Education and Conflict in Nepal:

Impact of Violence on Schools and the Role of Education in Peacebuilding

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The following figures and tables have been omitted on request of the university –

Abstract

This study is concerned with the interaction between education and conflict in Nepal. It examines the contentious role of education in the emergence and growth of the 'People's War' in 1996 and investigates the impact of the uprising on Nepal's school education. Then, the study identifies various implications of the decade-long civil war for the post-conflict educational reconstruction. The study was carried out employing narrative inquiry as a research approach, in eight schools selected from six different geopolitical districts of Nepal including, Doti, Rolpa, Kapilvastu, Kathmandu, Udaypur and Sankhuwasabha. The data was primarily collected from June to October in 2008 in the form of stories of the participants' experiences during the conflict by using interviews, focus group discussions and narrative writing tasks with a total of 427 research participants including teachers, head teachers, children and their parents.

The study reveals that education in Nepal played a complicit role in conflict, primarily benefitting the traditionally privileged social groups in Nepali society and hence, perpetuating the existing structural inequalities, which were the major causes of the civil war. During the conflict, schools were trapped in the middle and teachers and children were abducted and maimed by both the Maoists and security forces. Schools also became prolific sites for political campaigns and recruitment for the Maoists. It was found that the violent conflict had caused a significant loss of teachers' professional motivation and increased their loyalty to political parties instead of the government that ostensibly failed to provide for their personal as well as professional security during and after the conflict. It was also found that educational processes such as teacher recruitment and redeployment, school upgrading, and selection of school management committees were often politicised whilst symbolising community schools as the political entities.

The study finally highlights that the post-war political transition has offered an immense opportunity to restructure the education system by recognising the cultural and social diversity of Nepal and addressing the problematic role of education in reproducing the social order. It is recommended that the post-conflict reconstruction should adopt a 'conflict-sensitive' approach to address the structural issues of educational inequity, social exclusion, and political hegemony of the privileged social groups. Hence, the study suggests that peacebuilding involves a process of social transformation in which education can play a significant role by promoting social and political structures that nurture peace with social justice.

Dedicated to

My Beloved Father

Meen P. Jnawali

Acknowledgement

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Acronyms

CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
CSSP	Community School Support Programme
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Lennist)
CWIN	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
CZOP	Children as Zone of Peace
DDC	District Development Committee
DEO	District Education Office/ Officer
DFID	Department for International Development
DoE	Department of Education
DP	Development Partners
HMG	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
ICG	International Crisis Group
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLSS	National Living Standard Survey
NEPC	National Educational Planning Commission
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PEA	Political Economy Analysis
PF	Peacebuilding Find
PHRC	Peace Human Rights and Civic Education
PLA	People's Liberation Army

SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
UCPN-M	United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNMIN	United Mission in Nepal
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research is primarily concerned with the impact of the decade-long 'People's War' (1996 – 2006) on school education in Nepal. The study also examines a contentious role of education in the emergence and spread of the violent conflict. In this process, it draws upon violent experiences of key educational stakeholders including teachers, students, parents and educational officers during the 'People's War' led by the then Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-M), later renamed as the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN-M). The main objective of the research is to examine how school education in Nepal was affected by the armed conflict and subsequently transformed into a community that is politically active and perhaps less attentive to innovations and practice in its main responsibility: learning and teaching. In this analysis, the advent of the 'People's War' is located in a historical backdrop and the socio-political realities of Nepali society in which education implicitly played a contentious role in generating favourable grounds for the conflict. Therefore, this study serves two purposes: the role of education in creating the onset for a protracted war and providing favourable conditions as the movement spread across the country and more importantly, the impact of this ideologically driven insurgency on the key stakeholders of an already deficient education system in Nepal.

1.1 The 'People's War' and Education in Nepal

On 13 February 1996, a splinter faction of the large, diverse Communist Party of Nepal proclaiming their ideas were inspired by Mao's peasant-led revolution in China (a faction that later became known as simply the United Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist (UCPN-M)) announced a 'People's War' in Nepal by carrying out attacks on police posts in three districts: Rolpa and Rukum in the mid-west and Sindhuli in the east, instigating 'planned assaults' on two factories in Gorkha and Kathmandu and raiding the house of a civilian in the eastern district of Kavre (The Worker, 1996). The declaration and rapid growth of communist rebellion in the twenty-first century is a somewhat incomprehensible phenomenon especially in the times when the world had already witnessed the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communist ideology globally. In addition, multi-party democracy was restored in 1990 based on the strength of the people's movement and Nepal had entered an egalitarian political system with at least a slow but consistent progress in the Human Development Index (HDI) (Lawoti, 2010).

The 'People's War' was initiated with the aim of overthrowing the monarchy that had ruled over Nepal for the last two and half centuries and establishing 'a new socio-economic structure and state' (Bhattarai, 2003; Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). By 2002,

the war had spread across the country engulfing 73 out of 75 districts claiming the deaths of approximately 8,000 people and causing enormous economic losses (Kumar, 2003). Such a rapid expansion of the violent conflict is widely attributed to a range of social, economic and political disparities that had prevailed in Nepali society for several decades. The social inequality was pervasive and manifested in the hierarchical caste system in which high hill caste groups such as Brahmin, Chhetri/ Thakuris and Newars enjoyed the economic and social privileges of society while Dalits, Madheshi and indigenous nationalities were largely marginalised (Murshed and Gates, 2005). Secondly, the *People's Movement 1990* overthrew the unitary Panchayat system that prohibited multiparty democracy and safeguarded absolute monarchy that had remained as the only power centre since the departure of the Rana oligarchy (1846 – 1950). This political change not only introduced multiparty democracy but also amplified people's socioeconomic aspirations in a new political environment. There is a general consensus in Nepal that the post-1990 governments were largely involved in the power struggle and lamentably, ignored the welfare of the ordinary people. More interestingly, it has been argued that a lucrative space for the initiation of the 'People's War' and its rapid expansion was provided by the political failure or inefficiency of the post-1990 governments in addressing the insurgency at its early stage (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). However, much graver causes are argued to be poverty and socio-economic disparities that prevailed in Nepali society (Bhattarai, 2003; Deraniyagala, 2005; Do and Iyer, 2007). Over 13,000 people lost their lives along with irreversible social and economic damages caused by the violent conflict before the *Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA)* was signed eventually between the Government of Nepal and the CPN-M in November 2006.

Much has been written about the context of the 'People's War' and the socio-political antecedents of the Maoist rebellion have been debated extensively in the academic as well as the development sector (Hutt, 2004; Thapa and Sijapati, 2004; Kumar, 2005; Do and Iyer, 2007; Lawoti and Pahari, 2010). As discussed above, most commonly rehearsed debates around the causes of conflict testify to the prevailing social, political and economic divisions, and more recently, some of the 'negative faces' of education (Shields and Rappleye, 2008a) that form the backdrop to the uprising have also been argued. However, Nepal's armed conflict significantly lacks rigorous analyses from an educational perspective given the evidence that education, particularly schools, played a major role in providing young recruits for political participation and being a prime target of the armed conflict (Smith and Vaux, 2003). Even though some academic literature of this kind has appeared recently (Vaux et al, 2006; Shields and Rappleye, 2008a; Shields and Rappleye, 2008b; Pherali, 2011), there is still a dearth of empirical studies, which explore the educational

development from a conflict perspective and the impact of the decade-long violence on education. As suggested earlier, this study aims to serve the same purpose. The educational sector has largely been presented as 'a victim' of the violence (Sharma and Khadka, 2006), which broadly ignores its role in the emergence and development of the 'People's War'. Even the School Sector Reform Plan 2009 – 2015 (SSRP) has underestimated the impact of the violent conflict on school education and continued to impose its top-down approach to educational reforms (MoE, 2009). In other words, the role of education in the conflict has hardly been problematised and therefore the contentious role of education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000) in the Maoist rebellion remains essentially unrecognised. Four years after the CPA was signed, school education remains massively engulfed by the residue and legacy of the 'People's War' and continues to struggle with the historical deficiencies of the system as well as the newly generated derivatives of the violence. Therefore, this research attempts to serve the dual purpose of analysing education from the conflict perspective and investigate the impact of 'People's War' on the stakeholders of school education. The study will subsequently discuss the possibilities for educational reconstruction in the 'New Nepal' that has huge potential to be transformed socially and politically along with the recent remarkable achievements (e.g. the abolition of monarchy, the commitment to federalism in the new constitution, the elections of the Constituent Assembly (CA), the rise in the regional and identity-based politics and signing of the CPA).

1.2 History of Education in Nepal

Heavily influenced by traditional rote-learning Sanskrit based education, the Nepalese education system inherits the disposition of British colonial education imported from the Indian subcontinent during and after the British regime in India. Durbar High School, the first school of Nepal was established in 1853 with the main purpose of educating the children from the ruling families and their courtiers. Establishing a school for the purpose of providing education to the general public was legally banned and anyone arguing for educational awareness would be prosecuted and banished by the then Rana oligarchy. The Rana rulers believed that educating the general public would be to invite a political threat to their own regime and mean the end of their political and economic supremacy. Apart from Durbar High School, there were only 13 high schools in the country that provided very limited access to the children mostly from highly privileged socio-economic class. There were also some Sanskrit and monastic schools that provided religious education to selected Buddhist and Hindu children from superior castes. The Rana oligarchy systematically pursued 'a programme of Hinduisation' that legitimised the ethno-linguistic hierarchy of castes and ethnic groups headed by the hill high castes (e.g Brahmins, Chhetris and

Newars) (Hutt, 2004: 2). This state protected hierarchy was no exception in the educational sector that provided exclusive access to children from socially and economically privileged backgrounds. The linguistic repression through the monopoly of the Nepali language as the medium of learning and teaching implicated gradual elimination of the indigenous languages. The rote-learning method was the only method of learning and students were forced to master religious texts by memorising them. In addition, a very few people from affluent and socially privileged backgrounds were able to go to India to gain higher education. The political change that occurred after the departure of the Rana oligarchy in February 1951 allowed an incredible opportunity to establish schools and educate the Nepali population almost 97% of which was unable to read and write (World Bank, 2001). Taking up this opportunity, literacy centres were also started by some individuals including some British Gurkha soldiers who had returned home after serving in the World War II. The educational drive was predominantly led by the individuals who represented hill-based, high castes and were conscious about the economic, social and political benefits of education for their children. Therefore, the schools were established mainly in the areas that were inhabited by these influential caste groups allowing an easy access to their children. Historically underprivileged and marginalised ethnic and indigenous communities lacked social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) to realise the significance of education and therefore did not sufficiently commit to education for their children even if there was an opportunity to do so. Additionally, schools were sometimes geographically inaccessible from their communities. As a result, despite the government effort to improve literacy and school enrolment, a large number of children from ethnic minorities and indigenous populations still remained out of school.

Educational development in Nepal was legally banned until 1950. Even the monarchy was inoperative and confined within the strict control of the Rana rulers who acutely suppressed the active role of monarchy by preventing any kind of political contact between the monarch and ordinary citizens. The anti-Rana revolution was the result of an alliance between Nepali Congress, the major political party that fought to liberate Nepal from the Rana regime, and the suppressed monarchy that was desperate to assume its active role in politics. The overthrow of the century old regressive autocratic regime and the advent of democracy ended the dark anti-education era that had kept the ordinary Nepali citizens away from the light of education. After nine years of political turmoil, the first parliamentary elections were held in 1959 with an outcome of the introduction of parliamentary democracy and the first democratically elected government in power. During this period, Tribhuvan University, the first university of Nepal was established with the aim of modernising and enhancing the educational development of Nepal. However, King Mahendra dismissed the elected

government and dissolved the parliament to introduce a unitary Panchayat system that placed monarchy above the constitution. However, the number of schools throughout the country continued to grow despite the unfavourable political climate for the political supporters of multiparty democracy (World Bank, 2001). With the authoritative monarchy at the centre of Nepal's socio-political transformation, the educational reforms also revolved around the national project of producing a citizenry loyal to the monarchy that became an integral part of Nepali nationalism (Onta, 1996). The introduction of a comprehensive Educational Plan in 1971 increased state intervention on teacher recruitment, curriculum, monitoring and supervision of schools across the country. Yet, arguably the major developments came after the 'restoration' of democracy, when millions of donor dollars poured into Nepal aiming to extend existing provision more widely. All community schools were brought under the management of the Ministry of Education through its regional offices and the formal education system embarked upon the state project of creating national identity through religion (Hinduism), language (the Nepali language) and the state institution (monarchy) (Shah, 1993). This exploited the indigenous diversity of language and culture systematically. Even though the number of schools increased by almost threefold from the Panchayat era by 2003 as a result of these ambitious plans and efforts (MOES, 2005), the quality of teaching and learning continued to be poor due to the lack of adequate resources and trained workforce compounding the problems of a school system that had always been exclusive and discriminatory (Pherali, 2011).

Teachers' involvement in Nepal's political activism is not new. Throughout the country, schoolteachers as well as university lecturers have always played a vital role in garnering public support against the existing regime. During the Panchayat regime (1960 – 1990), teachers served as the only intellectual base that secretly advocated the restoration of democracy among the people in the rural communities. After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, their involvement in politics became increasingly more explicit through teachers' unions affiliated to different political parties. Interestingly, the senior leadership of the UCPN-M consists of a large number of former teachers who predominantly worked in the rural areas of the country before fully committing to the armed rebellion.

After the political change of 1990, a large number of private schools were established mainly in the urban areas. These schools received no subsidy from the government and charged fees from parents for their operation. These schools offered education in English and targeted economically privileged parents who could afford to pay for their children's education. The private-public divide perpetuated existing social divisions between the poor and rich. Hence, privately owned independent schools were accused of commercialising education and therefore came under attack by the Maoists during the 'People's War'

(Caddell, 2006). A large number of privately owned schools were forced to close down with an unprecedented number of student influxes in the state-funded schools that were already struggling with the lack of adequate teaching resources and infrastructure.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study serves the major purpose of examining the impact of the armed conflict on Nepal's school education and identifying implications for the post conflict educational reconstruction. It is evidenced that civil wars have long-term effects on human life (Ghobarah et al., 2003) and therefore, the restoration of peace, though provides a real 'opportunity' for reconstruction (Buckland, 2005), does not voluntarily resolve the derivatives generated by the violent conflict. Unless the impact of war on various facets of human life is systematically studied and thereby addressed appropriately, the post-conflict reconstruction may become lethargic, if not a fiasco. As education is one of the preconditions of development and sustained peace in a society, the urgency of understanding and acting pertinently on the impact of violent conflict on education cannot be understated. In order to reconstruct the devastated educational system and restructure it to address the educational causes that contributed to generate and fuel the violent rebellion, it is crucial not only to understand the educational context in which the war began but also to examine how the educational sector as a whole has been impacted by the violent conflict. This study attempts to serve that very purpose.

Parker and Standing (2007) raise some key issues around the role of schooling in creating and sustaining conflict in Nepal and elsewhere they discuss the impact that the conflict has had on schools and schooling (Standing and Parker, 2011). Another study by Sharma and Khadka (2006) mainly documents the effects of the armed conflict on schools, particularly in quantitative terms i.e. the records of incidents relevant to education, how schools, children, teachers, parents and educational authorities suffered the violent attack by the conflicting parties. However, these studies are too shallow to understand the deeper level impact of violence, or to form a reliable basis for broader educational reforms in the post-conflict period. The originality of this study is argued in terms of examining wartime experiences of educational stakeholders, including students, teachers and parents and identifying the impact of the decade-long, armed conflict on schooling in Nepal. In addition, the study utilises a historico-political approach to analyse elements of educational development from a conflict perspective. In this process, the study examines the education in Nepal using the notion of 'two faces of education', a theoretical framework suggested by Bush and Saltarelli (2000), in order to examine the contentious role of education in the emergence of the 'People's War' in Nepal and then to suggest a strategy for educational reforms that

incorporate peacebuilding knowledge and skills in education. Hence, this study identifies the educational impact of the armed conflict and then establishes a critical agenda for the post-conflict educational reconstruction. The main purpose of the research is to investigate the following research question:

What is the impact of the armed conflict on school education in Nepal?

The following are the specific objectives of the proposed research:

1. To examine the historical context of education and analyse its relevance to the armed conflict in Nepal;
2. To develop case studies of educational stakeholders which represent a range of their experiences of, and responses to the conflict;
3. To develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the armed conflict on school education by integrating the range of responses from the schools; and
4. To develop an understanding of, and explain the implications of, the impact for educational reforms in a new political context.

The study stands itself differently in the body of literature by taking a phenomenological approach to understanding the participants' lived experiences of the war and the impact they have sustained by having to face violent and terrifying incidents of conflict. It is argued that the in-depth understanding of the impact on school education can only be gained by analysing the life experiences as described by the stakeholders rather than merely quantifying the impact in terms of the losses sustained by the education systems. Therefore, this study engages with the stakeholders through extensive interviews and focus group discussions in various schools across the country.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

This research challenges the fundamental structure of, and the practice in, the Nepali education system that has been long argued by the state as a necessary element for modernity. The arrival of modernity along with the excitement of a new political system in 1951 allowed for a gradual influence of the 'development' on Nepali society that now not only had an opportunity to transform itself from primitive social and cultural traditions but also faced a responsibility to meet the needs of a competitive global economy. This fundamentally necessitated the establishment of a 'modern' education system that could essentially facilitate Nepal's escape from its self-imposed historical ostracism to interact beneficially with the global society at economic, political and cultural levels. In this process, the nature of educational development including who benefits from the new opportunities created by economic and political processes need to be scrutinised in order to gauge how

education, as a vehicle for progress impacts on the country's diverse social fabrics. From a peacebuilding perspective, it is crucial that education reduces horizontal inequalities across different social groups and acts as a driver for equitable social mobility. In other words, the purpose of education particularly in a society that represents socioeconomic hierarchies is to enable a just society where everyone enjoys an equal opportunity to flourish by gaining knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in their social and economic lives. Failure to do so would result in an implicit role of education in perpetuating socioeconomic divisions. For example, the benefits of education in Nepal have been largely exploited by limited social groups who have historically controlled the state power and possessed necessary social and cultural capital to utilise the education system in their favour (Bourdieu, 1977). As a result, education simply became a weapon of cultural repression (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000) acting against the aspirations of those who represented ethnic minorities and indigenous groups. Hence, this study is significant in terms of unveiling the contentious role of Nepal's education with an aim to create an opportunity for reforms that could possibly address the historically inequitable social and political mechanisms in which education played a complicit role. Secondly, the post-war Nepal is on the brink of socio-political restructuring with a tremendous opportunity to restructure the provision of education both at policy and practice level. The political restructuring of the state through the promulgation of a new constitution would mean that the education system would also need to embark upon radical reforms in order to coincide with the new political structures such as federalism. The opportunity for educational reconstruction essentially provides leverage to address historical antecedents of the armed conflict as well as to accommodate the aspirations of down trodden castes, ethnic groups and indigenous populations in the future.

Education in 'new Nepal', a phrase often used to denote a visionary Nepali state that is socially and politically transformed, has a new responsibility to restore the social fabric ruptured by the Maoist conflict and address the debilitating effects of conflict on the teaching workforce, school leadership and the community. An understanding of the impact on school education will provide a necessary context for a meaningful process of reforms in education. Hence, this study serves the purpose of developing an understanding of the historical deficiencies of Nepal's education system from a conflict perspective and identifying the impact of the conflict on school education so that the post-conflict reforms could consider these elements during the process of a meaningful educational reconstruction.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Education and conflict is still a field of research in its 'infancy' (Tomlinson and Benefield, 2005: 5) and the literature available is 'too thin' to incorporate the 'wide range of experiences' of conflict that education has retained in fragile states (Sommers, 2002: 2). However, the existing literature in this emerging field provides us with two intrinsically interconnected analytical frameworks: i) the role of education in preventing or fuelling violent conflict, and ii) the multifarious impacts of conflict on education. Of late, there has been an interesting debate both in academic and practitioners' literature about the complicit role of education in violent conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Smith and Vaux, 2003; Davies, 2004; Harber, 2004). Davies (2005: 359) analyses the controversial role of education in terms of reproducing or hardening 'inequality, exclusion and social polarisation' and even 'legitimising inequality', a process that consequently amplifies 'social divisions' to exacerbate tensions in a society. Elsewhere, Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 9) examine the 'peace-building' and 'peace-destroying' role of education suggesting that education – despite the idealism that surrounds it - can equally have 'socially destructive impact' unless its distribution, philosophy, curriculum and quality are scrutinised and ensured so that they explicitly serve the ends of social justice, equality and inclusive citizenship.

While the nexus of education and conflict in Nepal partially complies with this theoretical lens, there exist some new themes and explanations revealed by micro-level analysis of the socio-cultural complexities, educational conditions and the political backdrop of the genesis and development of the 'People's War'. What emerges through this study is a deeper understanding of the contentious face of education, in particular, its role in producing educated 'masses' that were politically conscious and ideologically trained. These educated masses, instead of working for the cultivation of critical, positive and peaceful orientations in the process of social change, came to recognize armed rebellion as a legitimate means of eliminating the structures that perpetuate socio-economic disparities in Nepal. The agents of conflict in this case were ideologically extreme and could logically defend their views on the legitimacy of the use of violence. For them, attaining the goal (e.g. social, economic, political and cultural equalities) was paramount, justified their means, and motivated them to persist with the struggle. This ideological commitment and propagation of it to the wider populace thus made schools a key 'battleground' in the conflict.

In most emergency situations education comes under attack particularly due to the contentious role it plays in fuelling or dampening the causes of violent conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Schools can serve as recruitment sites or political training centres for

rebellion forces and they can equally represent the state and spread a state-sponsored agenda. Even more profoundly, the educational system of a society perpetuates social and economic inequalities and magnifies existing ethnic and religious segregation (Davies, 2004).

The underlying causes and object of conflicts when positioned in the context of existing socioeconomic disparities largely contribute to rationalising the use of violence. The ideology-led rebellion aimed at replacing the present political system with the one that is more just and equitable and is conceived out of the political will of socially and economically deprived people distinguishes itself from other intra-state civil wars that may have their own geopolitical nature and motivations. When the armed struggle is rationalised for socio-political transformation and driven by aggressive political education, people's mobilisation, and brutal resistance, the role of school heads, teachers and students, especially due to their organised nature and omnipresence, becomes extraordinarily central in carrying out rebellious tactics. This complex positioning of schools often reveals a multiplicity of ideologically opposing responses to conflict that are all complying, complicating, resisting and quite possibly ambivalent. Ultimately, at a deep level, the impact of violent conflicts on educational stakeholders is explained by this very nature of response.

The perpetual state of fear and serendipity of future aspirations caused by protracted wars create a kind of dumbness in life and a frustrating routine and futility of daily activities (Gounari, 2010). The inability to prevent conflict makes people develop alternative ways of coping with it and sustaining the effects of adversities. However, the impact of such violent experiences may be observed in a professional demeanour characterised by indifference, individualism and eroded motivations. This research utilises these conceptual frameworks to understand the educational context of the 'People's War' and explain the impact of conflict on education in Nepal.

1.6 Situating Myself in the Research

My positionality in this research is both outsider of the system as a researcher from a British university and an insider of the society with native background and understanding of the socio-political backdrop in which the conflict emerged and affected education generally. My critical understanding of the education system and the values it incorporated not only allowed me to challenge existing practices from a conflict perspective but also provided me with an analytical tool to unravel symbolic prejudices that prevailed in the Nepali education system.

I spent most of my childhood and adolescence in the dominant countryside of Nepal where I witnessed unfair social and educational practices that were institutionally legitimised to discriminate against subordinate and indigenous castes and ethnic groups in society which later was capitalised by the Maoists to endorse their violent rebellion. I was born in a hill-based, high Hindu caste with comparatively more affluent social and cultural capital that served for my success in education, creating broader opportunities to gain and maintain high social and cultural status. I grew up witnessing the problems of poverty, unemployment, injustice, caste and gender inequality and more importantly, unsympathetic discrimination against *Dalits*, the so-called untouchable castes. My education in the field of sociology and political science and work in the peacebuilding sector provided me with a critical perspective towards these political, social, cultural and educational contexts. Hence, my observation of the Maoist agendas for social transformation and their argued means of achieving these is an acutely contested perception. In other words, I always found myself close to the agendas of socio-political change while contending with the use of violence as a means of achieving them. Therefore, my contention in the 'People's War' is fundamentally associated with the issue of using violence as a means of achieving social justice and therefore, I believe that physical violence on schools and educational stakeholders may not be justified. Yet, I would still stand by the idea of using force in order to resist oppression, atrocities on innocent people as well as to dismantle the structures that represent cruelty and nurture acute symbolic violence on the socially deprived.

1.7 Motivation for the Study

Nepal's transitional politics is significantly dominated by debates on power struggle, state restructuring and securing ethnic and regional identity. The debate around educational reforms is somewhat postponed if not ignored completely. This study intends to make a contribution to the process of post-conflict educational reconstruction in Nepal from a conflict and peacebuilding perspective mainly focusing on two key aspects: a) the educational context in which the armed conflict started needs to be analysed in order to understand the role of education in conflict; b) given the evidence that schools and its stakeholders were at the centre of the decade-long violent conflict, it is important to identify their role in the conflict and the effects they have sustained during the war. The post-conflict state restructuring (moving from unitary state structure to federalism) has implications for education changes and hence some of the most challenging questions may include:

a) What is the role of education in addressing the issue of national identity while ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of unified national identity?

b) How will the national history be revised in order to make it more inclusive and how will the ideological contention towards the 'People's War' be included in the history curriculum?

c) What would be the role of education in reconciliation and peacebuilding?

The above questions would need to be considered for a meaningful educational reconstruction in the post-conflict Nepal. The motivation for the present study stems from the above questions.

1.8 Summary of the Methodology

This study adopted 'narrative inquiry' as a methodological approach to understanding storied lived experiences of educational stakeholders – head teachers, teachers, children, parents and educational officers (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The philosophical underpinning of the study entails a phenomenological hermeneutic that is concerned with an understanding of the world as it is lived (Moustakas, 1994). It is recognised that the issue of validity in stories entails complexity in understanding the difference between actual experiences and the stories participants share with the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2007). However, the value of constructionism as an epistemological stance is that the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched (Crotty, 1998). The reality of narratives is that the stories told by the participants embody distortion of experiences in the process of 'creating a self' as they unfold their experiences with the researcher (Riessman, 1993: 11). However, the object of narrative research is to extract, analyse and interpret the 'narrative truth' with an assumption that 'the stories are constructed around core facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these 'remembered facts' (Lieblich et al., 1998: 8). An extended engagement with the participants and their surroundings before, during and after the actual data collection allowed for much informed interpretation of the narrative evidence gathered in the interviews with teachers, children and parents. My own native background and understanding of Nepal's socio-political context and complex dynamics of conflict served as a strength in identifying meanings in the narratives. The analytical position was reflexively informed (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) and located within a philosophical hermeneutic, with an assumption that 'one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness; thus, textual interpretations are always perspectival' (Polkinghorne, 2007), 483).

I spent between three and four days with each of the research participants chatting, dining and walking together prior to carrying out research interviews. In some cases, the head

teachers offered me accommodation in their home during my fieldwork, which provided valuable time to rehearse and test the reliability in the stories. During my stay in the research field, I was able to carry out extensive informal interviews with local people in teahouses, local shops and community rest places where they provided me with valuable knowledge about the research setting and socio-political realities of field. Hence, this approach made the research a semi-ethnographic inquiry.

The research was carried out in eight schools selected across the national geopolitical regions of Nepal. The research schools were selected from Doti (Far Eastern Region), Rolpa (Mid-Western Region where the 'People's War' was started), Kapilvastu (a district in the Western Plains bordering India where the Maoist conflict was followed by a severe ethnic/ religious violence recently), Kathmandu (the capital in the Central Region) and finally, Udaypur (South Eastern Region) and Sankhuwasabha (a mountainous district in the North Eastern Region). Figure 1.1 indicates the geographical regions of the fieldwork:

Figure 1.1: Country Map Indicating Research Districts

The data were collected mainly using three different research methods: interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and the narrative writing task. Teachers and parents participated in FGDs whereas the head teacher from each was interviewed separately. One teacher from each school was further selected for an in-depth interview. Between 24 and 35

students from each school completed the narrative writing task. Table 1.1 presents a summary of the methods and participants who took part in the present study.

Participants	Method	Number of Participants
Head Teachers	Interviews	8
Teachers	Focus Group Discussions	88 (8 groups)
Teachers	Interviews	8
Educational Officers	Interviews	7
Students	Narrative Writing	240
Parents	Focus Group Discussion	76 (8 groups)

Table 1.1: Summary of Research Methods

Of the eight schools, three were privately managed independent schools that were precisely targeted by the CPN-M during the violent decade, accusing them of 'commercialising education' (Caddell, 2006).

The interviews were recorded and translated into English as they were transcribed. The recordings were listened and re-listened in order to capture the cultural nuances of the Nepali language. The data was analysed in both languages capturing emerging themes, which were enriched by the researcher's understanding of social and cultural nuances that mostly remained implicit in the research data.

This report also benefits from the researcher's involvement in and learning from other two educational research projects. Firstly, I am the project coordinator of the British Council-funded international collaborative project (2010 – 2013) entitled 'Education for Peacebuilding' which aims to develop a peacebuilding education course for teacher education programmes in Nepal and Cambodia. Secondly, I was a key member of the team that carried out political economy analysis of education in Nepal in February – March 2011. My involvement in both projects provided with a vast amount of knowledge on the educational issues particularly related to recent developments in education and the peace process in Nepal.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

This dissertation is organised in ten different chapters. This chapter briefly introduces the context of the 'People's War' in Nepal and its relevance to education. Then, key research aims and objectives are discussed and the significance of the study is argued. The conceptual framework employed to examine the interplay between education and conflict research is discussed along with a brief summary of the methodological approach used to carry out the research. As a whole, this chapter sets the scene for the dissertation.

The second chapter focuses on the educational dimensions of violent conflicts in general. The purpose of this chapter is to assess the role of education in society from conflict perspective and to debate how education can play a complicit role in the emergence and growth of armed conflicts. The discussion focuses on the impact of intra-state civil wars on the provision of education in the countries affected by violence. Here, the literature around the attack on education is reviewed and the analysis is focused on global debate of post-conflict educational reconstruction. The analysis demonstrates that the nature of armed conflicts and their root causes largely predict the nature of incursions on the educational sector. The aim of this chapter is also to highlight the theoretical debates around the problematic character of education in generating and fuelling conflict and then to analyse impact of armed conflicts on the provision of education as well as the educational stakeholders globally. This chapter provides a global context of education and conflict and further relates this debate to the Nepali context.

Chapter 3 mainly highlights the historical context of 'People's War' and education in Nepal. This chapter primarily deals with the social, political and economic characteristics of Nepali society in which the armed rebellion was initiated and spread rapidly with dominating effects on all spheres of life throughout the country. The long-standing social, cultural and political conditions in pre-1990 Nepali society are analysed to locate the historical antecedents of the 'People's War' and then briefly relate the analysis to the history and development of communist movements prior to the declaration of the 'People's War' in 1996. This chapter shows that education largely remained as a service accessible to the privileged and the unfair educational practices within the school deprived the majority of ethnic and indigenous groups from gaining quality education. This chapter locates educational debate in the genesis of the armed conflict.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the role of schools during the 'People's War'. First, it will provide an historical analysis of the contentious relationship between education and conflict within the broad framework of conflict theory, including cultural reproduction, hegemony and the notion of the 'negative face' of education in conflict. Then, it will analyse some of the

effects of the violence on schools including, the political intrusion on the school sector after the restoration of multi-party polity in 1990. This will be followed by a discussion on the most recent policy initiative – decentralisation in the form of community based school management, which interacts with the impact of the decade long violent conflict. This chapter will also set out the research agenda in terms of examining the nexus between education and conflict, the impact of armed conflict on education and the policy contention in the post-war period, followed by possibilities for peacebuilding through education.

Then, the methodology of the research is discussed in chapter 5. The study employs a phenomenological hermeneutic approach to examine the educational stakeholders' experiences of the violent conflict. The data is gathered through in-depth interviews (both in focus groups and individually) generally in the form of narratives and in the form of narrative writing form from the students. This chapter discusses key philosophical underpinnings of the methodology used and elaborates on research tools. Data analysis technique is also discussed here followed by a brief discussion on ethical issues concerned with the study especially being carried out in a distinct cultural setting. A summary of the methodology will be presented later in this chapter.

The findings and discussions of the study are presented in four main chapters – 6, 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 6 presents key findings in relation to the violent experiences of teachers, head teachers and educational officers during conflict and the impact on their professional and personal lives. The dominant theme emerging from the data indicates that education had largely failed in producing an employable workforce, which resulted in increased number of young graduates without any prospect of employment. This then left youth with 'no choice' but to join the armed rebellion with the hope that a new political change would offer a better life. The following chapter 7 highlights the impact of the 'People's War' on children drawing upon children's narrative writing. This chapter also draws on the experiences of parents who were trapped in the conflict that was pervasive in their village but also living under enormous amount of stress to protect their young children from the mounting violence in the school surroundings. These findings are further discussed alongside relevant literature. Chapter 8 brings the diverse themes of experiences together to discuss continued impact of the 'People's War' on the school culture. This chapter presents the themes such as over-politicisation of education system, eroded quality in teaching and learning and fragmented school leadership. More importantly, this chapter synthesises findings from previous chapters 6 and 7 using a political economy approach.

Chapter 9 highlight the pertinent issue of national identity, which has become one of the most powerful political factors in the post-war period. It presents a critical analysis of the

role of education in the creation of national identity and indicates that the historically disadvantaged communities are increasingly reclaiming their ethnic and indigenous identities, which redefines the notion of unified national identity. Then it will discuss implications of these evolving debates for post-conflict educational reconstruction. Finally, the role of education in supporting structures that promote equality, social justice and peacebuilding are discussed in this chapter. Finally, chapter 10 presents conclusions and proposes appropriate recommendations for the post-conflict educational reconstruction. The recommendations highlight the significance of the role of education in building sustainable peace.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This research examines the impact of conflict on school education drawing on the experiences of key educational stakeholders in the field. Even though the experiences of some educational officers in the Department of Education were incorporated to capture their experiences during the violent conflict, this study does not investigate structural level or institutional level impact of the 'People's War' on education. Therefore, the issues such as impact on educational planning, the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education and Department of Education, school financing and policy implementation are not considered this study. Methodologically, this research embraces qualitative approach and locates the inquiry within the constructivist epistemological framework. The researcher's positionality in this study is that each conflict emerges within its own unique socio-political context and out of distinctive motivations of its agents. This very nature of conflict, when it interacts with the education system of the country, fabricates distinctive impact on education and implications for reconstruction in the post-conflict period. While the findings and theoretical developments in this research may provide broader insights into education and conflict research internationally, the primary purpose of the study is to analyse and investigate the impact of the communist rebellion in Nepal with the view of illuminating the concerns of post-conflict educational reforms. The researcher's epistemological and ontological assumptions largely shape the design and execution of the study as well as the analysis of the data and writing of this thesis. Hence, the findings of this study may not serve the purpose of broader generalisations.

1.11 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief context of the study mainly locating the interaction between education and conflict within the history of educational development in Nepal. Then, it discussed the main purpose of the study and argued for its significance in relation to highlighting the contentious role of education in the surge of violent conflict and identifying potential implications for the imminent process of educational reconstruction. A

conceptual framework for the analysis was discussed followed by the specific objectives of the research. This chapter also has also included a brief summary of the research methodology employed in this study. Then, it reported on the structure of the thesis briefly introducing the key elements of each chapter. The following three chapters are extensive reviews of relevant literature in the field of education and conflict alongside a detailed analysis of education and conflict in Nepal. Hence, the next chapter will begin with a discussion on educational dimensions and armed conflicts in the global context.

CHAPTER 2: ARMED CONFLICTS AND EDUCATION: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The previous chapter presented a background for the study and discussed key research aims and specific objectives. This chapter will focus on the educational dimensions of violent conflicts in the global context. The aim of this chapter is also to highlight theoretical debates around the problematic character of education in generating and fuelling conflict and then to analyse impact of armed conflicts on the provision of education. Here, the impact of conflict on education is reviewed, and the analysis is focused on global debate on post-conflict peacebuilding. This chapter will locate the present study in a global context and later concentrate on the context of Nepal where the research was conducted.

2.1 Violent Conflicts and Education: Global Context

Since the end of the World War II, the nature of major armed conflicts in the world has changed from interstate wars to intrastate civil wars. In 2006, out of 32 active armed conflicts reported in 23 locations in the world, all were intrastate civil wars (Harbom and Wallensteen, 2007), the majority of taking place in the poorest countries of the world (World Bank, 2006). In 2010, the number of conflicts globally was recorded to be 30 (Themnér and Wallensteen, 2011). The most serious victims of these wars are the innocent civilians who are killed, abducted, or forced to flee their homes to live a harsh life as refugees when the wars progress (Ahlstram, 1991, SIPRI, 2005). The effects of armed conflicts always exceed the usually noticeable loss of human lives and destruction of infrastructure, and embrace the long-term effects on civilian health (Ghobarah et al., 2003), the economic wellbeing of the countries suffering from wars (Kang and Meernik, 2005), and the risk for developing countries of not being able to achieve the millennium development goals (Stewart, 2003) and the Dakar goal of Education for All goals (Sommers, 2002; UNESCO, 2000).

Collier and Hoeffler (2004) show that violent conflicts are more likely to occur in developing countries where a range of socioeconomic factors play a central role. There is a tendency to suggest in their analysis that economic cause is fundamental in explaining modern-day civil wars. However, there are social, political, religious and identity-based conflicts that cannot be collapsed into an economic explanation, nor can it be dismissed that economically strong nations are unlikely to experience violent conflicts. Smith and Vaux (2003: 9-10) also note that 'conflict in the world is not restricted exclusively to low-income countries' that 'there are many examples of violent conflict in high-income countries with well-developed education systems'. Clearly, the impact of conflict on weak economies is likely to be much more severe than those that have relatively well established public sectors

including education systems, health, manufacturing and physical infrastructure. Murshed (2003: 387) mentions that violent conflicts in low-income countries make 'the objective of poverty reduction all the more difficult, since not only growth retarded, public money is taken for military spending from basic social services, and the poor are themselves disproportionately the victims of conflict'. Lai and Thyne (2007) also show that increased military costs do not allow conflict-affected countries to channel adequate funding to education. As a result school enrolments as well as teaching and learning standards are most likely to decline. This makes the task of post-conflict educational reconstruction more challenging with existing problems further exacerbated by conflict dynamics (Dubois and Trabelsi, 2007).

Similarly, violent conflicts often disrupt educational processes. Schooling often becomes paralysed when educational infrastructure is destroyed and its stakeholders: teachers, children and educational authorities are caught in the violence. Despite being enshrined as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enforced by numerous international laws and treaties (Harvey, 2003), education is frequently targeted by armed groups. Teachers, school children, government staff and institutions can be victimized (UNESCO, 2010). Children are the most vulnerable groups during conflict who are often manipulated and forced to join the armed groups (Machel, 1996). Abduction of children for forced recruitment in the rebel army, or participation in indoctrination campaigns are commonly reported from the countries affected by armed conflicts. Abduction is one of the resorts of rebel forces who have no access to 'propaganda channels of state media or the coercive power of states' (Maxted, 2003: 61). For example, the Lords Resistance Army in northern Uganda abducted 10,000 school children for 'indoctrination' along with 'abuse and brutality' (Maxted, 2003). It is reported that more than two-thirds of Rwanda's teachers were either killed or fled during the genocide in 1994, whereas some schools in Angola and Cambodia have been deserted due to the presence of land mines in the school areas (Buckland, 2005). In Timor Leste, the secondary school system was paralysed due to the failure to return of the trained and qualified secondary school teachers, who were predominantly Indonesians (Buckland, 2005). In Nepal, it was reported that approximately 32,000 children were abducted from schools to force participate in political meetings of the rebelling Maoists and an estimated 3000 teachers had been displaced from the schools in the rural areas, directly impacting on an estimated 100,000 students' education (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004).

Despite the fact that violent conflict has a devastating impact on education in terms of obstructing teaching and learning, affecting teachers and pupils both physically and psychologically and destroying the existing educational infrastructures, research also shows

that 'the disruption caused by conflict offers opportunities as well as challenges for social reconstruction' (Buckland, 2005: 13). Education systems in most contexts are resilient to violent conflicts and continue to operate even in the times of emergencies. An international alliance known as Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has created minimum standards for education preparedness, response and recovery (2010), which has been recognised by international donors and organisations working to support education in the conflict-affected societies. It is noted that education can play an important role in providing a sense of normalcy even during emergencies. The Minimum Standards Handbook (2010) mentions:

> Education opportunities also mitigate the psychosocial impact of conflict and disasters by providing a sense of routine, stability, structure and hope for the future. By strengthening problem-solving and coping skills, education enables learners to make informed decisions about how to survive and care for themselves and others in dangerous environments. It can help people think critically about political messages or conflicting sources of information (INEE, 2010: 2).

The INEE Minimum Standards handbook contains 19 standards that are underpinned by international legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (Articles 2, 26), the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) (Articles 3, 24, 50) and the Additional Protocol II (1977) (Article 4.3 (a)), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) (Articles 3, 22), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (Article 2), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (Articles 2, 13, 14) and several other legally binding international commitments. The aim of these standards is to enhance 'the quality of educational preparedness, response and recovery, increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities and ensure accountability in providing these services' (INEE, 2010: 3).

However, there is a gap between the academic literature in education and conflict (e.g. Davies, 2004; Saltman, 2007) and that in the domain of development practitioners, who primarily focus on education as a humanitarian response, fall short in engaging with broader structural issues, such as political institutions, socioeconomic disparities, social exclusion, suppression of indigenous identities, ethnic and racial discrimination and so forth. The academic literature is increasingly making reference to these issues in which authors go beyond the 'quick fix idea' 'asking tough questions on the complex relationships between education and conflict' (Novelli, 2009: 380). The sub-field of education and conflict is primarily driven by 'the needs and concerns of practitioners and their organisations working and managing educational projects in conflict and post-conflict countries' and

therefore more critical questions need to be asked to examine the complex interaction between education and conflict, which would lead education and conflict debate beyond 'education as a humanitarian' response or a tool for 'pacification' and allow for 'critical academic scrutiny' (Novelli, 2009: 380).

2.2 Impact of Armed Conflicts on Education

The interaction between education and conflict, at least in one direction is well established – that is, 'the multitude of ways in which conflict can involve, limit, damage and destroy education are now widely acknowledged and have been evidenced in many countries and communities' (Paulson, 2011: 7). The recent EFA Global Monitoring Report entitled *'The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education'* published by the UNESCO also indicates that armed conflict is one of the major obstacles for reaching the EFA goals by 2015. It highlights that the countries affected by armed conflicts are the most vulnerable in terms of achieving these targets and therefore need stronger and more effective international response (UNESCO, 2011). Armed conflicts not only jeopardise human security but also seriously undermine economic growth and prospects for reducing poverty. The report highlights four failures of international cooperation—'in protection, provision, reconstruction, and peacebuilding— that are creating the hidden crisis' (Rose, 2011: 185). The report notes that the national governments should work with the United Nations system to monitor and report on violations of human rights that affect education. There is also a need for increased financing to ensure the provision of education in conflict-affected countries. The perception of education as a humanitarian response seems to limit the possibility of increasing access to a broader populations living in fragile situations. The provision of education to refugees and internally displaced populations needs to be strengthened. Similarly, the report also highlights that a more integrated approach of humanitarian and long-term aid is necessary in order to rebuild education systems in conflict-affected countries. One of the most important aspects of the report is that it highlights education's potential to contribute to peacebuilding. It urges the national governments and development partners to prioritise more progressive policy reforms in the education sector. For instance, the policy on language and medium of instruction, curricular revisions and devolution of power to local communities might help in working towards addressing the factors that have produced and reproduced grievances of the marginalised people. Schools have the opportunity to promote peacebuilding skills such as tolerance, mutual respect and the ability to live peacefully with others. The report urges that up to $1billion should be allocated to education through the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund in order to enhance the role of education in peacebuilding. It is also indicated that the UNESCO and UNICEF should play a more crucial role through education in the wider peacebuilding strategies (UNESCO, 2011).

The UNESCO has been closely monitoring the impact of conflict on education since their first global study in 2007 (O'Malley, 2007). The recent report highlights that the scale of attack on education has escalated significantly in 2010 as compared to the statistics reported in 2007 (UNESCO, 2010). The report also highlights some of the most devastating effects of armed conflicts on education in conflict-affected countries globally. Table 2.1 illustrates the scale of attack on education:

Table 2.1: The Impact of Armed Conflict on Education
(UNESCO, 2011: 2)

Education suffers more severely in the countries where conflicts are internationalised, or there is a strong ethnic or political dimension at the root cause of armed conflict. Clearly, as the violent conflicts emerge, security conditions deteriorate resulting in increased investment in the military budget and significant reduction in the educational investment (Lai and Thyne, 2007). Such countries include Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Thailand where the root causes and nature of conflicts vary and so does the nature of attack on education.

Since the removal of Talibans from power in Afghanistan, international aid agencies have been supporting the process of rebuilding Afghanistan's education system. There has been a remarkable progress in terms of girls' access to education since the involvement of international organisations such as the UNESCO, UNICEF and Save the Children. It is reported that 2.7 million girls have enrolled in schools now as compared to only 5,000 in 2001 when girls were legally banned from public education (MoE Afghanistan, 2011). However, the Taliban frequently attack female students and their schools to show disapproval of universal access to education.

The spread of global terrorism in the post-9/11 period particularly after the fall of Taliban in Afghanistan has acutely affected neighbouring Pakistan that has recently faced an increased level of terrorism. The American invasion of Afghanistan and the support of Pakistan to the US-led 'war on terrorism' has 'infuriated the religious militants and Taliban sympathizers who started networking in an anti-coalition resistance using Pakistan's territory as a base' (Janjua, 2009: 17). The present state of extremism, terrorism and violent insurgency in Pakistan also harks back to the failure to 'reintegrate the ex-Mujahideen[1] after the oust[ing] of [the] Soviets, failure to improve the socio economic conditions', failure of the government to address the problem of 'political exclusion of the people' (Janjua, 2009: 17). The close cultural and historical ties between the peoples of the two countries has given rise to antipathy towards the West and helped spread terrorist activities across the border. Schools are often caught in crossfire during the military operations against Taliban extremists in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. It was reported that nearly 300 schools were destroyed by rebels between 2006 and 2009 while 356 schools were destroyed in one small region in Pakistan in the battle between the military forces and the Taliban (UNESCO, 2010). Hence, the escalation in religious militancy in Pakistan has severely affected educational processes in this region.

Educational institutions are prone to attack especially during the short military operations. For example, 127 educational institutions were destroyed or damaged in Georgia in August 2008, whereas more than 300 kindergartens, schools and university buildings were damaged in Gaza during a brief military operation by Israel in 2008-2009 (UNESCO, 2010: 21-22). Hence, the educational sector often becomes a victim of violent conflicts globally.

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[1] Mujahideen were the guerrilla fighters who fought against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan 1979 - 1989. It is estimated that 60,000 Mujahideen from Pakistan took part in this uprising and helped establish Taliban's power in Afghanistan in 1991.

2.2.1 Reasons for Attack on Education

There are various reasons why education comes under attack during violent conflicts. As Apple (2004:1) notes, education is a 'political act' and therefore, it embeds values and principles of those who define the system in a particular context. Apple (2004: 61) argues that schools 'preserve and distribute what is perceived to be 'legitimate knowledge'—the knowledge that 'we all must have,' schools confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups'. Pedagogies and curricula are often designed to promote interests of dominant groups who mostly benefit from the provision of education put in place in a particular social and political context. Hence, schools often represent state power that utilises schooling as a tool of social control and often discriminates against marginalized populations. This can happen through imposition of non-native language as a medium of instruction, promoting a different religion and national history from the ones that local communities would identify with. The major motives of attack on education may vary depending on the nature of conflict. For example, in Thailand, Muslim separatists in the three southernmost provinces would attack schools as they represent government in rural villages and teachers promote a curriculum that reflects state dominance. Schools in this region are seen as 'imposing an alien language of instruction (Thai), religion (Buddhism) and history (Thai national history) as part of a policy to assimilate Muslims in a previously autonomous area' (UNESCO, 2010: 8). Schools in Nepal on the other hand were targeted by both Maoists rebels and security forces in attempts to garner support from teachers and school children (Pherali, 2011). In Afghanistan, Taliban and in Pakistan, Muslim fundamentalists defy the provision of modern education and particularly prohibit girls' access to education. From 2007 to March 2009, 116 girls' schools were destroyed in Pakistan's Swat territory (UNESCO, 2010).

In some cases, the attack on education can be ideologically driven. In Nepal, for instance, private schools were attacked by the Maoists accusing them of commercializing education and reproducing class divisions (Caddell, 2006). The UNESCO study reports the following as the key motives conflicting groups for attack on education (Table 2.2):

Table 2.2: Motives of Attack on Education
(UNESCO, 2010: 7-8)

Whatever the reasons for the attack on education, the impact of violence on the communities of teachers and learners is generally debilitating and enduring. The involvement of youth in violence is likely to make a long-term impact on their lives making the post-war rehabilitation seriously challenging. This can also affect negatively on young people's aspirations and motivation to excel in their lives. In a study conducted in Northern Uganda, Ezati et al (2011) found that violent conflict had adversely affected young people's

educational aspirations. They found that young students displayed increased amount of 'aggressiveness' and 'indiscipline' while their academic ambition had been relatively low. The post-war professional motivation and self-esteem of teachers had also been depleted. This indicates that the effects of violent conflict on teachers and learners are profound and protracted, which generally have serious implications for peacebuilding. Hence, more robust preventative measures at global level are necessary to protect education from violent attacks during conflicts.

2.3 The Two Faces of Education

It is increasingly being recognised that education cannot be unconditionally accepted as a positive driver of social harmony. 'Education', here largely means 'schooling' provided by the state or other agencies with clearly defined political and economic goals and therefore needs to be distinguished from 'education' as learning in general sense even though non-formal/ informal education also takes place within the broader structure of the society and possesses elements of implicit motive towards social conformity. In both scenarios, what is crucial is to examine 'the *type* of education that is on offer and the values and attitudes it is promoting' (Smith and Vaux, 2003: 10), which makes education either conducive to political tensions or preventative to state fragility.

Education should provide moral capacity to individuals to make a rational choice within their social domain. Hence, it becomes a part of agency that interacts with the structure, which is either confronted or confirmed through educational processes. For example, formal education in Nepal aimed at producing loyal citizenry to the political system while simultaneously; perhaps beyond the intentions of the regime, it enabled social and political consciousness that provided confidence and moral capacity to those who were part of the system to challenge the existing socio-political structures. More importantly, political education employed by the Maoists catalysed people awareness to resist various forms of structural inequalities in their society and channelled their reactions to reinforce the 'People's War'.

The UNICEF report on *'The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: Towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children'* has served as the point of departure to initiate a serious debate on the role of education in the emergence and spread of violent conflicts (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The 'two faces' dichotomy provides a theoretical framework to analyse and understand the education systems and educational processes particularly in the context of ethnic violence.

2.3.1 The Negative Face

Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 9) note that alongside its potential to address problems of intergroup differences, formal education can equally exacerbate 'intergroup hostility under conditions of ethnic tension' and have 'destructive impact' on societies. The positive impact of education is extensively highlighted, often uncritically, that the 'destructive' role of education usually goes unacknowledged. For example, access to education is usually distributed unevenly in a society where one ethnic group is dominant over others. In most societies where social, economic and political disparities exist, the benefits of education are mostly exploited by those who represent privileged social groups. Education in this context contributes to reproduce existing social hierarchies. Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 9) argue that:

> In ethnically stratified societies, privileged ethnic groups usually attain higher average educational levels than members of subordinate ethnic groups. Several factors underlie this pattern. First, educational attainment is enhanced by a privileged background, and students from advantaged ethnic origins benefit from the educational, occupational and economic attainments of their parents. Second, dominant social groups use the educational system to secure their privilege across generations. Because of their cultural and political domination, educational election is based on criteria that favour their offspring. Third, dominant ethnic groups may control the political processes by which school systems are funded and structured and are able to promote those schools attended by their children or their own educational districts.

During the period of European colonisation, social and ethnic differences were nurtured by the colonisers as a tactic to divide-and-rule. Educational access was allowed for certain social or ethnic groups who could assist the colonial administration at the local level. In the post-colonial era, the same privileged groups who were close to the foreign colonisers possessed relevant knowledge, literacy and numeracy skills. This skill allowed them to monopolise political and administrative power of these independent states. Former British colonies such as India, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Sudan characterise massive social stratification and unequal economic and political participation across different ethnic groups. Rwanda is a typical example of how former colonisers and their Catholic missionary schools discriminated against Hutus and provided Tutsis with educational opportunities with the view of establishing Tutsis as the future rulers of the country. At Rwandan independence, Tutsis were placed in the powerful positions of the state apparatus. This exclusionary practice generated animosity between Hutus and Tutsis, which resulted in one

of the world's most horrific genocides in 1994. Hence, uneven distribution of education systematically contributes to unequal political and economic structures, which marginalise groups representing lower social strata. This leads to continued frustration among these groups who would either escape or respond to these 'exclusionary walls' violently (Ferguson, 2005: 179).

Similarly, education can act as a repressive force against marginalised groups who represent minority ethnic and indigenous nationalities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Muslim minorities in Thailand have been culturally repressed by the Buddhist Thai state that imposes Thai identity through formal education. After the independence of Sudan in 1964, all foreign missionary schools were closed down and education was heavily Arabised and secondary schools were moved to the North, which neglected religious and cultural identity of the people living in Southern Sudan (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 10). This led to a violent conflict for several decades, eventually leading to the birth of a new country Southern Sudan in February 2011. Similarly, the National Education System Plan 1971 in Nepal nationalised schools throughout the country, implemented a national curriculum taught in Nepali language and banned local and indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. This was a state-sponsored homogenisation project and a response to the cultural and ethnic heterogeneity of Nepal, which was 'presented as a threat to the coherence and unity of the political entity' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 13). As a result, almost one third of non-Nepali speaking children were disadvantaged due to imposition of Nepali as a medium of instruction in the school as well as general repulsion they faced due to their ethnic, caste-based or indigenous backgrounds (Ragsdale, 1989). Later, the Maoist rebellion capitalised on the grievances of ethnic exclusion in public sectors including education, which is also indicated by the dominant representation of marginalised ethnic groups in the Maoist movement (Lawoti, 2005).

Teaching of history in schools is often politically motivated and the process serves the interests of those who are in power. The regime always promotes biased narratives that are ideologically and politically supportive of the state authority and contribute to maintaining their social and political control rather than allowing alternative narratives, or critical approach to learning history. The history curriculum in Nepal predominantly consisted of a eulogy of the monarchy and categorically denied the atrocities caused by the Shah monarchs on indigenous populations during their territorial expansion (1768 – 1845 and later during the Rana oligarchy). The history textbooks also celebrated the cultural significance of the hill-based high castes whilst largely neglecting cultural, religious and indigenous diversity of Nepal (Lawoti, 2010). Similarly, the functions of the schooling system in Nazi Germany were to indoctrinate young people with anti-Jew ideology and

subvert its purpose simply to 'normalize' and 'legitimise' 'internal oppression and unthinkable systematic violence' against the Jews (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 12).

Textbooks are generally manipulated in a way that they educate children to 'hate' the 'other' (Harber, 2004). For example, Arab history is mentioned at minimum in the textbooks in Israel while the 'heroic deeds' of Jewish military leaders dominates the content. Harber (2004: 87) notes that schooling in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 'divided into three ethnic lines – Bosniak, Croatian and Serbian – and still fosters ethnic separation, distrust and hostility rather than dialogue and mutual respect and understanding.' Similarly, the school textbooks in Pakistan highlight atrocities on Muslims caused by Hindus and present the 'other' picture of Hindus and India as an enemy. Hasanain and Nayyar (1997) summarise how a Class V textbook in State Schools in Pakistan portrays difference between Hindus and Muslims:

> Muslims and Hindus lived always in a deeply hostile and antagonistic relationship. The Muslims were broadminded, accommodating and brought enlightenment to an otherwise inhuman society characterised only by the caste system and the practice of Sati. (n.d.)

The authors also mention how historical events are described in textbooks particularly in this case when the partition took place between India and Pakistan and Hindus were to leave Pakistan while Muslims in India could choose to stay. They note that 'while the Muslims provided all type of help to those wishing to leave Pakistan, the people of India committed cruelties against the Muslims (refugees). They would attack the buses, trucks, and trains carrying the Muslim refugees and they were murdered and looted' (n.d.).

Hasanain and Nayyar (1997) argue that such materials would simply promote the 'bipolar' views of 'Hindu India' and 'Muslim Pakistan' and would simply 'fill young minds with hatred against an enemy, rather than against the acts of depravity and savagery committed by both sides'. The authors further conclude that Pakistan's education has 'encouraged students to be uncritical, submissive to authority' and 'enforced the distortion of historical facts in textbooks, encouraged religious chauvinism and glorified militarism'. Whereas in India, the government led by the Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya Janata Party revised textbooks in the state schools depicting 'Muslims and Christians as Alien villains' (Harber, 2004: 92). Educational development in both countries since their partition in 1947 constitutes a process of inculcating contesting 'nationalist geographies' through school textbooks (Joshi, 2010), which results in systematic creation of 'antagonistic national identities' in both countries (Lall, 2008). More education of this kind would never promote

peace and harmony but would only harm the prospect of achieving sustainable peace in the region.

Smith and Vaux (2003: 10) problematise the assumption that conflicts are likely to occur only in low-income countries where primary enrolment is low and quality of education is poor. They argue that:

> There are many examples of violent conflict in high-income countries with well-developed education systems. The 'highly-educated' are just as capable of turning to violence as the 'uneducated' and this emphasises the need to look more closely at the *type* of education that is on offer and the values and attitudes it is promoting. Simply providing education does not ensure peace.

Segregated education systems harden social, ethnic and religious differences among different groups (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The World Bank (2009: n.p.) also notes that 'unequal access to quality education often reflects a national heritage of social inequality and ethnic or religious divisions'. Even after 14 years since the successful Good Friday peace agreement was signed and significant political development towards peace and reconciliation has taken place, schooling in Northern Ireland is still massively divided along religious lines. Even though segregated schooling is believed to be creating a gap in developing a mutual understanding between Catholic and Protestant communities, only 5% of children in Northern Ireland attend integrated schools (DOE, 2011). Ironically, the politicians would be reluctant to undertake the process of social integration as it is not always in their interest to bring two religious communities together. The segregated education system contributes to perpetuate existing social and political differences that extend power bases to contesting political parties.

Hence, schools are too often used to transmit intolerance, prejudice, and social injustice in ways that reinforce perceived grievances and contribute to violence. Smith (2009: 1) notes that:

> ...education may also be perceived as a powerful tool for ideological development. This can take many forms, including the use of education in nation building and in extreme cases, political indoctrination. Education is also a means by which social and cultural values are transmitted from generation to generation and depending on the values concerned, these may convey negative stereotypes or encourage attitudes that explicitly or implicitly condone violence or generate conflict.

Davies' (2004: 2003) summary of how education can play a negative role in conflict is relevant to conclude this section here:

> ... education indirectly does more to contribute to the underlying causes of conflict than it does to contribute to peace. This is through reproduction to economic inequality, bifurcation of wealth/ poverty; through a promotion of a particular version of hegemonic masculinity and gender segregation; and through magnifying ethnic and religious segregation and intolerance. Schools are adaptive but they tend towards equilibrium rather than radical emergence; hence at best they do not challenge existing social patterns which are generative of conflict. At worst, they act as amplifying mechanisms.

2.3.2 The Positive Face

Education can play a constructive role in transforming society and strengthening social cohesion. Education, as a fundamental human right plays a crucial role in achieving other fundamental human rights (Annan, 1999). The World Bank (2009) notes that education is linked with production of knowledge, skills and technology that enables productivity and economic growth. Tertiary education in particular contributes to national productivity and is linked to macroeconomic growth as indicated by the evidence globally – that participation in higher education is 93.2% in Finland, 17.0% in Indonesia, 10.2% in Nigeria, and 1.5% in Mozambique (World Bank, 2009). This, however may not rule out the possibility of armed conflict, or breakout of violence in high-income societies with well-developed education systems (Smith and Vaux, 2003). Recent riots in England (August, 2011) and continuing sporadic violence in Northern Ireland recently indicate that the root causes of violence cannot simply be collapsed into poverty in general, or the problem of underdevelopment.

Education is seen as the 'fourth pillar' of 'humanitarian response' in the time of emergencies and can play a crucial role in protecting children from violence (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003) - that it provides a sense of return to normal situation even in the period of violent conflict. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) discuss a range of different ways that education could contribute to prevent violent conflict. Educational policies that promote equitable access to education can provide educational opportunities to socioeconomically disadvantaged populations through which potential ethnic tensions are minimised. The charter schools in the US provide parents, communities and educators to establish schools that cater for the needs of ethnically diverse communities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 16). The voucher system further allows children from poor backgrounds to be able to attend the school of their choice and increases their chance of gaining competitive quality education. Similarly,

the provision of multilingual education in many countries (e.g. Canada, Belgium and Senegal) has 'conflict-dampening' effect.

Schools can promote teaching and learning in the children's mother tongue rather than imposing a dominant national language on minority groups. Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 18) argue that the provision of schooling in the child's first language 'helps to develop inclusive ethos' and hence, 'it is difficult to marginalize children with different languages, cultures and histories if these are integral parts of the education process'. The authors further mention that 'bilingual education will help ethnic groups participate as citizens of the countries in which they live presenting them with the knowledge and means to defend their interests as well as revitalising and strengthening their own cultures' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 18).

The teaching of history in the post-war period often becomes controversial. In order to minimise the harm caused by politically manipulated history, it is important to 'disarm history' and allow children to read critically about their own positions in the historical context (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The nature of conflict and its resolution often dictate the character and the core values of citizenship education in the post-war period. This may be consistent both in the case of inter-state and intra-state ethnic as well as sectarian violence. The post-war history textbooks are generally redesigned to promote a particular version of history determined by the political leadership of the time, which may or may not incorporate balanced narratives about the historical events. One of the positive examples recently has been the joint history textbooks initiative between China, Japan and South Korea, which encountered powerful resistance of 'nationalism' in the trilateral debates around producing common history textbooks – *History that Opens to the Future* (Otsuki, 2011). But the initiative did contribute towards enhancing 'historical dialogue' among the three countries through which 'responsibility of the past becomes a democratic and ethical relationship with 'Others' in the present time' (Otsuki, 2011: 145) allowing for a more balanced national histories. Post-conflict educational projects such as this do play a significant role in building peace across the region. The mandatory teaching of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) in the schools of Northern Ireland is also an example of how education can be used as a tool to build a bridge between catholic and protestant communities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000).

2.4 The Peace Theory and Education

The UN approach to peacebuilding is problematic as it emphasises peace as the absence of violence which Johan Galtung (1964: 2) several decades ago called – 'negative peace', which simply means 'the absence of violence or war' whereas 'positive peace' means

'integration of human society'. Galtung's theoretical analysis of peace suggests that the prevalence of structural violence is the biggest threat to 'positive peace' so, he urges that it is important to understand violence in the structure of society that predicates direct or personal violence carried out by an actor. For example, in order to understand the higher level of participation of untouchable castes and indigenous ethnic groups in the 'People's War' in Nepal (Lawoti, 2005), it is crucial to understand social structures of the caste-system and monopoly of the hill-based high caste groups in social and political domains – that are part of 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1971). The structural violence caused by the state (by neglecting unjust socioeconomic conditions) and social structures (e.g. discriminatory cultural practices, unequal access to resources, unequal political participation, varied access to cultural capital and caste-based hierarchies) systematically discriminate against these marginalised groups making it difficult to gain upward social mobility. As a result, this frustration is manifested through violence. This understanding of violence calls for an extended definition of peace, where peace is not merely the absence of direct violence but also the absence of structural violence (Grewal, 2003). Figure (2.1) illustrates the two different concepts of peace advocated by Galtung:

Figure 2.1: The Extended Concepts of Violence and Peace

(Galtung, 1969: 183)

The notion of peacebuilding as 'pacification' undermines the need for addressing structural elements of conflict, which consistently push societies into civil disorder. For instance, social exclusion, gender discrimination, unfair social policies implicitly cause tensions among those who have been marginalised in the society. In this context, education plays a crucial role in reproducing structural inequalities.

2.4.1 Education and Inequalities

Most analyses of the nexus between education and conflict tend to restrict the debate within the notion of education as a victim of violent conflicts, or education as a humanitarian response during the period of emergencies (Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003; INEE, 2010; UNESCO, 2010). There are undoubtedly serious implications for the provision of education during emergencies but simply the technical and humanitarian response to education during emergencies does not necessarily address the socio-political conditions that generate or fuel violence. Brock (2011) also sees limitations in this process and argues that interactions between education and conflict need to be analysed beyond the measurable effects of attack on education in order to understand the fundamental character of the interaction between education and conflict. He notes that 'education is culturally embedded' and the provision of formal and non-formal education and educational policy generally exhibit the political character of the state (Brock, 2011: 19). In this process, education is often manipulated to implicitly inculcate particular types of cultural values that represent interests of the social groups holding state power. Therefore, educational experience in a formal setting, which is often politically imposed, may not always be congenial to its beneficiaries especially when they constitute socioeconomic diversity. This is where education is involved in discrimination by default and the educational benefits are unfairly distributed even in the situation of universal access to education. Apple (2004: 61) also argues that schools are 'dialectically interwoven so that economic power and control is interconnected with cultural power and control'. He further notes that:

> ... schools are 'caught up' in a nexus of other institutions - political, economic and cultural – that are basically unequal. That is, schools exist through their relations to other more powerful institutions, institutions that are combined in such a way as to generate structural inequalities of power and access to resources. (Apple, 2004: 61)

For Apple, inequalities along the economic, political and cultural lines are partly reproduced and preserved by schools through their 'curricular, pedagogical and evaluative activities' (Apple, 2004: 61). As a result, formal education contributes to the reproduction of social divisions and existing economic disparities through disproportionate educational achievement across different groups. This process becomes even more problematic in the

situation of schooling in a divided society (as in Northern Ireland where schooling remains massively divided across protestant and catholic communities), or public versus state provision (as in the case of England where top university places and leadership positions of most realms including politics, business and bureaucracy are monopolised by those who graduated from private schools). From a conflict perspective, this type of educational disparity plays a complicit role in nurturing social injustice thereby creating grounds for civil conflicts. This analysis coincides with the notion of 'negative face' of education discussed earlier in this chapter.

In Nepal, the expansion of education in the post-1950 period of Nepal did not necessarily offer a universal access to education even though it did appear that the increase in the number of schools across the country was aimed at allowing for general public to gain education without discrimination. In reality, the early educational development (1950s and 1960s) was primarily steered by some exclusive social groups in the communities who often emphasised the educational provision for their own children. Schools were generally established in the areas where children from the socially privileged groups could have an easy access. Hence, the educational expansion provided opportunities exclusively for the politically dominant social groups who had controlled political power of the country.

2.4.2 Educational Access, Conflict and International Development

Literacy and education are two different things. Unfortunately the agenda of international educational development seems to focus more on the technical targets of education such as universal access, improving literacy rates, and retention rather than on the debates around the social outcome of education and its role in improving the life conditions of the vast majority of downtrodden populations in the world. While it is often argued that the latter are the natural outcomes of the provision of quality education, it could only be true if the provision of education were apolitical. Educational initiatives led by international development agencies impose universal models of schooling and generalised forms of measurements of educational success. Without critically assessing the 'type' of education on offer (Smith and Vaux, 2003), access to schooling alone, does not necessarily contribute towards achieving social justice and peace. This seems to be one of the fundamental problems of the international development agenda and the advocacy of programmes such as 'Education for All' (UNESCO, 2000).

There seems to be a disconnection between the desperation of international development agencies to reform education systems in the developing world and the capacity of these poor countries to meet global targets. Globalising process of educational standards and philosophy of education has a fundamental problem of adaptability. The disconnection lies

not only in the pedagogies and curricular contents in a new cultural context but also in the philosophical underpinnings of what constitute learning. So, the imported models of education, irrespective of their efforts to incorporate local contents fail to match the social, cultural and economic needs of the particular society. The Western education systems were developed over decades along with the changing needs of their societies. Attempts to replicate these well-rehearsed systems, as panacea for underdevelopment without appreciating the complexity of interaction between socioculturally distinctive societies and the Western model of education, will 'succeed in transforming neither education nor broader society and its development' (Paulson, 2011: 13). From a conflict perspective, more development inspired by external forces can only rupture local development patterns and increase dependability on foreign aid and policy prescriptions. This leads to a decline of aid effectiveness and disjuncture between development trajectory and local needs, ultimately contributing to conflict dynamics (Rappleye, 2011).

Rappleye (2011: 88) provides a useful theoretical and conceptual discussion laying out five different categories of 'conflict and development' theories, their presumptions about progress and relevant implications for education: Neo-classic development, moderated classic development, failed development, conflict as development success, and conflict as development success. He presents a case of international development in Nepal to problematise the generally indisputable image of development as a cure for poverty and armed conflict. Drawing on the case of USAID supported 'Rapti Development Project' in Nepal, Rappleye (2011: 88) excavates the negative face of 'development', the unintended outcome of which contributed to spark 'collective action by oppressed groups' in the form of 'People's War'.

Educational goals and priorities are also influenced by the discourse of 'development', producing a 'so-called' educated workforce that is unemployable in the local market. In addition, development aid destroys confidence of its beneficiaries and gradually wipes out their ability to explore indigenous solutions to their local problems. The imported form of development and market economy cause serious economic imbalances, increase dependency on foreign aid and destroy local economies in the name of becoming 'developed' or like the West. Ultimately, the divorce from foreign aid becomes almost unthinkable for national governments whose survival is largely dependent on international aid. This 'trap' of development which Shrestha (1997: 50) calls a 'modern –day intoxicant' makes a violent rebellion inevitable through which the victims of this false 'development' rhetoric initiate a collective action against the structures nurtured by 'international development'.

Conflict-affected countries or those prone to civil disorder are often labelled as 'fragile states' in development terms. Bengtsson (2011: 34) notes that the concepts of 'fragility' and 'fragile states' are rather 'fuzzy' – yet have become 'buzz-phrases' in the development sector including education in emergencies. These concepts bearing negative connotations such as 'poor governance as identified by a lack of political commitment and/or weak capacity to develop and implement pro-poor policies (Rose and Greeley, 2006: 1) and those with 'persistently dysfunctional economic policies and institutions' (Chauvet and Collier, 2007: 1), often stereotype these nation states. These labels are imposed on rather than negotiated with 'so-called' 'fragile' nation states based on the criteria developed by external agencies. In addition, the term 'fragility' is used inconsistently or ostensibly with prejudice to refer to 'underdeveloped' countries while developed countries also do exhibit 'uncontrollable' civil disorder (Bengtsson, 2011). For example, violent riots erupted in major English cities in August 2011 can be argued as the indicator of 'fragility' in the seemingly peaceful English society. Even though the well-functioning state policing and legal system may have succeeded in bringing rioters to justice and preventing violence (by repressing the frustrated youth), the root causes of social injustice leading to conflict are largely ignored making England to an extent, a fragile state. Bengtsson (2011) indicates that there is a lack of shared understanding of these phrases among individuals and agencies working in the international development sector that the term 'fragility' seems to be used to describe different problems by different agencies. The meaning of 'fragility' is generally subjectively determined which Bengtsson argues can be 'detrimental' in aid interventions to these countries. The inconsistent labelling of 'fragile states' followed by corresponding policy prescriptions often lead to development monopoly in the form of external patronage, which is likely to be resented by these nation states often putting the aid effectiveness in jeopardy. Education as one of the main social services is likely to be affected mostly as a result of development sector politics.

The expansion of modern education may be seen as a 'development success' in Nepal that, by providing critical awareness of the unjust political and socioeconomic realities, formal education played a critical role in creating a mass of frustrated youths who joined the violent conflict with the hope of a better political system and socioeconomic structures (Pherali, 2011). Such a phenomenon can be understood as 'conflict as a development success' and 'development' as one of the major causes of violent conflict (Rappleye, 2011). These theoretical trends are not only useful in better conceptualising the education-conflict-development nexus but also understanding assumptions and hypotheses about the causality of modern-day violent conflicts. Developing an awareness of this process can help identify an effective role of education in building sustainable peace. The following section

will analyse some of the limitations of the 'peacebuilding' as a concept and discuss how education could contribute to build sustainable peace.

2.5 The Role of Education in Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a political process. Envisioning the role of education in building peace means enhancing a development role of education by carrying out structural reforms in the education sector and contributing to political, economic and social transformations in societies characterised by fragility. Since the term, 'peacebuilding' was introduced by the UN Secretary General in his *An Agenda for Peace (1992)*, the UN peacebuilding approach has been mainly preventative of conflict or conflict management rather enabling social transformation as a means to achieve sustainable peace. The report portrayed 'peacebuilding' as a 'preventative diplomacy' whose aim was to 'identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (UN, 1992). Since the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in 2006, the peacebuilding became a key agenda in the UN Peacebuilding architecture that aims to utilise coordinated interventions of UN as well as international community on the conflict-affected countries. The PBF received US$360 million to support more than 150 projects in 18 countries which primarily focus on preventative measures such as security sector reform, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration or post-conflict national reconciliation, good governance, rehabilitation of ex-combatants and supporting youth employment programmes (United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, 2010). There seems to be little attention to socioeconomic reforms, structural adjustments and to the agenda of social justice as a means to accomplish more equitable and peaceful society. However, in May 2007, the UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee developed the following definition for peacebuilding which incorporates the goal of social transformation, though not explicitly, as a means to build peace through the UN peace architecture:

> Peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.

Lederach (1997:20) notes that peacebuilding is 'more than post-accord reconstruction' He suggests that peacebuilding needs to be understood as:

> ... a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct.

For Lederach, peace is a long-term transformative process and 'conflict transformation' is a holistic and multi-faceted approach to manage violent conflicts. Peacebuilding should be concerned with the process of transforming negative relations into positive, behavioural, attitudinal and structural change (Lederach, 1995). He further mentions that 'a sustainable transformative approach suggests that the key lies in the relationship of the involved parties, with all that the term encompasses at the psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and military levels' (Lederach, 1997: 75).

Education has been predominantly used as a useful tool for protecting children from violence and restoring sense of normality, stability and in general, the hope for the future even in the period of conflict. However, education programming in fragile contexts largely falls short in integrating what Lederach (1997) calls a 'transformative approach' to building peace through education. The UN peacebuilding architecture still implies 'peacebuilding' as a preventative measure rather than suggesting more substantive structural adjustments in post-conflict or fragile societies.

How can education play a transformative role in building peace? Education can play a crucial role in changing people's attitudes towards conflict and transform the ways disagreements are usually dealt with – away from violent means to cooperative solutions. Education can contribute to the development of employment skills that support economic growth as well as to the transformation of social relations between the groups that have historically remained in opposition or engaged in violent conflicts. In other words, education can promote mutual understanding and help seek peaceful ways of transforming conflicts without lapsing or relapsing into violence. The recent prominent publications - the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report 2011 (discussed earlier in this chapter) and the Human Development Report 2011 by the World Bank (2011) deal with the pertinent issue of armed conflict and education. Both reports resonate that violent conflicts have become the major hindrance in achieving the EFA and Millennium Development Goals. However, the World

Bank (2011) sees education as an intermediate term social service while prioritising security and democratic elections as immediate priorities to post-war statebuilding whereas the Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2011) argues for education's prominent role even during conflict.

However, Matsumoto (2011) indicates that education, as an independent institution, cannot be assigned with the responsibility of building peace while existing socioeconomic conditions resist structural adjustments, which are necessary to build sustainable peace. She analyses the case of Sierra Leone where the pre-conflict educational provision that contributed towards the war by maintaining itself as an elitist system, fostering exclusion and failing to make it relevant to young people, is yet to be addressed long after the post-conflict statebuilding began. These underlying problems of education are linked with broader sociopolitical structures of the society and therefore, inevitably should become a part of broader political and economic restructuring of the state. However, the post-conflict educational reforms in Sierra Leone have a tendency to continue more of the same practice as that of pre-conflict times, potentially undermining the nexus between education and conflict (Matsumoto, 2011). Societal problems such as cultural and ethnic dominance, discrimination against women, monopoly of state power by certain privileged groups, regional and ethnic exclusion and unequal distribution of land and resources are key barriers to sustainable peace. Education is a part of these problems and needs a careful attention in the meaningful process of post-conflict reconstruction.

2.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the nexus between armed conflict and education in general and presented a theoretical framework to understand this interconnection. The interplay between education and conflict has also been discussed particularly highlighting on the 'negative' and 'positive' face of education and mainly drawing on the work by Bush and Saltarelli (2000). The theoretical base for peacebuilding is drawn from the Galtung's notion of 'positive' peace and Lederach's (1997) approach to 'conflict transformation' by addressing structural problems of society as a means to building sustainable peace. Finally, it is also argued that the role of education in building peace is rather political and involves the object of social transformation rather than simply limiting its role to a humanitarian response. The next chapter will focus on Nepal's education sector analysis from a conflict perspective and locate the emergence of violent conflict in the historical context of educational development.

CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION AND CONFLICT IN NEPAL

This chapter will introduce the nexus between the 'People's War' and education in Nepal. It will provide an overview and a detailed analysis of Nepal's education system from a conflict perspective. Some of the recent developments in education are then discussed, along with the continuing peace process. Finally, this chapter will also present a Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nepal to analyse state fragility and understand the potential of educational reforms in the post-war period.

3.1   Background to Conflict

On 13 February 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN-M) (later called United Community Party of Nepal (UCPN-M)), a splinter group of Nepal's diverse Community Party declared a 'People's War' in Nepal by carrying out a series of attacks on police posts, instigating 'planned assaults' on factories and raiding the house of a civilian who supposedly represented the feudal state (The Worker, 1996). This was a violent rebellion against the existing political, economic and social structures of Nepali society, which were promoted for the benefits of the monarchy and a small minority of social elites (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). The Maoists proclaimed that the aim of the 'People's War' was to overthrow the monarchy and transform the existing feudalistic make-up of Nepali society into a more just, inclusive and progressive one by establishing 'a new socio-economic structure and state' (Bhattarai, 2003: 117, Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). Within 6 years of the declaration of the 'People's War', 73 out of 75 districts of Nepal were engulfed by violent conflict claiming the deaths of approximately 8,000 people and causing huge amount of economic losses (Kumar, 2003). The Maoists launched massive recruitment campaigns in rural villages to expand their military strength and mobilised thousands of ideologically trained militias across the country building their political base. Hence, every single home in the rural areas was affected by the conflict.

3.2   Historical Context of Communist Movement in Nepal

The violent uprising in Nepal was not an unanticipated incidence. The communist movement was initiated in Nepal in September 1949 when the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) was officially launched in Calcutta, India. The CPN was against the restoration of monarchy after the end of the Rana oligarchy in Nepal and therefore denounced the 'Delhi Compromise'[2] and continued to demand the elections for the Constituent Assembly to

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[2] The 'Delhi Compromise' was forged in 1951 among King Tribhuvan, Rana regime and the agitating Nepali Congress Party as a response to the democratic movement led by the Nepali Congress. The agreement brought the century-old Rana regime to an end and marked the beginning of the

establish a republican state. The CPN was then outlawed from 1952 to 1956, allegedly for inciting violence and associating with other armed groups in the country. Even though their primary demand was the elections for the CA, the CPN participated in the parliamentary elections securing four seats (out of 105) in the parliament. King Mahendra later dismissed the elected government in 1960 and banned party politics to introduce the no-party Panchayat system (1961 – 1990). In the following years the CPN underwent ideological splits facing 'a chronic problem of factionalism' so that since the 1960s, there have been as many as a dozen communist parties in Nepal (Lawoti, 2010: 5). These entire splinter factions continued to be active clandestinely in different parts of the country even during the Panchayat era. The first violent communist movement was launched in 1971 by some youths in the east of Nepal who, inspired by the Naxalite Maoist movement in West Bengal, (India), killed several civilians – the 'class enemies'. The movement was crushed brutally by the Panchayat regime but it implicitly provided a base for Nepal's communist movement. Even though the same communist faction transformed to become the CPN-UML, the largest party in the parliamentary elections in 1994, another communist faction CPN-M capitalised on the long established radical communist base and declared the 'People's War' in 1996. There has been a dramatic increase in the communist support in Nepal during the last 50 years as indicated by the election results from 7.2% in 1959 to 33.15% in 1994 (just before the 'People's War' was declared) and 56.98% in the elections for the Constituent Assembly in 2008 (Lawoti, 2010: 6).

While the 'People's War' emerged and escalated in the context of widespread public dissatisfaction – (generated by several post-Panchayat [1990s] governments), it deeply surfaced in response to deep and historically embedded socio-economic divisions. The hill-based, high caste Hindus (e.g. Brahmins, Chhetri and Newar) monopolised the political, economic, social and cultural power and systematically controlled resources making it difficult for disadvantaged groups (e.g. Dalit, Muslims, indigenous nationalities and mid-level Madhesi) to benefit from economic opportunities. The economic liberalisation in the post-1990 environment benefitted only the high caste groups who overwhelmingly dominated the state apparatus including political leadership, media, NGOs, commercial, policymaking and academic sectors (Neupane, 2000). Between 1995 – 96 and 2003 – 4, the poverty level among Brahmin and Chhetri decreased by 46% while it declined only 6, 10 and 21% among Muslims, hill indigenous nationalities and Dalit (Tiwari, 2007: 7). Similarly, the gap between the poor and rich increased significantly over the period of one decade. It was found that the 'income share of the top 10% of the people increased from 21% in the

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democratic polity in Nepal. It was followed by the historic parliamentary elections in February 1959 electing Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala as the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Nepal.

mid-1980s to 35% by the mid-1990s, while the share of the bottom 40% shrank from 24% to 15% in mid-1990s' (Sharma, 2006: 1245). Agriculture, the backbone of national economy suffered negative growth due to inadequate development expenditure in the sector, feudalist land ownership system and increasing level of poverty in rural areas. Hence, the ethnic and caste-based disparities, coinciding with degrading economic conditions, acted favourably for the Maoist struggle. The Maoists were able to garner support of the disadvantaged and marginalised populations and indigenous nationalities by promising socioeconomic transformation of the state.

While the effect of the 'People's War' was getting severe, King Gynendra dismissed the civilian government and imposed state of emergency on 1 February 2005. The Royal intervention on democracy was criticised by India and other European development partners who gradually withdrew their support to the Royal government and aligned with the agendas of agitating political parties that were side-lined by the royal takeover. The parliamentary parties then united to form the Seven Party Alliance (SPA)[3] against the royal coup. This development created a congenial atmosphere for both the SPA and CPN-M to work on a common political roadmap and, with support from the Indian Government, forge the 12-point agreement. The agreement was a major breakthrough in Nepali politics, which paved the road for the Maoists to renounce the politics of violence as well as made a commitment to hold elections for the Constituent Assembly. The CPN-M then declared a unilateral ceasefire and, as its first step to jointly combat the Royal regime, the SPA, including the CPN-M, launched a peaceful protest against the Royal regime, which compelled King Gynendra to step down and reinstate the House of Representatives. The government and Maoists agreed to invite the United Nations to monitor the peace process and manage the arms of both the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Nepal Army (NA).

3.3 Overview of the Education System in Nepal

Nepal's modern education system has a history of just over six decades. The end of the Rana oligarchy in 1951 and the beginning of an egalitarian political system created an opportunity to introduce universal access to education. Education was then perceived to be the right of liberated people and therefore a Board of Education was established in 1952 to initiate educational development in Nepal. The National Education Planning Commission (NEPC), with financial and advisory support from the United States, was tasked to study

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[3] The SPA was a democratic alliance among the parliamentary parties including Nepali Congress, Nepali Congress (Democratic), Nepal Communist Party (UML), Nepal Sadbhawana Party (Anandidevi), People's Front Nepal, and United Left Front and Nepal Workers and Peasants Party.

existing educational initiatives and propose a homogenous national education system that would promote unity, democratic values and national pride.

The first *Five Year Plan for Education in Nepal* (1956 – 1961) emphasised 'national' characteristics in the education system by adopting a national curriculum for primary level; compulsory teaching of the Nepali language in all schools, and categorically barring the learning and teaching of other indigenous languages in the schools. The NEPC report recommended that Nepal's modern education be geared towards restoring historically ignored 'essential characteristics' – 'national pride, virility and individuality' (Pandey et al., 1956: 74).

The royal coup of 1960 and the establishment of the Panchayat system added a new theme of *rajbhakti* (service to monarchy) to education and placed a greater emphasis on national unity and solidarity (see Onta (1996) for an analysis of making of the national history in Nepal). The New Education System Plan (NESP) was announced in 1971 with an aim to meet the social, political and economic needs of the nation and again to solidify the project of nation building through the educational process. The main objective of the NESP was to produce the citizenry loyal to the Crown and Panchayat political system as well as develop scientific and technical human resources (HMG, 1971). All schools were nationalised under the Ministry of Education and a national curriculum was made compulsory to enforce Panchayati values through teaching and learning across the country. The US and other donors viewed this plan as a 'ploy' by the palace to legitimise royal supremacy and solidify the Panchayat system. As a result, the education sector lost substantial international funding.

The expansion of education during this period was simply a 'psychological adornment' rather than a national strategy to produce citizens capable of contributing to the economic development of the nation (Ragsdale, 1989: 15). Hence, the education system was developed as a tool for nationalising the diverse Nepali society, favourably disposed to the monarchy and the ruling elite (mainly representing hill high castes) (Lawoti, 2007) who were in control of the state apparatus. Even though two major political changes have occurred since, the legacy of Panchayat education system still prevails. Therefore, it is important to analyse these historical antecedents in order to fully understand why, despite a huge amount of investment, Nepal's education has failed to produce the intended outcomes.

The Nepalese school system has two types of schools: community schools (supported by government but may be aided or unaided by government), and institutional schools (supported by parents and trustees and privately managed). Community schools have three sub-categories: community-aided (fully supported financially and managed by the

government), community-managed (supported and funded by the government fully but managed by the community) and community-unaided (getting either partial or no support from the government). In addition, there are 766 religious schools (Madarasa, Gumba/Vihar and Ashram/Gurukul) (DoE, 2010b) that receive support from the government once they are recognised by the Department of Education. The following table 3.1 is an overview of the school system:

Age	Grade	Types of Schooling System	
		Old System	New System
16	12	Higher Secondary Education (Grades 11-12)	Secondary Education (Grades 9-12)
15	11		
14	10	Secondary Education (Grades 9-10)	
13	9		
12	8	Lower Secondary Education (Grades 6-8)	Basic Education (Grades 1-8)
11	7		
10	6		
9	5	Primary Education (Grades 1-5)	
8	4		
7	3		
6	2		
5	1		
4		Pre-Primary Education/	
3		Early Childhood Development	

Table 3.1: The Structure of Schooling System in Nepal

The most significant change in the new system has been the introduction of the basic education level which has been raised to grade 8 as opposed to 5 year primary education in the previous system. This change can be perceived as a strategic move of the government in order to receive international funding up to grade 8 as part of the global strategy for universal primary education. Even though this aspect can be viewed as a positive step forward, Nepal's education faces a range of structural challenges that play against the goal of educational equity.

3.4 Structural Factors in Education

3.4.1 Education and Social Disparities

Despite the significant expansion of education during the last few decades, there exist ethnic and caste-based disparities in access and attainment. Even in 2001, a full decade after multiparty democracy was restored, equal rights were spelled out in the new Constitution, and educational 'development' efforts intensified, disparities still existed. Literacy rates among Brahmins, the upper caste was 70% as compared with 10% among the several low-status caste groups that constituted 9% of the country's population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Socioeconomic status is strongly correlated with access to private education – 44% of students from the richest quintiles are enrolled in private schools as compared to 7% from the three poorest quintiles (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Those who have access to English medium education in private schools are more likely to succeed in the modern job markets such as the business sector and the ever-growing number of non-governmental organisations. The wealthiest quintile benefits from the social and political networks of the privileged, and is likely to gain easier access to economic opportunities. This kind of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984) is difficult to break through project-based interventions and simply perpetuates the caste-based social order in Nepali society making upward social mobility difficult for the least advantaged.

3.4.2 Economic Relevance of Education

Even though education is viewed as a 'good thing', it is not necessarily valued as a tool for guaranteeing a secure economic future for the majority of rural populations. Employment opportunities are scarce and nepotism and favouritism are rampant. Almost one third of the Nepalese youth population is currently employed in unskilled jobs in the Gulf States, Malaysia and Korea and approximately 400,000 Nepalese go abroad in search of employment or better life prospects every year (The Himalayan Times, 2010). This has resulted in precarious economic growth dependent on foreign employment without proper economic structures within the country. Therefore, educational development needs to relate more to local level economic activities in order to better establish the relevance of education in young people's lives.

3.4.3 Progress towards EFA Goals

The Dakar Framework for Action has identified six key Education for All goals which also include – 'Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality' (UNESCO, 2000). In Nepal, there has

been significant progress in access to, and equity in, education over the last 60 years. The literacy rate among the adult population (15 years +) has increased to 57.9% and 80.8% of the youth population are literate (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2008). From the situation in 1951 when there were 8,505 students in 321 primary schools and 1,680 students in 11 secondary schools, currently there are 4,951,956 students studying in 32,648 primary and 1,130,336 students in 7,559 secondary schools across the country. In the last 60 years the numbers of primary and secondary schools have increased approximately by 102 and 661 times respectively. The primary net enrolment rate has increased significantly reaching 93.7% in 2009 (DoE, 2010a).

Gender-based disparity in terms of access to education has almost ended with an average of 50.1% girls enrolment at all levels (DoE, 2010b). However, assessing this improvement in the new structure of the school system, the NER in basic education (1 – 8) is approximately 83.2% while the secondary (9 – 12) enrolment is only 23.9%. This indicates that the vast majority (76.1%) of secondary school age children are out of school. However, there is still a large gender disparity in the teaching workforce, of which less than 24% are female teachers. A significant improvement in *Dalits* and *Janajati* participation in education has been achieved with an average of 15.2% *Dalits* against their total population of 12% and 40.27% *Janajatis* against their total population of 40%.

However, the quality of education remains low, whilst repetition and dropout rates are high. Even though the primary Net Enrolment Rate has increased remarkably to 93.7%, almost 22.6% of these children fail to make satisfactory progress resulting in repetition in grade 1. This statistic is significantly bigger than the SSRP target of 8% repetition at primary level. More than one-third of children (34%) drop out by the time they reach grade 8 and the repetition rate in grade 8 is 6.6%.

The quality of education is low. The situation of 24% pass rate in the SLC examination in 1991 has now reached 68.67% in the year 2010. While this exceeds the SSRP target of 64%, whether or not the overall quality of education has improved at the same pace is debatable. Discussions with teachers and students in rural districts revealed that the SLC results can be questioned due to poorly managed exams and irregularities such as external cheating, guidance by teachers in the exam halls and copying among students is pervasive in most SLC exam centres in rural areas.[4] While there is a drive for enhancing educational improvement statistics, the focus on standards, quality and relevance of education seems

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[4] This theme emerged during fieldwork in schools in Doti, Rolpa, Kapilvastu, Udaypur and Sankhuwasabha.

to have received less attention. Therefore, the education system is blamed for not serving the labour market well (World Bank, 2001). The World Bank report notes that 3.9% of the wage labour force is under-educated and the social returns is less than 10% for secondary and higher secondary graduates in employment (World Bank, 2001).

3.4.4 Ethnic and Indigenous Groups

It has been argued that the post-Panchayat period has been an era of 'ethnicity building' Gellner (2007: 1823) as opposed to the nation building movement (1960–1990) during which discussion of ethnic difference and inequality was viewed as threatening national unity. While Nepali is still the official language, the Constitution of Nepal 1990 restored the right to have primary education in a mother tongue. The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has developed curricula in various local languages for example, five books for Grades 1 - 5 have been developed in the Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tamang, Limbu, Bantawa Rai, Chamling Rai, Sherpa, Gurung, Magar and Nepal Bhasha languages. However, there has been a lack of meaningful engagement with local communities in the process of design and development of mother tongue materials and more importantly, the limited capacity of the existing workforce to teach in local languages has not been fully recognised. This process is yet another top-down intervention, prescribed by international agencies without adequate preparedness of the actual beneficiaries (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b: 269).

The forty-point demand of the CPN-M before the declaration of the 'People's War' included a point on education in a mother tongue, 'all languages and dialects should be given equal opportunities to prosper. The right to education in the mother tongue up to higher levels should be guaranteed' (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). An ethnic and indigenous right was one of the prominent slogans and a uniting force of the Maoist movement that expanded its power base among the ethnic minorities, *Dalits* and indigenous populations. Therefore, not surprisingly, the majority of Maoist activists and *People's Liberation Army* are represented by young people from 'indigenous nationalities', down-trodden castes and marginalised ethnic groups (Lawoti, 2005). During the conflict, the Maoists also structured their 'new state'[5] based on ethnic dominance and they still advocate for state restructuring along ethnic lines within a federal state.

The twenty-one day long Madheshi movement in January 2007 revitalised the politics of ethnic identity, indigenous culture and local languages. A separate Madheshi state along

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[5] The CPN-M used the term the 'new state' to refer to their political control and the 'old state' to the existing state mechanism. They were still running their own judicial system, education, taxation, and traffic registration in some rural parts of the country before these structures were dissolved in 2008.

the southern Terai region has been demanded by all Terai-based regional parties. While most political analysts view this as a political bargaining stance, there will be broader implications of the politics of identity and ethnicity for educational reforms in the post-conflict Nepal.

3.4.5 Private versus Government Schools

Even though the vast majority of Nepalese children attend public education, 12.32% in basic education (1 – 8) and 15.3% in secondary level (9 – 12) are currently receiving education in privately managed schools. Recent statistics shows that 15.14% of basic education schools and 33.8% (one-third) of Nepal's secondary schools (9 – 12) are under private management (DoE, 2010a). Private schools in Nepal do not receive government funding, nor are their teachers trained or monitored by any state mechanism. These schools charge fees to the parents and offer the curriculum in English. Private schools generally perform significantly better than government funded schools in the SCL examination. However, the increasing corruption, cheating and poor exam conditions during the SLC examinations, almost 70% succeed in the SLC and almost 90% get through in the subsequent SLC chance exam. The pass rates of private schools in the SLC are over 80%, whereas less than 30% in government schools succeed in the same exam.[6]

The general perception that all private schools in Nepal have a sound financial situation is debatable. A large number of private schools outside the Kathmandu valley struggle to survive, teachers prefer to work in the capital and more importantly, affordability of private education in smaller towns and rural areas is a real concern. However, there is a widespread perception that private schools exploit their teachers by violating the government regulations. Even though the government regulation requires independent schools to spend a minimum of 60% of their total income in teachers' salaries. A recent evaluation conducted by the Department of Education shows that teachers in some private schools are paid up to 75% less than the basic salary fixed by the government.[7]

Despite this, private education, particularly in higher secondary level is growing rapidly. There is very little or no control over the fees charged by these private institutions, whose 'quality' and 'standards' are heavily publicised in both print and electronic media. As there is no 'general consensus regarding what constitutes quality' (Bhatta, 2009: 4), these institutions have created a public perception that quality is determined more by modern infrastructure than by improved teaching and learning. It also creates economic pressure on parents whose children see their educational future only in expensive institutions. Many

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[6] SLC Results 2063, Available from http://www.soce.gov.np/perf.php
[7] Nayapatrika, 06 February 2011

graduates from these institutions go abroad for further education or better life prospects and are most unlikely to return home for professional careers. While there may be indirect benefits of such a 'brain drain' problem, the social returns from Nepal's private education can be seriously questioned. The private-public divide is broadened due to English language being the medium of instruction in private schools. For parents, English medium education though costs much more than public education is instrumental for increasing employment opportunities for their children with international organisations and the private sector job market. Hence, private education contributes to perpetuate and reproduce existing socioeconomic structures in Nepali society, which are often argued as the major causes of the communist rebellion. A large majority of educated parents including school teachers, government employees, businessmen, politicians and social workers, who are generally the upper class of society, can afford to send their children to private schools. For this social class, the poor quality of public education is not necessarily a matter of personal concern. The Maoists who claim to represent poor people of the country argue that private education shadows the underperforming government education system where the majority (86%) (DoE, 2010b) of Nepalese children are educated.

During the armed conflict, the Maoists were critical of commercialisation of education and demanded the abolition of the private education system. Several private schools were forced to close down resulting in an unexpected influx of students into government schools that were already struggling to physically accommodate students in the class. The state versus private education dichotomy is still a contentious issue.

The majority of teachers in private schools are not formally trained so the teaching approaches adopted in most private schools are not dissimilar to the ones in government schools. The SLC exam, which is the key indicator of government versus private school success, largely assesses students' ability to memorise or reproduce answers during the examinations. Students mainly focus on examination preparation rather than engaging in a meaningful learning process. This is re-emphasised by a growing business in selling examination papers, model questions and readymade answers that are easily available at bookstores so, even if students secure good results, this might not necessarily reflect the quality of learning.

3.5 School Sector Reform Plan 2009 – 2015

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was introduced in 2009 to give continuity to a range of educational programmes including Education for All (EFA), Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP), and Community School Support Programme (CSSP). The SSRP 'introduces new reforms characterised by strategic intervention, such as the

reconstructing of school education, improvement in the quality of education, and institutionalisation of performance accountability' (MoE, 2009: 1). The plan integrates 'key policy goals and values, including the right to education, gender parity inclusion and equity' through a wide consultation with educational stakeholders at different levels (MoE, 2009: 1). The cost of the SSRP over the first five years is estimated to be $2.626 billion. The Government of Nepal has committed $2.002 billion and development partners have pledged $0.5 billion. It is anticipated that non-pooling development partners, I/NGOs and the Catalytic Fund from the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) will be approached as a part of resource mobilisation strategy to close the funding gap.

The SSRP has been implemented in the transitional period when the post-war political negotiations override the need of social reforms including education. Consequently, educational reforms are largely aimed at achieving global targets and hence are heavily influenced by the development partners. This compromises the meaningful engagement of local stakeholders in the process of policymaking and undermines the need for political endorsement of such reforms. This makes the SSRP generally a non-controversial technical plan whose purpose is to strengthen the existing educational system rather than enabling more progressive reforms at structural levels. The effectiveness of the SSRP also relies on outcomes the current peace negotiations. The following section will highlight the post-CPA political developments and discuss the UN involvement in supporting the peace process in Nepal.

3.6 The Peace Process

On 21 November 2006, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed between the CPN-M and the Government of Nepal, which formally marked the end of the violent conflict and beginning of the peace process in Nepal. Over 13,000 people lost their lives and an estimated 3,000 disappeared (International Commission for Jurists, 2009). Even though the CPA promises to form the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and investigate the cases of disappearance, it has not been fully carried out yet. The CPA made commitments to progressive restructuring of the state by addressing the problems of class, gender, ethnicity and regional disparities. The point 3.5 of the CPA explicitly mentioned that the new progressive polity would 'end the existing centralised and unitary state system and restructure it into an inclusive, democratic progressive system to address various problems including that of women, *Dalits*, indigenous community, Madhesis, oppressed, ignored and minority communities and backward regions, by ending prevailing class, ethnic, linguistic, gender, cultural, religious and regional discrimination'[8]. The PLA were positioned in seven

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[8] Comprehensive Peace Agreement 2006 (English Translation Available from http://www.satp.org/)

different cantonments namely Kailali, Surkhet, Rolpa, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Sindhuli and Ilam, each of which hold three smaller camps in the periphery. The arms of both sides were locked and arranged to be monitored by the United Nations. The CPA also committed to professionalisation of the PLA and democratisation of the NA by making it more inclusive to reflect the diverse ethnic and indigenous populations of Nepal and training on democratic principles and human values.

Even though significant progress has been made towards logical conclusion of the peace process, there are still several challenges ahead. There is a serious lack of trust among key political parties adversely affecting the progress of the peace process. Several armed outfits have become active in the Terai and Eastern Hills posing serious security threats. The nexus of political and criminal activities is a threat to law and order in these areas. The Young Communist League, (the Maoist youth wing) frequently violates peace and is involved in skirmishes with youth groups associated with other political parties. The perpetrators of the violence have not been prosecuted nor the land seized during the conflict been returned fully to its owners. There are serious disagreements among political parties on modality of integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist combatants. The deadline of the promulgation of a new constitution is approaching but the political parties appear to be more interested in the government positions rather than focusing on the constitution making process. The identity-based conflict and increasing ethnic segregation mainly in the Terai have subverted the movement towards federalism and could become detrimental to long-term peace and stability.

3.7 UN Involvement in the Peace Process

Nepal's peace process is an indigenously envisioned, devised and implemented model, which allows for a minimal role of international agencies, including the UN. On 16 November 2006, the Government of Nepal and the CPN-M wrote to the United Nations separately asking for peacebuilding support in a number of key areas: human rights monitoring; the management of arms and armed personnel; technical assistance for the election of a Constituent Assembly; and monitoring the ceasefire agreement (United Nations Country Team, 2007). As a response to the peacebuilding need of Nepal, UNMIN was officially established in January 2007 in order to carry out its mandate stated in the CPA.

The peace process has been largely successful in achieving the key objectives stated in the CPA. Both warring parties including PLA and CA have held firmly to the conditions of a ceasefire. The UNMIN played a key role in verifying the Maoist combatants and currently,

19,602 PLA members are staying in seven different cantonments and 21 other camps waiting to be integrated in security forces or rehabilitated. The UN presence in Nepal facilitated free and fair elections for the CA in April 2008. In February 2010, four years after the CPA, the UNMIN coordinated the discharge of nearly 3,000 minors from the People's Liberation Army (United Nations, 2010). On 15 January 2011, before the peace process reached to a logical conclusion, the UNMIN had to officially depart from the country as, despite Maoists' discontent, the CPN-UML led government refused to extend its mandate. A week later, the command of the PLA came under the statutory Special Committee for Monitoring, Integration and Rehabilitation of former combatants. The committee constitutes representatives from various political parties, including the UCPN-M.

Despite some of the challenges that the peace process faces today, remarkable progress has been made since the signing of the CPA in November 2006. The elections for the CA were held successfully and received praise from both national and international election observers. The CPN-M, a rebel party that had waged a decade-long, violent rebellion secured more than twice the seats received by their nearest opponents. The Nepali Congress and CPN-UML, the nearest rivals of the CPN-M received 37 and 33 seats respectively under the first past the post-election for 240 seats. The Maoist electoral victory shocked both national as well as international communities. Out of 240 seats in the first past the post elections, CPN-M bagged 120 seats, with 100 additional seats under the proportional representation. The Maoist Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' became the world's first democratically elected Maoist Prime Minister on 18 August 2008. The 601-member CA with the responsibility to promulgate a new constitution in May 2011 was claimed to have completed 85% of the work. Clearly, the timeline of this important work is expanding and the political parties have yet again extended the term of the CA for the fourth time and the new deadline has been set as the 30th May 2012.

The UN has taken a consolidated approach to development and peacebuilding in Nepal. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) has identified the following key priorities (United Nations Country Team, 2007) for Nepal's Interim Plan as the country undergoes political transition:

- Peace building;
- Social sector: education, health and drinking water;
- Youth employment and mobilization;
- Economic sector: agriculture, tourism, industry and commerce;
- Infrastructure sector: roads, irrigation, electricity and information technology.

The issue of social exclusion has been recognized as one of the root causes of the civil unrest in the past. Therefore, the inclusion of women, children, *Dalits*, Janajatis, Madhesis and people with disabilities has been considered as a crosscutting issue in all UN programmes. Nepal's development partners have developed a peace and development strategy for the period of 2010 – 2015 with an aim to 'provide a framework for how Nepal's development partners can work together to support implementation of the CPA' (United Nations, 2011a: xi). As a part of the UNDAF, the strategy coincides with the peacebuilding framework set out by the CPA that includes a transformational agenda on equity, inclusion, accountability, good governance and restructuring of the state. There is an increasing level of understanding among the development partners, including the UN agencies in Nepal, that the 'development' and 'peace' overlap particularly because inequitable development practices in the past decades contributed substantially to the emergence and spread of violent conflict. Therefore, the ongoing peace process is undoubtedly crucial but the long-term peacebuilding approach, situated in the development strategies of the government and development partners, is equally a colossal issue.

The peace and development strategy also recognises that development support to school education is crucial in order to enhance access of marginalised communities to education. The MoE has promoted linguistically inclusive and locally relevant learning materials in the schools with the view of promoting peace in ethnically diverse communities through education. However, the CPA does not explicitly identify education as a key issue in Nepal's peacebuilding strategy and the UN's peace and development strategy that works in line with the CPA has no major priority for intervention in the educational sector. Perhaps, it explains the absence of a clear peacebuilding approach in the SSRP 2009 - 2015 that has been jointly funded by the government and Nepal's development partners. In addition, there seems to be a general perception among the government and development partners that increasing access to education and handing over the management of schools to the community is a positive way forward. However, schools harbour deeply rooted educational discrimination in their practice that represent the social and cultural hierarchy in Nepali society (Pherali, 2011). For example, children from lower castes who do not necessarily have educational support in their family are set with lower educational expectations. The teaching workforce is dominated by upper castes, particularly Brahmins (the most superior caste who were traditionally allocated teaching and learning as their main profession by the state). Lower-caste children are not expected to do as well in education as their upper-caste counterparts. Such deeply rooted problems can be addressed through longer-term interventions of education and social change and may not be achieved simply by building new schools or increasing access to education.

Nepal's peace process is situated in a broader geopolitical context and is impacted immensely by the state fragility at different levels. Educational reforms are exceedingly the part of political and economic restructuring of the state and the education sector cannot be understood in isolation. The following section will analyse Nepal's state fragility at macro and micro levels using a Strategic Conflict Assessment framework (DFID, 2002).

3.8 Conflict and State Fragility in Nepal[9]

Studies show considerable agreement about the fundamental factors contributing to conflict and state fragility in Nepal although there is rather less agreement about the relationship of these factors to each other and their relative importance. Using the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) approach[10] the factors are mapped out below in Table 3.2 and explained in the following sub-sections:

	Security	Political	Economic	Social
International	India/China tension	India has an interest in weak governance in Nepal	*Aid through government may reinforce 'informal governance'[11]*	Global influences increase the demand for rights and equality;
National	History of conflict; No process of truth and reconciliation; Continued presence of Maoist army;	***Weak government asserting centralised control;*** ***Dominance of informal governance (patronage***	*Wealth focused in Kathmandu;* Political patronage extends into and constrains business sector;	*Private education and English language creates a class barrier affecting employment;*

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[9] Some of the ideas in this section have also been reported in Pherali et al, (forthcoming) 2012)).
[10] An SCA was first conducted in Nepal in 2000 and revised in 2002. The analysis became integrated into DFID Country Strategy from 2005.
[11] 'Informal governance' generally refers to a deeply rooted patronage system, which undermines the legal framework of the modern state and relies heavily on informal/ traditional/ culturally rooted power structures in Nepali society.

Note: The most important factors are in bold; those especially relevant to this study are in italics.

Table 3.2: Underlying Causes of Tension in Nepal – Summary
(Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012))

3.8.1 Security Factors during the Post-war Period

The security interests of the regional superpowers provide an overarching framework for Nepal, tending to prevent the emergence of strong and stable governments. Nepal's strategic geopolitical location and open border with India is a permanent facet of regional tensions. In particular, India often switches its support between different entities, ensuring that none emerges with unquestioned power and India could continue to play influential role in future political processes. Such geopolitical complexity plays out unfavourably for the assumption that present difficulties will be quickly resolved and a strong, stable government will emerge. Instead weak government is likely to perpetuate 'informal governance', characterised by the culture of patronage and is a fundamental factor determining social, political and educational reforms.

Issues relating to the security forces are highly politicised. The leadership of the Nepal Army is closely associated with conservative political forces and generally antagonistic towards any progressive changes, especially the reform agendas of the Maoists. Even though the command of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was handed over to the government-led Special Committee in January 2011, in reality, it leaves the Maoists with the responsibility of the PLA which still remains in cantonments. The maintenance of this force together with a very large army is a major drain on state resources. Without the promised amalgamation of Maoist forces into the army and/or other security forces, the security situation remains precarious and there is a continued threat of violence. Although a resolution of the issue now seems close, the threat of mobilising PLA cadres may continue to haunt political processes leading to continued weak and divided government.

Through processes of 'informal governance' PLA cadres are likely to retain links with the Maoist party. This may cause distortions in recruitment and promotion processes. This process can be observed in all aspects of government activity. With regard to the police, for example, there has been a history of alignment with the Nepali Congress and recruitment has been biased towards their party cadres. A recent political economy analysis of Policing and Public Safety notes that the legal and institutional framework for policing, exacerbated by the uncertainties of the unstable coalition government, leaves police vulnerable to direct political interference at all levels (Jones, 2010: 12). A recent report by International Crisis Group also concludes that 'the involvement of mainstream parties, police and administration officials in profiting from violence and offering protection is becoming institutionalised' (ICG, 2010: i). Processes of 'informal governance' operating within the security services pose a threat both in terms of local violence and in terms of the eventual

management of elections. With political threads running through all national institutions it is unlikely that democratic processes such as elections can be entirely free and fair.

Although none of the major actors has an interest in returning to war, the incidence of violence is high and probably rising, especially in the *Terai* (plains adjacent to India) where the Madhesi Movement led to the expulsion of people originating from the hills (Pahades) and then splintered into smaller groups which descended from local political demands into criminal activity (ICG, 2010: 13). In addition, gangs and hired thugs are available to support or oppose local interests. This has led to a situation where criminal acts and political activities are difficult to distinguish resulting in a rise to impunity (ICG, 2010: 19). With no elections in the last decade for Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs) much of this violence has been directed towards elections and resources focused around schools.

3.8.2 Political Factors and Conflict Transformation

The issue of centralised control is a recurring theme in political economy analyses (Jones, 2010; Pherali et al, 2011). The roots of this phenomenon go back to the history of the monarchy and the assertion of central rule over disparate elements initially by conquest and later reinforced through total concentration of power at the political centre. The Maoists, having emerged as the strongest single political party, have shown a strong interest in centralising power. As ICG observes that the Maoists 'believe in authority and occasionally indulged in their authoritarian streak once in government, stressing the need for order and discipline' (ICG, 2011: 8). Although the Maoists have engaged in multi-party democracy their long-term strategy appears to be to create a single party state in which they would dominate.

Centralising tendencies are particularly strong within the political parties and there is little sympathy with notions of transparency and downward accountability prevalent among aid agencies and civil society. Political parties support the concept of strong central government, although their ruthless rivalries ensure that the result is the opposite. Lack of democratic process and transparency within political parties allows patronage and rent-seeking behaviour to spread (Transparency International, 2010). Despite legislation intended to prevent it, political leaders maintain tight control over party finances and maintain their position through strong central control over the selection of candidates for election (when the time comes). Party cadres are highly dependent on a patron: ideological debate is not encouraged.

Because no party is able to create a government alone, recent years have been characterised by bargaining between the parties, especially for control of Ministries in which jobs can be found for party cadres or funds raised through sale of contracts. This has led to a process in which the parties collude in dividing up the political spoils but because of uncertainty about whether they can hold their positions for long the looting of the state becomes more frenetic (ICG, 2010: 2-19). This happens at different levels. In the education sector, parties have come together at District level and decided which party can take the benefits in which school. As ICG notes, School Management Committees (SMCs) have become 'ways to retain loyal cadres and provide secondary opportunities for corruption and patronage (ICG, 2010: 20).

Uncertainty about the future also encourages politicians to make short-term promises and pledges that they know they will be unable to fulfil but which challenge other political leaders. The result is an abstract world of promises and policies that bears little resemblance to reality. In the case of education, examples include ever-extending political promises of scholarships and free education. In such a situation it is easy for one party to blame another for any shortcomings when in fact they are colluding in the general arrangement. Thus there is a strong tendency to talk principles and act out individual interests. The Maoists have developed a further excuse for any shortcomings which is to make a distinction between long-term strategic objectives (often very radical) and short-term tactical actions which may be almost the opposite. This enables the Maoist leaders to exploit short-term gains while telling its supporters that they still plan to deliver on their fundamental purposes and promises.

Processes of 'informal governance' have spread to the point that, according to the ICG, the state does not exist to deliver public services but for the informal distribution of state resources through political patronage networks: the raison d'etre of the state, as ICG (2010: 29) notes,

> ...is not serving citizens so much as servicing the needs of patronage networks and keeping budgets flowing and corruption going. The state is dysfunctional by demand. It is slow to reform because elite incentives are invested in the status quo and public pressure is rarely acute.

These negative political processes have penetrated deep into the civil service. Civil servants may be compelled to be politically aligned and are dependent on political patronage both for their formal advancement and in order to pursue corrupt practices with impunity. Because civil servants are unlikely to make use of public services but generally

rely on private services (e.g. private education, urban-based economy), they may not take a personal interest in issues relating to public services.

The most important development since the CPA in 2006 has been the emergence of regionally-based political parties concerned with the issue of federalism. The unification of Madhesi[12] parties into the United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) appeared to create a serious challenge to centralisation but Madhesi leaders have subsequently aligned themselves with national parties and, in some cases, traded their federalist objectives for a seat in government (Maklian, 2008; ICG, 2010). The threat of dividing the state is used mainly as a bargaining position. Although regional politics could create greater political fluidity, it seems likely that it will add to the problem of weak government. Hence, these various political factors play a significant role in conflict transformation and post-conflict peacebuilding.

3.8.3 Economic Factors and Foreign Aid

Since the end of the war in 2006, DPs have moved towards greater support through government institutions following the Paris Declaration Principle of Alignment (OECD, 2005) but the dominance of 'informal governance' means that the effects can be distorted and reduced. These unintended effects often go unnoticed resulting in further exacerbating these trends and allowing aid to become a major source of patronage and its associated processes of corruption.

Not only is Nepal a country dependent on aid, but officials have also become dependent on the opportunities that arise through aid budgets. Work attached to aid budgets may offer different terms and conditions from government service and also opportunities for patronage through contracts. These factors often lead to compliance with donor agendas and requests without rigorous analysis. Aid also tends to reinforce centralisation and in particular increases the disparity between Kathmandu and the rest of the country. Large amounts of aid are directed to capacity building exercises in the capital but the effects are rarely seen in the field. Hence, Nepal's development partners are implicitly contributing to perpetuate the centralised system of state mechanisms.

Despite all these negative factors, the incidence of poverty has been falling in all groups over a number of years.[13] This is attributed largely to remittances from migrant workers which has increased from 2,100 Nepalese rupees in 2003/ 2004 to 9,245 Nepalese rupees per person in 2010/ 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). About half of rural

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[12] Broadly this term refers to people of the plains who are outside the dominant 'Pahade' group
[13] The third National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2010 detected a dramatic decrease in poverty from 31.5% in 2003/ 2004 to 13% over 8 years.

households benefit from such remittances and in many cases the benefits extend beyond basic consumption towards luxury expenditure, notably for private education. Investment in productive activity is not much in evidence reflecting the poor business climate especially for small businesses without political patronage. Wealthy local leaders do not send their children to government schools and may invest in setting up private schools, creating further incentives to ignore or even undermine state services.

3.8.4 Factors for Social Transformation

Nepal's social segregation has been one of the major causes of the Maoist insurgency (Kumar, 2003; Shields and Rappleye, 2008a; Pherali, 2011). The international development partners have been particularly concerned about 'social inclusion' in Nepal in relation to Dalits, women and girls (Lawoti, 2005; Bennett, 2005; Jones, 2010: 3) as a part of their commitment to peace and development. Bennett (2005: 8-9) notes that:

> Social inclusion requires a *shift from an institutional environment, which gives some individuals and groups more opportunity to realize their agency than others to one where the political system and the rule of law support equal agency for all* [sic].

A factor driving this concern is the evidence that these groups in particular have been drawn into conflict and violence as supporters of the Maoists (Lawoti, 2005). An extensive recent study by Tufts University indicates that there has been a significant improvement in relation to social inclusion especially in the school enrolment of *Dalits* and girls (Sharma and Donini, 2010). Discrimination against *Dalits* in Nepal has declined significantly due to the recent Maoist movement that was based on some of the social injustices, including caste and ethnic-based exclusion. The 'formation' of political 'coalitions' between the revolutionary agenda of the Maoists and the historical grievances of the *Dalits* brought them together to share their 'common change objectives' (Bennett, 2005: 9) (See Figure 3.1 for a dynamics of empowerment and social inclusion). The Maoists as the largest political force in the country and their strong political base in the rural areas meant that direct discrimination against the Dalits was now unusual. In some areas of the rural *terai* caste-based discrimination is still prevalent although less so following the reduction of Pahade influence because of the Madhesi Movement in January 2007.

Figure 3.1: The Complementary Roles of Empowerment and Social Inclusion

(Bennett, 2005: 10)

Although there has been a marked increase in enrolment of girls in government schools, parents prefer to invest in boys when it comes to paying for private education, which Stash and Hannum (2001: 355 - 356) term as 'rational cost-benefit analysis'. Stash and Hannum (2001: 356) further note:

> ... if parents feel that their daughters will be unable to capitalize on education in the labor market, they will be more likely to depend on sons for support in old age. When household resources are tight, investments in long-term contributors to the household economy (i.e., sons) are more easily justified than investments in short-term ones (i.e., daughters).

The lack of social priority on girls' education means that girls enrolled into government schools have higher drop-out rates than boys. This problem further reflects ongoing deficiencies such as lack of women teachers and continued demands from parents to their daughters to work in the house and fields. However, there has been a consistent drive for educational expansion and schooling has always been viewed as a tool of social transformation. Sharma and Donini (2010: 21) also note that education was 'seen as the most important factor in bringing about transformation in Nepali society'. They further argue that 'people again and again emphasized the role of education in making them 'aware' and building up their confidence' (Sharma and Donini, 2010: 21). Hence, education played a crucial role in making ordinary citizens politically conscious about their social realities and producing leaders who would later become the forerunners of revolutionary change – a role, which has been analysed elsewhere as 'education for revolution' (Pherali, 2011: 140).

The Strategic Conflict Assessment discussed above has a range of implications for educational reforms that contribute to reduce state fragility. The following section will discuss implications for the process of post-conflict educational reconstruction in Nepal.

3.9 Implications for Education

Geopolitical factors and persistent historical trends are likely to lock Nepal into a state of weak governance and this has led to the prevalence of short-term rent-seeking behaviours – the 'informal governance'. Despite recent political changes, the state mechanisms remain some of the same that perpetuate the patronage system over the formal system of governance. Aid initiatives in such a context merely exacerbate the problems rather than providing solutions. As the ICG (2010: 43) concludes that 'large sections of Nepal's economy and political system rest on the solid foundation of state non-delivery and would be greatly disturbed by a dramatic improvement in efficiency'.

This phenomenon has devastating consequences for public education. Because teachers are extremely important to the political parties as local cadres and potential organisers of elections they are willing to concede the right for teachers to dispense with controls from the formal institutions of government and ignore Head Teachers and School Management Committees (SMC). Similarly, Head Teachers, SMC Chairs and education officials may conspire at District level to abuse educational assets and funds. These activities are negotiated with and condoned by political parties. Weak structures of formal government in the justice sector allow this to continue with impunity.

Cheating in exams is an opportunity for local bribery and corruption but its institutional form has come to serve the wider interest of educational institutions. The political parties may

become involved in dividing up the passes between them according to an agreed formula (ICG, 2010: 5). Schools credited with higher pass rates attract added funding and education officials can use such success as reasons for further funding by development partners. Collusion in allowing girls to register in several schools, false registers and even 'ghost schools' provide opportunities for income through scholarships and grants. The actions of individuals in these processes of 'informal governance' are not simply focused on personal gain but may reflect forces on them that they cannot resist, social norms and ideological commitments to specific political approaches. Much idealism is still invested in Maoist perspectives of a more equal society and conservative determination to prevent the Maoists from seizing unilateral power. Nepal should not be viewed as a corrupt society but simply as one in which there is an intense dichotomy between 'formal governance' and 'informal governance'. On an individual basis this amounts to little more than a tendency to sort things out on a personal basis rather than through the abstractions of law and what many regard as external norms.

In the current education system, students are conditioned to 'informal governance' and its implied focus on personal advance and disregard for society as a whole. The problem is that such a system tends to favour the rich and powerful, and can lead to increasing class divisions which, as has been shown in the past, can be mobilised by elite groups to bring about violent conflict.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has provided a scenario of Nepal's education system. The historical development of education since the onset of democracy in 1951 has been discussed and the political intentions of the Panchayat system in educational reforms have been also debated. The social, political and cultural disparities between various groups representing castes, ethnicities and geographical terrains have been elaborated to problematise the notion that educational expansion in general has been a positive scene in Nepal's modernisation process. It has been argued that the provision of universal education has been somehow lost in the unjust social structures that favoured hill-based high caste groups over other ethnic and caste groups. The chapter also provides an overview of recent political developments, including the peace process and analyses the state fragility of Nepal using a Strategic Conflict Assessment framework developed by DFID. Finally, the implications of security, political, social and economic factors for education reforms have been presented. The following chapter will focus specifically on the role of schools during the 'People's War'.

CHAPTER 4: THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' AND SCHOOLS: INTERACTIONS, IMPACT AND POSSIBILITIES

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, it will provide an historical analysis of Nepali society in which the contentious relationship between education and conflict will be discussed within the broad framework of conflict theory including cultural reproduction, hegemony and the notion of the 'negative face' of education in conflict. In this process, a theoretical analysis into Nepal's cultural diversity and emerging debates around ethnic identities will be provided. Then, it will analyse some of the effects violence has had on schools including the political intrusion on the school sector after the restoration of multi-party polity in 1990. This will be followed by a discussion on the most recent policy initiative – decentralisation in the form of community based school management, which interacts with the impact of the decade long violent conflict. This chapter will set out the research agenda in terms of examining the nexus between education and conflict, impact of armed conflict on education and the policy contention in the post-war period, followed by possibilities for peacebuilding through education.

4.1 The 'People's War' in the Land of Buddha

Nepal was generally known to the world as a Zone of Peace, the birthplace of Buddha whose preaching of peace, love and compassion spread across the world, until the emergence of the Maoist rebellion that converted the country into a battlefield from 1996 onwards. The insurgency was launched after long ideological preparation and well-founded strategic planning that combined political struggles of the party and its sister organisations with guerrilla warfare carried out by its military wing – the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Maoist leaders, including the party Chairman Prachanda, revealed in numerous television interviews during 2007 and 2008 that their party had engaged in long-term planning and preparation before launching the 'People's War' in February 1996. The collective effort of the movement was to capture state power and establish 'a new democratic socio-economic system and state' (Bhattarai, 2003: 117) by ousting the existing 'semi-feudal' state structures.

Earlier popular uprisings and revolts against autocratic regimes had failed to transform the unjust socio-economic structures of Nepali society. The overthrow of the Rana oligarchy (1846–1950) and the advent of democracy in 1951, the no-party Panchayat system (1961–1990) and the restoration of multi-party polity with constitutional monarchy (1990 onwards) all largely failed to address the grievances of people and essentially benefited hill-based

high caste groups, particularly Brahmins and Chhetris who monopolised state power (Lawoti, 2005). Nepali social structures are based on a hierarchical caste system in which Brahmin, Chhetri and Newars are considered upper castes while indigenous groups such as Magar, Gurung, Sherpa, Rai and Limbu, are treated as lower castes. *Dalits* are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy and have traditionally suffered as an untouchable caste. The Maoist forty-point demands, submitted to the government alongside the declaration of the 'People's War', also noted the political, economic and socio-cultural inequalities as the rationale for an armed rebellion in Nepal (Maoist Documents and Statements, 2003). The major aim of the armed struggle was to establish a political system that would address the needs of marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, women, subordinate castes and indigenous groups (Bhattarai, 2003). Calling for people's participation in the rebellion, one of the leaflets widely distributed across the country when the 'People's War' was initiated in February 1996 read: *'March along the path of the People's War to smash the reactionary state and establish a new democratic state'.* This indicated that the war was initiated with a clear political objective and well planned military strategy.

The conflict started in some of the most deprived regions of the country, Rolpa and Rukum districts in the mid-west hills, primarily inhabited by an ethnic minority group called Kham Magars who were significantly underrepresented in the state apparatus and historically neglected by the Kathmandu-based power centre. These areas not only provided popular support to the Maoists, but also 'a pool of recruits to launch the opening moves of the insurgency' (Rappleye, 2011: 63). By the year 2002, the war had spread across the country engulfing 73 out of 75 districts, claiming the deaths of approximately 8,000 people and causing enormous economic losses (Kumar, 2003). This trend further escalated in the subsequent years finally reaching the death toll of over 13,000 before the CPA was signed in November 2006.

This rapid expansion of the 'People's War' is widely attributed to the spatial and horizontal inequality along caste, gender and ethnic lines (Murshed and Gates, 2005; Tiwari, 2010a), the political failure or inefficiency of the post-1990 governments in addressing the insurgency in its early stage (Bohara et al, 2006; Thapa and Sijapati, 2004) and, most importantly, poverty (Bhattarai, 2003; Deraniyagala, 2005; Do and Iyer, 2007). More recently, inequalities in the level of development as well as unwanted outcomes of development efforts have also been identified as explanatory factors in the emergence of violent conflict in Nepal (Tiwari, 2010b; Rappleye, 2011). In educational terms, the national education system either fell short in addressing these huge structural problems or played a

complicit role in reinforcing inequalities by excluding certain social groups from the national development process.

4.2 Ethnic Diversity in Nepal

The evolving historical social composition of Nepal, reflected through its diverse ethnic and multicultural traditions, was perhaps first recognised by King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723 – 1775), who annexed between twenty-two and twenty four different principalities and ethnic-based territories. Following the national unification campaign, he proclaimed emphatically that *'Nepal char jat chhatis varna ko fulbari ho'* [Nepal is a garden of four castes and thirty-six sub-castes.]. Later, the *Muluki Ain* (National Code) was formally introduced in 1854 to regulate caste relations as a legal system within Nepali society, until the caste system was eventually officially abolished in 1963 by the *Naya Muluki Ain* (New National Code), which prohibited caste-based discrimination (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b: 266). However, such legal provision largely failed to establish social equality as the upper caste groups who monopolised social and political institutions benefitted from the traditional caste system (Lawoti 2005). Today, such diversity is manifested through multiple forms of ethnicity, caste/race, language, religion, society and culture. The concept of 'race' has interchangeable use with ethnicity. For example, Miles (1993) and Mason (2006), have argued independently that 'race' can be regarded as a naturalising concept, which is socially, culturally and politically corrosive, as in the case of high and low 'caste' in Nepal. For this reason, though it is difficult to avoid using both terms at different times, in part because of the historical antecedents of Nepal as a caste-based society, the term ethnicity is preferred as a more accurate representation of cultural difference and diversity existing between indigenous communities. In terms of 'race', two different groups have historically dwelled in Nepal: Mongoloid and Caucasian. Dwelling in the mountainous terrains, Mongoloids are culturally close to Tibetans, whereas Caucasians reside much closer to the people of the Indo-Gangetic plains (Bhattachan and Pyakuryal, 1996: 18). The High Castes living in the hills (e.g. Brahmins, Chhetris including Newars), with their affinity and connections to royalty, have for centuries enjoyed a number of state privileges, while the *Dalits* (treated as untouchables) indigenous nationalities (e.g. Bhutia, Thakali, Magars, Limbus, Tharus, Dhimals etc.) and *Madheshis* (ethnic groups dwelling in the Terai) have been relatively deprived of resources and opportunities within the state apparatus (Pandey, 2010; Lawoti, 2005). However, in the last two decades, increasing tensions between such groups have been legitimised as a crucial political agenda through the 'People's War'. This has resulted in a significant change in access to power and political representation particularly after the peace agreement in 2006 and the subsequent elections for the constituent assembly in April 2008.

Nepal is home to over one hundred ethnic and more than seventy linguistic communities (Central Bureau of Statistics' 2003). While historically the state has recognised such diversity, with the co-existence of multi-lingual groups and castes, still the Nepali language has been promoted *de facto* as *the* language of national identity and therefore as that which represents the prevailing orthodoxy or *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1977). However, the dominant view among various ethnic and indigenous nationalities is that this represents an act of 'symbolic violence' by the state, under the rule and influence of high caste elite groups. For Bourdieu (1977), this is where particular forms of linguistic competence, realised through a national language, are strategically employed as a means of domination to suppress difference and diversity, and further mute indigenous languages. The promulgation of *Rastrabhasha* (national language) can be seen as damaging in terms of encouraging the reproduction of 'sameness', of identity, language and culture, as well as ensuring the widespread dissemination of orthodox knowledge, through a predetermined and historically contrived curriculum. Without exception, all former regimes of Nepal - the Shah Kings (1768 – 1845), the Ranas (1846 – 1950), the *Panchas* (1960 – 1990) and the parliamentary party leaders (1951 – 1959 and 1990 – 2006) — have promoted 'a homogeneous, monolithic and unitary state by sanctioning and promoting only one language (Nepali), one caste group (Hill Brahmin and Chhetri) and one religion (Hinduism)' (Hachhethu et al., 2008: 4).

4.3 Education, Identity and Post-war Situation

Scene 1:

A pahade[14] hawker knocks on the gate of Kathmandu city's house with strawberries in his traditional hilly basket.

The landlady asks: *Dai kafal kasari ho?* [Elder brother, what rate are the strawberries?]

Pahade hawker: *Bis ruppe mana ho bainee.* [Twenty rupees per *mana*[15], younger sister.]

The landlady: *Bis ta mango bhayena ra dai? Milayera dinus na?* [Isn't twenty expensive, elder brother? Could you consider the price please?]

Scene 2:

A Madhesi hawker shouts outside the gate – *Ye .... Aalu, kauli, ramtoria, tamator...* [Potatoes, cauliflowers, ladyfingers, tomatoes ...]

The same landlady asks: *Ye madhise golbheda kasari ho?* [Hey Madhesi, how much are the tomatoes?]

Madhesi[16] hawker: *Hajur... kilo ko dus rupaiya parchha hajur* [My lady, ten rupees per kilo madam.]

The landlady: *Kati mango, ali sasto de.* [That's expensive. Make it cheaper!]

Table 4.1: Treating Differently

The above two scenes can be read as textual representations and political allegories of the often entrenched and pervasive negative attitudes of Kathmandu city dwellers towards

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[14] A hawker is a person of hilly or mountainous origin
[15] This is a traditional Nepali measurement system, in which measurements are made in quantity and not in weight – 7 *mana* = 1 *pathee*
[16] A hawker of Southern Plains origin

impoverished 'hawkers' in Nepal. They also depict the enduring and more recently escalating tensions between two prominent ethnic groups in Nepal - *Pahade* and *Madhesi*. It has been discussed and argued elsewhere in this dissertation that such prejudice is not uncommon among the many different castes and indigenous groups of Nepal. It is rather a typical reflection on culture, a dominant feature of the mindset of socially and politically privileged classes (generally the high caste groups living in the hills) towards people of the Terai. Against this social and political backdrop, the persistent and unfailing negligence and symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977) of the state against the many marginalised castes and ethnic communities serves to create a timely intervention for oppressed groups to rebel violently against Nepal's monolithic political system.

For the purpose of comparative analysis, Nepal presents a somewhat unique and distinctive empirical case. Reflecting the inertia and acute vulnerability of the current geopolitical situation, Nepal's crisis is defined and characterised by a successful Maoist rebellion, powerful inter-ethnic and caste-based civil conflict and, perhaps most importantly, a unique and complex peace process, modelled and managed by considerable influence of multiple indigenous communities. The profound lack of certainty around emerging and rapidly evolving political debates of transition and state restructuring are potential threats to any meaningful process of educational reconstruction. Even though this discussion primarily focuses on the context of Nepali society, this may also provide insights into similar post-conflict scenarios in other regions of the world. There are potentially significant messages for peacebuilding and educational reconstruction in this analysis that may usefully inform and apply to other turbulent contexts: for example, those widely reported by the recent Global Monitoring Report focusing on the impact of armed conflicts and their implications for educational processes in conflict-affected societies (UNESCO, 2011).

In the last thirteen years, Nepal has suffered a significant loss in social and political stability, resulting in a breakdown of state institutions. Yet ironically such marked political change has also led to improved public participation, where historically suppressed castes and communities have begun to challenge the dominance of the state.

The decade-long 'People's War' has significantly ruptured the state-sponsored notion of monolithic nationalism and has revived the struggle for cultural and ethnic identity among the multi-ethnic and indigenous populations. The post-accord transitional politics provides a rich context to examine the concept of national identity, and also critically consider the implications of change for education and society. In educational terms, it is imperative to

carry out a radical revision of the education agenda to address the dominance of a state defined pedagogy whilst the old forms of social and political structures are gradually transforming. The tensions between embedded notions of 'national unity' and the political 'fragmentation' of the state, as new communities, identities and political affiliations continue to emerge and conflate in the post-accord era of transitional politics. More importantly, in the process of post-conflict reconstruction, a critical debate is necessary to reconceptualise the notion of 'Nepali' identity and citizenship and also to enhance the role of education in peacebuilding. Fundamentally, the following three questions involve the debate around the issue of national identity and peacebuilding:

a) What is the role of education in addressing the issue of national identity while ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly undermining the notion of unified national identity?

b) How will the national history be revised in order to make it more inclusive and how will the ideological contention towards the 'People's War' be managed in the teaching of history?

c) What would be the role of education in reconciliation and peacebuilding?

4.3.1 Analysing Education and Identity

The historical analysis of political developments in Nepal shows that society is often constrained by ideology (representing the interests of dominant groups) that seeks to fix (national) identity, and thereby oppress difference and diversity, the nuances of particular indigenous marginalised communities. In this context, the hermeneutic methodology allows us to see how historical conflicts are in fact recurring events located in particular ethnic and socio-cultural structures and traditions. More importantly perhaps, identities can become locked in notions of subjectivity that serve to fix meaning, while escalating the irresolvable tensions that define our human condition. The value of a hermeneutic approach allows us to focus on issues of structure and agency, to consider both subjective and objective forces operating simultaneously. Thus, the analysis of conflict and post-conflict dynamics can be understood in terms of the historical context within which social actors and political activists are effectively located.

Bourdieu's work and conceptual tools (1977, 1986, 1990) are especially helpful in this regard, for all human and social action is culturally, ethnically and historically situated. This means we are all born into particular social and political settings, with individual and collective dispositions, both located in, and influenced by prevailing social structures. Action is constituted through a reciprocal (and reflexive) relationship between an individual's

beliefs, thoughts and personal disposition – *habitus*, and relatively enduring social structures, defining a *field* of action, within which the opportunities and limitations of human agency are cast, but not interminably fixed. In Nepal's context, this relates explicitly to the notion of social hierarchy, in particular political class and caste, which serve to define and mediate the uneven terrain of an evolving scenario of post-accord transitional politics in Nepal. In turn, *habitus,* 'which acts as a mediation between structure and practice' (Bourdieu, 1977: 487) serves to influence and structure (ideological) beliefs and political action, doing so discrepantly across different castes and within the boundaries of different political *fields*. Both literally and metaphorically, such *fields* define a physical terrain within which different and diverse ethnic groups in possession of different levels of access to resources and *capital* (economic, educational, cultural and symbolic) struggle for power, as well as the privilege to live free of oppression.

The historical antecedents of the armed conflict in Nepal also include the failure of the state-imposed homogenisation project, while superficially appearing to achieve national unity turned hostile to communities whose cultural and ethnic identities remained dormant behind the political veil of the state. The influence of state-led 'nationalism' through education, as instigated by the nationalisation of education and implementation of the national curriculum (MoE, 1971) later contributed to the underachievement of children from marginalised and indigenous communities (Ragsdale, 1989). A key concept in this analysis is the notion of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1977), which describes how particular forms of linguistic competence developed through a national language (Nepali) can become a persistent force in the reproduction of state-defined knowledge. This coexists alongside the notion of *habitus,* conceived as a fluid and enabling concept, which while recognising the internal legitimacy of different ethnic groups, simultaneously allows such groups to challenge the *doxa* (or prevailing orthodoxy) and thus destabilise the state. In this sense, the *field* of conflict changes over time, resulting in a partial redistribution of resources and access to important forms of *capital*: social and economic, symbolic and political. The following section will discuss the *field* of 'diversity', which will then follow by before presenting an analysis how education contributed to the creation of national identity.

4.3.2 Creating National Identity through Education: An Analysis

The political change of 1951 was occasioned by the emergence of a democratic political system, leading to the restoration of traditional powers of the monarchy and introduction of the Panchayat era in 1960. In this, devotion to the monarchy, a commitment to Nepali as *the* national identity and loyalty to the Panchayat political system were often depicted as key unifying factors. The monarchy was portrayed as a symbol of national unity, and the

state embraced a policy of *one language, one culture* and *one state*. In Bourdieu's (1977) idiom, this can be expressed in terms of how different and unequal access to *capital* (social, economic, symbolic and political), often correlates with uneven and inequitable access to power (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b). The corollary suggests that more powerful and resourceful groups can often gain access to influential social and political networks and thus determine what counts within particular socio-economic and educational *fields*. For example, only if the *field* changes, through, say, conflict triggered by discontent towards of all forms of state-sponsored symbolic violence, would previously marginalised groups have any hope of acquiring access to new forms of political power and resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). As Lawoti (2007: 23) argues, 'the ruling group defined the rights and duties of citizens toward the state by conflating it with its own interests and adopting political institutions that concentrated power within the group. This disjunction between the state and society is the underlying cause for the eruption of many of the contentious activities in present day Nepal'.

In educational terms, the project of creating a unified Nepali state was the top priority of the Panchayat system (1960 – 1990), employed to produce a state- defined pedagogy. A policy of 'national schooling' was imposed through 'restrictive textbooks and curricula that aimed at reinforcing a one-party system' (Carney and Madsen, 2009: 175). The process of creating '*Rastiya Itihas*' (National History), through the state, led to the imposition of a national curriculum and further enculturation of a 'particular idea of nationhood' (Onta, 1996: 215), followed by the marginalisation of indigenous culture(s) and language(s). As stated in the NESP, the goals of national education were 'to strengthen devotion to crown, country, national unity and the Panchayat system, to develop uniform traditions in education by bringing together various patterns under a single national policy, to limit the tradition of regional languages, to encourage financial and social mobility, and to fulfil manpower requirements essential for national development' (MoE, 1971: 1).

In turn, this impacted on the learning abilities of children from minority ethnic communities and non-native Nepali speaking backgrounds (Ragsdale, 1989). Similar findings from studies in South Africa corroborate the argument that the medium of instruction other than the child's mother-tongue can sometimes hinder the realisation of their academic potential. This is indicated by the fact that black children lack substantially 'academic skills and intellectual growth' at both high school and university levels (Banda, 2000: 51). Stash and Hannum (2001) also argue that educational expansion does not necessarily address the issue of educational disparities by caste/ ethnicity as there may be other preconditions of the education system relying upon socio-economic and linguistic forms of capital. The

authors carried out quantitative analyses on the historical data from Nepal to show that irrespective of socio-economic status, caste is an influential determinant of 'both selection into and attrition from primary school' (Stash and Hannum, 2001: 376). Even in 2001, a full decade after multiparty democracy was restored and equal rights were affirmed in the new Constitution – (where educational 'development' efforts started to intensify), literacy rates among Brahmins, the upper caste, were recorded at some 70% compared with only 10% among several low caste groups (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003). Such inequality and profound social injustice reflects the uncompromising effect of state 'symbolic violence' against lower caste groups, the outcome of which has served to exacerbate violent conflict.

4.4 Politics, Education and Conflict in Nepal

The education sector has always been in the epicentre of the political movements in the history of Nepal. Even during the Rana oligarchy when there was no well developed/ formal education system in the country, students from Sanskrit learning centres as well as those who studied in India, mainly in Banaras (Kanshi), were in the forefront of the anti-Rana movement. Since the introduction of the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, a policy initiative that instigated the systematic control of public education by the government through centralised management of schools and implementation of a national curriculum, student movements have often surpassed the education agenda, calling for democratic change, social justice and more freedom in education. The student movement, often seen by the political leaders in Nepal as a part of the broader socio-political movement (Snellinger, 2005), has often maintained strong ideological connections with parent political parties and their struggle for political change.

During the Panchayat era, educational institutions, especially university campuses, were prime locations for debating political issues and organising pro-democracy rallies. In this period, the communist movement also spread clandestinely while the regime faced a more popular threat from the Nepali Congress, whose majority government became the victim of the royal coup in 1960. As one of the first communist rebellions, a radical communist group, inspired by the Naxalite movement of West Bengal, India, launched a violent movement by killing several 'class enemies' in east Nepal (Lawoti, 2010: 5). Even though the struggle was brutally crushed by the regime, it infused radical views among young communist groups, particularly the All Nepal National Free Student Union (ANNFSU), a student union established on 14 May 1965, whose ideological intimacy and loyalty was with the Communist Party of Nepal. This extreme communist group later transformed into a moderate communist faction in 1978 known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist –

Leninist) and formed the first democratically elected communist government in the world in 1994.

However, the radical communist ideology continued to prevail among several communist factions who believed that the long established socio-political and cultural structures that served a small group of social elites, could only be 'smashed' through an armed rebellion (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). A large number of school teachers who were politically active during their student life and were conscious about the socio-cultural inequalities prevailing in Nepali society turned apathetic to the state agenda of forging national identity and integration, an educational vision of the NESP. In some cases, they became involved in clandestine anti-regime political activities. This indicates that education not only reproduces pro-regime political ideology (Apple, 2004) but also provides anti-regime political awareness leading to a struggle for social transformation.

This phenomenon of socio-political campaigning by teachers continued, and even escalated, after the restoration of a multiparty polity and participation of the moderate communist group CPN-UML in the post-1990 democratic process. When the 'People's War' was declared, many teachers along with other supporters of the United People's Front, a communist faction that supported the CPN-M and the 'People's War', were arrested and falsely charged by the state which further contributed to intensifying the conflict (Pherali, 2011; Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003).

Along with the beginning of a democratic political process, the restoration of party politics in 1990 provoked fundamental changes in two social dimensions. Firstly, the new political environment raised people's expectations from the new state leadership in terms of improving their living conditions. Secondly, it involved the majority of the people in political campaigns enabling their affiliation with one or the other political party. The latter caused social fragmentation not only as regards those involved in active politics but also with respect to rural households who divided along the lines of their ideological connections. The political divide transcended all sectors, including education, where students and teachers organised as the political wings of their respective parties (Smith and Vaux, 2003). The use of young children in campaigns and mass demonstrations became a common practice. The CPN-M capitalised on the culture of widespread politicisation in the education sector to promote their radical political views and rationalise the 'People's War' as the only way to bring about socio-political change. For example, the ANNFSU-Revolutionary, the student wing of the CPN-M and the Nepal Republican Educational Front, the Maoist-affiliated teachers' union, actively participated in the 'People's War' by engaging in violent assaults on security forces, leading revolutionary political campaigns in the educational sector and,

more importantly, systematically attacking private schools accusing them of being merely commercial ventures and spreading 'Western influence' (Caddell, 2006).

4.4.1 The Contentious Role of Education in Nepal's 'People's War'

As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of 'two faces' of education is relevant in Nepal's conflict. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) and others discuss the 'two faces' of education during ethnic conflicts, namely that education can play both a 'positive' role in reducing the potential of violent conflict by addressing root causes of political and sociocultural tensions among different social and ethnic groups, and a 'negative' role - that education can be complicit in reproducing and perpetuating favourable conditions for social and political tensions that often develop into armed conflicts (see also Smith and Vaux, 2003; Davies, 2004; Shields and Rappleye, 2008a; Pherali, 2011). This is also the case when analysing Nepal's educational processes in the emergence and growth of the Maoist movement. While the nexus of education and conflict in Nepal partially complies with this theoretical lens, as noted elsewhere there exist some new themes and explanations revealed by micro level analysis of the socio-cultural complexities, the educational conditions and the political backdrop of the genesis and development of the 'People's War'. What emerges through this study is a deeper understanding of the contentious face of education; in particular, its role in producing educated 'masses' that were politically conscious and ideologically trained. These educated masses, instead of working for the cultivation of critical, positive and peaceful orientations in the process of social change, came to recognise armed rebellion as a legitimate means of eliminating the structures that perpetuate socio-economic disparities in Nepal. The agents of conflict in this case were ideologically extreme and could logically defend their views on the legitimacy of the use of violence. For them, attaining the goal (e.g., social, economic, political and cultural equalities) was paramount, justified their means, and motivated them to persist with the struggle. This ideological commitment and propagation of it to the wider populace thus made schools a key 'battleground' in the conflict (Pherali, 2011: 138).

The present study employs this theoretical framework while analysing the interactions between the armed conflict and education in Nepal. The following section will highlight the role of education in reproducing the social order and perpetuating the existing social disparities in Nepali society.

4.4.2 Education and Social Exclusion

The rapid expansion of school education in the 1960s and later decades did increase access to education but paid very little attention to the need for improving living conditions of the vast majority who have been historically marginalised in Nepali society. The educational benefits were largely limited to those who came from upper caste groups and privileged backgrounds, and school dropout among girls, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups and *Dalits* was extensive (Stash and Hannum, 2001). Even at present, primary school net enrolment has reached 93.7 per cent overall, but 34 per cent of the students drop out before completing basic education and only 55 per cent graduate from secondary schools at their first attempt (DoE, 2010a; 2011). Yadava (2007) shows that the majority of children who drop out of school come from ethnic/ indigenous minority backgrounds and do not speak Nepali as their mother tongue. The lack of education among these groups has severely limited their access to wider societal opportunities and contributed to reproducing social and economic disparities (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b).

The educational development of the past four decades has only benefited the upper caste social elites who continue to monopolise social and political power. Neupane (2000) found that hill-based high caste groups and Newars, whose population in the 2001 census was 36.37 per cent, occupied 80 per cent of the state's leadership positions in 12 different sectors, including the executive branch, parliament, the judiciary, public administration, the security forces, academia, industry and commerce, civil society, and cultural associations. Even in 2001, a full decade after multiparty democracy was restored, equal rights spelled out in the new Constitution, and educational 'development' efforts intensified, literacy rates among Brahmins, the upper caste, were 70 per cent as compared with a dismal 10 per cent among several low-status caste groups (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003). This reflected significantly in their capacity (or lack thereof) to improve their living standards after the country started practicing democracy and adopted a liberal economy. During 1995/96-2003/04, the poverty level among Brahmin and Chhetri declined by 46 per cent but only by 6, 10 and 21 per cent respectively for Muslims, hill indigenous nationalities and Dalits (Tiwari, 2010a: 74). This scenario suggests that the demise of the Panchayat system and the onset of multi-party democracy was simply the change in the form of politics that largely failed to address the structural inequalities. In educational terms, these social conditions that Bush and Saltarelli (2000) regard as 'uneven distribution' and 'denial of education', reinforced 'horizontal inequalities' (Stewart, 2000) and manifested in 'a high participation' of indigenous nationalities, Dalits and women in the 'People's War' (Lawoti, 2005).

The NESP aimed at eliminating the traditions, languages and cultures of indigenous nationalities and ethnic groups through the aim of creating a homogenous national identity

which mainly focused on three key aspects – loyalty to the monarchy as a symbol of national unity, Nepali as a national language and Hinduism as a national religion (Onta, 1996; Burghart, 1994). In this process, education became one of the major tools of national intervention, particularly through the imposition of a national curriculum. According to the NESP, the goals of the education were:

> to strengthen devotion to crown, country, national unity and the Panchayat system, to develop uniform traditions in education by bringing together various patterns under a single national policy, to limit the tradition of regional languages, to encourage financial and social mobility, and to fulfil manpower requirements essential for national development (MoE, 1971: 1).

The idea of developing 'uniform traditions' through education was executed by nationalising the country's community schools and through nationally distributed school textbooks which ignored the reality of cultural and linguistic diversity of Nepali society. This was a further escalation of linguistic repression through the education system that had started as early as 1956 when the first official educational report in Nepal's history explicitly stated: 'If the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language then other languages will gradually disappear, and greater national strength and unity will result' (Pandey et al., 1956: 97).

Graham-Brown (1994) notes that the control by a government of a particular social or ethnic group can lead to the construction of a particular version of national identity which reflects the group's cultural values by maintaining their dominance and neglecting the traditions and cultural values of those who are marginalised. The state apparatus, overwhelmingly dominated by the hill-based high caste groups (approximately one-third of the population according to the 2001 census) (Neupane, 2000), promoted their own language (Nepali), culture (national uniforms, festivals and life styles) and religion (Hinduism) as the emblem of Nepali national identity. These became necessary for other groups in the country to fully participate in the social, political and economic spheres of the country. They prevented non-Nepali speaking ethnic and indigenous groups from achieving success in education (Ragsdale, 1989) and entering into a range of civil services including the educational sector. As Ragsdale noted, 'Nepal's small, elitist system of education had been expanded without regard for its suitability to the country's needs', mainly serving the purpose of the regime and its character rather than promoting a system which contributed effectively to the economic development of the country (1989: 15). Hence, the regime systematically

(mis)used education 'as a weapon in cultural repression' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 10) against different ethnic groups and indigenous nationalities[17].

4.4.3 Effects of the 'People's War' on Education

Involvement of teachers and students in political movements is not a new phenomenon in Nepal but the emergence and expansion of the Maoist rebellion heavily engaged both teachers and young people in the Maoist movement in different ways. School premises provided shelters for the rebels, young recruits (students) for their militia (Watchlist, 2005) and a large group of educated people (teachers) who believed who believed that the 'People's War' was the only way of bringing about social and economic change in Nepal (Pherali, 2011).

Schoolteachers and young students were often caught in the middle of conflict between security forces and the Maoist rebels. By 2004, an estimated 3,000 teachers had been displaced from schools in the rural areas, directly impacting on an estimated 100,000 students' education (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). A significant number of displaced teachers are still based in district headquarters and some of them still cite security reasons for their inability to return to their designated schools. However, for a few who have now lived in town for several years with their families, moving back to their village is neither socially viable nor economically motivating. A large number of school children as well as teachers were kidnapped to attend political training programmes or mass gatherings of the CPN-M (Watchlist, 2005; Thapa and Sijapati, 2004).

It was reported that more than 79 schools, one university and 13 district education offices were destroyed by the Maoists between January 2002 and December 2006, of which 32 suffered bomb explosions and at least 3 schools were caught in crossfire between the rebels and security forces (INSEC, 2007). Schools were also targeted by security personnel who arrested, tortured and even killed teachers and school children suspected of being Maoist activists or sympathizers (Amnesty International, 2005; Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre, 2004; Dhital, 2006). The total number of teachers killed by the warring parties during the violent conflict reached 145 (INSEC, 2007). Furthermore, teachers suffered a two-way dilemma of whether to implement the 'Maoist curriculum', or the 'national curriculum' at school. The attacks on teachers during the conflict and the impact of direct or symbolic violence on school education have largely been ignored in the post-accord policy framework. The impact of violence on educational stakeholders including teachers, children and educational officers has not been systematically investigated.

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[17] See Gurung (1998; 2003) for detailed analysis of the ethnic demography of Nepal.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine the very issue so that the understanding of the impact could help identify crucial areas for post-conflict educational reforms, particularly from a 'conflict-sensitive' perspective (Smith, 2005).

The following section will briefly draw upon some theoretical debates around the process of educational decentralisation and locate the case of Nepal in the broader context of this policy discourse.

4.5 Community School Management: A Global Policy Discourse on Decentralisation

Community management of schools has been a global educational reform agenda specifically promoted by the World Bank since 1990s. School-based management is considered the most radical form of educational decentralisation, which enhances participation of stakeholders at local level by devolving the authority of school management to the local community. This form of educational governance mainly involves– 'the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility and tasks from higher to lower organizational levels or between organisations' (Hanson, 1998: 112). McGinn and Welsh (1999: 17) also note that decentralisation involves 'shifts in the location of those who govern' and transfer of authority from central locations to those who are in another level, such as local government bodies and schools. The rationale for education decentralisation is often argued as 'to increase both the productivity and efficiency of educational delivery systems, based on a presumption that local actors are better equipped to make appropriate decisions for their local context and better able to hold local actors accountable' (Edwards, 2011: 69). While there is a dearth of empirical evidence that centralised management is to be blamed for the failure of effective delivery of education, educational reforms towards decentralisation inspired by external actors and their ideological motivation can also lead to problematic outcomes in terms of access to and quality of education, teacher professionalism and participation of civil society in the provision of education (Carnoy, 1999; Poppema, 2009).

Education decentralisation is often driven by the motives of central governments or international agencies and based on the general assumption that the same policy aims and objectives are shared by the stakeholders at community levels (McGinn and Welsh, 1999). There also seems to be a presumption of a linear model of management effectiveness based on the idea that effective monitoring and local level accountability enhances efficiency in the delivery of public services such as education. This notion undermines the political and economic interests of the stakeholders as well as the agencies advocating decentralisation, which often counter the linearity of the hypothesis that devolution of

authority in education results in better student achievement. Carney,et al (2007: 614) argue that 'most decentralisation initiatives have struggled to realise their goals' as there seems to be a lack of understanding about the policy aims and objectives among the local level stakeholders. The independent evaluation group's report on the Community School Support Programme (CSSP) in Nepal also notes that the lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities of the SMCs and absence of effective mechanisms of their capacity building were some of the major causes of the project's unsatisfactory performance (World Bank, 2010). Edwards (2011) uses the terms 'policy disconnect' and 'capture' to problematise the education decentralisation process in which the policy aimed at mobilising parents and communities fails to reach its intended stakeholders, or the authority devolved to the local level is captured by the unintended agents who monopolise the policy reforms to work in their favour. Parents in low-income countries may experience the school management responsibility as 'a burden' as they are expected to make a voluntary contribution (e.g time and resources wherever and whenever needed) to manage their local schools (Poppema, 2009: 394). In the context of fragile states where socioeconomic inequalities are pervasive, devolution of such authority is a strategic intervention of the neoliberal state to neutralise the political opposition and reduce the chances of outbreak of violent conflicts (Cronwall and Brock, 2005), while still maintaining implicit control at the structural level (e.g. national curriculum, language of instruction, teacher recruitment policy and assessment, economic processes etc.). This phenomenon further exploits the poorest by making them contribute to the fundamental duty of the state – providing basic education to its citizens (Poppema, 2009).

Carnoy (1999) argues that globalisation has profound impact on educational reforms. He notes that the advancement of information technology and innovation in the global market has created demand for a multitasking flexible workforce. Education systems have been tasked with fulfilling this economic need of the world market, which consequently transform the nature of pedagogies, roles of teachers and curricular choice by making it more demand-orientated and relevant to the world of work. Particularly, education systems in the developing world have come under pressure to produce an educated labour force that can attract global financial capital, which is seen as the only rescuer of the world's poverty. This prescription comes with a 'private-sector bias' that promotes market competition, smaller public sectors and more often dismantling of the welfare state (Carnoy, 1999: 16). As a consequence, there is an indirect pressure on the governments of developing countries to promote mechanisms that reduce public spending while expanding the provision of education that authenticate the capitalist economic structures that is key to producing the workforce these mega economic structures need. This can only be done by devolving

authority and ownership of educational institutions to the communities who are held accountable for public education while the governments regulate this process by holding an ultimate control of the system. Hence, education decentralisation in this context is not just the devolution of power, but also a systematic delegation of financial responsibilities where a neo-liberal state puts in place self-functioning and often economical mechanisms that are expected to produce public returns at their own costs. As it is all market driven, the ultimate beneficiaries of neoliberalism are the private sector and the mega structures of global capitalism where the educated workforce is likely to be absorbed. However, this kind of policy thrust is either resisted or has failed in many countries in terms of enhancing quality and sustainable development that cherishes local cultures and economies. Research from Latin America shows that the social justice agenda and concerns of civil societies are neglected often with an increased burden on poor and marginalised people (Poppema, 2009). As argued by Carnoy (1999), the community surveillance of teaching at schools may potentially increase teacher productivity but does not necessarily enhance educational quality.

These manifestations of educational decentralisation can be collapsed into a number of concerns that often act against the interests of the poorest in society. Firstly, they facilitate cost sharing of the provision of education with local communities that are already under resourced. Secondly, they promote the culture of privatisation, competition and market-driven economy that further marginalise those who are in the bottom pile of society. Finally, they falsely presume that transfer of school management to the local community can impulsively result in school effectiveness and improvement in the quality of education. However, evidence from the political economy analysis of education in Nepal indicates that school-based management is often monopolised by social elites who abuse the authority for their own political and economic benefits (Pherali et al, 2011).

Carney et al (2007) note that there is a definitional problem with the construct of 'community', which characterises it with the concepts of fellowship, harmony and social cohesion. This notion neglects the community realities where 'inequalities, oppressive social hierarchies and discrimination' are pervasive (Carney et al, 2007: 616). In Nepal's case, the extensive diversity along the socio-cultural, economic, religious, ethnic, caste and linguistic domains problematises the concept of 'homogeneity' in the composition and relations within the community. These differences are manifested in unequal power relations and social hierarchies among different ethnic or social groups whose roles and the degree of influence on the process of community participation may vary significantly. Hence, education decentralisation, especially the policy framework designed and

implemented by the central governments with the support from external donors, is often driven by the interests of broader economic structures of the world market that is concerned with accumulation of financial capital, increased production and privatisation of public sectors (Carnoy, 1999). More importantly, it ignores the welfare and empowerment of marginalised groups (Cuellar-Marchelli, 2003; Geo-Jaja, 2004; Wankhede and Sengupta, 2004). At the local level where strong patronage systems exist, the involvement of local communities in the school management process becomes highly selective and is often motivated by political and economic interests of stakeholders at different levels.

4.5.1 The Context of Education Decentralisation in Nepal

Decentralisation has become a major policy thrust in the educational sector during the last decade. The CSSP facilitated the transfer of school management to the local community by providing a financial incentive to the schools intending to move to the school-based management. Even during the period of the armed conflict when schools were engulfed by the 'People's War', the transfer of school management to communities became a popular phenomenon in the educational sector. The education section of the National Planning Commission's Five-Year Plan (1997 – 2002) also articulated that the 'policy of decentralizing education management will be effectively undertaken in practice in order to increase the active local participation in management and operation of education institutes, and improve their capability' (HMG, 1998: 618). The Five-Year Plan was influenced by the Education for All goals that aimed at achieving universal primary education by 2015 and therefore the plan was much more aggressive in relation to decentralisation of primary education anticipating that the policy would help achieve the global target. The plan notes that the decentralisation was the 'fundamental principle for effective management and implementation of primary education, (thus) arrangements will be made to involve guardians, local elected bod(ies) and people in the programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation' (HMG, 1998: 620). By the end of the CSSP, the initial target of transferring 1,500 schools to communities was exceeded by more than 25%. However, there is very weak evidence-base in relation to student performance and education quality in order to rationalise the policy intervention of school-based management (World Bank, 2010: 14). A recent study into the political economy of education in Nepal notes that many schools opted for the transfer because of the financial incentive offered by the government (Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012)).

It is important to note two key points at this juncture. Firstly, the communities in Nepal represent ethnic and caste-based hierarchies and do not always portray a cohesive and equitable space (Carney et al, 2007). Hence, the privileged social groups (mainly Brahmins,

Chhetris and Newars) were able to seize the opportunity of educational freedom and establish schools in their own neighbourhoods providing a convenient educational access to their children. Hence, the post-1950 educational expansion was not necessarily equitable in terms of allowing access to all social groups. Rather, it served and catered for the interests and aspirations of the privileged caste and ethnic groups thereby intensifying 'horizontal inequalities' (Stewart, 2000).

Secondly, the fact that the Education Act of 1971 nationalised all the schools that were initially established by the local people and managed mainly using local resources, gradually disconnected communities from educational businesses and involvement in school management. Even though the Act allowed for an egalitarian system of education setting up the provision for all children irrespective of their castes and ethnicities, these children were not able to benefit to the same extent that their counterparts who came from privileged backgrounds did. Bourdieu's notions of 'forms of capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) are relevant here to explain why simply the availability of education may not ensure equitable educational achievement among the children from different social groups. Bourdieu argues that cultural 'habits' and 'dispositions' inherited from the family are fundamentally important to explain educational success of a particular social group (Bourdieu, 1986). Despite the availability of education and improved level of school enrolment, the educational outcomes across different castes and ethnicities have been inequitable. This kind of disparity in education is not solely explained by the economic factors or the type of educational provision but equally by hierarchical educational and cultural capital 'embodied' by different social groups. The medium of instruction, forms of assessment, curricular choice and the monopoly of a particular cultural group on educational workforce do nothing but institutionalise a particular type of knowledge within the education system and systematically exclude certain groups. This means that increased educational investment within the existing structures is more likely to benefit the same privileged groups resulting in further marginalisation of those who have been discriminated by the existing system.

The decentralisation in the education sector returned rather more aggressively with the Seventh Amendment of Education Act of 1971 by the government in 2001. However, educational decentralisation was reintroduced since the 1990s as the multiparty polity embraced a liberal approach to economic and educational reforms. The following Table 4.1 presents a summary of educational development from the perspective of decentralisation:

Table 4.2: Historical periods of formal schooling in Nepal
(Khanal, 2011: 773)

The amendment renamed all government schools as 'community schools' and established a policy framework to delegate authority of school management to the district and village development committees. As a result, the role of SMCs became significant in school's operation, supervision of teaching and learning, teacher recruitment, management of the school budget and mobilising local resources. There were also a number of other policy regulations that laid foundations for the systematic transfer of school management authority to local communities. For example, the *Education Rules 2002*, the *Operational Manual for Community Managed Schools 2002* and more importantly the World Bank funded *Community Schools Support Project (CSSP)* collectively created a policy framework for strengthening the implementation of community schooling.

However, the extent to which local communities can be involved in the functioning of the school is also limited. For example, schools must follow the national curriculum especially at secondary level and use the prescribed textbooks published by the government publisher. In addition, the District Education Officer who is accountable to the Department of Education has been endowed full authority to dissolve the SMCs that cannot deliver their responsibilities at the prescribed standards (Edwards, 2011). This means that the decisions

of the SMCs are always under the influence of the District Education Officer who oversees the implementation of the policy.

However, the private education sector where an average of 14% children (1 – 12 grades) are receiving education (DoE, 2010a) is unaffected by most education policies, including the education decentralisation and the provision of education in mother tongue. There is a general criticism that the majority of politicians, bureaucrats, policy makers, social elites and the urban rich send their children to private schools where the medium of instruction is English and therefore they are impervious to most policy interventions that mostly affect the vast majority of children from economically underprivileged groups of the society. The most recent SLC results show that approximately 90% students from private schools succeed in the SLC exam at their first attempt against 46% of their counterparts from the government schools (DoE, 2011). Government schools have repeatedly underperformed against their private counterparts. This has damaged their reputation among the public and as a result public education has become only for those who either cannot afford the costs of private education or have no access to private schools in their vicinity. As a result, a significant increase in the number of private schools has been observed in the last decade with the current situation of 15.14% of basic education schools (1 – 8) and 33.8% (one-third) of secondary schools (9 – 12) being under private management (DoE, 2010a).

The private-public divide became a key issue of political debate during the armed conflict. Private schools in Nepal were accused of commercialising education and creating a two-tiered education in the country (Caddell, 2006). Private education for many parents has become a way of negotiating the economic challenges of 'unknowable 'modern' future' for their children (Liechty, 2003: 216). It also promises to prepare children to break away from their traditional lives and seek opportunities in the modern economic market that requires different sets of skills. Private school principals, as noted by Caddell (2006: 469) 'emphasise how attending their institution offers the opportunity for students to become 'doctors or engineers' and allow children to move away from the village.' The Maoists opposed the idea of competition and privatisation in education as often argued, the process would only benefit the privileged social groups who monopolise state resources. As their struggle to oppose private education, the Maoists demanded:

> 'the reduction of school fees; the removal of reference to the monarchy in school activities, including the singing of the national anthem; the prevention of 'western influence' in teaching; and, ultimately the nationalisation of schooling. In some areas

of the country the complete closure of private schools has been demanded—and enforced' (Caddell, 2006: 471).

Buckland (2005: 13) notes that violent conflicts do not only damage educational infrastructure, but also create opportunities for educational reconstruction in the post-conflict period. At this political juncture, Nepal has tremendous amount of opportunities to adjust educational structures with the view of addressing the 'negative face' of education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The following section will examine some of the efforts in the educational sector that have contributed to building peace in Nepal.

4.6 Education, Conflict and Peacebuilding

The concept of 'peacebuilding' became a global agenda after the publication of the UN Secretary General's report entitled *Agenda for Peace 1992* (UN, 1992). Smith (2010: 1) notes that the UN definitions 'distinguished between 'peacemaking' (action to bring hostile parties to agreement) and 'peacekeeping' (a way to help countries torn by conflict create the conditions for lasting peace), and defined 'post-conflict peace- building' as 'action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict'. This definition is much focused in the agenda of preventing 'a relapse into conflict' rather than addressing the root causes of conflict as a means of building peace. However, the concept of peacebuilding has transformed from its earlier version of peacebuilding as pacification or stabilisation to peacebuilding as social transformation (Novelli and Smith, 2011). As briefly discussed in chapter 2, since the UN Secretary General's call for the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Find (PF) in 2006, the agenda for peacebuilding has 'received renewed attention' (Smith, 2011: 4). However, education has received only 14% of the total peacebuilding fund of US$ 360 million (Smith, 2011). This suggests that education is not yet a priority in relation to post-conflict peacebuilding. However, educational programmes are increasingly receiving attention as useful tools to normalise situations during emergencies.

Recent studies into impact of conflict on education reveal that the educational sector often comes under severe 'attack' during violent conflicts (UNESCO, 2007; 2010) and it was also not an exception in Nepal's case (Pherali, 2011; Sharma and Khadka, 2006; Watchlist, 2005). Armed groups often intruded into school affairs unhesitatingly. For example, the Maoists often carried out their political education programmes among children and teachers, organised mass meetings in the school premises and abducted children to

participate in the political campaign (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). Children were also forcefully recruited to the Maoist militia. The security forces often arrested young people and tortured them suspecting them of involvement in Maoist activities, or sympathising with the 'People's War'. Parents felt extremely concerned about sending their children to the schools. Violence on and around schools was a major concern for organisations, mainly Save the Children, UNICEF and Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN), working in Nepal to support education and ensuring the rights of the children. In this context, protecting education from violence and enhancing its role in peacebuilding became one of the key agendas during and after the conflict.

4.6.1 Protecting Schools from Violence

After the publication of the UN Secretary General's report on impact of armed conflict on children (Machel, 1996), there is an increasing concern among international organisations for the safety and wellbeing of children during conflict. As a humanitarian response to increasing violation of children's rights by armed groups and armed forces, the Children as Zone of Peace (CZOP) campaign was launched collectively in 2003 by several non-governmental organisations working in Nepal (Shrestha, 2008). In the backdrop of extensive violation of the rights of children and educational stakeholders during the conflict, the CPA also mentions that both conflicting parties agree to keep educational institutions away from violence. It states:

> With the realization of the fact that the right to education for all should be guaranteed and respected, both sides are committed to maintaining a congenial academic environment in educational institutions. Both sides agree to guarantee that the right to education shall not be violated. They agree to immediately put an end to such activities as capturing educational institutions and using them, abducting teachers and students, holding them captives, causing them to disappear, and not to set up army barracks in a way that would adversely impact schools and hospitals (Comprehensive Peace Agreement, 2006).

The CZOP campaign was a multi-agency initiative mainly involving UNICEF, Save the Children Alliance, CWIN and other agencies who campaigned for Schools as Zone of Peace (SZOP) and created pressures on the armed groups and armed forces to treat schools and children as the Zone of Peace (Shrestha, 2008). The SZOP also involved awareness programmes in order to enhance people's knowledge, attitude and practice in relation to children's right to education and the need for schools to become safe sites for teaching and learning. Even after the CPA, the legacy of violence and emergence of armed outfits in the Terai and Eastern hills has affected schools in various ways. The SZOP

campaign has been continued mainly focused in nine districts in the Eastern Terai where the situation of law and order is fragile (World Education, 2011). It is reported that 524 schools have been supported in implementing the Code of Conduct that helps prevent external violence or political interference on schools (World Education, 2011). The project also trained 626 teachers for conflict-free classrooms, 300 Parents-Teachers Associations and 300 SMCs for improved governance and doing advocacy and community assessments for ensuring peace within schools (World Education, 2010). The initiatives such as SZOP have become an effective tool to sensitise the issue of moral and legal obligation to ensure educational wellbeing during armed conflict. However, such programmes have limitations in their capacity to address root causes of conflict that are located in the state's social, political and cultural structures.

4.6.2 Building Peace through Education in Nepal

The role of education in building peace has been recognised increasingly in the situations of post-conflict educational reforms. In Nepal, the integration of Peace, Human Rights and Civic education (PHRC) in formal and non-formal education has been a major initiative in the post-accord educational development. UNICEF, Save the Children and MoE's Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) have worked collaboratively to identify various PHRC components and include them in the national curricula and of late, this joint initiative has successfully integrated key concepts of PHRC in the curricular materials used in grades 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10. These peace education contents focus mainly on 'the culture of peace, child rights, disability issues, human trafficking, democracy, rule of law, celebrating diversity, social inclusion' (Save the Children, 2010). The National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) has also produced teacher guidelines and provided training to some teachers as trainers of the new PHRC teaching strategies. Teachers from the communities where ethnic conflict has taken place in the past have now begun to assume broader roles as peacebuilders and dispute mediators even outside their schools (Save the Children, 2010). However, there is a lack of conceptual clarity in relation to what 'peacebuilding' means in Nepal's changing social and political context. Some of the contentious issues such as ethnic and caste discrimination, social and economic inequalities and monopoly of certain groups on state power and resources that have become potential challenges to peacebuilding and therefore need to be dealt with much sensitivity. Teachers need to have knowledge of and skills to deal with these contentious issues in a secure educational environment. Peace education without appreciating the root causes of conflict and locating the broader framework for peacebuilding will have no impact on achieving sustainable peace. The ideas of social justice, equity and social inclusion hence become the

fundamental factors of peacebuilding education, which are lacking the most in teacher education programmes in Nepal.

4.7 Post-conflict Challenges for Education

Schools are still in vulnerable situations in many parts of the Terai districts and the fear of armed groups prevails everywhere (ICG, 2010). SMCs substantially lack capacity to manage schools and teachers more notably, represent various political parties with interests other than improvement in education (Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012)). UNICEF has identified two major issues that interfere with learning and teaching at schools: '1) Strikes and *Bandhs* do not exclude schools and little effort is made to ensure students get sufficient tuition days or make up days; 2) Fear of violence by armed groups continues in many schools in the Terai with many schools and teachers receiving threats demanding money or donations, although many are afraid to report these threats' (UNICEF, 2010a: 4)[18]. This indicates that the schools continue to suffer from the legacy of the conflict even after the peace agreement has been signed.

Schools are now affected by tensions that may be characterised as by-products of the decade-long political violence and decentralisation policy of the government. In the absence of local governments, public services such as schools have now become de facto political centres where party cadres exercise their political interests (Pherali, forthcoming (2012)). The transitional politics and the ongoing peace process manifest fear of uncertainty among political parties that constantly struggle in maintaining and renewing their support in communities. The SMCs implicitly represent political stronghold in the community where the school is based and the leadership in school management is regarded as social and political capital for SMC members. In addition, schools now receive a significant amount of funds directly from the government in order to implement a range of policy initiatives such as scholarships for children from *Dalits*, girls and children of the martyrs. Devolution of power to SMCs has meant that local communities are able to control the funds allocated to the school. It was found that the SMCs and head teachers often misuse these funds rather than utilising them for the benefit of children's education. The political economy analysis of education at local level indicates that the devolution of power to SMCs has generally given rise to politicisation affecting the goal of quality education adversely and undermining the role of education in peacebuilding (Pherali, forthcoming (2012)).

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[18] UNICEF Peacebuilding Strategy, Concept Note (2010a, p.4)

In the last thirteen years, Nepal has suffered a significant loss in social and political stability, resulting in a breakdown of state institutions. These institutions are highly politicised and operate with contained economic motivations. Yet ironically, such marked political change has also led to improved public participation, where historically suppressed castes and indigenous nationalities have begun to challenge the assumed dominance of the existing social and political structures. While there is a need for state restructuring in order to correct these structural inequalities, it is also important to recognise that such structural adjustments can often ignite new forms of conflict in social groups. Hence, long-term peacebuilding initiatives are necessary to support structures that promote social justice and communal harmony. Education can play a crucial role in this process.

4.8 Conclusions: Establishing the Research Agenda

This review indicates that Nepal's violent conflict emerged in the backdrop of longstanding socioeconomic disparities within Nepalese society but also was a successful outcome of a political entrepreneurship contrived by persistent communist movements in the country. Increasing population, uneven distribution of land and lack of economic opportunities provided a favourable ground for the expansion of insurgency that promised a more equitable socioeconomic structure. As public institutions within society, schools were no different from other sectors that harboured discriminatory practices in teaching and learning (Pherali, 2011). The longstanding social and cultural disparities were further hardened or exacerbated by the political structures that were monopolised by certain privileged groups. The CPA's commitment to transform social, political and economic structures is yet to be materialised and therefore education's role in addressing these issues is yet to be well articulated.

Hence, the present study examines the impact of the armed conflict on school education in Nepal. In this process, the following key research objectives are established:

1. **To examine the historical context of education and analyse its relevance to the armed conflict in Nepal:** The critical review of literature in Chapter 3 and 4 (this chapter) have provided an analysis of interactions between education and conflict in Nepal. Chapter 2 provided an analysis of global debates on education and conflict while situating the Nepal case within the broader context.

2. **To develop case studies of educational stakeholders which represent a range of their experiences of, and responses to, the conflict:** Chapter 6 and 7 present an analysis of findings of the study that examines violent experiences of teachers/

head teachers/ educational officers, parents and their children. The findings deal with the following key themes that have emerged from the interviews:

a. The interaction between education and conflict;

b. Participants' experiences during the conflict; and

c. The impact of their violent experiences on their personal as well as professional lives.

These chapters also discuss findings alongside relevant literature that resonate similar contexts within Nepal and globally.

3. **To develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the armed conflict on school education by integrating the range of responses from the schools:** Chapter 8 synthesises the findings presented in Chapter 6 and 7 in order to develop a holistic understanding of the 'People's War' on school education. Three major themes emerged in this synthesis process:

a. Continued violence on schools in the form of politicisation of educational processes;

b. Variation in power relationships among different stakeholders within the school; and

c. The general ignorance of the impact caused by the violent conflict on educational stakeholders.

4. **To develop an understanding of, and explain the implications of the impact for educational reforms in a new political context:** Chapter 9 will deal with the post-war political and educational dimensions particularly focusing on the role of education in peacebuilding. In this process, the post-conflict state restructuring has tremendous implications for education in relation to its role in supporting structures that promote equality and social justice. It will present a critical analysis into the role of education in addressing the issue of national identity while ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of unified national identity. It also raises some questions regarding inclusive national history and the ideological contention towards the 'People's War' in the curriculum.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has provided a historical analysis of the interaction between education and conflict in terms of cultural reproduction and perpetuating the existing socioeconomic order of Nepali society. The relationship between schools and political movements in Nepal was also discussed. Most importantly, this chapter debated the policy of decentralisation in education which interacts with the impact of the decade long violent conflict and has implications for current educational processes. Finally, this chapter established the research agenda for the present study and briefly elaborated key research objectives and outline of how these different issues have been organised in this dissertation. The following chapter will report on the research methodology used for the present study.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detail of the methodological plan employed in this research. It begins with a personal note on the narrative inquiry that was employed as a research approach, and then discusses the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the research. The key research question and specific objectives are discussed drawing on relevant methodological literature. Then, the research process and key research methods, including the selection of participants and technique for data analysis, will be critically discussed. This chapter will also outline some of the ethical concerns in relation to the study and reports on the measures undertaken in order to meet appropriate ethical standards.

5.1 Personal Narratives and Methodological Motivation

This research was mainly conducted in 8 secondary schools selected across 6 districts of the 5 geopolitical regions of Nepal (refer to the country map in chapter 1). The study was undertaken using a narrative approach, a research strategy within the domain of qualitative approach, to analyse violent experiences of educational stakeholders. The research methods employed to collect the primary data included interviews, focus group discussions and narrative writing. During the fieldwork, 8 head teachers, 8 teachers and 7 educational officers were interviewed whereas, 88 teachers (8 groups) and 76 parents (8 groups) participated in the focus group discussions. Similarly, 240 students aged between 15 and 22 completed the narrative writing tasks in which they wrote about their experiences of the 'People's War' and the subsequent ethnic violence in some southern districts of the country. Hence, the total number of participants in the study was 427. A detailed discussion on these research methods will be presented later in this chapter.

In this section, the researcher's narrative encounters as a child within the social, cultural and political context of Nepali society will be examined and then its methodological connection with the present study will be discussed.

5.1.1 Narrative Approach and my Childhood Stories

I have always loved stories. My father is a great storyteller. Stories became an indispensable part of my childhood and the major source of learning and the inculcator of traditional moral values as a young child. My father's stories ranged from narration of his own life experiences to exciting events from Hindu mythology. These included both the narratives of his struggle to bring about political change in society as well as the challenges he faced to provide a decent life for us as a family. His personal experiences also included his adventures with leopards when he was a goat herder at a young age as well as exciting

moments with his parents and the traumatic moment of losing them. His stories did not only teach me social and cultural values or ethics and integrity but also a process through which learning would take place. My father's stories were the only source of external knowledge in the rural village where learning materials including books were so scarce and modern facilities such as electricity, telephone, television, newspapers and roads were far away. There were just a few textbooks and school life was dominated by rote learning.

My father is in his late 70s now and I have heard each of his stories probably more than 10 times. When he starts what he thinks is a new story, I know what the ending is going to be but on every occasion the same story provides new insights and different social and political interpretations to the series of events narrated. There is a vast amount of newness within the old stories and I listen to and engage with them as if I have never heard them before. I am now a doctoral student and university academic living in a developed country that espouses significantly different social and cultural realities from my own native Nepalese society. But my learning approach has fundamentally remained the same – learning from people's narratives, perhaps influencing the methodological choice for my doctoral research, which employs 'narrative inquiry' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) as a dominant strategy in understanding participants' experiences of violent conflict in Nepal. In order to explore this topic further, more discussion on narrative inquiry is presented in the following section.

Most interestingly, the same stories of my childhood have provided me with different meanings at different periods of my life. I simply enjoyed listening to them when I was young but now I see them more analytically and critically, which I have gained from my formal education in different countries, academic experience (working as a lecturer and engaging in scholarly activities) and extensive travel around the world. I am now able to observe intimacy and affection in my father's relationship with his parents, strong cultural traditions of devotion and responsibility to the family as well his resistance to the feudalistic social system during the most difficult political periods of his times. When he says – 'Your mother has always looked after me', I am now able to see my mother's subordinate role in the family. The inability of my mother to tell similar stories and my father's patronising remarks indicate women's underprivileged status in the family and society as a whole. After getting married at the age of 11 and giving birth to 11 children and raising them while delivering the demanding household work, farming and meeting expectations of her in-laws, my mother represents a typical Nepali woman who lives a very hard life in the rural Nepal. When he uses the Sanskrit verse – *'putra shatru napandita'* [an uneducated son is an

enemy], I am able to see how I was conditioned to believe that it was absolutely unacceptable for a child from a Brahmin family to underachieve in education.

5.1.2 Experiences of Social Inequalities

I grew up in a society where my caste had a higher social status and I was supposed to achieve a competitive position in the State and society in general. I was not supposed to befriend people from low castes nor could I take part in the local cultural celebrations such as folk music and dance. We lived in a village that was dominated by the community from indigenous nationalities who often helped us on our farms but it was hardly reciprocal. They came to have meals in our house but I was not allowed to eat anything cooked in their homes nor did my parents ever do so. My elder brothers completed their schooling and obtained professional jobs in the public sector but their local counterparts who were mainly from subordinate castes dropped out before completing their school education and went to India for work. By the time I reached secondary school, all my local friends had dropped out of school, either to work on the farms or to undertake manual work in neighbouring India.

I was not allowed to enter into my tailor's house, the elderly gentleman who stitched my clothes because he was classified as 'untouchable'. In every festival, he would come to our house to stitch new clothes for my family. I had to be purified with a sprinkle of gold-dipped water every time the tailor would touch me to take measurements for my clothes. In the school, Dalit children could not touch the water. If they felt thirsty, we, children from superior castes, would pour water into their cupped hands under their mouth so that they could drink. This would prevent them from touching the bucket of water and so making it impure for others to drink. In schools, there was a culture of low educational expectations for children from Dalit and indigenous backgrounds (Pherali, 2011). While my teachers, all representing the Brahmin caste and well acquainted with my father, always set high learning targets and expected me (and children from high castes) to secure the first position in every final examination, children from lower social and economic backgrounds were often neglected. There were hardly any girls in the class by the time I reached the final year of my primary school (one girl out of 15 students and she sat alone on the front bench while the boys sat in the subsequent rows). A few girls joined from other primary schools in grade 6 but most of them dropped out before completing their grade 7. Now, I am able to link this experience with a recurring pattern in the education system that systematically disadvantages children from Dalits and indigenous nationalities such as Tharu, Magar, Rai, Limbu, Sherpa, Gurung and others (Lawoti, 2005).

5.1.3 Education and Modernity

Knowledge of the English language was an important aspect of educational success. Moving into higher education after school meant that it was necessary to leave the village. Modern education in the school was not about preparing for a better life in the village, it was rather to help identify with the life and culture 'outside' of the village. It was to do with 'development' and 'modernization' that was offered in the urban culture (Pigg, 1992). The social expectation was that every educated person was supposed to gain fame outside the village – in town or the capital city. Living and working in the capital Kathmandu would earn high social prestige and the ability to emigrate abroad (especially to the Western world), would symbolise a highly valued, rare success. I am a typical character of this social phenomenon, who has fulfilled most expectations of the family and my own society by succeeding in education and managing to live in the UK as a university lecturer. I faced consistent moral pressure to adopt a life that significantly contradicted the indigenous culture and encouraged me to question my own traditional values. In this process, I felt constantly that I was being driven away from where I belonged in order to achieve all those expectations that were valued in the post-colonial modern world. I am evidently the by-product of the invasion of modernisation on indigenous cultures that often lose confidence in their own capabilities and fall into the trap of external dependency. All our modern education did was that it paved a path for exit for those who succeeded within the system in search of so-called 'better' life that existed outside of our native place.

5.2 Narrative Inquiry and the Researcher's Narratives

What is the methodological relevance of my personal narrative to the present study? The above personal narrative consciously and critically observes my own cultural upbringing and educational experience. It denotes cultural disparities, gender discrimination and social exclusion that are embedded in the structures of Nepali society and its political, social and educational institutions. My critical understanding of these unjust social practices and structural inequalities, combined with some aspects of globalisation and its social and cultural influence, largely shape my positionality in this investigation. Some of these narratives that appear throughout this dissertation are an effort to clarify my stance in the research as well to help the reader decode elements of potential bias in the interpretation of the participants' narratives.

Defining narrative research, Polkinghorne (2007: 471) notes that it is the 'study of stories' and 'narrative researchers study stories they solicit from others: oral stories obtained through interviews and written stories through requests'. This makes narrative research 'both phenomena under study and method of study' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 4). As a

method of research, it utilises a range of 'field texts' including life experience, autobiography, journals, field notes taken during the research, letters, conversations, interviews with participants, family stories, photos (and other related artifacts) (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 98-115). Narrative inquiry is increasingly becoming a major approach in qualitative research and its 'primary occupation has been the project of "capturing experience" and 'developing modes of analysis and interpretation that provide explanatory power for understanding "experience"' (Hendry, 2007: 492-493). Hendry (2007: 494) criticises the idea of interpreting storied texts to get the 'story right' since she argues that narrative researchers impose a range of methods in order to interrogate respondents' stories rather than trusting them as the true representation of their experience. The process of analysis and interpretation is actually 'an act of colonization, of violence', which tends to distrust the storyteller and their empirical narratives. However, stories are just the extracts of broader social contexts and the partial representation of social reality. Stories have a purpose. So the storyteller is often selective and partial about their experience. To challenge the idea of doing justice to the participants' narrative as argued by Hendry (2007), it can be suggested that the researcher's responsibility is perhaps to go beyond the superficiality of the story in order to explore multiple questions (such as Why? What if? How? What else?) that are more often have answers outside the respondent's story in the broader social and political context of the setting. Hence, the role of the researcher requires active engagement with the narrative data and is significant in reporting a more balanced picture of the social reality rather than simply brokering experiential narratives to the reader.

Hence, qualitative inquiry including narrative research requires integrity in relation to the 'location' of the researcher within the research process and presentation of findings. Connolly (2007: 453) also suggests that 'reporting narratives should more commonly include a report of an autoethnographic nature where the researcher provides an account of his or her own voice, stance, assumptions, and analytic lens so that the reader is abundantly clear on whose story is whose'. She further notes that '… making researcher's stance explicit and understanding the researcher's social location, personal experiences, and subjectivity will help the reader to understand where the voice of the researcher exists in the narrative' (Connolly, 2007: 453).

The present study provides a historical analysis of Nepalese society and the education system and locates the interconnection between education and conflict within the broader spectrum of social and political development in Nepal. It also endeavours to understand educational experiences during conflict through the narratives of educational stakeholders in which the researcher actively engages with his explicit 'social location' as well as

'personal experiences' within the social phenomenon that is being investigated (Connolly, 2007). As Hendry (2007: 495) also notes, 'through telling our lives, we engage in the act of meaning making'. She further argues that 'we are our narratives. They [narratives] are not something that can be outside ourselves because they are what give shape to us, what gives meaning' (Hendry, 2007: 495). This leads to a need for negotiation between the researcher's inherent narrative and those of the participants in the study, which mutually enhance the 'act of meaning making' (Hendry, 2007).

Linking back to my personal narrative again, I am also able to recognise the cultural capital and social network that I inherited from my family, which have largely shaped my thinking, perception and attitudes. This has also provided me with an understanding that stories are situated in a particular context and the meanings are socially constructed and 'co-constructed' as the human beings 'engage with the world they are interpreting' (Crotty, 1998: 43). But these stories cannot be analysed fully unless they are placed within the broader socio-political context of contemporary Nepali society and negotiated with the interpreter's preconditions and prejudices. Here, prejudices are not necessarily a negative condition. Annells (1995: 707) argues about Gadamerian hermeneutics that it is impossible to 'eliminate one's own concepts in interpretation' rather 'it is actually an advantage not to be freed from prejudice in a hermeneutical situation' where prejudice is a prerequisite for a meaningful engagement with the research data. Some of the discriminatory practices and educational exclusion against women and subordinate castes such as *Dalits* and indigenous people make me now feel uncomfortable that I am (perhaps) and have been part of the unjust social structures. The pervasiveness of this social injustice, which has become one of the problematic characteristics of the Nepali social system, nurtures extreme 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1984) on the subordinate castes and ethnic groups. Hence, the present research is located within the historical backdrop of Nepal's socioeconomic realities in which the education system contributed to perpetuate these social divisions. The emergence of the armed rebellion was a response to these unjust social and political conditions in which education became both the aid to as well as victim of the conflict (Pherali, 2011).

My exposure to the world of narratives and critical engagement with the unjust social and cultural realities of Nepali society have led to adopt narrative inquiry as a research strategy that would give 'voice to those traditionally marginalized, and providing a less exploitative research method than other modes' (Hendry, 2007: 489). This allows for not the stories not simply in isolation, but the context where these stories have been conceived and narrated, as an effective way to understand the lived experiences of the research participants. More

importantly, the researcher's own dispositions and sociocultural background play an important role in the process of narrative interpretation. Hendry (2007: 489) also mentions that 'by acknowledging the social construction of knowledge, narrative has provided a methodology that has taken into account the situated, partial, contextual, and contradictory nature of telling stories'.

The issue of validity in stories entails complexity in understanding the difference between actual experiences and the stories participants share with the researcher (Polkinghorne, 2007). It is recognised that narratives embody distortion of experiences in the process of 'creating a self' as the participants unfold their experiences with the researcher (Riessman, 1993: 11). However, the object of narrative research is to extract, analyse and interpret the 'narrative truth' with an assumption that 'the stories are constructed around core facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these 'remembered facts' (Lieblich et al, 1998: 8). The present study involves an extended engagement with the participants and their surroundings before, during and after the actual data collection, which allowed for an opportunity to better engage with the 'storied texts' (Polkinghorne, 2007: 483) in the process of analysis and interpretation of the narrative evidence. Interviews with various groups of educational stakeholders including teachers, children and parents enriched the stories with multiple perspectives. The researcher's native background and understanding of Nepal's socio-political context and complex dynamics of conflict served as a strength in identifying meanings in the narratives. Hence, the analytical position was reflexively informed (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009) and located within a philosophical hermeneutic, with an assumption that 'one cannot transcend one's own historical and situated embeddedness; thus, textual interpretations are always perspectival' (Polkinghorne, 2007: 483).

5.3 Research Goals

This study was initially proposed with the aim of investigating the impact of the decade-long armed conflict on school education in Nepal and identifying possibilities for post-conflict educational reforms. As the project evolved along with the researcher's broader understanding of relevant literature particularly in the field of education and conflict, it was realised that the contentious role of education in the emergence of violent conflict was as significant to examine as the impact the armed conflict had had on school education. As Harber (2004: 19) argues that 'the negative dimension of schooling has been consistently played down or ignored internationally in governmental policy documents and in the

majority of academic writing and research where education in the form of schooling is presented and accepted too readily as a given good'. Similarly, a detailed analysis of education in Nepal also indicates that educational structures deeply harboured a range of negative dimensions that gave rise to necessary conditions for the violent conflict. Hence, the present study examines the following two key questions:

1. *What is the role of education in the emergence of 'People's War'?*
   This question is largely investigated through a detailed historical and political analysis of available literature. However, research participants were also asked if they perceived education as a problem in the emergence of 'People's War' in Nepal. Analysis of these interviews largely shows that respondents perceived education as a victim of conflict rather than having its role in the advent of conflict. There was however, sporadic mention of education being too theoretical and not providing employment skills and therefore compelling frustrated youth to join the rebellion. More of these themes will be explored in the following chapters.

2. *What impact has the decade-long armed conflict had on school education in Nepal?*
   This question is examined drawing upon experiences of educational stakeholders including head teachers, teachers, educational officers, parents and children during the conflict. The participants were asked three main questions:
   a. What were their experiences during conflict?
   b. How have these experiences impacted on their personal as well as professional lives? and,
   c. What did they think needed to be done to address the impact of conflict on their lives?

In order to investigate the above research questions, the following specific objectives were identified.

5.4 Specific Aims and Objectives

1. **To examine the historical context of education and analyse its relevance to the armed conflict in Nepal:** The critical review of literature in Chapter 3 and 4 have provided an analysis of interactions between education and conflict in Nepal. Chapter 2 analyses global debates on education and conflict while situating the case of Nepal within the broader context.

2. **To develop case studies of educational stakeholders, which represent a range of their experiences of and responses to the conflict:** The following Chapters 6 and 7, present an analysis of findings of the study that examine violent experiences of teachers/ head teachers/ educational officers, parents and their children. The findings contain key themes that have emerged from interviews with the participants: interaction between education and conflict, participants' experiences during the conflict and the impact of their violent experiences on their personal as well as professional lives. These chapters also discuss findings alongside relevant literature that resonate similar scenarios within Nepal and globally.

3. **To develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the armed conflict on school education by integrating the range of responses from the schools:** Chapter 8 synthesises the findings presented in chapters 6 and 7 in order to develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the 'People's War' on school education. Three major themes emerged in this synthesis process: continued violence on schools in the form of politicisation of educational processes, variation in power relationships among different stakeholders within the school, and the general ignorance of the impact caused by the violent conflict on educational stakeholders.

4. **To develop an understanding of and explain the implications of the impact for educational reforms in a new political context:** Chapter 9 highlights the pertinent issue of national identity, which has become one of the most troubled notions in the post-war period. It presents a critical analysis of the role of education in the creation of national identity and indicates that ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of unified national identity. Then it will discuss implications of these evolving debates for post-conflict educational reconstruction. It also raises some questions regarding inclusive national history and the ideological contention towards the 'People's War' in the future curriculum. Finally, the role of education in supporting structures that promote equality, social justice and peacebuilding will be debated.

5.5 Philosophical Underpinnings

The lived experiences of the researcher influence their 'ontological' and 'epistemological' orientations when they engage in a social inquiry (Crotty, 1998). Ontology is concerned to 'establish the nature of fundamental kinds of thing which exist in the world' (Jary and Jary, 1991: 428). Crotty (1998: 10) defines ontology as 'the study of being' and notes that it is concerned with 'what is' in terms of 'existence' and 'reality'.

My understanding of the meanings of these stories (both the narratives of my father as well the narratives of the participants providing detailed experience of violence during the conflict in Nepal) draws on two interrelated analytical frameworks gained through my interactions with two distinct cultural domains. Firstly, my native background allows me to engage with the plot as an insider of the phenomenon, or in other words what cultural anthropologists term as an *emic* approach to understanding the meaning of a social phenomenon (Pike, 1967). The *emic* approach to social inquiry may be characterised as 'domestic, mono-cultural, structurally derived, relative and contrastive in reference to a system (Pike, 1967: 37), which is created through a localised knowledge base, indigenous culture and common understanding of the social events. On the other hand, my temporally distanced life style, academic experiences and extensive exposure to the Western knowledge partly disconnect me from my native identity to allow for critical engagement with the narratives of my own native society. Hence, the explanation that opposing notion – the *etic* approach is "nonstructural but classificatory in that the analyst devises logical categories of systems and units" without essential reference to the broader structure of language and culture in which the particular form of practice is situated (Dundes, 1962: 101). This dual framework allows me to oscillate between the two approaches to meaningfully engage with the research phenomenon and develop narrative categories at various levels.

Social enquiries are always located within an array of epistemological and ontological assumptions. The construction of social meanings involves multiple layers of interpretation often tainted by both the researcher and participants in the study. This study is informed by an interpretivist theoretical perspective that it derives from Gadamerian hermeneutics, which holds the view that there cannot be 'any single interpretation that is correct in 'itself'' since all human understanding involves pluralist and subjective interpretation (Gadamer, 1989: 397). The core tenet of the Gadamerian hermeneutic philosophy is that the interplay of partners, researcher and participants or the interpreter and the data has the potential to generate shared meaning of the phenomenon under investigation which Gadamer calls the 'fusing of horizons' (Gadamer, 1989: 378). Sammel (2003) explains that Gadamer's notion of 'fusing' is an inevitable process of meaning making. According to Sammel (2003: 158),

> '... the interpreter of a text, or the listener of dialogue, belongs to and is conditioned by their culture, or as Gadamer would argue, their horizon of tradition. As people interact within a particular historical horizon of tradition Gadamer insists all interpretations are anchored in our social and individual histories. These histories or

pre-understandings enter into any dialogical situation with us for they serve as the foundations for our values, assumptions, and relationships'.

For Gadamer, as Sammel (2003: 158) further notes, meaning is 'not stable' rather it is always 'temporal, situational, progressive, and shared through interactions, implying it is limitless with possibilities, and open to interpretation and reinterpretation'. In the present study, the participants' social, cultural and political conditioning as well as their temporal positions in the post-war context influences the narrative revelations by the participants. The research interviews as a process of not 'conducting' a conversation but 'falling' into a conversation between the researcher and the participants (Gadamer, 1989), obtain '*a story*' rather than '*the story*' of their experience. The task of analysis and interpretation allows for the researcher's active engagement (along with their 'horizon of tradition') with the storied texts, which makes the meaning making a dynamic process.

Historical analysis is a central theme of Gadamerian hermeneutics. According to Gadamer (1989: 306), the *present* has an inseparable connection to the *past* and the 'horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more an isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired'.

5.5.1 Research Paradigms

Crotty (1998) presents four key elements of social research: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Epistemology is 'a theory (or theories) of knowledge' that suggests to us 'how we can know the world' (Jary and Jary, 1991: 186). According to Crotty (1998: 8) epistemology is about explaining "*how we know what we know*". There exist two dominant research traditions in the social sciences that advocate for two contrasting worldviews to knowledge: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is a long-standing research tradition that borrows philosophy about creation of knowledge from natural sciences. It is the 'epistemological view that things exist as *meaningful* entities independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects ('objective' truth and meaning, therefore), and that careful (scientific!) research can attain that objective truth and meaning' (Crotty, 1998: 5-6). It aligns with positivistic theoretical perspective to social inquiry that aims to discover knowledge that can be generalised across the broader populations. Hence, it informs the choice of methodologies (e.g. survey) that prescribe the methods such as a randomised control trial. Quantitative approaches that utilise statistical analyses are common within the positivist domain.

However, qualitative research, including narrative inquiry, aligns epistemologically with constructionism that adopts the view that *'all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practice, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context' [sic]* (Crotty, 1998: 42). It refutes the view that knowledge gained from social inquiry can be generalised and therefore, the purpose is to develop an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena. However, the complexity of generalisation in educational research has been debated by some qualitative researchers who advocate for 'theoretical inference', the possibility of generalisation based on in-depth qualitative inquiry (Hammersley, 1992) and 'fuzzy generalisation' (Bassey, 1999) that provides 'a measure of tentativeness in extrapolating the finding to other people-event-situations, but making a prediction of what *may be* the case elsewhere' (Bassey, 2001: 19). Clearly, the multiplicity of dynamic variables in social/ educational domains makes the task of scientific prediction problematic for social/ educational researchers but the possibility of 'conditional' generalisations can be utilised to formulate the idea of 'fuzzy generalisation'. However, some researchers (see Hammersley (2001) and Pratt (2003)) refute the uniqueness of 'fuzzy generalization', which according to Hammersley (2001: 219), is a common 'mode of formulation' in all types of logical predictions rather than as argued by Bassey (1999), a distinctive type of generalisation. But according to Bassey (2001: 20), the idea of 'fuzzy generalisations' 'offers a viable solution to the problem of generalisation in educational research and across the other social sciences' and provides unique opportunities to generate cumulative knowledge that can be useful to both practitioners and policy-makers in order to inform their decision-making. Bassey further suggests that:

A fuzzy generalization carries an element of uncertainty. It reports that something has happened in one place that it may also happen elsewhere. There is a possibility but no surety. There is an invitation to 'try it and see if the same happens for you' (Bassey, 1999: 52).

The notion of 'fuzzy generalization' urges an understanding of the detailed case analysis along with its claim expressed as: *'particular events may lead to particular consequences'* as opposed to other two types of generalisations including *scientific* generalisation *(If x happens in y circumstances then z will occur in all cases)* and *probabilistic* generalisation *(If x happens in y circumstances then z will occur in about p% of cases)* (Bassey, 2001: 6). The familiarity with the whole contextual analysis (e.g. characteristics of multitudes of variables) becomes essential in the process of making sense out of these tentative generalisations. Hence, findings of the present research are formulated within the

parameters of 'fuzzy predictions' suggesting that the detailed historic-political analysis of Nepali society as well as the findings representing the impact of violence on the case study schools may be generalised across the country and even beyond in similar situations. Hence, the recommendations made by this study have a great potential to inform the process of post-conflict educational reconstruction.

For constructionist epistemology, there is no 'truth' out there waiting to be discovered but any meaningful reality is co-constructed as a result of negotiation between human preconceptions and the phenomenon itself. This leads to an idea that social inquiry is not about discovering the objective truth (which exists nowhere) rather it is to explore a meaningful reality of the phenomenon through an honest engagement with the world. In this process, it is impossible to detach the researcher from the representation of reality and therefore, the researcher's biases are inseparable components of the qualitative research, including the narrative inquiry. Researchers working within the constructionist paradigm align with interpretivist theoretical perspective such as hermeneutics (discussed earlier in this section), phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, post-modernism, and so forth and hence adopt qualitative methodologies such as ethnography, phenomenological research, grounded theory and action research (Crotty, 1998: 5). Methodological choices govern the choice of methods that have inherent connections with the assumptions of relevant research paradigms. As Bryman (2008: 604) notes, 'participation observation is not simply about how to go about data collection but a commitment to an epistemological position that is inimical to positivism and that is consistent with interpretivism'.

Another philosophical tradition known as *pragmatism* has emerged as a solution to the 'paradigm war' between positivism and interpretivism. It is the notion that consequences are more important than the process and therefore that the 'end justifies the means' (Doyle et al, 2009: 176). Pragmatism considers practical consequences or real effects as the vital components of meaning and truth. As a conciliatory stance, for pragmatists, knowledge is viewed as being both 'constructed' *and* 'on the reality of the world' we experience and live in (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004: 18). This epistemological view has significantly popularised mixed-methods research in the past twenty years. The following table 5.1 summarises the characteristics of various approaches in social science research.

A Pragmatic Alternative to Social Science Research Methodology

Table 5.1: Characteristics of Research Methodologies
(Morgan, 2007: 71)

One of the features of the pragmatic approach as Morgan (2007: 71) notes is 'abduction' in pragmatic reasoning, which is to 'further a process of inquiry that evaluates the results of prior inductions through their ability to predict the workability of future lines of behavior'. Crotty's (1998) four elements that provide conceptual clarity in understanding social research are presented in Figure 5.1:

| Epistemology | The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology |

| Theoretical perspective | The philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria |

| Methodology | The strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes |

| Methods | The techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis |

Figure 5.1: Four Elements of Social Research

This study is specifically concerned with the lived experiences of the individuals who had experienced different types of violence during the conflict due to their association with the education system. The purpose is to examine these experiences in a broader socio-political context and develop an understanding of how such experiences have impacted on their personal lives and professional practices and then to understand an array of new characteristics of school education in the post-war period. Capra (1996: 37) suggests that 'living systems cannot be understood by analysis' and 'the properties of the parts are not intrinsic properties but can be understood only within the context of the larger whole'. Hence, the investigation into the interconnection between armed conflict and education involves a careful attention to broader social and political dynamics that shape the characteristics and surround the education system.

The present study mainly employs a narrative approach to examine the experiences that school teachers, students, parents and educational officers have had during the violent conflict in Nepal. It constitutes a phenomenological hermeneutic approach (theory of interpretation) (Moustakas, 1994) to enable the interpretation and understanding of their violent experiences by analysing their meanings and how these experiences have transformed their personal and professional lives. Figure 5.2 attempts to capture the methodological design of the study:
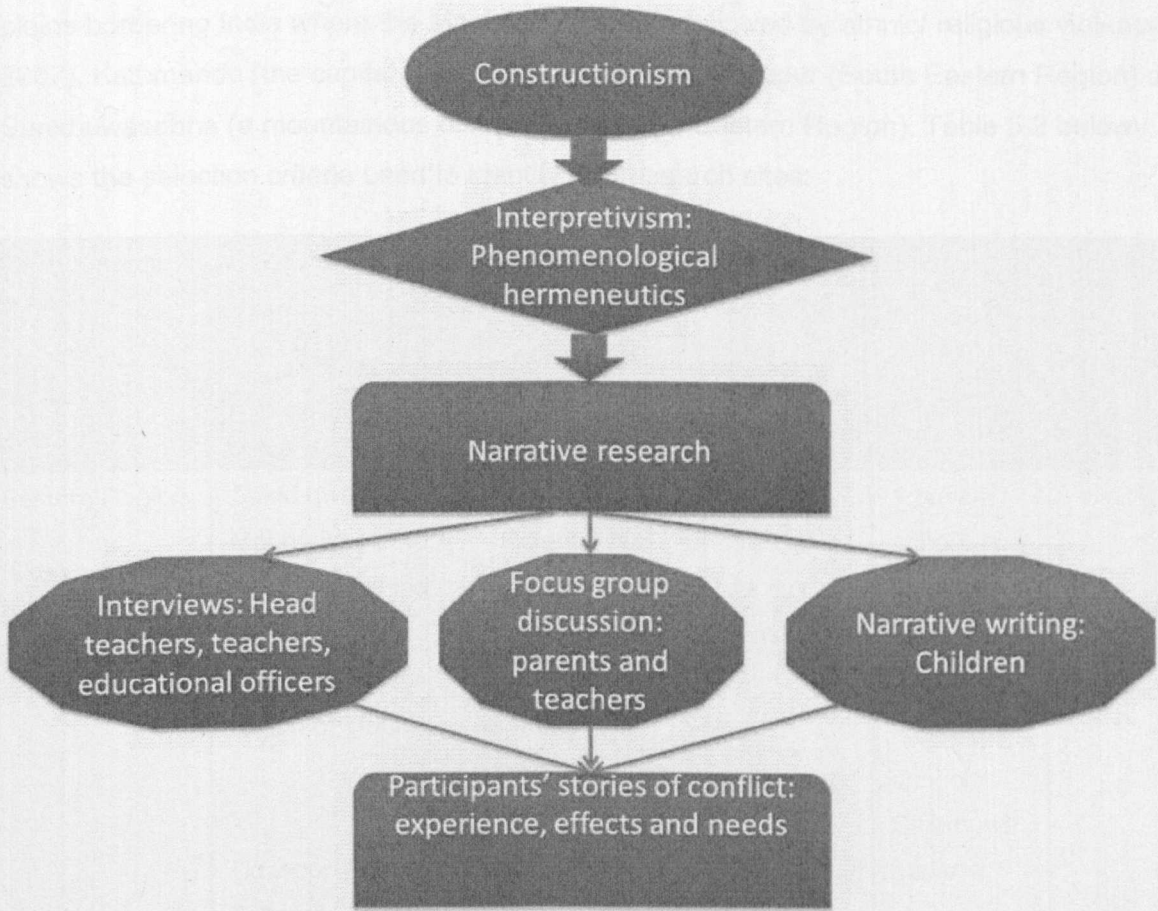
Figure 5.2: Methodological Design of the Study

(Author's Methodological Conceptualisation)

5.6 Methodological Approach

The study was carried out from June to October 2008. I spent between three and four days with the research participants chatting, dining and walking together prior to carrying out research interviews. In some cases, the head teachers provided accommodation in their home during the fieldwork, which further provided valuable time to better engage with the events narrated during the interviews. During my stay in the research field, I was also able to meet with local people in teahouses, local shops and community rest places, where they provided rich descriptions of the research setting (schools and surrounding communities) and the socio-political character of the community. Hence, this approach made the research a semi-ethnographic social inquiry.

The research was carried out in eight schools selected across the national geopolitical regions of Nepal. These regions included Doti (Far Eastern Region), Rolpa (Mid-Western Region where the 'People's War' was started), Kapilvastu (a district in the South Western

plains bordering India where the Maoist conflict was followed by ethnic/ religious violence in 2007), Kathmandu (the capital in the Central Region), Udaypur (South Eastern Region) and Sankhuwasabha (a mountainous district in the North Eastern Region). Table 5.2 below shows the selection criteria used to identify the research sites:

Geographical Region	Geographical Features	Political Features	Conflict severity	Status of schools (Private/ Public)	Location (Urban/ Rural
Eastern Region (Udaypur and Sankhuwasabha)	Sankhuwasabha - Mountainous district bordering Chinese autonomous region of Tibet Udaypur – Inner flatlands connecting the mountains with the Southern Plains	Sankhuwasabha - Remote, far from the capital, historically neglected, dominant settlements of indigenous nationalities Udaypur- important route of rebel movement during conflict	Medium level of conflict sensitivity	1 private school in Udaypur 1 public school in Sankhuwa sabha	Rural
Central Region- (Kathmandu)	The largest valley located in the central hilly region	The capital city, densely populated, political focal point with bases of international organisations including foreign embassies	Low level of conflict sensitivity	1 private school 1 public school	Urban
Western Region (Kapilvastu)	Southern plains bordering Indian state of Uttar	Multi-ethnic settlements (Pahade and Madheshi), the	High level of conflict sensitivity	1 public school	Rural

	Pradesh	country's largest Muslim community, history of ethnic violence, lowest literacy rate			
Mid-western Region (Rolpa)	Hilly region in the Western part, remote and mostly inaccessible	The origin of the violent rebellion also considered the rebel headquarters, dominated by indigenous nationalities, politically and economically neglected by the state	High level of conflict sensitivity	1 private school 1 public school	Rural
Far Western Region (Doti)	Remote hilly region in the far east of the country	Generally neglected from the centre, high level of rebel recruitment and frequent clashes between security forces and rebels	High level of conflict sensitivity	1 public school	Rural

Table 5.2: Selection of Research Sites

As indicated above, eight schools were visited for an extended period of fieldwork that involved interviews, focus group discussions and series of ethnographic observations in the schools and their surroundings.

5.6.1 Overview of Research Participants and Methods

Of the total of eight schools visited for the study, three were privately managed independent schools that were targeted by the CPN-M for their ideological discontent with private education. The participants for the study mainly included teachers, head teachers, educational officers, parents and school children (see table 5.3 below).

Location	Participants	Method	Number of Participants
Doti, Rolpa, Kapilvastu, Kathmandu, Udaypur and Sankhuwasabha	Head Teachers (Head teacher/ Principal from each research school)	Interviews	8
	Teachers (8 – 12 teachers randomly selected from each research school)	Focus Group Discussions	88 (8 groups)
	Teachers (One teacher identified based on their participation in the focus group in order to carry out in-depth interview)	Interviews	8
	Educational Officers (Each district has one District Educational Officer (DEO) appointed by the Department of Education. The DEO from each research district and the Director General of Department of Education were interviewed.)	Interviews	7
	Students (All children from the most senior class of the school, usually Grade 12 (except in 2 schools where children from Grade 10 took part.)	Narrative Writing	240
	Parents (Parents were selected based on children's response to the narrative writing task. Parents of the children who indicated that they had experienced conflict attended the FGD.)	Focus Group Discussion	76 (8 groups)
Total Participants			427

Table 5.3: Overview of Research Participants and Research Methods Used

Interviews

The head teacher/ principal from each case school was separately interviewed, whereas between 8 and 12 teachers from every case school took part in focus group discussions. All the head teachers were males and there was a very small representation of female teachers in group discussions. This clearly reflected underrepresentation females in the teaching workforce. There was no seriously distinctive experience of conflict across genders or castes and therefore, the focus group discussion was mainly focused in capturing teachers' experiences of violence and its effects on them. The table above (Table 5.3) provides a summary of methods and number of participants taking part in the study.

The District Education Officer from each district as well as the Director of the Department of Education was also interviewed. This allowed for understanding dilemma, tensions and risks experienced by government officials while working during the conflict. One teacher from each focus group was identified on the basis of their experience of conflict for a further in-depth interview. This provided more detailed narrative of the individual teacher which helped illuminate narratives gained from the focus group.

Primarily, the following five questions were asked in order to understand their view about education in relation to the emergence of violent conflict and to capture their experience and effect of violence on their lives (Appendices 3, 4 and 5 for details):

1. How do you see education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
2. What have been your experiences since the armed conflict began in Nepal? Please tell me your experiences.
3. How have these experiences impacted on you, your roles and responsibilities?
4. What support do you need both at personal and professional level to manage these impacts?
5. Given the effect of conflict on education, what kinds of changes or improvements are necessary in Nepalese school education in the context of post-conflict educational reconstruction?

Narrative Writing Task

Students from the most senior class (mostly, grade 12 (17 – 18 years), or in some cases grade 10 (15 – 16 years)) from each school were given a task of narrative writing entitled 'The Armed Conflict and my Experiences'. This age group was purposefully selected given the fact that the conflict had formally ended in 2006 (2 years before the present study) and they were likely to have good memory of their experiences. In addition, from cognitive

and maturity point of view, they were the most appropriate group of school children to be able to share their experiences during conflict. Narrative researchers who mainly rely on interviews or other forms of data do not generally use narrative writing task as a method of data collection. However, this innovative tool was deemed to be culturally suited and was the most effective method of obtaining young people's experiences of the conflict. My extensive research on young people's role in communities in the past and project work with youth in rural Nepal shows that young children from rural areas in Nepal are more capable of expressing their ideas and feeling in writing rather than in formal interviews (Pherali, 2007; Neupane and Pherali, 2008). This method also allowed for a possibility to obtain a range of different stories with a considerably large group of young students.

The purpose of the task was to capture stories about children's experiences of the conflict. They were asked to write about what they had experienced at school, on the way to somewhere, home or communities in relation to the violent conflict. The task provided detailed guidelines and flexibility to write their stories in any style or structure they wanted. These stories included narratives of conflict-related incidents, which these young students had become part of, or witnessed, read or heard about. The following questions were prompted to facilitate their structure of the stories (See Appendix 6):

- What incidents took place? Write in detail. Were they about you? Were they about teachers, children, parents or education officers?
- Did they affect you? If 'yes', how?
- What was done about it?
- How do you feel about them now?
- What changes do you intend to see in school education (topics you should study, methods of teaching, learning, life at school, etc.) in relation to the experiences you described?

Focus Group Discussions

The children were also asked whether they had heard/ read about, witnessed or experienced violent incidents themselves. Based on their response, their parents were invited to attend a focus group discussion. If the child had experienced violence at school, in the community or at home during conflict, their parents in particular were invited to the group discussion in relation to the impact of conflict on their lives and children. A focus group discussion is generally held with 'a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research' (Powell and Single, 1995: 499). The focus group discussion is considered a useful tool 'to draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences

and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods, for example observation, one-to-one interviewing, or questionnaire surveys' (Gibbs, 1997).

The parents were asked the following key questions (See Appendix 1):

1. How do you view school education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
2. Have you or any member of your family or relatives been drawn into any incident associated with the armed conflict in the past?
3. How do you think the experience of conflict has affected/ influenced you or your children?
4. What needs to be done to address these impacts?
5. What should be the role of school education in the post-conflict Nepal?

Similarly, between 8 and 12 teachers (randomly selected if there were more than 25 teachers in the school) in each research school participated in a focus group discussion. They were first divided into two groups and asked to identify conflict-related incidents that had occurred in their communities, at school or elsewhere in which their fellow teachers or students or someone else associated with their school had been somehow affected. Then, the participants identified various aspects of school education that had been affected by these incidents. Each group was asked to report their work to the whole group, which then formed the basis of discussion among the participants. The key guiding questions for the discussion were similar to the interview questions stated above (See Appendix F). One teacher based on their conflict-related experience was selected from this group for a further in-depth interview.

In addition, this thesis also draws upon researcher's 32 follow up interviews and consultation meetings with head teachers, teachers, parents and SMC chairs in Kapilvastu, Rupandehi, Dhanusha and Kathmandu in February 2011. This series of interviews was carried out as part of a multi-agency funded study into political economy analysis of education in Nepal in which the researcher played a lead role in designing and carrying out the research.

Even though the research methods discussed above were the main tools used for collecting primary information for this study, the observational notes during the field visit also informed the data analysis process. Some of these observations are also reported in the following chapters to illuminate research findings.

5.6.2 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, a process of identifying emerging themes from the data. The thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique for which 'any lived-experience description is an appropriate source for uncovering thematic aspects of the phenomenon it describes' (Manen, 1990: 92). The thematic analysis aims at identifying the 'theme', which 'refers to an element (motif, formula or device) which occurs frequently in the text' and the 'theme analysis' is the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied or dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work' (Manen, 1990: 78). Manen (1990: 79) further notes that:

> Making something of a text or of a lived experience by interpreting its meaning is more accurately a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure – grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of "seeing" meaning.

This process enabled the researcher to accomplish the best 'understanding of how people see their own experiences, their own lives and their interactions with others' when an armed conflict spread throughout the country affecting all walks of their lives (Atkinson, 1998: 74). The experience of the conflict may be best described through the *three dimensional narrative inquiry'*: 'temporality' reflecting *'past, present,* and *future'*; *personal* and *social* dimension of interaction; and the *place* determining a situation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000: 50). In this process, the researcher's understanding of social, cultural and political contexts of the conflict and educational processes also helped enhance the meaning of the narrative experiences. These three dimensions of narrative inquiry as the parallel and integrated facets of a human experience guided the data analysis.

Manen (1990: 92-93) suggests three different approaches to isolating themes from the data: a) the wholistic or sententious approach; b) the selecting or highlighting approach; and c) the detailed or line-by-line approach. In the first approach, we attend to the text as a whole and ask – *'What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?'* Then we identify a phrase to capture that 'meaning'. The second approach involves 'selective reading' in which the researcher listens to the data or reads the transcripts several times and asks, *'What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?'* Then, the researcher circles, underlines and highlights these sentences or phrases. The third approach recommends that we look at every sentence or sentence cluster and ask, *'What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?'*

This study employs the 'selecting or highlighting approach' as a data analysis technique in which the essential or revealing sentences and expressions were identified and isolated as the emerging themes from the data. The analysis is structured along three different groups of educational stakeholders and their experiences: a) head teachers, teachers and educational officers; b) students and parents. The themes are structured along the following lines:

1. Education in the backdrop of the emergence of violent conflict in Nepal;
2. Stakeholders' experiences of violent conflict and impact on their lives; and
3. Their suggestions about addressing the impact and reconstructing the education system

Finally, overall impact of conflict on school education was synthesised drawing upon the impact on all stakeholders as categorised into above three groups.

The 'socio-cultural approach' to locate respondents' stories was relevant in which the respondents' backgrounds, identity and potentially their ideological beliefs were the important aspects of analysis. In this process, it was acknowledged how their emotions and feelings were displayed during the interviews and different stories were compared and linked to 'relevant political structures and cultural locations' (Gribch, 2007: 130-131).

5.7 Note on Language

All the data were collected in Nepali language, which were later translated into English as they were transcribed. Out of 39 recorded transcripts, 8 were transcribed by the researcher while the rest were transcribed by a professional bilingual editor who was not only competent in both Nepali and English language in general but also had an expertise in the political jargon and hence was able to translate most accurately into English. The transcripts were listened and re-listened in order to capture the cultural nuances of Nepali language. The researcher did only rely on the translated data but also revisited the original records in Nepali in order to verify the accuracy of the translation.

Clearly, the issue of translation is relevant here. My background as a native researcher with good understanding of Nepal's education sector enabled me to ask relevant and contextually appropriate questions instead of simply relying on generic interview questions. Even though I was associated with a British university for my doctoral study, the semi-ethnographic approach to the study and my native background allowed me to present myself as a Nepali scholar who was interested in educational experiences during conflict. This sense of common cultural intimacy between the researcher and participants considerably benefitted the research process.

The data collection was carried out from June to October in 2008. All the transcripts were listened and re-listened to several times to identify common themes. Even though Nepali is my native language, I have gained my higher qualifications in the English and currently work in an English-speaking environment, which allows me to navigate between the two languages comfortably. Gadamer (1989: 388) argues that the situation of the interpreter and translator are 'fundamentally the same'. My involvement in the research process mainly in conducting interviews served as an effective way of gaining 'understanding' of the experiences, which were later, reminded by the data more systematically. Having noted this, there are clearly limitations of translation in maintaining originality. As Gadamer (1989: 387-388) notes:

> ... no one can doubt that the translation of a text, however much the translator may have dwelt with and empathized with his author, cannot be simply a re-awakening of the original process in the writer's mind [interviewee's verbal expression in this context]; rather, it is necessarily a re-creating of the text guided by the way the translator understands what it says. No one can doubt that what we are dealing with here is interpretation, not simply reproduction. ... Translation, like all interpretation, is highlighting. A translator must understand that highlighting is part of his task.

Hence, a layer of interpretation appears inevitably as the data is transcribed from one language to another. However, in the present study, the researcher has access to both languages so, the real linguistic transition occurred in the process of writing the research, which was benefitted from the ability to navigate across the experience during fieldwork; access to the original interview records; and the translated manuscripts of the data.

5.8 Ethical Considerations

The majority of people in rural Nepal are illiterate and do not have access to basic facilities such as media, roads, electricity, telephone and health. Even though this situation is gradually improving (especially the radio and telecommunication), the vast majority of Nepalis are largely uninformed about the rest of the world. The uniqueness of Nepali traditional culture is to welcome the stranger as a guest and extend respect by offering food, drink and accommodation. As someone who was born and brought up in this culture I was fully aware of what was expected of a 'guest' in a remote village. Having worked as a teacher in schools for several years, I was also aware of how schools might react to a request for research participation. Since the Nepali rural communities are mostly open and trusting, getting involved in paperwork or signing documents, apart from occasional legal situations, is not a common practice. Therefore, overstating the risk of participating in research or making the signing of a consent form mandatory could have resulted in not

having access to the field at all. It is important to note that ethics is a culturally constructed notion. As this study was undertaken in Nepal, a society with its unique cultures and traditions in contrasts to those of the Western society, the ethics requirements of a UK university did not always make perfect sense. However, it was ensured that the participants felt safe and there were no risks whatsoever attached as a result of their decision to participate in the study. As a whole, ethical standards have been at the utmost importance throughout the study.

The institutional ethical approval was obtained from Liverpool John Moores University prior to the commencement of the study (see copy of the ethics application in Appendix G). Official permission in Nepal was obtained from the Department of Education and District Education Offices before visiting the schools in the districts. The schools were approached with a formal letter seeking permission before conducting the study. At least two days were spent at each school to familiarise with the surroundings and build rapport with the school. Informed consents were obtained from all head teachers, teachers, parents and educational officers before they attended the interviews or focus group discussions. Respondents' identities have been kept confidential and the data have been treated with full anonymity. Some of the interview data involved personal information that was politically sensitive during the times of fieldwork. All these sensitivities were treated as absolutely confidential. All respondents, including schools, were made fully aware that their participation in this research was entirely optional and they could, without prejudice, withdraw from the research at any time.

For students, detailed guidelines on the task were provided in their class while handing in the narrative writing task. The task could be completed within one week, which was to minimise the load of extra work to the students. Even though the parents of the most affected children were invited to take part in the focus group discussion, the rationale for choosing these particular parents was not disclosed to them to prevent any symbolic offence. Again, there was no risk and harm associated in this process. All the discussions and interviews were held in one of the school classrooms after the normal school hours to avoid disruption in the school routine.

Hence, the study employed various qualitative research methods to gather data relating to key educational stakeholders' experiences of armed conflict in Nepal. Qualitative interviews were the key methods of data collection, which revealed moving stories of the participants who took part in this study. The focus group discussions among parents and teachers were also revealing and these occasions served as emotional moments for all participants while listening to each other's stories. Most importantly, the narrative writing was used as an

innovative research tool which generated rich data involving vivid description of the life experiences the young children had undergone during the decade-long armed conflict in Nepal.

5.9 Summary

This chapter has reported on the research methodology employed to carry out this study. As the main objective of the study was to examine the impact of the decade-long civil conflict on school education, this research takes a narrative approach in capturing lived experiences of teachers, educational officers, school children and their parents during the 'People's War'. This chapter has discussed philosophical underpinnings of the inquiry to highlight that the present research is located in the domain of philosophical hermeneutics and aligns with the constructionist epistemological stance. Key research methods such as interviews, focus group discussions and narrative writing were also discussed alongside a summary on the research participants. The data analysis technique was reported in detail in order to clarify the structure of research findings. Finally, the issue of language and translation was briefly discussed and the key ethnical measures taken in the study were then explained. The following three chapters will report on the findings of the study while discussing the themes alongside the relevant literature in the field of education and conflict. The next chapter will primarily focus on the impact of conflict on head teachers, teachers and educational officers.

CHAPTER 6: IMPACT OF THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' ON EDUCATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

This chapter will primarily present an analysis of the lived experiences of key educational stakeholders including head teachers, teachers and educational officers involved in the research during the 'People's War' and after the peace agreement was signed in 2006. In this process, I will begin by analysing their views towards the role of education in conflict and then move into an analysis of their experiences during the conflict. Finally, I will discuss the impact on their personal as well as professional lives.

6.1 Relevance of Education in the Onset of Conflict

There is an increasing body of literature dealing with the problematic role of education in the emergence of, and during violent conflict (a detailed theoretical discussion has already been presented in Chapter 2). The analysis in the previous chapters (Chapters 3 and 4) also highlighted that educational development in Nepal since the advent of a democratic system in 1951, has been implicitly influenced by key political events as well as the prevailing sociocultural conditions of Nepali society. The participants were asked if they perceived education as an instigator or catalyst of the violent conflict in Nepal.

6.1.1 Economic Relevance of Education

The dominant theme emerging in the data in relation to education's complicit role in conflict is about its relative failure to provide employability skills to young people, producing a mass of youth with qualifications without the necessary skills to be employed. A teacher from Kathmandu revealed that education 'definitely contributed to the conflict' and explained:

> … unemployment problem is widespread in the country making people feel frustrated. If education only produces unemployed people they are bound to be upset and out of compulsion they will be annoyed with the government and in order to vent their ire they would be compelled to get involved in the revolt, that is why until the education policy becomes employment-oriented this process will carry on (Teacher from a public school in Kathmandu).

Similarly another teacher in Sankhuwasabha mentioned:

> The education is not people-oriented, scientific, nor applicable to the lives of people and hence schools have become a hub for producing educated unemployed (Teacher from a public school in Sankhuwasabha).

He also highlighted that the provision of two-tiered education in the country fuelled violent conflict. He elaborated that:

> ... existing education system is of two types: the education imparted in government schools is received by poor people whereas those who can afford to pay for an English medium education send their children to private schools. Difference in the type of education has also contributed to conflict (Teacher from a public school in Sankhuwasabha).

6.1.2 The Education Divide

Many participants noted that the system of two-tiered education has contributed to the creation of two types of citizens with unequal economic potential. This relates to the idea of cultural and academic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that young people from diverse social and economic backgrounds are exposed to unequal educational and economic structures, which contribute to the reproduction of hierarchical social class. Private schools primarily based in the capital Kathmandu served the urban populations who were relatively affluent and could afford to pay for private education whilst the vast majority of children in the rural areas struggled to get access to education or predominantly received a poor quality education. An educational officer observed that:

> Socio-economic disparity, caste differences are the reasons for the start of the conflict. After those two, education is also mainly responsible, because the problems that plagued our society also created divide in the education sector, for example, government school education was for poor and the private education was for well-offs. Because of this, it has been apparent that the education system has been producing two types of educated workforce. (District Education Officer from Doti)

Private education, which significantly strengthened the economic potential of the growing middle-class based in Kathmandu (Liechty, 2003) and helped them to continuously influence the way that national governments interacted with global neoliberal policy thrust ignoring the fundamental educational needs of rural populations, widened the gap between the rural poor and the urban elites. The traditionally hierarchical society along the caste lines now increasingly adopted the necessities of Western modernity, simply to validate caste-based hierarchies along the notions of social class. As Liechty (2003: 8) noted, 'class has increasingly come to be the framing paradigm for many people in Kathmandu, encompassing (though by no means eliminating) the social valance of caste'. He further notes that 'as more and more of everyday life revolves around the social imperatives of the money/ market economy, the moral (and economic) logic of caste is subordinated to the

economic (and moral) logic of class (Liechty, 2003: 8). Private education played a key role in driving social change along these lines, which were challenged by the Maoist rebellion whose political base was predominantly the rural peasantry.

However, teachers in public schools felt that public education served comparatively better in relation to providing knowledge that was socially and culturally relevant to Nepali children unlike the private curricula that focused generally on the Western form of knowledge. A teacher from a private school in Kathmandu shared this similar view and maintained that English medium education promotes 'pro-Western' modern values and lifestyles, which are generally 'away from dominant social and cultural realities of Nepal' (Interview with a teacher from private school in Kathmandu). Even though there is a perception that private educational providers offer a better quality of education, some teachers in government schools argue that private schools emphasise rote-learning which best suits the current system of assessment. As a teacher from a government school mentioned:

> *Students graduated from government schools are socially, politically and culturally educated and develop a better understanding of our local society whereas private schools educate children for the Western economic market. Simply because private school graduates know better English and can perform better in the SLC exams, it should not be understood as a measure for quality education. (Nepali subject teacher from secondary school in Kathmandu)*

6.1.3 Equitable Access to Education

Some respondents also mentioned that education had failed to create an equitable society by providing an equal educational access to all social and caste groups. One of the respondents mentioned that – *'they (low caste groups) were dominated and pushed to the bottom. Brahmin and Chhetris were cleverer and were able to maintain their superior positions in society. Other castes such as Magars, Gurungs and others gradually got involved in the armed conflict. Dalits particularly, joined the rebellion'* (Teacher from a public school in Kathmandu). He revealed that the education system with a mandatory provision of Nepali as a medium of learning and teaching created a linguistic barrier to children who represented non-Nepali speaking ethnic or indigenous groups. Even though there was an opportunity to participate in education, the educational structures (e.g. medium of instruction) played against their linguistic backgrounds, which systematically led to their underachievement. The *Khas* groups (particularly Brahmin and Chhetris from the hilly region) had long dominated state authority and thus completely ignored the social, cultural and ethnic diversity of Nepali society by enforcing the Nepali language and *Khas* culture in

the formal curriculum (Pherali, 2011). As Ragsdale (1989) also found that the imposition of the Nepali language as a medium of instruction in Nepal schools significantly disadvantaged a large number of children whose first language was other than Nepali. Hence, right to education in the mother tongue was one of the fundamental demands of the Maoists before they declared the 'People's War' (Maoists Documents and Statements, 2003).

6.1.4 Education for Revolution

Another problematic aspect reported by most participants was the lack of education among the rural populations who were easily manipulated by the communist rhetoric of the CPN-M who waged a war of propaganda against the state through their rigorous political education programmes. The ignorance of the general public about socio-political conditions and potential opportunities for a peaceful transformation of Nepali society also offered fertile ground for the Maoists to succeed with their ideological indoctrination campaigns. Another teacher revealed that:

> *Uneducated people would not normally challenge any political view. It is not within their capability to advocate for educational, social or economic future of the country as they were deprived of education. The 'People's War' received the maximum support from and involvement of the rural uneducated people who found the Maoist ideology attractive. ... and those who were knowledgeable, they used those people to fulfil their self-interests (Teacher from a public school in Sankhuwasabha).*

The political campaigning in support of the rebellion entered the school premises as well. Some teachers indicated that the role of schools in the production of political culture was envisioned by the Panchayat regime when the schools were nationalised in early 1970s and educational processes largely involved dissemination of the political message to the young people and communities (Ragsdale, 1989). Simultaneously, the education system also conceived anti-regime sentiments among the educated teaching workforce who were increasingly becoming aware of the hegemony of the social elites. Teachers became the most influential political agents in the rural areas and therefore the political groups would compete to garner their support. The overthrow of the Panchayat system in 1990 and beginning of the multi-party polity intensified competition among political parties to expand their ideological support among teachers and students. Hence, educational settings were generally accepted as the sites for political programmes and teachers and students openly extended their political support to one party or the other. The CPN-M capitalised on this political culture to gain support for their rural-based movement. Hence, the role of teachers became prominent in spreading political ideology across the rural populations as well as

among students who could significantly contribute to mass mobilisation. A teacher in a private school in Kathmandu lamented that:

'... politics entered the education sector enormously. And from the point of view of small children, it is not worthwhile because they were forced into political involvement' (Teacher from a private school in Kathmandu).

Another teacher from Doti revealed that:

... our school always experienced direct political interference. All the political gatherings during local and national elections usually took place within the school premises which led schools to close down during these events. This trend greatly affected our teaching and learning (Teacher from a public school in Doti).

Most respondents indicated that the existing culture of teachers' involvement in politics and the use of schools in political propaganda generally allowed for acceptance of the Maoist interference into schools. Hence, the general acceptance of politics in schools may be seen as a catalyst for school-based political violence. Another teacher in Doti claimed that the massacre that took place in his school during the conflict is linked with the political culture of misusing educational settings for political activities. He lamented that:

Cultural programmes had been organised by political groups in our school on several occasions in the past but on that fateful day, the army raided the cultural programme of the rebels in which six of our innocent students lost their lives including four young members of the Maoist group. Had there been no practice of performing political programmes in the school, the crossfire would not have taken place on that horrific day either (Teacher from a public school in Doti).

6.1.5 Education, Teachers and Revolution

Most participants indicated that the security forces were suspicious of teachers and often arrested and tortured them, accusing them of being Maoists or their sympathisers. This assumption was largely reinforced by the fact that the Maoist leadership predominantly represented former teachers. A teacher who explicitly claimed his political affiliation with the CPN-M mentioned that:

If you see the leadership of the CPN-M now, you will see most of the leaders coming from teaching backgrounds. The leadership understands the ground reality of [education] in this country. The state was aware of the fact that the 'People's War' was being commanded by the education sector who had access to the grassroots level workers such as peasants, labourers, and other low level working groups.

Those who were working in the education sector were aware of the futility of Nepal's education system and therefore got involved in the rebellion with the aim of changing it (Teacher from a public school in Rolpa).

Here the respondent suggests that while the education system in Nepal was ostensibly to exert political hegemony of the ruling class, the system also harboured teaching workforce that would produce political leadership for an armed conflict. Interestingly and importantly, the 'People's War' was begun not by those who were deprived of access to education but by a small proportion of those who were able to become educated and thus came to recognise the political opportunity to challenge the regime and 'the feudalistic structure of the state' (Bista, 1991). That is, the idea of the 'communist revolution' in Nepal was born in the minds of generally educated people who mainly came from privileged backgrounds. They supposedly knew how to convert people's latent discontent, rendered by the long-standing state negligence, into the driver of rebellion.

The Maoist leader, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) was born in an upper-class Brahmin family and gained a university degree before working as a secondary schoolteacher. Similarly, Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai, the Vice Chairperson of the UCPN-M and the present Maoist Prime Minister, studied in a missionary school in Gorkha and obtained the top score in the national-level School Leaving Certificate examination. Later, he went to Jawaharlal Nehru University, one of the most prestigious institutions in India, to gain his doctorate in Regional Development and Planning. He had always been a top achiever throughout his academic and political career and is widely respected as an 'always first' man in Nepal. Interestingly, the average Nepali teacher is aware of these facts and thus has begun to make the connections between education, discrimination, development and the conflict' (Pherali, 2011: 140). As one school principal argued:

The 'People's War' was declared and led by some of the highly educated people. But, you must be aware that the 'People's War' began from Rolpa, a remote underdeveloped district. Why did it begin from Rolpa while the political movements in the history have started from urbanised or developed cities? Firstly, the dominant population of this region is Magar. Historically, the Magars have been always oppressed by the Brahmin oriented state structure of this country. This caste [Magar] is deprived of having opportunities to progress and have always been down trodden. The people from this caste are socially, politically and educationally deprived. They are very naive and easily persuaded by other people. Secondly, Rolpa is much behind in educational development as compared to other districts in Nepal. Out of five districts in Rapti Zone, Rolpa has been the least performing in

educational development. People would not have abilities to critically analyse, explain and look into political propaganda and therefore, would easily be manipulated. (Head teacher from a school in Rolpa)

Hence, education was seen as a passive tool of providing qualifications without much relevance to employment. Secondly, unequal access to education by means of social and linguistic exclusion or a divide through the private and public provision was also reported to be the 'negative face of education' in Nepal's violent conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). As noted elsewhere, 'depriving people of educational opportunity is profoundly detrimental to peace and justice but simply providing 'more of the same' education does not look like a viable option to contribute to building peace either, since it was those who were educated that led the conflict' (Pherali, 2011: 140).

6.2 The Role of Schools in Reducing Conflict

Most teachers and educational officers reported in the interviews that the educational sector, particularly schools, remained at the forefront of the armed conflict. Teachers and students revealed that violent intrusions into their schools could not be prevented and they were often caught in the middle of the conflict between the Maoist rebels and the security forces (Watchlist, 2005; 2007). Security threats came from both the security forces that would frequently arrest teachers and students suspecting them of having clandestine links with the Maoists and from the Maoists who would often intrude into the educational space to enforce their political activities. A teacher from Kathmandu lamented that:

The teachers and students were helpless and fell under immense mental pressure. People were victimized by both the warring sides either for supporting, or for standing against the conflict. If they supported the Maoists, they would be targeted by the government and vice versa. Many innocent teachers were killed as well. Rather than dealing with political issues, the government and the rebelling sides promoted the conflict. No agency, not even from the education sector could do anything to reduce the conflict. Either they were silently supporting it if they were not involved, or they were against it, but they could not do anything to find a way out of it. Even if some initiatives were undertaken, they were insignificant to the point that they had no effect (Teacher from a public school in Kathmandu).

However, some participants believed that despite being victimised, schools had also made a significant contribution to building peace during the emergency. Schools collaborated with NGOs and community-based organisations in order to prevent violence in the school. As revealed by a teacher from Sankhuwasabha:

The education sector has played a major role in reducing the conflict. In the context of our district, the education sector including schools, teachers, guardians, students and their respective organisations raised their voice to keep schools away from tensions and declared educational sites as the peace zones even during the frightening times between 2058 [2001] to 2063 [2006] ... they didn't hesitate to make appeals and hold sit-ins, rallies. And students' organizations too were involved in demanding that education sector not be ruined. In many places there were sporadic strikes and in some places the schools might have remained closed for a long time, but it did not exceed more than 7 or 10 days. When they were closed for a few days the guardians were involved in keeping both Maoists who were aiming to intensify the conflict, and army who were trying to suppress it, in balance. Hence, those involved in the education sector played a role in warning both sides.

He further reported that:

When I was in a school in Barabise there was a fight between the two sides. The army threw bombs inside the school and the Maoists laid mines inside the school premises. They kept signposts with "Danger" printed on them. Even during such times of risks, we managed to hold meetings with both the sides and urged them to remove explosives and spare school premises from becoming the battle ground. Finally, they listened to us (Former school head teacher from Sankhuwasabha).

Some educational campaigns such as the UNICEF-supported project known as *Schools as Zones of Peace (SZOP)* created pressure on the warring parties to keep their activities outside the educational institutions. The SZOP forms 'part of the UNICEF country programme' and is also part of 'UNICEF's peacebuilding framework, which aims to promote a culture of peace, tolerance and respect for different ethnic groups, opinions and values, as well as a culture of civic responsibility among children and young people' (UNICEF, 2010b: 1). The overarching goals of the SZOP were to:

a) 'reduce school closures as a result of political activities;

b) reduce presence of armed forces in and around schools;

c) reduce misuse of school grounds and buildings;

d) support political parties to honour commitments with regards to school functioning;

e) improve governance by SMC/PTA systems and local ownership of schools;

f) improve school functioning and resolution of internal conflicts; and increase inclusiveness at the school level' (UNICEF, 2010b: 2).

It is also reported that this campaign was able to achieve some positive outcomes in relation to securing peace within educational settings. For example, as a response to the pressure created through this campaign, 'political armed groups and police have moved camps out of schools; armed groups are cautious and do not enter schools with arms as they have done in the past; many schools have been successful in reducing inappropriate use of school property for agricultural activities, animal slaughter, weddings and political programs (UNICEF, 2010: 2).

As education was not the target of conflict as such and the international recognition and support for both Maoists as well as the government was of great significance, the SZOP campaign seemed to have worked. In addition, the Human Rights organisations, along with support from Nepal's development partners, also actively challenged violent incursions into the educational setting. However, the campaign was predominantly urban-based and did not reach remote districts, most of which were controlled by the Maoists. The participants in this study reported that the state of fear was so intense and pervasive that campaigns for peace needed a great deal of confidence among people. In addition, the Maoists would often argue that teachers and students were responsible citizens of the country and therefore their expression of political views and involvement in the movement was a positive phenomenon for social and political transformation of Nepali society. Hence, in Maoist terms, political engagement of teachers and students in favour of the Maoist movement was justified.

Private and boarding schools associations also campaigned for peace in schools. However, a teacher from a private school in Kathmandu mentioned that 'schools owners or principals did talk with the political leaders and the Education Ministry requesting them to make schools conflict-free zones, but it didn't affect that much'. He further revealed that it was due to 'fear' that schools were unable to create pressure... 'When the struggle was at its peak, everything was moving out of track so, speaking against the movement meant that you became a target'. This indicates that common people were forced to choose one or the other conflicting party with very little room for peace.

6.3 Violent Experiences of Teachers and Educational Officers

The experiences of conflict as reported by schoolteachers, head teachers and educational officers indicate that living as educational professionals during the armed conflict was the most distressing experience of their lives. Such horrific experiences of conflict were consistent throughout the country both in the rural and urban areas.

6.3.1 Direct Violence on Schools

Many private schools suffered physical attacks by the Maoists during the conflict. These schools suffered permanent closure or destruction of their properties, such as school buses. Among many, a reputable school in the heart of the capital saw its properties set on fire and a school building blown up by the rebels. One of the interviewees believed that their school was attacked despite their financial support to the Maoist movement:

> *Interviewee: They exploded bomb in the Principal's office and set fire on the school bus.*
>
> *Interviewer: Was that because you didn't pay them?*
>
> *Interviewee: No, nothing of the sort. It was just a message to the rest of the private institutions that: If you go along with us it's okay, otherwise these are the consequences you might have to face.*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you actually mean by "go along with them"?*
>
> *Interviewee: Do what they say. Pay what they want.*
>
> *Interviewer: So the blast was because you didn't pay...*
>
> *Interviewee: No, no. We had to move along whatever they said. We did move along with them. But it was just a message to the rest of the institutions in the country.*

> *(Teacher from private school in Kathmandu)*

It appears that the private schools were doubly disadvantaged during the conflict. Firstly, the Maoists would extort money from these institutions to fund their war, which was resourced from public donations and extortion largely from private institutions. Secondly, the CPN-M had ideological contention with the provision of private education that necessitated their action against these establishments. Hence, there was no choice about making donations but private institutions could not negotiate their security even after their compliance with the rebel demands.

There were explosions and crossfire unpredictably everywhere in the country. Explosions in civilian sites would often kill innocent people who would not have any link to the 'People's War'. Teachers also became terrified by the news elsewhere about the murder of their fellow colleagues. For example, a teacher in Kathmandu reported that he was horrified to read the news about a schoolteacher in Okhaldhunga district who was kidnapped and killed by the Maoists by breaking his limbs before murdering him barbarically (Teachers from a private school in Kathmandu). However, it was not uncommon to witness violent incidents even within the school surroundings in the rural areas. Teachers in Rolpa reported that 'almost every day during school hours, we used to hear explosions and cross firing and we

often feared of explosion in the school. Bullets went past the school hostel almost every night' (Teachers from a private school in Rolpa). Another teacher from a different school in Rolpa mentioned that:

> A political leader affiliated to Nepali congress was shot dead near the school, which terrorised young children who were in the school when the incident took place (Teachers from public school in Rolpa).

Elsewhere in Kathmandu, a teacher described how Maoists enforced anti-Sanskrit campaign in the school:

> On the day of exam, a group of Maoist supporters forcefully entered the school premises and burnt down the question papers of Sanskrit [a pro-Brahmanism subject taught in the school curriculum]. (Teachers from a public school in Kathmandu)

Similarly, violence occurring in the school surroundings impacted on schools and children. During the communal riots in Kapilvastu in 2007, schools were badly affected. A teacher in Kapilvastu described the horror of the riots as:

> As many as 300 houses of Pahade communities were burnt down and 25 people were killed. Schools in the southern parts of Kapilvastu were closed for up to 4 weeks. Bhuwaneshwori secondary school was closed for two months. Similarly, 120 vehicles were set on fire and hotels and shops of Pahade people were looted.
> (Teachers from public school in Kapilvastu)

The news of such violent incidents spread across the country making even unaffected parts of the country equally vulnerable and horrified. Hence, it was not only the individual experiences but also the general discourse of brutality and 'demonstration killing' that created the state of fear among teachers and school children (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010). In many rural schools, the Maoist cadres forced schools to refund the school fees paid by the students and often conducted their political education programmes in the schools forcing teachers and students to attend these.

The participants revealed that these incidents had profound impact on them and it was difficult to express in words. The distress, discomfort and trauma were frequently manifested by the respondents during the interviews, which indicated that the impact of conflict was deep and sustained and continued to affect their professional as well as professional lives.

6.3.2 Forced Participation in Political Activities

School children and teachers were forced to participate in the mass education programmes of the Maoists while the school buses were often used to ferry their political activists during such programmes. Teachers were compelled to take membership of the Maoist party after the state of emergency was lifted briefly in 2001 and the Maoists were in the peace process. Later, when the Maoists withdrew from the peace negotiation and the state of emergency was declared again, all those teachers who took membership or participated in the Maoist mass meetings were arrested and tortured by the security forces (Teachers from a private school in Udaypur). A head teacher in Rolpa pointed out that it was impossible to trust the state for their security during the times of conflict. The state neither provided security to its teachers nor did it allow them to negotiate their own safety within the dominance of rebels in the rural areas. Instead, it attacked teachers accusing them of colluding with the Maoists against the state.

6.3.3 General Strikes

For the political parties including the Maoists, general strike was the most common means of resisting the state mechanism. Generally known as *banda* in Nepali, the national or regional strikes would enforce complete shutdown of all businesses including schools. As a result, it was difficult to complete the school syllabus, which affected students' exam results. During emergencies, teachers in private schools often risked their lives by having to walk long distances to get to work or else they would lose their salary. A teacher in Kathmandu lamented that:

> *We [teachers] had to work even during the curfew. We attended school risking our lives. (Teachers from a private school in Kathmandu)*

The Maoist donation campaign was the most torturous factor during the conflict that morally destroyed teachers' motivation to work. Teachers were forced to contribute mandatorily to the 'People's War' which ranged from ranged from NRS.50,000 to 100,000 to most teachers in the district. For many teachers, it was impossible to pay. However, the failure to comply with the rebel demands would mean that the teachers would be physically assaulted in front of their students and sometimes be abducted and killed brutally (More on this theme will be explored later in this chapter).

6.3.4 State Terrorism

Teachers in most districts reported that the security forces often treated teachers disrespectfully. During the *Kilo Sierra 2* operation ion Rolpa and Rukum districts, the security forces carried out indiscriminate arrests, interrogation and torture to anyone

suspected of Maoist affiliation (A teacher from public school in Rolpa). Teachers in Sankhuwasabha also reported that the security forces mistreated teachers and students and carried out lootings in civilian houses (Teachers in Rolpa and Sankhuwasabha).

Security surveillance on students and teachers during their school hours terrorised them that most of them often cried and screamed. The Maoists and royal army personnel would visit villages in each other's disguise to obtain secret information about their enemies. Ignorant villagers, who would report the truth innocently would be later assaulted, arrested or sometimes killed being accused of spying for enemies of the conflicting groups(Teachers from public school in Doti). Elsewhere in Rolpa, a teacher describes that:

A powerful bomb exploded near the school several times. On one occasion, Maoist rebels who were allegedly dressed in the school uniform attacked the police checkpoint located near the school. Then the army entered the school and mishandled all teachers and students. Most of us were beaten badly. The security forces prevented learning and teaching for up to 22 days (Teachers from public school in Rolpa).

The following section will discuss impact these experiences on teachers in more detail.

6.4 Impact of Conflict on Teachers

Teachers' narratives of violent conflict show that schools were targeted equally by government forces who arrested, tortured and even killed teachers and school children suspected of being Maoist activists or sympathisers (Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre, 2004; Amnesty International; 2005; Dhital, 2006). The violation of human rights and atrocities caused by the state was far higher than those caused by the Maoists (INSEC, 2007). The Maoists engaged in 'demonstration killing' of teachers and school principals to terrorise their opponents (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010: 309). For example, the murder of Muktinath Adhikari, a school head teacher in Lamjung, was barbaric and inhumane[19] as documented in *Schools in the Crossfire 2004* that also captures the narratives of traumatic experiences of Adhikari's colleagues at school, of students who resisted his abduction and of orphaned family members. This was defended by a Maoist leader in the documentary who maintained that 'those who stand against the 'great' 'People's War' are class enemies and therefore not spared. We [Maoists] turn cruel to them'. However, in the absence of Truth and Reconciliation after the conflict, it is largely unknown what Muktinath Adhikari as

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[19] Muktinath Adhikari was forcefully taken away by the Maoists from his school while delivering a lesson on 16 January 2002. He was killed within an hour of abduction. His dead body was found tied to an alder tree.

well as hundreds of other teachers, parents and children did when 'stand[ing] against' the Maoist movement. Similar incidents were reported frequently by the respondents during the interviews. One of the teachers in the Eastern region described one barbaric act of violence by the Maoist rebels:

> *They killed my school's headmaster. We were together and the Maoists and students were preparing for a political programme for the next day. The school was not on that day and somebody called him [the head teacher] and took him away. Later they took him along the side of Lankhua river to a jungle and sheared his neck and killed him. The next day his body and head were brought to the village and we saw the gory scene. However, the Maoists have not officially taken the responsibility for the killing and therefore it is still a mystery. But unofficially they say they killed him, which indeed they did. And in that situation the school was in disarray and I was obligated to run the school as the villagers offered me the role of headmaster based on seniority and I had to take the responsibility despite my unwillingness. During the course of my work a lot of incidents like that happened, in some cases, because after that the Maoist activities intensified, they banned the practice of charging fees from students, not even the examination fees which had to be paid by the school. This put us in a very difficult situation (As reported by a teacher from Sankhuwasabha).*

Teachers in their interviews reported that they were trapped in the middle of the conflict, which resulted in loss of professional motivation, as their prime concern during the conflict was how to survive. Several teachers lamented that the Maoists suspected them of spying on rebel activities, and the security forces frequently harassed them accusing them of colluding with the Maoists against the state, or of harbouring them. The total number of teachers killed by the warring parties during the conflict reached 145 (INSEC, 2007). Furthermore, teachers in the Maoist stronghold suffered a two-way dilemma of whether to implement the new 'Maoist curriculum', or continue with the government-prescribed 'national curriculum'. In some rural areas, the Maoists enforced their own academic calendar and replaced the national anthem with a revolutionary song.

In rural areas, schools provided young recruits for the insurgency and school premises were often captured as shelters by both warring parties (Watchlist, 2005). In some places, school buildings were turned into military barracks preventing teaching and learning in the school. By 2004, an estimated 3,000 teachers had been displaced from schools in the rural areas, directly impacting on an estimated 100,000 students' education (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). A significant number of displaced teachers were still living in the district

headquarters and some of them cited security as the reason why they could not return to their designated schools (Interviews with teachers in Rolpa and Sankhuwasabha).

Teachers and children were also caught in actual crossfire between Maoist rebels and security forces. In one incident in October 2003, 11 young people, including four local students, were killed in Sharada Secondary School, Mudbhara in Doti, when security forces opened fire indiscriminately at the Maoist cultural group who had gathered in the school to perform a cultural show as a part of their political campaign. The school soon turned into a battlefield and then graveyard leaving local people and children with devastating effects. Even five years after this traumatic incident, teachers and children in Mudhbhara indicated that the impact of the violence was irreparable as can be seen from the following interviews with teachers in a community school in Doti:

> *Interviewer: Where were you, Sir, when the incident took place?*
> *The Male Teacher: I was in the school, hiding behind a cabinet when the army and the Maoists were firing the bullets. Later a teacher came and asked me to come out, and while we were walking out of the room we heard the army shout at us. They were saying: 'We will kill you, we will shoot you'.*
> *Interviewer: And where were you, Miss?*
> *The Female Teacher: We were also here [in the school]. We came out when we heard the cry: 'Shoot! Shoot!' They said, 'Shoot from the roof.' We were so scared when they asked us to put our hands up that we could not even lift our hands. They fired despite seeing the students in their school dress. ... they came and instantly opened fire.*

Teachers reported that their professional 'morale and motivation' almost collapsed due to the stressful experiences during the conflict. In a group interview, teachers in a community school in Doti said:

> *Our enthusiasm and energy have run out of steam. During the conflict, they were virtually non-existent in us. You never knew what would happen when, and the mental pressure diminished our interest in teaching students.*

These findings are also corroborated by similar observations made by Ezati and colleagues in the post-war context of Northern Uganda (Ezati et al, 2011). The authors also reported that the post-conflict impact of violence among teachers was largely manifested in the lack of professional motivation (Ezati et al, 2011). When the primary motive of life becomes escaping from physical violence surrounding people's lives, professional motivation, creativity and aspirations become largely paralysed.

6.5 The State of Fear and Psychological Trauma

Schools remained at the centre of attention for both conflicting parties for a number of promising benefits they provided to the armed struggle. For example, schools offered a considerable mass of inquisitive young people, who could be trained more easily than adults and persuaded to join the 'People's War'. Secondly, gaining support of school teachers would mean that their intellectual influence on the rural populations could be exploited in favour of the rebellion and expanding their support base. The increasing influence of the Maoists in rural areas, particularly on schools, provided a suspicious ground for the security forces to view school heads and teachers as part of the ongoing uprising and subsequently implicated violent interferences on the schools. Head teachers and their fellow teachers were apprehended by both conflicting parties on charges of aligning with the opposing party. School teachers were continuously intimidated and threatened with physical harm unless they adopted the policy enforced by the Maoists while the security forces arrested and abused them, accusing them of colluding with the rebels. The head teachers were traumatised but equally ensnared in their moral responsibility to protect teachers and students from the conflict while maintaining the regular school business. Parajuli (2006) notes one of the many unfortunate incidents at school that occurred during the conflict:

> Two years ago, Maoists came to Jumla's Tribhuban Secondary School and abducted the Principal and two teachers. The Principal was later killed in the forest and the two teachers let go with the warning not to speak against the movement. Once released, the teachers were interrogated by the army, and then the police took the two into custody and beat them up.

The news of 'disappearance', 'abduction', 'arrests', 'torture' and 'deaths' of school teachers and students often became the front page headlines in the national dailies. This spread the 'culture of terror' in the educational settings that was further exacerbated by violent incidents in the surrounding communities (Pettigrew, 2003). The 'culture of terror', as explained by anthropologists such as Green (1995) and Suárez-Orozco (1987), becomes widespread as the violent incidents become ubiquitous around the communities. Frequent encounter with violent incidents, either in person or obliquely through the media, gets people 'to accommodate themselves with terror or fear' but the 'low intensity panic remains in the shadow of waking consciousness' (Green, 1995: 109). Hence, living in such a perpetual state of terror causes considerable psychological and psychosomatic damage long after the violent incidents end. A DEO described his experience of being abducted as the following:

Talking about what I have gone through personally, I am a person who had been held hostage for 25 days while I was Paanchthar district's DEO. The Maoists kidnapped me and held for 25 days to get the government remove the military camp from the local school premises. The Royal Nepal Army had captured the school's compound and they checked teachers and students every morning when they arrived at school. The Royal Army had taken full control of the school. The student wing of the CPN-M sent me a letter asking for immediate removal of the army from the school. I put the matter before the security committee in the district but army ignored the request. (DEO from Sankhuwasabha)

It was not only the teachers but also educational officers that were trapped in the middle of the escalating conflict that largely disregarded the sensitivity of educational settings. Educational authorities were helpless in terms of influencing security-related activities that would violate educational code of conduct. The above quote 'army ignored the request' resonated in other districts such as Rolpa where a head teacher revealed that educational authorities including District Administration Officer were powerless before the military supremacy and their interventions in the civilian space. In addition, the state failed entirely to provide security to educational staff while expecting them to follow government regulations in the rebel-controlled areas.

The increasing Maoist activities in the school surroundings escalated the potential risk of school premises being used for clandestine mass meetings and as a sanctuary for rebels. The military aerial attacks tended to make no discrimination between venues which often resulted in losses of civilian lives including teachers and school children while attending Maoist programmes. The most traumatic experience for the head teachers was abduction of their teachers and students from schools to unknown places for several days and their vulnerability towards misuse of school premises as battlegrounds. Their professional accountability towards parents and educational authorities was trapped into the prevalence of the fear of being victimised by conflicting parties. Living in the perpetual state of fear, yet hard to narrate through language was reported to have adversely affected their physical, mental as well as emotional wellbeing. The broader impact of this situation was the gradual disintegration of the social intimacy between schools and communities. More recently, as the government of Nepal is pushing for decentralisation of education and transfer of school management to local communities, the teachers' associations and head teachers perceive it as a threat to their professional security from politically motivated social groups. Gounari (2010: 184) notes that 'increased fear can be linked to reliance to the individual and the disappearing social provisions and solidarity'. Green (1995: 108) also states that:

Routinization of terror is what fuels its power. Routinization allows people to live in a chronic state of fear with a façade of normalcy at the same time that terror permeates and shreds the social fabrics.

The head teachers frequently mentioned how the experience of violent incidents traumatised them during and after the period of conflict. These experiences (Table 6.1) are consistent with all head teachers representing eight different schools throughout the country.

DISTRICT	HEAD TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE OF CONFLICT
Udaypur	*During the conflict, I lived in a state of terror all the time. I would not know who would summon me and where they [Maoists or security forces] would ask me to go or something else. Life was completely uncertain.*
Rolpa	*The security forces arrested me despite their knowledge that I did not have any involvement and I was working with the district security chief when Holeri was attacked. Yet, they accused me of colluding with the Maoists in carrying out that attack.*
Sankhuwasabha	*One of them was sporadically showing his gun on his waist to intimidate me. Then a Maoist rebel put his gun on my head, I was so numb and I thought that was it. After I was released, I fell ill for several days.*
Doti	*After the massacre in my school, all the eleven dead bodies of the children including those of the Maoists were lying in front the school building. I did not know what to do. I was so scared but went to inform the District Education Office about the incident. I was too scared to return home so, I went to Mahendranagar (a bigger town away from the school) for a few weeks. When the situation cooled down a bit then only I returned.*

Table 6.1: Head Teacher's Experience of Conflict

Teachers, head teachers as well as educational officers based in the outreach districts were traumatised by both what Zur (1994) calls 'visible' and 'invisible' violence. The 'visible' violence was manifested through military arrests, abductions, physical assaults or even 'public executions' of educational staff who were often accused of spying or colluding with the opposing side. As noted briefly above in this section, on 16 January 2002, Muktinath Adhikari, head teacher of Pandini Sanskrit Secondary School at Duradanda, Lamjung district was abducted by Maoists while he was teaching at school. His hands were tied behind his back on a tree, where he was shot in the stomach and died on the spot

(Amnesty International, 2002). Another head teacher Harka Raj Rai was also abducted from Chisapani High School at Kaule village, Khotang district on the same day and murdered by the Maoist affiliated Khumbuvan Liberation Front (Amnesty International 2002). The everyday news of attack on and abduction of teachers and school children maintained the prevalence of 'invisible' violence. Anonymous phone calls and letters demanding financial contributions to the 'People's War' served as a 'controlling mechanism' to cause symbolic violence to the school leaders. While teachers struggled for their survival and emotional wellbeing, their professional enthusiasm and intellectual ability to engage in teaching and learning was considerably affected. Gounari (2010: 184) argues:

> Fear generates an uncritical acceptance of anything and makes people deterministic and cynical about the future. Horror of violence prevents us from thinking and therefore it is used to paralyze thinking. It mobilizes feelings of fear, but one would have difficulty connecting the feeling with a theory that is able to explain its underlying cause.

In some areas, the head teachers' role increasingly became more like a political broker struggling to protect their teachers, students and themselves from the serendipity of the ongoing insurgency and its brutal encroachment on the school system. The Maoist pressure, camouflaged in formal requests for teachers' representation in their political training, created a moral crisis for the heads in nominating their staff for this life-threatening but unavoidable task. Denying the Maoist 'orders' was virtually unimaginable but attending their programmes equally comprised the risk of being caught in the crossfire or facing arrests and torture by the security forces.

The Maoists popularised a revolutionary discourse to systematically eliminate anti-Maoist elements throughout their stronghold. Schools were used for this propaganda war and children were secretly used by both warring parties to 'spy' on each other's activities (Watchlist, 2005). Teachers in Udaypur and Rolpa reported that they were compelled to be apolitical or abstain from debating curricular contents such as democracy, social values, history and culture. Teachers felt that they were under constant surveillance from both conflicting parties through the school children who could report on teachers' political inclination. The physical presence of armed soldiers in school premises and their strict surveillance of school activities represented distressful 'symbolic violence' on schools. Elsewhere, the Maoists did not only retaliate the military intrusion but also attacked the symbolic representations of the values, principles and ethos in the education system. The teaching of Sanskrit, a language that symbolised oppression of Dalits, indigenous nationalities, ethnic minorities, subordinate castes and women was utterly banned by the

Maoists. The biographies of the royals who were represented by the Maoists as the 'chiefs of feudalism' and the 'exploiters' of the Nepali people were also prohibited from the school curriculum. The school children in remote districts were forced to tear out the portraits of the monarchs from the books (Parajuli 2006) and in many places, the students affiliated to the Maoist student wing *All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary)* carried out such action. A head teacher described his experience as:

> *During the exams, the CPN-M led groups of students entered the school and set fire to the exam papers as a protest to boycott Sanskrit from the school curriculum and subsequently vandalised the school offices and then exploded a grenade in my office. It was a horrifying incident. (A Head Teacher in Kapilvastu)*

Such an incident would inevitably cause police and military involvement resulting in indiscriminate arrests of students accusing them of being Maoists supporters. The effects of these tensions were not limited within the school involved but also spread across the entire school system and its surroundings.

6.6 'Terror' of Mandatory Donation

'Chanda aatanka' (terror of donations) was reported to be the most widespread form of 'terror' that engulfed school professionals during the conflict. The Maoist donation campaign equally increased the state surveillance of educational staff. The state would view financial help to the Maoists as equivalent to involvement in the insurgency and therefore would treat teachers ruthlessly irrespective of the conditions under which such donations had been made. The mandatory donation, as it implies, would also dictate the amount, leaving very little room to negotiate. A head teacher lamented:

> *They demanded [money] from me but there was some negotiation and finally they came to a compromise. I was able to reduce the amount they had initially demanded. They reached my home several times and I could not take any risk by not paying them. (Head teacher from Kapilvastu)*

Teachers reported that the Maoist campaign for 'mandatory donations' caused deep psychological distress among teachers. They were trapped into having to decide whether to comply with the Maoist demand of mandatory donations that, on one hand, carried a risk to life if they did not comply with and, on the other hand, if they did, carried a risk of being identified as a Maoist supporter by the security forces. The head teacher and teachers from a government school in Sankhuwasabha reported these tensions and violent experiences in the following way:

The Maoists had been demanding money from us [teachers in the school] for a long time. I [the Head] had been getting letters. Once they took a friend and me some five-seven hours away from this place [the school] and we negotiated with one of their commanders that we could offer them one-month equivalent salary instead of their original demand of one month each for the last three years. After we returned from that meeting, we collected 28,000 rupees, but had no idea of how to get the money to them. Then one day a man came and asked me to come out of the house. I went out carrying the money and when we reached a little distance he asked me about the money. I gave him what I had and asked him to provide a receipt. When I said that, he took out a gun and took me to a school near the jungle beating me all the way. Luckily, one of the cadres was a former student who had graduated from my school and who negotiated my release eventually. But that incident traumatised me and ruined my Dashain[20] festival that year.

Schools would receive letters indicating the details of donations including amount and deadline expected from the school staff. The analysis of these letters reveals that the messages were often written in an extremely intimidating tone and made death threats indirectly. This caused psychological torture among the heads and adversely impacted on their ability to manage school affairs. A letter of this kind reads as:

Dear [Name supplied] Sir,
We received your letter. Are you always drunk? You have been told several times before that you could send the money to the letter bearer if you could not come yourself. Do you really feel like living in a safe place? Why do you give trouble to our people? Is your intention to trick our people? Now, you will be solely liable for all the money from teachers in your school since 2002 in addition to your liability of Rs. 50,000. You will not be excused if it does not happen after this letter. Why do you get us to be cruel? ... there are rumours that you collected money and used it for yourself. What is it?
Area In-charge,
CPN-M
(Letter sent to School Head Teacher)

The schools, although portrayed as a vulnerable sector, were rather convoluted entities implicitly fragmented with their covert political affiliation with the conflicting parties. Some teachers were sympathetic to the objectives of the 'revolution' and extended their financial

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[20] Dashain is the greatest Hindu festival celebrated prodigiously nationwide for two weeks in September/ October.

contributions as well as moral support to the 'People's War' clandestinely whereas others, had no choice but to abide by the rebel demands to negotiate their own physical wellbeing. In attempting their own survival and protection of the school, the head teachers would often end up in mandatory cryptic dealings with the Maoists; negotiating with their teachers who potentially held contrasting political views towards the 'People's War' and maintaining pro-state behaviour at all times to satisfy the state surveillance.

The privately owned schools usually often had to pay significant donations to the Maoists in order to negotiate their existence or faced a permanent closure. The issue of private education as a Maoist target has been explored elsewhere in the literature (Watchlist 2005; Caddell, 2006). Rather more interestingly, private schools were affected by the pressures from the parents who either criticised the school for not paying adequate donations to the Maoists thereby inviting violent attacks on the school and putting their children's lives in danger, or strongly opposed the idea of funding violent conflict with the money paid for their children's education. Either way, the school leadership was caught in the middle of these tensions.

6.7 Relational Disequilibrium: An Excruciating Misery

Dealing with both Maoist rebels and security forces on a regular basis and maintaining a delicate balance in relationship with them was reported to be the most stressful experience. The 'People's Liberation Army' was a mobile guerrilla force that often resorted to sanctuary in civilian homes while the military deployment throughout the country during the emergency created a high risk of fatal skirmishes in the villages. During the conflict, school premises became strategic locations for both groups in providing space for a stay during their mobilisation. For the Maoist rebels, schools were prolific sites for spreading their political ideology and expanding their support-base across young students and teachers while the security forces often found school building and space appropriate for their temporary barracks during their deployment. Any kind of defiance from educational staff to these incursions could cost physical assaults, abductions or even loss of life. The head teachers often engaged in negotiating these virtually undeniable requests that, whether heeded or confronted would equally put their lives at risk. The head teachers lamented that:

> *The army and the armed police would frequently visit the school and enquire about the Maoist activities [in the village] or the information about the Maoist. We would not know any information but they would still press on us to tell them about the Maoist hideouts. (The Head Teacher in Kapilvastu)*

> *I was frequently forced to provide food and shelter for the Maoist rebels. My house is located near the military barracks and the soldiers would visit my house*

repeatedly. I was caught in the middle and my life during the conflict became 'hell'. (Head teacher in Sankhuwasabha)

Even though the state was mostly incapable of providing security to the independently operated schools, it frequently harassed them for making donations to the movement. In the rural areas, the challenge to maintain equilibrium of relations between the Maoists and security forces was even more painstaking for the schools. Head teachers were required to play a difficult and controversial role in liaising both 'perpetrators' and 'victims' simply to maintain a balanced relationship so that they could protect themselves and their schools in the times of mounting violence. As the head teachers from Doti and Kapilvastu pointed out:

I had to allow the Maoists to perform their cultural programme in my school on the one hand and cooperate with the security forces in their search on the other. (Head teacher from Doti)

Armed forces entered my school and arrested one of my students. I had to cooperate with the armed soldiers despite the fact that what they were doing was wrong. Later, I received pressure from the Maoists to facilitate the release of this student. I went to the military camp to negotiate the release of this student. (Head teacher from Kapilvastu)

The head teachers' relationship with the educational authority also grew contentious due to the conflicting policies of the existing state and the emerging state imposed by the CPN-M (as the Maoists called it 'New State') that rejected numerous aspects of the existing educational policy and practices. This caused head teachers to face contesting authorities and the only way to survive was by maintaining relational equilibrium with both the 'old state' and 'new state'. Makkawi (2002: 51) analyses a similar but rather intricate positionality of Palestinian teachers in Israel who consistently struggle to balance the pressure from the Jewish state and 'cultural and national expectations of their own community and students without putting their jobs in jeopardy'. However, in some cases in Nepal, the inefficiency of state bureaucracy was redressed by the fear created by the Maoists. An educational officer shares his experience as:

When the conflict was at its peak, I was working in Dolpa. What I observed in that period was that the fear of Maoists ensured teachers' regularity and punctuality in schools. The Maoists had circulated a warning to the teachers in the district that they would be physically punished unless they performed their professional duties with integrity. This approach worked really effectively and I felt that fear was perhaps necessary to bring people on track. (Educational officer from Kathmandu)

As indicated above, the fear of being persecuted might have worked superficially but this would not necessarily bring about real change in teachers' realisation of their professional duties. The professional standards achieved through physical or psychological threats to the practitioners would hardly produce high quality teaching and learning which is meant to be in a healthy peaceful environment where teachers and children enjoy educational processes.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has presented key findings in relation to the impact of conflict on educational professionals particularly, teachers, head teachers and educational officers. It was found that education's role in fuelling conflict was linked with its failure to address to address economic and social problems of Nepali society. This shortcoming of education ultimately contributed to the emergence of rebellion involving those who had been marginalised from the opportunities to progress economically and gain upward social mobility. The educational sector was trapped in the crossfire between the conflicting parties, which significantly paralysed educational processes during the conflict. Educational professionals, particularly teachers, were targeted by both conflicting parties to achieve their political and security interests which led to severe psychological and emotional breakdown of teachers. The terror of mandatory donations to the Maoist movement and fear of being physically assaulted, abducted or even killed by both Maoists and security forces was reported to be the common experience during the conflict which impacted on their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing not only during the conflict but also long after the armed conflict ended. Similarly, school children were also caught in the middle of violence. The following chapter will present the findings focusing on the impact of conflict on children and their parents.

CHAPTER 7: IMPACT OF THE 'PEOPLE'S WAR' ON CHILDREN

This chapter will discuss the impact of the 'People's War' on children particularly drawing on children's lived experiences as reported in their narrative writing. The narrative writing completed by 240 children from eight schools (Doti – 1, Rolpa – 2, Kapilvastu – 1 Udaypur – 1, Sankhuwasabha – 1 and Kathmandu – 2) provided vivid descriptions of young children's encounters with the decade-long armed conflict in Nepal. These young participants aged between 15 and 20 years reported their experiences along with their explanation on how they had been affected by the violent experiences. These students were studying in the most senior class (Grade 10 or 12) in their schools and had recently experienced the insurgency as young children. Based on the children's narratives, parents of those who mentioned that they had experienced violence were invited to take part in focus group discussions. In this chapter, children's experiences of conflict are analysed along with similar experiences shared by their parents. The findings are critically discussed alongside relevant literature in the field of education, conflict and impact on children.

7.1 Children and Armed Conflict

Since the publication of the UN Secretary-General's report on the *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*, prepared by Machel (1996), there have been increasing concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children during conflict and in the post-war situations. The report noted that millions of children were caught up in conflicts as targets of the warring parties. It highlighted that:

> ...[children] fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians; others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Just as shocking, thousands of young people are cynically exploited as combatants. (Machel, 1996: 5)

There have been consistent reviews of global efforts of child protection and initiatives to disassociate children from armed forces and groups. In 2010, it was reported that 11, 393 children (8,624 male and 2,769 female) were reintegrated into their communities with the help from United Nations agencies, funds and programmes (United Nations, 2011b: 4). However, the abuse of children and young people's involvement in violent conflict still continues to be a serious problem in conflict-affected countries. During the decade-long armed conflict in Nepal, children's experiences also resonated much of what the Machel report had highlighted. However, children and youth involvement in the 'People's War' was

found to be voluntary in many cases and coincided with the notion of 'revolution' for socioeconomic transformation of the existing unjust society. This chapter will report on experiences of children during the conflict in Nepal and discuss these issues in relation to available literature in the field of education, children and armed conflict.

7.2 Young People, Education and the 'People's War'

With the backdrop of failing education and economic stagnancy, youth frustration particularly in rural areas interacted intimately with the rapidly growing political and social movements in early 1990s that challenged existing socioeconomic structures in Nepali society. While most young people's social and economic mobility was trapped in the traditional power structures, a large number of rural youth saw the emerging rebellion as the only available option that could offer a respectable and collective purpose in life. All this happened simultaneously with some remarkable educational achievements. For example, primary enrolment increased at the surprising rate of 20% per decade compared to the 2% literacy recorded in 1951. As a measure of its success in expansion, Nepal has now achieved 92% primary enrolment and adult literacy has grown to 49% so that now 70% of the youth population (15-24 years) are literate (World Bank, 2001; 2009). However, one must ask whether these simple increases represent gains in the 'quality' of education and served the interests of the country at large or were simply 'more of the same' (Pherali, 2011). As discussed elsewhere, 'there is a pervasive feeling that education today largely provides theoretical knowledge and young graduates mainly gain certificates without any substantial employment skills, a perspective that is often hidden by the statistics proffered by development agencies working in this sector. Instead, there is mounting evidence that rather than reasonably contributing to the economic life of individuals or the nation, the increase in enrolments without either (a) improvements in quality or (b) adequate employment opportunities for those 'lucky' enough to graduate, only fuels frustration and conflict' (Pherali, 2011: 141).

Nepal's armed conflict involved an ideology-led Maoist rebellion (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010) that mobilised a vast number of young people who were politically trained and inspired by their leaders who extensively promoted the discourse of 'great People's War' as a means to bring about social and economic transformation in Nepali society (Bhattarai, 2003). In this context, schools provided multiple benefits to the Maoist rebellion while primarily serving as the prolific centres for political education through which the leaders of the rebellion could attract teachers and young students to the movement but also serve as recruitment sites for their guerrilla force (Watchlist, 2005; 2007). Schools were also lucrative places for gaining access to resources for the movement not only in relation to providing young recruits to the

guerrilla force but also in providing shelter to the 'People's Liberation Army' as they moved from one place to another during their preparation for attacks as well as for security forces who occupied school premises during emergencies.

The interaction between education, children and armed conflict needs to be analysed not only from the global perspective of rights of the children but also within the context of socio-political realities and the nature of conflict in a particular society. In Nepal's context, children's participation in the conflict has often been denied by the Maoists in formal interviews or official documents but informally, they view it as spontaneous and a part of a 'people's revolt' in which everyone spontaneously rose for a political change. Maoist affiliated ANNFSU-R leaders have occasionally reiterated this view during their interviews but there is a tendency in the UCPN-M to downplay this issue for obvious international pressures. Children and young people reported several incidents in which they had been victims of violence. All students who participated in this study had witnessed some degree of violence while almost all students in Rolpa, Doti, Kapilvastu, Udaypur and Sankhuwasabha had directly been affected by violence at various levels, ranging from witnessing violent clashes between the Maoists rebels and security forces, to being badly wounded in the crossfire in the village or school surroundings.

7.2.1 Abduction and Disappearance

Children and teachers were often abducted by the Maoists as part of their political campaign. As the Maoist movement was based on the principle of mass mobilisation and gradual expansion of their base area, they needed a large mass of young people who could be trained both politically to popularise their movement through political activities and militarily to fight the security forces including the Royal Army. It is estimated that 8000 children were orphaned during the conflict and over 32,000 were abducted either for political campaigns or recruitment in the rebel army (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). While some were lucky to return home after the occasional campaigns, others were persuaded or even forced to join the 'People's War'. One student from Sankhuwasabha revealed:

> On 25 May 2004, when we were studying in the class, five Maoist cadres entered our school and announced that they would take students from classes 9 and 10. We all started crying. There was no chance of denying the Maoists. So, we accompanied with them. I lost all my hope for life. I felt devastated for not being able to bid a goodbye to my parents before leaving. We were taken to a distant village called Yafu and on the way we were allowed to sleep in the group of six and one person had to be a sentry guard carrying a heavy rifle in hand at a distance of half

an hour walk. We could barely sleep during the night. Thankfully, I was released later on as there was a big group of soldiers who were going to Khotang district and they could not take every one with them for logistic reasons. When I arrived home, my parents could not stop crying for me. (A 19 year-old female student in Sankhuwasabha)

Similarly, another student in Kapilvastu also reported her experience of being abducted by the Maoists:

It was not only we, students but also our teachers were abducted by the Maoists. This happened frequently. There was no one else as a replacement when the subject teacher would be kidnapped by the Maoists. We could not do anything to prevent it. The whole school would remain tense after the abduction. The teachers could not fail us because they were aware of the effects of such incidents but the quality of education was badly affected. (A 19 year-old female student in Kapilvastu)

Children's narratives of being kidnapped by the rebels show that they did not have any choice but to comply with the Maoists' orders. While the Maoists referred to the existing education as a bourgeoisie system, which was irrelevant and did not prepare young people for intellectual and economic prosperity, they argued that the armed rebellion had become necessary to reform the state structures, including the education system (Maoists Statements and Documents, 2003). Form their perspective, in the times when the 'great People's War' was being fought in order to transform the entire Nepali society, 'bourgeois' education was less important. As one of the parents revealed:

The existing bourgeois education produces young people who cannot be employed. We do not have the foundation for professional and scientific education that produces independent youth. It consists of songs and praises of kings and places ... it does not teach children how to move forward and change society. (A parent during a focus-group-discussion in Sankhuwasabha)

It appears that parents who held socialist views disagreed with the present system of education and implicitly argued that the Maoist movement was a legitimate response to static social structures. This was argued to be a motivation for many to join the war which affected children and their families. However, it was interesting to observe that those who criticised the existing education system implicitly acknowledged the relevance of meritocratic education system that would treat the problem of youth being trapped in the unemployment.

Many children lost their close relatives during the violence. Some of them joined the Maoists or were already serving in the security forces and were killed during the war whereas others were arrested or kidnapped during the conflict and never returned home. It is estimated that over 3000 people were victims of forced disappearances in the period of 1996 – 2007 (International Commission of Jurists, 2009). As the following table (Table 7.1) shows, several organisations have documented the cases of forced disappearances, many of which are still unresolved:

SN	Organisation	Cases Registered
1	National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)	2800 cases (900 cases remain unresolved (600 disappearances and 300 abductions)
2	International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)	209 cases (195 disappearances and 14 abductions)
3	Advocacy Forum	417 cases
4	Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC)	933 cases (828 disappearances and 105 abductions)
5	The Society of Families of the Disappeared	1162 unresolved cases
6	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	3000 disappearances, of which 1127 cases remain unresolved

Table 7.1: Forced Disappearances during the People's War
(International Commission of Jurists, 2009: 2)

The Watchlist on Children in Armed Conflicts also highlights that there was a widespread pattern of disappearance in Nepal when the government launched a counter-insurgency strategy (Watchlist, 2007). One student in Udaypur described the disappearance of his uncle as the following:

My uncle was the head teacher in a local school. One day in 2002, he was summoned by the District Education Office in the district headquarters of Okhaldhunga. When he went to see the DEO, he was arrested by the police and charged of being a Maoist activist. My auntie was then notified by a letter that he needed some clothes in the police custody. When she hurriedly visited the district headquarters next day and wanted to see her husband, the administration told her that he was transferred to Rajbiraj (the regional administrative office). Then she worryingly went to Rajbiraj where she was told that he was no longer there and perhaps transferred to Kathmandu. We could not get any information about his

whereabouts. The family broke down economically and emotionally. The eldest son went to the Gulf for employment and the youngest joined the 'People's War'. The government disclosed only in 2007 that my uncle was beaten ruthlessly and killed soon after being arrested in 2002. (A 15 year-old boy in Udaypur)

The Maoists recruited children in their armed forces by using a number of strategies such as 'kidnapping of children; abduction of large groups of children from schools; and use of propaganda campaigns to attract children as "volunteers" (Watchlist, 2007: 5). It was recorded that 33,160 school children were abducted from schools for political campaigns (INSEC, 2007), many of whom were subsequently released, but some were killed in the crossfire or the aerial attack by the state army while 'others joined the movement voluntarily or under pressure' (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010, p. 310). Watchlist (2007) estimated that there were between 3,500 – 4,000 child soldiers in the Maoist ranks who mainly served in local militias. However, many children also served in the Maoist core military wing 'People's Liberation Army' where they were trained how to use modern heavy weapons, including 'socket bombs' (Watchlist, 2007: 4). The Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre (2004) reported that an estimated 475 children had lost their lives within the first six years of the conflict whilst 562 sustained injuries either in the crossfire or in explosions. Hence, school children were victimised by the state as well as by the Maoists. It was only in February 2010, four years after the CPA that nearly 3,000 minors were released from the People's Liberation Army (United Nations, 2010).

7.2.2 Displacement and Victimisation

Several reports reveal that the Maoists caused atrocities against civilians during the conflict (INSEC, 2007; Watchlist, 2005), which often led to a massive scale of internal displacement, mainly people fleeing to the district headquarters, or to the capital. The displacement of families caused financial pressures and seriously damaged children's education. It is estimated that 50,000 people still remain displaced due to the decade-long conflict while 5,000 people faced forced displacement during the ethnic conflict that erupted in the Terai in September 2007 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2011).

The families and relatives of personnel serving in the security forces, including the military and police, were often the first targets of the Maoists rebels in rural areas. The families were 'threatened and maimed to recall [their] serving members' (A 16 year-old girl in Udaypur in her narrative writing). She further revealed that her family was forced out of home and locked out by the Maoists as her father was serving in the army and her 'uncle and auntie were kidnapped and heartlessly tortured by the Maoists' (A 16 year old girl in

Udaypur). Shakya (2011) also reported similar findings in her study drawing on her extensive fieldwork relating to human rights violations.

Experience of violence in the communities and school surroundings was a common phenomenon. A student in Sankhuwasabha wrote:

> *During conflict, a violent incident took place between the army and Maoists in Makalu village. Later on we found out that two Maoist rebels had been killed. It was only when we saw the dead bodies that we discovered that the two Maoists were my two uncles. A couple of years later, my own friend decided to join the Maoist Red Army. She also tried to convince me but I did not want to give up my study. A few months later, she was killed in a battle in Tehrathum. (A 19 year-old male student in Sankhuwasabha)*

Hart (2001: 28) mention that children who joined the 'People's War' often did so 'with the encouragement or example of parents, especially, of older siblings'. He further notes that children's participation in the rebellion was closely related to their parents' ideological affinity with the movement and the Maoist ideology (Hart, 2001). In addition, the construct of Nepali families, often characterized by the cultural attribute of hierarchical structure, also explains children's attitudes towards the 'People's War'.

Shakya (2011: 560) noted that 'the school mobilization was very effective with cultural programs and radical rhetoric of social justice: equal rights, free from discrimination both in terms of caste and gender, liberation of oppressed, ensure identity, language and culture rights of the underprivileged and marginalized'. She also found that children were attracted to elegant Maoist parades and musical programmes that condemned feudal lords (Shakya, 2011: 560). Security forces targeted schools on the suspicion that students and teachers were part of Maoist political campaigns. One of the most shocking incidents of this kind occurred in Doti in 2003 in which security forces raided a secondary school where the Maoist cultural groups were preparing to hold a cultural programme such as singing, dance and opera. Security forces suddenly surrounded the school and opened fire at Maoists as well as innocent children who were in the school that day. One student who was caught in the crossfire explained:

> *In October 2003, the armed security forces attacked my school. On that day, a group of Maoists had organised a cultural program in our school. They were not particularly armed. In fact, these artists were students like us who were brought from another school to perform a cultural show at our school. But they were members of the Maoist cultural groups. The Maoists forced all students to view their cultural show and would*

not let anyone leave the school premises without their permission. Before the show
began, there was an explosion near the school. Suddenly, armed soldiers surrounded
our school and started shooting at us recklessly. Two of the children who were on
their way home were killed on the spot. Other three children were shot inside the
school. I was also hit on my leg and fell on the floor inside the canteen. I screamed for
water but there was no one around. The soldiers who had gone mad locked all others
inside the classrooms and shooting randomly at everyone they found suspicious.
Eleven young people were killed during this attack of the dead, six were my friends. I
fell unconscious. When I opened my eyes, I found myself on the hospital bed. I
realised that I was later airlifted to the regional hospital. Despite the long treatment,
doctors could not take the bullet out of my leg for several months. My leg will not be
recovered and I walk with this bamboo crutch. (A 17-year-old male student in Doti)

For secondary schoolchildren in the outlying regions, it was virtually impossible to remain 'politically neutral' in the escalating 'rebellion,' even if they could escape the Maoist recruitment campaigns. Young students who experienced these dangers revealed that the mounting conflict resulted in the decline of their aspirations and rising doubts about the futility of life and the banality of school education (Pherali, 2011). Students reported that the traumatic experience of being caught in the crossfire had made a long-term impact on their lives. Another student from Doti revealed:

When the army entered the school playground, they started shooting recklessly. They
started firing at us madly and indiscriminately despite our telling them that we were
students. Some students managed to escape from the school whereas other started
running into the classrooms. Suddenly, I was hit by a bullet on my right hand and fell
unconscious. I was airlifted to Kathmandu for treatment where I stayed for two months
before returning home. I can no longer write with my right hand so I had to learn to
use my left hand. I cannot concentrate properly and often get disturbed by the
memory of the violence. (A 19 year-old female student in Doti)

The fear generated by the violent conflict also altered the way in which people moved around in their communities (Pettigrew, 2003). Clearly, public mobility suffered from self-imposed restriction as an understandable precaution against being caught in an unpredicted occurrence of violence in the village. For teachers and children, especially in the mountains where schools are generally located, travelling to and from schools was a dangerous undertaking (Pherali, 2011). Parents of teenage children would always be worried and troubled about their children's safety while they were at school. While the risk of being caught in the crossfire was pervasive, young people equally feared the risk of

forced recruitment in the rebel army, abduction, or even being arrested by the security forces as a Maoist suspect. Watchlist (2007: 2) reported that a large number of young children had been forced to flee their homes 'to avoid recruitment by the Maoists, or to seek better lives away from already impoverished communities further damaged by the conflict and the government's brutal responses'. Some parents in Kapilvastu district reported that they were compelled to withdraw their boys from school and send them away for employment hoping that they would at least escape the risk of forcible recruitment into the Maoist army. As one parent lamented:

> *The soldiers in the camps would observe our children play on the school playgrounds with their binoculars. Anyone who was able to jump and looked physically fit would be arrested as a Maoist suspect. (A parent in Kapilvastu)*

> *We were extremely terrorised by the risk of our children being nabbed by the armed groups on their way to and from school. I could not live with the everyday fear of losing my son. So, I took him out of school and sent him to Malaysia for work. (Another parent during a group discussion in Kapilvastu)*

As revealed in the above quote, parental concerns during the times of conflict mainly appear to be about the safety of their children while their children's future aspirations evidently become unimportant. It also shows the calculated decision of parents who, being aware of dire working conditions of the manual work in 'Malaysia', would still prefer to send their young sons abroad while compromising their potentially bright future had they continued education. Here, 'losing' one's young son temporarily by sending them away from home is described as a more intelligent decision than potentially 'having to lose them permanently to one of the conflicting parties. This, however, would often lead to family disintegration and systematic rupture of the long-term dreams that parents and children collectively see for the children's future.

Security forces also arrested students suspecting them of maintaining secretive connections with the Maoist student wing ANNFSU-R which was also labelled a 'terrorist group' by the government. Students were usually stopped and interrogated on their way to, and back from, schools. As the soldiers would mistreat and even assault people on suspicion during their patrolling, young students would often get intimidated by the heavily armed soldiers. One student in Sankhuwasabha described the experience of her friend being hassled by security forces during her overnight stay in the rented house:

On 31 October 2004, I was staying at Bhanjyang to complete my high school study and one day, one of my friends arrived from Dhankuta where she had been to take an entrance exam for a nursing course. The following morning when she was leaving for home, she had an encounter with the soldiers at a shop outside my rented house. The soldiers stopped her and started interrogating. As she was scared, she lied about her visit to Dhankuta and pretended that she was a student in my school and shared the house with me. But they quickly found out that she had already completed her secondary level education. They came to my room and pointed a gun on my chest and repeatedly asked me if she was a Maoist, which I consistently denied. Later, she told the truth but the soldiers arrested her and took her to the army barracks. She was released after a month when her brothers stayed as her guarantors. (A 19 year-old female student from Sankhuwasabha)

Elsewhere, 'children were mobilized by the Maoists to create student unions in schools to influence their peers to understand their ideology and political rhetoric, and the importance of being part of the insurgency' (Shakya, 2011: 560). A young boy in Sankhuwasabha revealed that security forces would turn brutal against Maoist suspects and their sympathisers. He mentioned:

On 23 January 2003, Royal Nepal Army raided my uncle's house and inhumanly tied my cousin's hands and legs and blindfolded him before dragging him outside the house. They beat him mercilessly and arrested him. We later found out that he had distributed membership of the Maoist-affiliated student union to other students in the school. (A 18 year-old boy from Sankhuwasabha)

In Rolpa, the district where the violent conflict originated, most children seemed to have negative perceptions about the police and the army. Even before the 'People's War' was declared, a large number of people in this region were arrested and charged with false cases (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003) for their political affiliations with the United People's Front, a political party that later converted into CPN-M, most people in this district viewed the state authority as a violent oppressor. Whenever any conflict-related incidents took place in and around the village, the security forces would normally target teachers and students. As one student in Rolpa explained:

I was a student in grade 8. Once, the police and army surrounded our school while we were taking English lessons. We had the impressions that the army and police often tortured and killed people for no reasons. When I saw armed soldiers outside our classroom, I started shivering with fear. The soldiers got all senior students of the school to stand in a queue on the playground. They started interrogating

everyone. They beat up some teachers and students heartlessly. (A 17-year old female student in Rolpa)

Students reported a range of dreadful experiences during conflict. As Shakya (2011: 560) noted that 'schools were not the 'zone of peace' as they were promoted to be but were rather 'zones of war' as both the armies of the conflicting parties violated the rights of children' under the UN convention. Another student in Rolpa witnessed a horrific scene of attack on civilian homes from her school. She explained that she had experienced 'so many events of violence' in the past few years. She further stated:

Once we were taking an exam, suddenly we saw the Royal Army setting fire on two houses in the village next to our school. The soldiers threw a seven-year-old child into the burning house. Suddenly there was gunfire and a bullet went through the left hand of our teacher who was invigilating the exam. (A 19 year-old female student in Rolpa)

These findings corroborate with various reports and studies that indicated human rights abuses and indiscriminate intrusion of the conflicting parties into schools and violence against teachers and children (Amnesty International, 2005; Watchlist, 2005; Sharma and Khadka, 2006; Shakya, 2011). These violent incidents, often targeted at children and young people (Machel, 1996), severely affected children's education and the quality of their lives. Mounting experiences of these kinds led to a rise in forced migration of families, which exacerbated the negative educational experiences of young children.

7.3 Ethnic Violence and Children in Kapilvastu

For children in Kapilvastu, the ethnic violence that occurred in September 2007 had affected them much more seriously than the decade-long armed conflict between the state and the Maoists. Perhaps, it was because the ethnic riots were much more dreadful and explicit than the generally clandestine and targeted violent actions during the protracted conflict. The ethnic violence in Kapilvastu began after the assassination of Mohit Khan, a local Muslim leader by some unknown persons on 16 September 2007. Mohit Khan was a former member of the pro-Monarchy vigilante group called *Pratikar Samuha* (OHCHR, 2007). Such groups were promoted by the royal government to counter the CPN-M activities in some Western Terai districts and were provided with training and weapons by the security forces. There was no formal decommissioning of such groups and they continued to possess arms even after the peace agreement. The hostile activities in the area resulted in the killing and displacement of a large number of Pahade people who were perceived to be the supporters of the Maoist movement (OHCHR, 2007). Muslim /

Madheshi communities that Khan belonged to, accused Pahade groups of his murder and started retaliatory attacks by burning homes and businesses owned by Pahade people. The riot caused the deaths of fourteen people and 200 homes were destroyed (OHCHR, 2007). All the 33 children who participated in the narrative writing task in Kapilvastu district highlighted that the ethnic violence was the scariest form of conflict they had experienced. One student explained that:

> The communal violence that erupted on 16 September 2007 forced my family and neighbours to flee our homes. It was a festive occasion of Teej and all our sisters, aunties and mothers had gathered to celebrate the festival. Suddenly, hundreds of armed Madheshi people entered the village attacking the villagers and setting fire on their homes. Then, they attacked our neighbour and shot him in front of my eyes. We heard that they were raping women in the village. Suddenly, they set fire on our house and we somehow managed to escape to the nearby forest. It rained heavily all night. There were pregnant women and newborn babies and young children who suffered from hunger all night. When we returned to the village next day, the village was all wrecked and young girls of 15-16 years had been raped. There was no one to pick up the scattered dead bodies. We picked up some left over belongings from homes and fled to Sundaridada [a village in the north] where we stayed for one month. We were moved to another place for few more months before finally the political parties and the government assured that it was now safe to return to the village. Not everyone has been able to return though. (A 18 year-old Pahade student in Kapilvastu)

The above narrative of a young girl represents the common experience of children and families during the ethnic conflict in this district. The state of helplessness as the participants describe was not only painful to read about but also infuriating to learn that the security forces made limited or no effort to protect civilian lives and properties during the times of communal violence. The narrative also indicates that the ethnic violence of this type contributed to legitimising their own ethnic identity more firmly and stereotyping the 'other' as criminal, cruel and rival ethnic groups. Similarly, another student wrote that:

> The following day Nepali people came to our village and burnt down Muslim people's homes. They also set fire on two tractors. All Muslims from our village fled to India. We also took refuge in our relatives' house. Villagers took turn to guard the village at night and young girls and women often hid in the sugarcane farm and fields to be safe from rioters. (A 19 year-old Tharu girl in Kapilvastu)

It was interesting to observe how this young girl uses the term 'Nepali' to refer to the people from hilly backgrounds. Even though both Muslim and Pahade people living in Terai as Nepali citizens, it is not uncommon to notice exclusionary remarks against Madheshi people. This is an example of how 'Nepali' as the national identity predominantly represents the Pahade people and culturally excludes other ethnic groups such as Muslims, Tharu and Madheshi people from the character of Nepali as the national identity. The cultural hegemony of hill-based, high caste groups (Brahmin-Chhetri) and their language (Nepali) has systematically undermined cultural, religious and indigenous identities of diverse populations of Nepal (Lawoti, 2005). Education in this situation systematically contributes to the process of reinforcing or reproducing these cultural prejudices (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Apple, 2004; Davies, 2004). As Gellner (2007) also notes that schools and government organisations propagated highly exclusionary national identity that neglected sentiments of lower castes, ethnic groups (Janajatis including Tharus in the Terai), religious minorities (Buddhists, Muslims, and increasingly now by Christians), as well as Madheshis living in the economically crucial southern plains of the country. The recent rise in ethnic politics challenging the state-sponsored repressive traditions against minority ethnic and indigenous nationalities problematises the notion of 'Nepali' as the only unifying national identity. A mural on the wall of a Kathmandu busy street reads *'Down with the idea of national identity that requires Nepali language and daura-suruwal-topi*[21].*'* This indicates that the ethnic violence in Kapilvastu has its roots in social and political exclusion of various cultural and religious groups in the district, which was sparked by a criminal incident.

Most children in Kapilvastu reported that their homes, grain and cattle were set on fire by the rioters. A student mentioned that his younger brother lost his sense and developed mental health problem as a long-term effect of attack on their home (A 18 year-old male student in Kapilvastu). He also lamented that there was no support provided by the government nor did any NGO or INGOs extend meaningful support in the times of crisis. Schools in the region were reported to have been closed for up to two months due to the fear of a return of violence. Particularly, teachers from different ethnic backgrounds felt insecure about returning to schools, which adversely impacted on teaching and learning.

In addition to the ethnic conflict, children in Kapilvastu had also experienced a range of other problems such as abduction and forced recruitment in the armed groups during the decade-long civil war. One student reported how she escaped from the Maoist abduction as the following:

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[21] National dress that has been traditionally promoted as national uniform.

We could hardly study in peaceful situations in the school. There was always fear of being abducted by the Maoists. One day while we were studying, some Maoist rebels arrived in our school and asked us to go with them. We did not know where they intended to take us but we did not have any choice. So, we followed them. On the way, I deliberately walked slowly and acted being left behind and then ran away from them. I did not go to school for one week and soon moved to another school. (A 18 year-old female student in Kapilvastu)

Some children were found to have been traumatised after experiencing violence and in some cases having lost their relatives. One young girl revealed that her brother-in-law was killed in front of her when his house was caught in the crossfire between the Maoists and security forces. She revealed that she fell unconscious for hours. When the brother-in-law's friends protested against the death, the security forces accused them of being Maoist supporters and killed 12 of them during the protest (A 18 year-old female student in Kapilvastu). Another student described how she and her family had been affected by conflict several times in the past. She lamented that:

When I was 13 years old, several vehicles were set on fire in Chandrauta market and violence started spreading. Then we fled to the lentil farm and stayed the whole night for our safety. When I was 15 years old, heavily armed Maoist rebels attacked the police barrack near my house one night. The heavy bombardment and constant firing between the rebels and the police force was so scary that we took sanctuary in our neighbour's house and saved our lives. Last year, we were attacked by the Muslims. (A 19 year-old female student in Kapilvastu)

The above quote indicates how young people remember their violent experiences and reveal their frustration about being repeatedly victimised despite their innocence. Children and young people in Kapilvastu continue to be victimised, now with a different type that represented ethnic and religious hatred, even after the peace agreement has been signed between the government and the former rebels.

7.4 Continuing Impact on Children

As indicated above the impact of conflict on children's education has been immense due to the massive scale of internal displacement (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010; Raj, 2004) and frequent lockouts (strikes) called by the Maoists as a tactics to demonstrate their strength and incapacitate government functioning (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004). In most parts of the country, school children and teachers were forcibly taken away from their schools to attend Maoist political training or mass meetings of the CPN-M (Watchlist, 2005). These

experiences were traumatic and enduring as witnessed by a government school teacher in Sankhuwasabha:

> *I was working in Jana Jyoti Secondary School. And after the 'People's War' started, all the teachers and students in the schools were forcefully taken by the Maoists to a distant place called Devitar where their political training session was underway. Those students who had heard about abduction of school children in the past were generally able to cope with the fear but most others got very scared and cried badly. They had taken us to be trained in the achievements of the People's War till that date. (A teacher from a government school in Sankhuwasabha)*

The risk of abduction from school put enormous pressure on teachers who were unable to resist the Maoist intrusion into their school. Schoolteachers in Udaypur indicated that the relationship between school and parents deteriorated as parents held teachers accountable for the security of their children during school hours. They claimed that schools were frequently attacked, intimidated and victimised during the violent conflict and that it was virtually inconceivable to prevent external interference into the school while the entire nation was engulfed in a bloody civil war. Elsewhere, parents in a private school in Kathmandu held contentious views about how their school dealt with the Maoist pressure of 'mandatory donations'. The principal of this school lamented that some parents objected to providing financial support to the Maoists, while others blamed the school management for not complying with Maoist demands, thereby inviting attacks on the school and endangering the lives of their children.

Students studying in a private school in Liwang, Rolpa mentioned that their schooling experience during conflict involved a great degree of anxiety and uncertainty about their educational future. School children in all the selected schools claimed that they were often harassed and intimidated by the security forces on patrol or at the security checkpoints. One student in Rolpa described his experience as the following:

> *During 2000-2001, I was a student in grade 6. Once, the police set up a security checking post near our school. Every morning and afternoon when we crossed the checkpoint, they searched our bodies and treated us inhumanly. They used to grab the hair of teachers and students and point pistols on their heads. They [security forces] would come to our school almost every day and arrest anyone who they suspected of being a Maoist supporter or sympathiser. I have myself seen how they used to torture people. Many people were displaced due to this continuous arrests and torture of the security forces. (A 18 year-old female student in Rolpa)*

In the post-war period, teachers reported a noticeable change in students' attitudes towards learning, future aspirations and in their general behaviour. They revealed that students were comparatively more hostile and indisciplined with a significant decline in their motivations to learn and prosper. Teachers maintained that in the aftermath of the conflict, students increasingly became more aggressive and often displayed irritation and they seemed to have lost creativity. Most students at the secondary level showed a high degree of schizophrenic symptoms (A teacher in a focus group discussion in Kathmandu). The power relations between teachers and students have also shifted allowing students more freedom and rights in the educational processes. This has, as indicated by teachers from a private school in Kathmandu during the interviews, affected students' ability to fully engage in the process of learning. Similar findings have been reported elsewhere in Northern Uganda where students' behaviour in the post-conflict period was characterised as 'aggressive' and 'indiscipline' (Ezati et al, 2011).

7.5 Summary

This chapter has analysed experiences of children during Nepal's 'People's War'. It was found that children were not only caught in the middle of the violent conflict between the warring parties but also targeted by both conflicting parties for their own benefits. Schools were the most lucrative sites for recruitment and mass mobilisation for the Maoists while the security forces tortured, maimed and killed children accusing them of involvement in the insurgency. Children were also affected when their families were caught in the conflict and displaced from villages whilst some children became victims in the clashes between Maoist rebels and government forces. Children's experiences of conflict overlap with those of their parents in relation to understanding the overall impact on them and their families as a whole. These experiences also coincided with teachers' experiences of violence, as they all became the sufferers of school-based violence during the conflict. The following chapter will discuss the impact of the conflict on education more broadly from the perspective of political economy.

CHAPTER 8: CONTINUED IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON EDUCATION

This chapter builds on some of the key findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7 relating to the impact of conflict on different groups of educational stakeholders, including teachers, educational officers, head teachers, parents and children. It further considers the political dynamics of the post-war period (2006 – present) to synthesise key issues analysed in the previous chapters. In this process of synthesis, the following three aspects are mainly debated from a political economy perspective: the continued violence on schools in the form of politicisation of educational processes; the variation in power relationships among different stakeholders within the school; and the general ignorance of the impact caused by the violent conflict on educational stakeholders.

8.1 Post-War Educational Development

The educational sector has been largely neglected in the current peace negotiations that began after the end of conflict in 2006, which have mainly focused on state restructuring and transitional political trading among the parties. Even though the armed conflict has ended and the peace process is heading towards a logical conclusion, the massive task of nation building lies ahead and education has a prominent role in correcting the legacy of the past. Some efforts have been made by the Ministry of Education to address the structural weaknesses of Nepali society through education. The *School Sector Reform Plan 2009-15* (SSRP) was introduced by the government in 2009 and has been implemented as 'a continuation of the on-going programmes, including Education for All (EFA), Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP), Community School Support Programme (CSSP) and Teacher Education Project (TEP)' (MoE, 2009: 1). Building upon the lessons learnt and gains made in the sector, the SSRP also introduces new reforms characterised by strategic interventions, such as the restructuring of school education, improvement in the quality of education, and the institutionalisation of performance accountability. It integrates 'key policy goals and values, including the right to education, gender parity inclusion and equity' and claims that the plan was designed through a wide consultation with educational stakeholders at different levels (MoE, 2009: 1).

Measures have also been taken to increase participation of children from marginalised communities. Furthermore, along with other educational indicators, the representation of women, Dalits and indigenous nationalities in the teaching force is being monitored with the view of making it more representative of the national population (DOE, 2010b). The SSRP has also made a provision for scholarships for girls and Dalit children to increase their

access to public education, while technical and vocational education has been given a greater priority with an aim to produce a skilled and readily employable workforce (MoE, 2009).

The SSRP is, however, essentially a technical plan that does not 'reconstruct' the vision of Nepal's education system along the lines of recent political changes. As indicated by a government official in the Ministry of Education during an interview, it is certainly not a 'revolutionary plan' but a strategic plan that aims to improve the quality of school education by restructuring the school system. From a conflict perspective, apart from providing scholarships to the children of martyrs of the conflict, the plan largely disregards the impact of the decade-long violence on the education system. The massive investment in education in this plan is unlikely to affect the legacy of politically driven violent insurgency or the longstanding deficiencies in the system. This is reflected in the continued violence in the education system, although expressed in different ways but with more damaging long-term effects.

8.1.1 Education for Social Awareness

As discussed in Chapter 4, education contributed in several ways to reproducing social order by mainly benefiting the historically privileged castes and social groups. However, schools also served as a forum for critical discourse. Interviews with teachers indicate that their role in laying the foundations for socio-political movement was crucial. As stated by one of the teachers from a government school in the eastern mountains:

> *Teachers and students are the people who understand the most the political situation, the country's situation, and therefore, every political group would strive to garner teachers' and students' support for the success of their movement. Since the time when teachers fought against the Panchayat regime, they have been perceived as anti-government elements as they often advocated progressive changes in society and instigated such values in students to protest against autocratic rules of the country.*

Here, the relationship between teachers and the state is depicted as sensitive and cautious, but also showing that the regime's intention to maintain control over society is potentially at risk due to teachers' progressive views on society and their ability to transfer such views to the young populations and their local communities. Hence, teachers and educational institutions are often likely to be drawn into struggles for political change that involve mass mobilisation.

The Maoists did just that in the process of mobilising youth groups in favour of their movement. Schools provided easy access to young masses of educated people who could be recruited for the militia and trained politically to carry out violent acts. Hence, schools became the target of security forces who frequently abused teachers and school children (Watchlist, 2005), which has been reported in detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Consequently, schools were caught in the crossfire – a situation, which has been far from resolved after the CPA, was signed and the peace process began.

8.2 Politicisation in Education

One of the major impacts of conflict on education has been the politicisation of the education system, particularly the school management and the increased influence of political processes on the roles of teachers, educational officers and parents. It has been found that politicisation has been spurred by a continuous thrust for education decentralisation inspired by external agencies, such as the World Bank. An analysis of the education sector highlights the extent to which political affiliation and economic motivation continue to impact on educational provision. Since the signing of the CPA in 2006, education has become even more politicised and an important arena for political struggles. In particular, education policy is determined by declared ideological commitments of different political parties without consideration of the practical implications in terms of implementation (Interview with a senior official at the Department of Education). Furthermore, interviews with educational stakeholders, including teachers, local politicians and students in rural areas, revealed that School Management Committees (SMCs) have become more politicised, and political parties have mobilised support for elections to these bodies based on ideological commitments rather than education policies that serve the best interests of children.

In the last 13 years of armed conflict, Nepal has suffered a significant loss in social and political stability, resulting in a breakdown of state institutions (Lawoti and Pahari, 2010) and a spread of party-based politics into all public sectors, including education. All educational stakeholders, including teachers, head teachers, SMCs and District Education Officers (DEOs), are affiliated to political parties and have their own political and economic interests in education. Interviews with educational stakeholders in ten districts across Nepal indicated that educational management and bureaucracy, including teacher recruitment and redeployment, DEO's transfer, school upgrading and elections of SMCs, all involved political interference and corruption.

The corruption and politicisation at local level can be argued to be a by-product of unsuccessful decentralisation in education (Edwards, 2011), weak governance and absence of local government for the last decade or so. Yet ironically, such marked political upheaval has also led to improved public participation with historically suppressed castes and indigenous nationalities challenging the assumed dominance of the State. This has put pressures on State restructuring that guarantees a more inclusive democracy in all sectors. In this transformation, primary education in the mother tongue has become a popular slogan for Terai-based, ethno-regional, political parties. In this context, the SSRP makes an effort to implement the provision of primary education in the child's mother tongue in 7,500 schools by 2015 (MoE, 2009). While there is substantial empirical evidence to support the argument that education in the child's first language brings 'the most positive educational outcomes' (Taylor, 2010: 140), such a policy initiative, which is partly aimed at addressing the political concern, may not achieve much success. Interestingly, parents do not prefer to educate their children in the local language since, as they argued in the interviews, imposing the local language on ethnic and indigenous children is a political ploy that would further exclude them by restricting full participation in wider economic opportunities.

8.2.1 Teachers in Conflict and Impact on Education

The most recurring theme in teachers' narratives about their experience during conflict was the 'fear' of being abducted, maimed, arrested or even killed. The decade-long conflict forced teachers to operate in a perpetual state of terror and under extreme pressure from the armed groups that eroded their professional motivation and the quality of their personal life (Pherali, 2011). Teachers in the rural communities became proficient with a new 'vocabulary of terror' (Suárez-Orozco, 1987), such as 'mandatory donations', 'displacement', 'abduction', 'forced participation', 'torture', 'banda' [closure], 'political education', 'army check points' and so forth (Pherali, 2011).

Teachers' professional ability to carry out their duty on a regular basis was seriously disrupted due to their long-term stress and traumatic experiences during the conflict. Even after the end of explicit violence and beginning of the peace process, teachers continue to suffer from post-traumatic anxiety, which is manifested in their disengagement with their professional duty and increased loyalty to teachers' associations. Teachers are hence increasingly becoming political entities rather than dedicated educational professionals (Vaux et al, 2006). This may be explained in the following ways:

- Firstly, teachers have been either victimised or misused by political parties for their political movements in the past several decades. The problem of teacher absenteeism and their involvement in politics is not just an issue of professional misconduct but also a part of the institutional culture that has been promoted and protected by major political forces in the country. During the conflict, the state either caused violence on, or largely failed to protect the schools and teachers from hostilities. The CPN-M on the other hand, denounced the existing education system but exploited it ruthlessly (e.g. misusing school premises, recruiting children, enforcing donations and involving teachers and children in political campaigns) while utterly failing to offer an alternative to the existing provision. This led to the decline of trust towards the state in times of difficulties.

- Secondly, the political freedom, after the peace agreement, ended the decade-long suffocation and perpetual state of fear providing teachers with some hope about their future both in professional and personal terms. However, teachers found themselves in a situation where the legitimacy and influence of the existing state had been seriously challenged by emerging political forces such as CPN-M and regional political parties. In such an unpredictable situation, teachers made a rational choice by extending their loyalty to teachers' associations affiliated to national political parties rather than maintaining professional integrity to the weak and partly fractured post-war state.

- Finally, there is a strong tendency to blame teachers for the loss of educational quality in the school. This undermines the exigent working conditions (e.g. lack of resources, children coming from extremely poor backgrounds, parental indifference to education and overcrowded classes, etc.) in which teachers are expected to produce competitive results. In addition, they become the passive recipients of national as well as international policy initiatives that constantly delegate educational responsibilities to teachers and parents without providing sufficient funding for the schools (Poppema, 2009). Most importantly, teachers have been working in a fragile political situation and at the verge of contriving a new political structure that would also devise the education system reflecting changes in society. This means that teachers are likely to align with political forces that would protect their interests in times of educational reconstruction.

Consequently, the professional security that teachers receive from political parties impacts on teacher deployment nationally. Vaux et al (2006) also noted that there was an imbalance in teacher deployment across the geographical regions. There were often too many teachers in the hilly areas but too few in the Terai. The Pahade ethnic groups, particularly Brahmins and Chhettris dominate the teaching workforce and historically, there has been a marginal participation of Madheshi groups in the education sector that requires Nepali language proficiency. Most teachers would naturally prefer to work in or near their native village but some ambitious ones would strive to be posted in the Kathmandu valley for potentially wider opportunities for themselves and families. For example, Kathmandu is a lucrative place to provide English medium private education children. This creates a difficulty deploying teachers in the educationally deprived regions. More importantly, because of the political power of teacher unions, teachers could not be redeployed to the areas where they were needed. Over the last five years, the overall rate of enrolment has increased and there is generally huge overcrowding in Grade 1 classes. If the government manages to reduce school dropout and this group proceeds through the school the demand for teachers will increase. However, the unions often resist the redeployment of teachers as the teachers prefer not to be transferred to rural areas. The role of the unions that in preventing rational deployment of teachers has made the government reluctant to recruit more permanent teachers and instead staff have been recruited on a 'temporary' basis.

Hence, the impact of conflict on teachers constitute historical and current political dynamics affecting education as well as new policy encounters such as educational decentralisation and community schooling. The following section will highlight how schools are increasingly becoming political entities at the expense of children's urgent educational needs.

8.2.2 Schools as Power Centres – School Management Committees as Political Entities

The effects of conflict interact intimately with the processes of educational decentralisation in Nepal. Decentralisation of public school management is often posited as an effective approach that results in 'increased efficiency, greater accountability and equity, and more democratic decision making processes' through the involvement of local communities (Carney et al, 2007; Carney and Bista, 2009; Edwards, 2011: 67). However, this process has also been criticised as a 'policy disconnect' in which globalised policy agendas fail to engage with community level, educational stakeholders (Edwards, 2011) resulting in 'unsatisfactory' project outcomes (World Bank, 2010). Interviews with head teachers and SMC Chairs indicated that one of the main reasons for community involvement was the financial support received from the CSSP, a policy initiative that facilitated the process of

educational decentralisation. It provided the schools as a perk for their transfer to local communities which, according to the respondents, was crucial to build an extra classroom or employ a new teacher. The opposition by teachers and the Maoists to the concept of management transfer, as well as the lack of effective engagement by the local communities in school management, largely defeated the purpose of educational decentralisation (World Bank, 2010). It needs to be noted that the Maoists have always resisted the neo-liberal agenda of educational decentralisation that enforces reduction in public spending and encourages privatisation of education (Maoists Statements and Documents, 2003), which makes their resistance to community schooling no surprise.

Increasingly, the school management at community level has become a power struggle. Being the SMC Chair provides an important opportunity to control resources and extend patronage networks. While the SMC Chair may have strong political links, this is not as evident in the case of head teachers many of whom claim that they keep clear of politics, apart from their necessary formal affiliations. This permits the two key figures to work together, the SMC Chair focusing on funding issues and external relations while the head-teacher focuses on teaching issues and the internal management of the school. In practice, however, one or the other is dominant, SMC Chairs taking the lead in the (highly politicised) Terai district, such as Banke, Kapilvastu and Dhaanusha, while head-teachers appear to be more likely to take the lead in the hilly areas, including the Kathmandu, Rolpa, Doti and Sankhuwasabha districts. Unfortunately, these management structures often fail to prioritise children's learning and primarily indulge in making political influences on teachers and local communities.

8.3 Political Economy of Community Schooling

Political economy analysis is concerned with 'the interaction of political and economic processes in society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time' (Collinson, 2003: 3). This definition of political economy analysis is rather developmental and guided by the agenda of aid effectiveness that demands sensitive planning and implementation of development programmes within the politically complex and often fragile situations. The political economy analysis of development agencies is often limited to technical processes of the interaction between power and resources rather than asking critical questions about the structures that resist social transformation. In Nepal's context (as discussed in Chapter 4), a Marxist approach to political economy analysis becomes more relevant. The Marxist theory can provide analytical tools to understand caste, gender and ethnic hierarchies and how these social divisions interact with control of

power and economic processes. For example, education decentralisation has given local communities access to school funds but it is the traditionally privileged groups (mainly the upper castes) who usually hold political prominence in the community that are most likely to influence the selection of the SMCs. Because schools are "the site(s) of political and social influence" (Edwards, 2011: 78), decentralisation contributes to sustaining and reproducing traditional power relationships rather than transforming them in favour of marginalised groups, such as women, Dalits, Tharu, Madheshi, and other indigenous nationalities who continue to be marginalised in local political and educational processes. The decade-long civil war (1996 to 2006) has often been rationalised as a means to transform the rigid horizontal inequalities across these social and cultural groups (Tiwari, 2010b) and to achieve a more just and equitable social order (Bhattarai, 2003). However, the absence of elected government bodies at local levels for over a decade created political spaces in schools where the struggle for political dominance, for example, through the SMCs, became a common phenomenon. The return of peace as a result of the peace accord simply reduced the amount of direct violence but the fundamental causes of social inequalities, uneven development, and economic grievances (Bhattarai, 2003; Deraniyagala, 2005) have not yet been dealt with. Thus, any policy initiative in the education sector that does not fully appreciate the social context is likely to serve the interests of the privileged groups in society rather than promote equality and social inclusion.

The SMCs are politicised for a number of reasons that go back to the conflict period. The vignette below drawn from my diary during the fieldwork represents a typical political tension that occurs in rural districts.

> It is 11AM; a group of teachers from a secondary school were picketing at the entrance of the District Education Office. No DEO staff members, apart from an Office Assistant, have arrived yet, even though work was supposed to start at 10AM. The DEO was reported to be on leave for four days and had given his charge to a lady officer who arrived only around 1pm. The story of the teachers' protest in front of the DEO unfolded interestingly. They had not been paid for the past four months due to school-based tensions related to the appointment of a new head teacher. The previous head teacher had recently retired giving his deputy the authority of headship. The new head teacher, though was able to acquire an appointment letter from the district education office, was rejected by most teachers but the SMC Chair. However, the school accounts had not been transferred to the new head teacher so he could not sign the cheques for teachers' salaries. The

school generated some additional income by renting out its properties, including to some shops. Clearly, there was a potential for economic gains from school funds, which encouraged a struggle for the post of SMC Chair and head teacher.

To achieve a new political combination of the head and SMC, an individual who had the support from a prominent regional political party forcefully replaced the SMC Chair and illegally captured the SMC. Now, the new SMC, with the support from the newly appointed DEO in the district, transferred a secondary level teacher from a different school into this school to replace the new head. But the head teacher was not prepared to renounce his post as he claimed that he had been formally appointed to the post. The new DEO could not approve the transfer of school accounts to anyone at this situation and hence the teachers' salaries were withheld. The school had been closed for the past week, as the teachers demanded the appointment of a new head teacher and payment of their salaries without any further delay. The current head teacher had the patronage from the teachers' union as well as from the Nepali Congress Party. The DEO was suspected of being bribed and was therefore hesitating to make a new decision.

The position of SMC Chair provides a significant opportunity to control resources and extend patronage networks. While the SMC Chair may have strong political links and simultaneously hold positions in the party, this is not so evident in the case of head teachers, even though they might hold positions in teacher associations that are linked to different political parties. This arrangement makes it possible for the two key figures to work together in the SMC. In practice one or other is dominant. The analysis of interviews in this study also shows that in the schools where head teachers were enthusiastic and provided strong leadership, the quality of education was better than in other schools in the region. SMC Chairs usually took the lead in the (highly politicised) Terai, while head teachers appeared more likely to take the lead in the hilly areas. A range of political causes were identified behind the politicisation of the SMCs, some of which are stated below:

Table 8.1: The Political Economy Factors SMCs
(Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012))

Therefore, there are a number of political and economic motivations for competing for the SMC positions, especially the Chair. The aggressive decentralisation processes inspired and assisted by development partners and project-based educational programming have influenced the trajectories in Nepal's education policies. Politicisation in the education system is one of the unintended outcomes of the interaction between the global drive for educational decentralisation and incompatible local contexts.

This shows that the educational sector is heavily politicised, not in the sense of pursuing an ideologically driven, educational vision but in the way it maintains the pervasiveness of a rent-seeking culture. This damages the education system covertly but more aggressively than violent conflicts. It reduces the effectiveness of potential educational reforms, which could cater to the needs for peace building through education.

Most SMC members who were interviewed in this study had close affiliations with political parties and many of them held responsible positions in the local or regional party committees. The analysis of interviews with parents, teachers, and members of the SMCs revealed that there are social and political benefits to being involved in local educational

committees, such as SMCs, Parent-Teacher Associations, or Social Audit Committees. An SMC chair in Kapilvastu mentioned that his responsibility in the SMC provided him with an opportunity to serve the community in other avenues of social services, such as politics. In most schools that participated in the study, the SMC chairs belonged to upper castes and were influential personalities in the local communities. Edwards (2011: 79) likewise noted that the SMC Chair usually has high social status in the community and it is considered 'a place to gain political prominence'. As SMC Chairs usually hold reputable positions in their political parties, they have significant influence on teachers and parents in the community. In theory, the SMC should reflect a wide range of stakeholder interests, including representatives of women, Dalits, and marginalized groups in society, but in reality, the SMC Chair dominates the committee and the regulations about its functions are often undermined. The political economy analysis of the school system shows a complex network of different actors and agencies operating to secure their political and economic interests within the education system. The following figure (Figure 8.1) attempts to capture the tangled web of relationships:

A Political Economy Network of the School System in Nepal

Figure 8.1: A Political Economy Network of the School System in Nepal

(Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012))

For example, in a secondary school in Kapilvastu, where 95% of the children come from Tharu communities, the SMC chair belongs to a non-Tharu ethnic group. He is able to secure this role because of his social prominence and political affiliation to one of the national political parties. In a community school in Kathmandu, the SMC chair is an influential businessman and is highly regarded in his local community for his significant financial contribution to the development of the school playground. Neither of these SMC Chairs are guardians or parents of any children in the school. A study conducted by the Research Centre for Educational Innovations and Development (CERID, 2006) found that only 34% of the SMC Chairs were parents or guardians of children in the school and although the government has amended the regulation specifying that only a parent could be eligible for the SMC membership, this rule is mostly ignored or manipulated.

Interestingly, the analysis of interviews with SMC members and headteachers shows that educational success is measured in terms of infrastructural development such as construction of school buildings, playgrounds, and fences around the school. Teachers and SMC members in Dhanusha strongly argued for a fence around the school to prevent children from escaping during school hours. Most SMC members felt that the physical barrier around the school would oblige children to stay inside the school and learn. However, none of the members had ever observed the poor quality of teaching and learning that took place inside the classroom. In most interviews, SMCs and head teachers rarely mentioned children's learning, teacher development, or quality of educational experience.

Another perceived measure of school development for both head teachers and SMC Chairs was a school upgrade, which would not only provide higher-level schooling for children locally, but also help SMC Chairs and head teachers gain social prestige for their achievement. However, an educational officer in Kathmandu mentioned that school upgrading and the subsequent construction of extra classrooms often involved corruption. He revealed that:

> *We often receive complaints from opposing groups of the SMCs about the misuse of school funds. This is more likely to happen where the head teacher and the SMC chair have good working relationships and share the same political views. Even the District Education Officer is sometimes involved in this kind of corruption. (Education Officer in Kathmandu)*

In the southern districts of the Terai, corruption and malpractice are reported by SMC members to be pervasive in the process of teacher recruitment and redeployment. One

SMC member in Kapilvastu stated that 'there are different rates for recruitment in different teaching grades: 100, 200, and 300 thousand Nepalese rupees for a primary, lower secondary, and secondary level post, respectively' (Focus group interview with SMC members and local politicians in Kapilvastu). It appears that this type of corruption is pervasive in these schools and occurs at different levels, involving SMC chairs, DEOs, head teachers, and school auditors. Community schooling seems to have been perceived as a means to gain increased access to school funds rather than achieving improved educational quality by enhancing local capacities and better engaging teachers and parents in their children's learning. It suggests that there is a disconnection between the policy aims and socio-political realities at the local level. These tensions of political economy dynamics remain pervasively as the continued impact of armed conflict on the education system in Nepal.

Ethnic liberation and the right to prosper as a multilingual society have been the integral part of the Maoist ideology and more recently the political agenda of the CPN-M's proposal for federalism. The ongoing state restructuring would also constitute policies around native language and have implications for the medium of instruction and curricular choice in schools. The following section will discuss the post-war rise in politics of language and possibilities for reforms in education.

8.4 Education in the Mother Tongue: Contesting Views

Along with the transfer of school management to local communities, the Ministry of Education has also adopted a policy of promoting instruction in the mother tongue and the development of localised curriculum in local languages (SSRP, 2009). The interim constitution of Nepal 2007 also provides the right to education in the child's mother tongue. This may be seen as 'a conflict sensitive' response to the social and political movements of ethnic and indigenous groups who have been historically marginalised by the hill-high-caste dominated, state structures (Lawoti, 2005), as well as to confirm with the multilingual education agenda of international development agencies such as UNESCO. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2063 produced by the Curriculum Development Centre has also articulated the need for education in the mother tongue, and the incorporation of local contents in the school curricula. However, the implementation of this provision has been problematic in many ways. A study conducted by Centre for Educational Innovation and Research shows that there is a lack of capacity in schools as the 'teachers are neither trained for using the curriculum in local context nor are they provided with adequate instructional materials to enrich their abilities in developing and implementing the local curriculum' (CEIR, 2010: 8).

Interviews with teachers also indicate that these initiatives substantially lack funding and are expected on top of existing responsibilities of the teachers. In very few schools where head teachers are enthusiastic about progressive pedagogical changes in their schools, this policy seems to have been taken onboard. A teacher from a community school in Kathmandu said:

> *I spent several days of mine writing curriculum materials incorporating local contents but it is now in storage due to the lack of funds for printing. Other teachers are not very interested as it is extra work. The head teacher seems to be interested in it but there has been no progress or follow up on this. (Nepali Language Teacher in Community School, Kathmandu)*

It can be observed that teachers are accustomed to the printed teaching materials and anything that is not available in the form of hard copies is unlikely to be used in the classroom. Interestingly, it was found that the idea of local content was almost irrelevant in this school where 95% children came from outside the local community and from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds other than the one of the community where the school was located. The vast majority of children from the local community went to private schools where the medium of instruction was English and there was no consideration for local languages in their provision. Additionally, the teacher who had allegedly prepared the local curriculum neither represented cultural values of the local community nor spoke the local language. Most importantly, there was no community involvement in the process of curriculum development, which undermines the purpose of localised curriculum.

The problem of a teacher's capacity to produce localised teaching materials in local language has also been identified in the CEIR's (2010) report. As indicated elsewhere, the education system has been dominated by the vast majority of teachers whose mother tongue is Nepali and have undergone training and selection procedures in Nepali. It is unrealistic and even unfair on the teachers' part to expect them without sufficient training to implement the centrally imposed policy of instruction in mother tongue and incorporation of localised content in the curricula.

While regional political parties see the provision of education in local language as a political victory (interviews with local party activists in Kapilvastu), parents do not always view this achievement this way. The empirical research and reviews of related long-term studies show that education in the mother tongue is linked with the children's educational success (Alidou et al, 2006; Heugh, 2009). Taylor (2010: 140) notes that students who receive

instruction in their mother tongue for a sustained period of time (e.g. 8 years) 'experience the most positive educational outcomes'. An academic who represents the Maithali-speaking ethnic group vehemently argues that basic education in the mother tongue is necessary not only because children can learn better but also it is an integral part of their identity formation. Arguing for the provision of education in the mother tongue, he explained:

> Language is a medium but not knowledge. Teaching three languages [English, Nepali and the mother tongue] at primary level is not appropriate. It confuses children. There has been a movement for the revival of Maithali language in Janakpur. All FMs in Mithila broadcast in Nepali and Maithili. We do not want Hindi to be our local language. We are not Madhesi. We are Maithili. Mithila does not exist in the political map but it does in people's mindset. We are proud of being Maithili rather than Nepali. Our language, culture, art etc. were suppressed, which we would like to regain through federalism which we believe would strengthen Nepali nationality. (University Lecturer in Janakpur)

Here, this academic indicates how the complex issues of policy (decentralisation), regional politics (of language) and ethnic or indigenous identity (Maithini/ Madheshi/ Nepali) interact at the regional level. He reveals that the imposition of Hindi as yet another dominant language of the region would only mean disrespect for Maithili, the local language that has suffered repression from the state in the past. Terai-based political parties have been demanding the entire Southern plains from West to East to be declared a single federal state and Hindi, the lingua franca in the Terai, to be their national language. However, as indicated above, there are various ethnic groups living in different parts of the country (for example, Tharu in the Terai and Limbu in the Eastern hills) that have been demanding recognition and restoration of their own language, federal territory and national identity. So, without structural reforms along the political lines and extensive educational reforms at national level, simply the provision of education in the mother tongue, or incorporation of local contents in the dominant national curriculum, would barely address the prevailing issue of linguistic and cultural repression. The politics of language is not just concerned with the medium of instruction in formal education but is also concerned with social movements that interact with existing political structures of the state. This reveals that education decentralisation is entangled with a range of complex and sensitive issues that are located in the sociopolitical structures of Nepali society.

However, parents do not necessarily see the provision of education in the mother tongue as an opportunity to regain their cultural identity. Instead, they see this as a political conspiracy

of the dominant political structures. In Janakpur where Maithali is the main language of the region, parents revealed that:

> Children should learn in Nepali and English from the early age so that they can gain proficiency in these two languages that are important for getting good jobs in the future. Mother tongue instruction is the politics on children from marginalised ethnic backgrounds whose mother tongue is not Nepali. (School parents in a lower secondary school in Dhanusha district)

For these parents, the economic prospect for their children is the top priority, which they think depends on Nepali, the most widely spoken language in the country and English that expands employment opportunities in the urban setting and abroad. They perceive the provision of education in a local language as a threat to their children's future aspirations. This may be interpreted as the hegemony of the language that makes people submissive to the dominant social and economic structures supposedly providing economic and social security to the people (Gramsci, 1971). At a global scale, political and economic processes of globalisation have contributed to a massive growth in the knowledge industries leading profoundly to create 'differential effects' on nation states and their educational institutions (Zajda and Geo-Jaja, 2009). The forces of globalisation influence educational organisations to transform their goals and strategies into 'the entrepreneurial business model' and 'are compelled to embrace the corporate ethos of the efficiency, accountability, and profit-driven managerialism' (Zajda, 2010: xiv). Hence, the education systems have been tasked with fulfilling this economic need of the world market, which consequently transform the nature of pedagogies, roles of teachers and curricular choice by making it more demand-orientated and relevant to the world of work (Carnoy, 1999). In addition, the major goal of educational reforms has been to maximise efficiency and economic productivity by internationalising educational processes (e.g. access to education of a particular type, standardisation of curriculum and quality indicators, assessment techniques, meritocracy, literacy and numeracy as the fundamental skills, employability etc.), which largely undermines the agenda of educational equality. In Nepal, the policy level interventions sponsored by external agents as well as the economic and cultural interactions between the 'local' and 'global' and the hegemony of global economic structures have created a powerful educational discourse, which has significantly influenced the local level educational choice.

Lower castes such as Dalits and indigenous groups were historically indoctrinated by the Brahmin-dominated society that teaching and learning was only in the portfolio of upper castes, especially the Brahmins, while the subordinate castes were supposed to be inheriting their traditional professions and had a duty to serve the upper castes. This led to

marginalisation and social exclusion of subordinate castes (Stash and Hannum, 2001). The Madheshi people living in the southern plains, who were linguistically and culturally distinct from Pahade communities in the hilly regions, suffered systematic exclusion by the state in all realms of the public sector. They were massively under-represented in elements of the public sectors, including education, health, media and public administration (Neupane, 2000). More importantly, they were not allowed to serve in the military, which was dominated by people from indigenous nationalities, but the commanding positions were often occupied by upper castes close to the Nepalese royalty. More importantly, schools taught in Nepali language while the mother tongue of the majority (52%) of the people in Nepal was other than Nepali (Pandey, 2010: 65). This consequently impacted on 'the multitude of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups in Nepal' who 'found themselves at a severe disadvantage' in relation to gaining access to, or remaining in education, to improve their lives (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b).

The opportunity for education in the mother tongue has provided a congenial learning experience for Nepali-speaking children from the Pahade communities, particularly representing hill-based high castes. The education system treats them favourably allowing them to gain an education in their native language and usually outperform other social groups in competitions. This is also indicated by the fact that the most senior positions in the state as well civil sectors have been occupied by privileged castes (Neupane, 2000). They further benefitted by the state structures, including bureaucracy, literature, media, legal system and so forth that reflected their own language, culture and values (Lawoti, 2005). On the other hand, state imposition of education in the Nepali language disadvantaged non-Nepali speaking children from minority ethnic and indigenous backgrounds who often underperformed in their education (Ragsdale, 1989) and dropped out of the system before gaining a proper qualification (Yadava, 2007). The language, culture and national identity were defined in the terms of dominant culture of the hill-based, upper castes who had monopolised leadership in all state sectors (Neupane, 2000) as well as maintaining an influential social status in the communities. Hence, the centralised administrative power was not necessarily the only problem of Nepal's development, but also the problems equally lay in the existing horizontal inequalities (Tiwari, 2010a) as well as sociocultural disparities (e.g. ethnic, caste-based, regional and legacies of historical dominance of minority groups) that continued to exploit the benefits of devolution of power to the local communities. While the conflict has ruptured the traditions of some of these structures (e.g. gender, caste and ethnicity), a new political system is yet to be institutionalised while progressive educational reforms still remains at large. In this context, decentralisation only contributes to strengthening central level structures that are

monopolised by the same groups who exploit the opportunities of local authority by the virtue of policy reforms that allowed local participation.

8.5 Impact on Relationships among Different Stakeholders

This study develops a new understanding of shifting inter-group relationships within the educational settings as a result of the impact of conflict on education. The decade-long conflict in Nepal has significantly altered the nature of existing power relationships between different stakeholders in the education system. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the political influence on teachers and their increased loyalty to political parties often pose implicit resistance to the authority of the head teacher. Teacher absenteeism is reported to be a serious problem and is believed to be largely seasonal (especially early departure and late reporting for duty after holiday periods) and that the practice is compounded by political factors which lead to under-reporting (Foundation for Human Development, 2004; Teachers' Union of Nepal, 2010). The head teacher, as the officer in charge of the school, is responsible for supervising teachers, teaching and learning and the management of everyday school activities. However, the head teacher cannot fully exert their professional authority in order to maintain educational standards. In other words, the head teacher is often unable to take action against the union-protected teachers who fail to carry out their professional duties at the required level. In some cases, head teachers may also engage in the power struggle within the SMCs as indicated in the researcher's observations above (see Section 9.2.2).

Teachers reported that their professional integrity was heavily compromised during the conflict, as they could not freely teach various subjects such as social studies, which contained references to monarchy. Students were recruited as spies by both conflicting parties during the war (Watchlist, 2005) that created an environment in which teachers felt insecure about interpreting curricular contents, which could be perceived by students as being pro-royal or pro-Maoists and reported to the Maoists or security forces. Hence, teachers had to work under strict surveillance even within their classrooms. This kind of war-time phenomenon weakened traditional relationships between teachers and students, creating distrust between them.

The decade-long conflict followed by the ethnic uprising in the Terai has increased the patterns of children's involvement in political activities. Many school children are now organised under the umbrella of student unions affiliated to political parties. School children march out of their classrooms during school hours without seeking permission from the school management in order to join demonstrations, or political rallies in support of their

mother parties' political agenda. Teachers cannot prevent children's participation in political activities nor can they professionally allow for such engagements during school hours. This creates tensions within the school, and usually teachers respond to these situations with indifference just to avoid potential confrontations with students. Ultimately, these activities have impacted the quality of education as well as the relationship between teachers and students.

Furthermore, many students in the rural areas observe education as a necessary but unrelated process in relation to providing them with employability skills. In the context where almost one-third of the country's youth are employed abroad, students, particularly boys, do not see any reward for working hard in education. Instead they see themselves re-locating to one of the Gulf countries for manual labour. This leads to increased disrespect to teachers and school education as a whole consequently transforming the relationship between teachers and students.

8.6 The Private/ Public Divide in Education and the Post-War Environment

Private schools came under severe pressure from the Maoists during the conflict (Caddell, 2006). These schools have expanded massively in the urban areas attracting children of the growing middle class and relatively wealthier families in the country. The main attractions of private schools are better exam results, use of English as the medium of instruction (leading to better job prospects), status and social connections. However, teachers in the public sector are generally better qualified, trained and better paid than those in the private sector (DOEb, 2010). Generally, the infrastructure of government schools is generally better and the curriculum is more sophisticated, excluding the very few elite private schools with better facilities than government schools. The increased politicisation and declining exam results in the government schools have extended parental attraction to private schools, even though these schools charge expensive fees. There is better supervision and monitoring of educational processes in private schools, which feel relatively more accountable to the parents who pay fees. Private school proprietors generally seek to prevent the activity of unions and where SMCs exist they seem to be dominated by the proprietors (Pherali et al, (forthcoming, 2012)). Teachers in private schools are subject to a 'hire and fire' system at the discretion of the school principal, which enables the school management to control them very tightly and make them work harder than is generally the case with teachers in the public sector. This all leads to better performance of private schools as compared to their publicly funded counterparts.

There is an argument that private schools perpetuate social class and therefore the two-tiered system of education is counterproductive from the perspective of social transformation (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003). This has been a major educational agenda of the Maoist movement and the Maoists have pledged to abolish private education if they established their majority government. In Nepal, private schools have allowed parents to make different educational choices for different children, with particularly strong variation between girls and boys. This has led to a preponderance of boys in private school and an increasing ratio of girls in government schools, indicating that the provision of a better quality private education systematically creates structural inequality across gender. Even though some private schools were forced to close down in the rural areas, the internal displacement during the conflict resulted in increased enrolment in private schools in the capital city or other big towns.

The private/public debate also problematises the notion of educational quality. There are contesting views in relation to whether or not the private schools' high pass rates in the SLC exams solely represent quality and purposefulness of education. The educational culture, including the curricula, in private schools is largely orientated to the western knowledge that produces school graduates with a limited understanding of the sociocultural realities of Nepali society. As a result, a large number of private school graduates go abroad for higher education and are less likely to return home even after completing their study abroad. Even though private schools provide a good alternative for wealthy parents who would otherwise have sent their children to India for schooling, the social return of private education may be seriously challenged. Private schools also argue that they keep away from political influence and prioritise teaching and learning which is also proven by a 90% success rate in the SLC exams.

There is a clear social divide between public and private schools. For example, in a multiethnic town in Kapilvastu, the government school is often referred to as the 'Tharu school' as 95% of children in the school are from a Tharu ethnic background whereas, the private school next door was attended predominantly (96%) by children from a Pahade background (Hindu castes from hilly areas) and known colloquially as the 'Pahade school'. This suggests that access to schooling can be predicted based on children's ethnic backgrounds and their social and cultural status determines whether or not they are likely to attend private education.

8.7 Poverty and Social Inclusion

Direct social exclusion based on gender, religion, ethnicity and caste has reduced considerably (Sharma and Donini, 2010). The continuing problem is not overt discrimination but the lack of contacts and social skills associated with the classes controlling jobs and opportunities. This may be explained by the theory of social capital that involves the significance of how people interact with each other; how they utilise their social networks and how they establish a bond between diverse groups of people with norms of reciprocity (Dekker and Uslaner 2001; Uslaner 2001). It is an ability to use connections to achieve personal or group advantages which Sander (2002: 213) explains that 'the folk wisdom that more people get their jobs from whom they know, rather than what they know, turns out to be true'. O'Brien and Ó Fathaigh (2005: 64) discuss the four forms of social capital: '(a) obligations and expectations (e.g. doing favours for and receiving favours from other people); (b) informational potential (e.g. sharing useful information that may inform some future action); (c) norms and effective sanctions (e.g. the establishment of community values and shared standards of behaviour); and (d) authority relations (e.g. skilful leadership that informs others' actions)'. The marginalised communities generally fall short in maintaining links with individuals who are in privileged positions and lack these forms of social capital, which prevent them from gaining access to essential resources required to participate in the competitive social and economic realms. Because of the dominance of 'informal governance' it is not possible for traditionally excluded social groups to get a job without connections or by using bribery. This leaves the have-nots, especially those from minorities, at a severe disadvantage (see Figure 9.2).

Does education improve opportunities for minority groups?

Figure 8.2: Does Education Improve Opportunities for Minority Groups?

(Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012))

Although the gender hierarchies have been fundamentally challenged in the past decade, particularly during the conflict in which a large number of female youth participated hoping to end gender discrimination, ambitions and educational outcomes of a larger number of girls in the school have not necessarily changed. Social custom has changed to the extent that a small amount of education may be an advantage in relation to marriage but it makes no other difference in women's lives. The early-age marriage still remains the main risk to the educational future of girls, the majority of whom in the rural areas get married before the age of twenty.

8.8 Post-conflict Challenges for Education

Attacks on teachers during the conflict and the impact of direct or symbolic violence on school education have largely been ignored in the post-accord policy framework. In the prolonged transitional period, the voices of victims of conflict in the educational sector have been neglected and, more importantly, the debate on educational reconstruction in the 'new Nepal' needs more attention, especially in the present context when the nation is in the process of promulgating a new constitution and restructuring the State with implications for the future education system.

The current SSRP attempts to accommodate some of the most contentious issues, such as vocational and technical education, and education in the mother tongue, without acquiring a political endorsement from the parties. It rather pursues a popular agenda raised by recent

political movements without a meaningful national debate. The process of educational reconstruction should involve an understanding of the contentious role of education in conflict and the reforms of the education system for peace and reconciliation (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The notions of national unity and ethnic identity are highly controversial as the historically suppressed ethnic groups have reclaimed their regional and ethnic identities, which often redefine the historically produced notion of a 'unified Nepali' identity.

Schools are still in a vulnerable situation in many parts of the Terai districts. The fear of armed groups prevails everywhere. At the technical level, SMCs lack capacity to manage schools and teachers represent various political parties with interests other than improvement in quality education (Pherali et al, (forthcoming) 2012). Hence, schools are now affected by tensions that may be characterised as by-products of the decade-long political violence and the decentralisation policy of the government. In the absence of local governments, public services, including schools, have become de facto political centres where party cadres exercise their political interests.

The localised perspective of community schooling in Nepal seems to be situated in the historical backdrop of the country's educational development in which communities had played a proactive role in establishing and managing schools in the past. However, with the introduction of the NESP in 1971, communities were gradually disconnected from the schools, which dismantled the culture of community responsibility towards the provision of education. The entire responsibility of the provision of public education was assumed by the Ministry of Education in order to allow for political control of education by the state. The return of community school management policy in 2001 was predicated on the false assumption that communities were capable of managing their schools while ignoring the fact that most districts were engulfed by the violent 'People's War' by then and new socio-political complexities had emerged in Nepali society. Hence, it is important to recognise that the success of decentralisation is determined by the informed choice made by the local people rather than centrally or externally led or coerced project of neoliberalism.

The transitional politics and the ongoing peace process manifest a fear of uncertainty among political parties that constantly struggle to maintain and renew their support with local communities. The SMCs implicitly represent a political stronghold in the community where the school is based and the leadership in school management is regarded as social and political capital for SMC members. In addition, schools now receive a significant amount of funds directly from the government in order to implement a range of policy initiatives. This, in principle, indicates increased control of local communities over the

school funds but in reality, SMCs are still monopolised by a few local leaders who resist broader community involvement in school management and who have an economic interest in managing these funds which are often misused or embezzled. The political and economic drivers of education operate intricately, mostly affecting the goal of quality education adversely and undermining the role of education in peace building. This is one of the biggest challenges for educational reform in Nepal.

8.9 Summary

This chapter has mainly discussed the continued impact of conflict on education in Nepal, particularly identifying several key themes in the current education system. Firstly, it was debated that the educational system has become immensely politicised due to the rupturing of the traditional political structures and the increasing political interests of various political parties in the state restructuring. In this process, teachers, SMCs and students are manipulated by political groups, which cost the education quality. Secondly, political economy factors involving various educational and political stakeholders contest for influence on schools and their surroundings. There has also been an emerging concern about education in the mother tongue and re-establishing the social and cultural identity of various ethnic and indigenous communities. Thirdly, it was noted that the conflict had significantly transformed the power relations between students, teachers, head teachers and SMCs in which political interests play a significant role. Finally, it has been highlighted that the impact of conflict on teachers and students has been undermined in the current peace process as well as in the process of constitution making.

The next chapter will primarily focus on the impact of conflict in relation to renewed debates around national identity and emerging concerns about multiple national identities, including implications for education.

CHAPTER 9: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the pertinent issue of national identity, which has become one of the most troubled notions in the post-war period. It relates to the ideas presented in Chapter 4 and presents a critical analysis of the role of education in the creation of national identity drawing upon relevant empirical data and indicates that ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of unified national identity. Then it will discuss implications of these evolving debates for post-conflict educational reconstruction. Finally, the role of education in supporting structures that promote equality, social justice and peacebuilding will be debated.

9.1 The Exclusionary Education System

Even after the restoration of democracy in 1990, many underprivileged ethnic groups continued to be excluded by the state. The state apparatus included a broad spectrum of political parties who were rather more concerned with their struggle for power than addressing the fundamental causes of poverty and pervasive social inequality. While Maoists have long demanded that 'the right to education in the mother tongue up to higher levels should be guaranteed' (Maoist Statements and Documents, 2003), some initiatives have been taken by the Ministry of Education and donor agencies to develop materials in indigenous languages as part of the Basic Primary Education Programme II (1999). These included 'the development of primers, textbooks, teacher guides, and curriculum materials in the languages of Limbu, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, and Newari among others' (Shields and Rappleye, 2008a: 99). However, while such positive activity is to be openly applauded it is nevertheless inadequate to address the broader issue of ethnic discrimination, as well as the profound and multiple linguistic barriers to teaching and learning of children from predominantly non-Nepali speaking backgrounds. In the post-war period, a series of ethnic movements have emerged to reinstate the legitimacy of their indigenous culture, language and identities within the new political environment. The decade-long 'People's War' and the subsequent Madhesh uprising in 2007 have significantly popularised the agenda of ethnic liberation and the right to promote ethnic, regional and linguistic identities within the single nationhood. This chapter will highlight some of the most serious implications of the 'People's War' and the subsequent Madhesh uprising for notions of national identity and citizenship, not least the critical role of education in producing social and political change in the era of post-war transitional politics.

The monopoly of Nepali-speaking Pahade groups has systematically excluded ethnic groups such as Madhesis who find themselves incompetent to equally participate in the broader economic sphere of the country. As an articulate Madhesi youth suggests:

> *Most Madhesi people would like to take up jobs in the technical fields such as engineering, medicine, technicians and so forth. If they ever became teachers, it would be Maths or Science teachers as these subjects would require a minimum use of Nepali language. Succeeding in civil service for Madhesis is extremely challenging due to the language limitation. They would always fail due to the poor grammar in Nepali writing (Madhesi male youth from the Eastern Terai).*

The palpable hint of resignation in this interview points to a notion of 'invisible violence' (Bourdieu, 1977), in which the self-subordination of Medhesi people reflects not only a form of tacit compliance in relation to the *doxa,* but also perhaps a discernible sense of agreement (refer to Chapter 4 for detailed analysis of these ideas). However, the latter arguably constitutes a form of 'misrecognition', whereby indigenous groups are constrained both by the prevailing political orthodoxy (social structures) and the limitations of their very own agency and self-regulation, with the effect of reproducing the social order. As Gramsci (1971: 244) might say, this is where the 'ruling class not only maintains its dominance but manages to win consent from those over whom it rules'. Thus, the educational intervention to create a single and universally recognised Nepali identity can be interpreted as part of an elaborate apparatus of coercion: a state sponsored initiative to establish Nepali as the only official language and thereby secure compliance of the people through deception and widespread 'misrecognition'.

Further examples include the appropriation of civil service examinations and teacher selection exams which are presented in Nepali, and which, of course, inevitably disadvantage non-Nepali speaking Nepalese citizens. The statistics on the *National Index on Governance* show that high-caste elite groups, whose populations number around 31% occupy more than 65% of different elite positions in the judiciary, parliament, military and civil service (Lawoti, 2005: 104). The hegemony of an elite minority upon the plural ethnic and diverse majority population left no alternative for many marginalised communities but to opt for their non-native language as a means of upward social mobility. As Shrestha (2007: 201) notes 'the ruling minority has been imposing its language, religion and culture upon all other Nepalese groups on the pretext of 'national unity' or 'Nepali nationalism'. As such, the policy to adopt Nepali as the only official language, across all spheres of life, has come at the cost of cleansing particular ethnic groups of their indigenous languages and often

precious cultural identities. The practice of state-imposed cultural assimilation is illuminated through the following extract, which highlights the exclusion of Madhesi people, who have been positively and systematically disenfranchised by the state:

> *Talking about other weaknesses, education has not been an easy access to all.*
> *There has been an opportunity to gain education for higher class [generally hill*
> *based high caste elites such as Brahmins and Chhetris and high caste Madhesis],*
> *whereas the low class [generally neglected groups such as Dalits, indigenous*
> *nationalities and low caste Madheshis] has been deprived of this opportunity.*
> *(Brahmin male teacher from a public school in Dang)*

9.2 The Relevance of Ethnic Identity in the 'People's War'

Such widespread inequality and social injustice across Nepali society, reinforced through the legacy of the pre-1990 political regime, gradually came to be questioned in the new era of post-accord transitional politics. The sudden declaration of the 'People's War' by the CPN-M served not only to compound ethnic conflict but also the state's focus on managing the fallout of the escalating insurgency. In this respect, the post-1990 period, simultaneously democratic and riven with conflict, became a time for 'ethnic building' as opposed to 'nation building' (Gellner, 2007). Enhanced democratic freedom during the 1990s allowed people from plural ethnic and diverse cultural groups to participate in multi-party politics and also reflect on their ascribed social and political status, linking particular conditions with ethnic and caste-based identities. This period thus saw the establishment of ethnic-based parties such as the *Nepal Sadbhawana Party* and the *Nepal Janajati Party,* who started to challenge the oppression and long standing monopoly of a single language, culture and policy of state-defined nationalism, shaped by the ruling Hill Bahuns and Chhetris. The increasing migration of people from the hills to the Terai, and their control over land, political power and convulsion on privileged groups became a critical issue within Terai-based regional politics. New found political freedom created an opportunity to examine 'inter-ethnic relations' more critically: relations which were hitherto 'stratified' and somewhat 'fragmented' (Cohen, 1978). The 'People's War' relied heavily and fundamentally on such latent tensions to be developed aggressively as a way to incite action and further mobilise people towards a common purpose, namely 'liberation'. Sudheer Sharma, a renowned journalist in Nepal notes that 'the Maoists systematically used ethnic groups that were largely ignored by the ruling elites by offering them a share of governance in areas they controlled during the insurgency. In exchange, the ethnic groups provided the rebels with manpower to fight government forces (2007, para 3)'.

This concurs with Gramsci's (1971) notion of articulation, in which the dominant Maoists were able to concede tactically a share of power and governance (to subordinate ethnic groups) in order to preserve their own hegemony. The Maoist 'revolutionary liberation fronts' such as *Tharuwan Mukti Morch, Madhesi Mukti Morcha, Newa Mukti Morcha* and *Limbuwan Mukti Morcha* are supported by different ethnic groups and are thus represented by people from different ethnic regions and across the social strata:

> *If you view the Nepalese context, it is not that all who went into conflict are ignorant people. Many intellectual and conscious people have also plunged into conflict. Due to the reason that there are social, political and cultural oppressions prevailing in our society, even the educated people have taken part in the conflict with an objective to end this, or to liberate people from these oppressions or to gain freedom (Private school Principal from Kathmandu).*

While this may be true, the majority of Maoist activists and the *People's Liberation Army* are represented by young people from 'indigenous nationalities', down-trodden castes and unjustly marginalised ethnic groups (Lawoti 2005). So, while the Maoist rebellion was largely envisioned and proclaimed by the educated hill elite (eg. Brahmins and Chhetris) (Pherali 2011), it was undeniably driven by the strength of many socially and politically marginalised indigenous groups. As a male school principal, of indigenous nationality (from Rolpa the district in which the Maoist rebellion began) critically questions:

> *... why did the 'People's War' start from Rolpa? This question emerges logically. Firstly, the dominant population of this region is Magar [indigenous nationality]. Historically, the Magars have been always oppressed by the Brahmin-oriented state structure of this country. This caste is deprived of having opportunities to progress and have always remained under-privileged. The people from this caste are socially, politically and educationally deprived. They are very naïve and easily persuaded by other people. If someone asked them to jump off the hill – they would do so. Such is the caste-structure and nature of the ethnic Magars of this region. The second cause is related to education. Out of five districts in the Rapti Zone, Rolpa has been the least well performing in terms of educational development. The literacy rate of this district is very low. (School principal from the Rolpa district)*

This reinforces the fact that for a long time regions inhabited by indigenous populations have been chronically neglected both educationally and developmentally. They were also simultaneously controlled, indoctrinated and all but homogenised through the 'triumvirate' of

Nepalese culture (language [Nepali], religion [Hinduism] and monarchy), where 'national culture was both elaborated in, and propagated through print, radio and visual media as well as educational resource materials' (Onta, 1996: 214). While such resources and improved access to primary education can be regarded as a positive step towards developing basic levels of literacy across all sections of Nepali society, many learning materials are mainly focused on creating a loyal and obedient citizenry, as well as preserving the hegemony of a state-defined politics of 'one nation'.

Moreover, ethnic divisions and hierarchies displayed through public images in textbooks have promoted an 'evolutionary understanding of social stages': moving from deprived rural lifestyles to more affluent and advanced urban cultures. The propagation and legitimation of such imagery, social and cultural, serves to reinforce the concept of social stratification, by educating (indoctrinating?) children in a process of inferred compliance with the status quo (Pigg, 1992: 500-501). Centrally produced school textbooks serve to propagate cultural homogeneity, a process of 'indoctrination' and values sponsored by the dominant regime. Pigg (1992) argues that such school books not only 'propagate' and 'legitimate' the theory of social stratification, but implicitly ascribe values that locate the Nepali language and culture at the heart of education through socialisation. The idea of bikas (development) and its particular representation in the formal curriculum - (for example, moving from rural life to urban 'modernity', agriculture to office work, the image of poor village children in rags with a filthy appearance to clean, free, studious and happy children in urban settings) creates an aspirational pressure, not only for the need to climb the social ladder of economic development but by affirming that certain groups within society have already enjoyed the life to which everyone sensibly aspires. Here, the regime also prescribes a path towards upward social mobility and further inculcates hope and loyalty to the system that it claims so deeply cares about them. This process of indoctrination would negate entirely any critical debate as to why some children but not others serve to represent the 'future' of Nepali society, and thereby promote the view that deprivation and social exclusion are culturally predetermined and hence almost inevitable (Bista, 1991). Even after the overthrow of the Panchayat system, where apart from removing references in school textbooks to the previous regime, no serious efforts were made to correct the biasing and exclusionary nature of education in the process of creating a single national identity.

9.3 Post-conflict Identity Crisis

While the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government and the CPN-M in November 2006 ended years of violent conflict in Nepal, the transition that followed saw an explosion in demand for more equitable social and political representation. As Pandey

(2010: 40) argues, 'the sudden onslaught of the Maoist rebellion in 1996 contributed directly to a series of upheavals leading many Nepalese to redefine the structures of common difference and to a fracturing of national identity'. The twenty-one day *Madhesh* uprising in January – February 2007 radicalised the agenda to establish new ethnic and regional autonomy, forcing the transitional government to concede to the demand of federalism and ethnic-based representation in the elections of the Constituent Assembly (CA). This agreement enabled the United Democratic Madhesi Front to win eighty-two seats in the CA, thereby emerging as the third largest party with a crucial role in the formation of coalition governments during the transition. Their political dominance lies along the Terai, Southern plains of Nepal, dominated by Madhehi and Tharu ethnic groups who primarily speak Maithali, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, Tharu and Hindi as their mother tongue. However, Hindi, the national language of India, is the *lingua franca* in this region and has been demanded by the Front to be considered as the official national language of the Terai. This issue has become contentious and occasionally triggered violence on the grounds of nationalism. For example, Vice President Parmanand Jha who represents Madheshis took the oath of the office and secrecy in the Hindi language on 23 July 2008. This incident sparked civil protest followed by a legal battle in the Supreme Court that declared Jha's oath null and void, subsequently suspending him from the post. He was reinstated after he took the oath of the office second time on 7 February 2010 in Nepali and Maithali, his mother tongue.

One of the major political changes in the post-accord democratisation of Nepal has been the unsettling of the monopoly of high-caste groups, leading to radically improved ethno-regional and caste-based representation in the CA. However, such change is intertwined with national identity, the antecedents of which are problematic and reprehensible and often regarded as untrustworthy among proponents of national integration. Accordingly, the historical formation of Nepali identity has become noticeably fragmented to the point where the struggle to establish distinct national identities has gained some considerable momentum. The idea of multiple national identities or nationalities in Nepal's the post-conflict political debate may be harked back to the national unification project in the mid-eighteenth century initiated by King Prithvi Narayan Shah (1723 – 1775) who annexed culturally and ethnically diverse nation states into one modern state of Nepal. Abolition of the Shah Dynasty in 2006 and advent of the republican state has allowed those indigenous nationalities who had been suppressed by the monarchy over two centuries to reclaim their historic identities in a new political environment. The demand of Ek *Madhesh Ek Pradesh* [the entire Southern plains as one federal *Madhesh* state], by the United Democratic Madhesi Front, who have redefined the identity of people living in the Terai as distinct from those who 'live outside of it', has served to exacerbate 'ethnic division and violence at the

grassroots level' (Miklian, 2008: 2). Indeed, recent incidents of expulsion of the *Pahadiya/ Pahade people* (people from the hills) from the *Madhesh* may be seen as a negative omen for more radical, identity-based, ethnic violence. For example, a *Madhesi* youth activist holding a prestigious post in a Terai-based, political party argues that while the state has tried to intercede with indigenous factions and identities, it has made no real attempt to integrate the people of the Terai, who were left to live and survive in a colonised state within their own nation:

> *The notion of Nepali identity was promoted in line with the Pahade ethnic groups. The Madheshi people were treated as the second-class citizens and their languages and culture were oppressed by the state. Pahade people ridiculed the people who preferred to wear Madheshi cultural dress in the capital. (A male Madhesi youth from the Eastern Terai)*

Hachhethu et al. (2008: 93-94) offer new insights on the process of redefining Nepali identity, in which they report that ethnic identity and national identity are not incompatible, but rather overlap so that people can be 'proud of both'. Yet still it remains that many excluded and disadvantaged groups appear to cherish their ethnic identity more than their national identity. Perhaps somewhat naively then, the authors conclude that such an overlap 'will not prove detrimental to national integration', and so call optimistically for pluralistic nationalism that 'harmonises people's need to maintain both national and ethnic identities'. However, this is a contentious issue in the context of the move to promote a new constitution and radically restructure the state. While there are serious issues around uniting the country 'socioculturally and emotionally' to prevent disintegration (Lawoti, 2005: 159), the debate on determining the modality of federalism is further compounded by the lack of mutual trust among the political parties, along with an emerging regionalisation of politics which threatens disintegration. Pandey (2010: 51) argues that 'federalism on the basis of identities such as ethnicity or language would be a peril rather than a promise in a developing a country like Nepal'. He further notes that 'it may result not only in caste based politics like in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar [Northern states of India], but more so invite historical accidents if one or the other federal unit decides to secede from the reset of the country'(Pandey, 2010: 51).

This controversial debate continues within academia, the structures of international development agencies working in Nepal and also among the political parties that represent the CA. However, the political schooling of the Maoists and *Madhesh Movement* escalated

the ideology of regional divisions and ethnic identities, which in turn stirred the ethnic sentiments of young people who actively participated in the war, as well as in those who were part of the ethnic movement in the Terai. In an interview, one of the youth activists in Kapilvastu said – 'I am Madhesi first and then a Nepali.' This type of sentiment, in which ethnic identity surmounts national identity, is not uncommon among those who represent marginalised groups. Educational policies have rarely dealt with the issue of identity formation after the multiparty democracy was reinstated. The community school management programme had limited success, although it set out to devolve educational authority to local communities (World Bank, 2010). In the current SSRP, the government plans to provide multilingual education in 7,500 schools by 2015 (MoE, 2009: 26), which may be regarded as an initiative to address the needs of the children from non-Nepali speaking ethnic and indigenous nationalities, and an effort to nurture their linguistic identity. As Bhattachan (2003: 41) argues, historically, the government has never done anything helpful for the development of the Madhesi and Muslim communities of Nepal. He further notes that Madhesi 'feel that they are treated like second class citizens; that they are deprived of citizenship; that their mother tongues are suppressed by the Khas – Nepali language; and that they are not allowed to join the civil service, police and military' (Bhattachan, 2003: 41).

Such ethnic exclusion harks back to the national unification campaign led by King Prithvi Narayan Shah who defeated the Tirhutiya army – (consisting of Madhesi people) - on his third attempt. Following the triumph, his army inflicted further horrific atrocities on the people of Kirtipur and their defeated soldiers. Moreover, as the Shahs were victorious they continued to exercise discriminatory attitudes towards people living in the Southern plains and began treating Madhesis as social and cultural inferiors. The reality of this situation was perhaps understandably (though regrettably unjustifiably) omitted from the mainstream (educational) history of Nepal, but is now being challenged in the new era of post-monarchy politics.

As discussed above, the ideology-led, Maoist rebellion and *Madhesh Movement* has fundamentally altered the social fabric of Nepali society, while the nature of formal education and curriculum provision has remained largely the same. Educational debates within and outside the classroom have not moved sufficiently to redefine the character of national identity in a new socio-political context, and nor, for that matter, has there been a legitimate explanation for it. Consequently, in contrast to the historical notion of Nepali identity, several fragmented identities along regional and ethnic lines seem to have

emerged, which pose a threat to national unity and national identity. Hence, there exists a profound crisis or fluidity of identity within post-war Nepali society.

9.4 Implications for Reconstruction

The structure of political control and state directed leadership over the project to homogenise national identity begins to crumble as violent conflict continues to penetrate and weaken the instruments of the state. Social and cultural practices are no longer reproduced, but rather rejected, redefined and reclaimed in the post-accord era of transitional politics. Even though the risk of attack on education continues to be a matter of grave concern during times of serious violent conflict (UNESCO, 2010), the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in post-conflict nations (e.g. Timor-Lest, Peru and Sierra Leone) are making increasing recommendations for the reconstruction and reform of national education (Paulson, 2006). This creates an opportunity for post-conflict governments to implement sensible and representative recommendations in light of testimony from victims and perpetrators of the violence, as well as correct the often deleterious impact of education in both generating and fuelling brutal conflict (Davies, 2005; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). In Nepal's case, it is difficult to address the impact of violence on educational stakeholders, particularly in the absence of a mechanism that would allow the survivors of violence, especially teachers and young people, to have their testimony heard. The victims of violence, including orphans, widows, families of those 'lost' or disappeared and many war survivors, are still awaiting justice. Post-accord politics is thus a largely stagnant and contentious affair due to the mix of political interests represented in the CA. The continuation of the state apparatus, comprising the military, parliamentary democracy and somewhat cumbersome bureaucracy, makes the task of any 'revolutionary' change of the state mechanism – (including the provision of education) a mission at large, and especially so with the imminent risk of an unwelcome return to violence. The difficult and unpredictable transition of Nepal's political future makes the task of envisioning a new education system increasingly onerous and, with this, the process of educational reconstruction extremely remote.

Unlike the segregated system of education in Northern Ireland, which has conspired historically to reproduce a divided society (Gallagher, 2005), Nepal's education system has consistently pandered to the wants and needs of selective elite groups, while further ignoring the plight of diverse ethnic and indigenous nationalities (Lawoti, 2008; Lawoti and Guneratne, 2010). This has served to maintain the dominance of historically- privileged, social groups in prominent positions throughout society, across public and private sectors.

On average, some 91% of all leadership positions in professional bodies, including those within the progressive sectors of cultural and academic work, science-technology and civil society are occupied by high caste groups (Brahmin, Chhetri and Newar who constitute only 37% of the total population). In contrast, the *Dalit* (7.09% of population), indigenous nationalities (21.85%, excluding indigenous nationalities dwelling in the Terai) and Madhesi (32.33%, including Madhesi *Dalit* and the Terai indigenous nationalities) have 0.3, 7 and 11% representation respectively in twelve influential sectors: the executive branch, parliament, the judiciary, elite public administration and security forces, politics and leadership in academe (Neupane, 2000).

Thus, on the one hand, while the post-conflict scenario in Nepal appears ripe to determine an appropriate model of federalism (allowing ethnic and indigenous populations to regain their cultural and national identities and further enhance the role of education in the process of achieving long-term peace and social cohesion), on the other, such radical political change is far from straightforward in practice, especially in a society where social exclusion prevails on a massive scale. Indeed, the often tense and intricate geopolitical situation in Nepal, with the powerful legacy of caste-based and ethnic discrimination and exclusionary politics, threatens the process of determining a new politics for social change and with this, any hope of a reshaped and revitalised social and political infrastructure.

Federalism is not an option in the current political environment, as it has been endorsed by the vast majority of political parties and other civil society organisations. The debate is rather around the most suitable modality of federalism in Nepal. This research also reveals that federalism is an opportunity to redress social, political and cultural repression endured by diverse ethnic and indigenous nationalities for the last two and half centuries. The rationale for federalism can be argued for at least three main reasons: restoration of cultural identity; promoting caste, gender and ethnic inclusion; and decentralisation of state power to the local communities.

Historically, there has been a sheer disconnection between state-sponsored national identity and people's distinctive ethnic and cultural identities. This gap prevailed in the form of dormant social tensions during the monarchy that acutely embarrassed ethnic identities. Indigenous nationalities and ethnic minorities have never been fully part of the political processes and representation of mainstream national identity. Most importantly, the suppression of ethnic identity and associated exclusion became a major agenda of the 'People's War' and later of the Madhesh uprising in 2007. Hence, federalism with regional,

ethnic and indigenous identity could be a positive way forward for sustainable peace in 'new' Nepal.

Secondly, social and political exclusion has become a major cause of the armed rebellion. A new political structure should ensure proportional representation of historically marginalised castes, gender and ethnic groups such as Dalits, indigenous nationalities and ethnic minorities in order to enhance their social mobility and political participation. These groups have been systematically excluded in the state structures such as education, public service, political leadership, media and business enterprises. Existing social and political structures often resist their access to the upper strata of the society. For example, non-native speakers of Nepali language are less likely to succeed in formal education that is provided in Nepali medium. Individuals from non-Nepali speaking cultures find public service exams more challenging not only due to their potential lack of linguistic ability but also owing to their cultural disconnections between their backgrounds and what is considered the legitimate knowledge for public service. Federal structure that officially recognises indigenous knowledge, language and cultures would allow for a more inclusive democracy and provide an opportunity for various ethnic groups to prosper within their linguistic and cultural domains.

Finally, centralisation of power has been a key barrier to political participation of local communities. This has also reinforced patronage and given rise to 'informal governance', the benefits of which are often reaped by those who are in privileged positions. This prevents marginalised communities from achieving social mobility. Federal governance would facilitate devolution of power to the federal states allowing regional communities to take increased responsibility in taking decisions about the matters that affect them. The devolved political power at federal level can extend local autonomy in planning and implementation of public sector projects including education, which will gradually build capacity of local communities. On contrary to the current projects of 'centralised decentralisation', federalism would expedite a sustainable project of localised decentralisation.

It is also important to consider economic viability and geographical practicalities of the federal states while realising the above discussed rationale for federalism. Hence, it is argued that the most appropriate model of federalism should be based on three key factors: identity, economic viability and geographical proximity. At the same time, it is also important to identify common principles of national pride and integrity while exercising federal autonomy. Federalism should be an instrument for building sustainable peace and

achieving economic prosperity and all political forces have a responsibility to negotiate the most appropriate model of federalism.

Educational reconstruction is largely dependent on the nature of political change and therefore has tremendous implications in the process of determining its vision and goals for a new Nepali society. In order to promote the role of education in peacebuilding, educational reforms must be geared towards maintaining national unity, while also judiciously promoting a context for sustainable peace, community cohesion and social justice. Hence, a meaningful process of educational reconstruction should coincide with the new political structure within which the role of education in maintaining social cohesion and building peace should be clearly articulated.

9.5 Educational Reforms and Opportunities for Peacebuilding

Nepal's education system has not only contributed to the process of modernisation in the last few decades but also played a complicit role in amplifying horizontal inequalities (Stewart, 2001) across different social groups, which as a result, has legitimised marginalised identities during the period of violent political conflict. Even though conflict had devastating impact on children, teachers and educational officers (see Chapters 6 and 7), the post-war political development has shown a tremendous amount of hope in relation to socio-political restructuring of the state and potential opportunities for 'revolutionary' educational reforms. Buckland (2005) also explains that violent conflicts pose not only challenges to post-conflict rebuilding but also offer opportunities for a meaningful reconstruction of the education system. In other words, post-conflict opportunities for educational reforms allow for a comparatively easier process to address 'the negative face' of education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000) and contextually devise its role in peacebuilding.

Smith (2005: 377) argues that education systems need to be more 'conflict-sensitive' in their characteristics and practices in order to play a positive role in reconciliation and peacebuilding. He notes that 'political elites are likely to want to use education for their own purpose', which suggests 'the need for systems and structures that 'insulate' the education sector from political bias, potential corruption and interference in operational decision to implement policy' (Smith, 2005: 379). Similarly, equal access of all social groups to education is another key issue from the conflict perspective. Examples from conflict-affected societies show that 'uneven distribution' of education generates and fuels violent conflicts. In the apartheid South Africa, black children suffered systematic exclusion in the education system while the Hutus in Rwanda and Burundi were prevented from gaining

access to secondary education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Other sensitive areas include education in the mother tongue, unbiased and diverse curricular contents and balanced teaching of history and recruitment of a multi-ethnic teaching workforce (Smith, 2005). For example, Nepal's teacher recruitment process significantly lacks 'diversity-sensitive recruitment' of teachers partly reflecting the exclusionary character of the recruitment procedure but mainly an indication of lack of educated people from the marginalised communities. In the post-conflict situation, Nepal has a good potential to reform the education system more responsibly with the view of making education free from prejudices or ignorance of the rich ethnic and cultural diversity. Addressing the abovementioned aspects of educational reform would enhance the role of education in building peace in the long run.

Education is largely ignored in the peace agreements and it is hardly regarded as an influential factor of peacebuilding in the UN peace programmes. Dupuy (2008) notes that in the 37 peace agreements that were signed between 1989 and 2005, 11 of them make no mention of education at all and those that do include education, there appears to be great variation. The UN Peacebuilding Fund in 2010 was supporting 150 projects in 18 countries but education received only 14% of the annual budget of US$360 (Smith, 2011). However, the most pertinent issue here is not necessarily the allocation of a small amount of funding to education, rather it is the dominance strategy of prevention rather than what peace theory highlights: peacebuilding as 'transformation processes related to security sector reform, political institutions, economic regeneration and social development within post-conflict societies' (Smith, 2011: 5). The armed conflict in Nepal emerged in the background of pervasive social exclusion, deeply rooted inequalities across caste, gender and ethnic lines and most importantly, the social and political structures that perpetuated these social injustices. Hence, peacebuilding in Nepal is not just about demobilisation and reintegration of Maoist rebels, it is more about social transformation in social, political and economic realms. A recent UNICEF study that examined the role of education in peacebuilding highlighted that 'the education sector is potentially a very important sector for supporting the transformative process in post-conflict societies' (Novelli and Smith, 2011: 7). Drawing on an extensive research in three countries Nepal, Sierra Leone and Lebanon, the report notes that 'education programming should be based on high quality political economy and conflict analysis that is sensitive to conflict dynamics of local contexts' and 'attention should be paid to supporting transformation through reform of the education sector and paying attention to the values and content communicated through the education system' (Novelli and Smith, 2011: 7). This approach is related to what the peace theorist Johan Galtung (1969) suggests as an important distinction between 'negative peace' (absence of physical

violence) and 'positive peace' (absence of symbolic violence and social injustices). Hence, the challenge for Nepal's educational reconstruction is to devise an education system that it contributes to the process of social transformation by addressing key issues within the system as well as in the broader society as a whole. These may include the following areas:

- equal access of all social groups to a good quality education
- provision of education in the mother tongue
- recruitment of teachers from diverse ethnic and caste groups, maintaining gender balance
- education is related to economic needs and provides employability skills
- teachers are trained how to deal with multicultural, multi-ethnic and multilingual sensitivity
- revision of curricular contents to reflect regional and local realities
- revision of history to honour diversity
- national identity and national unity.

9.6 Summary

This chapter has highlighted the contested notion of national identity that has emerged as an outcome of the decade- long conflict and subsequent political movements. The role of education in the process of the formation of a national identity was debated and it was indicated that ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of a unified national identity. Finally, the chapter briefly discussed the role of education in supporting the process of social transformation as a means of building sustainable peace. The next chapter will provide a summary and conclusions of the dissertation and propose some recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will provide a brief summary of the study and draw conclusions from the findings and discussion presented in previous chapters. In this process, the research aims and specific objectives will be revisited along with a brief summary of major debates in the field of education and conflict. This will be followed by conclusions derived from the analysis of key findings of the study. Finally, this chapter will make a number of recommendations for post-conflict educational reconstruction in Nepal.

10.1 Revisiting the Aims of the Study

The major aim of this research was to examine the impact of recent violent conflict on Nepal's school education particularly drawing upon the experiences of various educational stakeholders. Hence, the study began with the research question - *What is the impact of the armed conflict on school education in Nepal?* However, as the research unfolded, the role of education in reinforcing structural inequalities and thereby strengthening necessary conditions to ignite armed rebellion became a key aspect of analysis. Problematising the role of education in conflict became to a useful analytical tool to better understand the nexus between education and conflict in Nepal. This analytical approach further provided critical knowledge about the role of education in reducing conflict and contributing to sustainable peacebuilding that is beyond the notion of pacification as peacebuilding to the notion of social transformation. Hence, the specific research objectives of this study were:

1. **To examine the historical context of education and analyse its relevance to the armed conflict in Nepal:** The critical review of available literature in Chapter 3 and 4 provided a detailed analysis of the complex relationship between education and conflict in Nepal. The analysis problematised the perceived unquestionable role of education in providing social mobility, economic growth and enhancing national development. It introduced a critical debate in the domain of Nepalese educational research and scholarship by challenging the complicit role of education in perpetuating social divisions. The education and conflict debate in Nepal is situated within the emerging field of education and conflict globally, which is receiving increased attention, both in the academic and practitioner literature.

2. **To develop case studies of educational stakeholders, which represent a range of their experiences of, and responses to, the conflict:** In Chapters 6 and 7, the key findings of the study were presented and discussed alongside relevant literature in the field. Chapter 6 mainly analysed a range of experiences of teachers, head

teachers and educational officers during the armed conflict and discussed the impact on their professional as well as personal lives. The subsequent chapter presented an analysis of children's and parents' experiences of the war. The central themes in these chapters include interaction between education and conflict, participants' experiences of violence and the impact of their violent experiences on their personal as well as professional lives.

3. **To develop a holistic understanding of the impact of the armed conflict on school education by integrating the range of responses from the schools:** Chapter 8 of this thesis synthesised the findings concerning the effects of war on educational stakeholders including children, teachers, parents and others but also further attempted to develop a holistic understanding of the impact of 'People's War' on school education. Utilising a political economy analysis approach, the following three central themes were discussed:
   a. Continued violence on schools in the form of politicisation of educational processes
   b. Variation in power relationships among different stakeholders within the school; and
   c. The general ignorance of the impact caused by the violent conflict on educational stakeholders.

4. **To develop an understanding of, and explain the implications of, the impact for educational reforms in a new political context:** Chapter 9 dealt with the post-war political and educational dimensions particularly focusing on the role of education in peacebuilding. It highlighted that the post-conflict state restructuring had tremendous implications for educational reforms in relation to reconstructing the role of education in supporting social and political structures that promote equity and social justice. Most importantly, Chapter 9 presented a critical analysis into the role of education in addressing the issue of national identity while ethnic and indigenous identities are increasingly surmounting the notion of unified national identity. It also raised some questions regarding inclusive national history and the ideological contention towards the 'People's War' in the curriculum.

10.2 Education and Conflict in Nepal: An emerging debate

Largely confirming with the dominant global perception, education in Nepal is also perceived to be unquestionably a positive experience and valuable instrument for gaining upward social mobility. However, the analysis of the complex relationship between education and Nepal's armed conflict shows that education can not only 'serve to lift a country out of absolute and relative poverty and hence out of the economic marginalisation that can be a precursor to instability' but it can also equally produce and reproduce or actually exaggerate 'social divisions, therefore contributing to the likelihood of tension' (Davies, 2005: 359). The critical review of available literature revealed that the 'negative face' of education in Nepal is increasingly being recognised in relation to the emergence and spread of the armed conflict (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Shields and Rappleye, 2008a). Educational expansion in the last five decades did increase access of all social groups to education but primarily served the privileged castes that were able to monopolise economic resources and political power. According to Bush and Saltarelli (2000: 9), 'in ethnically stratified societies, privileged ethnic groups usually attain higher average educational levels than members of subordinate ethnic groups'. Nepali society represents multiple layers of social stratification (e.g. gender, caste, ethnicity and urban-rural) that allow for students from privileged backgrounds to gain higher levels of 'educational attainment'. These students can also 'benefit from the educational, occupational and economic attainments of their parents' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000: 9). Weininger and Lareau (2005) note that in societies characterised by various forms of social hierarchies and a system of formal education. As argued by Bourdieu (1977), 'these "advantages" largely stem from the institutionalization of "criteria of evaluation" in schools—that is, standards of assessment— which are favorable to children from a particular class or classes' (Weininger and Lareau, 2005: 1). Nepal's modern schooling legitimised the 'cultural capital' of various social groups (Bourdieu, 1977) and largely channeled 'individuals towards class destinations that largely (but not wholly) mirror their class origins' (Weininger and Lareau, 2005: 1).

According to Apple (2004: 61), education is a 'political act' and schools are 'caught up in a nexus of other institutions—political, economic, and cultural—that are basically unequal'. Education in Nepal played a crucial role in reproducing the unjust social order that ultimately became the major cause of the Maoist movement in Nepal.

This thesis has shown that the dominance of hill-based, high caste groups in social, political and economic realms (Neupane, 2000) equally interacted with educational policies and practices in gaining social control by reinforcing 'cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups' (Apple, 2004: 61). The language of instruction, curricular contents and the teaching workforce represented cultural hegemony of the dominant social groups that systematically excluded disadvantaged groups such as Madheshis, Dalits and indigenous nationalities. Education for some minority ethnic groups acted as a 'weapon in repression' by excluding their language, culture and history in the educational process (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). As Gramsci (1971: 43) also notes that producing 'a new stratum of intellectuals … from a social group which has not traditionally developed the appropriate attitudes, then we have unprecedented difficulties to overcome'. As a result, despite increased access to education, the traditionally marginalized groups were unable to benefit from the education system. This is indicated by the high rates of dropouts among children from marginalized groups (Yadava, 2007). Hence, education played a complicit role in perpetuating the existing caste-based hierarchies, gender divisions and ethnic marginalisation and therefore implicitly contributed to the emergence of the armed rebellion in Nepal.

10.3 Impact of Conflict on Teachers, Children and Parents

This research revealed that the educational sector was affected by the conflict in a number of different ways. Primarily, teachers and students were caught in the middle of the conflict, as schools were lucrative sites for both conflicting parties. School premises often provided shelter for the Maoist mobile army as well as for the security forces that were deployed throughout the country during emergencies while teachers and students were compelled to participate in political education programmes. The Maoist cadres abducted and murdered teachers if the teachers did not comply with the Maoist demands, such as mandatory donations, attendance in their political programmes and sometimes being accused of spying on the Maoist activities and therefore being the 'enemy of the revolution'. On the other hand, security forces arrested and tortured teachers for 'colluding' with the Maoists and challenging the state authority. Similarly, students were also abducted and forcefully recruited to the Maoist guerrilla army. This created the environment of fear in schools resulting in significant loss of motivation in learning and teaching. The violence in schools and their surroundings often risked the lives of children and teachers causing despair and futility related to their education in the times of mounting conflict throughout the country.

It was revealed that some teachers and children supported the 'People's War' and joined the movement as they believed that it was possibly the only way to bring about socioeconomic change in the country. Others joined believing that they could earn their living being part of the movement. As a result, many died or were wounded during the war and those who survived could not complete their education, which would impact on their ability to succeed economically.

It was found that teachers and children had suffered from emotional and psychological stress caused by their violent experiences in the past. A large number of displacements of both teachers and students in rural areas also disrupted educational processes. The security forces often tortured children and family members of Maoist activists and in exchange, the family members of the security forces faced threats and attacks from the Maoists in the rural areas. Even after the end of violence, school children in some parts of the country are still reported to have fainted during the school hours. The conflict has also caused a significant decline in children's participation in sports and other extra-curricular activities. Teachers' professional motivation has declined significantly impacting adversely on the quality of education.

10.4 Continued Impact of Conflict on Education

Even though the violent conflict has officially ended after the signing of the peace agreement and the peace process is approaching a logical conclusion, the education sector continues to suffer from the legacy of conflict-related dynamics. The end of conflict has merely reduced the incidents of physical violence in schools. Schools are now trapped in the power struggle between various political groups that intend to control school management to exert their influence on the community. There has been a significant decline in teacher accountability, which is further exacerbated by politicisation of educational processes including of the community management of schools. The relationships between teachers, head teachers, SMCs and students have been transformed resulting in a shift in power dynamics that are again manifested through their political links. For example, students who are active members of or affiliated to student unions were reported to have been disrespectful to teachers and often violated rules and regulations of the school. The quality of education has hence declined as a result of weakening governance and less priority on teaching and learning in the school. Violent intrusion on the

education system, politicisation of educational processes and traumatic experiences of teachers and children during the conflict have paralysed the public education in Nepal. The ongoing rehabilitation and reintegration of former rebels appears to be an effort to gain stability by pacifying the former rebels. Unless the root causes of the violent conflict are addressed and socioeconomic structures of Nepali society are transformed, sustainable peace is likely to remain elusive.

10.5 Political Economy Analysis (PEA) of Education

This research has demonstrated that political and economic factors play a significant role in Nepal's post-war educational processes. For example, the present fundamental problem of teacher deployment is unlikely to change as the politicisation of unions is an integral part of the current political situation. Support from teachers is very important to the political parties: calls to de-politicise education are not wholly realistic. Failure to tackle the teacher deployment issue will continue to undermine the quality of government education and increase the divide between private and public schools. In addition, the increasing pattern of Nepali youth working abroad and their remittances further exacerbate this trend as more and more families can afford to send their children to private schools.

The attempt, endorsed by many DPs, to increase the decentralisation of school management contradicts with the apparent determination of political parties to strengthen the bureaucracy and control education through their dominance at the centre. Both of these extremes (strong central control and vigorous community involvement) are unlikely to come about but a combination of better central control of officials (at least to the extent of rooting out blatant corruption in the educational sector) and stronger community involvement to improve teacher performance are likely to make modest improvements (Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012)).

Most educational policies initiated after the political change in 1990 appear to have been driven by an external agenda for educational development rather than being rooted in the national level realities. The most recent policy framework - SSRP including other centrally managed processes in the education sector have little impact on schools. This follows the general finding that 'informal governance' drives out 'formal governance' (Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012)). The hidden effects surrounding patronage and politics undermine whatever is envisaged through formal policies and processes.

Foreign aid in education is largely manipulated and does not effectively strengthen the processes of 'formal governance'. The strong patronage system in Nepali society,

exacerbated by increasing politicisation of the education system, means that educational development aid is distorted towards 'informal governance' – corruption by those who hold power both at local and national levels. This indicates that the major challenge of educational development is not necessarily the lack of sufficient funding in education but the political and social patronage that resists institutionalisation of formal governance. Hence, the increased funding in education without balancing political economy drivers mainly the practice of informal governance, is likely to perpetuate corruption rather than improving the system. It is questionable whether DPs should continue to finance such a system. The political economy drivers in Nepal's education system are identified as the following:

- Centralisation of power and resources
- Politicisation of the education sector and schooling
- Patronage based on political affiliation, social status and wealth

The most recent educational reforms are limited to technical solutions to existing educational problems, which have largely failed to achieve satisfactory results. The political and economic factors play crucial roles in the educational development process. The following table (Table 10.1) summarises different areas of policy reforms and provides PEA explanation to the ineffectiveness of technical solutions:

Table 10.1: The PEA Drivers
(Pherali et al, forthcoming (2012))

The target-orientated educational financing has grave repercussions for the entire education system. The current educational bureaucracy is capable of adjusting to DP targets by manipulating processes such as exams. Educational statistics are often manipulated and processes are adjusted to meet pre-conditions of educational aid. Schools were found to have over-reported their student number to gain extra funding (e.g. per capita funding, scholarship, books, school improvement funds etc.). Cheating in exams particularly the SLC, has become institutionalised in order to meet targets set by DPs and public expectations. Corruption in the exam system has adversely impacted on the quality of school level qualifications as well as students' motivation to engage with the learning processes.

Even though the social and political environments have changed as a result of the decade-long, violent conflict and the subsequent Madhesh uprising, the institutional structures including those in the education system remain fundamentally the same. Interestingly, the

traditional forms of discrimination along gender, caste and ethnic lines have been challenged leading to a greater demand for education especially for girls. However, the education system has contributed to this in a superficial way, through incentives or scholarships, rather than through a transformative approach to diversity in the education system. Even though there have been attempts to revise the textbooks and initiatives have been taken to provide education in the mother tongue, this appears to a superficial response to the changing political sentiments as well as to sympathise with the demands of DPs. This does not necessarily contribute to the broader need for structural reforms in education, such as dominance of Pahade teaching workforce, male domination in the school leadership, hegemony of Nepali language, high dropouts among girls and children from marginalised communities, private-public educational divide, perceived lack of relevance of education for some social groups and cultural beliefs preventing girls from continuing education. The ongoing peace process and current political restructuring of the state through the Constituent Assembly has significant implications for the future of Nepal's education system. Hence, this study makes a range of recommendations for educational reconstruction in a new socio-political context of Nepal.

10.6 Recommendations for Educational Reconstruction

The analysis of the nexus between education and conflict conveys that educational reconstruction in the post-conflict environment should take a radical approach in order to enhance the role of education in building 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1971). It is important not only to address the impact of conflict on education (eg. rebuilding schools, issue of politicisation of SMCs, addressing the impact on teachers and students who have become victims of the conflict) but also to carry out structural reforms at various levels in order to mitigate conditions that implicitly contributed to generate and fuel violent conflict. In broader political terms, these strategies may include adjusting social structures (e.g. caste, gender and ethnic hierarchies that perpetuate unjust cultural hegemony), economic structures (unequal distribution of land and economic resources and barriers to upward social and economic mobility), and political structures (centralisation, political patronage, monopoly of certain social groups over state power and marginalisation of ethnic and indigenous communities). Educational reconstruction is therefore an essential part of broader structural adjustments that intimately relate to the process of state restructuring.

While Nepal's education system continues to suffer from the effects of violent conflict, it also holds a tremendous opportunity for radical reforms. Education has a key role in making necessary contributions to economic growth as well as to the post-conflict democratisation

and statebuilding process. In this process, the education system should be more inclusive in order to allow not only equal access but also equitable experience for all social groups to quality education. Education should complement the equitable economic and social structures that help historically marginalised groups such as Madheshis, Dalits, indigenous populations, and women to be able to achieve their full potential and participate equitably in the society. Hence, a number of recommendations are made in order to facilitate the process of educational reforms in the post-conflict period:

1. Addressing the Impact of Conflict: The decade-long violent conflict has significantly politicised educational processes in government schools to an extent that educational priorities are often manipulated by political interests of various groups within and outside the education system. For example, SMCs, teachers' associations, student unions, political parties and even criminal groups mobilise support for their political agendas often at the cost of children's learning. Secondly, educational stakeholders, including teachers and students who had been victimised (e.g. arrested, abducted, traumatised, maimed, etc.) by the conflicting parties have been largely ignored in the present political processes. The armed conflict has weakened the state functionaries and seriously damaged teacher professionalism resulting in a loss of accountability. It is important to restore the trust of teachers on the state mechanisms and rebuild professional motivation.

2. Enabling Structural Reforms in Education- recruitment, assessment, language, and curriculum: Teacher recruitment should be 'conflict-sensitive' at structural level. In other words, there needs to be equitable representation of diverse caste, gender and ethnic groups in the teaching workforce. Teacher selection procedure should be reformed in order to allow for individuals from marginalised communities to enter the service. Most importantly, children should be provided with an opportunity to gain education in their mother tongue and the school curricula should be more inclusive, diverse and employment orientated.

3. Incorporating Peacebuilding Education: Education has a great potential to make valuable contributions to peacebuilding (Novelli and Smith, 2011). However, there are limitations in the current UN peace architecture in relation to defining peacebuilding. There is a dominant perception and understanding of the notion of peacebuilding as pacification or

stabilisation rather than social transformation through fundamental changes in the structures of the society. Current peacebuilding strategies are more geared towards prevention of violent conflict through youth engagement, disarmament, reconciliation and maintaining peace and stability in the society rather than addressing the root causes of violent rebellion – that are social, political, economic and cultural inequalities causing symbolic violence on those who are disadvantaged, excluded or marginalised in the society.

Peacebuilding education needs to be guided by the notions of social justice, critical thinking and interactive pedagogies in order to allow for young people to understand and debate socioeconomic divisions and political exclusion that have contributed to the surge of violent conflict in Nepal. The constitution of the International Labour Organisation notes that 'universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice' (ILO, 2010: 5). Peacebuilding education is concerned with constructing social foundations and structures that promote social justice - economic egalitarianism, equality, human rights, progressive taxation, income redistribution, property redistribution and equality of opportunities. This would mean that children become empowered and actively engage in a variety of learning activities that promote critical thinking and creativity. The implication for teachers is that they need to radically transform their educational philosophy from the dominant didactic approach to more participatory learning in which children's voices are respected and listened to. This means that learners are at the core of educational processes.

Hence, peacebuilding education should be understood as an active process of analysing and understanding the forms of structural inequalities in society and providing young people with tools to critically understand the root causes of the violent conflict. Sustainable peace can only be achieved if the unjust social, political and economic structures are adjusted and society becomes more equitable. It should go beyond the dominant notion of peacebuilding as pacification and prevention of physical violence to peacebuilding as a process of social transformation by addressing structural violence (e.g. poverty, socio-political exclusion, gender, caste and ethnic marginalisation). Addressing these problems is the prerequisite of Nepal's peacebuilding project. Peacebuilding education can contribute to this process by supporting the structures that promote peace.

4. Need for Conflict Sensitive Reforms: The recent SSRP aims to make 'strategic intervention' by 'restructuring school education, improvement in the quality of education, and institutionalisation of performance accountability' (MoE, 2009, 1). However, the SSRP largely ignores the enduring effects of the decade long, violent conflict on school leaders and the teaching workforce. The plan is flawed mainly in two respects: a) it does not acknowledge the 'negative face' of education that has historically produced favourable grounds for insurgency (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000); and b) it completely ignores the fact that Nepal is currently undergoing a rapid political change potentially with massive implications for a radical agenda for educational change. Even though the policy has some positive aspects, it is unlikely to produce intended outcomes in the present scenario of weak governance and politicisation of the education system. The success of any policy initiative would depend on the aptitude and motivations of the educational workforce, which, in Nepal's case, is morally incapacitated and psychologically traumatised by the decade-long violent conflict. Hence, there is a need for a conflict-sensitive educational reform that recognises the enduring impact of violence on school education.

The array of violent experiences endured by schools poses significant challenges to the task of educational reconstruction. Implications of the violent past and the kind of conflictual impasse brought to schools including teachers, students, head teachers and educational officers are located in the form of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1977) that are essentially the same kind of dilemma. The protracted peace process and dominance of politics on the educational sector have obscured the contentious role of education during the conflict and undermined any meaningful debate on what 'more of the same' education might mean for reconstruction of a 'new Nepal'. The continued development-inspired formula of education for narrow economic gain unfortunately seems to overlook the connections between education and conflict described by those who experienced it discussed in this thesis.

5. Teaching of History: National history has largely been biased and exclusionary in terms of acknowledging cultural and ethnic diversity of Nepal. During the Panchayat period, the national history mainly promoted three main factors – loyalty to the monarchy, the Nepali language and Hinduism as the instruments for creating national unity (Onta, 1996). These characteristics were also embedded in the educational processes. For example, schools were required to celebrate anniversaries of the members of the royal family and chant slogans praying for their long lives; the national anthem praised the monarchy; Nepali was the official language as well as the medium of instruction in the school; the Hindu religious festivals were declared as the national holidays and the monarchy was portrayed as the guardian of the Hinduism. These practices also became the basis for creating monolithic

Nepali identity. The national education system promoted the values of monoculture, predominantly represented by the privileged social and ethnic groups and viewed the ethnic diversity and multiculturalism as a threat to nation building. The state-sponsored cultural repression ultimately fuelled people's resistance resulting in increased support of the marginalised castes and ethnic communities to the Maoist movement that embraced gender, caste and ethnic liberation as the major goal of the violent struggle.

In the new political context, the national history needs to be rewritten in order to make it more inclusive, particularly incorporating diverse cultural and religious traditions and acknowledging social exclusion of various groups in the past. In other words, Nepal's diversity, multiculturalism and multiple nationalities need to be reflected in the new history of the country rather than continuing with the hegemony of the unbalanced past. It is likely that there will be controversies in relation to depicting the 'People's War' in the history of Nepal due to its political and violent nature. This agenda requires a great deal of sensitivity before it is introduced formally in the education system. Due to contesting ideological stances towards the violent conflict, it is important that teachers adopt a 'conflict-sensitive' approach while dealing with politically controversial issues. For example, approximately 13,000 people have been killed during the course of the conflict and many have suffered from both conflicting parties. Even after the peace agreement, the legacy of conflict and loss of loved ones continues to affect families, children and relatives. On the other hand, the Maoist movement has considerably challenged the unequal social and political structures of Nepali society while sensitising socioeconomic agendas of the poor and marginalised. Dealing with these issues critically in non-threatening environments such as schools requires new approaches and pedagogical skills and hence the need for an effective teacher education programme that provides teachers with the necessary tools to deal with these sensitive issues.

6. Educational Leadership: The violent experiences of school leaders and the impact of decade-long conflict on educational stakeholders as discussed in chapter 6 and 7 have significant implications for envisioning school leadership in post-conflict Nepal. The increased political influence on the teaching workforce and in some cases, problematic working relationships with politically motivated, school management committees has added yet another challenge to effective school leadership. School monitoring and supervision should be strengthened by the DEO along with increased participation of local communities in the educational processes. School heads need to be equipped with more autonomy in

leading and managing their schools with increased accountability to parents and the education authority.

7. Policy Level Reforms: Historically, education has mainly served the purpose of Nepali speaking, hill-based high castes (Lawoti, 2005). The monopoly of Nepali language and the state-sponsored project of national homogenisation through language and culture (Onta, 1996) have implicated education as an agency for reproducing socio-economic and caste-based disparities in Nepali society. The marginalised ethnic groups who fought in the 'People's War' have now emerged as the regional political force with influential power in the Constituent Assembly. Ethnic and indigenous nationalities have attempted to reclaim and restore their identity and hence the rise of debate on ethnicity-based federalism and the superiority of ethnic/ indigenous majority in the federal states. The federal structure of 'new' Nepal would have policy implications in terms of determining the educational frameworks, medium of instruction and the curricular design. The new education system must address discrimination based on language, ethnicity, gender and castes. This is likely to impact on the composition of the existing teaching workforce, which is dominated by the hill-based high castes.

7. Political Influence on Schools: Schools have played a central role in the successful 'recruitment strategy of indoctrination' which Eck (2010: 45-46) argues was the agency of the rebel group in expanding the 'People's War'. Even prior to the armed conflict, school heads, teachers, students and educational officers were ideologically associated with different political parties and were frequently (mis)used in their political campaigns. The conflict has further increased political interference and escalated teachers' and students' involvement in politics. A strong political commitment is required to develop a mechanism that allows schools to mainly focus in their professional duty of maintaining a high level of learning and teaching standards. Teachers need to be assured with professional respect and duty of care by the state so that they would see no need to extend their loyalty to political parties. Head teachers should be empowered to make administrative decisions, management of teachers and school funds and also be accountable to the SMCs in terms of educational performance and financial transparency. In addition, elections of the local government would also help deflect the school-based, multi-party struggle to village development committees. This would reduce political influence of the SMCs on schools.

8. Education and National Identity: All that has been done in the past to contrive and produce a single 'national identity', through a unified culture, single language and integrated system of politics, has clearly not worked in Nepal's case. Despite rapid educational expansion over the past decades and increased access to education throughout the

country, education has failed largely to address persistent horizontal inequalities across castes, gender and ethnicity and nurture social cohesion along these lines. The legacy of recent conflict has also demonstrated that political belief in the value of national identity as a form of cultural assimilation – (mediated through regime change designed to homogenise ethnic identities), is nothing but a flawed concept. In seeking to impose radical and indiscriminate regime change in the context of an increasingly heterogeneous empirical reality, such centralised policy does little to enhance the prospect of social and political stability. Indeed, the coexistence of different ethnic identities alongside a unified concept of Nepali identity is not without opposition, for the paradoxical scenario highlights the extent of the crisis of identity in the post-accord transitional era in Nepal. It further poses a series of critical questions that have emerged throughout the process of Nepal's state restructuring project: What does a single ethnic identity serve to produce? How would the ethnic make-up of individual federal governments ensure inclusion and begin to address the more serious issue of widespread poverty? How is the process of national integration to be addressed and how would national unity be promoted? Finally and more importantly, how is the idea of national identity and integration embedded within formal education?

These questions have complex and potentially controversial answers. Recognition to ethnic identity can revitalise the self-esteem of ethnically marginalised groups and encourage them to seek their proactive roles within their federal state. It can also build their political and economic capacity to represent their state and develop mutually beneficial links with other states. However, very soon, these federal states would have to realise that ethnic liberation is a means not the goal. The extensive analysis presented in this thesis reveals that ethnic exclusion was one of causes of economic and political disparity and hence the federal autonomy along ethnic lines would potentially pave the way for inclusive democracy and equitable economic growth. The key agenda then is concerned with sustainable growth and poverty reduction, which should be the major concern of federal governments. However, political leaderships as well as the ordinary people must be conscious about the risk of potential intra-state as well as inter-state conflicts largely involving identity issues. In this situation, the notion of national identity needs to be reinterpreted. It is likely that 'Nepali' as national identity would gradually disappear or will only be a political notion rather than an emotional one. Economic and political factors are likely to be the source of national integration rather than the existing notions such as 'brave Nepali', 'land of Buddha', 'country with the Mount Everest' and 'cultural diversity'.

Clearly, the post-conflict transition provides an opportunity to redefine the aims of education in Nepal and also comprehensively review education policy – (in terms of redefining

objectives for curriculum, teaching and learning pedagogy). However, there is a need for rigorous debate around the *kind* of citizenry required in Nepal in this newly emerging context and further, how this should be incorporated into the process of formal education. The *scale of the task is considerable*, not least in the context of an evolving regional politics that are fast becoming skewed towards concerns of national integration, both in terms of conceiving 'Nepali' identity and shaping 'Nepal' as a one-nation state. It is almost certain that Nepal will adopt a form of federalism, such that federal states will assume some responsibility individually for the reconstruction of education. In the flux of debate around national unity, however, a number of questions need to be asked in relation to the many aspects of provision that require fundamental educational reform and reconstruction. These will include addressing the imposition of a single language, 'national history' (Onta, 1996) and motion to challenge the profound and widespread cultural exclusion of marginalised groups in education and society. However, it should be realised that evidence from international contexts does not necessarily provide an easy solution to the provision of multilingual education which is generally regarded as a panacea for educational tensions in multilingual societies – that it exposes 'persistent and seemingly insurmountable tensions and contradictions in translating official multilingual policy into actual classroom linguistic practice' (Hornberger and Vaish, 2009: 309). In the present context of globalisation and the *increased influence of English* as a means of securing global economic opportunities, the prospect of nurturing a localised ethnic identity through *the provision of education in the* mother-tongue has become a much less attractive option to parents (Banda, 2000).

While only a radical reconfiguration and purposeful restructuring of formal education can address such issues, the scale of the initiative would inevitably pose substantial technical challenges; for example, meeting the demand for an adequately trained teaching workforce, transforming teacher education programmes, improving the management capacity of federal states and, not insignificantly, undertaking the enormous task of extensive curricular reforms. Ultimately, then, educational reconstruction can be meaningful and may succeed only if there is serious political 'will' and commitment from the political parties, parties who, in turn, would need to serve both the aspirations generated by the recent 'People's War' and political movements involved in the peace process.

10.7 Methodological Reflection

This research provided a rare opportunity to visit rural districts of Nepal including Doti in the far-West and Sankhuwasabha in the eastern mountains and helped me gain valuable experience of interacting with teachers, children and parents in diverse communities including the Maoist-dominated Rolpa to metropolitan city of Kathmandu. I was amazed to

see how people very openly discussed their violent experiences during the conflict. Focus group discussions sometimes posed challenges due to participants' contesting political affiliations and distinctive experiences during the conflict but also served as unique opportunities to share their painful experiences of the past. In one of the districts, ex-army men (some of who had been wounded during the conflict) and Maoist activists participated in the focus group discussion as parents of the school who completed the narrative writing task. It was, however, interesting to observe how they revealed their traumatic stories in front of each other. The discussion provided them with an opportunity to meet their former enemies and listen to each other's experiences. This opportunity brought them closer and helped realise that effects of violence are painful irrespective of who experiences them. Hence, some of these focus group discussions served as a *community peacebuilding* activity by bringing people from across dividing lines together.

The interviews and discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As a Nepali native speaker, I was fortunate to be able to listen to the clips in Nepali several times before, during and after the data analysis period, which proved to be a useful approach to playing with the data. I also benefitted from a journalist/ desk editor of an English newspaper in Nepal who helped me by transcribing the data into English. Political jargons used in Nepali are not always easy to translate accurately into English even for a competent bilingual speaker. Given the political nature of the research, having someone who edited political news to transcribe the data was a real benefit.

The use of narrative writing task was an innovative methodical experiment, which proved to be extremely useful. This tool can be useful especially in the contexts where interviewing people about their traumatic experiences may be ethically challenging. Clearly, it is important to build trust with the participants to be able to obtain data in the written form and the researcher needs to be even more careful to protect the data and maintain confidentiality of the participants. It would be interesting to see the use of this tool in other similar contexts.

The fieldwork was conducted during the summer and monsoon of *2008 which posed* challenges to visit the research field. Flooded rivers and frequent political strikes made commuting extremely difficult. Due to indefinite period of strike, I was stuck in Biratnagar for three days and finally had to take a risky ride on an old motorcycle through a dense forest during a rainy day in order to avoid the protesters. I was then stuck in Udaypur for two days after I completed my research due to flood in the Triyuga river that blocked vehicular movement. On the way to Rolpa, the bus broke down and had to spend 16 hours in the middle of the forest without food and water. I was also caught in the riots on the highway in

the West where the police used force to remove barriers placed by the protesters. I escaped narrowly from attacks from the rioters at mid-night. It was both dangerous and adventurous to drive the car without lights in the dark to avoid being hit by the rocks. The support , welcome and valuable insights provided by the research participants outweighed every single trouble experienced during the fieldwork.

10.8 Final Thoughts

This research has established a complex relationship between education and conflict in Nepal. While education has become instrumental in modernising Nepali society after the political change of 1951, it has largely exacerbated horizontal inequalities across various social groups, ultimately contributing to the conditions that give rise to the possibility of a violent conflict. Even though the conflict has formally ended after the signing of the peace agreement, teachers and schools continue to suffer from the effects of the decade-long 'People's War'. Most regrettably, tensions in the education system including at the level of school management have not been related to the violent experiences (both direct and symbolic) of educational stakeholders during the conflict. In the post-conflict period, education has an immense potential to contribute to the process of Nepal's effort to building peace. The education system in the past has exerted political hegemony of the privileged ethnic and social groups (in the form of language of instruction, curriculum, teaching workforce and so forth) and has largely undermined the culture, history and identity of diverse ethnic and cultural groups living in Nepal. As the issues of social, economic and political inclusion have become key agendas in the post-war state restructuring, the new education system should also incorporate these aspects in the process of educational reconstruction.

Schools are now overwhelmed by excessive politicisation of educational processes including, teacher recruitment and redeployment, school upgrading, management of school funds and the selection of school management committees. Various political groups battle over securing their influence over schools and the communities. As a result, the debate of educational development has been deflected from learning and teaching to school leadership school management that lends social and political status to those who already enjoy privileged positions in their communities. In addition, the decade-long conflict has caused a significant decline in teachers' professional motivation so that teachers now extend their loyalty to the political parties rather than to the government.

Most importantly, educational reconstruction should address the 'negative face' of education by providing equitable access to education by various social groups; making a provision of education in the mother tongue; incorporating history, culture and religious issues of diverse social groups in the curriculum; and making the existing teaching workforce more inclusive. Alongside more inclusive political restructuring, it is important to incorporate peacebuilding education in the education system so that education can play a crucial role in promoting social and political structures that nurture peace with social justice.

Nepal is on the brink of promulgating a new constitution, which would allow for a new political structure of the State. It is almost certain that Nepal would adopt federalism with a devolved authority in various public services, including education, to the federal states. At this political juncture, it is vital to conduct a broader study with the view of making specific recommendations for a meaningful process of educational reconstruction in the 'new Nepal'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide: Parents

The purpose of this discussion/ interview is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As parents, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on children and school education. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies your village or yourself as an individual will be available to anyone outside this project. The discussions/ interviews will be recorded for analysis purpose and will safely be disposed after being used.

10-15 parents of the children who write narratives will be invited to an FGD.

The FGD will attempt to cover the following questions:

1. How do you view school education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
   a. Can our education be linked with the emergence of the armed conflict? Which ways?
   b. Do you think the existing education system played any role in fuelling/ mitigating the armed conflict? How?
   c. Does our education system contain any elements which play complicit roles in conflict? If yes, what are they?

2. Have you or any member of your family or relatives been drawn into any incident associated with the armed conflict in the past?
   a. Did you/ family member/ relatives participate in the armed conflict?
   b. Did you / family member/ relatives experience conflict incidents?
   c. Did you have a risk on your or family's life during the conflict?
   d. Did you and your family have to leave your home or did you or your family have to move to another place for security reasons?
   e. Did your child have to leave or change the school because of the conflict?
   f. Was your child's school disrupted because of the conflict?
   g. Were you or any member of your family or relative abducted/ arrested during the conflict?
   h. Did you suffer or retain any risk of physical attacks/ psychological pressures?

3. How do you think the experience of conflict has affected/ influenced you or your children?

a. Apparently, we have gained peace now. What effects have you or your family have still retained?
b. Any changes on your life?
c. Any bad memories of the past?
d. Fear?
e. Impact on your child's education?
f. Any difficulty that you/ your children/ family members still facing?
g. Any positive changes in your life brought by the conflict?
h. Any other changes?

4. What needs to be done to address these impacts positively?
    a. From government level?
    b. At community level?
    c. Teachers' roles?
    d. Political party's roles?
    e. Any other effective interventions you believe may be necessary?

5. Let's discuss about the role of school education in the post-conflict Nepal.
    a. What kind of school education should 'new' Nepal have?
    b. What needs to be changed/ improved?
    c. What should our children study at school?
    d. What should be the role of the government?
    e. Can NGOs or INGOs play any role in improving schooling education?
    f. How should private schools be treated in new scenario?

Thank you for your valuable opinions in the discussion.

Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide: Teachers

The purpose of this Focus Group Discussion is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As teachers of this school, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on teachers, children and school education. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies your school or yourselves as individuals will be available to anyone apart from this researcher. This interview will be recorded for analysis purpose and will safely be disposed after being used.

There will be a brief brainstorming activity before starting the FGD.

Activity:

1. All teachers will be divided into two groups. They will have flip charts and markers.
2. They will be asked to brainstorm all the conflict-related incidents that occurred in their communities, at school or elsewhere in which any one of the stakeholders of their school or other schools they knew or heard about.
3. Then, the participants will identify the aspects of school education affected by those incidents.
4. Each group will nominate one or two of its members to present their task.
5. All flip charts will be collected at the end.

Focus Group Discussion

The FGD will build on the presentation of the group activity and will further attempt to delve into the following questions:

6. How do you view education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
    a. Can our education be linked with the emergence of the armed conflict? Which ways?
    b. Does our education system contain any elements that may have played complicit roles in the conflict? If yes, what may be these?
    c. Do you think the existing education system played any role in mitigating the armed conflict? How?

7. What are your experiences of the armed conflict as school teachers?
    a. Were you forced to teach something other than you used to?
    b. Were you forcefully taken to attend any political programmes?
    c. Did you have to face any risk from the warring parties?
    d. Was your job at risk during the conflict?
    e. Did you experience any conflict related incidents at school, on the way to and from school or at home for being a teacher?

f.　Did you face financial/ physical/ psychological pressures from any warring groups?
　　　g.　What were the experiences of your family during the conflict for you being a teacher?
8.　Can you tell me how these experiences affected your roles and responsibilities as a teacher?
　　　a.　Did you have to change the way while operating as a teacher?
　　　b.　Did it affect your level of performance?
　　　c.　Did these experiences affect your finances?
　　　d.　Health and happiness?
　　　e.　Your normal life at home and school?
　　　f.　Relationship with the head teacher?
　　　g.　Relationship with the students?
　　　h.　What kinds of impacts have you still retained?
9.　What needs to be done to address these impacts positively?
　　　a.　What should to be the role of the Government?
　　　b.　What should teachers do about it?
　　　c.　Can the community play any role? How?
　　　d.　How can this be addressed in new educational reconstruction?
10.　Let's discuss the role of school education in the post-conflict Nepal.
　　　a.　What kind of school education should 'new' Nepal have?
　　　b.　What needs to be changed/ improved?
　　　c.　What should our children study at school?

Thank you for your valuable opinions.

Appendix 3: Teacher – Interview Schedule

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As a teacher, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on teachers, children and school education. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies your school or yourself as an individual will be available to anyone except this researcher. This interview will be recorded for analysis purpose and will safely be disposed after being used.

1. How do you see education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
    a. Can our education be linked with the emergence of the armed conflict? Which ways?
    b. Does our education system contain any elements that may have played complicit roles in the conflict? If yes, what may be these?
    c. Do you think the existing education system played any role in mitigating the armed conflict? How?
2. What have been your experiences since the armed conflict broke out in Nepal? Please tell me your stories about what you experienced both in personal life and as a teacher during the armed conflict.
    a. Were you taking part in the 'people's war'? If yes, at what level? What were your experiences?
    b. What were your experiences during the armed conflict?
    c. Was there any pressure on you from any warring groups?
    d. Did any incidents take place at school, home or in your village?
    e. Have you ever had to do anything unwillingly/ forcefully at your job?
3. How have these experiences affected yourself, your roles and responsibilities as a teacher?
    a. Have there been any changes in the ways you would operate as a teacher?
    b. Have you sustained any physical, psychological or financial damages because of any incidents during the armed conflict?
    c. Are there any positive/ negative effects on your motivations to teach?
    d. How do you feel now having experienced the armed conflict as a teacher?
4. What support do you need both at personal and professional level to manage these impacts?
    a. How are you coping with your experiences of the armed conflict?
    b. Do you need any support to manage the sustained effects of the conflict? If yes, what kind of assistance would you expect?
    c. Who do you expect to provide this support to you? How?
    d. How should these impacts be addressed in our future educational reconstruction?

5. What kinds of changes or improvements are necessary in Nepalese school education in the context of post-conflict educational reconstruction?

a. In managing the school
b. The way we teach and children learn
c. The curriculum we use in a changed political situation
d. Roles and responsibilities of Government, school staff and parents
e. The school and community relationships
f. Any other aspects of school education

I will contact you at your convenience if I need to verify any information from this interview.

Thank you for attending this interview!

Appendix 4: Educational Officers – Interview Checklist

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As an Educational Officer, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on Nepal's educational system. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies you as an individual will be available to anyone apart from this researcher. This interview will be recorded for analysis purpose and will safely be disposed after being used.

- Do you see school education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
  - d. Can our education be linked with the emergence of the armed conflict? Which ways?
  - e. Does our education system contain any elements that may have played complicit roles in the conflict? If yes, what may be these?
  - f. Do you think the existing education system played any role in mitigating the armed conflict? How?

11. What are your experiences as an educational officer since the armed conflict broke out in Nepal? Please mention about your both personal and professional experiences related to the violent conflict.
    a. What did the schools under your supervision experience during the conflict?
    b. Was there any pressure on you from any warring groups (government/ rebel groups)?
    c. Did any incidents take place at your office, home or in the district you worked? If yes, how did that affect you or your work?
    d. Were you under pressure to do certain things beyond your professional duties?

12. Please tell me how the armed conflict affected your roles and responsibilities as an educational officer.
    a. How did you deal with the unusual political and security situations during the conflict?
    b. What are the sustained impacts of the armed conflict on school education?

13. How should we address these impacts of the armed conflict to improve the future of our school education?

a. At the level of educational authority (eg. Setting goals, curriculum development, policy making, etc.)
b. Curriculum - in terms of what children should study about in a changed political scenario
c. The way schools are managed
d. Roles of teachers
e. Roles of the community where the school is based

14. What kinds of changes or improvements are necessary in Nepalese school education in the context of post-conflict educational reconstruction?

a. The way we teach and children learn
b. Roles and responsibilities of the governments, school staff and communities
c. Any other aspects of school education in a new political scenario

Thank you for your time and valuable responses. I will contact you at your convenience if further clarification is required from this interview.

Appendix 5: Head teacher – Interview Schedule

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As a Head Teacher of school, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on head teachers, teachers, children and school education. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies your school or yourself as an individual will be available to anyone apart from this researcher. This interview will be recorded for analysis purpose and will safely be disposed after being used.

1. How do you see education in relation to the surge of the armed conflict in Nepal?
   a. Can our education be linked with the emergence of the armed conflict? Which ways?
   b. Does our education system contain any elements that may have played complicit roles in the conflict? If yes, what may be these?
   c. Do you think the existing education system played any role in mitigating the armed conflict? How?

2. What have you experienced since the armed conflict broke out in Nepal? Please tell me your stories of experiences both in your personal life and as the head teacher of this school.
   a. Did you have any involvement in the 'people's war'? If yes, at what level? What were your experiences?
   b. What were your experiences during the armed conflict?
   c. Was there any pressure on you from any warring groups?
   d. Did any incidents take place at school, home or in your village that had effects on you or your school?
   e. Have you ever had to do anything unwillingly?

3. Please tell me how these factors affected your roles and responsibilities as the head teacher?
   a. Effects on:
      i. Educational responsibilities (teaching and learning at school)
      ii. General and human resources management
      iii. Accountability
      iv. Social relationships
      v. School's vision

4. How should these impacts be addressed? What ways? Whose responsibilities?
   a. What are the sustained effects of the incidents that took place during the conflict?

b. How should these impacts be addressed in the process of educational reconstruction?

5. What kinds of changes or improvements are necessary in Nepalese school education in the context of post-conflict educational reconstruction?

      a. In managing the school in a changed political scenario
      b. The way we teach and children learn
      c. The curriculum we use in the post-conflict period
      d. Roles and responsibilities of Government, school staff and parents
      e. The school and community relationships
      f. Any other aspects of school education

Thank you for your time. I will contact you later at your convenience if any information given by you needs further clarification.

Appendix 6: Narrative Writing Task for Students

The purpose of this narrative writing is to gather information about how the recent armed conflict impacted school education in Nepal. As students, your opinions and experiences of the conflict and education are important to understand the impact of the armed conflict on children and school education. I would like to re-enforce the point that no information that identifies your school or yourself as an individual will be available to anyone outside this project. The narrative writing scripts will be safely disposed after using them for analysis purpose.

Write a narrative on **'The Armed Conflict and my Experiences'**.

Write about:

What you have experienced at school, on the way to somewhere, home or communities in relation to the violent conflict in our country. You may have experienced such incidents yourself, witnessed, read or heard about them.

The following questions may assist you to remember, contemplate and organize your writing:

- What incidents took place? Write in detail. Were they about you? Were they about teachers, children, parents or education offices?
- Did they affect you? If 'yes', how?
- What was done about it?
- How do you feel about them now?
- What changes do you intend to see in school education (topics you should study, methods of teaching, learning, life at school, etc.) in relation to the experiences you described?

Guidelines:

1. You should write this story at home and bring within a week's time.
2. The writing sheets and ball pens are provided to you.
3. Please sit in a peaceful place when you write your experiences.
4. You can write as long as you want.
5. If you need to verify any date, numbers or event, you can ask your parents, teachers or friends.
6. Do not show it to other people.

*Please note that this is not a test and there is no right or wrong answer to this task. I am interested to know about your **real experiences** only. Do not worry about any spelling or grammar errors in your writing.*

You will need to hand in the completed task to Tejendra Pherali (Researcher).

Please complete the following questions:

1. Name: _____ 2. Grade: _____

3. Age: _____ 4. Gender: Male/ Female

5. Caste: _____ 6. School: Government / Private

7. Which of the following best describes your experience of the armed conflict in Nepal? (Please tick one.)

1- I have heard/ read about the violent conflict only

2- I have seen violent conflict at school/ community/ on the way to or from school or somewhere else.

3- I have experienced conflict related incident myself/ my close relatives have been a part of violent incidents.

One of the stories will win a small gift!☺

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet – Narrative Writing

(Pupil)

Dear Pupil,

My name is Tejendra and I am a researcher in Liverpool John Moores University, UK. I am investigating the impact of the armed conflict on school education in Nepal. It is important to know in order to improve our school education in the post-conflict period. As school children, you are one of the major stakeholders of our school education and your experiences of the decade long armed conflict in Nepal are important to be considered in any initiative to improve our school education. Therefore, I would like to invite you to participate in this investigation.

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to write a narrative on *'Armed conflict in Nepal and my Experiences'*. You need to complete this task and hand in to me within a week. Detailed guidelines of the task will be provided to you before assigning this work. I may contact you for second time if I need to verify any information you provide in your writing.

No one apart from me will know what you have written in your narrative. I will analyse and may use some portions of your story in the publications without mentioning your name and school. I will dispose of your writings safely after I finish using them.

You may choose not to write the story or not to hand it in even after writing. If you do not want me to use it in the research even after you hand it in, just let me know.

If you are happy to participate in this research, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Thanks for your participation!

Tejendra Pherali
(Researcher)

IM Marsh Campus
Liverpool John Moores University
Room B010a,
Liverpool, L17 6BD
United Kingdom

Tel: 44 151 231 5485
Email: T.Pherali@2007.ljmu.ac.uk

Professor Mark Brundrett (Supervisor

Appendix 8: Participant Information Sheet

(Head Teacher, Teacher and Educational Officers - Interview)

Dear participant,

You are invited to take part in a study into the impact of the armed conflict on school education in Nepal. The object of the study is to inform the post-conflict educational initiatives aimed at improving our country's school education. This study is being conducted by Tejendra J. Pherali, under the supervision of Professor Mark Brundrett, will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Liverpool John Moores University, UK.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be requested to attend an interview session for 30-45 minutes for a single occasion. The interview session will be tape recorded. The researcher will meet you for the purpose at your convenient place. You may be contacted for a second time in case the interview needs to be clarified.

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the investigator named above will have access to information on participants, except as required by law. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without any prejudice.

When you have read this information, I will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact me at the following address. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Tejendra Jnawali Pherali (Researcher)

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Liverpool John Moores University
Barkhill Road
Liverpool, L17 6BD
United Kingdom

Tel: 44 151 231 5485
Email: T.Pherali@2007.ljmu.ac.uk

Appendix 9: Sample of the Interview Transcript: Head Teacher

Q: How do you view the role of education in contributing to the armed conflict in Nepal?

A: If I have to put forward my own experiences and opinions, certainly, the political change that was achieved in 1990 brought two different political camps. The first one the democratic camp that was satisfied with the achievement of the multiparty democracy by the people's movement and the second camp was not fully satisfied though they came to a mutual understanding with the democratic camps. For example, in 1992, then United People's Front participated in the general elections for the parliament and established itself as the third largest party of the country. The majority government, which was supposed to run for the full term could not serve its full term due to the internal disputes inside the ruling party Nepali Congress. Consequently, an interim election was declared in 1995. But the United People's Front Nepal rejected the interim elections. After this, a distance between the state and the Front increased resulting in clashes in the political programmes. The state filed cases against the people who protested the government agendas in which many innocent people were also charged of treason or committing anti-peace and security activities. Because of these activities, the 'people's war' began from 13 Feb 1996.

In the process of beginning of the people's war, one of the causes of the revolt was the way the government at that time treated with the people who were innocent. Those who did not have anything to do with the People's Front, turned out to become rebels after the government charged them with forged cases.

Q: You said that there were political weakness and the government could not address the problems suitably. I would like to link this with education. Are there any elements in our education system that contributed to the conflict that began with various causes?

A: I am linking this conversation to that. When the people's war began, it is not the fault of the education. Education is an intangible thing. Such an intangible thing does not seem to be impacting the conflict. Education does not pop up as a tangible element to cause such incidents. However, as you just asked, what was seen in the Nepalese context when the war began was, even now, the literacy rate is fairly low. Because of this, Nepal lags behind socially, politically and, culturally.

When the 'People's war' began, it should be noted that there were some scholarly people who were involved in it, such as Dr Baburam Bhattarai, Prachanda is also an educated person. They were leading the people's war. Even though they were in the leadership of the people's war, you may be aware that the people's war began from Rolpa. Why did it begin from Rolpa? It should have begun from Kathmandu, Chitwan or Biratnagar, more urbanised or developed cities. The war in the history had begun from the urban areas such as in Biratnagar. But why did the People's war have to be started from Rolpa? These questions emerge logically. The causes why the war began from Rolpa are revealed frequently in the public discussions and I also share the same views. Firstly, the dominant population of this region is Magar. Historically, the Magars have been always oppressed by the Brahmin oriented state structure of this country. This caste is deprived of having opportunities to

progress and have always remained under-privileged. The people from this caste are socially, politically and educationally deprived. They are very naïve and easily persuaded by other people. If someone asked them to jump of the hill – they would do so. Such is the caste-structure and nature of the ethnic Magars of this region.

Second cause is related to education. While whole Nepal is backward from educational point of view, Rolpa was much behind. Out of five districts in Rapti Zone, Rolpa has been the least performing in educational development. Literacy rate of this district is very low. Therefore, people would not have abilities to analyse, explain and look issues critically. People would rather be accepting to anything that others would say. For example: CPN-M brought in some good slogans and the people very easily accepted and internalised these slogans. They were told that the beautiful and big buildings of Singhdurbar and Kathmandu were theirs. The people in the rural villages got excited when they were told that such developed infrastructures and richness beyond their access in their lifetime in fact belonged to them. That's how they got motivated to join the revolution. The properties belonged to the rich people will be equally distributed when the war is won. The popular slogan read as – 'The house belonged to the one who scrub it and the land to those who ploughed it.'

Third cause is unemployment. There is no job for literate or the people who had gained SLC level of education. They saw benefits in joining the People's Liberation Army and People's Militia.

Q: Is there any role of education in becoming unemployed?

A: Well, there is no role, they got an education but remained unemployed. Some remained unemployed even if they got education. As you rightly said, some people remained unemployed because they would not have education. Uneducated people do not get an opportunity to submit academic certificates to the administrative level in order to get a job. But they would not need any qualifications to join the people's liberation army.

Q: What you just said sounds very significant. Firstly, you mentioned about educated unemployed and secondly you said about less likelihood of getting into an employment due to the lack or access to education. Can this be linked to education, as the cause of not having access to education implicitly obliged people to remain uneducated? This remained as one of the reasons for contributing to the conflict. Secondly, education failed to enable educated people to be employed anyhow, and this resulted in educated unemployed involving in the conflict.

A: After the conflict began in Nepal, did the schools play any role to reduce the level of ongoing conflict in the country? Did the schools carry out any activities towards mitigating conflict?

Schools did not do anything about that because when the people's war broke out, until it completed 4-5 years, it had not touched education sector or the administrative sector to an effective extent. The war broke out in 1996 but only after 2000, the Maoists brought a campaign to shut down private or boarding schools. Those schools that were running in the villages were forcefully closed down.

Q: Did the schools give any pressure with a message that schools should not be closed down?

A: They did. They sat at a negotiation table and engaged in dialogue but at that time, the schools remained powerless and miserable in front of the group which was carrying out arms.

There were several private schools in this town before the People's war began in this district. When the war began to collapse the private schools, only three private schools survived, only within the fenced security area of the town. There was a wire fence around the town, not sure whether you were able to see that. Our school also fell inside the wire fence. The entire town along with the army barrack on top of the hill and all these houses were put inside the close security area which was literally fenced by metal wire with thrones. I am sure these schools would have been closed down if they were outside the fence. Some of the schools that denied closing down were treated horribly. In these schools, the rebels took all children and teachers outside before setting fire on the school buildings. They burnt down all the official documents of the schools. In some schools, children were prevented / stopped from going to school. In some cases, they abducted children and founders of the schools.

When the situation was not that severe, we held discussions with them for 4 – 5 times to discuss these closing issues but no agreement was achieved at all. They pressurised us to close down the schools no matter what. After the process of negotiation discontinued, our contact with the rebels also broke down. However, they would send us letters regularly. They would consistently give us an ultimatum by setting a fixed date to close down the school. They would warn that all the launchers had been fit on the hills around the school and the school building was always in target and would be destroyed at any time.

Some children were also killed in the crossfire, though not in this school but at a government school, on the way to school, as it was the time that the school hours were over and the children were going home. One child was killed in the crossfire.

All private schools were pressurised to close down in all places. Only the private schools in the urban areas remained unaffected in terms of complete closure. Some survived because of their location and security provided to them whereas others paid huge amount of money to survive. The rest collapsed miserably.

As far as the case of government schools is concerned, they were not put with pressure to close down but the children and teachers were taken to the political programmes whenever they organised. The children were used. Particularly, the teachers were used in the campaigns, workshops and political indoctrination programmes and they had to sometimes reach to Humla and Jumla. Even the fenced areas had to participate in the campaigns.

Q: Have these private schools been able to reopen recently?

A: Some have reopened. But other have not been as some of the founders of the private schools left the place and looked for alternatives such as going overseas or moving to other towns for alternative professions. Those who were staying back even if they had to close their schools down normally reopened the school. Not the number of private schools has mushroomed to be almost double after the peace was restored in the country.

Q: Let's talk about your real experiences. You mentioned about general experience in the district. What were your personal experiences as the headmaster during the conflict?

A: I did not suffer anything personally. We had to take every possible measure to remain safe. We could not travel freely at that time. For the people who worked in army, police and the officials or the owners of private schools, it was available to walk around freely and fearlessly. If we had to go anywhere, it would only be with the police or army escorting or when the security personnel went along. In some cases, it would only be possible in helicopters. Some friends used helicopters and we had to make a journey secretly in that situation. For example, the textbooks my school uses are not published locally, we have to import them from Kathmandu. We were supposed to bring our text-books escaping the rebels' sight. If they found, they would burn our books down. On one occasion, the textbooks of a local private school were set on fire at Sulichaur.

Q: What were other experiences?

A: As far as private schools were concerned, the rebels would always look for a chance to abduct and sometimes would finish (safaaya garne) the owners and the principals. We were able to escape all these threats and remain safe throughout. Such a feaful situation was not only concerned with the teachers working in the private school but also to those who worked in the government schools as well. On top of that there were naturally teachers who subscribed to different political ideologies. Some of them might be close to the rebels or support the war whereas there were many others who did not believe in violent means to bring change. This naturally became a challenge to those who did not relate to the Maoists. They would take the entire school including the teachers and other staff to participate in political trainings. Without limiting to this, they would have to donate certain%age of their monthly salary to the Maoists. They would have to donate one month's salary to the rebel party in a year. This is how they were also tortured and in some cases the teachers lost their lives as well.

Appendix 10: Sample of Transcript: Focus Group Discussion with Teachers

Q: During the course of 10-12 years of conflict, what incidences did you have to suffer in the school, on the road, at home, in the neighbourhood?

A: Schools were forcibly shut, teachers were made to pay donations.

Q: How much did you have to pay and for how long?

A: We had to pay one day's salary for around two years.

A: Individually, I got a letter asking 10000 and 5000 rupees. Apart from the one day's salary, I along with other teachers and head sir got such letter. We got relief only after we pleaded to them that we couldn't pay such amount.

Q: Did other teachers also get such letters?

A: Yes. We got letters but we didn't pay.

A: When I said I have already been paying from schools, they attacked my house at 4am and beat me up, I had to be hospitalized and could not go to schools for 15 days. Even the subject I taught at campus got affected and the effects were seen recently in the results of the students.

Q: When did that happen?

A: On 28th, near the election.

A: YCL did it.

Q: Why did they do that?

A: For no special reason. Just because I held different political belief. They beat people to make sure that they cast vote for their party out of fear.

Q: What about other incidences?

A: In Gobali VDC, in 2056 Poush Maoists tried to murder a man called Dr Chai, in that they broke his limbs, they took physical action, after that in order to identify the perpetrators the administration entered Shivagadi VDC, they believed that the VDC was a fort of Maoists, at that time they saw anybody on the road they beat them up, they were riot police, they beat one Chaudhary just because had a star print on his cap. I used to teach at a school across there, it was Saturday and I was at home, the administration came and took me away, they asked me to identify the homes of the Maoists. They asked me to identify the homes of Chandra Bahadur Chand, Bala Thapa and others, but I told them I had not seen their homes, then they beat me up for not speaking, and then if I said they came only in the night and I did not know where they lived, they would again beat me up for speaking nonsense. After that they took me to a place that was very far from my home, there was nobody on the way, they were the riot police, then they pushed me into a canal and then somehow I managed to get out of that and they threatened to kill me if I didn't show them the houses of

the Maoists. They asked me since how long I had been living in the place. I told them nearly 10-12 years and then they told me I was knowingly refusing to identify those people and told me I was a Maoist. But later they let me go but when I was returning home another group got hold of me, and in a wall close by there was written: let's take people's war to another height and other such slogans, they asked who wrote them I told them some people write it in the night and I don't know who writes them, they told me you live in this village and you don't know who writes this, they said you wrote it and decided to check my handwriting, after that they kicked me with their boots after that I returned home and I had a fever after that I could not go to the schools for 3-4 days.

Q: What did other teachers go through during the conflict?

A: Not just the rebels, we were tortured equally by the state side. The moment you said you were heading to Shivapur, their attitude changed, they that was a Maoist area and everybody there was a Maoist, they frisked bags.

A: It was in 2058, I left home for school. The small students live some 4km away from the school and they had left home early, I was just behind them, nearby is the Armed Police camp and they keep practicing day and night. A student Sun Bahadur Sunar was walking ahead of other students, it was around 9am and a shot came and struck him at the back, but the bullet hit the bag he was carrying fortunately the shot only made holes in 2-3 copies but did not hurt him.

Q: Who fired the shot?

A: APF, they were training.

Q: Did they intend to shoot him?

A: No, it was during the exercise, but they were so careless.

A: So we had to fear even while walking on the road.

A: It was during 2061. After the Chandrauta incidence, shots were fired whole night during a cross-fire and people even feared of stepping out of their homes those days. They even hurled bombs at some places. People were terrorized and they feared what might happen when and they might get killed suddenly, police will kill or the Maoists will kill, the village that had never heard gun shots, it was like a calamity. Because of that for many days schools could not be opened.

A: Their mind could not focus on studies. They were less interested in the classes. Their mind was bothered by who might come when.

A: The office of department of roads and this school are located in close vicinity of one another, they attacked the office at night, they bombed the office and burnt the vehicles and then they tied the watchmen their and took them outside.

A: After that we had to go to the fields in the night for safety as we feared we might get caught in the crossfire, so we took our children and fled to the fields. We were terrorized that they would set up a camp in the school.

A: We suffered a lot during the conflict. We had to wait in lines as searching went on for hours, we had to return home from the way, we could not go to schools and we could not carry bags.

Q: Do anyone have experience related to the communal riot that happened recently?

A: On Bhadra 30, an unidentified group killed Moit Khan of ward no 6 of this Shivapur VDC, within half an hours of his murder a massive arson took place in Chandrauta, many shops were burnt down and some 70-80 trucks were also burnt down and one police was killed and some other people were murdered and in some other areas people of hill origin were burnt alive and raped and chased away. Around 11 people were killed and all people escaped towards north leaving behind their homes and properties. Some people fled to Chandrauta and settled near administration building and some came to Shivapur VDC and stayed in the school there, some even lived in this school, so at that time those who had guns they fired guns all night and those who had khukuris they were on duty the whole night for a month. Those in the madhesi areas too were scared as they heard rumours that Pahadis would come, there was terror on both the sides. For many days we had food in the morning but forgot to have food in the evening, we came back from office stood on duty the whole night, and when the administration came we patrolled along with them from village to village. We did so for more than a month and the school was in disorder during that period, teachers and students did not turn up at the school due to insecurity. After that home secretary and home minister Krishna Sitaula came to Chandrauta on a helicopter, at that time some people were preparing to hold a peace rally, but the same day some people of pahadi origin broke open the rice cellars (rice mills) belonging to Muslim people, the administration opened fire, many were injured but they could not stop and people were seen plundering the cellar, they carried away the rice bags, three four cellars were totally emptied. The home minister could not go amid the people as people had to resort to *lathicharge* and he went back.

Q: During the conflict did you face a situation in which you had to teach something you didn't want to or forced not to teach something you were supposed to?

A: That situation did not arise here. Earlier they had forced us not to teach Sanskrit and during the examination period they tore the answer sheets, some of our old students were involved and they came and said those subjects must not be taught, the police entered the examination hall and arrested them, other students were terrorized, the office was vandalized and the school was closed for a couple of days

Q: Were you forced to take part in political programs?

A: They didn't put pressure on us, but programs were held in some places in the nearby areas and those who wanted to take part they did.

A: No, they brought buses to the villages and asked the villagers to get in in order to ferry them to the places where the programs were held.

A: The psychological pressure was there, so people mostly went whether they wanted to go or not.

Q: Did anyone of you face a situation in which you had the risk of leaving your job due to conflict?

A: Not just job, we faced the risk of leaving the village itself. In the south during the conflict the situation was such that people had made up their mind to leave the village thinking there was no condition for survival, the Maoists would not let us live in peace and the people packed their bags and began to migrate across the border, they were already living in the makeshift camps close to the border but slowly things began to look better and they came to settle down here again. The day the Maoists hacked Shyam Bahadur Rayamajhi, the brother-in-law of our president, they hacked him right in front of his children after that men, women and children were seen heading towards Indian border carrying whatever they could.

Q: You said you had to go through psychological and economic pressure and one of you even had to suffer physically [yes, I was even hospitalized, new about me were in the media, they even damaged my house, took away my telephone set and broke my solar panels, they abducted me in the night and they left me short of firing a shot at me. I was taken to a hospital where I was kept for three days. It was done by the YCL activists. This happened after the peace accord, during the elections.]

Q: Did your family members have to suffer any such incidences?

A: They used to come at home and ask for donations, take away rice and corns stored at homes, if nothing we would have to let them have food or go and work for him.

Q: Did your family suffer anything because of your profession as a teacher?

A: We live in a village and in village Maoists used to come and others also came and if the Maoists asked for food we had to give them food and after that the government army came, they were no different than the Maoists, they used to dress up and behave like the Maoists, you could not identify whether they were Maoists or the army, and they asked for food and if people gave food they would say, see you feed the Maoists and they used to take them away and thrash them.

Q: Now that you have narrated frightening and painful experiences, how did that affect the way you worked earlier? Like you said you were beaten, how did that affect you?

A: I was unwell for 5-7 days and after that I went to school, that did not affect me much but people used to ask me all the time what happened, how did they beat me, even students used to discuss about me, and I felt little weary as the same things were asked to me repeatedly, the villagers, teachers and students all kept asking me the same question and I grew tired because of that. At that time what happened was if I had shown where I was taken, the Maoists would again come and beat me up and if I don't the police would thrash

me I was in dilemma. At that the Maoists used to break the limbs of people if they suspected them of spying. Sometimes I thought I'd rather go to India.

Q: With these kinds of incidences happening how could you continue to work as a teacher? How did you feel?

A: On the one hand we feared for our life while on the other we were concerned that we are not able to give the students as much as we should, that worry affected our teaching.

Q: What was the experiences of other teachers, the way you taught earlier, how was that affected?

A: At that time students were not in the mood to study and we didn't feel like teaching, the children were in terror and fear and they would say don't teach today sir, they might come and there might be some accident, they would say the Muslims would come and kill us all, let us go home, that was their psychology at that time, so we just went to the school for the sake of duty.

A: The Bhadra 30 incident affected all. The teachers who were out of the district they could not return and the teachers here were also facing difficulties. I was also out of the district and I thought probably it would be difficult o live in that place or we may not be able to teach, there was strike for 15-20 days, if we came somehow we might also be in danger, we could not speak out, put forth our views, we still have that fear, because the communal feeling prevails here... [you mean you had to be careful even while explaining things in the class] yes... yesterday it was class conflict, today it is communal conflict, racial conflict

A: As far as teaching was concerned, our region was considered sensitive during the time of conflict, it was even termed as second Rolpa and some of our students who were already a involved in the armed conflict we could not even put pressure on the students while teaching, we feared talking about punishment as that could have put us in danger so we had to step back on many occasions, especially when teaching the classes above the high school. While giving examples we had to be very careful, we could only say what would be acceptable to them even of it was wrong [you mean you were not sure if your examples would be impartial or not. Unknowingly you might be seen as taking sides.

Q: The way you were working in the time of conflict did that affect your relationship with the Headmaster? More than your personal relationship, as a manager of the school who has to ensure smooth functioning of the school?

A: We never had any problems. All the staff in the school are one group and we have a very good relationship with each other.

A: But I have certain grievance against headmaster because sometime we could not make it to the school owing to strikes, and the school marked us absent for failing to turn up. During the conflict, while we were on the way and we could not reach school on time because of searching, or violence but the school accused us of not coming to the school.

A: Especially, the teachers from outside had major problem because of that.

Q: And how were your health and happiness affected?

A: There was no reason at all for us to be happy. Last year, in 2061, they attacked the district during festivities an our relatives fell victims, and during the Bhadra 30 incident we had to flee to the jungle in the night our family members were terrified, they never felt happy, we never could tell when we would die, get ambushed, get beaten by the army, so we never felt happy during the period of conflict.

Q: And how was your relation with the students affected? Like you said you could not explain things as spontaneously as you did in the past, how about other things?

A: When the students don't do homework, they get punishment but at that time it was all lax as we feared it might affect us later.

A: That happened with me. After the Bhadra 30 incident and there was a student called Yadav who had escaped to India during the riot. After one month the school opened and he did not come for 15 days even after he school as open I had no idea about that. And when I asked to show homework he didn't I asked him why, he said I was absent. I told him why was he absent for so long and ordered him to keep standing. He said he had gone to India fearing that he might get killed.

A: The students from 11/12 were taken away to seminars, mass assemblies, publicity campaigns, they would come while were teaching and demanded that we give them 1-2 hours' time, once or twice we even took up the matter with them asking them to organize such programs after school, but the way students reacted we got the impression that they would happily go to such programs if we let them. And the trend of asking donations was also seen in them and when we told them it was not appropriate they reacted vengefully.

A: The atmosphere of conflict that began from 2052 and the students who were born at that time are now studying in 10th and they have been seeing the violence year after year and now they think it is natural we have to like in the atmosphere like this and if any party members ask them to follow they should just follow them therefore their thought development is more towards those things rather than on studies, so in the schools there has to be a different type of curriculum for conflict affected students, they should study what is conflict, why it occurs, how to understand it, how to steer clear of it, the district administration does not have any such program and even if NGOs and INGOs run such program they do not reach school and in want of such programs the child who reaches adolescence he would have developed such mentality.

Q: Now that all such incidences have happened, how should they be addressed by the new education restructuring?

A: At present in our curriculum social study is compulsory, in social study we can have how the conflict arose, what are the factors that contribute to the conflict and how it can be managed, what are its effects, those things have to be included in the education, new things have to be incorporated in the education, the changes that has been happening in the society. The curriculum must show the positive side of the conflict. There are three

things in the society: conflict, cooperation and competition an if we take them positively and learn to manage them in time, it will have good effects but if it takes the form of violence it will affect negatively and if we look in the Nepali context the political parties do not have long term vision and they don't understand the conflict very well and conflict theory is not taught in subject like social studies.

Appendix 11: Sample of Transcript: Focus Group Discussion with Parents

A: Even during the Panchayat, in the education following it, there were talks of bringing in liberalization, equality, fraternity, but those were only slogans and nothing happened in reality.

But in reality the fundamental cause that resulted civil war in Nepal is poverty, whatever people might say, because here we didn't have alternative source.

Development and destruction are things that run parallel. While we were studying in class 1 or 2, when a bus came I ran... my home is in Dang... we used to ride small jeeps and tractors, but bus, Oh a big bus has arrived and thousands of us used to run after it like monkeys, but now I don't see much difference between Dang and Kathmandu, except for metered taxis there is everything in Dang. Where there is development there is destruction as well and what the education did was those who are in the lower level, those who studied up to 2nd or 4th standard, under the literacy campaign, they gave some knowledge to them, little knowledge is a dangerous thing, their ambitions was not fulfilled, there was no alternative job right after finishing 5th or 6th class. But during our parents time they would have finished 6th, 7th and got a good job, he still gets pension and that's why I think the civil war arose because of education, little knowledge. Because of all those who have joined the Maoist movement there rarely are those who wouldn't have studied at least till 5th or 6th standard.

A: Like he said many students could not study because of poverty also, even you can take an example of Galaxy, the children from ANFA whose parents cannot pay for their education, Geeta maam made arrangements for everything including their food, lodging and education but it never occurred to their mind that they have to study, they went so far as to spoil other students in the hostel. That posed a threat of ruining the entire school. Maam did everything hoping to make their lives better even if it is through game, for example there is an organization here run by America to help educate street children, but they don't go for studies, though their schooling has been paid for, but they don't go to schools. There is a lack of proper management policy. Like which child is doing what and what punishment should be given, that is lacking. The children don't know everything, they would be more happy if you'd let them indulge in mischief and fun. If you give them two options to choose from, they will definitely choose that only. As it is said if parents slightly beat up their kids, the student's guardians show up, but one must also look at student's fault. Where is he going wrong? Though it is right that they should not be beaten, but the children have to be shown the right track. That is also lacking here.

Q: And that is indirectly contributing to the conflict?

A: And the schools also ensure whether students are regularly doing home works or not, and one thing is that if I am teaching then I don't have to ask the whole class to know if the students are understanding or not, asking or punishing one student is enough for whole class. But that is not happening. They copy all the home works. You keep them as

boarders, 4 or 5 champions would do the home work and they come home and just copy all in the morning. That is not a good education, but when teachers see it, it's all perfect. And during the exam they fail or they would be copying from others. That is also lacking.

Some students score 80 percent, but at home you always see him watching television never studying. The parents don't try to find out how the child is scoring.

A: There are now two levels of education; one that is taught in boarding (private) schools and other in government schools and those who study in government school feel that they are dominated by those studying in private schools. Even that might have affected their mentality.

A: It all started from outside (the valley), from the villages. Those who study in private schools here aren't involved in that. They feel that those studying in private schools are like that and we are like this and they feel slightly dominated

A: Students feel that those who study in private schools are first class and those in government schools second class, that resulted in categorization.

A: Also what happens is when applying for a job if one mentions Galaxy Public School, he will be kept on the top of the list among those shortlisted for the interview and those coming from government schools are kept at the bottom of the list. For example when we select people for our company we ourselves think this person studies on private school, his English must be good.

A: Give me a second. What are we discussing here shortcomings of education or the effects of conflict on education?

Q: We have started right now by discussing whether education gave birth to the conflict? Do you have anything to say on this?

A: Education indeed is chiefly responsible for the upsurge of conflict, I can say that from minute observations I have made. Because little knowledge is dangerous. Formal and informal education was given even during Panchayat and after that after the revolution of 2046BS. In villages literacy rate gave gone up with that the villagers began to study newspapers and grasp things and learnt how rich treated the poor, who they were suppressed by feudalistic system and they told their children about it. Their hopes and objectives were not fulfilled, and they had to quit or discontinue out of pressure. Because of that what I feel is the main focal point is education itself, and the polarization, and they would not have been in a position to take up arms in that scale if they didn't have some knowledge.

A: The conflict between two people is mainly due to difference in thinking. And it holds true even in Nepal's case. A conflict does not happen between 10 different opinions, it is a conflict between two opinions. Due to lack of education one area was influenced by one person and other was influenced by another system and it is people like us who got influenced. But what happens in most countries is that we have an opinion but others may or may not have it, but what happens with little knowledge is that it can be easily brainwashed. You told some people that the only way to resolve this is through a war, discussions won't work, and they accepted that. That is simply due to lack of education. For

example, we all here think war won't help, let's discuss and find out an alternative solution, but the poor folk who does not have enough knowledge when he was told you have to resort to fighting and killing for this, they followed that direction.

Q: You mean those with little education are incapable of analyzing because of which they get easily influenced by anything.

Let's move forward. Let's see it from a slightly different angle. Did Nepal's education system played any role in reducing the 10-12 years long armed conflict? Are there any instances where due to education there was a reduction in the conflict once in a while?

A: Your argument is also correct. For example I influenced people towards conflict through my opinions. The conflict from here spread to 10 other places, and going to 10 places they became familiar with 10 areas and met 10 people. That is also knowledge, only earning degrees is not knowledge, he did not get degrees, but crossing 10 regions he acquired knowledge from there and slowly he too began to realize that this problem cannot be resolved only through conflict. The solution can also be found in a different way. And that is possible only through education, you have to agree to that. As education increases, conflict decreases.

A: Through street plays and television it was shown how people were suffering and what was happening, that is a kind of education as well.

A: A large number of books were written during the civil war whereas there shouldn't have been creativity during the civil war. That is also a kind of development. That is not only disturbance, because of that many people were involved in deep study and that encouraged people towards peace.

Q: Did schools themselves played any role in reducing the conflict?

A: I don't think they did because even they were under Maoists' pressure. For example if a school is open when it had called for a strike they would do something to that school. Like there was a blast in our school because we kept our school open. But even then private schools are still running despite so many strikes.