

Who Is In Control?  
An Analysis of Educational Decentralization in Kavre, Nepal

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## **Thesis Abstract**

### “Who Is In Control: An Analysis of Educational Decentralization in Kavre, Nepal”

Educational Decentralization, culminating in the Community Managed School, is a policy which in theory, allows communities and local populations to take responsibility of their schools from the government in order to increase transparency, accountability and educational quality. Using the case study of the Kavre District in Nepal, this thesis explores issues surrounding the educational decentralization policy and how it is affecting the public education system in Nepal on the ground. The main topics include elite capture, management issues and the resource base for the schools. By combining document analysis and interviews with teachers, parents and government officials, this thesis emphasizes that there are both positive and negative aspects to decentralization, though political strife and corruption in Nepal hinder the possibility of decentralization making a positive difference in the country.

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## **Dedication**

This Thesis is dedicated to the strong women in my life,  
Mama, Gramma and Resi, who always remind me that  
anything is possible if you set your mind to it.

### **List of Abbreviations**

CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CMS	Community Managed School
CS	Community School
CSSP	Community School Support Program
DANIDA	Danish Development Assistance Programme
DEO	District Education Officer
EFA	Education for All
FINNIDA	Finnish International Development Agency
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LDC	Least Developed County
LSGA	Local Self Governance Act
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPR	Nepali Rupees
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In a country where education is compulsory and schools are only a short walk or bus ride away, it is often difficult to perceive how important or unattainable formal education is to those who face barriers to their educational experience. Education is not only important for careers and economic growth, it is vital for personal growth as well; it allows a person to fulfill their wants and needs, and to better understand, interpret and exercise their rights as a human being. In developing countries or LDCs around the world education is far too difficult to attain, and there are too many obstacles for children and adults alike who wish to further develop themselves through formal education.

Education and development have not always gone hand in hand in the field of international development. However, over the past several decades, the pendulum has begun to swing and education is now seen as critical for a country's development. Whether a country views investment in education as important for economic growth in the long term, as crucial for a person to see their life as meaningful and to be able to fulfill their wishes and needs, or for citizens to construct for themselves a critical awareness of their world and an ability to act upon this awareness, education is now a necessary item in a country's repertoire of poverty fighting and economy boosting tools. It is a tool that shapes the next generation, producing citizens, filling vacant jobs and moving a country forward in higher education, research, industry and many other fields.

The formal education system of a society is crucial to the development of the country because without education, growth and change cannot prosper, and therefore, development and many possibilities for the country's future also stagnate. This occurred

in Nepal, where this thesis is based, for hundreds of years before a formal education system was introduced in the 1950s. Nepal, being one of the poorest countries in the world, has experimented with its education system over the years, testing out both centralized and decentralized systems, which have been affected by social, economic and political issues at the time of their implementation. In addition, each system has been adversely affected by the corruption and elitism still prevalent in Nepal due to its hierarchical and divided history of upper class elites and a heavily entrenched caste system.

The Government of Nepal, with the invited help of many NGOs, country development organizations such as DANIDA and FINIDA, and the World Bank has recently revisited the decentralization process which was in place from 1950-1972, which gives power to the communities themselves in an attempt to improve the quality, transparency and accountability of the education system. Therefore, this thesis attempts to answer the question “in Nepal, what are the outcomes for education at the local level of national regimes of decentralization?”

To answer the research question this thesis delves into the literature on education and development in order to understand the connections between and assumptions of the two large concepts made by scholars and organizations. The process of decentralization and how it is understood in the literature is also analyzed to see the positive and negative aspects of the policy and how it has been implemented and regarded in other situations as well as in Nepal. The most decentralized form of education is personified in the Community Managed School (CMS) which has a School Management Committee (SMC) running the school. These people are elected by the community from the community in



order to manage the school; so on paper the process is truly grassroots. Since stakeholders in the education system are now an important part of running the school, parental involvement is also a significant part of decentralization, and is discussed in the CMS section. Finally, educational attainment is examined because there has been a shift away from the importance of attendance as a marker of the success of educational programs, to the actual learning achievements of the students. Moreover, one important reason for implementing educational decentralization is to improve the quality of the education system and attainment of the children.

The field of study of this thesis is the Kavre district in Nepal, just east of the capital city of Kathmandu. Two schools were used as case studies, with several other schools being visited to triangulate and better inform the data collected from the case study schools. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to obtain data on issues pertaining to the educational attainment of the children, thoughts of parents, teachers and SMC members on the curriculum, the SMC roles and responsibilities and how well it functions, the decentralization process, and parental involvement.

This thesis is separated into five sections. After the introduction the literature review probes deep into issues pertinent to the thesis, which are explored through scholarly articles and theses, and critiques of each issue are noted. Following the literature review the data section notes the methodology used to glean data in the case study area as well as difficulties encountered while the research was taking place. The data section is organized into three subsections, educational attainment, management issues and the resource base, as the most important difficulties with the decentralization process arose within these subsections. The analysis section then discusses the positive

and negative aspects of the decentralization process based on the literature review and the findings of the data. This section is divided into subsections based on the problems found within the previous sections. Finally the conclusion includes recommendations for the improvement of the decentralization policy and process in the country of Nepal and offers some recommendations for other LDCs who find themselves in similar situations with regards to the decentralization of the education system.

The decentralization of any education system is no easy task to accomplish for any country; there will always be issues, problems and circumstances which can be improved. Nepal is currently embarking on an extremely localized, very decentralized policy which gives control of finances, teacher management and day to day business over to the community and a legislated body: the SMC. This has already occurred once in Nepal's short history of public education, but was abandoned many decades ago in favour of a centralized system, due to the political situation in the country. Now, through decentralization and with the assistance of many international and non-governmental organizations, Nepal is again attempting to increase accountability, transparency, educational attainment and quality in their education system while making it compulsory and universal up to grade five. This is a huge undertaking for a LDC country just coming out of a protracted, brutal civil war. This policy has already had, and will continue to have an important impact on local populations and the education system in the country as a whole. Therefore, it is important to see how the education system is being affected by the decentralization policy and if it is indeed increasing transparency and accountability. For that reason this thesis shall attempt to answer the question "in Nepal, what are the outcomes for education at the local level of national regimes of decentralization?"

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Education and Development**

There has long been an international consensus on the importance of education in a country's development. Nonetheless during the early years of international development, education was overlooked as an important tool because many development workers and scholars believed economic growth was the only way for a country to develop. Education acquired international legitimacy in the 1990s as a central pillar in the global fight against poverty after the economic growth model was deemed insufficient in reducing poverty and inequality rates (Tarabini, 2010). Social aspects of development such as education began to emerge alongside economic considerations as equally necessary within a country's national policy. Such social aspects were recognized to make a country's development equitable, peaceable and durable (Draft Dakar Framework for Action, 1999).

Now, the World Bank is a key player in education's rise within the global development agenda; it encourages developing countries to focus their poverty reduction strategies and policies on human capital institutions such as education. As such, popular discourses within development often interweave themselves into the education sector; policies such as decentralization, which countries around the world are adapting, either of their own volition or due to outside pressure from these multi-lateral institutions. For example, other international institutions such as the United Nations have followed the World Bank's lead and devised agreements such as the UNDPs Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), which place education at the forefront of development and poverty reduction.

There are several approaches that analyze the importance of education within development, and this thesis shall focus on three: The Human Capital Approach, The Capabilities Approach and Education as Liberation Approach. These approaches look at how development and education intertwine and why scholars and development workers have decided to emphasize education within the development arena in order to reduce poverty and reach the MDGs.

#### 2.1.1 The Human Capital Approach

The educational aspect of the human capital approach comes from economic theory of the 1960s; however, this side of the approach did not become internationally recognized until the 1990s. Before this time economic growth was seen to be the major necessity for development, though this was eventually believed to be inefficient due to the persistence of high poverty and inequality rates throughout the developing world (Tarabini, 2010, 205). Once the insufficiency of economic growth was recognized, the World Bank was crucial to the rise of the importance of education in development according to a human capital approach.

Human capital assumes that education is more an issue of investment than consumption and identifies many economic benefits of education, including raising the level of national productivity and economic growth (Tarabini, 2010, 204). The World Bank, since the 1990s has encouraged developing countries to make significant

investments in human capital through the MDGs and the EFA agenda (Tarabini, 2010). This attention to education through human capital has broadened development discourses in order to include people as central to economic development efforts (Robeyns, 2006, 72). This approach has also led education to acquire international standing and legitimacy as a strategy in the fight against poverty (Tarabini, 2010, 205).

While it has brought education to the forefront of development thinking, there have also been many critiques launched against human capitals' overly economic way of viewing the individual. Human capital theory considers education relevant to fight poverty insofar as education creates skills and helps people acquire knowledge in order to serve the economy as a factor in economic production (Robeyns, 2010, 71). This approach sees humans as objects that act for economic reasons only and ignores cultural, political and social factors that may affect the attainment of education.

Education is only recognized for its instrumental value in helping to increase the Gross Domestic Product and not for its intrinsic value to the individual (Robeyns, 2010). Human capital sees education as contributing to the economy by training workers and endowing them with skills and knowledge so that they may become more productive, earn wages and contribute to the economy in both private and social ways. Therefore, education is only valued if it has the highest return to its investment; if the returns decrease, education is not seen as important. It could be argued, according to this approach, that educating girls would be frivolous if they were going to get married and perform unpaid domestic labour for their entire lives (Robeyns, 2010, 74). In this case, the human capital approach does not address concerns such as gender and social

inequality, preferring to perceive of humans as simple economic machines, stripping them of their identities within a society.

The non-monetary value of education is not examined within the human capital approach. The intrinsic nature of humans valuing knowledge and seeking to improve themselves is completely overlooked. However, this is a very economical and instrumental approach to education; other approaches in development theory see education as valuable to the individual themselves, seeing people as the wealth of nations, not Gross Domestic Product.

### 2.1.2 The Capabilities Approach

The capabilities approach is most closely associated with the work of Amartya Sen, an economist and philosopher who believed that development is about providing the conditions which facilitate people's ability to lead lives they see as valuable. Sen examines an individuals' ability to make choices using the concepts of capabilities and functionings. Capabilities are described as what people may choose to be or do with their lives; they are the freedoms people have to achieve a lifestyle that they have reason to value (Sen, 2005). Some examples of capabilities would be the ability to live a long life, have good health, and the ability to exert control over one's environment. Functionings are what people actually are or do with their lives, which can be seen as the resources, activities and attitudes people recognize to be important in their lives (Sen, 2005). Functionings can be described as having a job, being educated, and being part of a community. Sen has a very individualistic way of approaching development; he believes

each individual has control over their own capabilities and functionings, though he does note that social forces influence individual capabilities.

Unlike other approaches, Sen does not see specific capabilities as necessary for each individual. He does not judge what each person needs or does not need and so avoids the paternalism prevalent in other approaches to development (Stewart & Deneulin, 2002, 62). Sen believes that no overarching list can be compiled due to diverse weightings that different people and cultures place on certain capabilities. If a list were to be assembled, it would no doubt alienate some people or cultures who do not share the same conception of what a “good life” is (Qizilbash, 2007, 176). Nonetheless, in his practical work Sen assumes that each individual should be healthy, well-nourished and educated; he sees these as basic capabilities that every person should have access to.

The capabilities approach does not focus solely on education, though it still plays an instrumental role in the theory. Sen, unlike the human capital approach sees education as having an inherent value as a capability in itself, as well as being instrumental in supporting people’s livelihoods, generating income and increasing human security (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, 7). In addition to being important to an individual and their way of life, education also has an empowering and redistributive effect, thus allowing for positive reactions such as the closing of the gender gap and the realisation of democratic freedoms (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, 7). Therefore, education under this approach does not exist solely to make sure people are employed and contributing to the economy, education leads people to be free to fill their lives with valuable actions and moments which they choose to have and do.

With regards to education, several critiques of the capabilities approach have been launched. These include the lack of specification, the use of new terminology and language and the problem of the practical application of Sen's work. Though this approach is fairly new in the development arena, many remain unconvinced of the approach's practical use within countries today. Sen's terms within the capabilities approach are seen as broad and non-descript by scholars such as Robeyns (2006). This can lead to difficulties in interpretations, which could ultimately lead to very different policy recommendations. Included in this lack of specification is the absence of a universal list for policy makers to use. Sen is opposed to a list of capabilities, as this takes away from the core concept of the capabilities approach; it is based on an individual fulfilling the life they value, not one that others deem valuable for that person. Martha Nussbaum has critiqued Sen for failing to provide a list of capabilities with which to judge development, and has provided a list herself. In addition, though Sen is an economist, the capability approach has introduced a slew of new language into the development field which has alienated politicians, social actors and civil society which causes the approach to be less accessible to those who would be able to harness Sen's ideas and use them within a policy field.

While some scholars find fault with Sen's work, others see these weaknesses as the strengths in the approach. For example, while some dismiss the lack of a list of capabilities, others see it as a departure from universalism and paternalism, allowing this approach to be seen more positively than others (Stewart & Deneulin, 2002). Moreover, the language used by Sen forces economists, development workers and politicians alike to recognize the core issues of development as Sen sees them, that the individual has a right



to live a life that they see as valuable, and they have the right to choose certain capabilities and paths in their lives in order to reach their goal of a fulfilled and valuable life. Regarding education, this echoes Paulo Freire, who thought that education was a practise that could be used by everyone in order to increase the freedoms they enjoy in their everyday lives.

### 2.1.3 Education as Liberation: Paulo Friere

Paulo Freire's ideas contrast starkly with those of the human capital approach; mostly because he sees education as an emancipatory process, not part of an economic equation. Freire's works, including *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and *Education: The Practice of Freedom* (1973) stress the importance of education as transformative, where students and teachers are creating knowledge together in a way that allows each to critically reflect on the world, understand how and why the world, geographically and socio-politically came to exist, be able to place themselves in it and comprehend how their lives fit into the larger picture of the world today.

Freire is very critical of the formal education system and spent his life theorizing differing ways of educating both children and adults. He dissects the formal education system and refers to it as the "banking concept of education" where the students have knowledge deposited into their brains in order to be brought out again when necessary, for example, on an exam (Freire, 1970). The students are seen as objects in the classroom, denoting that they are known and acted upon by the teachers; the teachers in turn are the subjects who know and act. These roles are not to be switched at any point of the learning

process, as the teacher would lose their authority. Needless to say, this type of education is lacking in knowledge creation, and is laden instead with knowledge transfer, devoid of active thinking and critical awareness. This model of education is used around the world, and it is described by Freire and Schor (1987) as a corpse of information, or a dead body of knowledge that is not a living connection to their reality. Education is separated from the lives of the student, which does not allow them to reflect on their own lives or on the knowledge they are banking. Freire and Schor say that this method of knowledge creation and transfer is based on western patriarchal models, which is one reason that such a method of teaching has spread around the world (1987).

In order to avoid such knowledge transfer, Freire coined the concept of *Conscientização* which can be seen as a move away from the objectivity of the students and towards subjectivity, which occurs simultaneously with the literacy and post-literacy process (1970). *Conscientização* is about being able to look at the world and critically reflect upon it. In order to move towards *Conscientização* one has to grasp true causality and reality, understand it and be ready to act upon this understanding. Freire says that to every understanding, sooner or later, an action corresponds. What is also important is the idea of dehumanizing structures, and that, in order for *Conscientização* to be possible, people have to reject these overarching structures that are constantly objectifying and dehumanizing them. Therefore, Freire recognizes that the task for those who have been dehumanized is not only to liberate themselves, but their oppressors as well, and this can all take place through *Conscientização* (Freire, 1970).

Therefore, education in this understanding is not just about educational outcomes and passing grades, it is about reflecting on one's situation within the world and acting

upon it in order to free oneself and others from the structures constraining them on a day to day basis. Freire saw education as a way to liberate and free people from the difficult situations they find themselves in. Though Freire focused on adult education, this does not hinder the ability for his theories to apply in cases of primary and secondary education. Freire paves the way for education to be seen as imperative for children, communities and parents alike, as well as for each of these groups to be involved in the education of the children, as they are the next generation of the area, and can help the community to escape the societal structures that constrain them. Therefore, the idea of educational decentralization, where the community has a very important role in the education of their children plays into Freire's thoughts on Conscientização and the importance of subjectivity rather than objectivity in education.

These approaches have shown different ways in which education and development are intertwined; so connected that important discourses and popular policies in the development world also affect education. The policy of decentralization is a popular term within development discourses right now, and it has been affecting change around the world in various sectors for several decades. As was mentioned, many multilateral institutions are supporting the policy and therefore it is being introduced, sometimes forcibly, in many different countries for a variety of reasons. Education is not immune to such changes, therefore the education systems of developed, developing and LDCs alike have seen their education sectors altered due to decentralization.

## 2.2 Decentralization

Over the past fifty years decentralization has increased in popularity among governments, multilateral institutions and development agencies around the world. While centralized government was the trend from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1960s, there was a move afterwards by many industrialized countries towards decentralization through various reforms of the local government structure (Teune, 1982). Though decentralization is fraught with debates and disagreements, many scholars usually agree on what it is supposed to achieve and how it is accomplished, though they use different wording. Decentralization is the allocation of responsibilities, once confined to the central government, throughout different levels of government. Theoretically, decentralization is supposed to bring the government closer to its people and improve its performance; it is able to do so by improving transparency, participation, and accountability in its political systems (Thede, 2009; Habibi, 2003). Although there is little evidence showcasing the overall success of decentralization, the literature promotes this policy as positive (Samoff, 2003; Parry, 1997; Thede, 2009).

Some scholars maintain that there are three forms of decentralization: deconcentration, where local authorities remain accountable to the central administration and as a result can make few decisions, delegation, where local authorities can make decisions regarding specific activities, and devolution, which is the transfer of significant fiscal and allocative decisions to local authorities, who have full responsibility over them (Habibi, 2003; Björk, 2006). Others theorize that decentralization is more of a continuum than specific slotted definitions (Chapman, 1973; Shields & Rappleye, 2008). Oxhorn

mentions that dynamic relations between national and sub-national levels of government create different situations for each instance of decentralization, and so it must be conceptualized as a continuum in order to avoid simplifying a “complex reality” (2004, 5).

There are many reasons why a country would perform decentralization, including economic decline, cultural factors, weakening legitimacy of the state/public sector, state overload, declining performance, heterogeneity in the country, micro politics and global and international pressure (Daun, 2007; Björk & Blase, 2009; Meade & Gershberg, 2008). For the reasons previously mentioned, decentralization is seen as a positive policy used to help defer or eliminate these issues, though there are many other concerns that arise due to decentralization.

One of the most cited problems with decentralization is elite capture. This is when elites use decentralization to their benefit and capture the resources given to the community (Daun, 2007; Jütting, 2005). Decentralization is also said to tolerate inequalities within the community because those in power often benefit from stark differences in the locale (Teune, 1982; Daun, 2007). Decentralization adapts and is adapted to every local situation; yet micro politics and the social and cultural hierarchy of the area may cause it to fail (Thede, 2009; Björk & Blase, 2009; Edwards, 2011).

Resource allocation is another difficulty with decentralization. Some scholars say decentralization has the ability to harm the poorest populations because they have the least resources and skills to be able to fulfill the responsibilities given to them (Esuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Gertler et al., 2011). Yet another concern is called “decentralized centralism,” where the government supposedly decentralizes its institutions, but sustains

power over them (Theede, 2009; Lo & Wai, 2010; Khanal, 2010). Still others maintain that the government decentralizes in order to absolve itself of a responsibility to its people (Noori, 2006; Wong, 2006). Finally, decentralization is problematic when it is implemented “by default” and not “by design”. This means that the government enacting the policy has bowed to outside forces or donor pressure instead of the policy being wanted by the people it is going to affect (Crawford, 2008).

Of course there are many problems with decentralization, as with any government policy, one could spend years discussing all the positive and negative ideas and outcomes associated with it. Because there are so many areas decentralization is associated with, this review shall focus specifically on educational decentralization, as each administrative arm of the government differs in its reasons for implementing and the politics surrounding decentralization.

### 2.2.1 Educational Decentralization

Holger Daun discusses how the world model for education has been affected by and is affecting the decentralization process in countries around the globe. As previously stated, education is seen as contributing to development; consequently there has been a significant extension of compulsory education and a world agenda of EFA. Educational decentralization culminates in the communities taking charge of the school system. In many cases, the curriculum is under national control, though specific subjects can be adapted to local situations, such as language of instruction, or religion classes (Daun, 2007; Khanal, 2010). In addition, even though the national government is controlling the

basis of what children learn, a considerable amount of school financing is expected to come from the community themselves, with basic grants and subsidies being provided by the government (Daun, 2007). This can be seen all over the world and has led to many countries adopting “outcomes based education,” with the communities being surveyed by the government and national standardized tests being administered to ensure quality throughout the country (De Grauwe, 2005; Parry, 1997, Khanal, 2010).

There have been found to be positive aspects associated with educational decentralization. Heystek, quoting Caldwell agrees with the idea of decentralized centralism, saying that self managing schools would be able to have a positive influence on academic achievement if other factors like centralized curriculum and examinations existed (2011, 456). As well, some scholars believe that a centralized school system may stifle the initiative of those who could have the largest affect on educational outcomes, mainly parents, teachers and principals, so decentralization is better for communities (Jimenez & Sawada, 1999). Anton De Grauwe says when communities are in control of the schools, they are more democratic and less bureaucratic which leads to greater relevancy of policies enacted as well as greater accountability and mobilisation of resources (2005, 274-275). In addition, because of the increased participation by community members and parents due to decentralization, educational outcomes have the chance to improve, though difficulties do occur, which will be discussed more in depth in the CMS section (Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009; Koross, Ngware & Sang, 2009; Heystek, 2011).

There are problems with the decentralization of education, such as the commodification of education. Due to the nature of each community having control over

the specificities of their schools, schools may vie for children and increased attendance due to the grants that may be accrued (Khanal, 2010; Wong, 2006; Parry, 1997). For example, schools may change the language of instruction to English or institute a breakfast program in order to secure higher enrollment and larger government subsidies (Parry, 1997; Khanal 2010). This also works in the opposite way; schools may not offer specific programs in order to keep certain children away from the school. For example, some schools in Chile do not offer school lunches in order to deter poorer children from attending, thus allowing the school to maintain a higher social standing (Parry 1997, 120).

With education as a commodity, educational outcomes in the school become very important, because some parents may wish to send their children to the most prestigious school, i.e. the school with the highest grades on standardized tests (Wong, 2006). This causes the community to have to keep their school competitive in the area, leaving the notion of education as valuable in and of itself behind the outcomes of standardized tests. Competition in Chile led to false advertising, showy school uniforms and insecure teachers and administration doing anything to please parents, which did not lead to higher academic standards or discipline (Parry, 1997, 122-123).

This view of education as a commodity and the school as an avenue of competition does not only affect students and parents, it also affects teachers. Wong, in her study of how teachers are adapting to a system of decentralization in China says that “teachers are gradually losing their capacity to theorize their work and control what they expect to teach in the classroom” (2006, 20). Their teaching practices are highly influenced by the education system and based on the exams they are preparing students for, thus teachers are held responsible when students do poorly on exams (Wong, 2006).



Governments, Wong points out, are moulding teachers to be “technical implementationists” who are only to incorporate and accomplish a predetermined task with effectiveness and efficiency, in order to give the school higher status in the competitive system of education (2006, 29). Regardless of the many difficulties with the concept, educational decentralization exists in various forms around the world and in many countries it emerges in the form of the CMS.

### 2.2.2 Educational Decentralization and Community Managed Schools

Educational decentralization, in its most focused form, occurs in the concept of school-based management. This concept is referred to using different terms around the world, such as Charter Schools in the United States, Community Managed Schools in many developing countries, including Nepal and Community Schools in various developed countries; however the definition remains the same. Due to the nature and focus of this thesis, school-based management shall henceforth be referred to as the CMS, because the concept is more commonly identified as such in Nepal. The CMS is a form of decentralization that identifies individual schools as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the “redistribution of decision making authority as the main method through which improvement may be stimulated and sustained” (Pang, 2008, 17).

According to Cheng, the function of the CMS is to change the management role of the schools from a “passive executing system” to a “self-managing system” (1996, quoted in Pang, 2008, 17). The school and those managing the school, which can vary from teachers and principals to parents, community members or local politicians, are given the

ability and the authority to control the schools everyday functions according to the specific rules of the decentralization process, such as infrastructure, the hiring and firing of teachers, and in some special cases, the curriculum (Pang, 2008; Cook, 2007; Daun, 2007).

The approaches of CMS differ in two main ways, the “who” (to whom the decision-making authority is devolved) and the “what” (the degree of autonomy that is devolved) (Barrera Osorio, Patrinos, Fasih & Santibanez, 2009, 20). The “who” dimension covers four basic categories, Administrative control CMS, where the school principal is the recipient of the devolved authority, Professional control CMS where teachers receive the authority, Community control CMS, where the authority is devolved to the community and/or parents and Balanced control CMS which balances the authority between parents and teachers (Barrera Osorio et al., 2009, 23-24). In many cases around the world, the “who” dimension is blended, meaning that power is devolved to a formal legal entity such as a school council or SMC. In doing so, school personnel are supposedly able to get to know the local people to whom they are accountable and take their needs and wishes into consideration, and the local residents are able to monitor what school personnel are doing (Barrera Osorio et al., 2009, 24).

The “what” shows the degrees of devolution from weak to very strong. Weak describes a CMS with limited autonomy over school affairs, mainly for planning and instruction, Moderate devolution covers the formation of school councils, but they only play an advisory role, Somewhat Strong to Strong includes a council that has the authority to hire/fire teachers and for principals to set curricula and control substantial resources, like lump sum funding, and lastly, Strong to Very Strong covers parental or

community control of schools and other possible models where parents and communities can create their own schools (Barrera Osorio et al., 2009, 22).

CMSs have been a major part of the education reform movement over the past three decades (Pang, 2008). In many developing countries, such as Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua the creation of the CMS was often a state initiative, due to the pressure the central government was receiving from such institutions as the World Bank, USAID, UNICEF and UNESCO, among others (Corrales, 2006). In Central America, the switch from a centralized system to one of the CMS began the process of state officials visiting localities and meeting with local parents of children attending the school and encouraging them to form their own NGOs (Corrales, 2006). The NGOs would then receive administrative training provided by the state officials and after the training was finished, public funds would be transferred to these NGOS in order for them to provide educational services (Corrales, 2006). Therefore, the move towards CMS was voluntary in many of these countries, but was neither spontaneous nor sought out by those now involved.

Many scholars within the literature see CMS as a positive aspect of decentralization. De Guzman (2007) espouses that schools with increasing levels of autonomy are bound to show evidence of greater participation in decision making surrounding the school by those in the community and involved with the school. This involvement empowers the local stakeholders, whether it is parents, teachers, or community members, which in turn increases professionalism and enhances the organizational health of the school (Pang, 2008). Additionally, when deep, meaningful relationships between the community and school are forged, the benefits can be

enormous, for both sides. For example, employment can be generated in the community and untapped resources within the locale can be harnessed for the good of the school (Prew, 2009).

Many others also believe that CMS has the ability to improve student outcomes, school effectiveness and accountability while also ensuring better school quality (Cook, 2007; Jimenez & Sawada, 1999; Dauda, 2004). Because CMSs are run by the community and stakeholders in close relation to the school, CMS can be expected to improve student achievement as well as other outcomes because these local people demand closer monitoring of school personnel, better student evaluations, a closer match between the school's needs and its policies and a more efficient use of resources (Barrera Osorio et al., 2009). When parents are involved, it is said that schools will be more responsive to local demands and decisions will be made in the interest of the children rather than the adults (Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009). In the case of schools that have control over their curriculum, it also leads to a varied curriculum, which helps to improve instructional programs and ensures a higher level of instructional and curriculum reform (De Guzman, 2007).

Though there are positive aspects to CMS, there are also difficulties. CMS can lead to increased inequality within communities and among children if local power imbalances affect whose voices are heard (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011; Dauda, 2004). As well, with decentralization comes the possibility of elite capture of local resources, and this does not change if the resources are meant for a school (Edwards, 2011). When the groups in control of the CMS are less technically able than the government to administer the schools, levels of inequality between schools can increase,

leading to the problem of educational commodification (Gertler et al., 2011). Finally, when little co-operation occurs between those outside governing the schools, and those inside, such as teachers and principals, the school and quality of education may suffer (Essuman & Akyeampong, 2011).

### **2.3 Parental Involvement in Community Managed Schools**

Participation and involvement in such institutions as the CMS is not only about whether members are physically present, it is about the way that people relate to the innovation and conceptualize this in relation to their everyday lives (Prew, 2009). Therefore, in a case of the CMS, when the community has a deep relationship with the school, the benefits can be vast and can include the mobilization of untapped resources, generation of employment for community members, and a gradual increase in parental and community involvement in the school in both developed and developing countries (Prew, 2009, 843). Specifically, when these community members are parents of the children in the school, academic achievement and accountability of the schools to the government and vice versa has been shown to increase and more dependable funding is secured by the schools (Lawson, 2003; Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). Though there have been proven benefits of parental involvement, detriments to the education system have also been noted when parents were involved, such as in cases of limited capacity, where the parents were supposed to be involved in the school, but did not contribute to improvements (Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009; Koross, Ngware & Sang, 2009).

The literature on the effects of parental involvement in community schools is very diverse. Just as with decentralization, it seems that local social, cultural and economic situations will affect the impact of parental involvement, so each situation must be seen as independent. For example, Carol Dauda completed a study of primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa and found that Parents Teacher Associations (PTA) brought more dependable funding to the schools and allowed for a certain amount of planning, which has led to better conditions for parents and students (Dauda, 2004). Parental involvement helped to improve many aspects of the education system in the area. However, these parents put forth resources they had in order to share governmental resources because the government did not have the capacity to provide schooling for the children (Dauda, 2004). Therefore, while parental involvement in PTAs may have allowed for better education and infrastructure, this could not occur in many other developing countries, as parents often do not have resources to put forth for the school.

In order for parental involvement to be successful, Shatkin and Gershberg believe that certain conditions have to exist in order for parents to feel comfortable being involved, which they list as: a non-profit organization's involvement that provides training for parents and plays an advocacy role on their part, principals with strong leadership skills, and a framework that provides parents with real influence and voice in the decision making process (2007, 611). They also examine how parental involvement in schools can improve the surrounding community itself as the parents become more confident in their roles and develop leadership abilities (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007).

Unfortunately there are often many barriers that a parent has to overcome in order to involve themselves in their child's school. Parental involvement is often hindered by a

prominent issue in decentralization: elite capture (Khanal, 2010; Koross, Ngware & Sang, 2009). Furthermore, many schools, teachers and principals do not wish to have parents involved for reasons including perceived limited capacity, power sharing, or control issues (Kim, 2009; Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009). The issue of limited capacity also has a detrimental effect on parental involvement. Heystek discusses how communities are entrusted with the funds to manage the schools in South Africa because it is assumed that they know better how to allocate these funds (2011, 456). However, he then mentions that this is only the case when the local community and parents are educated and have the necessary knowledgeable and trained educators, principals and wider community (Heystek, 2011, 456). This idea of limited capacity is echoed by many other scholars, who believe parental involvement to be positive, though only when parents are educated (Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009; Koross, Ngware & Sang, 2009). Other barriers include more practical issues such as lack of time and motivation, which for families in the developing world is a significant problem. When forced to choose between attending a PTA meeting and tending to the garden which is the prime subsistence for the family, it is no wonder many choose the garden (Gershberg, Meade & Andersson, 2009).

While it is important to have local participation, transparency, accountability and parental involvement in education, it is even more important to ensure that children are receiving an education. Are children staying in school and graduating with a diploma that will allow them to enter the workforce and contribute to the economy as the Human Capital Approach hopes? Are they realizing their capabilities and functionings through education as the Capabilities Approach assumes? Are they becoming aware of the world

around them and understanding their place in the world as Education as Liberation expects? So it is important to ask how we measure the success or failure of CMS and decentralization, which can be done through the concept of educational attainment; it is a fundamental part of education, and needs to be analyzed in conjunction with decentralization in order to understand how the policy is affecting the education system as a whole, and thus the entire country's development.

## **2.4 Educational Attainment**

Within education, the policy of decentralization promises many things, such as local participation and parental involvement, transparency and accountability. However, the decentralization literature is very vague on how the policy will affect the educational attainment of the children, even though their educational experience is assumed to be enhanced by it, as the local populations and those closest to the children have a greater say in how the school actually runs. This is partially due to the diversity of measurement in the literature. There are many ways to evaluate educational attainment, and each way has its own positive and negative aspects. Many scholars, as well as the OECD use the number of grades completed by children to determine their educational attainment (Stash & Hannum, 2001; Nishimura et al., 2008; OECD, 2003). This is a simple way to conclude whether or not children in a country are being educated up to grade five for the Universal Primary Education goal of EFA and the second MDG.

While this may give a statistically significant view of the educational standards in a country, educational attainment can also be seen as more than grades completed. Other



scholars define it as the number of years a child has attended school as well as the probability of the children completing primary school and of attending secondary school (Townsend et. al., 1997: 219). Urquiola and Calderón, in their study of educational attainment across Latin American and the Caribbean use several indicators, which allow for a greater understanding of the educational systems in the countries. Their indicators include age specific net enrollment ratios, a measure of the average number of years children spend in school, a measure of the average number of grades they actually complete and the gap between the last two indicators (Urquiola & Calderón, 2006, 573). The numerous indicators used in their analysis allow for a greater understanding of the issues behind the education of the students. They are able to understand concerns such as repetition rates, delayed enrollment, and the difference between enrollment rates and primary completion. This understanding allows for a more complete analysis of the actual education of the children. For example, though many children may be enrolled in school, which pleases EFA and the MDGs, how many complete the grade and has enrollment been inflated? These questions are critical in understanding the educational attainment of children and whether they are receiving an education that can help them lead lives they value.

Just as with decentralization, educational attainment is affected by many societal factors, such as gender, race, language, caste, class and living arrangements. Regarding societal factors, Jao and McKeever discuss two theoretical debates in the field of educational attainment. The first is known as the modernization thesis; saying that as societies become more industrialized and complex, the system of educational attainment will become more meritocratic, one that is based on the talents of the students, rather than

their backgrounds (Jao & McKeever, 2006, 132). The second, called the maximally maintained inequality thesis argues that family and class background will continue to influence educational attainment greatly, regardless of societal complexity (Jao & McKeever, 2006, 132). They studied the educational system in Taiwan and discerned that though more people were obtaining basic levels of education, and social background was becoming less important for those who obtained more education, there was still a great deal of educational stratification in the country in terms of who was able to make it to the highest levels of education (Jao & McKeever, 2006).

In their study on the impacts of Universal Primary Education on Educational Attainment in rural Uganda, Nishimura, Yamano and Sasaoka discover that socio-economic factors played a large role in enrollment and educational attainment, even when tuition was free (2008). The previous thesis can be seen in this study; more people were attaining primary education, but it was the higher classes whose children went on to further their education. Caste and gender also play an important role in education. In Nepal access to schooling has greatly expanded since 1971, however Stash and Hannum note that access to schooling depends greatly on gender and caste (at least until 1991 when the data was collected for their study) (2001). Living arrangements, defined as who the children live with and their social networks have also been shown to affect educational attainment in South Africa. Townsend et al. found that the residential arrangements of rural black children highly impacted their educational attainment, and this varied according to their sex and age (2002, 215; 223).

Gender, in many areas still plays a large role in who goes to school, and therefore the ability of many children to attain an education. Finn, Reis and Dulberg discuss how

educational attainment is one-sided, especially in many developing, middle-eastern and Asian countries, as “females do not enter schools, are not afforded the instructional opportunities and do not reap the benefits of education that males do” (1982, 107). Not only are there obstacles to females entering school, these scholars assert that obstacles exist within the school system; teaching methods seek to reinforce social attitudes, preparing girls for marriage and childbearing instead of for the workforce, thus limiting the scope of their educational attainment, even though they are in school (Finn et. al, 1982).

Another important issue within educational attainment is the curriculum that the children are learning within their schools. This is especially important in decentralization as the curriculum is often controlled in the centre and is disseminated throughout the system via the CMS. Therefore, though the local communities are participating and taking part in their children’s education, they have little say in what they are learning and how it is being taught. Finn, Reis and Dulberg discuss how formal schooling is a “significant agent in reinforcing cultural expectations for males and females” (1982, 109). The curriculum that a child is taught affects not only how they see themselves, but what they attain, both in their educational careers and afterwards (Finn et al., 1982). Joa and McKeever, in their Taiwanese study, hypothesize that language affects the attainment and dropout rates of ethnic Minnan children (2006). The language of education is Mandarin, and the Minnan children begin to learn this in school, yet the Hakka children and the mainland children already speak Mandarin before entering primary school. Therefore, the authors hypothesize that language has an effect on the obstacles that children have to

overcome in order to become educated and finish higher levels of schooling (Jao & McKeever, 2006).

Consequently, it is easy to see that there are many issues that affect the educational attainment of children. Therefore, a specific definition must be decided upon for this thesis, in order to specifically address the issues at play. For this thesis, educational attainment shall be measured by the retention and enrollment rates of the children, to see if they are going to school, and if they continue going to school through the years. It will also encompass School Leaving Certificate (SLC)<sup>1</sup> pass rates, to see if the children have learned what they need to know to pass the final exam administered by the government in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

Though class, gender, caste and living arrangements are all issues that can affect educational attainment, they can also be affected by decentralization. Decentralization is closely linked to educational attainment, as the policy directly affects the children due to the power that has been transferred to the local populations. These community issues can come to the forefront and affect the education system in various ways, thus also impacting the educational attainment of the children.

The issues of education, decentralization and educational attainment come together in many different ways in various countries around the world, affecting children, parents, school systems and ultimately the country, as the education system works to educate and socialize the next generation. For this thesis, the country of Nepal shall serve

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<sup>1</sup> This is an examination taken at the end of grade ten and includes six subjects: English, Math, Science, Health, Population and Environment, Nepali, Social Studies. All subjects must receive a passing grade, 32/100 in order for the student to receive their SLC and be able to apply to any higher educational institutions (Fieldbook, part 3, 204).

as a case study in order to understand how these issues combine, and what effects they are having when actual people and schools are involved.

## **2.5 Educational Decentralization in Nepal**

Nepal is a good case study for decentralization as its mountainous geography and relatively poor transportation and communication infrastructures are impediments to the control of the country from a central government. Nepal's decentralization system operates under deconcentration in the most technical sense; however, as earlier stated, decentralization can be seen as a continuum, and a country cannot be so easily slotted into one definition (Khanal, 2010; Shields & Rappleye, 2008). It can be said that Nepal follows "decentralised centralism," where the state retains control over important matters such as the curriculum, assessment of the students and other quality structures, such as the budget, whereas the communities have duties such as school supervision, additional resource generation (for individual projects), planning and administration, and in the most decentralized schools, teacher management (Khanal, 2010, 147). They also have varying resources and finances, meaning each district and village development area is diverse, contributing to the problem of the commodification of education and the public/private school divide of which Martha Caddell has produced some excellent research.

There are many issues with the policy of decentralization that directly affect the communities and schools in Nepal. Holger Daun (2007) discusses the government's ignorance of the people and the social, cultural and economic situations they find themselves in. Firstly, the problem of elite capture is rampant in the Nepali education

system with regards to control over the CMS (Daun, 2007). As previously mentioned, elites can take advantage of decentralization and local populations, often with little education and awareness of the CMS situation when they live in remote villages, cannot hope to grasp the positive outcomes that decentralization has to offer in the same manner (Daun, 2007; Azis, 2008; Jütting, 2005). Khanal has said that decentralization has helped increase parental control over their children's education, and this has in some areas, resulted in a reduction in teacher absenteeism, an increase in the number of female teachers and has helped schools upgrade to include higher grade levels (2010, 154).

The teachers are also immensely affected by the change to decentralization. There are several different forms of teachers within the Nepali system, including permanent teachers, temporary teachers, Rahat teachers (or relief quota teachers) who are specifically hired by the SMC of the CMS, Per Child Funding teachers, hired based on new enrollments and the funds school receive because of it, and local teachers, who are appointed by the SMC (Khanal, 2011). There are issues surrounding these differing labels teacher have placed on them, such as a large salary differential between permanent teachers (as high as 160 USD in an urban area and as low as 136 USD in a rural area per month) and local teacher (as high as 98 USD in an urban area and as low as 48 USD in a rural area per month) (Khanal, 2011). Therefore, there is a large division and hierarchy associated with all of the teachers in any public school. As well, with the decentralization process, the ability to hire and fire teachers has been given to those schools who have chosen to transfer management to the community and become Community Managed. This however, has led to corruption and elite capture, which enables elites to choose teachers as they wish, which is not based on merit or need (Khanal, 2011).

Teachers are vital to the success of decentralization, though teachers in Nepal do not support the system (Gaynor, 1998, quoted in Khanal, 2011; Khanal, 2011). The Teacher's Union is currently working towards omitting the teacher management issue from the decentralization process, job security and equal pay for all teachers (Khanal, 2011).

## **2.6 The Community Managed School in Nepal**

In 2001 the 7<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Education Act renamed all government schools "Community Schools" and a system was created in which local SMCs were to take on an increased leadership role within the schools. This attempt at decentralization was made because it was seen as essential to achieving improvements in the education system, so they decided to return to the decentralized system of education that had been instituted from 1950 to 1972 (Carney & Bista, 2009). In 2003 the Government of Nepal was renewing its attempt to shift service delivery to the local level, and they invited the World Bank to begin the Community School Support Program (CSSP) which gives lump sum grants to support the transfer of schools to local community stakeholders (Carney & Bista, 2009). Carney and Bista (2009) mention that the CSSP was pushed onto Nepal without the WB asking the local people what they thought, simply using the successes in Latin America as the reason for implementation. The CSSP requires that local stakeholder groups apply to the District Education Officer (DEO) in order to have their school transferred to community management, and over 10 000 of 27 000 schools have chosen this route and become Community Managed (Edwards, 2011; Khanal, 2011).

CMS are seen by the government as essential to achieving improvements in students performance, the quality of education, monitoring and educational planning (Carney & Bista, 2009; World Bank, 2007). However, there are recurring difficulties within the Nepali CMS framework. One of the most noted difficulties in the Nepali CMS is the issue of elite capture. Nepal is a very diverse and unequal society, and this shows in the management of the CMS (Edwards, 2011; Carney & Bista, 2009). Elites and local politicians capture seats on the SMC through bribery or influence and determine important measures for the school including fiscal allocation and the hiring and firing of teachers (Khanal, 2011; Edwards, 2011). As Edwards (2011) says, this capture is not very difficult for the elites because local stakeholders have often not been informed of their ability to participate in the management of the school. The DEO is supposed to disseminate this information to the communities, however, many occurrences affect the distribution of information (Edwards, 2011). Edwards mentions several incidences, including that the DEO may choose specific lines of communication (i.e. village elites) that never disseminate this information or they specifically shape and determine the recipients of the message (2011).

The commodification of education also affects the CMS through language instruction. The SMCs of CMSs have the power to choose the language of instruction at their school (Phyak, 2011). Phyak (2011) found that some parents wished to send their children to a school that teaches English rather than their mother tongue, because they see more room for advancement in society if their child speaks English. Therefore, SMCs often choose a language that will positively affect enrollment rates, and in turn increase the number and amount of grants and funding from the central government (Phyak,



2011). There was the perception that the local community schools had to instruct in English in order to compete with the private schools for children, and thus also for grants; however in doing so they may overlook cultural and religious issues in order to receive grant money (Phyak, 2011).

Inequalities present at the community level affect the impact that CMS has on the local populations (Shields & Rapple, 2008; Caddell, 2005). Caste, class, gender, ethnicity, location, political leanings, literacy and language all affect who is involved and at what stage of the CMS framework, which affects how the school is run and the impact decentralization has (Khanal, 2011; Carney & Bista, 2009). Thus inequalities are reproduced as marginalized voices, as elites continue to hold the power in the community and lower caste parents or community members concerns are silenced (Shields & Rapple, 2008).

## **2.6 Parental Involvement in Community Managed Schools in Nepal**

In Nepal, parental involvement in CMS is a legislated reality. A nine member SMC runs the local school, and four of these persons are elected from among the parents themselves (Government of Nepal, 1971). Yet many parents run into difficulties when trying to be involved in the school. As previously mentioned, elite capture is a large problem for Nepalese schools; local political parties will often place their members as “guardians” of the children, thus allowing them to be placed on the SMC and further their political career, while hindering the voices of those who are supposed to be represented (Edwards, 2011). In some cases around Nepal, very few members of the SMC are on the

board in order to improve education, mobilize parental participation, or because they were interested in school management (Edwards, 2011).

The SMC of the CMS, true to decentralized centralism has control not over the curriculum, but over a significant number of other issues dealing with the school. These include appointing and evaluating head teachers, appointing teachers in new teacher quotas, entering into agreements with any government or NGOs for the benefit of the school, forming subcommittees and supporting and co-ordinating them in their business mainly in the areas of academic standards, social mobilization for sending children to school, sports and extra-curricular activities, resource mobilization, physical construction, monitoring and evaluation, language of instruction, forming by-laws for educational, financial and personal management of the schools and implementing them after a meeting of the parents (Khanal, 2011: 772). However, Khanal (2011) found in his study that many of the SMCs are corrupt, choosing teachers before interviews, and not allowing parents to actually be involved in the management of the schools. Though this is not always the case, in many situations parents are very much involved in the decisions being made on the SMC and play a decisive role on the policies enacted (Phyak, 2011).

While parental involvement is important in a regime of decentralization, the improvement of the student's educational attainment is also imperative. However, in Nepal, many issues continue to affect who attains what within the education system, even though one goal of decentralization is to improve upon educational attainment.

## **2.7 Educational Attainment in Nepal**

There are many reasons why the Government of Nepal has chosen to adopt a decentralized education system, one of which is to improve all aspects of education. This includes the educational attainment of children as well as the quality and relevancy of education that children receive (Lohani, Singh & Lohani, 2010). The Government makes clear that they believe educational attainment, among other things, is directly related to the economic status of the individual as well as the household (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Carney and Bista (2009) in their analysis of the move towards CMS have noted that decentralization and the transfer of schools to the local communities was seen as essential by the government to achieving improvements in student's performance, quality of education, monitoring and educational planning. Therefore, decentralization was used in Nepal as a way to increase accountability and promote participation, but also to improve the education that the children receive in the hopes of increasing enrollment and retention rates.

Within Nepal there are several noted issues that affect educational attainment, the largest being the gender and caste disparities and issues with the curriculum. Through a national study, gender has been shown to be the single strongest determinant of school participation among rural youth (Stash & Hannum, 2001). There are many reasons why girls are not enrolled in school, including cost-effectiveness beliefs, labour needs in the household and marriage restrictions (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). On a positive note, it has also been shown that conditional upon being enrolled, boys and girls are equally likely to finish primary school (Stash & Hannum, 2001: 370).

In addition to gender, caste also plays a large role in who goes to school, as well as who stays in school once they have enrolled (Stash & Hannum, 2001). Caste was officially banned in Nepal in 1963, but traditions and beliefs keep the practise alive today. Therefore, caste affects the selection into and attrition from school; Stash and Hannum find that this reality is not surprising, as the organizational hierarchy, not only of the educational system, but of the country, has manipulated the structure along caste lines in order for the traditionally dominant castes to maintain their control, allowing corruption to continue unabated (2001:358). Therefore, educational inequality and the disparity in educational attainment are linked to an overarching social inequality that has existed for several hundred years.

Stacey Pigg, a prominent sociologist working in Nepal has also noted that the curriculum affects this inequality and teaches the children along caste and rural-urban lines (Pigg, 1992). Textbooks used in class talk about the diversity of Nepal and other countries, however, these diverse cultures, languages and traditions are ranked and sorted into a hierarchy. The same is true when teaching the concept of “Development” and who is developed, i.e. the villages are those in need of help and development, and the cities such as Kathmandu are where “Development” is, and where it must come from (Pigg, 1992: 502). This curriculum, when taught to children of “lower” castes and “undeveloped regions” affects how the children see themselves and their education, and is one reason why higher caste children are more likely to finish school than lower caste children are (Stash & Hannum, 2001: 376).

Besides gender and caste inequalities, other issues affect educational attainment as well. In the 2010/2011 National Living Standards Survey many reasons for children never

attending school were cited by adults and parents alike. This is a very large impediment to educational attainment, because when children do not even have the chance to attend school, the possibility of improving their livelihoods, or becoming critically aware are significantly reduced. According to the survey, the most common reasons for never attending school were that parents did not wish that the children attended school, the children had to work at home, they themselves were not willing to attend, they were too young, it was too expensive, they had a disability of some kind, or the school was too far away (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

In Nepal, the policy of decentralization, including parental involvement and the educational attainment of the children have become closely linked. This policy was implemented in order to accomplish goals such as increasing the educational attainment of the children. However, what remains to be seen is how this policy is working towards this goal, and so we turn to current data to see if we can provide an empirical basis for assessing our research question: what are the outcomes for education at the local level of national regimes of decentralization?

## **Chapter 3: Case Study: Nepal**

### **3.1 Background of Nepal**

Nepal is a small landlocked country of approximately 27 million people located between India and China. It is one of the least developed countries, and one of the few countries of the Global South that has never been officially colonized. Since its official unification in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century under Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepal has had a very strong monarchy, intent on maintaining their power and keeping the general population subdued (Rose, 1980). Approximately 86% of people live rurally in Nepal and agriculture accounts for 80% of people's livelihoods, even though it only accounts for 40% of the country's GNP (Carney, Bista & Agergaard, 2007). Nepal is covered by mountains in the North, fertile hills and valleys, including the Kathmandu Valley, in the middle and tropical plains in the South, known as the Terai. These vast differences in landscape have created a very diverse society over the centuries. There are over 100 different ethnicities and castes, and 124 spoken languages in Nepal (Lewis, 2008).

This heterogeneity in the country has led to a high degree of elitism and therefore corruption all throughout the government system (Parajulee, 2010). All throughout Nepal's political system, from the Feudal lords, to the King, and finally to attempts at democracy, Upper class and caste elites have managed to alienate large sections of the Nepali society because they have tried to maintain their power and been unable to comprehend the problems and concerns of the marginalized local populations from rural areas, ethnic minorities, lower castes and women (Parajulee, 2010). With regards to the

new decentralization process, political elites at the centre in Kathmandu were reluctant to enact the policy because they did not have the political will to make local units truly autonomous, and so they created roadblocks for the passage of effective legislation on local self governance (Paraljee, 2010, 101).

Even within the communities there is a distinct hierarchy formed by caste and class. This separation of the society is obvious not only in economic terms, but in social and cultural terms as well. Local myths and beliefs about caste still permeate the society and affect how people perceive of one another, and themselves. Moreover, this easily translates into elitism and corruption, because these beliefs and customs affect information and knowledge transfer, elections, resource transfers, and community relations. Consequently, all throughout Nepal's history and political strife, resources and the knowledge of contacts involved with political institutions have been necessary when trying to improve one's livelihood, or an institution they are involved with, such as education (Fieldbook, part 1, 1).

In 1996 a small Communist uprising began in the far Western region of the country citing three main demands: nationhood, a self-reliant economy, and people-centred governance (Shields & Rappleye, 2008; Thapa, 2009). This uprising was largely ignored by the government as insignificant, but by 2006 the uprising had toppled the monarchy and declared the country a federal republic (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). The civil war gained legitimacy and followers because of the poverty that many were experiencing, and because beyond Kathmandu the government had shrunk to simple district headquarters and commercial towns, so the Maoists were able to exert influence (Thapa, 2009, 209). The war deeply affected the society and created rifts, still existing

today between rural and urban communities; it also divided communities along caste and ethnic lines (Fieldbook, part 1, 16; Thapa, 2009).

The newly formed Parliament with a Communist majority set about writing a new constitution to change the political face of the country, though they have yet to achieve this goal, seven years later. The lack of a working constitution and the inability of the parties within the government to agree on simple matters have deeply impinged on its ability to effectively govern. The parties have been unable to really assert their power outside of Kathmandu, so rural populations are denied political representation and economic opportunities (Thapa, 2009, 216). Throughout the civil war and afterwards, political instability was characterized by frequent changes in the government, which weakened the new foundation of democratic governance and discouraged emerging trends of institutionalization (Paraljee, 2010, 97). Furthermore, though Nepal adopted democracy, they were not able to adopt such core values such as tolerance, compromise, transparency and accountability, which has allowed corruption to flourish at every level of government (Paraljee, 2010, 98-99).

The education system in Nepal has also been affected by these aforementioned issues since its inception. Therefore, the system must be analyzed to understand how it has come to exist in the way it does.

### **3.2 Nepal's Education System**

Nepal's history regarding public education is relatively short, as it has only existed since 1950; before this, only social elites could have their children educated, as



the family in power (the Ranas) felt an educated population was dangerous to their rule (Onta, 2000). In 1950 policies concerning public schooling were formulated, with communities setting up schools themselves. Each school had a SMC consisting of parents, community leaders, founders of the school and donors (Khanal, 2011). These SMCs were responsible for teacher management and recruitment, determination of fees, physical development, resource mobilization, and supervision and monitoring of their schools (Khanal, 2011).

In 1952 the government established a board of education, who then created the National Education Planning Committee which was founded the following year to find out what the countries needs were with regards to education (Onta, 2000). This body found that there was a large variety of teaching styles across the country. This issue led to the first five year development plan in 1956 which called for an education system that was “suited to the genius of the people” instead of the “wasteful hodgepodge efforts” prevalent until that time (Onta, 2000). By the late 1960s curricula uniformity had vastly improved, however the decentralized system of education was not to last. In 1971 the government was replaced by a panchayat system and schools became centralized through the New Education System Plan, so community initiatives for school management were derailed (Khanal, 2011). Although access to schools increased, government resources could not keep up with the demand, and so the education system faltered (Onta, 2000).

In 1990 when the country returned to multi-party democracy, decentralization was a prominent discourse within the government. This led to the policy being a central component in the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (1997-2002). The plan viewed decentralization as “a fundamental principle for effective management and implementation of primary

education so arrangements will be made to involve guardians, local elected bodies and people in the programme formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation” (Edwards, 2011). In 1999 the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA) was set up, which established three levels of elected local governance, the Village Development Committee, Municipality level bodies and the District Development Committee. However, because of the insurgency, and now, the lack of a constitution, elections could not be held, so these bodies are still defunct and lacking real leadership (Edwards, 2011, 73; Fieldbook, part 2, 118). Due to these problems, a great deal of ambiguity remains regarding who has power in the district, municipality and community.

In 2001 the 7<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Education Act reinitiated the decentralization process that was halted in 1972, renaming all government schools Community Schools, and making SMCs mandatory for all schools, whether or not they were government funded (Lohani, Singh & Lohani, 2010). Therefore, a system was created for local SMCs to take on an increased leadership role within schools (Edwards, 2011). The Amendment gave SMCs the opportunity to take on the management responsibility of state schools (i.e. become a CMS instead of CS) by signing an agreement with the DEO (Khanal, 2011; Edwards, 2011). Guidelines for membership in the SMCs were listed in the Amendment; it also empowered them with increased responsibilities, including school operations, supervision and management, oversight of school budgets and mobilization of resources (Edwards, 2011). The government retained power over teacher certification, curriculum and testing, and the DEO could dissolve a SMC if they were proven unable to fulfill their responsibilities (Edwards, 2011).

By 2003, the World Bank was invited to help in the large scale transfer of schools to local community stakeholders, thus beginning the CSSP (Carney & Bista, 2009). CMSs who accepted this transfer received an incentive of NPR 100 000 to help them begin to manage their school (Upadhyaya, 2004). They also regularly receive support from the government as per the approved teacher's quota, administrative and other operative costs, and their performance is reviewed every two years (Upadhyaya, 2004). So now, in 2013, Nepal has three main types of schools, Private or institutional schools, which are privately funded, CSs which are publicly funded and managed by a SMC, but have not transferred control to the community and CMSs which are publicly funded and fully community managed. This thesis shall focus on the decentralization process which ends with the CSs and the CMSs, and the reality that exists on the ground between these two "different" institutions.

### 3.3 Community Schools and Community Managed Schools in Nepal

There are several key differences between the CS and the CMS because although both forms of school have a SMC, they are given different powers. The following chart explains the similarities and differences with regards to school management and resources. The information was taken from a Formative Research Project conducted by a third party research firm in Kathmandu (Upadhaya, 2004).

Aspect of Decentralization	Community School	Community Managed School
School Management Committee	Yes	Yes

Teacher Management	Assigned teachers from the DEO upon teacher recommendation.	Full ability of SMC to hire and fire teachers. They also do not have to be certified by the government, though these teachers receive different rights.
Teacher Discipline	No control, teachers are disciplined by the DEO.	The SMC can discipline teachers as they see fit.
Head Teacher Criteria	The head teacher has to meet certain criteria and is assigned by the DEO.	The Head Teacher can be anyone, and does not have to meet any criteria.
By-laws	The SMC has to listen to the by-laws enacted by the Ministry of Education and Sports.	The SMC can enact its own by-laws.
Focus of Decentralization	Village Education Committees and District Education Committees (though defunct).	The SMC and parents.
Resources	Obtained from the government for teacher salaries and scholarships. They can also apply for grants from the government. They are encouraged to mobilize resources rather than search for new resources.	Obtained from the government for teacher salaries and scholarships. They can apply for grants from the government, enter into agreements for outside resources and are given a one-time 100 000 NPR grant.

While on paper this seems straightforward, there is a fair amount of ambiguity and inconsistency when comparing government documents to the reality on the ground. This has led to contradictions in reference to government policy. In our findings, both the CS and the CMS did not function according to these rules and statutes, leading to a very different form of decentralization, which can be seen in the management issues section of the data.

### **3.4 Methodology**

Our research took place in the Kavrepalanchowk (Kavre) district in Nepal, just east of Kathmandu in September and October, 2012 (See Appendix 2). The data was collected and organized into three different sections of one fieldbook (hereinafter explained as Fieldbook, part #, page #). The first section focuses solely on participant observations and notes on Nepali culture and society in general which were taken from informal talks with acquaintances during the stay, as well as observations that were made during the time in Nepal. This section also includes one day visits to other schools in and around the Kavre district, and the interview notes with the Principal and owner of the Private School that was visited. Section two of the fieldbook encompasses all notes taken during visits to the Urban School, including classroom visits, informal chats with teachers and school staff, observations made during the visits, and notes on interviews that were not recorded due to the wishes of the interview participants. The third section includes all information obtained from the Rural School, with notes taken after teaching several English classes one day. This also includes observations made during the SMC meeting of the Rural School. Due to space issues, this section also includes one interview with the headmaster of another urban school, which was completed towards the end of my stay in the area.

The Interview transcriptions are placed in another book, and are numbered in chronological order from 1-17 (hereinafter described as Interview #, page #, date). Appendix #1 is a list of the corresponding interviewees. Interviews #18-21 do not appear in the Interview book as they were not recorded due to the wishes of the participants,

however they are still interviews and therefore must appear in the appendix. These interviews will be cited according to their place within the fieldbook, as the notes corresponding to these interviews exist solely in the fieldbook, though it will be made clear within the data that the information was taken from an interview. The data given on the interviewees is enough to keep their confidentiality secure, as place names are not divulged in this thesis.

Historically, the Kavre district is home to the Newar and Tamang ethnicities. However, many other ethnicities inhabit the area in smaller numbers, such as the Dalits, or “untouchables,” and high caste Brahmins and Chhetris. The Kavre district is one of the richest areas of the country, due to its place along historic trade routes, and proximity to the capital, Kathmandu. This leads to plenty of rural to urban migration of poor labourers looking for work and better opportunities for their children and families. This area was heavily affected by the Maoist insurgency due to its high economic standing in the country, which has driven a wedge between both urban and rural community relations. Though it is one of the richest districts in Nepal, Kavre is still representative of Nepal as it has small cities such as Dhulikhel and Banepa, but also boasts poorer remote rural areas with tiny villages and poor transportation.

For the case study two schools were analyzed, and four different schools were visited in order to further inform the data. These schools were found due to the help of my partner organization, who shall remain nameless because it is a small NGO and the name would divulge the location, which could violate the confidentiality of the schools. I made contact with the Rural School through a friend of the NGO who knew of my research and wanted to enrich my study. The two schools shall be known as the Urban School and the

Rural School. As there are many urban areas in the Kavre district, even more village areas, and many different public schools within each of these areas I feel this is enough to mask their identities and maintain their confidentiality.

The Urban School had a student population of 498<sup>2</sup> and was half CMS and half CS, the management of the primary grades (up to grade five) was completely community managed, with the ultimate authority being the municipality, as they negotiated the transfer at the very beginning of the decentralization process, approximately fifteen years ago (Interview #8, 1, 30/9/12). The rest of the school, up to the 10<sup>th</sup> grade was a CS, though the SMC was the same for all grades. The Rural School had a student population of around 350 students, which is estimated because data for all the classes was not available. It was a CS with an SMC that took care of the management of the school. Of the four schools I visited to discuss my research with the head teachers, two were CSs, one was a private school and one was an institutional school.<sup>3</sup>

Data was collected for this thesis in several different ways. To begin, documentary analysis was completed on various government documents. The LSGA and the Education Act were analyzed and a flash report for the year 2011 (2068) for education in the Kavre district was obtained. Alongside these documents, CERID published a series of research projects on the decentralization process and CMS from 2002 to 2011, which were also acquired and analyzed.

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<sup>2</sup> This number is based on the school's data for the year 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Though this means private, in this case, they would like to become a government school, but the government did not approve of their establishment, and so refuses to pay for their costs. Therefore, they now have an SMC and rely on donations in order to run their school and keep the costs as low as possible for the children (Interview #16, 15/10/12).

A large amount of information was collected through participant observation of the two schools, with added information from day long visits to four other schools. I was able to teach classes at both main schools, which helped me gather a more complete understanding of the educational processes and how education was perceived by the students. I visited the two schools for ten days each, attending classes, talking to teachers and observing how the school operated on a regular basis. In each case I lived in the communities of the schools and participated in community events in order to understand how education and the schools were perceived by the community in general. I also partook in many different casual conversations with various community members which helped to inform my view of education and the state of the education system within Nepal. In addition these conversations helped to widen and enrich my knowledge not only of Nepal in general but the struggles faced by its people and those issues which they felt were most important to their lives. Without these conversations, my understanding of the Nepali way of life, and the current situation in Nepal, politically, economically and socially as perceived by its people, would not be as broad.

While at the schools and in the communities I conducted twenty-one interviews with teachers, the head teachers, SMC members and parents as well as one resource person for the district. I asked questions about enrollment rates, retention rates, the curriculum, the SMC and its management, the role of education, parental involvement and the decentralization process over all. These interviews were conducted while I was visiting the schools, in the teachers' lounge for the most part. Many felt uncomfortable leaving the room to talk privately, so in some interviews, more than one voice is apparent because people from around the room are voicing their opinions.



Originally I wanted to complete interviews with both SMCs in order to understand how they viewed their management role, though this was not possible in both cases, as the Urban School did not have an SMC at that point. It had dissolved several months before and they were hoping to form another soon, though as my six weeks passed in the country, they had not yet managed to form a committee. The SMC of the Rural School met once while I was in the village, and several members visited the school once, though due to time constraints, as they were all very busy with their other jobs and postings I could only interview several members separately.

In addition I had wanted to conduct a sufficient amount of interviews with parents to see how they viewed their role in the school and the value they placed on education, though this was also not so easy, due to the economic standing of many of the parents. I was able to interview several sets of parents of the Rural School, though these interviews were conducted while the parents were working on their farms, or on projects around their homes. They did not have the time to sit down with me as they needed to work in order to feed their families. Another issue with the rural parent interviews was my dependence on my translator, I could not speak Nepali well enough to venture out on my own, and so had to depend on my translator to find the families who could speak with me. This meant I interviewed parents, who in most cases were better off members of the village, as well as higher caste. Due to the ethnic tensions still present in the community from the Maoist insurgency, I was unable to speak with the lower caste members of the community about their children's education. My translator also told me that these parents know nothing of the school system and care nothing for the issues that I wanted to discuss because they were not educated or literate (Fieldbook, part 1, 16). Despite this I feel my

participant observation within the community as well as the teacher, SMC and head teacher interviews allowed me a competent picture of what was occurring in the community with regards to the management of the school and the SMC.

I had the same issue in the Urban School, only more pronounced. Parents of children in the Urban School were labourers, often working twelve hour days just to feed, clothe and house their families, and so did not have time to speak to me. In other cases, children are sent from the villages to live on their own and attend the Urban School because it was perceived to give a better education than village schools. So in many cases, parents are several hours away by bus or walking and therefore impossible for me to contact. I was able to talk to one parent at this school, and even they had to come to the school specifically to talk to me from an outside village. Due to these issues I altered my research focus from parental involvement to the decentralization process itself and the reality on the ground compared to the policy.

Finally, I wanted to listen in on SMC meetings to see how the management committee was run and how actions were decided upon. As the Urban School had no SMC, this was impossible; however I was able to attend a Rural SMC meeting. The translator accompanied me and told me what was being discussed and how they were coming to these topics. As the translator was from the community and actively involved within it, they knew the topics well, as well as the SMC members and their positions within the community. I was watching body language and facial expressions in order to grasp how these meetings proceeded and the unspoken hierarchy within the committee. This visit also helped to inform my understanding of the politics surrounding resources, and the reality on the ground of the decentralization process with respect to the

“differences” between the CMS and the CS. Now that the methodology has been made clear, the data must be analyzed in conjunction to the research question, what are the outcomes for education at the local level of national regimes of decentralization?

### **3.5 Data**

This section will comprise of three parts in order to address the research question. These three sections are educational attainment, including retention rates, enrollment rates and SLC pass rates, management issues, dealing with concerns associated with teachers, parental involvement and political motivations, and the school resource base, looking at government funding, local and outside resources that schools receive in order to function as an institution.

#### 3.5.1 Educational Attainment

Within this thesis educational attainment has been described as retention, enrollment and SLC pass rates. These parameters are being used to determine if children are being enrolled in school in order to obtain a formal education, if they continue going to school year after year, and if they are able to pass the final standardized exam administered by the government and thus complete the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. This completion would allow students to acquire office jobs, be teachers or continue their studies. Thus this research assumes that educational attainment means the number of grades completed.

Though there are problems with this simplified version of the concept, time and available records did not allow for a more detailed data collection.

As per enrollment rates, a CERID study conducted for the Government of Nepal has shown no correlation between the management transfer and enrollment in the data. Their data comes from the years 2008-2010 within 3 CSs and 10 CMSs from all around the country. The study only used data from three key years of enrollment, grades 5, 8 and 10, as these are the years when national exams take place. There is a slight drop in enrollment rates for the CSs across each year, however there is no upward or downward trend across CMSs; the enrollment rates rise in grade 5, increase and decrease in grades 8 and 10 (Government of Nepal, 2011, 37). They then split the CMSs into urban and rural categories, and again there are no correlations across the grades.

The data collected from the study schools shows no relationships as well, however the data's accuracy has to be critiqued because in each of the grades where data was collected for the year 2068 (2011), only one of six matches the official government document presented for that year. This is not blaming the schools, especially as the Rural School did not have the proper equipment to keep such statistics;<sup>4</sup> it is simply to point out that statistics cannot be taken at face value in Nepal. It is often the case that schools will increase the number of enrolled students in order to receive more money; in fact according to Martha Caddell, attendance is usually at least 20-50% less than the official

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<sup>4</sup> The schools statistics were kept in paper booklets and held in cabinets in no official order, as the school was without an administrator to deal with such issues (Field Book #1, part 3, 207). As well, they were exposed to such elements as rain, because there were holes in the roof from where children had thrown stones, and during the rainy season, the roof often leaked (Interview #1, 8, 25/9/12).

enrollment numbers (2005). Don Adams from the Asian Development Bank also notes that data from Nepal is inconsistent across the board (2002).

The next quantitative data set is retention rates and according to the government they have not followed any specific trend, whether in CSs or CMSs. The dropout rate over the three years and three grades at its lowest was 2.98% and at its highest was 14.03%. Only in grade 8 was there a slight increase in the dropout rates over the 3 years, from 2.98% to 4.98%, every other grade was inconsistent (Government of Nepal, 2011, 38). In the CMS the only dropout trend was in grade 5, where there was a slight increase (Government of Nepal 2011, 38). When comparing the rural and urban CMS, the rural schools dropout rate increased in grade 5, dropped and increased over the years in grade 8, and was almost nonexistent in grade 10 in 2009, when only one child dropped out, this rose again in 2010, however was still lower than the rate in 2008 (Government of Nepal, 2011, 39). There are the same trends in the urban CMS, with dropout rates increasing in grade 5, and then rising and falling in grades 8 and 10 (Government of Nepal, 2011, 39).

Finally, with regards to the quantitative data are the SLC pass rates. According to the government study, CS ranked far beneath CMS in SLC pass rates. While the three CSs averaged only a 35.42% pass rate, the ten CMSs managed a 63.71% pass rate (Government of Nepal, 2011, 46). The rural/urban divide was also evident in SLC pass rates. Rural CMS had a 54% pass rate while urban CMS had a 69.96% pass rate (Government of Nepal, 2011, 46). This is the only document which distinguishes between CS and CMS, many others quote the vast differences between the private and public schools, though this thesis is not concerned with such statistics. What is important to note is that from 2000-2010 the highest pass rate of the entire SLC system (including private

schools) of all schools was in 2008 at 68.47% and the lowest was in 2001 with 31.22% pass rate, the average being 48.26% (Office of the Controller of the Examination).

With regards to qualitative issues on the subject of educational attainment, when asked about how the SMC was affecting enrollment rates, the answer was often that they were not affecting them at all. The head teacher of the Urban School said that since he had come to the school the number of students “went down and down and then later on it went up and then down” (Interview #8, 5, 30/9/12). This was due to such things as the Maoist insurgency, poverty and migration. Another teacher said that “some schools are prosperous, that means they are able to uhh, take many students in their school....some schools. But I haven’t seen that in each and every school who have transferred their management in the community” (Interview #9, 3, 1/10/12). This teacher also said that the head teacher is very important in enrollment matters; they need to have the inner drive to do something good for the school, but this is very difficult to find (Interview #9, 4, 1/10/12).

Yet another teacher at the Urban School claims that the SMC in the urban areas is not as active as the rural SMCs, and therefore their SMC is not active and has not affected enrollment rates (Interview #12, 2, 2/10/12). This was echoed by a different teacher at the Urban School who said that the teachers, under suggestion of the head teacher go door to door each year to convince students to come to the Urban School (Interview #17, 3, 10/10/12). When asked who instigated this program the reply was that the SMC had

nothing to do with the idea, they only said yes to the idea put forth by the teachers, and let them carry it out (Interview #17, 3, 10/10/12).<sup>5</sup>

Within the study schools, the retention rates are again difficult to discern, especially due to the specific circumstances of the schools and the lack of reliable statistics. The Rural School becomes a feeder school for many other parts of the village as of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade,<sup>6</sup> so without specific information on each and every child, it would be difficult to determine who is new and who has not returned with regards to retention rates. Also affecting retention rates in the Rural School is the promotion of children. According to a conversation with several teachers in the teacher's lounge, the Rural School used to pass every child, regardless of how they did on the year end exams (Field book, part 3, 204). If they failed them, there was a chance the parents would move the children to another school where they would be promoted to the next grade (Field book, part 3, 204). This issue was reiterated by the resource person, who said that if a student fails in one school, they think the school is bad so they switch schools, though he mentioned that these students are few in number (Interview #15, 3, 9/10/12). Therefore, in order to retain children, the school needs to promote them or the children will find a school that will.

In the Urban School, there is significant migration to the urban area, meaning that children move with their parents in order to find work so they can put food on the table, therefore children might move several times within a school year, rendering retention rates difficult to effectively examine. As a teacher at the Urban School explained,

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<sup>5</sup> This person is referring to the previous SMC, as there was no current SMC.

<sup>6</sup> Villages in Nepal are laid out very differently to villages in Canada. The villages have "wards" and these wards can cover a distance of many kilometers. Therefore, the village might have several primary schools, but only one lower and higher secondary school. While one may think that since it is in one village, the walk would be minimal, some children might have to walk for over one hour, through jungle and over hills in order to reach the school if it is on the other side of the village.

“The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the age of migration and people migrate in search of jobs.... In such way it is a very great problem to enroll students to take students at the same school. We’ve got ours admitted in class 1, they cannot stay for long time. Whoever are the permanent students here, they can stay, but otherwise most of the students are not permanent, you know they do not live here permanently, you know they are temporary.” (Interview #9, 4, 1/10/12).

This was echoed by another teacher who said that “some of the students, whose parents are working, labour working, and they leave in one time and they migrate to another place. Two months they live in one place and after two months they go to [a place ten kilometers away] and anywhere and their students also go there” (Interview#12, 3, 2/10/12). With regards to the SMC and their role, one teacher stated that they are not filling their role; “Such as when a school organizes a parent’s meeting yearly, two times a year, at that time they must request the parents please don’t leave this school. This is their role, but they are not doing it still. If they support it like this, it’s better for the school” (Interview #17, 3, 10/10/12).

Moving on to the SLC, within the case study schools the average pass percentage of the Urban School (half CMS) is definitely higher than the Rural School (CS),<sup>7</sup> with 2010 being a year where every person in the Urban School passed the SLC (Fieldbook part 2, 108). When asked about the SLC and the curriculum that prepares the students for the exam, many teachers answered that the curriculum just allows the students to pass the

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<sup>7</sup> From 2004-2011 the average pass percentage of the Urban CMS/CS was 71.65% while the Rural CS was only 41.87%.



SLC exam, and only if they study it well (Interview #1, 3, 25/9/12). If one wants to do well on the SLC, you have to practise from extra books and extra classes, which are only offered if the school chooses to, meaning they can be offered from grade 7, or only in grade 10 (Interview #1, 4, 25/9/12; Field book, part 2, 115).

The resource person gave an example of two children which helps to explain the pass rates of the SLC. He said that out of two homes, one child goes to a private school and one goes to a public school. When they come home after school the private school child will go inside to study and do homework and the public school child will freshen up and go out to play (Interview #15, 5, 9/10/12). This point was proven by a mother who, when answering the question “does your child study at home, or at school only” said that they study at home when she is at home, but they just “escape” when she is not home (Interview #7, 1, 29/9/12). As this family owns a farm and she must work, the children had plenty of opportunities to “escape.” This difficulty is especially exacerbated in the rural areas, where the children might have to come home and go to work in the fields; meaning they cannot simply escape, they do not have the time to put towards their schoolwork because their labour is needed in order to help the family survive.

Many other teachers and some parents expressed their dislike of the SLC examination as a whole. They recognized that in order to go further in society one had to pass the SLC exam, however, they mentioned that the SLC was ten years of education pushed into three hours and promoted rote learning, and excellent knowledge of six subjects (Interview # 8, 6, 30/9/12; Interview #5, 2, 29/9/12).<sup>8</sup> With the data concerning

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<sup>8</sup> One father proclaimed that even Einstein or Newton could not pass the SLC because while they would have excelled in Math and Science, they would have failed Nepali (Interview #5, 2, 29/9/12).

educational attainment finished, it is now time to examine qualitative data regarding management issues which affect the community's ability to effectively govern the school.

### 3.5.2 Management Issues

Data was collected for several areas of management issues, including teacher issues, parental involvement and SMC roles and formulation. As stated earlier, one of the major differences between the CMS and the CS is teacher management and the ability to hire, fire and transfer teachers at will, regardless of qualifications (Upadhaya, 2004). This has created many challenges for both teachers and management. Some say the primary goal of decentralization is to have a tighter watch on teachers, which improves productivity, but not necessarily quality (Carney, Bista & Agergaard, 2007). Khanal says that the teachers cannot support this system because the way they are being treated is not equitable (2011, 781). If a SMC is corrupt, teacher hiring is often already decided before an interview, and bribery to get such positions is rampant throughout the country (Khanal, 2011, 779). According to one participant, teachers of government schools, both CMS and CS are very involved with the politics of the school and spend their time worrying about the politics instead of the children (Field book, part 1, 22). The main reason the Rural School had not had their management transferred to the community was because of the teacher management issues (Interview #3, 2, 26/09/2012). Within teacher management politics also exists, mainly in the form of temporary and permanent teachers and political background.

Government School permanent teachers are treated very well in terms of salary and teacher training. A permanent teacher in the higher grades can make up to 20, 000 Nepali Rupees a month,<sup>9</sup> which is double the highest salary of a private school teacher. They also receive training every one to two years (Field Book, part 1, 10). After twenty years of fulltime teaching you can retire with a pension, which allows for security in old age (Field book, part 2, 103). The last time the national exam took place in order to make teachers permanent was 2006, since then there has been conflict and corruption which has not allowed the exam to occur (Field book, part 2, 102; Field book, part 1, 11). The teacher exam has not been opened to the national public for eighteen years, so temporary teachers have to continually fight for spots (Field book, part 2, 120). Therefore, many teachers in the government school system are temporary,<sup>10</sup> and left without the same rights as permanent teachers. One teacher exclaimed that they have no care or curiosity to improve their teaching because they have been temporary for thirteen years with no open positions to become a permanent teacher; they get no support, so they simply teach at the bare minimum level (Field book, part 2, 113). Carney, Bista and Agergaard noticed the same issue in their study, quoting a participant who said “teachers have no interest in teaching. They don’t care. Their mind is somewhere else” (2007, 623).

This leads to another problem, which is the management of the teachers by the SMC and the head teacher. The head teacher of the Urban School said they are simply symbolic as they have no control over punishing or rewarding their teachers, it is

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<sup>9</sup> This equates to 228 US Dollars, and when one considers that the GDP per capita per year (as of 2003) is 269 US Dollars, this is a significant amount of money (Carney, Bista & Agergaard, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> To become a temporary teacher you have to pass the SLC, and then you can start teaching, usually at a private school and from there you can move up to eventually become a government temporary teacher (Field book, part 2, 103).

something done by the SMC (Field book, part 1, 22; Interview #8, 5, 30/9/12). If they do try to punish the teachers, the situation often becomes politicized, and the teacher is seen to be punished not because of the mistakes they made, but because of the political party they support (Interview #8, 5, 30/9/12). Within the CS a common problem is the lack of teacher quota given by the government to the school. The Rural School had to have teachers teaching not only out of subject, but out of grade and salary level. The school needed seven teachers to fulfill class and grade requirements for the secondary section of the school, but the government only gave them the salary grants for four teachers. Therefore, teachers being given a primary salary are being forced to teach past the fifth grade to make up for the loss. The teacher must also teach six out of the seven periods in a day (1 more than required) to make up for the lack of teachers (Fieldbook, part 3, 229).

The SMC of the CMS also has the right to appoint teachers to their posts. In the Urban School, where they have a CMS only to the fifth grade, the head teacher and the SMC have had difficulties agreeing on which teachers to appoint. For example, they needed a teacher for grades six to eight, and the SMC chose a Nepali teacher that suited their political background, even though two of the six teachers were already Nepali teachers, which would cause even more out of subject teaching (Interview #8, 2, 30/9/12). In the end, the teacher was hired, because within the SMC only one teacher and the head teacher opposed the idea (Interview #8, 2, 30/9/12). The head teacher of the Rural School made it clear that one of the main reasons their school had not chosen to fully decentralize was the issues with teacher management (Interview #3, 2, 26/9/12). Another teacher at the Urban School said that “Rather than the quality of a person, it is what party does he

follow? You know this is paid much attention in appointing teachers” (Interview #9, 6, 1/10/12).

One teacher was convinced that the management of the SMC was not good for the teaching profession, with the hiring and firing capabilities, however they did say that “only for management like furnitures, buildings, playgrounds, teachers training, enhancing, empowering are the good concept” (Interview #17, 1, 10/10/12). This feeling was reiterated by many teachers; that they liked the idea of community management, but not when it came to the ability to hire, fire and transfer teachers.

Another management issue prominent in the data is parental involvement. The first major issue with parental involvement is awareness. Some parents are unaware of the changes being made to their child’s school and may not even know it is community managed (Edwards, 2011). Edwards says that it seems the community information dissemination process stopped at the level of the established local leadership and that in general, parents are absent from the SMCs (Edwards, 2011; Interview #8, 2, 30/9/12). Therefore, parents of children attending the CMS continue to be marginal to the policies that originally were intended for them.

In addition, many parents do not have the time to spare to help manage a school. They are busy trying to survive and feed their families while housing and clothing them as well. In many cases they cannot make sure that they read and study at home, because they are either not home due to their long days as labourers, or they need their help on the farm with the daily chores (Field book, part 3, 220; Interview #9, 7, 1/10/12). During the interviews there was a great deal of resentment among the teachers for the parents not having their children study, or not sending them to school on a regular basis, but these

views contradicted what was being mentioned by parents (Field book, part 3, 213). The parents who were interviewed made the point that education was important for their children because without it they could not see; parents wanted them to have better lives than they had, and they would try to make time for their children to study, or find tutors to help them if they struggled (Interview #5, 6, 7, 29/9/12 & 14, 2/10/12). But again, one mother admitted that when she was out of the house her children would “escape” and she could not make them study (Interview #7, 1, 29/9/12).

Concerning the oft cited issue of limited capacity, the Head Teacher of the Urban School showed that parents care, but are lacking in their ability to contribute by saying “Many mothers come and they listen to what we say, but they can’t contribute much because of their level, political level is uh, say economical status, their educational status, so they can’t contribute much, but they come. So because of so, the support of which we need from the community is not enough. They are not giving enough” (Interview #8, 7, 30/9/12). Another teacher at the Urban School mentioned that

“And then the parents of [the students] are involved in the SMC. I think it is good. Because [parent’s], whose children are involved in the school they have a responsibility to make the school better..... but sometimes I think there are some difficulties..... Because whoever come to schools especially in public schools nowadays in Nepal, they are the working class of people. They are not very helpful, sadly we have to say.... Because every parent may not be educated, they don’t know what will be done, what are the provisions, what are good and what are bad, how can they lead the school the right way, on the right track?” (Interview #9, 1, 1/10/12).

Later on, this teacher mentioned that the parent's are sensible and are trying to support their children by buying them books and not sending their children to school in torn clothes, but they are very poor, and it is difficult for them, as they also have to eat (Interview #9, 1/10/12). The head teacher of the Rural School suggested that parents are crucial in the success of a school, saying "those schools which are improved and able to maintain quality education, there are more reasons, do you know, more reasons behind it. Because the community are civilized, guardians are aware, guardians are helpful, guardians are responsible, accountable, you know?" (Interview # 3, 7, 26/9/12).

When asked how they contributed to the schools, parents' explanations ranged from carrying sand for a building project, asking about their children's performance, visiting the school when they call for the parent's to come, to a simple "no" (Interview #5, 6, 7, 29/9/12 & 14, 2/10/12). None of the parents were involved in the SMC, and in previous years, the Urban School SMC had not had a single parent on the Committee, even though it is stated by law that four members of the SMC should be parents and guardians of the children attending the school (Interview #8, 2, 30/9/12).

This brings to light the final issue with management, the SMC itself. The formation of the SMC is laid out in the 7<sup>th</sup> Amendment of the Education Act. Nine people comprise the SMC, including a parent who is supposed to chair the Committee, three parents, selected from among themselves, with at least one being a female, the Ward President of the ward of the Village Development Committee, one "local intellectual or educationist" one of the founders of or donors to the school, one teacher and the head teacher (Government of Nepal, 2028, 11). The head teacher of the Urban School said the old SMC used loopholes in order to manifest themselves because of the many vague

terms apparent in the Education Act (Field book, part 2, 119). For example, an intellectual or educationalist is an unclear term, no one knows an exact definition, so the SMC simply chooses someone (Field book, part 2, 119). The same story applies to the donors; since many donors are from abroad or far away, this cannot happen in practise, therefore, a second person is hand-selected by the SMC (Field book, part 2, 119). Even with the guardians the language is indistinct, due to the fact that you can “sponsor” a child in the school, which could mean anything from giving them a pencil to paying their school fees and taking them to school. Therefore, anyone can form the SMC and make their presence “legitimate.” Edwards mentions that very few people joined the SMCs because of their interest in school management or mobilizing parental participation, SMC members did so for reasons including nepotism, social work, personal benefit and making new contacts, all things which are very important for social standing in Nepal (2011, 78-80).

With anyone able to take part in the SMC and so many positions able to be given away to convenient members of society, difficulties ensue. Every two years a new SMC should be formed, and this can be a lengthy process, as was seen in the Urban School. Technically, the Urban School is under the management of the municipality, but there is no strong leadership there now, so the money that should go to the community managed portion of the school just gets transferred to the entire school, and the management of the school falls to the SMC and headmaster, when it is supposed to be under the Municipality (Interview #8, 4). So the portion of the school that was to be managed by the Municipality is now run by the SMC of the entire school (Interview #8, 4, 29/9/12). In the Rural School the SMC was formed not by election but by consent. According to a young man in the village, those who showed up to the meeting to choose the SMC did not object and those



who did not show up were assumed to have “morally agreed” (Field Book, part 3, 228). When I asked how people were to find out about this, he said that the minutes of the meetings are available to all, and when I probed about how illiterate people were supposed to glean this information the answer was that “lazy people who do not come do not participate in the community, so it is ok, you can only deal with the active people because the others have work to do and are not interested in such things as the school” (Field book, part 3, 228).

Due to the absence of a SMC for the Urban School, I could not talk with any of its members on their thoughts. This had led to some frustration, as one teacher mentioned that their administration could not do anything without an SMC (Interview #12, 4, 2/10/12). However I saw the Head Teacher hand a grant application to an NGO that they had written themselves, and they also completed the first term exams and a parents meeting without a formal SMC (Field book, part 2, 111).

I was able to discuss the SMC with the Rural School Chairman, who was not the parent/guardian of any child at the school. They said that the role of the SMC is to create an environment for better education, provide physical infrastructure, find resources to fund the school, to audit and look at school environment and to manage the school (Field book, part 3, 222). If a child is regularly missing classes, the SMC will visit their home and ask why the child has not been attending, they also go outside the catchment area of the school to try and bring students in (Field book, part 3, 223). They also mentioned that the SMC motivates teachers, creates an environment where they can teach easily, effectively and efficiently, they praise them when they do good, and recommend

punishment to the DEO when they do bad (Field book, part 3, 223).<sup>11</sup> One teacher at the Rural School disagreed with this assessment and the SMC in general because many teachers at the school had their Master's degrees, and they thought the SMC should not affect their teaching, and could only properly watch over the teachers if they had a higher degree of education than the teachers (Interview #2, 3, 25/9/12).

While there are several difficulties concerning the management of the schools, whether they are CMS or CS, the leadership in the school is of the utmost importance and is one of the factors in a school's success or failure. The Formative Research Project by CERID has completed many studies on the management transfer in Nepal and has recorded some very interesting findings and recommendations. One of the most important and noteworthy is the necessity of strong leadership in the form of the head teacher in order for a school to be successful (i.e retain students, have students pass the SLC, enroll new students and students of disadvantaged backgrounds), regardless of the level of decentralization. The head teachers in their successful case study schools had different characteristics than other schools; they were self-determined, self-motivated, disciplined, creative and impartial, and they took initiative to implement programs to increase enrollment, retain the children, and improve the quality of instruction (Shrestha, 2007, 28). They were also active in mobilizing the community and donors for fund raising, as well as self-initiated activities without regard for government supported programs and activities (Shrestha, 2007, 28).

It was found in the case study schools that the head teachers and the chairperson of the Rural School were instrumental in the successes of the schools. These people took

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<sup>11</sup> This school is not a CMS, so they do not have the power to hire or fire teachers.

responsibility for grant applications, fund management, and teacher management so all classes could be taught; the schools would not be able to function without these important people at the helm. Though in some ways it is obvious that their role is simply to have the school function, they do not have any authority given to them in order to truly enact change within their schools.

Now that the management issues have been addressed, the issue of resources is left. Management plays a key role in finding and using resources, and therefore the SMC can play a vital role in the success or failure of a school, not only in managerial terms, but in monetary terms as well.

### 3.5.3 Resource Base

Resources are an important aspect to any institution, there is no exception when it comes to schools; private, government or community managed. The resource base of CS and CMS in Nepal includes government funding, local and outside resources. This section shall look at the differences in resources between the CMS and the CS, where the resources come from and how they are acquired and used.

CSs and CMSs are dependent on government grants in Aid for their operation, which come in the form of earmarked and block grants. Earmarked grants are to be spent in specific ways as per instructions from the government, they are conditional and are for such things as teacher salaries, free textbooks and scholarships to ensure all children in the lower castes and up to grade 5 are going to school (Manandhar, 2005). Block grants are to be spent as per the decision of the SMC, based on their School Improvement Plan

(SIP), for such things as administration, school improvement and educational materials (Manandhar, 2005).

Block grants come from the Education for All grant, aided by DANIDA, the World Bank, FINNIDA and Norway and occur in two forms, which require significant record keeping and application processes in order to receive the money (Manandhar, 2005). The first form is the SIP grants, received by schools who implement their SIPs; the second form are performance grants which are indicator based and require the submission of the SIP, latest school stats, audit reports and the effective functioning of the SMC (Manandhar, 2005). Under the performance grants is a one time, NPR 100 000<sup>12</sup> transfer for those schools who choose to take over the management of the school and become a CMS (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). The idea behind these incentive grants is that local communities will be willing to bear some of the costs of the school if they are given a greater say in its management, which will in turn increase quality (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). Therefore, the only difference between CS and CMS with regards to resources from the government is a onetime grant of NPR 100 000.

CERID found, in their study on these block grants, that they were not well understood and were not utilized to the fullest (Manandhar, 2005). The government, through its various channels had trouble disseminating the information, and there was limited communication to schools about them. They found there to be a delay in submitting data, a delay in teachers' salaries (especially in the Kavre district), difficulty in fund management at the school level, unprioritized SIPs, and no school initiative for finding out about these grants (Manandhar, 2005). The resource person explained the

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<sup>12</sup> About 1200 CAD.

government funding system as such: “So government has got a certain budget for the school, according, this is not given to all schools; this is given on the needs basis. Which school need them more and which school is demanding more and which school is good for that facility. They are providing that facility to those schools” (Interview #15, 6, 9/10/12). Many opportunities provided by the government for funding have to be initiated by the schools themselves; however there are many other avenues for funding to be secured by schools outside the government, for both CMS and CS in Nepal.

To begin, many local resources can be used in order to gain income for the school. Each school and their SMC can decide upon how these resources are attained, and each school may go about raising funds in different ways. For example, the Rural School owned a piece of land in the village and had poor villagers work the land and sell the harvest and the income from the harvest went to the school (Field Book, part 3, 215). They also sold grass, fruits, old newspapers and books, as well as had a piece of land where they collected money from land tenure (Field Book, part 3, 215). The SMC met every year and decided upon the admission price for the students above grade 5; even though school is supposed to be free, it is only mandatorily free up to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, to go along with EFA guidelines (Field Book, part 3, 215). The school also charges for student identity cards, which are necessary, and character certificates, which students who have passed the SLC need to apply to any +2 institution (Field Book, part 3, 215). This school did not receive much money from the earmarked or block grants.

The Urban School gained income from exam fees, house dress fees, character certificates, student identification, computer fees, and many of the block and earmarked grants previously discussed (Field Book, part 2, 118). They also have several students

who are now living in the United States, and last year sponsored the school so that they could buy some new furniture for the classrooms (Interview #8, 8, 30/9/12). They also have several people who give scholarships to children attending the school, essentially paying their fees and dress for them (Interview #8, 8, 30/9/12).

Schools also attain resources from larger outside sources such as INGOs or NGOs, and in some cases, wealthy foreigners who are willing to sponsor the schools or children (Gee Lim, 2008). In the case studies, there was a vast difference in this aspect of the resource base. The Rural School had accepted many donations from a Rotary Club in Canada, including their fairly new, two storey school building, furniture and science equipment (Field Book, part 3, 222 & 213; Interview #3, 3-4, 26/9/12). A Rotary Club in Nepal and another NGO pay for all the necessities for each student from grades 8-10, so they can waive the fees for these students (Interview #3, 3-4, 26/9/12). In addition, there are two scholarships given to the top students after the SLC (one boy and one girl) to further their studies (Interview #3, 326/9/12). All of these supporters originated from one donor who found the school over thirty years ago and since then the school has operated and improved its physical facilities with the support of these many donors (Interview #1, 7, 25/9/12).

The Urban School is not so lucky when it comes to large outside donors. The head teacher is applying for grants to help finish the construction of a new science building, but whether or not the school received them is unknown. The head teacher noted small amounts of different NGOs aiding the school every so often, though it was made clear that there are no regular donors (Interview #8, 8, 30/9/12). They mention that they have

seen other schools receive grants and donations, but that does not happen at the school (Interview #8, 8, 30/9/12).

Having the above data in hand, we will now return to our research question “what are the outcomes for education at the local level of national regimes of decentralization” to discuss the meaning and ramifications of educational decentralization in Nepal, and see what lessons there may be for educational decentralization of other LDCs and the process of educational decentralization generally.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis**

Having the foregoing information in hand, it is now time to look closely at the issues pertaining to decentralization in Nepal and analyze its effects on the ground to see how the reality is different from the laws surrounding education. This will also underline some of the main concerns with the educational decentralization policy in Nepal, which will lead to a greater understanding of the issues.

### **4.1 Elite Capture**

Decentralization is well-known for the problem of elite capture that can occur so easily when giving power to communities. It is one of the most cited problems in the literature review, because it is not only resources that are available to be captured, but power and control within the area. This specific difficulty is apparent in Nepal and shows itself in the hiring and firing of teachers, monetary issues, SMC roles and responsibilities and the execution of decentralization itself. With the hiring and firing of teachers, it was shown that even teachers who were not technically under the jurisdiction of the SMC were hired by the committee. The Urban School was Community Managed up to the 5th grade, yet a lower secondary teacher (grades 6-8) was hired by the SMC, an area they have no jurisdiction over (see page 47). There was also evidence that teachers were hired based on familial ties rather than merit, something which the interviewees (a teacher and a headmaster) could do little about, because they were the minority on the committee. The



literature review also shows many cases where teacher management was and is controlled by a group of elites within the community or school.

Therefore, teacher management, and thus the education the children are receiving is negatively affected by the ability of elites to control who teaches in the schools.

Teachers are chosen not because of merit, but political and familial ties. In addition, the hierarchy of the teachers and the political instability surrounding the teacher examinations is not enabling the profession, or individuals to thrive and improve. This has led to many teachers simply teaching at a bare minimum level because they feel their contribution to education is not being appreciated, and they see no long term benefits if they were to teach at a more committed level.

Another problem that creates elite capture within communities is the loopholes within the laws of decentralization itself. Many spots on the SMC can be appropriated by anyone in the community due to the ambiguities in the laws. For example, “sponsors” can fill the parent/guardian spots on the committee, and there is even vagueness as to who a sponsor can be. Therefore the delegated parent seats can be filled with village elites who give children pencils once a year. There are also no definitions for what an “educationalist” or an “intellectual” might be, and thus one more seat on the committee can be filled by anyone. A donor to the school also claims a seat on the committee, but since they are often foreign, and this is prohibited, another seat is filled by a person who has no legal right to a seat. Those who are usually aware of the situation and knowledgeable of how such a station can aid one’s resume and broaden one’s contacts are the elites within a certain area; consequently these empty seats are filled with people who are often not there to improve education.

The literature review has shown that this predicament is not located solely in Nepal, there are many other countries, developed or not, where elite capture is a prominent issue. In Nepal these elites within the communities are those who have the social contacts and the economic ability to enforce their will in the area. Therefore, the caste and class system is continuing to exist, and is even being supported by the current educational policy of decentralization because of the ability of elites to control resources and power associated with education.

Finally, elite capture of resources is wide-spread in decentralization and this is no different in Nepal. Though there was no first hand data of elite capture of resources specifically, there were many second hand accounts where elites or certain ethnic groups in specific areas took control of the resources and used them for their own personal and political gain. This appears to be a particular problem in the Terai, or southern plains, where some schools are transferring management only to have groups run off with the NPR 100 000 grants for themselves, their families, or their political parties. Edwards (2011) deals with this issue specifically in her article, and this capture is devastating to the decentralization process, as it not only ruins people's faith in the policy, but drains limited resources from the government and causes income to be that much more scarce and difficult to receive for schools trying to apply for grants and scholarships. When the government is having a difficult enough time trying to distribute resources, it is nearly impossible to do so evenly and trust they are being used properly when they disappear so easily.

The stipulations placed on earmarked and block grants exist because of elite capture, and this makes the possibility of obtaining these grants very difficult for many

schools, due to issues such as limited capacity for applying to such grants, problematic and imprecise record-keeping, and lack of information about the grants. Therefore, many schools find themselves unable to apply for many of the grants they need for facilities such as toilets, school playgrounds, textbooks or extra teachers. Even if they could apply for these grants, the equal distribution of these grants must come under scrutiny. The resource person for one area of the district mentioned that “government has got a certain budget for the school, according, this is not given to all schools; this is given on the needs basis. Which school need them more and which school is demanding more and which school is good for that facility. They are providing that facility to those schools” (Interview #15, 6, 9/10/12). This quote shows that the grants are given out on a needs basis, but there are many schools in Nepal who need facilities, but are largely ignored because they are far away from the centre, or do not have the ability to vocalize their need. Thus, corruption can again be implied as those schools who are better off most likely have contacts within the government and know how to receive resources for their schools, or know how to prove their “need,” even when another school may have a better case. Though this aspect of corruption is not due to decentralization, under a centralized government the same issue can occur. Those schools closer to the government, in urban areas, or with important contacts would receive resources first, and the marginalized communities would continue to receive resources last, or not at all.

Resources are of significance to schools and without them, they would not be able to properly function. However, another issue with decentralization is educational commodification and educational attainment. When receiving grants from the government based on your enrollment numbers and success of students, often the needs of the students

get left behind. Decentralization claims to improve educational attainment by increasing transparency and accountability, yet this next section will show that schools may focus on the business aspect and ignore the education of the children.

#### **4.2 Commodification of Education and Educational Attainment**

As was stated in the literature review, educational attainment within the confines of this thesis shall be measured by the retention and enrolment rates of the children, to see if they are going to school, and if they continue going to school throughout the years. It will also encompass SLC pass rates, to see if the children have learned what they need to know to pass the final exam administered by the government in the 10th grade.

Educational attainment is often used in order to cite whether a certain educational project is succeeding or not, and the quantitative data, while showing no recognizable trends, speaks to the problems inherent in decentralization. The data could not show any increasing or decreasing trends with regards to enrollment, retention and SLC pass rates.

These lacking trends show that the decentralization policy is not really affecting the education system. The increased local authority has not been able to positively (or negatively) affect enrollment and retention rates, in fact, in both schools it was shown that the teachers had more to do with enrollment rates and the attempt to increase the student population than the legal body equipped with the authority to do so. On the other hand, it was shown that issues of poverty, migration and political instability, are much more prone to affect enrollment and retention rates as the qualitative data made clear. The lack of change within the enrollment and retention data highlights another problem with the

actual execution of decentralization itself, which will be addressed later in the analysis section.

Some works, such as those of the Government of Nepal and CERID, have shown CMS to be far above the standards of the regular CS as far as SLC pass rates and grade promotions are concerned. However, we found a very different reality on the ground. In the data there was no significant divide between CS and CMS, but there was a rural-urban divide in the educational attainment parameters. In the rural areas, children often needed to come home and work on their family farms in order to feed their families. This hindered their ability to study and progress through the grades. In addition, societal factors, such as poverty, gender and caste all played into how far a child progressed in school, and in some cases as was shown in the literature review, whether children went to school at all. Thus, despite the level of decentralization, schools and SMCs were not affecting who went to school. Those who went to school, or were going to go anyways, went. Those who were not going to attend were not affected by the increased “authority” that the local school was given in order to increase their attendance and enrollment. If their economic standing, gender or caste affected their possible enrollment in school, the SMC did not do anything to ensure they were receiving a formal education.

Educational attainment on the ground in Kavre was also heavily affected by the commodification of education, an issue that is in the forefront of research in education today (De Grauwe, 2005; Daun, 2007). In Kavre we found the educational attainment of the children to be negatively affected by the commodification of education. In order for schools to retain students and the grants they received because of their attendance, schools were promoting students who should have been held behind due to their

performance on tests and in the classroom. They believed that if the student were held back a year, the parents would pull the student and find another school who would promote them to the next grade. Because schools require funding from the government, they need to keep their student population at a steady or increasing rate, and if this means passing a student who should be held back, then that is what happens.

Several people discussed this topic during their interviews, and each time they mentioned it did indeed occur, yet under further questioning said that only some schools promote children who have failed, or that their school no longer practised this policy. Therefore, it may not be as prevalent as it once was, though it is clear this practise still occurs, as numerous people felt it was important to mention.

This is a concern for the validity of educational attainment, because according to statistics, such a child would be attaining a higher level of education. However, the actual education the child is receiving must be brought under the microscope. There is a discrepancy between the statistics collected for the country to be shown to such groups as the UN for the MDGs and EFA, and the actual reality on the ground. This also brings into question the actual success of the decentralization program, as it is this policy which is being heralded for increasing attendance and attainment in order for the MDGs to be met.

The literature review showed that the World Bank has been supporting Nepal in its move towards decentralization for several years now. They joined the government in order to support more schools in their transition to community management in the hopes of increasing quality, transparency and accountability, as well as increasing enrolment and educational attainment. However, the data has shown that this move to the truest form of decentralization in Nepal (full community management over everything but the

curriculum and national examinations) has made little if any changes with regards to the students' achievements.

There are some sources that quote better grades and pass rates for CMS than CS, but there are so many other factors imposed upon these statistics that they cannot be taken at face value. However, these statistics show another emerging problem in the Nepali education system. If the CMS is indeed better for educational attainment than the CS, then there will be a divide created between those children who go to the CMS and the CS. The Nepali system is already facing a large challenge due to the public/private divide of schools. Only the children who absolutely cannot afford a private school education attend public schools, thus the social divisions based on caste and class are being perpetuated in that the richer children (often those of higher caste and class) receive a better education. With the divide of the CMS and CS, those children who attend a CMS will supposedly receive a higher level of education, thus creating another divide, those who attend CMS and those who do not, and creating yet another level in the organization of the education system, and further entrenching divides in Nepali society.

Moreover, there is little proof from the Kavre district that CMS and CS are very different at all in terms of management or finances, which both weigh heavily on the educational attainment of the children. These management issues are a problem within themselves. One of the concerns with the decentralization policy in Nepal is the lack of clarity within the laws and the roles that people and institutions have to play. This creates openings for such things as elite capture, but also showcases the inability of the institutions at every level to perform their jobs.

### **4.3 Lack of Clarity within the Laws and Roles**

The data and literature review suggest that management is imperative for the success of decentralization in any situation and within any country. Unfortunately, our research also suggests that this main concept is not functioning properly in the context of Nepal's education system. To begin with, there is no clarity of the roles people are supposed to play, from the highest levels of government down to the parents of the children; people do not know their roles, or how to fulfill them. Thus confusion ensues, leading to management difficulties such as elite capture and mismanagement. The data has shown that in Nepal there are several ways in which clarity is impeded, and each problem needs to be addressed if there is any hope of the education system improving.

Firstly, one of the most important clarity concerns facing decentralization is the government's inability to decide upon a policy at all. Now that a new government has been instated, they cannot agree on a process for the educational sector. The Maoists, who hold a majority in the government, wish to recentralize the institutions because they believe that the previous government was trying to avoid responsibility. However, the government itself cannot even agree on the basics of governing; they have yet to agree upon a constitution, which has been seven years in the making. Therefore they cannot solve problems such as who has authority and clarify roles within the decentralization process because they cannot even begin to agree upon which fundamental rights Nepali people are entitled to.

Unlike other countries, Nepal was not forced into decentralization. They had experimented with the policy before, albeit many decades ago, and so knew the basics of



the process. Hence it was not an implementation by “default” as Daun discusses, but one by “design.” Nevertheless, because the government cannot agree on a process, how to implement it, or how to upgrade and improve the process underway, they have little chance of implementing the policy successfully.

Most importantly, there is a lack of clarity and understanding of the roles and responsibilities that the actors involved are supposed to play. From the bottommost rung of the decentralization ladder with the parents, to the very top with the government, confusion and ambiguity affect how the process works, and how the policy functions in reality.

#### 4.3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The clarity issue also shows itself within the chain of information, or lack thereof. Information is not being properly disseminated through the layers of decentralization to those it is supposed to directly affect, which then causes confusion regarding the roles and responsibilities that each person or institution is supposed to have. The literature review has shown that when information is properly and effectively disseminated down to the bottommost level of decentralization, training of local populations can result, and therefore educational services in the communities can improve. Nevertheless when information is not properly distributed, confusion and chaos occur, and this impedes the educational system.

At the top of the ladder, the communication is severed and incomplete due to the political upheaval and instability within the country. The CS is supposed to be controlled

and looked after by the Village Education Committee and the District Education Committee (depending on whether it is a rural or urban school). However, many of these bodies are obsolete due to the lack of elections held since the insurgency's end in 2006. Therefore, many schools that are only CSs are left on their own and must report directly to the DEO instead, a large jump in bureaucracy if you are a small village school without much knowledge of politics or connections in the urban areas. The CMS are also left to deal with little support from above, as the proper institutions to guide them are all but obsolete. It is very difficult for decentralization to take hold and succeed if the institutions needed for it to be put in place do not exist or function improperly. What this means is that the government is so defunct, it barely has the ability to govern at all. Regardless of which government system and educational policy one chooses, when the government does not have the ability to effectively govern, there is little hope for the success of any policy.

This is problematic because communications from the top are still needed within the context of Nepal because they have a centralized curriculum and standardized testing and they also have control over teacher management in the CSs. This lack of communication is detrimental to the impact decentralization could have on the education system and instead leads to confusion and schools having to take matters into their own hands, which places more stress on the communities themselves to make up for such things as resources and training that the government is supposed to provide, especially in the case of the CMS.

The issue of a lack of communication and information can be seen on the ground in the Rural School when their SMC was formed due to the consensus of those present

(Fieldbook, part 3, 228). Because of the socio-cultural issues within the village, those who do not appear at such meetings are seen not to care, or to be lazy. However there are many other difficulties that such families have to face before attending school meetings. Many families must work all day in their fields in order to make a living and feed their families. They may not have the time to visit the school and vote for a new SMC, attend a PTA meeting or ask about their child's progress. They also may not feel capable enough to take part in these meetings and activities as they are most likely illiterate and formally uneducated. Nonetheless, because these families are often within the lower echelons of society, their real and perceived inability to attend these events is passed off as laziness and general disinterest, which is also linked to their social standing within the village.

This particular problem is often cited as limited capacity, and can take many forms with regards to a lack of parental participation in a CMS. The literature review showed parental participation as generally positive, except for the difficulty of the parents not being educated or able enough to manage a school's finances, day-to-day exercises or properly staff the school. Within the case studies, there were many parents who would have been able to fill these spots on the SMC, but there were always difficulties affecting their participation. For example, many lived far away, as in the Urban School's case, and so could not afford the long journey to the school. Others worked hard all day just to feed their families, which was also the case in the Rural School. There have been instances where when parents were given training and were able to make the time to help the school and join these committees the schools and communities benefitted. Within Nepal there are supposed to be trainings within the CMSs to help parents increase their capacity and knowledge about the schools, and how to manage them, but there was no evidence that

these trainings took place. This suggests the CS and the CMS are virtually the same on the ground, but with different titles according to the government.

Training is also not the only concern with parental involvement. Training does not solve any problems if the parents cannot leave their farms or labour jobs for several hours due to their poverty. A deeper need has to be met in order for the parents to be able to take the time to undertake the management of a school. I was told by a prominent doctor in Kathmandu that people need to solve the hand to mouth problem before they can think about development, and this refers to education as well. Decentralization will not work if communities have no time to manage a school due to their need to feed themselves; an oft cited problem in the literature.

#### 4.3.2 Execution of Decentralization

Aside from roles and responsibilities within the schools not being explained clearly or properly executed due to loopholes and ambiguity, the end result of decentralization in Nepal is not well executed. The CMS is supposed to be the climax of the decentralization system, a school where the community has full responsibility for everything concerned with it. On the other hand, the CS is community managed, but takes its orders, as well as its finances from the Government of Nepal. Eventually, every school is supposed to transfer to full community management, though this is being done in stages, and only if the schools wish to make the transfer. This is how these two aspects of schooling should work, though this is not the case in reality.

The data section reveals the differences between the two decentralized schools outlining the roles and responsibilities of each and how they differ. Yet in many aspects of management they were found to be virtually identical. For example though there were stipulations on where and from whom each school could obtain resources they were both able to secure capital from international and national donors, whether they were richer graduates of the school, or international NGOs or service clubs; both schools also used resources within their grasp, such as selling old newspapers, or cultivating land. However, the Urban School was better able to capitalize on the available grants from the government. This could be due to a lack of information transferred to the Rural School about the grants, a lack of capacity on the part of the Rural School to apply for and receive these grants, the Urban School's ability to better describe their need for funding to the government, their proximity to the DEO and resource person, or an individual's contact within the government.

Lastly, with issues relating to the two-pronged approach to public schooling, the SMC reality on the ground was very interesting in contrast to its prescribed existence in law. It is significant to note that the Urban School, which was supposed to be run by an SMC managed to (and is still managing to, as of writing) run the school without an SMC at all. The head teacher and the teachers controlled and oversaw such matters as parent meetings, end of term results, NGO grant applications and day to day school functioning. In contrast, the Rural School, who had an SMC, but not the same legislated powers as the Urban School SMC, was running, holding meetings, making committees for necessary actions that the school needed and checking up on the school and teachers on a regular

basis. So it can be said that the success of decentralization at the ground level is more prone to the people involved, rather than the actual process itself.

For example, had the Urban School not had such a devoted and respected head teacher, the school may not have run as smoothly as it did without a SMC. As well, if the teachers were not so creative and dedicated to their school, the number of students may have dropped more significantly, as it was shown in the data that they went out door to door to recruit children. Had the Rural School not made and maintained contacts with several different NGOs and INGOs, their financial state would be much worse, and many students in the Lower Secondary Level would not be able to afford their education past the 5th grade. With the right people a school has a better chance of improving its education, transparency, accountability and facilities, regardless of the education policy enacted. Though many other factors come into play, one cannot overlook the importance of having a devoted leader in each school throughout Nepal who dedicate themselves to improving the educational quality of their schools and therefore the education the students receive.

It has been made clear that decentralization in Nepal needs to develop clear lines of communication to make sure everyone involved understands the process, it needs to rid itself of ambiguous laws and it needs devoted people who have a clear understanding of roles in order to succeed, thus the “who” and the “what” are important when discussing how effective decentralization is any country. Barrera Osorio, Patrinos, Fasih & Santibanez’s idea of the Who-What dimensions of decentralization were introduced in the literature review, and their analysis shall be used to examine the difficulties within the decentralization policy in Nepal.

#### **4.4 The “Who/What” Dimensions of Decentralization**

As was described in the literature review, the “who” dimension refers to whom the power is devolved within the policy of decentralization, which in both the CS and CMS cases, would be the legal entity of the SMC. Power is devolved in this way for the purpose of involving the locals and allowing their ideas, views and needs regarding their children’s education to be met by the SMC; though in the Kavre district this was not the case.

The data suggests that parents are being left out of the process due to many factors: socio-cultural, including the issue of limited capacity, political and economic. Some parents, especially in the Rural School were seen, and one could say saw themselves, as backward and unable to contribute to the school other than carry sand for a building project. Meetings were called and those who were absent were assumed to agree with whatever happened at the meeting. Consequently, a legal entity was formed without the knowledge of many members of the community, and their voices were not heard. In the Urban School many parents have to travel several hours to attend such meetings, and since they are poor farmers, they often cannot afford this loss of time. Even those who do live in the urban area work long days and cannot take the time off work to make it to such meetings. So these entities are comprised of people who have the spare time to contribute to such meetings and voting procedures. Overall this means that the “who” dimension is not answering the need it was created for: having a body that will listen to the local community itself and take their concerns seriously, while trying to improve the school.

The argument can be made that the “who” dimension continues to reside with the central government, or one step removed, which would be the DEO. The head teacher and the chairperson of the SMC, whom we have already established to be key in the successful performance of the schools, are not given any true authority, only titular functions to act out. As the head teacher of the Urban School said, he was not given any authority to punish teachers, he was only a figurehead, and this was within the school that was supposed to have been fully decentralized. Consequently, it can be said that the government has retained the power concerning the education of the nation’s students, though it has given all the work to the grassroots level, essentially absolving itself of the job, while maintaining control: an issue known as decentralized centralism.

Nepal does not have the proper infrastructure, a system of checks and balances or even enough control in order to hand power to the community and expect the educational situation to improve as outside donors and international bodies wish. The civil war ended seven years ago, and in many cases local bodies are defunct and do not have the ability to properly govern their constituencies. They have also not had the ability to elect new leaders, understand their roles, or truly exercise power for decades due to the political instability in the country created by the civil war. The government has made several promises regarding decentralization, such as that parents and guardians will be trained for their roles as SMC members, though these promises now seem to be empty in many areas of the country.

This is especially true with regards to the resources that do or do not make their way to the lowest forms of decentralization. As with any decentralization policy, resources, and their flow down to the bottommost rungs are a key indicator of its success



or failure. In Nepal, there are several issues with the resources which particularly portray the difficulties the country is having with the policy. The “who/what” dimensions regard resources as important in how they are distributed as well as how much power the recipients are given in dealing with them. They are a part of the “what” dimension and are therefore important when discerning how successful the policy can be.

Resources in Nepal depend very much on contacts, and who the SMC, head teacher and community know as well as the information gleaned from these people, rather than the level of decentralization or education that each group has. The Rural School was able to obtain many resources in the form of grants and donations for a new school building, new toilets, science equipment, furniture and scholarships due to their contacts with different INGOs around the world and throughout Nepal. These donations allow the school to have the proper facilities for their student population. These donations also allowed children to continue their education further than they may have been able to, as scholarships are provided for all lower secondary children, making school free past the primary grades. This school does not receive many of the earmarked or block grants from the government, which is supposed to be the main avenue through which a CS receives its money. It is unclear as to whether the school does not apply for these grants, is unaware of their existence, or they are not deemed as “needing” these grants by the government, and so do not receive them.

The Rural School undertakes many projects in order to make money for the school, these ideas come from the SMC and the teachers, and many are standard ways of making money across the country, such as selling old newspapers or owning a piece of land. Without this money, the school would not be able to function so efficiently, as the

money given from the government is not enough. It has been previously mentioned that the teacher quota at this school was not high enough to meet the demand, and therefore, the salary and other monies from the government are not enough to cover the expenses. The CS school, which is supposed to receive enough money to function from the government, has been left to fend for itself because the government is basing grants on “needs” as they see them, and not on the actual situations the schools find themselves in. Fortunately, they have many contacts abroad and nationally and have been able to meet the demand for their school. Other schools, especially in rural areas, have not been so providential.

In essence, this shows that the CS, as per resources is part of the Strong to Very Strong “what” dimension. They receive money to pay for their teachers and some scholarships for students, but they have to obtain and manage many of the funds from outside sources, even though this is limited, on paper, to the CMS schools.

In contrast, the Urban School, part CS and CMS depends on earmarked and block grants from the government because they do not have as many regular outside donors of a national or international nature. In addition, the Municipality, which is supposed to be in control of the school, simply gave the school a lump sum of money and expected them to divide it correctly between the CMS and the CS portions of the school. The Municipality expected the school to do its job, and essentially absolved itself of the responsibility. This was especially true during the field research, seeing as the school did not have an SMC. Consequently it was the head teacher’s job to prepare and hand in applications for funding to different NGOs in order to try and fund their new science building, which was already partly built. The money the government was giving was not enough, and as of

data collection the school had tallied a net loss of 1, 716, 474.67 NPR or 20, 106.10 CAD for the 2010/2011 year (Fieldbook part 2, 117). So the CMS/CS school was being funded by various grants from the government and elsewhere, while the resources were being controlled and sought out by the teachers and head teacher for the time being.

Again, it is clear that the policy of decentralization was lacking clarity and control, because the resources were not being organized or sought out by the SMC, but by the head teacher. These resources were also not given out in the proper manner. This person had to run the school, teach and organize all the duties normally associated with the SMC, so the “who” dimension did not end here with a legal body, it ended with one person, expected to do the work of the entire body.

There were also several schools that were visited during the field research who were seeking the help of the partner organization to pay for such things as a toilet facility, so they could have toilets instead of corrugated steel twisted around a hole near a tree for privacy. These schools did not have the capacity to apply for grants from the government, and were not fully aware of their existence, they were also not deemed as “needing” these facilities by the government, as they were not receiving funds for such projects. They also were far away from the DEO office and thus had trouble making their case to the next level of the decentralization process. This is especially the case as the local bodies they were supposed to rely on were defunct, and so this tiny school had to make the administrative jump up to the highest form of government in the district in order to receive grants. These schools were fortunate enough to have a contact with a local NGO; other schools have no contacts and cannot hope to receive grants or help from outside sources. It can be concluded that the resources are not making their way down the chain,

regardless of whether they are CS or CMS. It depends on who one knows whether resources make it to the schools, because information is just as valuable as money; if one is unaware of grant possibilities, and has no information from the government, they are then unable to apply for such grants, much less receive money. It is important to mention that this would be the case in a centralized government as well, because contacts and social standing are just as important to receive funds in a centralized education system in Nepal.

When they are given out, resources are also not transmitted along the proper lines laid out and expected by the government. In some cases, when they are given out they are slow and unreliable. In one specific Municipality in Kavre, the Municipality has taken over control of all primary grades and they are now all CMSs. Therefore, they are supposed to transfer the funds for the teacher quota and other subsidies. However, there is no strong leadership at the Municipality right now due to political instability and uncertainty so the Urban School receives one lump sum, and is expected to divide it accordingly. Therefore, the body that is in charge of this act has absolved itself of its responsibility and simply expects the schools to do its job. The Kavre District is also particularly slow at giving out teacher salaries. Teachers might go several weeks waiting for their pay, which is unfair to all concerned.

In order for decentralization to work, lines of communication have to be clear and open, and comprehensible infrastructure put in place so that every part of the structure knows exactly what to do, their roles and the expectations placed upon them. Otherwise, confusion ensues, and the system crumbles. This is what is happening in Nepal, the “who” dimension has not been made clear to those it is directly affecting or to those who

should be taking control in certain areas. Therefore, confusion, and lack of clarity and authority are impeding the process in every segment of the policy.

The “what” dimension is particularly interesting when addressing the confusion surrounding decentralization. According to the definition (page 15), the CS should fall under the Moderate to Somewhat Strong category because it has a school council/legal entity which plays an advisory role, but has little to no control over such aspects as the hiring/firing of teachers, curriculum or substantial resources. The CMS should fall under Strong to Very Strong with the exception of curriculum control, because they do have control over teacher management, substantial resources and parental and community control of the school in general. Yet these definitions do not explain the reality of the situation because each school in the data was very different from their slotted definition. The Rural School had much more control over their resources than the government technically allows on paper, which can be seen as positive because had they not had significant donors and outside grants, they would be teaching in a building that was half a century old and not nearly large enough for the 350 plus students attending the school. They did not have the power to hire or fire teachers, though they did move the teachers around within the school because they were not given the appropriate teacher quota with which to teach their classes. A teacher that was being paid a Primary School salary was required to teach several classes in the Lower Secondary Level with no salary increase because the teacher quota was insufficient.

In the Urban School, the CMS and CS were essentially combined as far as every aspect of decentralization was concerned. The hiring and firing of teachers went through the SMC for grades that were not technically community managed, resources were given

to the entire school as a lump sum from the DEO and the school was expected to assign them accordingly, and they were running effectively without a SMC, as the previous SMC, one without any parents or guardians of students, had been dissolved due to its tenure expiring. The head teacher was applying for grants, they held a parent's meeting without the SMC and the accounts were being controlled by the school. With the exception of the control of the curriculum, this half CS half CMS School was being completely run by the head teacher and the teachers themselves. Referring to the "what" dimension, we see that each school has the responsibility to come up with the monies to run their school effectively, or at all for that matter.

#### **4.5 Teacher Management**

Another important matter for schools to run effectively is the proper management of those educating the students: Teachers. Teacher management is a very contentious issue within the decentralization process in Nepal. The division and hierarchy of the teachers create a separation based not on ability or merit, but on appropriate timing for the teacher exam, and contacts throughout the system. Therefore the teaching profession is layered with politics and corruption, taking away from their capacity to teach their classes to the best of their ability.

Only the CMS are allowed to fully manage teachers; they have the ability to hire and fire, without set requirements, teachers for all grades. While this has created a greater role for the SMC and increased their authority, it has also produced many difficulties for the teachers as Peshal Khanal noted through elitism, poor teacher management, and

equity issues. By giving the power to the local communities to hire and fire teachers, their job security and job opportunities are adversely affected because they have to please the elites in the community, or those on the SMC, instead of worrying about their ability to teach, or the subject they teach. This can also mean that teachers are hired on differing pay scales, thus only increasing the division and resentment of the teachers (Khanal, 2011). It was mentioned by several teachers throughout the research that they did not mind community management of the schools, though they did not approve of the aspect of teacher management, and they thought that the SMC members should be educated so that they can run the school properly (Interview # 3, 17).

Therefore, it is clear from the data and the analysis that the decentralization policy is fraught with complex social issues such as poverty, corruption and elitism. This is allowing elites to capture seats, resources and power all over the country, thus shutting out those whom the decentralization process was supposed to involve, such as community members and parents. We have seen that the decentralization process has led to competition for students, consequently creating educational commodification. The government, from its central office to the villages far away, has not been able to clearly communicate their desires and rules with regards to the entire policy and process of decentralization and has therefore created confusion and loopholes for more issues to arise. This pertains to roles and responsibilities of those involved, the very nature of the decentralized schools, the workload of dedicated and determined members of society who truly wish to improve education and resources as far as where they come from, who receives them, and how a school can obtain them.

Though there are positive elements to the decentralization policy in Nepal, there are many drawbacks and situations where the government is failing their people with regards to the education system. What is left now is to conclude and begin recommending ideas to Nepal and other LDCs, and even others with a decentralized education system so that each child in any school, no matter where it is located, or how capable the parents are, has a chance to receive a quality education they can use to enhance their lives and well-being.



## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

While Nepal's geographically and socially diverse nature make a strong case for the potential success of decentralization, the execution of the policy and lack of continuing support from the government has resulted in confusion surrounding the policy and corruption because of it. This thesis has made several arguments as to why this is the case.

To begin, the government of Nepal has absolved itself of the responsibility to its people with regards to the educational decentralization policy because they have not been able to fully commit to the process due to the political strife in the country. On paper they may be committed, accepting grants and working with INGOs and donor organizations, yet within the walls of their parliament, they are unable to decide on the most fundamental issues, such as a constitution, much less the centralization or decentralization of key institutions.

Another important issue is the problem of clarity within the decentralization laws and the loopholes they have created. They are not well laid out and are easily adapted to a specific community or person's needs, making elite capture possible in many situations, such as obtaining seats on SMCs, or resources meant for the schools. Information has not been properly disseminated throughout the decentralization process, making elite capture easier to manage because few are aware of the laws surrounding the decentralization process, or even the policy itself. Parents, teachers, communities and schools are unaware of the possibilities decentralization brings to their communities and education system, and

as a result those that are supposed to be involved in and benefit from the process, are often not involved at all.

An additional issue facing educational decentralization in Nepal is resources. The way the resources are allocated to and obtained by schools leaves many schools without facilities such as toilets, furniture, books or even teachers. The communities or SMCs need to either have the capacity to apply for grants from the government and hope their need is recognized, a contact in the government or have partner INGOs or people who are willing to fund their schools and programs. Without non-governmental donors, many schools would not be able to function properly, due to the lack of necessary monies and facilities.

The confusion between the CS and the CMS was also addressed by this thesis. The CS allows the government to retain control over teacher management, curriculum and a large amount of the resources, the CMS gives this control (except curriculum) over to the community. However, it was proven that this is not the case in reality. The confusion between the two schools resulted in corrupt dealings within communities, problems with teacher management, schools not properly receiving resources, confusion surrounding the entire decentralization process, and the government absolving responsibility for the education of its students. Therefore, the execution of decentralization throughout the entire ladder, and especially at the grassroots level is poor at best. This confusion and bad execution also links back to the lack of information dissemination, and these two issues have combined to create many of the problems that exist in Nepal's education system today.

An issue more so related to the social and cultural history of Nepal rather than its education policy is corruption within the government, which affects many facets of the education system. Resources and how they are distributed, the management of teachers and the success of certain schools based on location and contacts within the government are issues based in Nepal's highly divided and entrenched socio-political history, and they continue to exist regardless of the educational policy, which has been shown throughout Nepal's history.

With all the negative issues surrounding educational decentralization, one positive aspect discussed throughout the thesis is the importance of devoted people and their ability to change the school, community and educational experience of the children for the better. While there is a chance of elite capture, there is also a chance that many people want change and will work towards it, and there were several instances of that highlighted in this thesis. These people work hard to improve the education of the students at the local schools, and this makes a large difference in the overall decentralization process.

Lastly, poverty adversely affects education. Education can be a factor in escaping the circle of poverty; however, poverty hinders the ability of many to receive a formal education of any merit. Whether children do not have the time to go to school, study after they come home from school, or have no one to ensure that they pursue their studies when they come home, poverty is the main reason for all of these occurrences in Nepal. There are grants, there are scholarships, but in many cases, this has proven not to be enough. So unfortunately, poverty continues to cycle through the generations, even though parents may wish more for their children.

There are several lessons to be learned from this research, all of which can help to improve the decentralization process, and eventually, the education system in Nepal. First of all, the government needs to commit to a process and implement it according to guidelines they set out. This was done by the pre-civil war government, and therefore some changes will naturally be made by the post-civil war government. However, this has taken too long, and the education system has suffered for it. The government needs to make a decision quickly in order to save the infrastructure that exists.

Within the current system, the laws and bylaws need to be strengthened and the loopholes filled in so that such problems as elite capture and resource mismanagement do not occur as often as they do. The wording has to be tightened otherwise there will constantly be those who dance around the law in order to improve their social and economical standing within the community and the country. It is obvious that elite capture and resource mismanagement will never disappear completely, though strengthening the laws and filling in the loopholes will certainly help to decrease the number of occurrences.

Another important lesson to be learned is the dissemination of information and how important it is for the success of educational decentralization as a whole. The government needs to do a better job of making sure that everyone who is involved in any way knows exactly what their roles and responsibilities are and how they should carry them out; at the most basic level, people need to know that educational decentralization is occurring in their community and that it is indeed affecting their lives. This means that they also need to train people throughout the decentralization process in order to have it carried out successfully. From the very top of the Ministry of Education, down to the

parents who have accepted the responsibility of managing a local school, everyone should be adequately trained to accomplish their duties so that the education system can run smoothly and produce knowledgeable citizens with skills that they can use in their everyday lives after their formal schooling is complete.

Lastly, poverty is impacting the education system in many ways: who goes to school, who continues on in school, and even who excels in school. There are programs put in place so that children can go to school and continue on in school, however, in many cases this was not enough because though children were attending school, they had no time or supervision after school to ensure they did their homework in order to understand the material presented to them that day. More programs targeting the poverty of the family would help the children's ability to study after school, and thus be able to receive an education of merit, rather than just attending school and either failing or being promoted haphazardly.

While this research has addressed several issues pertaining to the educational decentralization process in Nepal, there are avenues for further research on this topic in Nepal. One important aspect of education that was not discussed in this thesis was the idea of educational quality and how it is being affected by the decentralization of education. The statistics point out that more children are indeed attending school and more are reaching higher grade level than before, but what does this mean for the actual education they are receiving? Is it meaningful for their future lives? Will they remember their lessons in five years? Are they able to address issues they come up against with a critical lens and understand how they relate to the world around them? Or will they be literate with no ability to analyze what they read? And most importantly, has the move to

decentralization, and thus their parents and communities being heavily involved in their education, improved the quality of their education, or adversely affected it due to such problems as elite capture, and hiring and firing staff based on familial ties, not qualifications.

Another important avenue for research in this area draws from the social implications of the CMS in Nepal. As was mentioned earlier, Nepal is a very socially, economically and geographically diverse country, and these issues were the key to the success of the Maoist civil war. This war, now seven years past, divided the country, both in a national and communal sense, along ethnic, economic, geographical and social lines. The country and communities are working on coming back together; in some situations this is working well, in others it is not. With decentralization, the communities have to work together to run the school, so an interesting avenue to explore would be the community relations through educational decentralization. This goes past the issue of elite capture, resting more on issues of social acceptance and local beliefs and myths of the area instead of simple economic and social standing. Are communities coming together to govern the school, or are they being separated due to ideas of backwardness, capacity and ethnicity? And how is this affecting the children at the school, who does well, who does not, and who goes on to further study? Are myths and ideas of the community being transcended in order for the school to function as a whole, or are they being used in order to fuel the next generation of local myth and views? In discovering these relations, decentralization can be improved in order to bring in laws to ensure that every community member has an equal chance of receiving a spot on the SMC if they so desire, thus

opening up the possibilities to bring communities together and improve the opportunities for their children to receive an education of importance and quality.

At this point we can now begin to recommend some possible steps for the Government of Nepal and the government of other LDCs around the world who hope to improve their education system through decentralization. The most important recommendation this thesis has to offer is to stop the separation of the CMS and the CS. Choose one process and ensure all schools go along with it. The difference is muddled on the ground and is causing confusion in the communities, in the schools and in the government. This thesis found that the reality in Kavre was that these schools were virtually the same, and while we cannot speak for other areas of the country, a tiered public school system is not a good indicator of a successful education system. There have been reports saying that CMS are better than CS for many reasons, and though this thesis could not support these findings, this suggests that children would receive a better education at those schools, yet they are not available to everyone. Nepal already has a large issue with the private public divide with regards to education, as shown by Martha Caddell (2005), therefore this thesis recommends that they do not create the same issue within the public school system. Both CS and CMS have positive and negative aspects, and therefore, this thesis shall not recommend which one the government choose, however we do recommend that one be chosen, as divisions need not be created between those less fortunate.

As well, omitting teacher management from the SMC directives is important. It is creating rifts between those teaching inside the schools and those managing it from the outside. This process allows for elite capture to occur and divisions and hierarchies within

the teaching profession to emerge. By omitting this clause, many more supporters of the decentralization process would appear, as this is a sticking point for many teachers as to whether decentralization is a good policy for the country of Nepal.

Another recommendation for Nepal would be to recognize the immense diversity that exists within the country and use it to work together and create an education system with everyone in mind. More social programs and equal funding would give everyone a chance to attend school and excel in their studies because they would have the ability to study after school, instead of working. It would give parents the break they need so they can send their children to school, and still be able to feed themselves at the end of the day. It would also give teachers the proper salary for the amount they work, and schools the ability to have functioning facilities, regardless of their capacity to write a grant proposal.

Finally, an independent commission for the analysis of the decentralization process and its effects on the education system should be called for. It is important to know how this process is affecting local populations all around the country, and what it is doing for the education system.

Nepal can be used as a case study for other LDCs because in addition to being one of the poorest countries in the world, it has also dealt with diverse issues such as a civil war, stronger superpowers influencing its decisions, divisive social issues and corruption. Moreover, the largest issues that Nepal grapples with in terms of decentralization are the most cited in the literature, i.e. elite capture, resource difficulties, poverty and limited capacity of the communities.

Firstly, proper information dissemination cannot be stressed enough. Everyone throughout the ladder of decentralization, regardless of which country, must know exactly



what is going on, what their roles and responsibilities are, and what the laws and rules surrounding the process are. Without knowledge, the policy falls apart, it leads to the problems cited so often in the literature, such as elite capture, and does not allow the grassroots nature of the process to flourish. Training those involved is also a vital part of this information package. If the training of local populations occurs, then they can build the capacity in order to be confident in their new responsibilities and take pride in their duties, as we saw in Nicaragua in the literature review.

Another recommendation would be the universalization of the policy across the country. Making two school systems within the public schools creates a divide between the quality of education and the type of schooling children receive depending on where they are from. This then creates numerous tiers in society. For example, rich and poor children are segregated by a public/private school divide, and then the poorer children are also segregated depending on whether they attend a public or community run school. Since decentralization is often implemented to improve quality, accountability and transparency, it is unfair to the children who would not have access to these schools; they would be receiving a lower quality of education simply because of their place of residence. Therefore, it is recommended to all LDCs that if the policy of decentralization is implemented, it is executed universally, with steps to ensure that every area of the country is moving towards community management on target.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Of course we realize that community management does not come overnight, however, to only have some schools slowly move over creates the issue of tiering. Therefore, if every school slowly made the transition to CMS, the government could ensure everyone is moving towards the goals appropriately and quality everywhere was improving.

Finally and arguably most importantly, poverty adversely affects education, and thus also needs to be addressed alongside the education system. According to the human capital approach education is important and helps to boost the economy. However, poverty has to be addressed in order for education to be universalized so that children can become contributors to the economy when they finish school. Education alongside measures to boost the economy and other social spending programs will help more children attend school and have time to devote to their studies after school. You have to solve the hand to mouth problem alongside other important issues such as literacy or universal education. Devoting time and resources to these problems will help improve all aspects of peoples' lives and how they live them.

Ultimately, Nepal has many issues that it has to address, both inside and outside of the education system. Decentralization has caused a lot of problems for the education system, but the centralized system was wrought with the same issues of elitism, and resource capture. Therefore, staying with the policy of decentralization because it is improving the education system is not a recommendation of this thesis, however, the suggestion is that Nepal not stray away from the policy, as the infrastructure already exists for it. There has been so much change in the education system that the best advice would be to stay the course simply to have some form of stability. To have stability is to have time to work on the issues present in the system and try to fix them and work towards a better education system. To change the policy again is to open up many new issues while continuing to deal with the old ones such as corruption and elitism, associated more so with Nepal than any certain policy.

In the end a good education system leads to great changes in a society and for a country. Regardless of why and how a country chooses to invest in education, whether they believe in the human capital approach, the capabilities approach or education as liberation, an education can change a person's life for the better in so many ways. Though the decentralization system in Nepal has its faults, it also has devoted people, international and national support and the basic infrastructure in place. With some changes, and a stable government, Nepal's public education system can improve, and will undoubtedly produce vibrant young minds that will help to develop their country in the years to come.

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## Appendix 1

Interview Table

Interview Number	Description of Participant
Interview #1	Male Teacher in the Rural School
Interview #2	Male Teacher in the Rural School
Interview #3	Male Head teacher of the Rural School
Interview #4	Female Teacher in the Rural School
Interview #5	Father of three primary school children in the Rural School
Interview #6	Father of three primary school children in the Rural School
Interview #7	Mother of four children in the Rural School
Interview #8	Male Head teacher of the Urban School
Interview #9	Female Teacher in the Urban School
Interview #10	Administrative Assistant/Accountant/Teacher in the Urban School
Interview #11	Male Teacher in the Urban School
Interview #12	Male Teacher in the Urban School
Interview #13	Female Teacher in Urban School
Interview #14	Father of two children in the Urban School
Interview #15	Resource Person for the one of the District Resource Areas
Interview #16	Female Head Teacher of an Institutional School
Interview #17	Male Teacher of the Urban School, Member of Nepali Teacher's Union
Interview #18	Private School Principal/ Owner
Interview #19	Male Teacher in the Rural School
Interview #20	Chairman of the Rural School Management Committee
Interview #21	Male Head teacher of another Urban School

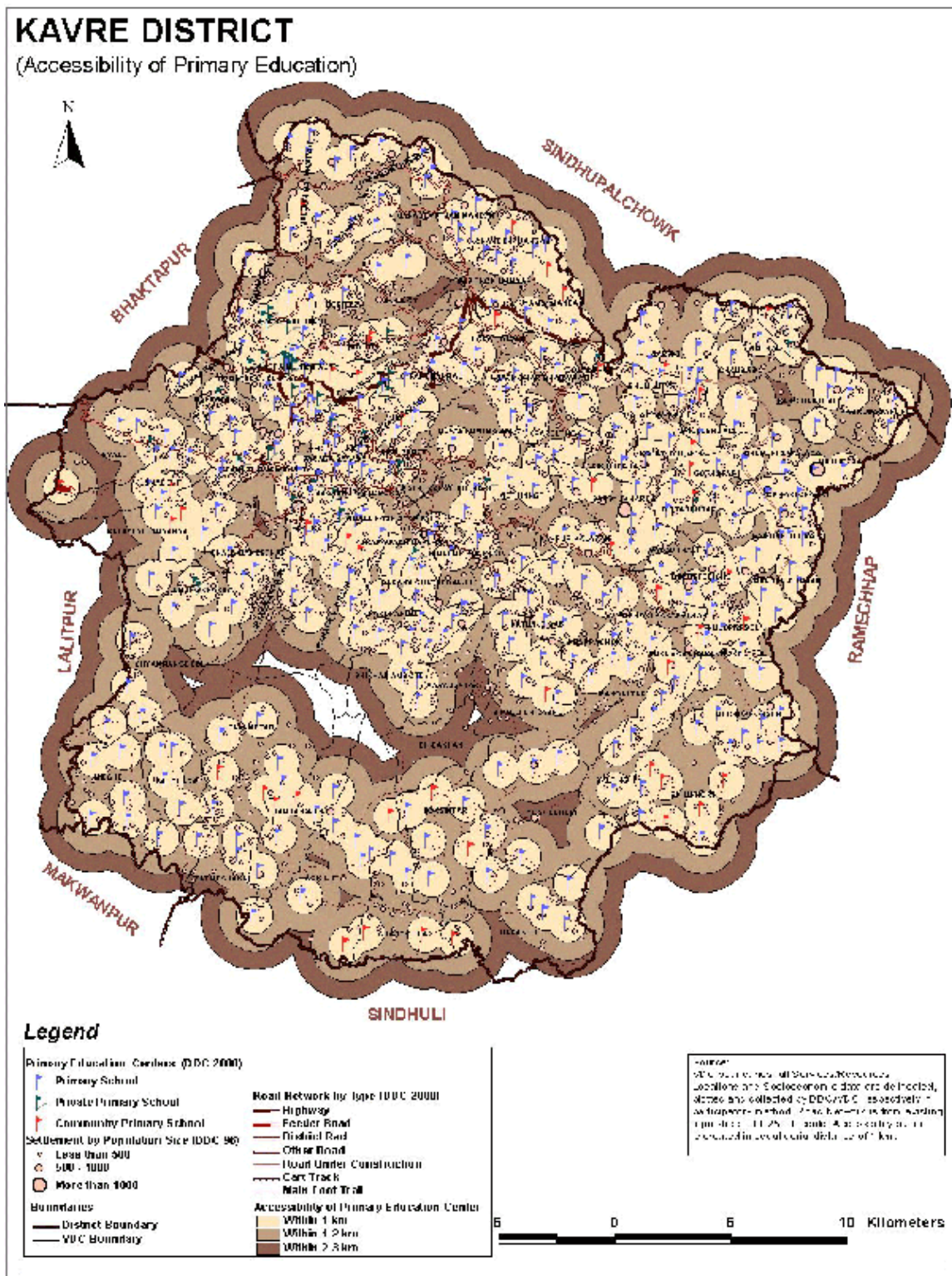
## Appendix 2

The Kavre District is highlighted in red. Kathmandu, the capital city, is denoted by the star, which has been added by the author. The district is larger on the next page, citing access to primary education. The Blue flags show access to a primary school, the red are CMS primary schools. The light beige colour shows access within 1 kilometer, the middle colour represents schools within 2 kilometers and the dark brown represents schools within 2.5 kilometers.

[http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distretto\\_di\\_Kavre](http://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distretto_di_Kavre)



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