

Case Studies

Chapter 1 Education and International Development

Case studies: Nepal and Zambia

The birth of international development created a global revolution in educational practice. Many newly independent colonies established national education systems as a first order of business, and as a result the number of students enrolled in schools increased throughout the world. In 1950, there were approximately 253 million primary school students in the world, approximately 47 per cent of all children. By 2006, this figure had more than doubled to 654 million, or 86 per cent of all eligible children. However, growth was even more dramatic in former colonies; for instance, primary school enrolment in sub-Saharan Africa increased from 20 per cent to 70 per cent between 1940 and 2006 (Benavot and Riddle, 1998:200–3; UNESCO, 2008:307). This boom in enrolment rates is often referred to as the expansion of mass education (Boli et al., 1985), as in many countries access to education expanded from a privileged few to ‘the masses’ (i.e. most of the population).

In many senses, Zambia exemplifies the experiences of many former colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. Under British rule, some education was provided by missionaries and the colonial government. As the economy was heavily focused on copper mining, there was little need for skilled labour, and as a result only 961 Zambians in the entire country had completed secondary school at the time of independence (Kelly, 1991:13). After independence, the government prioritized secondary and technical education in the hope of increasing economic growth, with secondary enrolment tripling between 1964 and 1969. This meant that primary education received less attention than might have been hoped for, despite a government goal to ensure at least four years of schooling for every child (Kelly, 1991:14).

While the country experienced a decade of strong economic growth, fluctuations in the global price of copper weakened the government and prompted it to request assistance from the IMF and World Bank (Kelly, 1991:20). At the time, both institutions required borrowing countries to undergo a series of reforms collectively known as structural adjustment. These conditions included minimizing spending on public services (including education), and promoting free trade with other countries. Zambia entered into a structural adjustment agreement with the World Bank and IMF in 1983, which stipulated limits on public sector pay, removal of agricultural subsidies, and allowing free exchange of its currency internationally. Effects of structural adjustment

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policies caused considerable turmoil within the country, including wide fluctuations in the price of food that sparked riots (Simutanyi, 1996). Combined with a growing HIV/AIDS epidemic, limits on public expenditure contributed to a drop in school enrolment from 80 per cent in 1980 to 68 per cent in 2000 (World Bank, 2012a).

In contrast to Zambia, the Himalayan kingdom of Nepal was never directly ruled as a colony. Instead, its rulers held it in near isolation from the outside world for nearly a century, partly to avoid the influence of the British rule in India. However, when its neighbour India became independent in 1947, Nepal opened its doors to the outside world, establishing diplomatic relations with other countries for the first time (Whelpton, 2005). Due to its strategic location (between communist China and democratic India), it was able to leverage a sizable amount of foreign aid from competing world powers, and, as a result, it received proportionally more aid than other countries in the region. Like Zambia, it became heavily dependent on foreign aid, and by the 1980s these funds accounted for 40 per cent of the overall government budget (Whelpton, 2005:128).

Like Zambia, Nepal quickly took steps to establish a national education system. Within 50 years, literacy expanded from 2 per cent to 49 per cent and primary school enrolment jumped from a mere 9,000 to over 3.6 million (UNDP, 2004; World Bank, 2001). For the national government, education was a key in developing a cohesive nation: as Nepal contained many different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, maintaining national unity was perceived to be a major challenge. Thus, a commission convened by the government to lay the foundations for a national education system proclaimed 'schools and educational systems exist solely for the purpose of helping the youth of a nation to become better integrated into the society' (Nepal Education Planning Commission, 1956:14). While the effort to build a single nation was largely successful, by doing so the government marginalized many linguistic and religious minorities. Through its policies and curriculum, the government successfully promoted the idea that these minority groups were backward or deficient, while Hindus who spoke the national Nepali language were forward-looking and progressive. Simmering tensions about the rights of minority groups were among the causes of a decade-long civil war that broke out in 1996 (Shields and Rappleye, 2008a: see Chapter 4).

What is perhaps most remarkable about the global expansion of mass primary education is not how individual countries differed in their approaches, but how similar they were. Throughout the world, schooling was implemented using more or less the same model: schools were built, teachers were trained, and students entered classrooms that would have looked quite familiar to a European visitor. Furthermore, most governments placed priority on primary education, preferring to provide basic education to as many people as possible rather than offer secondary or higher education to a few. In both cases, international organizations (e.g. the UN and World Bank) were deeply involved in the development of education systems throughout the world. Their roles went well beyond simply providing funds for education; they also gave recipient countries advice on how their education systems, and indeed their entire economies, should operate.

Chapter 2 Redefining Development: Education for All

Case study: Education for All in Bangladesh

The experience of Bangladesh exemplifies both the struggles and successes of the EFA movement. Located in South Asia, Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world and, as a low-lying tropical region, is susceptible to flooding and certain infectious diseases such as malaria (Rahman et al., 2007). UNDP's 2010 *Human Development Report* ranks Bangladesh 129th in terms of human development, placing it in the 'low human development' category but above most of sub-Saharan Africa. Particularly in rural areas, poverty levels are high and persist from one generation to the next; in the words of a recent study 'pervasive poverty has kept generations of families from sending their children to school, and without education, their children's future will be a distressing echo of their own' (Ahmed and Arends-Kuennig, 2006:665). However, the country also shows signs of becoming an influential economic power; high population growth has slowed in recent years while the economy has been strong since 2000. Reconciling new economic opportunities with high levels of poverty, particularly in rural areas, has been a major challenge facing the country.

Since the Jomtien conference in 1990, the government of Bangladesh has taken strong proactive measures to attain universal enrolment in primary school. A 1990 government act made primary education compulsory, and education-led poverty reduction was a key focus of the country's Fifth Five Year Plan (1997). Reflecting these priorities, expenditure on education increased from 5 per cent to 12 per cent of the government budget between 1990 and 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). The government also became less dependent on aid to finance education; in the same time period foreign funding of the education budget decreased from 19 per cent to 12 per cent (Kimura, 2003).

Education funding has been supported by special measures to target children in poverty. Started in 1993, the Food for Education (FFE) programme provided a grain ration to low-income families who sent their children to school. To receive the full ration, families had to send all children in the household to school, and children needed to maintain an attendance rate of 85 per cent. In 2002, the government replaced FFE with the Primary Education Stipend (PES) programme, which provides a cash stipend for low-income families who send children to school (Ahmed and Arends-Kuennig, 2006).

Bangladesh's progress towards universal primary education has been considerable: net enrolment has gone from 64 per cent in 1990, when the EFA movement began, to 91 per cent, in 2008 (World Bank, 2012a). However, achieving EFA by 2015 will be a challenge, although favourable economic conditions and slowing population growth create some space for optimism. One area in which Bangladesh has been

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particularly successful is gender equality; the country was able to achieve gender parity in both primary and secondary education by 2005. Data from 2008 show that 94 per cent of girls now attend primary school, while in 1990 the figure was just 59 per cent (World Bank, 2012b). This achievement is largely a result of proactive government policies: the terms of both FFE and PES helped to increase girls' primary enrolment (Ahmed and Arends-Kuennig, 2006), while other policies have eliminated fees and provided stipend for girls in secondary school.

As a case study, Bangladesh shows that considerable progress can be made towards the EFA goals, even in a relatively low-income country. Perhaps more importantly, its experience with EFA shows that gender equity can be achieved even before universal enrolment is achieved. It also shows that this was made possible by proactive government policies that actively countered the disincentives for girls' education discussed above. As a lesson for the EFA movement, Bangladesh shows that concrete government support is essential if EFA goals are to be achieved.

Chapter 3 Critiquing Education and International Development

Case study: 'saving' Asha

To illustrate and exemplify the relationship between power and representation in development critique, this section analyses a television commercial for a major international non-governmental organization. The advert starts by showing a poverty-stricken girl, emaciated, gaunt, with a distant glazed look on her face. The narrator, an English male, reads

Asha would ask you something if she could. She'd ask you to save her life, but she's too exhausted. She's starving. She'd look you in the eye; she'd ask again if she thought someone, somewhere had the heart to help.

Over footage of other starving children, accompanied by a slow, melancholy piano, the narrator continues:

Please, help a child like Asha right now. We know what it takes to save a child's life. The solutions are simple, but we need your help . . . Asha can't ask you, but we can. Please will you stop children dying?

While Asha's story provokes feelings of pity, compassion and perhaps anger, disgust or guilt, these immediate reactions obscure deeper critical inquiry. The advert describes Asha's plight in great detail, but it leaves many other questions unanswered. First, where does Asha live? To many viewers, Asha's surroundings and skin colour suggest somewhere in Africa, but by leaving this unstated the advert places her in a vague, stereotypical Third World context. Second, why is she starving? Is it due to political oppression, or perhaps fluctuations in food prices caused by global markets? By not addressing this, the advert suggests this condition is an intrinsic or inevitable feature of living conditions in the 'Third World'. Even Asha's name raises certain questions: would the advert have the same impact if she were called Susan or Jennifer?

What is clear is that Asha's life is deficient, even pitiable in nearly every respect, but everything else is vague and unstated. Furthermore, the audience is continually reminded that Asha cannot speak for herself; instead, we must rely on the narrator to describe her plight. Thus, in this relationship the narrator (and by extension the development organization), hold all the power: they are able to put forward a representation that is remarkably one-sided: poverty is focused upon to the exclusion of all else.

Through this advert, one clearly sees the issues raised by poststructuralists such as Escobar (1995). Representation is asymmetric: the object of development (Asha) is represented by the narrator, who grounds his authority in knowledge ('We know what it takes to save a child's life'). As Trudell (2009) notes, the primary feature of the development discourse is deficiency, often to the exclusion of all else. Thus, Asha is described only in terms of her problems and deficits. According to poststructuralists, the claim to save children like Asha is ultimately bankrupt; instead the concept of development is used as a guide to perpetuate a relationship of power and control.

Chapter 4 Education in Conflicts and Emergencies

Case study: education and conflict in Nepal

The complex relationship between education and conflict can be seen in the decade-long conflict that took place in Nepal between 1996 and 2006. The conflict started when a group of Maoist rebels in a remote part of the country declared a 'People's War' against the government, which at the time was a constitutional monarchy. The situation was worsened when a royal massacre in 2001 created instability in the national government; the new king disbanded parliament in 2002 and eventually declared absolute rule in 2005. It was not until an alliance between Maoists and the disbanded parliament led to mass protests in 2006 that the king was overthrown and a new government formed (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b). However, the post-conflict environment has remained highly unstable (Pherali, 2011). Although Maoists had a strong showing in elections to the constituent assembly, they have remained at odds with more mainstream political parties and the threat of a return to violence is omnipresent.

Education was very much at the heart of the People's War. Among the Maoists' grievances were the right to education in students' mother tongue (rather than the national Nepali language) and the closure of private schools, which the Maoists claimed created a two-tier education system that benefited the wealthy. However, the links between education and conflict ran more deeply than the Maoists' stated demands: for decades the curriculum had promoted a strong vision of national identity centred on conservative visions of Hinduism and the use of the Nepali language (Shields and Rappleye, 2008a). Pigg (1992) describes how textbooks promoted integration of the country's many diverse ethnic groups in order to create a cohesive national identity, yet in doing so they favoured certain groups as being superior to others. High-caste Hindus – who generally speak the national Nepali language – were depicted in prominent positions in textbook illustrations while ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities were portrayed as deficient, often in the background (Pigg, 1992). This portrayal effectively marginalized many of the country's ethnic and religious minorities, leading to feelings of alienation and antagonism towards the national government. In addition to practices within the classroom, half a century of rapid educational expansion had ingrained into popular consciousness the notion that education would lead to national development and improved standards of living. Although enrolment increased significantly, the promised improvements in employment and income never materialized for much of population. Instead, educated, unemployed, youth provided an ideal body of recruits for the Maoists' People's Army (Shields and Rappleye, 2008b).

During the conflict, schools were heavily politicized and subjected to ideological and physical attacks from both sides. As many remote areas of the country lacked

other government offices or infrastructure, schools were the only state-run institution, which meant that 'an attack on the school' was equivalent to 'a symbolic attack on the state itself' (Caddell, 2002:232). Maoists also used schools as a platform to promote their political ideology and to recruit young soldiers for their army (Parker and Standing, 2007). Thus, it is not surprising that on several occasions, fighting between the two sides spilled onto school grounds (Shields and Rapple, 2008b). Teachers were put into a particularly difficult role, negotiating between the demands of government, the Maoist army, and the communities in which they lived (Shields, 2005). Writing during the conflict, Thapa and Sijapati describe how

teaching is a risky job in areas where the Maoists are strong. Teachers are at the receiving end from both sides. As people living in Maoist areas, they are viewed with suspicion by the authorities, whilst their regular contacts with the district administration causes them to be viewed with equal distrust by the Maoists. A disproportionate number of teachers have been killed in the conflict. (Thapa and Sijapati, 2004:6)

Nepal's recent history provides an excellent example of how conflict and education are deeply intertwined. It also suggests that this link does not stop at education but rather extends to the larger project of national development in which it is situated. Tracing the origins of the Maoist movement, Rapple (2011a) describes how a USAID-funded programme in the Maoists' stronghold in the remote west of the country increased the production of cash crops that were sold in India. While the programme benefited large-scale industrial agriculture, it left many of the region's small-scale farmers behind. This was complemented by an educational paradigm centred on the values of 'modernity', including the belief that individual investments in education would inevitably lead to increased opportunities and national development (Pherali, 2011). Carney and Rapple (2011) link these phenomena in their argument that 'Nepal's experience of modernity through "development", at least as this has manifested in and around the classroom, has contributed directly to the country's devastating civil war' (Carney and Rapple, 2011:2).

The timeframe of Nepal's conflict also overlaps with a growth in education in emergency programmes. In 2002, a number of development organizations initiated the 'Children as Zones of Peace Programme', which sought to mitigate the effects of conflict, including violence against children and the recruitment of child soldiers, through a programme of peace education and advocacy for children's rights (Parker and Standing, 2007). Even in the post-conflict scenario, education remains a highly politicized and divisive issue, which contributes to a larger context of instability and national fragility (Pherali, 2011).

Using Nepal as a case study, one sees how the education-conflict relationship is complex and multifaceted. While enrolment had expanded greatly over a period of several decades, education contributed to the outbreak of the conflict by reproducing prejudices and marginalizing minority groups. Furthermore, the larger project of national development in which educational expansion was situated was exclusionary, benefiting some while leaving others behind. Throughout the conflict, schools were severely affected by the conflict as violence targeted both teachers and students.

Chapter 5 Conceptualizing Globalization and Education

Case study: globalization and decentralization

Nothing better illustrates the globalization of education than the ongoing trend towards the decentralization of education in many countries. From Argentina to Zambia, national governments are reducing their involvement in education and looking to local communities, the private sector and charitable organizations to play a greater role in the operation of schools (Bray, 1996; Rhoten, 2000). This is truly a global phenomenon; decentralization initiatives have become so widespread that they have been called a 'mantra that is recited regardless of the circumstances of specific settings' (Mullikottu-Veettil and Bray, 2004:224).

Decentralization has received considerable support from international organizations and from bilateral aid donors (see Chapter 2). Since the early 1980s, the World Bank has supported decentralization initiatives in official policy documents and reports, a position which USAID and UNESCO began to support in the 1990s (Rhoten, 2000: 601–2). Support for decentralization is underpinned by several interrelated arguments. First, proponents of decentralization claim that it increases efficiency: decentralization frees schools from the bureaucracy of central government and adherence to regulations that may not be relevant in local contexts (Lai-ngok, 2004). Second, supporters claim that decentralization empowers parents, teachers and local communities by allowing them to take a more active role in the management of schools; these groups are transformed from passive recipients of a state service into active participants in delivering education. Because members of the community are involved in governance and management, schools also become more accountable to their local communities (Carney and Bista, 2009). Finally, decentralization is seen to open new doors for school financing through the involvement of local businesses and charitable organizations (Astiz, Wiseman and Baker, 2002). However, all of these cases for decentralization share a common set of assumptions: the national government is seen as inefficient, unresponsive, heavy-handed and non-participatory, and its involvement as undesirable. The solution to these shortcomings is to minimize state involvement in education (Carney, 2009).

However, the implementation of decentralization measures in national contexts varies considerably. For instance, in the United States the decentralization of education has been furthered through the establishment of charter schools, which are funded by the government but are autonomous from local educational governance and have greater control over staffing, curriculum and teaching practices (Carnoy et al., 2009). In return, charter schools provide accountability, committing to achieve certain performance standards. Charter schools are similar to academies in the United Kingdom, which are also publicly funded and teach the National Curriculum, but are governed and partly funded by local businesses and charitable organizations

(Gunter, 2011). In a similar vein, the World Bank sponsored implementation of community managed schooling in El Salvador, Tanzania and Nepal reduces oversight from the Ministry of Education by establishing local school management committees, which have substantial power in running the school, and are supposed to address problems of teacher absenteeism, poor quality and a purported lack of support from the central government (Carney and Bista, 2009; Miller-Grandvaux, 2002; Jiminez and Sawada, 1998).

Each of the theoretical perspectives discussed above (section 3) acknowledges that decentralization exemplifies the convergence of educational policies in many countries around an 'international model' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004b:3). However, these theories provide very different accounts of why this convergence is occurring. From a neoliberal standpoint, the trend towards decentralization is easily explained as the emergence of a 'best practice': as globalization puts countries in greater competition with one another, there is more pressure on education systems to perform efficiently (Burde, 2004). Neoliberalism claims that decentralization increases accountability, which improves the efficiency of education. Therefore, the common trend towards decentralization is easily explained as a result of the increased competitive pressures of globalization. Because these competitive pressures are the same in all countries throughout the world, it is expected that countries would respond in similar ways, explaining why the move towards decentralization is so prevalent. Rhoten (2000:594) notes that decentralization initiatives are underpinned by the assumption that the welfare state (i.e. national governments that provide high levels of social services) is no longer feasible in an age of intense economic globalization. This conforms to the neoliberal expectation that globalization usurps the role of the nation-state, the only way that national governments can expect to survive is to look for new ways to deliver social services (including education) effectively.

In contrast, world systems analysis points out that neoliberalism completely ignores the intense power struggles involved in decentralization. Furthermore, the world systems perspective claims that decentralization initiatives tend to benefit elites (i.e. those in situations of greater economic or political power) at both the national and the local levels. The ways in which it does so are manifold and complex: for example, elites may use decentralization initiatives to increase their influence in school policy making by joining school management boards (Edwards, 2011), to divert resources towards 'high performing' schools in affluent areas, or to increase the presence of private schools (Carney and Bista, 2009). The trend towards decentralization can, therefore, be explained by the common interests of elites around the world: acting both through international organizations (i.e. the World Bank) and at the local level (e.g. on school management committees). This is supported by an ideological rhetoric about increased efficiency and accountability, but this is inaccurate and disingenuous. The real driving forces behind decentralization, claim conflict theorists, are power relations.

Conflict theories do not view the nation-state as fundamentally undermined by globalization, as neoliberalism does, but they point out the clear hierarchy that exists in global policy making. For example, Carney and Bista's (2009) anthropological study

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of decentralization in Nepal shows that policy making in the Ministry of Education is effectively dictated by the World Bank, which primarily acts in the interests of global elites. The Ministry of Education, and with it the nation-state, are necessary in facilitating and providing legitimacy for this transfer, but it lacks agency and is fundamentally disempowered.

Finally, world culture theory explains the global trend towards decentralization as an expression of world culture ideals of autonomy, individualism, accountability and citizenship (Boli and Thomas, 1997), which entail that schools should be run democratically by stakeholders. These values are embodied in international organizations, which express their support for decentralization expressed in official documents (e.g. Barrera-Osorio et al., 2009; Lugaz and De Grauwe, 2010). National governments and their ministries of education then adopt these 'policy scripts', importing world culture values and ideals into their national context (Astiz, Wiseman and Baker, 2002). This diffusion to national contexts is an important part of world culture theory, and for this reason it rejects the neoliberal claim that the nation-state is effectively undermined by decentralization policies and the larger processes of globalization in which it is situated. On the contrary, national governments are key actors in implementing the global policy scripts within local contexts. Additionally, world culture theory emphasizes that this process is driven by diplomacy and consensus among states that are sovereign equals, implicitly negating the world systems' emphasis on power and hegemony.

Clearly, each of these theories has some validity. The neoliberal perspective is supported by increased competition between schools and the pressures for reform that this creates. However world systems theorists would rightly point out that this increased competition takes place in the context of wider relationships of conflict and hegemony, and powerful groups are able to use autonomy to further their own advantage by influencing school management. Similarly, international institutions have a clear influence over policy and practice, as predicted by world culture theory (Astiz, Wiseman and Baker, 2002). Thus, all theories have some validity, yet none offers a complete account of the dynamics involved in globalization.

Chapter 7 International Discourses on ICT in Education

Case study: One Laptop Per Child

Perhaps nothing has generated more interest in ICT for education in the international development sector than the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Association, whose mission is 'to empower the children of developing countries to learn by providing one connected laptop to every school-age child' (OLPC, 2011). Started by Nicholas Negroponte, a professor at the MIT's media labs, OLPC has developed a low-cost laptop called the XO that it believes can theoretically revolutionize education in low-income countries. When first introduced, the idea of a '\$100 laptop' for the world's poorest children captivated much attention from the media, international development community and public alike. With very low power consumption, and a screen that works well in direct sunlight, the design of the laptop is aimed at the difficult contexts common in many low-income countries. Additionally, all software installed on the laptop is open source, meaning it is not subject to expensive royalties or licensing fees, and any software developer who chooses to do so can modify and redistribute its code.

The OLPC Project is heavily influenced by Papert's (1980) theory of constructionism, and for this reason programming languages designed for children are integral to the XO's software. Speaking in 2007, Negroponte asserted, 'Kids don't program enough and . . . if there's anything I hope this brings back it's programming to kids, it's really important . . . programming is absolutely fundamental' (Negroponte, 2007). Collaboration and connectivity are also key elements of its approach: the XO laptop is equipped with mesh networking technology, which allows an XO user to communicate with other users in the vicinity. This allows sharing of information and collaboration even in areas that lack an internet connection.

While it appears that every consideration has been taken into account (even the laptop itself is made of materials that pose minimal environmental threat), OLPC has had difficulty reaching many of its targets. First promoted as a '\$100 laptop for the world's poor', it has in reality never come close to its \$100 target. In 2007 Negroponte claimed, 'It will be \$100. In two years. it will go below \$100' (Negroponte, 2007), yet more than two years later the price still exceeded \$200 (Bray, 2009). Furthermore, the laptop price did not include related costs such as internet access and power, which can be particularly expensive in low-income countries (Shields, 2009).

Finding buyers of the XO also proved more difficult than first anticipated; plans to launch the XO in six countries were delayed after the respective governments failed to place orders. Instead, OLPC has launched the XO in smaller numbers in Uruguay, Peru, Rwanda and Argentina. Uruguay was the first country to launch the XO in practice, ordering 100,000 laptops in 2007 and 200,000 more in 2009. The laptop is used as part of its Plan CEIBAL, which aims to expand ICT and online learning in

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primary schools. While Negroponte (2007) set a goal to manufacture 1 million XO laptops per month by 2008, actual production has remained at a fraction of initial expectations (Talbot, 2008).

The idea of a low-cost laptop quickly gained attention and sparked a number of similar initiatives. The microprocessor manufacturer Intel, once a partner in OLPC, has developed its Classmate line of low-cost laptops targeted at educational use. More recently, the Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development announced plans for its Aakash Tablet (*aakash* is a Hindi word that means 'sky'), a small touch screen computer that it claims can be provided to children for as little as \$35 (BBC, 2010). Following a limited pilot production in 2011 of approximately 1,000 units, the programme plans to produce an updated version in 2012 (Anwer, 2012).