Article

Global citizenship education in Nepal

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Abstract

The article explores how educational policy, curricula, textbooks and teaching have translated thinking about Nepal's relationship with the rest of the world into global education practice in Nepalese schools in contemporary classrooms. Drawing upon the framework of policy cycle approach, the article addresses the following research questions: What are the key contemporary messages about global education in Nepal within the 'macro' context of policy influence? How is the theme of global education communicated through the content of Nepalese textbooks at the 'meso' context of policy text production? What are the perceptions of Nepalese social studies teachers with respect to teaching and learning about global education themes at the 'micro' context of practice? Qualitative content analysis of textbooks and documents was conducted, while thematic analysis of interview data was undertaken to understand policy objectives and recommendations related to global citizenship education in Nepal. The findings indicate that educational policies primarily aim to socialise and nurture responsible citizens, while textbooks and teaching processes mostly emphasise the acquisition of knowledge. Some recommendations are made as to how the curriculum, textbooks and pedagogical approaches might be adapted to better support Nepalese young people seeing themselves as global citizens.

Keywords global citizenship education; Nepal; curriculum; textbooks; contexts of influence

Introduction

For much of its history, Nepal has been isolated from the rest of the world and from global trends, but even as a landlocked and relatively de-industrialised and agrarian state, Nepal has not been immune from the recent effects of the internet and more mobile populations reducing the world to a global village (Regmi, 2019; Wagle, 2015). There was a recognition in the influential Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) report as long ago as 1956 that educational approaches in Nepal needed to accommodate the challenges of engaging with the outside world. This was captured in the following prescient statement:

> We have become part of the world, whether we like it or not. We can no longer remain isolated; the world has come to us. How can we meet this world without education? Must we – who once were the crossroads of civilisation – bow our heads in shame to our worldly visitors? How can we evaluate the 'gifts' that are offered us – ideologies, new customs, inventions and the ways of a new strange world? How can we protect ourselves against slogans and ideologies detrimental to the interests of our country? We can do none of these without education to give us understanding and strength to lead us. (NNEPC, 1956: 74)

Modern education in Nepal began comparatively recently with the establishment by the monarchical regime of a limited degree of democracy in 1951. Education was perceived as a vital means to enable Nepal and its citizens to face the challenges brought about by greater interchange with the international community (Caddell, 2002). Nepal's desire to become part of the global community was evident. There was a realisation by Nepal's monarchical leadership that the country could not remain unaffected by a post-Second World War wave of decolonisation and the Cold War context.

Nepal is a small landlocked country with an area of 147,181 square kilometres, sandwiched between India and China. The country is rich in topographical, climatic, religious and population diversity. Within the population of 29 million people there are 125 ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken (CBS, 2014). Nepal has made significant progress in terms of reducing poverty and improving the indices of human development. For example, it was the first country to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to reduce extreme poverty before the designated period (Damir et al., 2017). Nevertheless, with per capita income of US$1,074, Nepal remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with around 25 per cent of the population living in poverty, as defined and measured by the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) – an individual having a monthly income below a benchmark of US$160 (Ezemenari and Joshi, 2019). The majority of people (more than 75 per cent) live in rural areas, and the overall literacy rate is 65.9 per cent (CBS, 2016).

Events in Nepal generally only receive intermittent mentions in Western media – exceptions are coverage of newsworthy events related to tourism or accidents linked to Mount Everest (Upreti, 2004), the relative novelty of national elections in the country (BBC News, 2017), and the catastrophic effects of an April 2015 earthquake which killed 9,000 people, injured thousands and destroyed or damaged over 700,000 properties (Harrowell and Özerdem, 2018). However, there has been strong international interest in Nepalese education related to its political transformation from a monarchy to a federal republic and in Nepal's restoration of political stability following a long period of civil conflict from 1996 to 2006 (Pherali, 2011; Valente, 2013). For example, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Union and the Japan International Co-operation Agency have all supported initiatives in the education sector in Nepal in recent years (Bhattarai, 2016; Ministry of Education, 2016; Regmi, 2019).

The purpose of this article is to explore how educational policy, curricula, textbooks and teaching have translated thinking about Nepal's relationship with the rest of the world into global education practice in Nepalese schools and classrooms. Drawing upon a wider research study of civics and citizenship education in Nepal, deploying Bowe et al.'s (1992) policy cycle approach (with modifications by Ledger

et al., 2015) as a conceptual framework (Shah, 2020), this article addresses the following three research questions:

- What are the key contemporary messages about global education in Nepal within the 'macro' context of policy influence in the country?
- How is the theme of global education communicated through the content of Nepalese textbooks at the 'meso' context of influence?
- What are the perceptions of Nepalese social studies teachers with respect to teaching and learning about global education themes at the 'micro' context of practice?

The article opens with a section which briefly reviews some germane global education literature and then contextualises the historical, political and educational background of approaches to global education in Nepal. A methodology section outlines the article's utilisation of a contexts of influence analytical framework and other relevant methodological details. Subsequent sections address the presence and nature of global citizenship education (GCE) across the macro, meso and micro contexts of influence in Nepal. Some recommendations are made at the end of the article as to how the curriculum, textbooks and pedagogical approaches in Nepal might be adapted to better support Nepalese young people seeing themselves as global citizens.

Global education: a brief international overview

As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected through culture, economics and politics, the need for developing students' understanding about global perspectives and engaging them with people from around the world has been identified as a crucial component in their active citizenship. For UNESCO (2015: 15), the overarching objective of GCE is 'to empower learners to engage and assume active roles, both locally and globally, to face and resolve global challenges and ultimately to become proactive contributors to a more just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world'. The primary purpose of GCE is to 'prepare students for the increasing interconnectedness among people and nations' (Zong et al., 2008: 199). Issues such as human rights, equity, environmental sustainability, conflict resolution, critical dialogue and action on global issues and social justice are apparent in the study of global education (Osler and Vincent, 2002).

The major goals of global education (which vary in nature and emphasis across national jurisdictions) include developing students' global perspectives, intercultural understanding and preparing them as responsible global citizens (Oxley and Morris, 2013). It is posited that a GCE focus and an appreciation of contemporary issues related to globalisation will develop key GCE values and attributes such as open-mindedness, responsiveness, sensitivity and skills to face complexities (Banks, 2017). Bourn (2014) argues for applying a pedagogy for global social justice to strengthen the effectiveness of GCE. He suggests that this approach should integrate 'not only subject and curriculum knowledge, teaching skills, and styles of learning, but also reviewing and reflecting upon issues and their relevance within the classroom, including wider social and cultural factors' (Bourn, 2014: 8). Banks (2009: 13) observes that:

> Teaching for social justice, diversity, and citizenship in a global world is a new kind of citizenship education [that] will enable students to acquire a delicate balance of cultural, national, and global identifications, and to understand the ways in which knowledge is constructed; to become knowledge producers, and to participate in civic action to create a more humane nation and world.

This article assesses the extent to which this kind of thinking about global education has penetrated Nepali policymaking, curricula, textbooks and teaching. There is no assumption, however, that Western notions of citizenship education can simply be transplanted into a South Asian context. There needs to be a sensitivity to what is possible given the distinctive history, culture, religion, politics and geopolitical context of Nepal and the particular characteristics of education in a developing country.

Global education in Nepal: historical, political and contemporary context

The NNEPC report of 1956 included social studies for the first time as a separate subject within the primary education curriculum. The report outlined five themes of content within the social studies curriculum as: life at school and at home; life with neighbours; a life of the valleys, hills and mountains; life in the regions of Nepal; and the life of people outside the country (NNEPC, 1956). Through to the present day, the teaching and learning of social studies in Nepal continues to conceptualise a process where 'an individual's life starts from the family and in turn moves to neighbours, community, region, nation and the entire world' (CDC, 2009: 19).

Education discourse until the introduction of the National Education System Plan (NESP) 1971 was focused on the opening up of Nepal to the world in order for it to develop as a nation. However, with the introduction of the NESP, there was a shift to less foreign influence and more of an emphasis was placed upon the development of citizens loyal to the crown (Mitchell, 1976). The NESP 1971 can be regarded as 'Nepal's declaration of independence from US policy dominance' (Sellar, 1981: 11). The country received significant financial and technical assistance from the United States in education sector development from the 1950s. Expertise and power returned to the centre, and local autonomy was diminished. To minimise the influence of the United States, the plan removed English from the list of compulsory school subjects and introduced a provision that allowed students to choose other United Nations languages such as Chinese, French, Spanish and German (Bista, 2011). Although most teachers and students were demanding to continue teaching and learning of English at the secondary level, the government decided to shift from English to Nepali as a medium of instruction in Nepalese schools (Awasthi, 1979). Moreover, the legitimisation of a singular Hindu identity, and a focus upon the Nepali language and hill elites as symbols of national identity in Nepal during the Panchayat system, promoted social exclusion and benefited the advanced sections of the society who were already privileged (Caddell, 2007).

A 2007 National Curriculum Framework (NCF) document, created in the aftermath of the civil war, placed high importance on developing students' competency to face the challenges of the contemporary world. The document was 'designed to make a provision for education that can generate productive, creative, qualitative, nationalistic, employment-oriented and globally competitive citizens' (CDC, 2007: 7). The 2007 NCF aimed to fulfil international commitments made by the Nepalese government with regard to global campaigns and initiatives such as Education for All and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The document recognised the influence of globalisation in the education sector and accepted it as a positive phenomenon (CDC, 2007). However, the NCF policymakers did not necessarily explicitly recognise that globalisation and an increasingly open Nepalese economy would be likely to complicate the loyalties and attachments of young Nepalese people, nor that new technologies and increasing flows of people into and out of Nepal had the capacity to alter the nature of long-standing allegiances in a country previously relatively isolated from the rest of the world (Bhattarai, 2016; Regmi, 2019).

Nepal's School Sector Reform Program (SSRP), which guided the education development initiatives in the country during the period 2009–15, envisioned that by 2015, 'a student has basic life skills to co-exist in the competitive contemporary, global society' (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2008: 1). The updated School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for the July 2016 to July 2023 period aligns with Nepal's international commitment towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Development Program, 2019). Its overarching goal has been for schools to produce the needed human resources to elevate the country's status from a least-developed country by 2022 and to reach the goal of achieving the status of a middle-income country by 2030 (MoE, 2016). Economic rather than social imperatives are the key policy drivers.

Methodology

Bowe et al.'s (1992) policy cycle approach (with modifications by Ledger et al., 2015) provided a conceptual framework for this article. The policy cycle approach consists of three contexts: the context of influence, the context of text production and the context of practice. The macro-level incorporates national policy framing contexts, the meso-level concerns intermediary contexts (for example, school textbooks) and the micro-level refers to enactments of practice in schools by teachers.

Primary data for this qualitative research were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, while documents, including relevant policy, curriculum, textbooks and government reports, were utilised as additional data. Social studies teachers of Grades 5–7 were interviewed to capture and understand their perspectives on the research questions across the three contexts of influence.

Since textbooks in Nepal are both published by and approved by government bodies, textbooks are the bearers of officially approved messages. They play a determining factor in deciding whose knowledge is of most worth and whose knowledge is marginalised (Apple, 1996). The selected social studies textbooks are published in Nepal and are widely used in public schools by Grades 6 and 7 (CDC, 2016, 2017). The same textbooks are used in public schools throughout the country regardless of geographical and cultural differences. The textbooks were selected purposively in line with the focus of the study and the research questions. School textbooks, particularly in developing country contexts such as Nepal, are considered an integral and authoritative part of the educational process, and often students will view their content and core messages as presenting essential truths (Apple and Christian-Smith, 1991). Similar to the situation in Pakistan, in Nepal 'textbooks are the primary vehicles for delivering content knowledge, for determining in large measure what goes on in a class and for assessing what students do and do not learn' (Mahmood and Saeed, 2011: 503).

Sixteen teachers across six schools (nine female and seven male) who were teaching social studies in Grades 5–7 voluntarily participated in semi-structured interviews to understand their perspectives on a range of issues including GCE. Of the six schools, four were public schools (two rural and two urban) and two were private schools (one rural and one urban). There is a clear divide in terms of the schooling system – students who can afford higher tuition fees and other allied costs opt for private schools, which offer education in the medium of English, while the rest join government-funded public schools, which use Nepali as a medium of teaching. Students from minority ethnic and socially excluded groups with low socio-economic status are mainly enrolled in public school education, which is generally free and flexible in terms of the enrolment and attendance of students. Hence, the schools and research participants were chosen to represent the diversity of Nepal. Although this was a qualitative study (and thus the teacher interview data are not generalisable), there were efforts to ensure that the schools were varied and reasonably typical and representative of the Nepalese educational context. The interviews were conducted consistent with the ethical guidelines around participation, consent and anonymity outlined by the University of Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee. Interview data recorded in the Nepali language were translated and transcribed into the English language and independently reviewed for accuracy.

The data analysis of the written content of the textbooks drew upon six steps for conducting qualitative content analysis – building a coding frame, segmentation, trial coding, evaluating and modifying the coding frame, main analysis and presenting and interpreting the findings (Schreier, 2012: 61). The thematic categories were generated deductively from prior research (Boyatzis, 1998) and included national identity and democracy, cultural diversity and global education. The analysis process started with building a code frame where qualitative materials were organised into thematic subcategories which enabled the differentiation of data into groups according to their relevancy. Subcategories were then given names to expedite the analysis process. For example, subcategories for national identity and democracy were national heroes and enemies, history of Nepal, civic rights and responsibilities, and local government. This was followed by a separation of information, where the curriculum policy documents

and textbooks were segmented into the areas of the research queries – national identity and democracy, global education and cultural diversity. Here the division of the coding frame into units took place, and the main categories were reduced. As Schreier (2012: 14) suggests, the coding frame itself serves as the main instrument in representing findings, and 'presenting the findings involves presenting the frame and illustrating it through quotes. This can be done through continuous text or through text matrices.'

The main strategies employed in the coding to create subcategories were – progressively – summarising, contrasting, comparing and subsumption. Thematic qualitative content analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the interview data was conducted to understand how ideas around global education were understood by the teachers. Braun and Clarke (2006) also provide a six-step guide to conducting thematic analysis effectively: become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define themes and write-up. Following Miles and Huberman (1994: 56), codes were used to assign meanings to the descriptive information and were 'attached to "chunks" of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs'. Through this process, themes were identified from the data that had significant characteristics or were relevant to the research questions. Examples of emerging subcategory themes included global citizenship, international relations, conflict resolution, international cooperation, human rights, GCE challenges and GCE pedagogy.

Findings

A policy cycle approach 'employs a cross-sectional approach by tracing policies from the formation through to implementation stages and analyses all levels of the policy process' (Maguire and Ball, 1994: 26). In addition, the approach draws clear distinctions between those levels of analysis: the context of influence, the context of policy text production and the context of practice (Vidovich, 2013). The findings for GCE in Nepal are organised according to this schema.

Macro articulations of the 'global' in Nepal

Several institutions and individuals are influential in the formulation and implementation of Nepal's educational policies. They include international organisations such as UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank (Bhattarai, 2016; Regmi, 2019), politicians, Ministry of Education (MoE) officials, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and teachers. The MoE, as the apex body, formulates, manages and implements educational policies. The CDC, as an academic centre under the MoE (2016), is responsible for the overall development, modification and improvement of the school curriculum, textbooks, teachers' directives and resource materials and for conducting studies on their effectiveness. At the local level, there are School Management Committees and head teachers in each school to plan and implement school-level activities and to manage the school (Singh and Allison, 2016) while teachers at the classroom level are responsible for the successful implementation of the Nepalese curriculum (CDC, 2007).

The overall aims of Nepalese education mainly have a national orientation, but two of the (still extant) 2007 NCF objectives have global implications:

> Be open to social equality and justice and develop conduct accordingly to help create an inclusive society.

> Foster feelings of peace, friendship, goodwill, tolerance and fraternity in local, national and international contexts. (CDC, 2007: 31–2)

There is also a recognition in Nepalese educational policy than a key aim of the social studies curriculum and textbooks is 'to produce citizens responsive to human rights, diverse culture, environment, and respectful to mankind by changing the world into a global village' (CDC, 2007: 26). The social studies curriculum for Grades 5–7 contains some content to promote global education (see Table 1). However, there is no overt commitment to global education in Grade 5.

Table 1. Social studies curriculum in Grades 6 and 7: Scope and sequence of the contents in relation to global education themes (source: CDC, 2009, 2012).

Grade 6	Grade 7
Introduction of international relations and cooperation	SAARC and Nepal
SAARC and Nepal	Introduction to landlocked countries, their problems and solutions
Contemporary global activities	Contemporary global activities
Conflict and its management	Roles of United Nations and schools
Role of media in conflict management	Conflict management
	Assisting to manage conflict in family and neighbourhood
	Role of media in conflict management
	Need for peace

The Grade 6 curriculum content introduces international relations and cooperation, regional organisation through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and conflict management. The relevant contents in the Grade 7 curriculum are SAARC and Nepal (treated in more detail), the idea of landlocked countries along with their problems and coping strategies, conflict management and the need for peace. There is some flexibility in Grades 6 and 7 for the teacher to support children to explore an unspecified topical contemporary global issue.

It will be apparent that the treatment of curriculum content related to global education is limited at the basic level of education. Much content about 'the world beyond Nepal' is pushed into secondary education. Important elements of global citizenship education, such as the environment and sustainability, social justice, the human rights of minority groups and interdependence and globalisation (Reynolds et al., 2015), are reserved for Grades 8–10. The primary school dropout rate in Nepal in 2019 was 26.5 per cent (United Nations Development Program, 2019) which represents a large cohort of students who will never learn about these important issues. The deferral of contents to higher grades for educating on global education will have consequences in terms of all Nepalese young people being able to develop the attributes of global citizens.

The curriculum envisions enabling students' understanding of the concepts of global relations, cooperation and neighbouring countries, which is narrower and more knowledge-based than the model of global citizenship in Oxfam (2006), which is influential in many developed nations. Under the scope of 'Our international relations and cooperation', the curriculum aims to support students to understand the introduction, objectives, necessity and importance of the SAARC, of which Nepal was a founding member (CDC, 2012).

The curriculum also prioritises the learning of conflict management and the role of the media and has hopes that students will be able to manage conflict within their families and neighbourhoods as well (CDC, 2009, 2012). The aim through conflict management content is to promote values of peace, non-violence and harmony at community and national levels in the wake of a decade-long civil war in the country (Smith, 2015). The curriculum further attempts to educate students about the challenges faced by landlocked countries.

Overall, however, the Nepalese policy and curriculum aspirations have more civics components than citizenship skills and values dimensions. Policymakers aim to socialise patriotic and responsible Nepalese citizens more than to nurture critical and active global citizens. Approaches to global education generally emphasise institutional structures and nationally oriented factual knowledge over values and dispositions.

Textbook representations of Nepal and the world at the meso-level of policy enactment

In terms of supporting students to be global citizens, there is a specific focus in the textbooks on learning about regional cooperation and mutual welfare, the country's geopolitical situation, and peace and conflict resolution. The Grade 6 textbook provides a brief introduction to international relations, explains how nations are interdependent and narrates how Nepal is contributing to international relations and benefiting from this. Bilateral relationships between countries are seen as an important factor for national development. One of the challenges Nepal is facing in foreign relations is to maintain a balanced relationship with both China and India (Dahal, 2018). While the concept of international relations is introduced in the textbook, the role and existence of United Nations organisations, global politics and non-governmental organisations are largely ignored. This will impact on students' learning and visualisation of significant international actors and brokers, and their overall conception of international relations.

The Grade 7 textbook presents Nepal as a somewhat vulnerable landlocked nation. Geopolitically and economically, Nepal is heavily reliant upon India (Pattison, 2015). The text observes that: 'Blockade can be imposed by neighbouring countries if tensions or conflict arise with them' (CDC, 2016: 132). For example, a nearly four-month-long blockade imposed by India, and related protests in Nepal's southern plains following the promulgation of a new constitution in Nepal in 2015, had a serious impact. Schools were forced to close due to a lack of fuel and cutbacks in public transportation. A solution to the problem of landlocked countries portrayed in the textbook mostly emphasises enhancing the relationship with neighbours: 'A healthy and balanced relationship with neighbouring countries should be maintained to import the necessary goods' (CDC, 2016: 133). However, Nepal is presented as reliant upon the generosity of neighbouring countries to access global markets and transport goods.

The treatment of SAARC is uncritical. SAARC was established as a regional intergovernmental organisation to promote regional cooperation and cultural and historical links among its eight South Asian member states: Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Grade 7 textbook attempts to elaborate how Nepal is contributing to the mandates of SAARC as a founding member. The major contributions include the establishment of the SAARC secretariat in Kathmandu, establishment of the SAARC Tuberculosis Centre and information centre in Nepal, mutual cooperation on agricultural, health, transportation and postal service development and cooperation in children's welfare and female development (CDC, 2016). The associated units, however, provide few specific case studies of such cooperation.

In reality, the performance of SAARC has been questioned. It has not been able to perform as expected; both bilateral and regional trade and other forms of cooperation among the countries are suboptimal (Majid, 2018). Too often, South Asia nations have failed in their efforts to reduce poverty and conflict and to fulfil their people's aspirations (Print and Lange, 2013; Mazhar and Goraya, 2015). Contested issues between member states and military imbalances remain.

In a post-civil-war era in Nepal, there have been understandable efforts to integrate peace-building education as a central feature of the social studies curriculum (Smith, 2015). The Grade 6 and 7 textbooks certainly devote a significant amount of attention to peace education and conflict resolution. Throughout a Grade 6 unit on peace-building, attempts are made to educate students about the meaning of conflict and sustainable peace: 'Sustainable peace is about ending all chances of dispute recurrence and creating a peaceful environment and attempts are made to maintain peace by addressing in a timely way the causes of future disputes' (CDC, 2016: 42). Furthermore, some preconditions for sustainable peace are discussed. These include respect for others' views, controlling greed and jealousy, maintaining social harmony, providing justice to victims and mechanisms to hear the grievances and issues of both parties (CDC, 2016). Similarly, efforts are made in the Grade 7 textbook to educate students about the causes of conflict, conflict management and the importance of peace.

Attempts are made to portray the characteristics of peace: happiness; justice; respect; love; freedom from injustice and fear, violence and war; and the existence of social justice (CDC, 2016). The necessary dispositions for peace are outlined: participation, active listening, equality, harmony, democratic culture, rule of law, social justice, positive thinking, tolerance, cooperation, respect, transparency, security and fulfilment of basic needs (CDC, 2016). This is a complex and relatively abstract list for 10–12-year-olds to grasp, but it encompasses several important concepts. The decade-long civil war in Nepal had roots in inequalities in geography, political, social, ethnic and economic spheres of life and the under-representation of poorer and marginalised Nepali social and ethnic groups (Valente, 2013).

Nepalese textbook-writers might want to consider that educating for cosmopolitanism (Osler and Starkey, 2003) can begin at home. More nuanced approaches to Nepal's social diversity are likely to have a flow-on effect on young people's attitudes to pluralism, tolerance and acceptance beyond Nepal's borders. There are certainly some powerful messages in the students' textbooks about the cultural diversity of Nepal being one of the country's distinctive strengths. The Grade 7 textbook observes: 'Our country is a common garden of various ethnic groups, language, culture and civilisation. All religious groups are living in harmony here' (CDC, 2016: 20). Moreover, the coexistence and tolerance among several religious groups is emphasised: 'Nepali people do not fight over religion or culture. People from one religion go to others' religious sites. Religious tolerance is Nepal's ideal and excellent example' (CDC, 2016: 21). However, overall, Nepal's homogeneity, social and religious harmony and inclusiveness, while a genuine reality in many communities, is idealised. The textbooks do not discuss underlying inequalities, discrimination and economic hardships of minority ethnic groups. Moreover, Nepalese teachers are generally not satisfied with the quality of textbook images in supporting the teaching and learning of civic virtues, and they have sought to source external resources such as newspapers, e-resources and magazines (Shah et al., 2020). The democratic transitions in Nepal have continued to struggle to bring indigenous peoples, Dalits, Madhesis and Muslims into the mainstream of development, and they have been raising voices since the 1990s to recognise multiculturalism and freedom of religion and to give them a greater voice in the governance of Nepal (Marit and Aasland, 2016; Novelli and Smith, 2011).

Teachers and global citizenship: policy enactment at the micro-level

All interviewed teachers agreed that the social studies curriculum and textbooks are designed to develop global citizens. Further, they believed that teaching about subjects such as regional organisations, the United Nations and international cooperation, and their linkage with the Nepalese context supported the development of global citizens. A teacher observed: 'We have been teaching relevant lessons such as the essence and importance of SAARC and United Nations, international cooperation and Nepal and its presence in the world with an objective of developing good citizens and then global citizens' (male, Grade 7).

Another teacher reasoned that an understanding of national and global contexts is important to develop global citizenship among students:

> Students understand global contexts through the learning of international relations and cooperation, regional and international organisations and development issues of countries like Nepal. They learn how some countries are developed now and how citizens can support the process. These are supportive to develop their global citizenship. (female, Grade 7)

Despite the teachers' positivity, nurturing students to be global citizens is a complex process, and it requires teaching and learning of concepts beyond those mentioned by the Nepalese teachers. For example, GCE encompasses teaching and learning of issues such as the environment and sustainability, social justice, the human rights of minority groups and intercultural issues (Reynolds et al., 2015). In relation to the teaching content of GCE, teachers are facing some challenges in the effective delivery of the social

studies curriculum. One teacher acknowledged the challenges in linking national and global contexts in her teaching of social studies:

> We face challenges to bridge the gap between Nepal and global contexts while teaching concepts such as international relations, global organisations and other international issues. Without establishing a proper linkage between local and global contexts, the teaching of social studies will not be effective. (female, Grade 7)

Another teacher reinforced this observation:

> We have students from difficult socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Their understanding of the affairs outside their comfort zone is limited. Since they are comfortable in learning about local elections, government, India- and China-related units, delivering these contents are relatively easy compared to other global content. We generally face a tough time in delivering units on international cooperation, climate change and the role of UN agencies. (male, Grade 6)

The complex relationship between local and global aspects of learning, which is referred to as a 'global–local nexus' (Edwards and Usher, 2000: 22), is crucial for effective delivery of content on global issues as confirmed by the teachers. Half of the interviewed teachers raised the issue of limited training and teaching resources in relation to the effective delivery of content on global affairs. A teacher commented: 'I have not received specific training to deliver complex contents such as international relations, climate change and the role of international agencies. Furthermore, we have to rely on limited teaching resources to teach these complex topics' (male, Grade 7). These excerpts underline the challenges Nepalese teachers face in teaching curriculum content on international relations and global education. Mostly, the textbooks for Grades 5 to 7 have a national orientation.

Global education benefits from the application of open, discursive and active pedagogical approaches. However, the education system of Nepal has often been criticised for being traditional and based upon transmission, rote learning and memorising practices that promote passivity and limit opportunities for students to develop practical and applied knowledge in active ways (Timsina, 2011). In an evaluation the World Bank (2009: 11) found that 'teachers mainly lectured, using the blackboard, and asked students fact-related questions. Many teachers were observed to interact only with the first 3–4 rows of students while students behind them remained silent and potentially uninvolved.'

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that there are some tough practical issues from the teachers' perspective – the student–teacher ratios in Nepalese government schools at the top end of the basic level can be 60:1 (MoE, 2015).

Conclusion

Overall, Nepal has moved forwards exponentially from a mindset that was still apparent in the early twentieth century, whereby rulers were deeply afraid of 'giving education to the common people, lest they should be awakened and be conscious of their rights' (Shakya, as cited in Caddell, 2002: 4). Nevertheless, despite the apparent prioritisation of GCE themes in the Nepalese curriculum, similar to the context of other South and East Asian nations, the discourses of social studies education are 'still very much focused on enhancing national economic productivity and maintaining the global status of the nation-state' (Ho, 2018: 92).

A strong sense of national identification based on language, diversity and shared heritage and values have been seen as key to enhancing the Nepalese people's loyalty to the nation (Onta, 1996). Cosmopolitan and global social justice and human rights discourses receive less attention in Southeast Asian citizenship education curricula (Lall and Vickers, 2009). This has also been found to be the case in Nepal. How might approaches to global education in Nepal be enhanced drawing upon the findings of this article across the macro, meso and micro contexts of influence and practice?

For policymakers at a macro-level, there may well be advantages in framing a more Nepali articulation of bottom-up educational development solutions; a contrast with bureaucratised, top-down approaches and an imported one-size-fits-all Western language of global education (Dhakal, 2019; Parajuli, 2014). Many of the intentions of the 2007 NCF are progressive and well-meaning, but they sometimes feel derivative in the Nepali context and reflective of the significant interests of international political donors. Circling back to the 1956 educational vision quoted at the start of this article, there is a renewed imperative for Nepali policymakers to evaluate 'the "gifts" that are offered' (NNEPC, 1956: 74) from Western educational agencies and donors and to foreground distinctively Nepali aspirations in terms of engagement with the world.

Textbooks are a powerful conduit at the meso-level of policy enactment in Nepal. However, as Kadiwal and Jain (2020: 6) have recently observed in relation to civics textbooks in India and Pakistan, 'the lack of a critical lens in civics textbooks [is] inimical to the development of citizenship in a democracy'. Knowledge, facts and information about civic, political, legal or regional and international structures are safe; the encouragement of critical thinking, the articulation of multiple or contested perspectives, and the acknowledgement of argument and dissent are potentially more sensitive. Ball (1994: 21) notes that 'discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority'. Textbook writers in theory have the power to transform values into practice, as they translate the multiple goals of social sciences education into more concrete forms. Specifically, power lies in the hands of textbook writers in terms of their capacity to shape how a particular agenda is perceived and how policy 'problems' (in this case, the representation of Nepal's place in the region and the world) are presented and defined. However, in practice, textbook writers in Nepal operate within relatively defined and narrow parameters. Textbook policy at the meso-level of interpretation in Nepal follows 'macro' education policy very closely and in a spirit of compliance. Policymakers might want to reflect upon what steps they can take to empower Nepalese textbook writers to open up classroom discussion on GCE issues that will interest Nepalese young people and to develop opportunities for more critical thinking and consideration of different points of view.

Nepalese teachers, as implementers of policies and mediators of textbooks, are central to the context of practice where policies are subjected to interpretation and re-creation. At the micro-context of practice, this study has confirmed that Nepalese teachers mostly perceived themselves as implementers of the curriculum and transmitters of textbook perspectives when it comes to teaching about Nepal and the world. The findings corroborate the recent work of Subedi (2020), who found that many Nepalese classroom teachers feel a lack of agency over their curriculum choices and planning. Several of the teachers interviewed for this study similarly noted the paucity of their own pre-service training for teaching social studies and a lack of in-service professional learning in GCE during their time in teaching.

Inevitably, there are both limitations to this study and scope for further research. The article explores policy, the curriculum, textbooks and teacher attitudes in relation to 9–13-year olds' GCE knowledge and attitudes. The sample size of six schools could be extended. Further research might explore how GCE is taught in the classroom or also elicit student perspectives. It is important to understand how teachers in Nepal, who largely articulate themselves as passive receivers of policies, enact the curriculum and textbooks in classroom contexts. It is important to understand how factors such as teachers' beliefs, expertise, teaching methodologies and interpretation of the curriculum and textbooks can affect the implementation of GCE and student learning experiences. Similarly, as this article has indicated, many of the important elements of GCE in Nepal are reserved for Grades 8, 9 and 10. A study that analyses the contexts of policymaking and policy enactment at the secondary education level will help to complete the picture of Nepalese GCE discourse and practice.

In Nepal, there is no equivalence of power across the different contexts of influence that have been analysed. The policymakers are in charge, and they have historically viewed the education system as a key institution to transmit specific values of the political system and patriotic visions of the Nepali state (Caddell, 2007; Pradhan, 2018). It is important to recognise the interconnectedness between politics and

education across all three contexts of the policy cycle. To be successful, GCE needs recognition and support from policymakers and educators throughout Nepalese society – politicians, government officials, municipal leaders and other relevant community and village development committees, principals and teachers – all of whom can contribute to creating conditions for effective, meaningful and active global citizenship education for Nepalese young people.

Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

The authors declare that research ethics approval for this article was provided by the University of Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Consent for publication statement

The authors declare that research participants' informed consent to publication of findings – including photos, videos and any personal or identifiable information – was secured prior to publication.

Conflict of interest statement

All efforts to sufficiently blind the author during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work.

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