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## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN NEPAL

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The institution and continued growth of Nepalese public education is simultaneously a cause, a result and a conveyer of many of the changes that have altered the social fabric of the Kingdom over the last century. Recent events in Nepal have only emphasized this point. It is certain that secular public education will continue to play a role integral to social change; at least for Nepal's foreseeable future. What is less certain is how its function will evolve and transform as a component of Nepalese society. Part of this uncertainty comes from the noticeable lack of studies focusing on Nepalese education and social change.

Though there are of course exceptions (most recently Fisher, 1990), a majority of social scientific research has refracted Nepal through categories of caste, symbol, religion, myth, ritual, trade and the like. Educational research has, for the most part, focused on educational development in Nepal for its own sake; using analytic boundaries such as curriculum, teacher training, testing and cognition. Educational development is a normative concept (cf. Seers, 1981), however, and is therefore uninterpretable except as part of a broader system of societal and personal needs. This is the motivation behind the theme of this special issue of the Himalayan Research Bulletin.

The articles in this issue examine Nepalese education in relation to social change; whether through reconstructing the past, describing the present, or projecting the future. In doing so they necessarily draw together a number of disciplines: history, anthropology, psychology, education. The articles are based on papers by Sharma, Skinner, Holmes and Beach and a discussion by Fisher that were part of the symposium "Education and Social Change in Nepal" at the 1990 annual meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago, Illinois. Butterworth was unable to participate in the symposium, but serves as a second discussant for this special issue.

The article by Sharma describes how the Rana oligarchy laid the groundwork for the foreign-modeled system of education now in force in Nepal. The Rana prime ministers, responding largely to external pressures, created a highly circumscribed series of educational opportunities. The paper focuses on the Ranas' attempts to control formal education in Nepal and how, despite their efforts, they created the impetus for later educational expansion. The articles by Skinner and by Beach examine two different facets of present-day education and social change in Nepal. Skinner's article examines how Nepali adolescents are producing and recreating their social identities in and around the school. Beach's article examines the interplay of school- and shop-originated mathematics for two generations of shopkeepers representing different periods of village social change. The final article by Holmes deals with the social and pedagogical implications of education via radio, a relatively new educational innovation in Nepal.

The discussion papers by Fisher and Butterworth respectively represent an anthropologist's and an educational development specialist's views on the articles and on the issue of education and social change in Nepal.

## References

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