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## Notes for an editorial

*I like to be in a bad school because I look good there.*

A child posted this sentiment on the wall somewhere in one of the many schools we have world. This message could be any child's, in any school, anywhere. Behind the apparent mischief that we are all too ready to attribute to the child's statement, there is an innocent but unforgiving indictment. When does the force of a child's emotion find its utterance in the language such as the above?

Educational thinkers tell us that the school, especially at the primary level, should be an extension of the home. The kind of world the child finds the school to be will shape the kind of inner and outer world the child will imagine and create.

Even though the school is an index of the values and ideals of the society, the school as the instrument of good is supposed to be the lighthouse of the society. How can the school affirm and advance the integrity of children as human beings and then promote learning?

These, among others, are the issues that Mrs Els Heijnen raises in defining effective schools which aspire to be inclusive schools. This Spring Issue of *Rabsel* also highlights other critical concerns we face today including the factors that influence students' relative preference for English and Dzongkha, apprentice teaching, public image of teachers trained in the country, concept mapping, sample survey report, and the standard of English in our primary schools.

We have some encouraging insights into the secrets of success that our three far-flung schools have agreed to share, beating the notion that the sun always shines bright in urban areas. In focus this time round is the Institute of Language and Culture Studies in Semtokha.

As our society continues to march apace, it falls upon our seats of learning to be able capture the essential ideals of education and advance the pride and promise of our country.

May these flowers of Spring bring you light and learning. Tashi Delek.

Thakur S Powdyel.

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# TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME IN BHUTAN: AN EVALUATION

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## Abstract

The Teacher Apprenticeship Programme (TAP) was introduced in 2000 to meet a severe shortage of teachers in Bhutan and to meet the pressure on teacher education institutes as they extended the period of pre-service training. The TAP was also intended to provide some initial experiences for high school graduates entering teacher education prior to commencing their formal degree programmes. Following the interviews, selected students receive an intensive induction programme for ten days and are then attached to schools across the country to experience teaching for about eight months.

This study focussed on the effectiveness of the TAP and employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to capture the experiences and problems the apprentice teachers faced. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data. The qualitative data were collected through interviews with 12 selected apprentice teachers, their head teachers, mentors and District Education Officers. The quantitative data were gathered through 222 randomly selected apprentice teachers of the two National Institutes of Education at Paro and Samtse. Data were analysed through developing themes and coding categories.

The study found that teacher apprentices reported remarkable experiences that they thought contributed to a sound foundation for becoming competent and dedicated teachers. The research also discovered that the stakeholders needed to have a common vision about the programme and establish a collaborative approach. Many changes are suggested if the TAP is to continue as an element in Bhutanese initial teacher education.

## Background

Apprenticeship in the Bhutanese education system is a reform that was introduced in 2000. This was done mainly to provide some initial experience to high school graduates in teaching before they join the formal three-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programmes (both Primary and Secondary) at the National Institutes of Education in Paro and Samtse, Bhutan. High school graduates (after grade twelve) who are interested in joining the teaching profession have to go through a selection interview. This is necessary since there are limited seats available than students wishing to become teachers. Selected students (about 40% of those applying) are inducted into teaching every year and are sent to different schools around the country to experience teaching for about eight months. The Teacher Apprenticeship Programme (TAP) for the selected students begins with a ten-day intensive induction programme led by NIE staff. The programme introduces them to the skills needed to work as an apprentice teacher. Some of the areas covered during this workshop include the first module of teaching skills from the NIEs, which includes some of the basic skills in teaching, assessment,

teachers' code of conduct, basics of child psychology, processes for professional development etc.

The TAP in the Bhutanese education system was introduced when the country's teacher supply situation was in a critical state. Moreover the Royal Civil Service Commission required that Teacher Education should be of four years' duration. The institutes were only able to take in a limited student number and this, coupled with the teacher shortage, precipitated the institution of the TAP to meet the four-year requirement. As a result, the concept of apprenticeship came into existence and this is credited to the course in order to allow the students to test their aptitude in teaching.

This eight months apprenticeship is taken as a probation period in which a number of goals are achieved:

1. The students find out if they really possess the aptitude for teaching. In the process, if they do not find a good match between the demands of teaching and their personal characteristics, they have the option to change their career.
2. This helps the student-teachers experience practical aspects of teaching before joining the institute for actual training. The rationale is to help trainees relate the training programme to the field realities when they join the institute after their apprenticeship ends. This is done with the hope of making their training programme as relevant to their needs and as realistic as possible.
3. It familiarizes the student-teachers with the teaching profession and helps them to learn what being a member of the teaching profession entails.
4. During this apprenticeship period, they are not just expected to gain some experience of teaching and dealing with students but also to learn about the overall management systems in the school and the educational policies (Dorji, Personal Communication, email June 2004).

## **Literature Review**

Greydragon (2000, p.1) defines apprentice as:

A student who is in a relationship with a Master or Mistress of the Laurel. A master (or mistress) is one who has been recognized (by a kingdom) as meeting an international standard of excellence in knowledge and performance of technique in a particular art or science. An apprenticeship can take many forms and has different aspects to it. Two important aspects are whether or not the relationship is based on fealty, and whether or not the master is a master of the same art or science that the student is interested in.

As indicated by Greydragon, an apprenticeship is a type of programme in which students try their hand in the profession of their choice. An intensive review of literature shows that apprenticeship programmes are very popular and common in the

field of vocational education. Conford and Athanasou (1995) as cited in Conford and Gunn (1998, p.5) state:

Apprenticeship provides the groundwork for the development of expertise and high levels of skilled performance and problem solving skills.

Apprenticeship, irrespective of the field of employment, is necessary and important to produce highly skilled and capable individuals. Conford and Gunn (1998, p.11) comment:

Under the guidelines of the apprenticeship system, an apprentice is supposed to be supervised by a qualified tradesperson of the same trade. Again, this is not always the case in practice. It is very difficult for an apprentice to develop high skill levels if they are not supervised by a tradesperson of the same domain. It would be highly unlikely for a swimming champion to be appointed to coach a football team. To allow a Beverage Manager to supervise the on-the-job skill learning of an apprentice chef is absurd, but nonetheless this occurs quite often.

They also stress that there is the danger that business employers may consider their apprentices a form of cheap labour. As a result the former do not train their apprentices as an investment but instead use them as a source of cheap labour (Conford & Gunn, 1998). Such deprivation of learning opportunities ensures that in the long term companies and organizations will not have employees who can perform complex skills. This clearly shows that some apprenticeship programmes may have short term benefits for stakeholders instead of long term benefits. If this is the case then they give little value to providing the kind of training and experience apprentices deserve. Given such a situation Stern (1997) as cited in Conford and Gunn (1998, p.15) argues that "we can no longer simply assure that all work experience is good."

There has not been much literature in the field of teacher apprenticeship. Even if it is there, the teacher apprentice programme as seen in the Bhutanese education system seems to be unique. However, the existing literature indicates that the philosophy of apprenticeship is similar irrespective of the type of programme different organizations or schools have (Greydragon, 2000; Conford & Gunn, 1998; and Shady Hill School, online). Greydragon (2000) rightly comments that the main purpose of being an apprentice is to receive the guidance, mentorship, teaching, encouragement, and honest feedback on the path to becoming a more skilled person in that particular profession of choice.

As indicated, even in the Bhutanese context, apprenticeship is an opportunity for our student teachers to "try out" the field of education as a career. It is perhaps a valuable opportunity to deepen, refine and immerse themselves in getting a taste of the teaching profession. The writer feels that it is better for the individual student as well as for the system. In the process of being apprentices, students are allowed to withdraw their candidature without any penalties if they realize that they are not suited to teaching. It is good for the individual student because they get an opportunity to make the right career decision, and it is good for the system because half-hearted teachers are not invested in or retained.

It is vital that the students are attached to a senior and capable mentor teacher. Murray & Owen (1991, p. xiv) define mentoring as a

Deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.

A mentor teacher plays a paramount role in the life of an apprentice teacher. It is interesting to note that the term mentor came into existence during ancient times. Buckley & Zimmermann (2003, p. 1) state:

The concept of youth mentoring embraces ideals that serve the development of all youth, but particularly those growing up in challenging circumstances. The term 'mentoring' is alleged to have its origin in Homer's 'Odyssey', when an older friend named Mentor cared for king Odysseus' son, Telemachus, while the king fought in the Trojan wars. In leaving Telemachus in the care of Mentor, the king not only entrusted his child's safety to Mentor, but also his son's physical, emotional, and educational development.

Mentoring normally takes place in different forms of settings such as educational, social and sporting situations.

Mentoring is required since learning to teach is a complicated and challenging process which involves "developing a practical knowledge base, changes in cognition, developing interpersonal skills and also incorporates an affective aspect" (Maynard & Furlong, 1994 as cited in Sinclair et al, 2001, p. 50). This is done through the process of role modelling by the more skilled person which often involves teaching, sponsoring, encouraging, counselling and debriefing a less skilled student-teacher (Sinclair et al. 2001). Much research has been conducted to show the positive effects of mentoring on a beginner's personal and professional development (Uakeia, 1998; Sinclair, et al., 2001; Boreen, Johnson, Niday & Potts, 2000 etc). This relationship between mentor and apprentice has been explained in the following words:

Working alongside a master is a time-honoured way to learn. The modelling that occurs in apprenticeships is a powerful intervention. The concept breaks down however, when an apprentice is arbitrarily assigned to a not-so-masterful mentor (Indiana University Apprenticeship Programme, online).

Ideally, this relationship of mentor to apprentice not only benefits apprentices but also their mentors. The power of a mentor has been described in the following words: "Mentors not only touch someone's life... they have the potential to touch and change the life of the nation" (Newsweek, 1999 as cited in Buckley and Zimmermann, 2003, p. 1). Therefore, it is significant that there is a committed relationship between the beginner or inexperienced person and the other experienced person which Buckley and Zimmermann (2003) call Mentee/Protege and Mentor respectively.



To make the process of Mentor and Mentee relationship successful, both the parties should focus on certain agreed goals and challenges. If there are not any focused goals and challenges, or if the mentee-mentor relationship is not well understood or developed, the mentee is not likely to learn any specific skills, ultimately resulting in a waste of time and resources.

The process of mentoring in the Bhutanese context could be highly valuable for our teacher apprentices. It can be a period of transition from a fresh high-school graduate to initiation into the process of undertaking a profession of their choice. The apprentices would definitely need spiritual, psychological and social support besides learning to teach and deal with younger students. So to produce a fully committed and skilled teacher, it is important that teacher apprentices complete their period of transition full of satisfaction and with positive attitudes towards a teaching career.

The process of mentoring is in fact a two-way process of learning, a kind of give and take situation. Discussing the benefits for mentors, the Director of the Shady Hill School Teacher Training Programme (online, p. 3) describes:

It is the lifeblood of their own professional development because it keeps them in a constant state of examining their practice, articulating it and seeing a new interpretation, a new idea or a new approach.

Mentors can derive immense benefit from this relationship. It is of great importance in the Bhutanese context because most teachers work in isolation and do not get opportunities to examine their own practices. The Bhutanese system needs to develop a culture, a sense of collaboration where everyone values learning from one another.

TAP can be an incredible experience for both the mentors and apprentice teachers. These apprentices are future teachers who are going to educate hundreds of future citizens. If they do not undergo meaningful and enriching experiences during the early stage of their career, it will be difficult for them to become skilled and capable professionals. The old maxim "well begun is half done" is quite appropriate here.

Kuchar (2003) also supports the idea that apprenticeship is a model by which the learner actively participates in a meaningful teaching-learning process assisted by an experienced teacher.

The vision statement of the TAP discussed by Kuchar (2003, p.3) indicates that:

- Students must be given the information they need to make decisions within the context of socially meaningful 'real-life' models, rather than in isolation;
- Learning must be an active process comprised of meaningful experiences related to teaching as a professional in authentic contexts;
- Students must experience service learning that is meaningful and challenging; and
- Responsibility and independence are characteristics that should be nurtured, valued, and developed.

This vision statement is almost complementary to the Bhutanese philosophy for introducing apprenticeship.

Quite interestingly, the University of Toronto in Canada has a similar apprenticeship programme to that of Bhutan. The university enrolls their apprentices in a regular B.Ed Programme only after successful completion of four months of an apprentice programme (University of Toronto, online <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/qr/quatres.html>). Shady Hill School in United States (Online, <http://www.cf.synergylearning.org/>, p.1) also has a strong apprenticeship programme:

Immersion in the classroom while studying and working alongside a talented mentor is the best way to learn how to teach. In this one year, site-based course, apprentice teachers discover what teaching is all about through observation, supervised teaching, workshops, seminars, and continuous involvement in the life of the school.

One of the important guiding philosophies for Shady Hill School's programme is to tackle the problem of teacher shortage, which is quite similar to that in Bhutan.

New Canaan County School (Online, <http://www.countryschool.net/nccs/about/apprentice.html>, p. 1) is yet another school that provides an insight into how to model a teacher apprentice programme. Here apprentices are assigned to self-contained classrooms from kindergarten to grade six, with each classroom having 18-20 students. Working under the supervision of a mentor-teacher, apprentices assume increasing amounts of professional responsibility over the course of the year. They plan and execute academic lessons, work with individual students, and participate in parent conferences along with their mentor-teacher.

Apprentices gain additional practical experience by helping with athletics and physical education, heading lunch tables, camping with students, and participating in extensive professional dialogue and faculty committee work. They are in every way an integral part of the teaching faculty at New Canaan Country School. However, their apprentices have an opportunity to attend courses at a university and complete their degrees, which is not the case in Bhutan.

It is almost five years since the Bhutanese TAP scheme commenced, so it was quite interesting and challenging to conduct research to find out the effectiveness of the programme. Key questions that the researcher explored in this study included: How are our apprentice teachers doing in the field? Are they getting enough support and guidance towards their professional growth or are they treated as a cheap source of labour? Do they have a mentor-teacher? What type of other responsibilities do they shoulder besides classroom teaching? Is there a gap being created between the objectives of the scheme and the actual practices? Is the TAP scheme the best way to learn how to teach, as indicated by Shady Hill School in States? These are some of the important questions that the researcher explored in this study.

## **Methodology**

For this study, the researcher employed a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Many writers such as Neuman (2003); Punch (2001), Bryman (1988) and Jick in Maanen (1984) advocate the use of multi-methods in social research. Discussing the methodological justification for incorporating the qualitative and quantitative methods in research, Punch (2001, p.245) states:

At a general level, the reasons for combining are to capitalize on the strengths of the two approaches, and to compensate for the weaknesses of each approach.

Integrating both the methodologies for this particular study was of value in order to best capture the experiences (opportunities and problems) apprentice teachers faced.

## **Research Design and Tools**

Two different types of research tools were employed, namely, questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Survey has been one of the most commonly used methods in social research (Neuman, 2003; Robson, 2002; & Punch, 2001). Bryman (1998) as cited in Robson (2002, p.230) maintains that:

Survey research entails the collection of data on a number of units and usually at a single juncture in time, with a view to collecting systematically a body of quantifiable data in respect of a number of variables which are then examined to discern patterns of association.

This method allowed the researcher to collect a large amount of information within a limited time period and budget. The population for this study was highly scattered geographically, and consequently in terms of cost effectiveness, self-administered postal questionnaires were appropriate (Burns, 2000). All the participants (n=239) of the 2004 cohort were sent a questionnaire by mail to be completed and returned. The questionnaire was developed based on the research question presented above (See appendices).

Keeping in mind the weaknesses of the quantitative survey research, this study was also designed to make use of qualitative interviews. It was designed to look at the lived experiences of the participants in their natural setting, venturing to understand the wholeness and unity of the case (Punch, 2001). Burns (2000, p.460) states that such design will help the researcher to gather rich and holistic data for in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Such studies will provide insight and contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

## **Participants/Sample**

The participants for this study were two-hundred and thirty-nine (239) apprentice teachers from the total 2004 cohort of (412) four hundred twelve (254 NIE Paro and 158 NIE Samtse). Since NIE Paro has a higher number of apprentice teachers than Samtse, 159 questionnaires were sent to apprentice teachers attached to NIE Paro and

80 questionnaires were sent to apprentice teachers attached to NIE Samtse. These samples were selected on a random basis and were sent a questionnaire to gather evidence and data.

From 239 questionnaires mailed to different apprentices around the country, the researcher received back 222 completed questionnaires. One questionnaire was redirected for not being able to find the recipient. The response rate from the participants was quite impressive (above 93 percent), increasing the validity and reliability of the data.

For greater depth in understanding the processes of apprenticeship 12 apprentice teachers were selected for interview based on the idea of purposeful sampling. According to Merriam (1998, p.61)

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned.

Selection of the sample was based on several criteria: firstly, the sample was selected from different schools around the country in order to better obtain the variety of experiences and problems apprentice teachers face. Different schools here mean level of the school (1 Middle Secondary School, 4 Lower Secondary Schools, 4 Primary Schools and 3 Community Primary Schools) and its location (2 Urban, 5 Semi-urban and 5 Rural). Secondly, the sample was selected from 10 different districts. Thirdly, the sample consisted of six male and six female apprentice teachers to provide a gender balance.

In order to provide possibility for within-method data triangulation, information was also gathered through interviews with the District Education Officers (DEOs), head teachers and mentors of all 12 samples. Out of 12 samples 5 were from NIE, Samtse and 7 were from NIE, Paro (from a total of 158 Samtse apprentices and 254 Paro apprentices).

## **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This form of research focused on multi-method is also known as “convergent methodology” which provided opportunity for triangulation (Jick in Maanen, 1984). The data for this study were generated qualitatively through in-depth interviews with 12 apprentice teachers, their mentors, their head teachers, their District Education Officers, and the report that each of the apprentice teachers wrote to the Institute for monitoring. So the qualitative data were analyzed by developing themes and patterns through coding (Merriam, 1998). This allowed for what Jick (1984, in Maanen) calls “within-method” triangulation.

On the other hand, data obtained quantitatively through survey questionnaires were analyzed through multivariate analysis. Codes were applied to all the answers in the questionnaire (de Vaus, 1990). The quantitative data provided opportunity for ‘between-method’ triangulation. Therefore, “within-method” triangulation enhanced internal consistency or reliability and ‘between- methods’ triangulation tested the degree of external validity (Jick in Maanen, 1984).

Different sources of data enhanced the possibility of making the findings more accurate. Like anything else of this nature, different methods have their own strengths and weaknesses. The advantage of triangulation is that the weaknesses of one method will be compensated by the counterbalancing strengths of another (Jick in Maanen, 1984).

Triangulation helps to strengthen the research findings by making it possible to reach a more accurate and reliable conclusion.

### Setting the Context

Out of 222 respondents, 132 (59.5 %) were male and 89 (40.1 %) were female. Table 1 provided below shows the comparative figure in terms of gender, location of the school and level of the school for the 222 participants who returned their completed questionnaires. The following observations are made from the table:

- 1) More apprentices are placed in Primary and Community schools (73% of the research participants).
- 2) 63.5% of the apprentices are in rural schools against only 9% in urban schools.
- 3) The number of male increases as we move from urban to semi-urban and to the rural schools and the reverse is true with the female apprentices (44% male in rural and 18% female in rural).

**Gender \* Level of the school \* Location of the school Cross-tabulation**  
**TABLE 1**

Location of the school			Level of the school				Total
			Middle	Lower	Primary	Community	
Urban	gender	Male	3	2	0	1	6
		Female	1	7	3	2	13
	Total		<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>
Semi-urban	gender	Male	1	13	7	8	29
		Female	2	11	12	7	32
	Total		<b>3</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>61</b>
Rural	gender	Male	1	10	32	54	97
		Female	1	7	8	28	44
	Total		<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>221</b>

## Themes and Discussion

After reading the interview transcripts of the twelve samples and the interview transcripts of their DEOs, head teachers and mentors, the researcher started developing themes and patterns by coding the data. The following themes have been identified and will be discussed in more detail. For ethical reasons and convenience, the samples are provided with pseudonyms. Therefore, the twelve samples are named as sample 1, sample 2, ... sample 12, and DEOs, head teachers and mentors as DEO 1, head teacher 1 and mentor 1 respectively (Note: Two districts had two samples each, so the DEOs of sample 6 & 7 and 8 & 9 are named as DEO 6/7 and DEO 8/9).

### 1. Placement of Apprentice Teachers

The only criterion followed in placing apprentices in different schools is the shortage of teachers (all the head teachers). With regard to the placement, first at the national level, the Ministry of Education works out the number of apprentices each district wants based on the requirement submitted by the DEOs. The Human Resource Officers at the ministry work out the requirement for each district. Based on the number of slots for each district declared by the ministry, apprentices choose several alternatives.

Apprentices are given an opportunity to make internal changes of their placement with the consent of the ministry. The ministry then sends groups of apprentices to different districts. At the district level, the DEOs determine placement to different schools based on the requirement submitted by the heads of the schools. The DEOs work out the placement based on the subject as well as the number requirement from each of the schools under their jurisdiction. Finally the placement is done on lot basis keeping in mind the requirement (DEOs of all the 12 samples). Apprentices can change their placement internally on understanding basis. Some of the DEOs (e.g, DEOs 6/7 & 12) said that it is very difficult to convince the apprentices to go to remote schools where there is a shortage of teachers. They also face difficulty in placing the apprentices because of the subject requirement. For instance, the DEO for sample 6/7 said,

Working out subject combinations is a huge problem as apprentices are not always placed from the ministry on the basis of requisitions submitted (Interview, 27/9/04, page 46).

Some of the apprentices who do not get the school of their choice seem to face a lot of difficulties especially with those who are in urban areas where the living expenses are very high (sample 3). Dissatisfaction with the placement was also raised by sample 5 when he/she stated,

I feel it would be better if apprentices are placed at a school where they have their own arrangement for accommodation and other necessary things. If we have to go to another place where we do not have anybody, it would be really difficult to survive (Interview, date 27/9/04, page 42).

As a fresh high school graduate, it would be difficult for them to get settled. The researcher also felt that this would ultimately affect the quality of teaching. Head teacher 8 said,

Apprentices should be placed based on their choice. If the interest and welfare of the apprentices are not considered, it would ultimately hamper the quality of teaching (Interview, date 29/9/04, page 58).

The above statement of the particular head teacher was purely based on his experience. His apprentices lived with their relatives about 10 kilometres away from the school and they had to come to the school by taxi every day (sample 8).

All though it was not very common, some apprentices faced difficulties with their accommodation. When asked about their difficulties, sample 3 said,

Yes sir, in the beginning I faced some problems because I did not get the placement of my choice. So it was difficult for me to deal with the new surroundings. I had difficult time looking for a house to rent and it is very expensive here. Other teachers were not very helpful. With much difficulty I got a house to rent in the town for Nu. 3000/- per month (Interview, date 25/9/04, page 22).

Under such circumstances, it is certain that the quality of input by the apprentice will be affected.

## **2. Workload**

The workload here refers to the type of responsibilities apprentices shoulder and it has been discussed under two areas: 'Teaching Subjects' and 'Other Responsibilities'.

### **a. Teaching Subjects**

Most of the apprentices are teaching subjects other than their electives (Subjects that they have already opted as their major/s during the interview). Out of twelve samples, there were at least five of them (41.7 %) teaching subjects unrelated to their electives. Others have somehow managed one of their electives in addition to the other subjects they teach. This is mainly because of the teacher shortage problems that the schools are going through.

Apprentices are also teaching a variety of subjects depending on the need of the school. This research also discovered that apprentices are over loaded with more than 25 periods of independent classes per week (Sample 1, 5 & 12), which is a normal load for a trained teacher with 40 to 45 minutes on average dealing with 40 to 50 students in each class. If apprentices take independent classes without any guidance and support, the very purpose of an apprenticeship is being defeated. Conford & Gunn (1998, p.11) comment:

Under the guidelines of the apprenticeship system, an apprentice is supposed to be supervised by a qualified tradesperson of the same trade.

It will be very difficult for an apprentice to develop high skill levels if they are not supported and guided by the senior teachers. The guiding philosophy of the apprentice

programme of Shady Hill School in United States is quite appropriate in our context too (online, <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/qr/quatres.html>, p.1)

Immersion in the classroom while studying and working alongside a talented mentor is the best way to learn how to teach. In this one year, site-based course, apprentice teachers discover what teaching is all about through observation, supervised teaching, workshops, seminars, and continuous involvement in the life of the school.

The researcher believes that TAP in Bhutan could be modelled in line with the above philosophy. It is crucial that teacher apprentices are provided with strong foundation because it will have strong implication on the education of the citizens of the country. Quality education is impossible without quality teachers.

#### **b. Other Responsibilities**

Teacher Apprenticeship is a programme designed not only to help apprentices learn how to teach but also to experience other aspects of the profession. According to Shady Hill School it is "continuous involvement in the life of the school." The findings suggest that, in this regard, Bhutanese apprentice teachers are doing quite well. Apprentice teachers are found to be taking active roles in co-curricular activities such as coordinating clubs, being members of various committees, and being house masters, sports coordinators, cultural coordinators, libraries in-charge, stationeries in-charge, literary, scouts, etc. Head teacher 1 summarized the view of many,

From my experience, I found apprentices to be very active. They take a lot of other responsibilities besides teaching such as literary, sports, scouts, house masters and class teacher. They are very active and creative especially in co-curricular activities. They are really helpful for the school (Interview, date 20/9/04, page 1).

All the other head teachers had very positive impressions of the contribution and participation by the apprentices in the field of co-curricular activities. For instance, head teacher 9 commented:

Coming fresh out of school system I have observed that apprentices are energetic and enthusiastic. They have more interaction and dealing with students than regular teachers (Interview, date 1/10/04, page 61).

Some of the DEOs also pointed out that apprentice come up with new ideas especially in co-curricular activities. Quite surprisingly, besides shouldering all these responsibilities, some apprentices are even managing the school when their head teacher is out of station. Some schools in remote areas are solely managed by a single teacher (head-cum-teacher). If they are lucky enough, sometimes they are joined by one or two apprentice teachers. In such schools when the head-cum-teacher goes elsewhere, the schools are being managed by the apprentices. For instance, Mr. Dorji (pseudonym) stated that:

In the month of June, my head teacher had gone to attend multi-grade teaching programme in Australia for three months. Thereafter, I had to



take the responsibility of managing the school both in terms of official work and teaching (classes PP to II comprising of three sections) for three months. Nevertheless, in the month of July, I had my apprentice friend from the other school (within the same district) that had been sent by the DEO to help me. Without experience and help from the experienced teacher, we had a tough time looking after the school (Communication through monitoring letter, dated 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2004)

Mr. Pema (pseudonym) also had a similar experience of managing the school when the head teacher took preparation leave for writing grade XII examinations as an in-service candidate. Pema (pseudonym) had to prepare all the question papers for the end of year examinations, conduct examinations and prepare progress reports (Communication through monitoring letter, dated 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2004). This is not the only such experience - even Sonam (pseudonym) teaching in another corner of the country had similar experiences. Feeling proud about his responsibilities, Sonam expressed:

Sometimes I remain alone in the school with students while the head teacher is away for meeting and other official works. During this period I have opportunity to run the school alone. I learnt a lot from my head teacher to do administrative works (Communication through monitoring letter, dated 30<sup>th</sup> October, 2004)

### 3. Choice of Profession

As indicated in table 2 below, self-motivation topped the list of factors/people that had more influence in making a decision to join the teaching profession.

**TABLE 2**

	N	Sum	Percentage
Self motivation	218	<b>852</b>	76.8
Parents	218	<b>752</b>	67.7
Friends	219	<b>667</b>	60.1
Job fair	212	<b>614</b>	55.3
Your teacher/s	217	<b>606</b>	54.6
Last option	211	<b>553</b>	49.8
Siblings	189	<b>511</b>	46.0
Others	0		
Valid N (list-wise)	0		

The findings suggest that the majority of the apprentices are genuinely interested in and motivated to take up the teaching. This is further supported by the qualitative data where the majority of the interview participants expressed that they had joined the teaching profession out of their self-motivation (10 out of 12 samples). One said it was his/her parents' influence and the other said he/she joined teaching because of friends. This indicates that more than 80% of the sample apprentices are genuinely interested in teaching.

Although we consider apprenticeship as a probation period providing them enough time to decide if they really want to pursue the regular training programme, not many apprentices drop out. From last year's batch, only three to four (out of about 250 apprentices) candidates decided to take up other professions, that is about 1.6 percent. This further supports the above finding that apprentices join the teaching profession out of their self-motivation.

#### 4. **Benefits of TAP**

Although the immediate, systemic, benefit of the TAP is filling up the teacher shortage gap (all the DEOs and head teachers in the research sample agreed), there are also many other benefits - apprentices, head teachers, mentors, and DEOs) felt that Teacher Apprenticeship is an excellent programme and it should continue. The amount of knowledge and experiences apprentices gain from this programme is immeasurable. For instance, sample 5 states:

I personally feel that TAP is a very good programme because without any field experience it would be difficult to directly join training. I am gaining a lot of experiences in classroom teaching, planning lessons, dealing with students etc. With such experiences I feel I can do well during the training period (interview, date 27/9/04, page 41).

Apprentices felt that the programme is useful and important for anyone who is going to become a teacher because such experiences help them understand the real life of a teacher (sample 1, 9 & 10). At this stage of their career, it is good to go through such a realization so that one can become a good teacher. Although the immediate benefit of the TAP is filling up the teacher shortage gap (all the DEOs and head teachers in the research sample), there are also many other benefits apprentices, mentors and students said they derive from this programme. Speaking very positively about the TAP, head teacher 10 comments:

From my point of view, TAP is not only helpful for the school but even for apprentices themselves. They learn the practical aspects of the school which would be very helpful for them while at training. They understand the field realities which would be meaningful for them to reflect upon during training (Interview, date 8/10/04, page 78).

Mentors also considered the mentoring process as a two-way process learning from one another (mentor 9, 10 & 11). The experiences of the TAP also provided opportunities for the apprentices to decide whether they would like to continue or give up the profession (head teacher 11). These qualitative findings have been complemented by the quantitative finding in which 66.1% of the respondents agreed to continue the programme. This clearly showed that our apprentices are learning and experiencing a lot preparing to become a learned teacher. There were several themes that were evident in the data on 'benefits' and these will now be discussed in turn.

##### **a. Professional Development**

Many apprentices expressed that professionally apprenticeship has been quite useful for them. They are learning a lot through this experience such as planning lessons,

improving their classroom teaching, adding to their stock of vocabulary, developing classroom management, dealing with students, etc (sample 3, 5, 9, 12). For instance, sample 7 expressed:

Professionally, I am learning a lot especially in Science. I have to make a lot of models to make my teaching effective. Making models is a good experience for me. I am also improving my vocabulary. Whenever I come across difficult words in the texts or manuals I refer to a dictionary or ask senior teachers. Sometimes I go to the library to find extra information to make teaching informative. So in this way I am learning a lot (Interview, date 29/9/04, page 64).

It has been found out that professionally apprenticeship programme has been an enriching experience by almost all the respondents (92.8%). Apprentices could also see improvement in their vocabulary (88.3%).

#### **b. Personal Development**

Besides undergoing professional development, apprentices also see a lot of personal development in them. The survey questionnaires indicated that 94.1% of the participants experienced positive personal development. Improving confidence was one of the most important aspects of personal development apprentices experienced according to the quantitative findings, (91.8%) which is supported by the qualitative findings. Many apprentices pointed out that apprenticeship is a remarkable experience for them before they begin their regular training programme (sample 1, 4 & 5). For example, sample 1 stated:

In the beginning, I was not able to face a large crowd but now after repeated appearance in front of the assembly as a Teacher on Duty (TOD), organizing co-curricular activities, dealing with other people and teaching different classes have helped me gain some confidence (Interview, date 20/9/04, page 7).

Gaining confidence in facing the crowd is the most important area that everyone experienced with this programme. Improving the self-esteem of a teacher has a direct link to the quality of teaching. According to sample 10,

TOD system provides opportunities to face a large crowd. I have to comment on the speeches and make announcements. These experiences improve and boost confidence, which ultimately helps in teaching (Interview, date 8/10/04, page 81).

The researcher feels that developing confidence is a crucial step towards becoming an efficient teacher.

#### **4. Induction Programme**

The study discovered that about 30% of the 222 respondents were still not confident enough to deal with the teaching skills that were covered during the Induction Programme.

The effectiveness of the Induction Programme is one of the most important themes that emerged from the comments of the apprentices, head teachers, mentors, and DEOs. Many apprentices expressed the opinion that the Induction Programme was very useful and relevant (samples 4, 11 and letters that apprentices wrote to the institute for monitoring). However, some were also of the opinion that the duration of the Induction Programme should be increased to cover more topics and equip apprentices to face the challenges in the schools (Sample 2, mentor 2, DEO 1, DEO 8/9). Suggested topics included construction of test blue-prints for preparation of question papers, use of manuals and texts, multi-grade teaching, teaching lower primary classes and in-depth coverage on child psychology. The DEO of samples 8 & 9 suggested:

The briefing that the Institute gives to the apprentices during induction should be also sent to the DEOs for uniform application of rules or any other decisions (Interview, date 29/9/04, page 60).

Expressing concern over lack of communication between the Institutes and the DEOs, the DEO of sample 8/9 suggested conducting the Induction Programme district-wise to make it more effective (Interview, date 29/9/04). This would help apprentices to get more familiar with DEOs and understand the needs of the particular district. With the present practice, DEOs are not aware of when the apprentices have to report or of their requirements (Interview, date 29/9/04).

## **5. Apprentice Guidelines**

According to some of the mentors and head teachers, they are not able to provide adequate support and help to their apprentices because there is no clear directive as to how to monitor the apprentices (Mentor 12). Mentor 9 for instance stated, "There has to be proper guidance and direction about the process of mentoring" (Interview, date 18/10/04, page 71). Head teachers also felt that apprentices should be attached to a mentor for guidance.

To make this successful, they felt that the institutes should send a letter to the schools emphasizing the need for mentors (head teacher 3). Sharing a concern over lack of instruction and communication between the institutes and the schools, some head teachers felt that schools should know the right person to contact if there is any problem or inquiry to be made about the apprentices (head teacher 12, ). DEO 12 also expressed:

There is no clear-cut directive either from NIEs or from Education Division as of how and what to do with apprentices. So we really get confused when it comes to making important decisions sometimes. For example, about their leave, what happens if they get married etc? (Interview, date 18/10/04, page 67).

The two-way communication between apprentice schools, NIEs or Education Division and districts needs to be improved in order to provide adequate support and for proper follow-up.

## 6. Mentoring

With little experience of being mentored, 97.2% of the respondents have realized the need for mentoring. At present, there are at least 18.5% of the participants without mentor or any help.

The above quantitative findings have been supported by the qualitative findings. Some of the apprentices who received help from their mentors realized the importance of mentoring for their professional and personal growth. Sample 10 for instance stated:

The best way of growing professionally is the mentoring process. Working with the mentor I can see I am growing intellectually. I can improve and learn a lot working on the negative comments provided by my mentor. I have improved a lot in teaching (Interview, date 8/10/04, page 81).

According to this sample, the benefit of mentoring is seen not only as guidance to improve teaching but also in the other aspects of a practising teacher such as improving confidence while teaching in front of a mentor. Correspondingly, some mentors believe that by helping and guiding apprentices, they also learn and become aware of the new skills and ways of teaching (Mentors 9, 10 and 11).

According to Murray & Owen (1991, p. xiv) mentoring has been defined as a:

Deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.

However, this research has discovered that most of the apprentices are left without much guidance and support in teaching. Of the twelve samples in this study, only five of them had some form of mentoring process having been established. Even with these five samples, there was no regular observation and support provided. In most cases, lesson observation was done only once a month by their mentors (in some cases by Education Monitoring and Support Division monitors). The reason given was mainly the shortage of teachers. Both the mentor and the apprentice have their own classes to teach, making it difficult to find common free time for lesson observation.

In one or two schools where they are quite comfortable with the teacher situation, mentors find it difficult to make the mentoring process successful because they need to update themselves with the latest developments in the field of teaching skills. Mentor 1 stated:

I find it very difficult to use skill forms due to lack of experience and exposure. Most of the skill forms are changed and modified as compared to the forms that were used during our time (Interview, date 20/9/04, page 5).

Although some mentors value mentoring as a two-way process, circumstances prevent them from establishing a good mentoring system. The other reason why the mentoring process has not been carried out properly is made clear by mentor 12 when he/she mentioned:

There has to be proper guidelines and instructions as of how to monitor the apprentices. Without that, I find it difficult to even provide comments (Interview, date 18/10/04, page 69).

Similarly the mentor 11 also expressed concerns (as stated earlier) when he/she mentioned:

Briefing about observation and other details should be given to mentors so that there is uniform application of apprentice rules. Moreover to provide maximum help and guidance, the mentor and apprentice should take same classes (Interview, date 13/10/04, page 86).

To fulfill the observation requirement, most of the apprentices made a personal request to senior teachers for observation. Surprisingly, some of the apprentices were even not aware that they should be attached to a mentor for support and guidance (e.g. sample 4). As per the DEOs of these 12 samples, apprentices are placed in a school where there is shortage of teachers. If this is the practice followed by all the other districts, it is certain that the mentoring process will be negatively affected.

## **7. Institute Visit**

To make the programme more successful and efficient, 92.2% of the 222 respondents felt that a visit from the respective Institute would better strengthen the system. This is further supported by some of the opinions raised by the head teachers, mentors, and DEOs.

At least, a few from each of the groups of research participants (DEOs, apprentices, head teachers and mentors) felt that perhaps a visit from the respective Institutes would strengthen the programme (DEO 8/9, mentor 10, head teacher 6, sample 7 & 12). Apprentices felt that they would improve and be more careful about their teaching if there was a visit from the institute (sample 12). Frustrated with the lack of communication, sample 12 mentioned:

I did not receive any response from the institute. For e.g., we were asked to teach Dzongkha compulsory once or twice a week during the Induction but here they have enough Dzongkha teachers and I did not get any Dzongkha classes. So I was worried about that and I wrote an inquiry letter to the institute but I did not receive any response so far (Interview, date 18/10/04, page 96).

## **8. Support**

Table 3 provided below shows the total points scored by each of the stakeholders in terms of support they provided to the apprentices. The respondents in this research felt that head teachers provided them with the maximum support during their apprenticeship programme. From a score range of 1-5, head teacher has topped the list by scoring 925 (83.7%) from 221 respondents. Mentor teacher has a close competition with 758 (83.3%) score for 182 respondents who have mentor teacher.

**TABLE 3**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Head Teacher	221	1	5	<b>925</b>	<b>83.7</b>	4.19	.872
Students	222	1	5	<b>845</b>	76.1	3.81	.929
Teachers	215	1	5	<b>806</b>	75.0	3.75	.913
Other staff	219	1	5	<b>803</b>	73.3	3.67	.997
NIE	214	1	5	<b>770</b>	72.0	3.60	1.240
Parents	219	1	5	<b>769</b>	70.2	3.51	1.118
Mentor Teacher	182	1	5	<b>758</b>	<b>83.3</b>	4.16	.831
DEO	218	1	5	<b>705</b>	64.7	3.23	1.209
Community	221	1	5	<b>677</b>	61.3	3.06	1.025
Apprentice Teachers	148	1	5	<b>561</b>	75.8	3.79	1.096
Valid N (list-wise)	125						

Many interview participants also expressed that they were satisfied with the type of support they were provided by their head teacher, mentor, senior teachers, students and parents (e.g. sample 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11). Sample 6 for instance mentioned:

Besides my mentor I also deal with another senior teacher who teaches science in class IV. So whenever I have any problem I go to her and she is really helpful. I am also satisfied with regard to other colleagues' support and help (Interview, date 27/9/04, page 49).

However, this study also discovered that due to the shortage of teachers in the schools, some of the apprentices did not receive much help and guidance in the process of preparing lesson plans and in actual teaching. Sample 7 stated:

Professional support is very minimal because we have only one head teacher here for 51 students with classes from pre-primary to VI. So I really face a lot of problems in teaching. Due to the shortage of teachers, I have to take full time classes, which has implication on planning. When I have to make many plans it affects the quality. Besides professional support, the other type of support that I get is very satisfactory. For example, there are no houses available in the community to rent. In this case the head teacher has sacrificed a room for two of us in his quarter and he is very helpful. He even helps us to get our food items too, otherwise it takes days to go to the nearest town for shopping (Interview, date 28/9/04, page 55).

Some of the mentors also mentioned that they were not able to provide adequate professional support due to lack of experience in dealing with teaching skill forms and also because there were no proper directives and guidelines for the mentoring process (mentor 9). Mentor 10 also said that mentors are not able to do proper pre and post conferences due to lack of proper instruction from the authorities. This particular

mentor felt that without proper directives as to how to monitor the apprentices, he/she found it difficult to pass comments and suggestions.

## 9. B.Ed Interview

Many head teachers and DEOs expressed their concern with regard to the B. Ed selection interview criteria. DEO 2 explained:

In the past, we have come across one or two apprentices who are not fit to become teachers in terms of their character and behaviour. I feel there should be other criteria for selection interview not just base on merit (Interview, date 24/9/04, page 13).

Similarly, DEO 1 said:

The system of B. Ed interview also needs to be carefully looked at. By just looking at the merit, we cannot guarantee that we will get quality teachers. Other aspects of a person also need to be looked at during the interview (Interview, date 20/9/04, page 4).

Other participants of the research (DEO 5 and head teacher 4) also felt that students who excel in academics would not necessarily become good teachers because they believe that an interview process is not an ideal way to identify such personal characteristics.

## 10. Disadvantages of Having Apprenticeship Programme

Although the research participants view the apprenticeship programme as a very productive and relevant programme both for the apprentices and for the system, a few of the participants also shared some of the problems it caused. For instance DEO 1 expressed that:

With this programme, we tend to depend on the supply of apprentice teachers every year to be posted to the schools where there are shortages of teachers. As a result, we seem to neglect working out the possibility of transferring regular teachers from one school to the other within the Dzongkhag which would to a certain extent solve teacher shortage problem. In fact, there are some teachers who have been working in the same schools especially in urban areas for more that five years and moreover some of these teachers do not have families.

So in the future we should try to solve teacher shortage problem by sending these teachers to the remote schools rather than waiting for the apprentice placement (Interview, date 20/9/04, page 4).

The present trend that the researcher discovered from this study is that a particular head teacher submits a requisition to the DEO for additional teachers if they have a shortage. If the DEOs are not able to solve the problem within the district, the requisition is further submitted to the personnel division at the national level. The problem is somehow solved by placing apprentices. So there are many districts and schools around the country that depend on apprentices to make their academic year



successful. However, the saddest part is that if they have enough teachers, many head teachers and DEOs will not accept apprentices. This again is a lack of understanding of the TAP model on the part of key people, the head teachers, in the system.

The other disadvantage of having apprentices (indicated by DEO 4) is that apprentices are not able to handle lower primary classes (NAPE). This is another problem that an Induction Programme could ameliorate or if this is the case, then apprentices might be better off not being placed there. DEO of samples 8 and 9 also commented that apprentices cannot take heavy teaching loads like regular teachers.

All these clearly reflect the type of understanding and attitude our head teachers and DEOs have. After all, apprentices are not for solving teacher shortage or equivalent to fully-fledged teachers. In fact they should be placed in a school with enough teachers. Only then will they get proper guidance and support which is essential for becoming a better teacher.

## **Summary**

The findings from this research indicate that the TAP provides meaningful experiences for apprentice teachers even though they undergo a lot of difficulties. The TAP in Bhutan, like elsewhere, provides an opportunity to students to try their hand at the teaching profession. It provides a foundation for the development of expertise and producing competent teachers.

This research has been able to determine some of the positive aspects of apprenticeship (such as improving self-esteem, increase of vocabulary, dealing with students etc.) as well as some of the impediments (such as lack of professional support, no proper guidelines for apprenticeship etc.) towards successful apprenticeship.

If this programme is strengthened further there is no doubt that the education system in Bhutan would benefit immensely. With the little positive experience by the apprentices, the research also discovered that apprentices are very positive about the TAP.

## **Recommendations for Future Improvement**

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are made for future improvements:

### **1. Placement**

This research suggests that the present practice of placing apprentices to different schools within the country is not based on the philosophy of apprenticeship programme. They are mostly placed where there is shortage of teachers and are left without much professional guidance and support. This clearly indicates that there is a gap created between the actual philosophy and the current practice. Apprentices are used for short term systemic benefits, specifically solving teacher shortage problems.

The existing literature (Conford & Gunn, 1998) shows that apprentice programmes should focus on long-term benefits rather than short-term benefits. According to Greydragon (2000) the main purpose of being an apprentice is to receive guidance, mentorship, teaching, encouragement, and honest feedback. The findings suggest that not much of guidance and mentorship is being provided to the apprentices. Such deprivation of learning opportunities ensures that in the long-term, the Bhutanese education system will not have capable and competent teachers.

Apprentices need to be placed where there are enough and preferably better teachers for maximum professional support and guidance. If the Bhutanese education system does not establish a culture of sending the apprentices to the schools where they are likely to get adequate support right from the beginning, it will be quite difficult to make such programmes successful. In the future, when schools have enough teachers, there is a risk of considering TAP a burden for them. Therefore, in the long term, if we need capable and competent teachers, stakeholders must understand that we must begin with a successful apprenticeship programme.

## **2. Strengthen the Induction Programme**

This study has determined that some of the problems related to apprenticeship fall back to the Induction Programme. In the future, the researcher strongly suggests improving the Induction Programme by tightening the loose ends. We need to include some of the topics (multi-grade teaching, preparation of test blue print, use of text and manuals, teaching lower primary classes, and in-depth coverage on child psychology) suggested by the research participants. As a coordinator of the Induction Programme in the past, the researcher has realized the importance of these topics.

## **3. Develop Apprenticeship Guidelines**

Two of the major difficulties encountered by the stakeholders of TAP are the lack of communication between the stakeholders. Putting into place certain guidelines for TAP would assist here. These guidelines would guide the stakeholders as well as the apprentices through proper stages of apprenticeship making it more likely to be a successful programme. If these guidelines are put into place, the researcher feels that the communication will definitely improve thereby contributing towards a more successful apprenticeship programme.

## **4. Improve Mentoring Process**

The review of literature shows that to make apprenticeship programmes enriching and successful, an apprentice has to be attached to a mentor. It is vital to put the mentoring process into place. It is a period of transition for our apprentices who are fresh high-school graduates. It is crucial for them to experience positive aspects of a teaching profession. If they do not get proper guidance and care during this period, it is likely that they will develop a dislike for the teaching profession. Under such circumstances, there will be more cases of burn-outs which will ultimately put the education system into danger.

Therefore, it is imperative that apprentices are attached to a mentor for maximum support and guidance. Learning to teach is a complicated and challenging process

which involves role-modelling by a more skilled mentor. Previous research has proved that there is a positive effect of mentoring on a beginner's personal and professional development (Uakeia, 1998). The power of the mentor has been explained in the following words: "Mentors not only touch someone's life... they have the potential to touch and change the life of the nation" (Newsweek, 1999, as cited in Buckley and Zimmermann, 2003, p.1).

## **5. View TAP as an Investment**

If our education system is looking for capable and competent teachers to educate the citizens of the country, we should not use apprentices as a means for solving teacher shortage problems. The classic example here was the situation where the apprentice was left in charge of the school for months while the single multi-grade teacher went overseas. Of course, this might help to keep some classes going in the short term, but the ultimate question is of quality for the long term. Apprentices should be used as an investment, not as a source of cheap labour. As DEO 1 pointed out, teacher shortage problems could be resolved to a certain extent by within-district transfers. The researcher strongly recommends that districts and schools should not depend on apprentice teachers for solving staffing problems.

## **6. Reconsider B. Ed Interview**

As indicated by some research participants, students who excel in academics during their schooling will not necessarily make good teachers. The present practice of teacher selection is based purely on academic merit (grade XII results), which does not guarantee production of excellent teachers. The researcher feels that this is a matter of genuine concern. The selection criteria need to be reviewed to consider other aspects of a person that makes them good teachers. One possibility in looking at this issue is to be very particular about character certificates during the interview. It should be a requirement that students produce character certificates issued by their previous school during the selection interview. In this way, students with behavioral problems could be screened out at the time of interview although they may excel in academics.

The other way that we could look at this concern is to consider it as one of the strengths of the TAP. It will be a difficult process to identify such personal characteristics during the interview. Therefore, the TAP model allows such persons to be identified prior to their entry into the NIEs and can be seen as complementary to the interview process. In this regard, an efficient monitoring system has to be put into place by the NIEs in collaboration with the schools and education Ministry.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this research indicate that the present TAP in Bhutan lacks a common vision among the stakeholders. Without a harmonious common philosophical orientation, programmes such as this are likely to fail.

Figure 1 TAP – At present

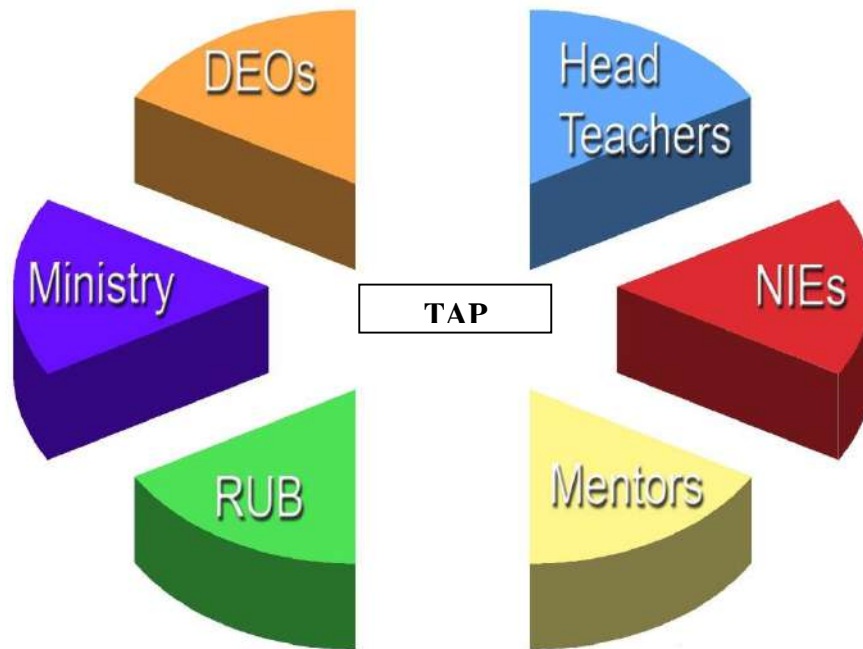


Fig.1 shows that TAP is being pulled in different directions by the stakeholders thereby preventing the development of linkages that are necessary for effective action. When each stakeholder has a different notion about the programme, the gaps become wider giving rise to confusion and misunderstanding.

Figure 2 TAP – Common Vision

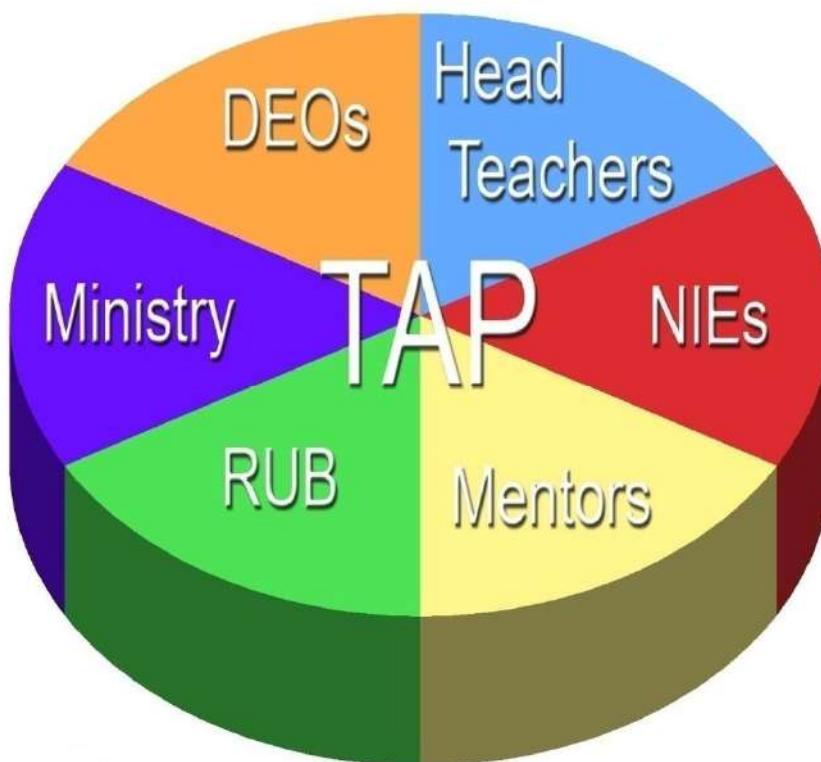


Fig. 2 places the TAP at the centre, surrounded by all stakeholders. In this circumstance, all stakeholders share a common vision about the programme. The more focused they are, the narrower the gap between each of the stakeholders. As a result, it is more likely that linkages will flourish and the programme will be successful. In order to provide meaningful and efficacious experiences for the apprentices, it is essential that stakeholders cooperate under the guidance of a common vision.

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## **Your Preference: Dzongkha or English?**

- Sonam Rinchen, Lecturer in Chemistry  
National Institute of Education, Samtse.

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Bhutan is a tiny Himalayan kingdom covering an approximate area of 46,500 square kilometers, running roughly 150 km north-south and 300km east-west. The kingdom of Bhutan is bordered by the Tibetan region of China and the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh. Bhutan broke the shell of its self-imposed isolation only in the early 1960's. The history of Bhutan's education is as old as Bhutan itself. In the 1900's, learning was in the form of monastic education which aimed to bring about the spiritual development of the person. Only by early 1960's were formal educational institutes set up in Bhutan.

Owing to the non-availability of human and material resources, everything had to be imported from India. One of the main features of the Bhutanese education system is that the country adopted the Indian education model, based on the Cambridge system of education. This, in turn, led to the adoption of English for school resources, teachers and the language of instruction. The result was that English assumed the status of a second language.

Dzongkha is the official language of Bhutan. Along with Dzongkha, about seventeen dialects are spoken in the country. Dzongkha has been taught in schools since the inception of schools in the country. However, because of the lack of learning materials in Dzongkha, a second language had to be chosen as a medium of formal secular instruction.

Until 1964, the policy had been to teach the Bhutanese children in Hindi. The factor which led to the choice of Hindi as the medium of instruction was the availability of learning materials, which enabled the new system of formal secular education to get a quick start. Solverson (1995) states that "Hindi was little spoken in Bhutan; its use in the schools had been purely pragmatic. And it was, after all, the language of a neighboring country" (p.107).

Along with Hindi medium instructional materials, Bhutan also invited a majority of the teachers from India as well as the Indian-style of education. With the advent of the western education, Hindi lost its hold on the Bhutanese educational system, paving the way for English. So English was adopted as the medium of instruction, and, except for Dzongkha, all other subjects were taught in English in all the schools.

Since then, English has gained lot of popularity. It has been well received by the teachers, students and administrators. They look at it as a pathfinder and a means of livelihood. Now, as English is so firmly set in our educational system, and the interest that people have developed for it having increased, our national language is on the verge of losing its importance. In the school, children take more interest in English than in Dzongkha. The same concern was shared by a gentleman who spoke to *Kuensel* that in 2001 "Dzongkha is losing out to foreign language, especially English. So Dzongkha is under severe risk of being discarded.



Some of the factors which have increased the popularity of English in the Bhutanese education system are as follows:

- Strong western influences circulate in Bhutan,
- There is a lack of Dzongkha resources (books and printed materials).
- English is an International language.
- English provides job opportunities and training.
- English is the medium of instruction in all schools.
- There is easy access to English materials and references.
- Dzongkha is not regarded as a language which brings about development.
- Many English-speaking tourists visit Bhutan.
- English is associated with social status.

Along with Dzongkha, Sharchopikha, Lhotshamkha, and English are the languages of the Bhutanese media. The national radio and television (Bhutan Broadcasting Service), and the national newspaper, Kuensel, use Dzongkha, English, and Lhotshamkha to disseminate national and international news to the people. Other forms of popular media in English include newspapers, magazines, novels, comics, children's storybooks and music. Videos and movies have also made their way into the country.

Both Dzongkha and English are used in government administration as well in private organization and business. Along with Dzongkha, English is used for many official purposes such as government announcements, departmental and interdepartmental correspondence and discussions. English is used for all sorts of international communications, including diplomacy, commerce, transport, higher education, and science and technology. English language has become a necessity in our daily lives. Most of the means of communication in Bhutan is conveyed through English.

I have also come across people waiting for an acquaintance to show up in the bank to fill his/her bank form. We realize the importance of English when we travel in-country or to other countries. People find it difficult to identify the bus to board and locate a seat. Most of the notices and signs are in English and people find themselves lost without the knowledge of English.

Today in Bhutan, "Hello" has become an integral part of our vocabulary with people all over the country. The usual prayer before the drinks is replaced with "CHEERS"! Crystal (1994) wrote: "The language plays an official or working role in the proceedings of most other major international political gatherings, in all parts of the world" (p.79).

Bhutan has become a member of many international and regional organizations. These involvements have increased the necessity for the Bhutanese to develop communication skills in English. All the above factors have led more Bhutanese learning and using English in their daily lives. It helps people to cope with real life purposes within the country, and with other English speakers in the world.

If we turn over the pages of history, we see that the present life in Bhutan could be compared to some of those of the earlier periods. With the introduction of English in our curriculum, people got a “feel” of the west and were fascinated by the progress that they have made. We always consider somebody from the west as learned and superior. The other influential factor is that of the people studying abroad, and this has an impact on the children in particular and the society in general.

Ngugi (1986), wrote “In Kenya, English became more than a language, it was “the” language and all others had to bow before it in deference” (p.11). The experience shared by one of my colleagues at the National Institute of Education, Samtse, has it that from a very young age she studied in one of the schools in India where students of different backgrounds attended the same school.

The medium of instruction was English and all subjects, except for the second language, were taught in English. The English language enjoyed the status of being a first language for all students. They had to always talk in English. Using the mother tongue was discouraged. In a year, they spent only three months on holidays with their families and nine months in the school. Those three months in a year were the only time she got to live in her own language and culture.

And as years went by, she tended to like the English language. She became comfortable living in that kind of culture, and pushed Dzongkha, her mother tongue, to the background. Back at home, her parents found a different attitude in her and she became an influential factor to her young siblings and peers. In a way, she accepted to bow before the English language culture. (Denkar,1999).

Brathwaite (1984), a distinguish Caribbean poet and literary critic states that the Caribbeans came to know more about English kings and queens than they did about their own national heroes. A similar situation exists in Bhutan. The school children are exposed to English literature during the teaching-learning process. It widens the horizons of English vocabulary and a sound foundation is built up. English with its rich vocabulary leads to the exploration of other subjects of interest and gives people greater access to other English media. Our people are more geared towards western movies and novels. More houses and restaurants are decorated with posters of Leonardo Dicaprio and Tom Cruise than with those of the revered Bhutanese figures.

In *Ancient Futures*, learning from Ladhak, Norberg and Heklena (1990) write about the result of English education on the Ladhaki culture. They state that Ladhaki children are recipients of a poor imitation of an Indian curriculum, which itself is an imitation of British education, which completely lacks Ladhaki representation. It isolates children from their culture and nature, and trains them to be narrow specialists in the westernized urban environment.

When these children leave school, they lack knowledge of using their own resources, and fail to function in their own world. The authors conclude that modern education in Ladhak not only disregards local resources, but makes Ladhaki children regard themselves and their culture as inferior. Everything in the school promotes the western model, and makes children feel ashamed of their traditions (as cited in Denkar, 1999).

A similar situation is emerging in Bhutan, since the inception of western education. This has resulted in importing western popular culture into their homes and the hearts of the Bhutanese. There is an increasing sense of identity confusion among many Bhutanese due to these ideological forces. Many of us, especially the young, are embarrassed about the local culture and regard it as inferior.

The International Encyclopedia of National Systems of Education states that the decision to use English as the medium of instruction in Bhutan was made at a time when primary education was considered, in the main, to be a preparation for secondary schooling. To have chosen Dzongkha would have created problems, since almost all teachers had to be recruited from abroad. Solverson (1995) states that Bhutan had no completely indigenous written language used ... English, while also foreign, was an international language. Even India recognized English as one of its language and used it officially and quite generally. As well, English had already been taught as a subject in Bhutan's schools and finally, the better schools that the Bhutanese leaders had seen were English language institutions (p.107).

The better qualified people have a better chance of getting employment and can have access to fast promotion and teaching opportunities. This, in turn, would fetch good money. So it is the dream of every parent to educate his or her child, which would enable him/her to rise to a good post.

The Bhutanese perceive that the change in the system from monastic to western education has resulted in a huge cultural shift. Monastic education was religious in nature and was responsible for teaching ethical, spiritual and moral values. It focused on communal well-being above concern for self. But the western education in Bhutan is more a tool for material benefits rather than a principle that defines one's life. The students develop a competitive spirit, which values "individualism" over the well-being of others.

Western education, with English as its medium of instruction knowledge, was supposed to prepare the Bhutanese to take part in the global economy. Thus, learning skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking has become a necessity for the Bhutanese. I fully agree with what has been said by McCrum et al (1993), that one of the factors that contributed to the spread of English in countries where the native language (s) is not English, was that knowing English gave these countries access to economic and intellectual privileges.

On the other hand, Dzongkha is the national language of Bhutan; it is at the threshold of losing its importance. This fact is evident in that students love reading English novels, and watching English movies, and reading magazines which have directly led to many Bhutanese devaluing our customs and traditions which seem inferior and outdated to them. Dzongkha is not given much emphasis, and the teaching and learning of Dzongkha is confined within the four walls of the classroom.

The only references in Dzongkha that Bhutanese have access to are the textbooks. Most of the teachers resort to traditional methods of teaching, as they lack basic teaching skills. They are not able to provide an insight into education. The students studying Dzongkha only for the sake of passing examinations also contributes to the weakening of the language.

In a way, both teachers and the students are impeded because of the lack of resources. Dzongkha learning is limited to the horizon of the Dzongkha background. Organizations and offices look for people with scientific background, so the people with Dzongkha knowledge have only a remote chance of getting jobs, especially outside the country.

Ngugi (1986) states that “the language of my education was no longer the language of my culture” (p.11). This is true in our context. The process of modernization has brought about many changes in the lives of the Bhutanese. Many of these changes, such as better educational facilities, health, housing, drinking water, have benefited the Bhutanese. On the other hand, in appreciation of the effects of these changes on our lives, we often ignore the negative consequences of modernization on our culture and values, which inform the Bhutanese identity. The same old Bhutanese saying, “you cannot be what you are and what you are rusts while you are busy being what you are not”. (Zam, 1991, p. 76) applies to us here.

Without a proper sense of belonging, we could not even have the integrity of a tree, which stands firmly in its place, whatever may be going on around it. (Zam,1991). Lately, the government has adopted many innovative initiatives and activities to develop and promote Dzongkha. The following are some of the suggestions to help students learn Dzongkha better and achieve the vision of preserving our culture and tradition, while retaining the English language in our school curriculum:

- Introduce more Bhutanese literature in Dzongkha.
- Support the development of Dzongkha articles, novels, books and magazines.
- Make teaching learning of Dzongkha relevant, challenging and interesting to the students.
- Create more job opportunities for people with Dzongkha background.
- Encourage co-curricular activities in the schools in Dzongkha.
- Introduce teaching of other subjects in Dzongkha medium (Dzongkha immersion).
- Establish our own Dzongkha TV network and cinema.
- Increase the number of periods in Dzongkha and Dzongkha teachers in the schools.

As stated in the *Vision 2020* document

“The promotion of Dzongkha is more than any means of communication. It is a complex phenomenon that is inseparable from intellectual and psychological processes related to ways in which we organize and express our thoughts. Our language is the way in which we identify ourselves and distinguish ourselves from others. Strategies to conserve and promote our culture and heritage cannot thus be indifferent to language” (p.70).

The Bhutanese look at our culture and language as strength. We believe that no matter how small the country may be, it is the culture and identity that bring us together. Dzongkha has been a powerful force to bring the country together in the

past. It is our language and we must ensure that its position is enhanced to a greater degree. The government is trying every means to hold the thread of Dzongkha. The biggest challenge to promote and preserve our language is entrusted to the hands of schoolteachers and authorities. So to enable the school and teachers to meet the expectation of the government, the school must be equipped with resources in the form of texts, references and teacher training to the Dzongkha teachers.

The parents too must be held equally responsible for promoting Dzongkha in their kids. From a very young age the kids must be made aware about the importance of Dzongkha. The people have cherished the benefit brought about by English and will continue to do so, but Bhutanese must ensure that Dzongkha is given importance from every aspect. The coming of English has made Dzongkha extraneous, so we must revive Dzongkha and see that it gains its status in the national forum. There is an old Bhutanese saying "in an attempt to learn others' language, you land up learning none and forgetting one's own language too."

Let us live by what was said by his Excellency Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk to the gathering at the closing ceremony of the Second Dzongkha Annual Conference in Thimphu "How strong our country will be and how uniformly developed our economy will be in the future will, to a large extent, depend on how much and how far our national language progresses." (Kuensel, December 2001).

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## Concept Mapping: A Strategy for Helping Students Learn

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### Abstract

Every teacher has a vision of offering their students better learning conditions. Helping students to learn “how to learn” is crucial for preparing them for life- long learning. Concept mapping is one of these strategies, benefiting students in both school learning, and self-study. Concept mapping enables students to use visual perceptions of their changing ideas and assists both students and their teachers to understand the changes in their learning. This paper invites you to promote your students’ learning through the use of concept mapping techniques.

### Introduction

When preparing learning experiences for students, teachers often ask themselves: ‘what should I teach?’, ‘how should the learning experiences be organized?’, and ‘how can I help students learn more effectively?’ A closer look at the answers to these questions may stimulate teachers to reconsider some of the basic assumptions behind teaching and their students’ learning.

Researchers like Dell, B. (1993) and Driver, R. (1989) illustrate clearly that learning may be enhanced when:

- Learning experiences are linked in the learning context with student with students’ prior ideas.
- Students try to make “sense” of their world as they attempt to link new learning with their previous ideas and experiences, and
- Students’ needs, interests, and individual differences are respected.

Concept mapping techniques provide ways for both teachers and students to address fundamental learning priorities, to visualize the students’ starting point. By externalizing the students’ prior ideas, links may be visualized between these starting points and their new learning.

### Concept of concept mapping

Concept maps, like flow-charts, make clear to both students and teachers the key foci for any specific learning task. Concept maps, however, emphasize also the **links** between the ‘big ideas’ by connecting the **concepts** with the meanings that the students hold for the links. Concept maps provide a kind of visual road-map showing some of the pathways we may make for connecting meanings of concepts. The concepts, linked by their connection, are called **propositions**. After a learning task is completed, concept maps provide a schematic summary of what was understood. The changes observed between the concept maps constructed prior to the learning process

and those drawn after the learning process would indicate the achievement of the learner. In this way, teachers will be able to identify the specific understandings and misunderstandings of their learners and develop teaching strategies to provide the necessary guidance and scaffolding their learners need.

As concept maps represent meaningful relationships between concepts in the form of propositions, concepts are linked with each other by the use of **linking words (describing words)**. The concepts, with their linking words describe the regularities that exist within the concepts and across the concepts, providing a holistic view of the conceptual theme. Further, because meaningful learning proceeds most easily when new concepts, or concept meanings, are subsumed under existing broader concepts, the concepts are sequenced from more general to more specific (i.e. from more inclusive to less inclusive). This gives a **hierarchical pattern** of concepts and associated linking words in concept maps. The hierarchical character of concept maps helps learners to compare and integrate new ideas, and to find continuity in their learning.

How can concept maps be constructed?

You may already be familiar with the ideas of flow charting through your lesson planning and as an aid to your teaching. For example, in planning a lesson in "Matter" for Class IV, we might place a smaller topic, such as solid or liquid within the wider context by considering its association with 'matter' (Figure 1).

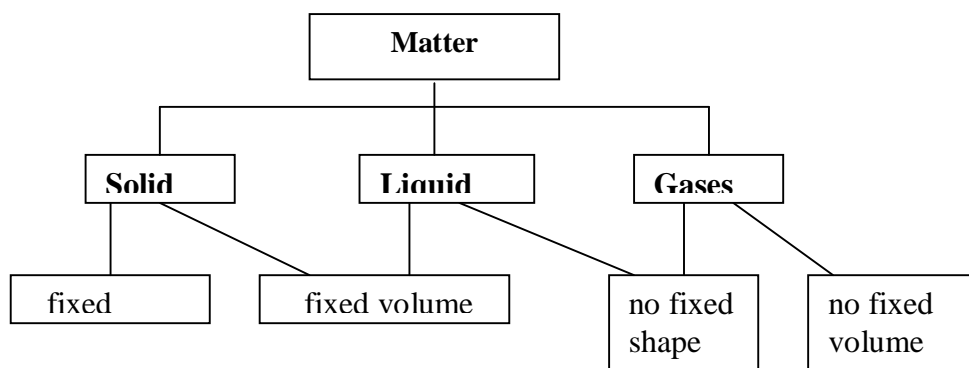


Fig. 1 Flow-chart diagram

Concept maps use these same steps, but unlike flow-charts, concepts in concept mapping are expressed as 'propositions' by using linking words. These linking words describe the concepts, their relationships with other concepts and their subordinating ideas by using hierarchical and cross linking lines. For example, the concept 'solid' may be linked with 'fixed shape' by the word 'has' to form the proposition 'solid has a fixed shape'. Similarly, each of the concepts identified in Figure 1 may be linked together to form a concept map.



When teaching, or devising concept maps, we start, therefore, by listing related concepts that either aid in explaining the concept (e.g. 'matter') or how it is related to other broader concepts (Figure 2).

Matter	heat
Solid	melts
Liquid	freezes
Gas	vaporizes
Ice	vapour

Fig. 2: List of concepts related to "matter"

These concepts are then linked by using linking words in hierarchical order so that the more general, more inclusive concepts are at the top and the more specific and less inclusive concepts are at the base. For instance, in Figure 3, matter, molecules, states, solid, liquid, and gases are 'bigger'; or more general and inclusive concepts.

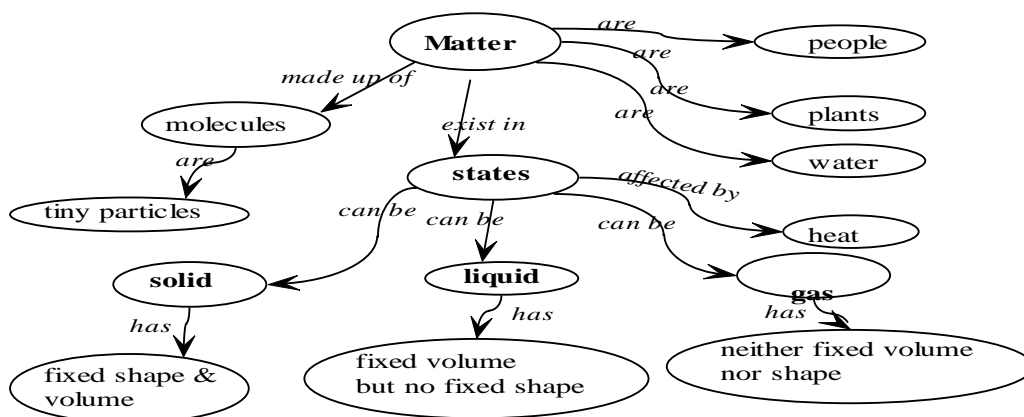


Fig.3: Concept map of 'Matter'

Less inclusive concepts, such as stone, water, air may be added by using hierarchical links (Figure 4). Many concepts have unilateral, across relationship links with the other concepts of equal hierarchical order. There is, therefore, a need to use arrow-heads to imply the **senses**, or **directions** of relationships. (Figure 4).

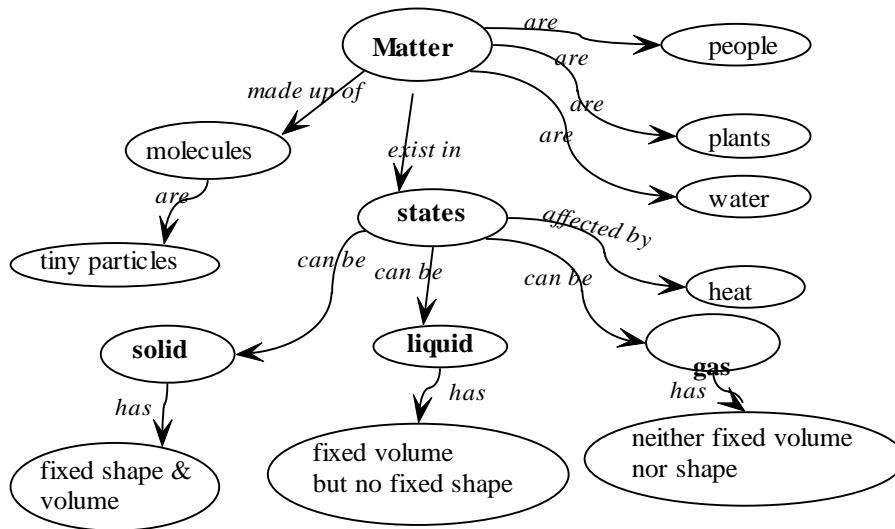


Fig. 4: Concept map on "Matter"

As students construct concept maps, they build up the propositions for each concept using their own reasons for interrelationships. In doing so, students express **their ways of thinking**. Through the strategy of concept mapping, students are able, therefore, to:

- understand his/her prior knowledge and misconceptions. These become the prominent basis on which teachers start teaching or helping students to learn by themselves,
- articulate different concepts together to form a more holistic views, and
- remember the concepts for a longer period of time.

**Activity:** Developing concept maps is relatively simple when you follow the steps. Try one for yourself or with your class.

- 1 Construct a concept map using the following concepts: battery, copper wire, switch, clean iron nail.
- 2 Supply linking words which may make meaningful sense to your map.
- 3 Discuss the concepts with your colleagues or find out further points on them from your library;
- 4 Construct another concept map and compare it with your previous map;
- 5 Which concept map, the earlier one or the latter, appears to be more meaningful to you?
- 6 Reflect upon what made this change in your thinking.

The above exercise may reveal to you that you have constructed the map based on what you know about electricity and on your value judgment of it; and it may illustrate that your latter map has grown bigger than the earlier one because it not only contains more concepts but more propositions, too.

Learning inevitably results in conceptual change. Identifying the learning that has taken place should characterize how our students should learn - whether in the class

or from their self-study. Facilitating students' learning by encouraging them to reflect upon their map construct may encourage meaningful learning - that is learning with understanding. This will assist students in finding the purpose and value of learning which is the fundamental requirement for students' continuing their learning.

Although inherently useful, concept maps are not always easy to construct and students may need to be encouraged to persevere before they master the technique.

How can teachers use concept maps?

Apart from being useful in encouraging students' meaningful learning, concept maps are very useful for teachers in their lesson planning, assessing students' misconceptions, note-taking, self-study, and as a means of self-reflection on their students' learning (Novak, 1983; Cliburn, 1990). These points are considered in greater details, below.

### *1. Exploration of what the learners already know:*

Learning requires a deliberate effort on the part of learners to relate new knowledge to relevant concepts they already know. To facilitate this process, both teacher and learner, if they are to proceed most efficiently in meaningful learning, need to know the 'conceptual starting place' (Novak, D. J. & Gowin, D.B., 1984) Construction of concept maps externalizes the cognitive structure and thinking processes of learners, substantially, as it displays a representation of the relevant concepts and propositions the learner knows.

Both teacher and learner can consciously and deliberately challenge and expand these ideas as they move forward in their learning. For example, if a learner knows more on a topic, he or she will illustrate more concepts and links in their concept maps for that topic. From this, teachers can infer what the learner needs to be taught to meet the specified objectives. Through knowing the prior knowledge of learners, teachers are assisted, therefore, in planning their teaching programme.

### *2. Development of learning*

If a concept map, displaying prior ideas is allowed to "grow" by adding newly developed ideas throughout the teaching of a theme, both students and teachers may see the progress of learning over time. If different coloured pens are used to record changes in ideas from one session to another, the development of learning, over time can be appreciated. Additional concepts, extensions of links between propositions, other units of learning, past experiences and the social context are some of the progressive, learning that may be readily visualized through reflection and made explicit by the 'growing' concept map technique.

### *3. Assessing the learning outcomes*

Teaching and learning without assessment would mean a programme without direction and purposes. We emphasize assessment of every lesson, unit, and for the whole year learning of our students. Although assessment tools are numerous (Meng,

E & Doran, R., 1990): and Welch, W., 1995) many tools rely on the purposes offered by learners to only teachers' questions. This limits the boundary of the purpose of teaching and assessment. The use of concept maps, as an assessment tool places assessment more within a holistic perspective. A comparison of concept maps constructed prior to and following instruction provides the teacher with an insight into the learning that has occurred. Increased concepts, propositions, linkages and reduction in misconceptions are typical results.

#### 4. *Self-study*

Teaching learners to learn that art of learning is one of the crucial functions of teaching. We are familiar with students forgetting most of their 'learning' soon after their examinations. This begs the question: 'how can we promote the memory retention power of students?' But, is understanding a 'given' thing for the learners? Certainly, one of the ways of looking at this is to consider the ways students learn. This may constitute remembering different concepts as separate 'blocks' of concepts of learning by trying to relate their perceptions or new knowledge to their life experiences.

To achieve this, students frequently practise rote learning or they may use meaningful learning strategies. The research findings of Cliburn (1990) suggest that memory retention is higher when learning is done with understanding. Concept maps are helpful in promoting learning with understanding. For example, when students revise the day's lesson or prepare for examinations, they may read through the text linking the important concepts on the page, drawing and studying the links between the concepts. This helps the learners to understand and remember the concepts for longer periods of time. Students learn more effectively as they enable themselves to connect the instances (of what) and events (of how) with our past experiences.

#### 5. *Extracting meaning from reading articles in newspapers, magazines, journals, and textbooks, and taking notes from lectures or talks*

Concept mapping is a useful tool for assisting note-taking from teachings and from readings. After a quick reading of an article, it is relatively easy to go back and circle, or list the key words (concepts), or propositions and then to construct a concept map representing them in hierarchical order. Constructing a concept map enables the learner to identify in a concise way the major points made in the article. The hierarchical organization of the concept map casts the meaning of ideas in the article into a framework that makes it easier to recall the substance of the article and to review the information presented in it.

Conclusion

Although, concept mapping is not a conclusive tool for learning, it upholds the principles of focusing the student's interest on, and responsibility for, their own learning. As learners construct concept maps, they attempt to relate the new knowledge to their existing knowledge. In doing so, they find meaning in and purpose for their learning. This realization becomes the impetus for further learning.

However, it needs to be borne in mind that the construction of a concept map depends solely on the students' thinking processes. There can be varieties of representations.

Further, students should be discouraged from copying concept maps from peers or memorizing concept maps for examination purposes. Concept maps themselves should not be part of the examination process. To use them in this way would be antithetical to the purpose of the strategy for promoting 'learning through understanding' and 'de-emphasizing rote learning'.

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## **Teacher Education in Bhutan: Quality and the Indifferent Public**

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Introduction: Are we or are we not good? That is the question.

Just how good are teachers trained in the National Institutes of Education in Bhutan? Answers to the question have been as varied as they have for almost every question on Bhutan's chequered path of educational development. It is common knowledge, however, that popular opinion among educated (and semi-educated) Bhutanese tends to dip to the negative. So has it been on the matter of teachers trained in Bhutan. Contrasted, perhaps unfairly, with experienced hands from India and abroad – including the revered missionaries that spearheaded Bhutan's initial drive towards modern education – fresh graduates from the NIEs have all too often been by-passed without recognition or branded as juveniles and strugglers in the field.

To be sure, there is some justification for the lukewarm attitude towards NIE pass-outs; and it is in the obvious differences that arise from comparing them to the west that the criticisms appear justified.

For one, the use of the west as yardsticks for judgment brings to the fore our status as a developing country. In this light, the NIEs as well as the bulk of schools that absorb NIE graduates are marked by geographic isolation, vast distances between sites and entities, limited economic resources, and limited training and credentials for significant numbers of educators. Most of the country's schools can be classified as "rural" schools and approximately 75 percent of the country's children live in small and isolated settings. The prevailing conditions also often include limited access to communication and transportation.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, a current of educational reforms swept all of the advanced industrialized societies. Due to the growth of the information society, the advancement of the social sciences, and the development of comparative education studies, citizens in one land became more aware of the strengths of other nations' educational and teacher training systems (Wray, 1987). Bhutan's relative under-development saw it miss that bus. A Bhutanese educationist, Jagar Dorji, sensed and observed this intellectual deprivation in a 1987 essay on teaching in Bhutan. He wrote:

"We do not have any access to the new developments that are taking place in the world of education. We have neither been able to establish a centre to reproduce and disseminate information of this nature to the teachers of our country nor produce suitable learning materials for students and teachers. In the absence of such facilities, one tends to cherish the old skills and experiences, so much so that an adjustment with the sudden emergence of new ideas (if any) becomes difficult. This can be a serious handicap for both the teachers and the students".

Sure, Bhutan has since 1999 channelled a conduit to the world-wide web, the information superhighway, but there is little cause for cheer in accessing this facility,

from an educational point of view at least. Anybody who has used the internet from Bhutan knows our conduit is no expressway. As little traffic as there is on this conduit, it is always snail-paced or disrupted. Resting assured of its stranglehold monopoly in Bhutan, Druknet is inarguably the South Asian region's most complacent and inefficient internet service provider. Let's face it, between the choices of spending two hours of frustration opening only five pages on the net and doing other productive work during that time, Samtse NIE trainees much rather opt for the latter choice.

Considering these apparent differences with the west, it is no surprise that NIE products are looked at indifferently. Eventually, as with most things Bhutanese, it takes a *chilip's* viewpoint to set our perspectives straight and initiate some degree of self-appreciation.

### The Quality of NIE-trained Teachers: An Alternative View

Professor Urs Dursteler and Werner Zollinger, two Swiss educationists from the University of Applied Pedagogy in Zurich, have both been working for a number of years with a programme called Partnership in Teacher Training (PITT) that connects the Teacher Training College in Zurich with the NIE in Paro and, of late, the NIE in Samtse as well. The part of PITT they deal with involves quality management.

On a recent visit to NIE, Samtse, the two eminent educationists expressed views that contrasted sharply with local opinion.

"In terms of equipment, technical facilities and infrastructure, TTC, Zurich, has the best quality and all these are found not just sufficient but sometimes too much in quantity", Zollinger said in an interview, "but the difference in quality of teaching between products of TTC, Zurich, and the NIEs in Bhutan, based on this difference of access to material resources, is very small".

Dursteler agreed. "I am very impressed, really, very impressed with the teaching quality in Bhutan", he stressed.

He added that in spite of the disparity in material resources, teacher training and teacher trainees of Zurich were hardly different from those of the NIEs here. The curricula were similar and the students just as motivated. In both places, there existed a will to serve society – TTC students were not as money-driven as, say, bankers – and an overall atmosphere of continual switching between intellectual pursuit and physical activity.

"Even in Swiss classrooms, the teacher is king just as you might be here in Bhutan," he explained, and added, in a lighter vein, "Teachers in both places are very careful if anyone comes to observe their classes".

So, there you have it. We, of NIE, Samtse, may not be quite at par with western standards but, in the light of our limitations of resource and environment, we are good enough. Good enough to impress visiting professors from one of the premier teacher training institutes in Europe. That is no small achievement.



Obviously, the education system and teaching training programmes in Bhutan have been on the right track. Things are working in a number of areas. What areas, we then want to ask, might these be?

## The Right Stuff – What Has Worked For Us?

### New Teaching Methods

Over the course of repeated visits to Bhutan Dursteler and Zollinger observed that there was a “huge” difference in teaching practice between the new products of the NIEs and their senior colleagues, the older products. Observing and interviewing 120 recent NIE graduates, 30 head teachers and a number of District Education Officers (DEOs), the two Swiss educationists concluded that the graduates were “very initiative and motivated”, well versed and prepared with their subjects, more children-oriented in their approach (using visual aids, for example), and enthusiastic role models in communities. These qualities were attributed to the newer teaching methods and approaches that the NIE had adopted in recent years.

### Gleaning and Adapting

Bhutan, it has been observed, has made, in 30-40 years, educational achievements that took most countries 300-400 years to realize. Grand as that may sound, one must remember that we have been blessed with the unique position of being able to study educational systems worldwide. We have the leisure of learning from others’ mistakes and garnering what we see as appropriate for us. The social and pedagogical changes of attitudes that, over a period of centuries, resulted in a teacher training system in effect today in Switzerland is not a factor in our educational development. The Swiss did the hard part. We simply borrow the final product. The Professional Development Cycle, a cross between the teaching methodology of TTC, Zurich, and the Sydney Micro Skills of Australia, is a case in point.

### A System That Works

But we adapt our borrowings to suit our needs and environment. Dr. G.R. Mohan of NIE, Samtse, and a “Bhutanese” educator in his own right, assures us.

“The great thing about the Bhutanese system is that, unlike India, changes are immediate, and upon discovery of an error, the correction of the mistake is also immediate,” he said. “There is adopting, adapting and a great ‘cultural discipline’ ”.

### The Country’s Relative Under-development as an Advantage

Even as we strive for greater economic advancement, our “less-developed” position in relation to the west has, paradoxically, worked to our advantage. Take the remoteness of most schools, for example. With little to choose from, teachers in remote schools are compelled to be creative by utilizing whatever little teaching resources they have. Many times, they make use of resources available in their environment.

Dursteler and Zollinger told this researcher that they found NIE trainees to be a bit more enthusiastic than their Zurich students. A possible reason they cited was the

lack of distractions or availability of other avenues for releasing creativity and energy. Students in Zurich, on the other hand, have a multitude of activities and hobbies to get involved in. Here, most of a trainee's energy and creativity was channellised in to teaching. It was the same scenario with lecturers. Zurich lecturers suffered from a "lack of time" and "things to do outside" because of their multiple social engagements. Here, lecturers could concentrate on their lessons and pupils.

Fresh teachers in Bhutan, especially those in the rural pockets, were also seen to be true exponents of the belief that teachers must be agents of change. Their environment served to challenge them everyday. Inside the classrooms, they were confronted with the task of applying and multiplying new teaching methods. In their schools and communities, they assumed the responsibilities of convincing older teachers of the virtues of newer methods and of being exemplary figures to village-folk.

### The Centralized Education System

Like the US and most other industrialized countries, the Swiss have an education system of education systems. In other words, each state prefecture has a distinct system and all these systems are, on a general policy level, harmonized. Bhutan, however, possesses neither the land area size nor the population, nor even the ethnic diversity that necessitates such a system. This works out particularly well for the NIEs as trainees know what curricula and syllabi they are training for and therefore, upon completing training, know their subjects well.

### National Identity

For all intents and purposes, Bhutan is one, the people are one and children are taught to think they are one. Irrespective of their regional roots, all Bhutanese children are taught in Dzongkha and English right from their primary school years. Thus, teachers in Bhutan are able to communicate with their students in either of the two languages. In Zurich, every paper presented in a class is translated into several languages for the benefit of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nature of class students.

### Respect and Remuneration

The Bhutanese government and society - at least the majority in predominantly rural Bhutan - recognize that qualitative academic standards cannot be achieved if the nation fails to reward its teachers. Bhutanese teachers receive 30 percent more salary than civil servants with corresponding rank. Those who opt for the teaching cadre generally wish to remain in it for life and so are driven to complete their training courses successfully. Masters degrees and choice of schools for excellence act as added incentives.

In the words of Dr. G.R. Mohan, teachers in Bhutan are usually looked up to as 'encyclopedias' to be awed. Respect of this kind makes teachers extremely powerful figures in village communities. The attractions of prestige and higher salaries are capable of attracting the best minds to careers in teaching.

### Social Order and Social Awareness

In a comparison of the American and the Japanese education systems, Wray (1987) points to America's "fetish of individualism" as the primary cause for school curricula becoming too diversified and lacking in directions and standards.

"School curricula and teaching methods have been based on the idealistic premise that all teaching must be made relevant to each student's interest, needs and abilities," he writes. "The National Commission on Excellence in Education aptly characterized this approach as sentimentalism".

On the other hand, in Japan (and similarly in Bhutan) the needs of society are more the norm than the needs of individuals; the society and nation have assumed they know what is best for teachers on training. The Bhutanese leadership assumes that teachers have a long-range obligation to society.

Through a variety of extra-curricula involvements, Bhutanese teacher hopefuls are taught the value of character. In fact, beginning from their kindergarten years, they hear incessantly from their teachers and society the words: sincerity, loyalty, responsibility, perseverance, personal effort, modesty, cooperation, selflessness, obedience, devotion to duty, frugality, patience. These are traditional values that are fundamental to Bhutan's hierarchical social structure. The Bhutanese practise what their teachers, their Buddhist lams, have taught for centuries: forms are important. They are not, however, just forms, like the offerings of water each day; repetition creates internal attitudes, which become substance rather than mere ceremony.

#### Conclusion – The Answer and the Prayer

How then, with due consideration of the observations presented here, can the urban "educated" Bhutanese, standing confused between our traditional values and the rabid values of an increasingly consumerist world, look upon NIE graduates as incompetent or average? Although my chief concern has been to describe the relative quality of Bhutanese teachers in comparison with those of the west, a premise underlies my presentation/essay. It is that I believe, with television and growing exposure to the world, Bhutan's future as a great nation is under a severe challenge in all areas.

The most basic one is education because along with the home, it carries the primary responsibility for shaping attitudes, character and the quality of a people. Education affects the way we think and act in our daily life, in the market place, at work, in our relations with others. And the agents of education, teachers, need all the support they can get.

The Bhutanese need to look hard at themselves in the area of attitudes. Desirable ones contribute to the greatness of a nation; undesirable ones will lead to a decline of Bhutanese life. If Bhutanese continue to deny teachers the credit they deserve and persist in looking for scapegoats for our maladies, I believe a decline into a third rank nation will be inevitable and irreversible for Bhutan.

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## Effective Schools Are Educationally Inclusive Schools

- Els Heijnen, Project Advisor, STEP, NIE, Paro.

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*As part of the RGoB's commitment to Education For All (EFA) and integrated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, Bhutan is developing a more inclusive education approach based on the beliefs that (1) inclusion and responding to different learning needs is a critical component of educational quality and (2) education has a role to play in the development of a more just society. The workshop on Child Friendly Schools (CFS) – schools that are per definition inclusive - from 1 to 5 February 2005 at Bajothang HSS in Wangdue was a concrete example of the RGoB taking this commitment seriously.*

### Introduction

Inclusion is one of the major challenges facing education systems around the world. The question of how schools can include *all* children from the communities they serve and enable them both to participate to the full and achieve highly is a pressing concern for anyone concerned with issues of equity and social justice in contemporary and future society.

Inclusive education is often misunderstood as a concept that applies to children with disabilities only. The limited disability perspective of inclusive education has in some countries become an obstacle for real inclusive mainstream reforms. Inclusive education is not a special approach that shows us how some learners like students with disabilities can be integrated in regular schools, but it looks into how mainstream *systems* can be transformed in order to respond to learners' difference and diversity in a constructive and positive way – which includes, but is not limited to, children with disabilities.

Education systems and school development are now increasingly focused on the right to Education for All (EFA) in one national mainstream system. In describing its vision for EFA, the Dakar World Education Forum (April, 2000) stated clearly that inclusive education is vital if the EFA goals are to be achieved. As a result, more and more countries are developing mainstream inclusive education policies and practices.

<p>"The key challenge is to ensure that the broad vision of Education for All as an <b>inclusive concept</b> is reflected in national government and funding agencies' policies....." From: Dakar Framework for Action (2000) – Para 19</p>
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### What is child-friendly, inclusive education?

- It is based on the belief that the right to education is a basic human right for *all* children and is the foundation for social justice. All children, whatever their difference, have a right to belong to mainstream society, to mainstream development and therefore to mainstream education. Though there is a special focus on learners vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion, inclusive

education increases the effectiveness of the system in responding to *all* learners!

- It is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – ratified by Bhutan as one of the first nations and thus legally binding. Inclusive education is based on a rights and responsibility analysis showing that national education systems and mainstream schools are responsible for *all* children.
- It takes the Education for All (EFA) agenda forward by finding ways of enabling schools to serve *all* children in their communities as part of a national education system.
- It is about transforming mainstream systems (policies and practices) into more responsive systems and is as such concerned with *all* learners - providing equal opportunities in access, participation and learning.
- It recognizes that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs and therefore, if the right to education is to mean anything, systems must be designed and programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs (e.g. children living in poverty, ethnic, linguistic or cultural minorities, children with disabilities, children from remote or nomadic populations, children of migrant workers, working children).
- It seeks to understand all barriers to access and learning and recognizes that many children may find learning difficult in ordinary schools as they are currently constituted. Repetition rates and poor learning achievements are importantly linked to *what* and *how* teachers teach and interact with learners. Children may find the curriculum uninspiring and irrelevant or they may have problems to understand the language of instruction.
- It recognizes that mainstream education needs to accommodate different styles and rates of learning while ensuring quality education to all children through appropriate and *differentiated* curricula, classroom organizational arrangements, and flexible teaching strategies.
- Inclusive child-friendly education is about transforming education focusing on (a) effective teacher education, (b) respecting and responding to diversity, (c) appropriate teaching aids and equipment, (d) professionally supported schools and teachers, and (f) active involvement of parents and communities.

Within the philosophy of inclusive education, it is recognized that problems of non-enrolment, non-attendance, high repetition and dropout rates cannot be solved simply by developing separate policies and systems and special schools. Instead, an approach is needed which views difference as *normal* and which tries to develop a system that can respond effectively to diversity! Most children who experience barriers to learning (e.g. those from ethnic, language or cultural minorities; those from poor families; those with different disabilities or learning problems, and working children) do not need different or special education – they need more *flexible* and *individualized* education.

Barriers to learning can be located within the child, within the school, the education system and the broader social, economic and political context. Such barriers manifest themselves in different ways and only become obvious when learning breakdown occurs. Effective learning is directly related to and dependent on the social and emotional well-being of the learner. It is important to recognize that particular conditions may arise, which impact negatively on a child's emotional well-being (e.g.

domestic violence, exploitation, sexual abuse), thus placing the child at risk of learning failure.

Inclusive, effective teachers are observant to signs that reveal a child's emotional well-being. Good teaching is good teaching for all children, because good teachers look for children's individual strengths and weaknesses, and thus for their individual learning and development needs, and address those effectively.

Negative attitudes and certain assumptions regarding difference and diversity in society, for example related to socio-economic status or disability, remain critical barriers to development. For most part, such negative attitudes manifest themselves in the labeling of learners. Sometimes these labels are just negative associations between the learner and the system such as 'dropouts', 'repeaters' or 'slow learners' and while it is important to recognize the impact of such labels on a child's self-esteem, the most serious consequence of such labeling results when it is linked to school placement or exclusion.

It is critical to reflect on teachers' roles in creating or reducing barriers to learning as their attitudes and behaviour can either enhance or impede a child's ability to learn. Teachers and other adults in that respect may not always be good role-models for children. How, for example, can we expect children to learn to be tolerant and respectful to others, if adults continue to ridicule certain children for not being able to learn as other children? And, how can we expect children to learn to resolve conflicts in non-violent ways, if adults continue to use corporal punishment on children?

Factors such as the classroom's physical environment, the child's level of psychological comfort in the classroom, and the quality of interaction between the teacher and the child affect whether and to what extent a child is able to learn and develop to his or her full potential.

Inclusive child friendly education focuses on what children **can** do and on their potential for further learning, rather than on failings and shortcomings. This means that teachers need to create learning environments where all children are *encouraged* and *enabled* to reach their potential and where all children feel comfortable about who they are, where they come from, and what they believe in.

An effective *support* system is essential if schools are to become inclusive and child-friendly and give every child the opportunity to become a successful learner. 'Support' includes everything that enables children to learn. The most important forms of support are available to every school: children supporting children, teachers supporting teachers, parents becoming partners in the education of their children and communities supporting their local schools. There are also more formal types of support to mainstream inclusive schools such as from teachers with specialist knowledge, resource centres and professionals from other sectors.

**Inclusive Education (IE) defined:** IE is an approach to improve the education system by limiting and removing barriers to learning and acknowledging individual children's needs and potential. The goal of this approach is to make a significant impact on the educational opportunities and outcomes of those (1) who attend school but who for different reasons do not achieve adequately and (2) those who are not attending mainstream school but who could attend if families, communities, schools and education systems were more responsive to their needs and rights. From: Promoting IE in Bangladesh "Potential & Challenges"

In the move towards more inclusive child-friendly education, the curriculum may be a major obstacle but at the same time also an important tool for change. The nature of the curriculum at all phases of education involves a number of components, which are all important in facilitating or undermining effective learning. Key components of the curriculum include the style and tempo of teaching and learning, the relevance of what is being taught, the way the classroom is managed and organized, and materials and equipment used in the teaching-learning process.

Developing a curriculum, which is inclusive of all learners, may involve broadening current definitions of learning. Though there is a need for a basic standard curriculum, it should be flexible enough to respond to the needs of all students. It should, therefore, not be rigidly prescribed at a national or central level. Inclusive child-friendly curricula are constructed flexibly to allow not only for school-level adaptations and developments, but also for modifications to meet the individual student's needs. Teachers must learn how to adjust a basic standard curriculum in such a way that it becomes relevant and learning-friendly for different children. It is important to realize that the process of *how* knowledge, skills and values are transmitted is as important a part of the curriculum as *what* about these is learned.

Inclusive education research and pilot programmes from all over the world – including many low income countries – suggest some key elements for more inclusive curricula leaving room for schools and individual teachers to develop adaptations that make better sense in the local context and for the individual learner, such as, for example, assessment based on individual progress rather than on peer competition. Such curricula should not only value academic learning, but also teach and *model* understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Inflexible and content-heavy curricula are usually the major cause of segregation and exclusion within a classroom..... From: Open File on Inclusive Education (UNESCO)

To facilitate and sustain the process towards educational inclusion, extra financial resources may be needed. However, such resources are needed for better quality education in general! Poor education provision is very costly as it often results in high repetition and dropout rates and poor learning achievements. Part of the process towards inclusive child-friendly education requires a critical analysis of why the mainstream system is not successful in providing good quality education for all. It also asks for identification of existing resources and innovative practices in local contexts, and examining barriers to participation and learning. Improving the mainstream system from an inclusive perspective benefits *all* children.



Inclusive child friendly education brings quality improvement in teaching and learning because there is:

- \*More experience-based, hands-on learning and teaching children to reason
- \*More active learning (doing, talking, trying out)
- \*More responsibility given to students for their work, goal setting and monitoring
- \*More enacting and modeling of the principles of democracy
- \*More attention for emotional needs and different cognitive styles of individual students; \*More cooperative activities
- \*More reliance upon teachers' descriptive evaluation of student growth.

**And**

- \*Less whole-class, teacher-directed lecturing and instruction
- \*Less passive learning (sitting and listening)
- \*Less rote memorization
- \*Less stress on competition and grading
- \*Less tracking and leveling students into "ability groups"
- \*Less use of and reliance on standardized tests.

It is a *myth* that there are different categories of learners such as those with "special" and with "ordinary" needs. Education systems have clung to this myth against better judgment, and continue to use undifferentiated instruction as the norm. There is no *special* education – just *education* and good teaching is good teaching for all children!

Mainstream schools and classrooms need to change into more flexible and resourceful environments. The assumption that there are special schools and learning centres needed for special groups of learners not only serves to divide and exclude, but also fails to describe the nature of need, which is regarded as 'special'. Most factors influencing educational segregation or exclusion have little to do with education. Children from poor homes, working children, migrant workers' children, and children with disabilities are not out of mainstream schools because of poverty or disability, but because of social prejudice and resistance to change. It has resulted in a situation where disadvantaged children who have the greatest need of education and of being included in mainstream society, are thus the least likely to receive it.

Any child may at times suffer exclusion. Critical are those affected in major and permanent ways by *where* they live (e.g. remote villages, migrant workers' settlements), *how* they live (e.g. in poverty, malnourished), *what* they or their parents do (e.g. sex workers, road workers), and *who* they are (e.g. with disabilities, from religious minorities). These children are unable to break the cycle of marginalization and discrimination without significant, persistent affirmative action by local communities, national governments and international agencies.

Mainstream systems need to seek out, find and include those learners that have been under-served, and mainstream teachers need to learn how to support children for whom learning is difficult due to family circumstances, poverty, earlier experiences, different mother tongue, or disability. This should be based on the belief that children in a classroom are never homogenous and should not be treated and taught as if they were.

There are no “special needs” children. All children have the same needs of belonging, love, security, health, individuality, stimulation and self-esteem, and it is normal that learning needs of individual children differ! “Special needs” has become a new stigmatizing label which reinforces the deeply entrenched deficit views of ‘difference’, which define certain learners as ‘lacking something’.

“Special needs” labels are not useful for teachers as they say little about *how* to teach a certain child. A teacher may have two children with learning problems in his/her class who need very different approaches, because children with disabilities are as different from each other as children without disabilities.

Furthermore, many children with disabilities (especially those with visual and hearing impairments) may not have special educational needs at all, provided they are given the assistive devices they need! On the other hand, there are many children who do not have disabilities, but who experience learning problems – arguably all of us do in certain areas at certain times.

Schools must take up their responsibility to provide quality teaching and learning for all children more seriously. And, when seeking explanations for lack of achievement, they must be prepared to consider inadequacies in the teaching-learning conditions rather than inadequacies in children themselves!

Many of the pioneers of inclusion were originally ardent supporters of special education. However, they have realized the limitations and *potential damage* of the special needs philosophy and practice, while also acknowledging some of its effective child-friendly approaches which could be integrated in quality mainstream education, such as (1) the creative child-focused teaching, responding to individual learning styles, (2) the holistic approach to the child, focusing on all areas of functioning, (3) the close links between families and schools and (4) the development of specific technologies, aids and equipment to facilitate access to education and to help overcome barriers to learning.

For good reasons, much of the attention in the development of inclusive education to date has been focused on the school and, particularly, the classroom. However, many of the education barriers may be outside the school for example at the level of national policy (e.g. educational inclusion being an integral part of the mainstream national education policy or not), of the structures of national systems of schooling and teacher education (e.g. educational inclusion being part of mainstream teacher education or not) of the way society views diversity (e.g. different ethnic and religious traditions and values included in the mainstream curriculum) of the management of budgets and resources (e.g. rural versus urban schools), etc.

Inclusive child-friendly education should be seen in terms of a *system-wide* quality development, where inclusion is part of the wider attempt to create a more effective system and a more diversity-friendly society. The movement towards inclusive education can be justified on a number of important grounds:

- **Educational justification:** the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together – the rich and the poor, boys and girls, with different abilities,

from ethnic, language and cultural minority and majority groups – meaning that they have to develop ways in teaching that respond to individual differences and thus benefit *all* children.

- **Social justification:** inclusive schools are able to change attitudes to difference and diversity by educating all children together and form the basis for a just and tolerant society.
- **Economic justification:** it is less costly to establish and maintain mainstream schools which provide quality education to all children than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specializing in different groups of children.

Most countries in the world – and Bhutan is no exception – are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, and comprise a number of different ways of living. Nevertheless, cultures are often seen as monolithic, and the voices of the less powerful such as children, those living in poverty or in remote areas or people with disabilities may not be heard. Education systems are commonly designed on the basis of homogenous delivery rather than diversity, resulting in marginalization and exclusion both within and from the systems.

Inclusive education ultimately aims at creating a more inclusive society where differences and diversity are acknowledged, respected and CELEBRATED!

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## Writing Standard in English in Primary Schools in Bhutan: A Sample Study.

- Needrup Zangpo, Assistant Research Officer, CERD.

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### Introduction

Over the last several years, there has been a general feeling in the Bhutanese society - especially in the education circle - that the standard of English in Bhutan has declined or is on the decline. This has caused an uneasy stir among parents and stakeholders in education. There is, though, no study done so far on the subject to answer this basic question: Does this perception hold water?

While my modest study does not directly answer this question, it does shed some light on the current standard of English in the primary schools in Bhutan. This, when seen in the light of the standard of English in the past, provides an answer to the question.

Apart from that, my study also seeks to answer one important question that all of us have been asking ourselves through the years: Are we up to the mark in English? This is done by juxtaposing the standard of English reflected in the paper with the standard set in the CERD's *The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan*.

The second subject discussed in the paper also concerns the reality and perception with regard to the standard of English. There is in Bhutan a widely held perception - even consensus - that pupils in urban schools do better in English than their counterparts in remote schools. The question, once again, is: Does this perception hold water?

### Methodology

Over a period of two months, I collected over 620 writings of pupils from five remote primary schools and five urban primary and lower secondary schools. I meticulously went through each of the writings and broadly grouped them into three categories - good, average, and poor. In this study, I found Delphi method of evaluation most appropriate.

A panel of English experts comprising reputed and experienced teacher-educators, college lecturer, schoolteachers, among others, was formed. A representative number of writings from all the three categories was sent to the experts for evaluation by post. The experts' rating of the writings was not influenced, in any way, either by my rating or one another's rating. While I sent to the experts a mix of the children's writings, I made sure that they did not know my rating of the writings so that their judgment was independent. Each expert's rating was also independent of the rating of any other member on the panel because, first, no panel member knew another member and, second, the whole process of evaluation was done by post.

In the end, when the writings came back, a broad consensus was distilled. The ratings of most of the experts dovetailed and the experts' collective rating in turn dovetailed with that of mine.

The performance of the pupils is provided in the graphical analysis of the three categories. To augment the conclusion reached through the above method, a graphical analysis of the Class VI English examination results of the ten schools is done.

## 1. A General Profile

### I. Good (grade IV, V, VI)

#### Our school.

A school is a place where we study. School is like a temple where we get more knowledge. In 1978 primary school was opened. In 1998 ~~se~~ Junior school was opened. Learning includes development of mind, body and character. There are 32 classes and 1552 students. We think that our school is being develop.

Our school's name is Changzambodowarsecondary school. Our school is located near the school hospital. In the school we can meet many different friends. There are 44 teachers and 5 non-teaching staff. Our Headteachers name is Mr. Lasang Norbu and our assistants Headteacher is Mr. D.B Rai. Our school has about 21 gardens. The non-teaching staffs are ~~two~~ two typists, two peon and one store encharge. We have many facilities like dancing competition, essay competition and sports. In our school there are library. From the library we can improve our English knowledge. language. Our school has strict rules and regulations. We should follow ~~to~~ the rules.

To conclude, <sup>my essay saying</sup> Our school is like the heaven and temple we pray and study.

Thank you.  
Thinley Choden  
Class-VI 'C'  
~~2018~~ C, ZL, S.S.

13% of grade VI, 7.70% of grade V, and 0% of grade IV pupils perform at or below this level as shown in figure 1.

The pupils performing at this level generally

- Show good control of grammar in simple sentences (subject-verb agreement, tenses, use of simple punctuation marks like full-stop and comma).
- Spell most of the common simple words correctly most of the time.
- Organize their writings in a good way (an attempt to write an introduction and a conclusion, paragraphs, sequence of thoughts etc.)
- Attempt to write complex sentences, but often get them wrong.
- Avoid long loose sentences with multiple use of *and*.

## II. Average (grade IV, V, VI)

My school

Pg1= My school name is Babesa primary school. My school is above the road. My school build in 1979. It is made of wood, mud and metals. My school is very beautiful. Our headteacher's name is Laga Tshering. In my school there is 1000 boys and girls.

Pg2= In my school there is 28 teachers. Our school is under the Thimphu Dzongkha. There is 22 class's in our school. There is one library room. There is one staff room. There is two toilet. One for teacher and one for studrens. Infront of our school there is flower garden and there is tree. some small and some big. Infront of our library room there is headteacher's house. Under our headteacher house there is one store room.

Pg3= Near our school there big ground where we play under the road there is two shops. one traditional shop and another is morden shop. In our school there is two water tap. One is near the toilet and another is near the library room. There is one canopy near the toilet. There is rock garden near the class.

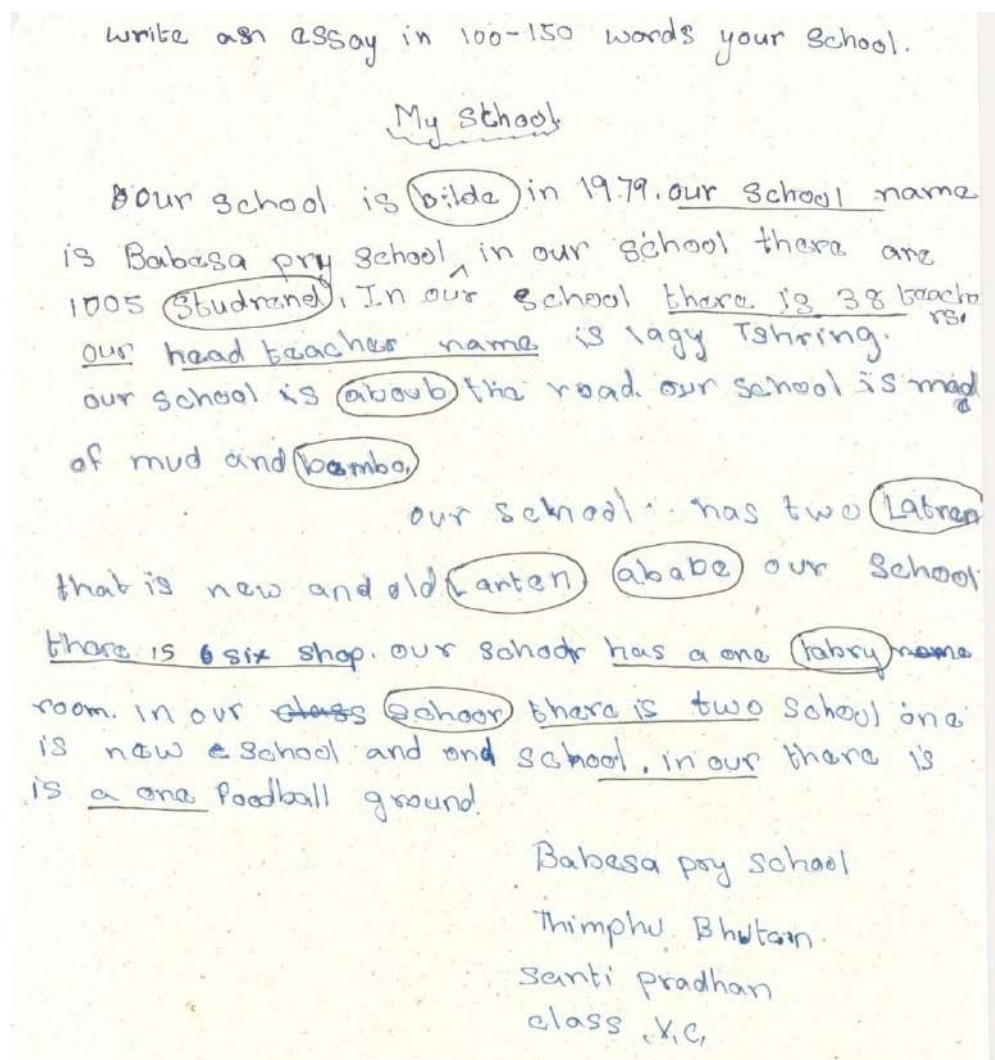
NAME = Sonam Pelden.  
class = V (C).  
Roll No = (39)  
School = Babesa primary school

66.40% Of grade VI, 43.40% of grade V, and 0% of grade IV students perform at this level as shown in figure 1.

The pupils performing at this level generally

- Show weakness in spelling, even of words which are familiar to them (graden [for garden], tolite [toilet], primery [for primary], libry [for library], social work, compition...)
- Show weakness in grammar (subject-verb agreement- there is 28 teachers, there is two shop; use of possessives - my school name is...; capitalization - pema, raju; punctuation - 'and' is used instead of full-stop resulting in long running sentences).
- Often get incoherent in organization of thoughts.
- Often do not organize their writing (no introduction, conclusion, or paragraphs).

### III. Poor (grade IV, V, VI)



Write an essay in 100-150 words about your ~~class~~ school.

my school.

~~This is~~ a Phegari community school.

2) There are 8 window

3) There are one door.

4) There are 100 teacher.

5) your class are.

~~School are~~

5) out

Name = kezung choden.

19.8% of grade VI, 49% of grade V, and 100% of grade IV pupils perform at this level as shown in figure 1.

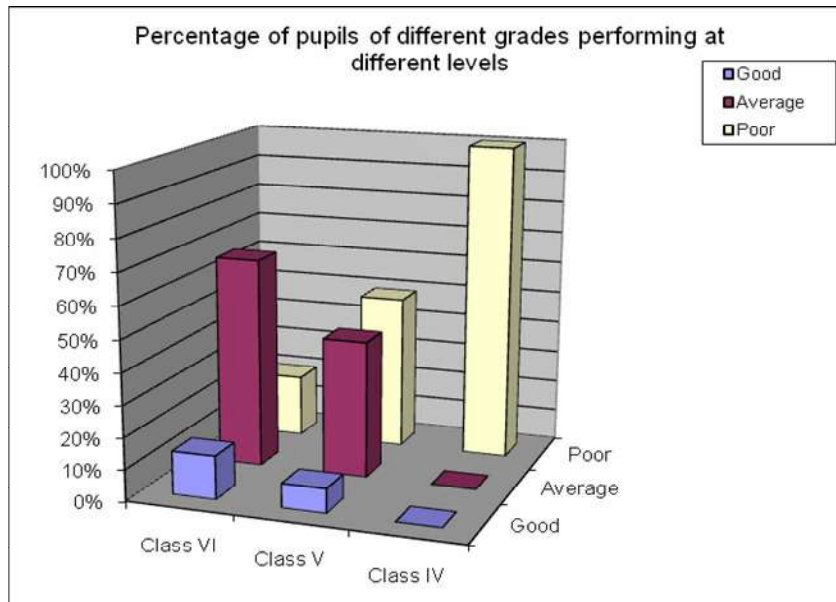
The pupils performing at or below this level generally

- Are extremely poor in spelling (bilde [for build], studrend, labry, football, primry, heat teacher, ston...)
- Use mangled grammatical structures (our school name is...; there is 38 teachers; there is six shop; there is a one football ground; our school have...; we has...; our school is built in 1965; our present head teacher was; santi pradhan...)
- Show very poor organization of thoughts.

Category	Class VI	Class V	Class IV
Good	13.80%	7.70%	0
Average	66.40%	43.40%	0
Poor	19.80%	49%	100%



Figure 1

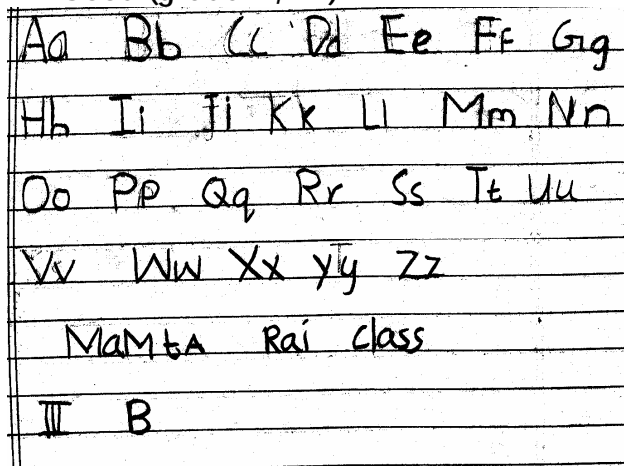


### Discussion

While I have chosen the three essays that best represent their categories, there are many essays of differing standards within each category (as in the two sample writings in the Poor category above). Considering the three broad categories into which I have divided the writings, no category can be a blanket category.

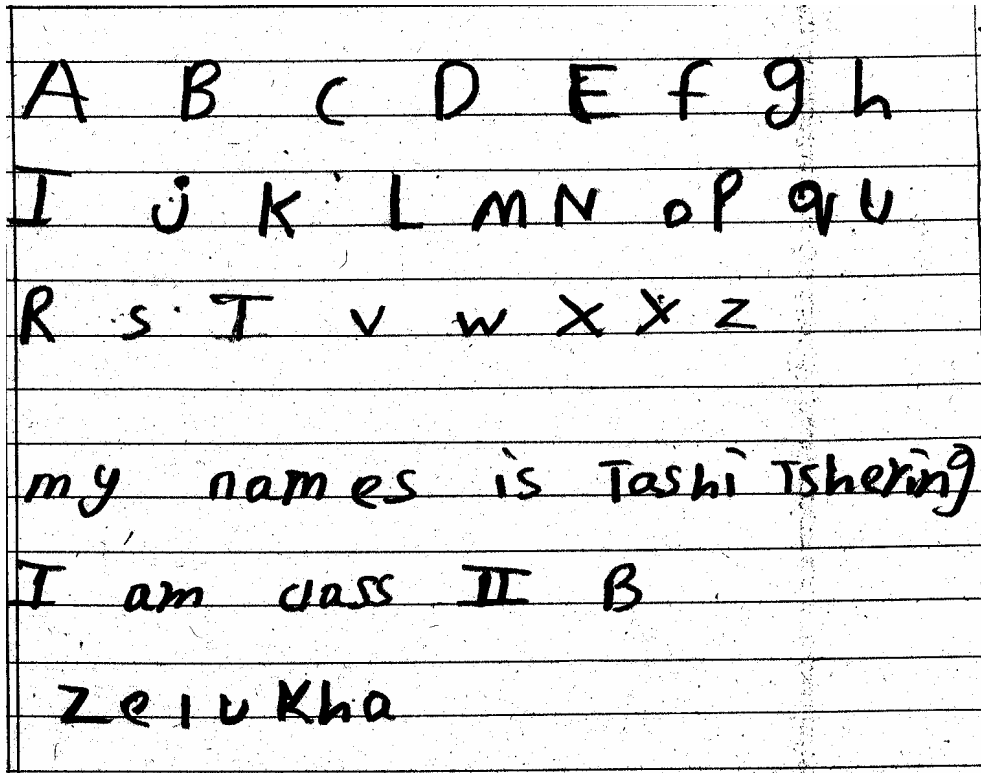
The three essays are among the best from their categories. It is in this light that the figures are worrying. Only 13.8% of grade VI pupils can perform at the level Good. The fact that no grade IV pupil can work at levels Good and Average means that they work at or, mostly, below the Poor sample given above (considering that it is one of the best from the category).

#### IV. Good (grade II, III)



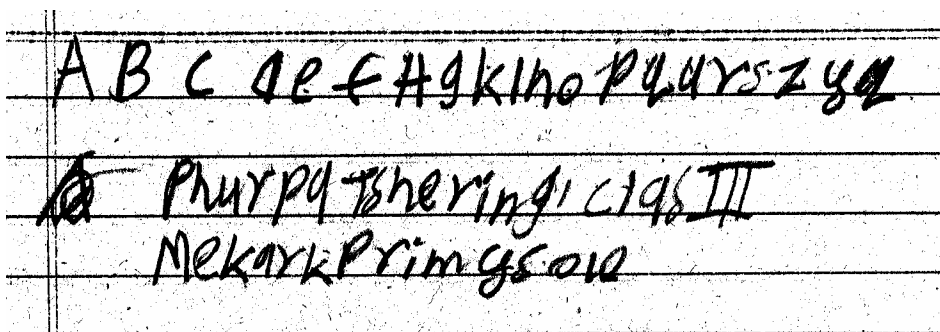
48.8% of grade II and 58.5% of grade III pupils perform at this level as shown in figure 2.

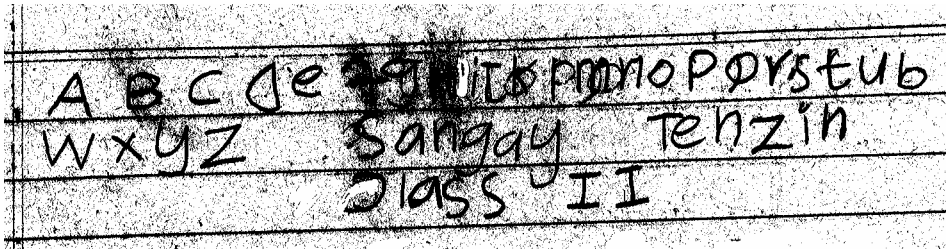
V. Average (grade II, III)



29% of grade II and 18.9% of grade III pupils perform at this level as shown in figure 2.

VI. Poor (grade II, III)

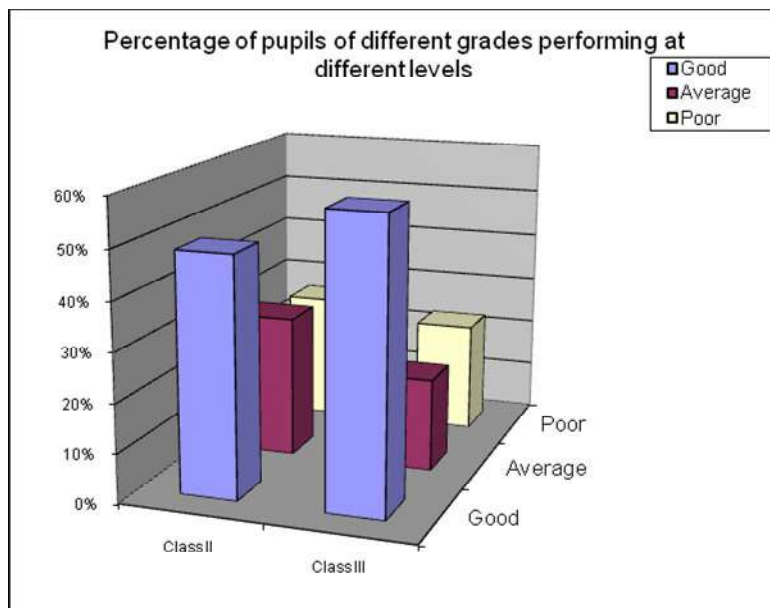




26% of grade II and 22.6% of grade III pupils perform at this level as shown in figure 2.

Category	Class II	Class III
Good	48.80%	58.50%
Average	29%	18.90%
Poor	26.20%	22.60%

Figure 2



## Discussion

Here too, both the figures indicating pupils' performance at levels Good and Poor are not encouraging. 22.6% of grade III pupils who are working at level Poor, for instance, may take another one year or more to be able to write the English alphabets correctly, which probably means that they are highly likely to pass out of primary school half-baked. Generally, one expects children to know and be able to write the English alphabet correctly at the end of their pre-primary class. But, even at the end of Class III, only a little more than a half of them are able write the alphabets.

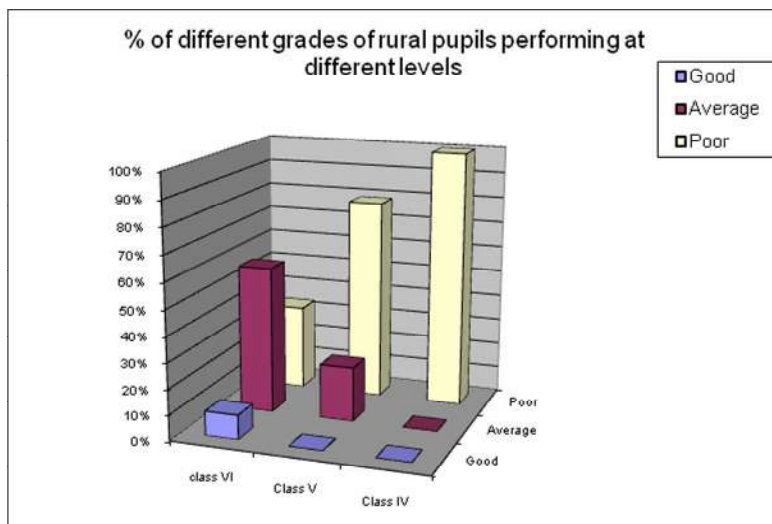
## 2. Rural Versus Urban Schools: A Comparison of Writing Standard

The following two graphs (figures 3& 4) project a clear picture of the performance of urban and rural schools. The comparison is drawn only between the three higher classes: IV, V, and VI.

### I. Rural schools

Category	Class VI	Class V	Class IV
Good	9.50%	0%	0
Average	57.10%	21.40%	0
Poor	33.30%	78.60%	100%

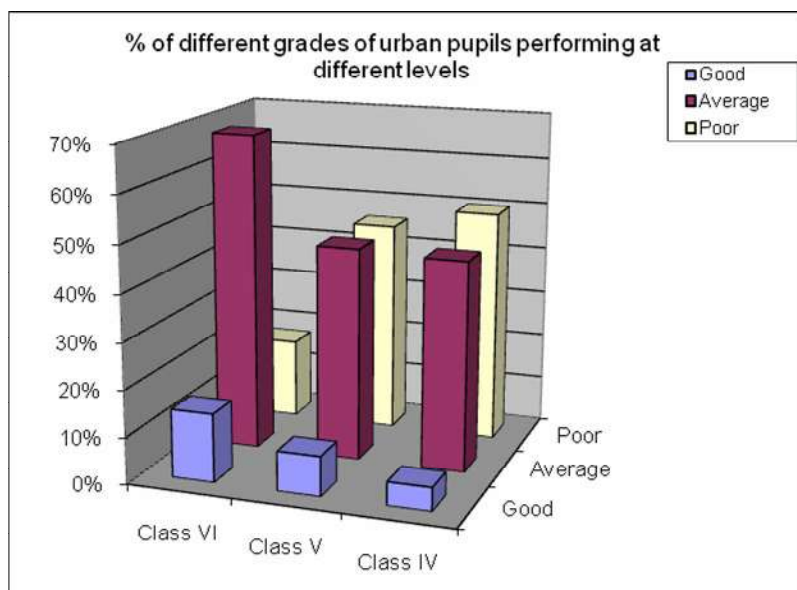
Figure 3



### II. Urban schools

Category	Class VI	Class V	Class IV
Good	14.60%	8.50%	5%
Average	68.10%	45.70%	45%
Poor	17.30%	45.70%	50%

Figure 4



### Discussion

From the above figures, it is clear that the children in urban primary schools do better in written English than the children in rural primary schools. The dichotomy set between rural schools and good standard of English is, therefore, reasonable. To supplement and confirm the conclusion of my study, I have done a comparative graphical analysis of five rural and five urban schools. The two conclusions dovetailed proving that the children of rural schools are indeed not as good as their urban brethren are. But why? I will briefly touch upon the question later in the paper.

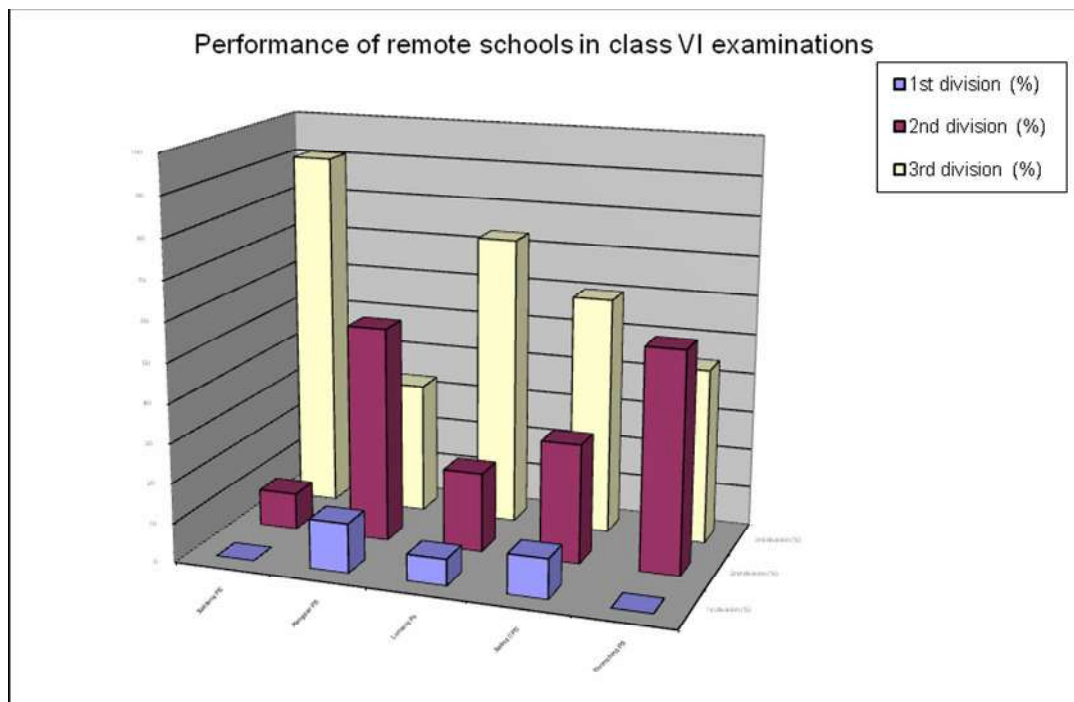
### 3. Rural and Urban Schools: Examination Results

I have categorized the results into three divisions: first division (60 marks and above), second division (between 50-59 marks), and third division (49 marks and below), which can be equated to Good, Average, and Poor categories respectively. The results interpreted in the graphs below are the cumulative sum of Class Assessment (50%), Mid-term examinations (20%), and Annual examinations (30%).

#### I. Rural Schools

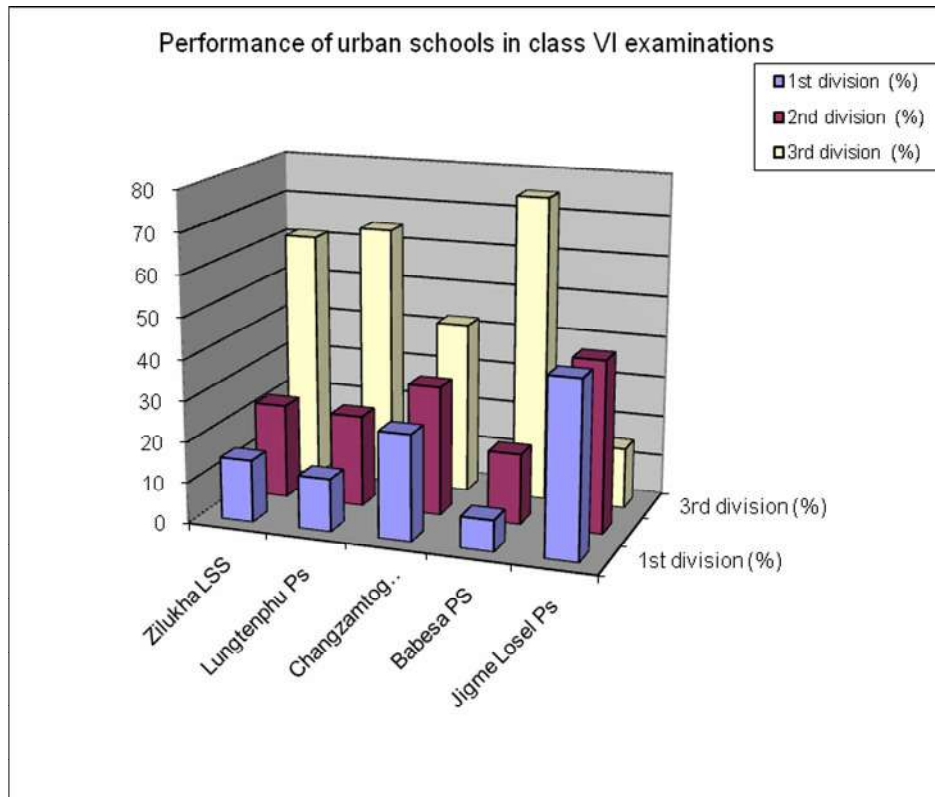
School	1 <sup>st</sup> division (%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> division (%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> division (%)
Sakteng PS	0	9.1	90.9
Kangpar PS	12.5	54.2	33.3
Lumang Ps	6.7	20	73.3
Saling CPS	10	30	60
Thrimshing PS	0	55.6	44.4

Figure 5



II. Urban Schools

School	1 <sup>st</sup> division (%)	2 <sup>nd</sup> division (%)	3 <sup>rd</sup> division (%)
Zilukha LSS	15.3	23.3	61.4
Lungtenphu Ps	12.9	22.6	64.5
Changzamtog LSS	26	31.8	42.2
Babesa PS	7.6	17.4	75
Jigme Losel Ps	43	42	15



### Discussion

The conclusion of the first analysis and that of this dovetail, proving, now strongly, that the children of rural schools are indeed not as good in written English as the children of urban schools are. Besides this, this conclusion is also in line with my earlier discussion on the percentage of pupils of different grades performing at Good, Average, and Poor levels. (Please refer to figure 1)

#### **4. The Standard of Writing against the Standards for Writing: In the light of *The Silken Knot***

The Levels of Achievement in *The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan* "are intended to be markers of student progress towards the Standards and not to describe grade or class level performance, except in a general sense." "In a general sense", class PP-IV are expected to meet the indicators listed in Levels 1-4, classes V-VI those indicators shown in Level 5.

First, I will discuss the standard of the children's writings against the indicators of levels of achievement, level 5 and below, since pupils of grade VI and below are expected to meet the standards set in these levels. Then I will briefly comment on the discussion.

The pupils in the Poor category cannot measure up to the standard set in Levels 1-5. As discussed at the beginning of the paper under the Poor sample writings (classes IV, V, VI), the pupils demonstrate an extreme weakness in spelling, basic grammar, and

organization of thoughts and ideas. While even at level 1 (class PP) the pupils are expected to shape letters clearly, recognize capital and small letters and use full-stops, even class III pupils in Poor category fall far short of these indicators.

The standard of writing demonstrated by the pupils in Average category (classes IV, V, VI) meets the indicators listed in level 1 comfortably and at best measures up to the indicators in level 2.

The standard of writing demonstrated by the pupils in Good category (classes IV, V, VI) meets the indicators listed in level 4. Level 4 states that students should be able to spell common simple polysyllabic words accurately, use a range of punctuations, begin to write grammatically complex sentences and so forth. The students in Good category, as discussed earlier, are mostly able to meet all these indicators. But, they fall short of the indicators in level 5.

While level 5 requires students to write complex sentences correctly, they can at best make only a faltering attempt at them. While the Level requires them to use complex paragraph structures and complex vocabulary, they are barely able to use simple words correctly and simple paragraph structures loosely.

In view of the above observation, Class II and III students are a long way behind the standards set in *The Silken Knot*.

Going by the above observation, 66.4% of Class VI and 43.4% of Class V students are working at the level expected to be fit for classes PP and I. A mere 13.8% of Class VI students and 7.7% of Class V students are working at the level set for Classes IV or V. 19.8% of Class VI, 49% of Class V, and the whole of Class IV students do not at all have a place in *The Silken Knot*.

## **Conclusion**

This small study shows where our primary school children stand in terms of their writing ability in English, albeit in a small way. While the study makes an attempt to bring to light some of the difficulties and shortcomings associated with our children's written English, it does not trace the root cause of the difficulties and shortcomings. This could be an interesting and revealing research avenue for future researchers.

This study could serve as a benchmark for writing standard in English of Bhutan's primary children in general. It could also be a comparative benchmark study of the writing performance of primary children in urban and rural schools.

A similar kind of study a few years from now will show how much our schools have evolved down the years in terms of quality and equitable delivery of education to our young children.



## ***Post Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English for In-Service Teachers: A Sample Survey Report of Trashigang Dzongkhag***

- Seema Murugan, Asst. Prof. in English  
Dept. of HSS, IIT, Kharagpur, India.

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### **Introduction**

During his official visit to Sherubtse College on 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2002, the Director General, Ministry of Education, expressed his keen interest in the college offering a course to improve the teaching skills of English teachers in the schools of Bhutan. The idea was very strongly emphasized by the Principal to the Department of English.

The author of this report carried out a survey to find out the actual difficulties faced by the in-service teachers of English. The aim is to provide the services of Sherubtse College as the premier institute of higher learning in offering a PGDTE to the English teachers of classes IX to XII so that they can upgrade their teaching capabilities and qualifications.

### **The Survey**

A simple questionnaire was framed to assess the above-mentioned objectives. It was distributed to the 20 English teachers (with experiences ranging from 4 months to 15 years of teaching English at various levels) in four higher secondary schools of Trashigang Dzongkhag. The responses were analyzed and they led to the following conclusions:

#### **A. Duration of the Proposed Course and Extended Contact Programme (ECP)**

Regarding the duration, 50% of the respondents wanted it to be for two years with four weeks of ECP during the winter break every year, whereas about 36% of them expressed that the duration should be of one year with six weeks of ECP. The rest of the opinions varied from the previous two in that the duration should be of three years with three weeks of ECP every year.

#### **B. Certification**

Regarding the kind of certificate to be awarded at the end of the course, approximately 64% of the respondents expected a Degree and 29% wanted a Diploma. Only 7% of them expressed that it could even be a Certificate Course.

#### **C. Weighting for the Different Components of the Course**

The opinions of the in-service English teachers regarding the weighting for the three different components of the proposed course (namely - Extended Contact Programme, Teacher Marked Assignments and Course-End Examinations) were of varying nature. About 45% of them desired that the weighting of the ECP should be above 50% and

that of the CEE should be less than 20%. Their opinion about the TMA seemed to be more or less consistent, that is ranging from 30% to 40%.

#### **D. Areas of Difficulty faced by the Respondents in Teaching English:**

##### **1. Teaching English**

50% of the respondents found it difficult to teach Literary Genres (Prose, Poetry and Drama) and 36% of them had difficulty in teaching Language (Grammar and Composition). Only 14% of them experienced difficulty in teaching Communication Skills.

##### **2. English Grammar**

On the specific areas of English Grammar which the teachers faced difficulty in while teaching, all of them seemed to have divided opinions on different areas. But on the average, Sequence of Tenses, Transformation of Sentences and Concord (Subject-Verb Agreement) seemed to be the most difficult to teach, followed by Voice and Direct-Indirect Speech. The rest of the topics like Modals, Spelling, Punctuation and Articles appeared to be relatively easy to teach.

##### **3. Prescribed Text Books**

Regarding the teaching of prescribed texts, a little over 40% of the teachers faced difficulty in teaching topics like Theme and Style. 35% of them found it difficult to explain the Background to the text and talk about the Author and the Literary Age. Most of them felt it was easy to summarize the Plot and justify the Title of the text. And in general, it was easier for them to teach students how to attempt questions on the text.

##### **4. Reading Skills**

Almost all the teachers engaged in some activity or the other to hone the reading skills of their students. Most of them made the students read aloud in the class and some of them even conducted exclusive reading classes at least twice a week. Some teachers corrected the student's reading on the spot whereas some others tried to identify the shy and weaker ones and trained them separately. The majority of them were of the opinion that the school library should have more books on a variety of topics so that students could read books of their own choice apart from the prescribed ones.

##### **5. Writing Skills**

On the areas focused upon by the teachers during a writing practice/class/session, 43% focused on Note-Taking, 29% on Punctuation and almost all of them equally stressed upon Paragraphing and the Use of Appropriate Style. Some teachers even mentioned that the students should be made to write Thesis Statements and develop them further so that it would be a kind of writing practice for them.

## 6. Class Lecture

During a class lecture, about 40% of the teachers expressed their difficulty in teaching Vocabulary Building whereas around 30% of them found it tough to teach the Use of Literary Language. Pronunciation and the Use of Figurative Language were not as difficult to teach as the other topics mentioned above.

## 7. Respondents' Suggestions for Improving the Overall Proficiency Level in English

60% of the respondents felt that there was a scope to improve upon the Language aspect, whereas 30% emphasized on the scope of improving Speaking and Listening Skills. Not many teachers stressed on the scope for improving Writing Standards, Reading and Literature.

E. Some suggestions given by the teachers:

- The speaking of English in schools should be made compulsory.
- The teaching of English Grammar from the primary level itself should be emphasized much more.
- The school library should be further equipped with good books on English Grammar, a variety of magazines, better learning resources and other reading materials.
- The school should encourage the organization of workshops and invite guest speakers exclusively on topics related to English.
- An English teachers' conference should be held bi-annually so that the teachers could meet and discuss their successes and/or failures in improving the teaching of English.
- Some good quality Audio and Video Cassettes/CDs should be provided to schools so that both teachers and students could improve their Listening and Speaking skills.
- There should be a change in the examination pattern so as to include an Oral section in the English paper.

### F. Expectations of the respondents from the Proposed Course

- To grasp the basic concepts and principles of teaching English
- To learn useful teaching methods/techniques
- To know more about English and get a better performance from students
- To learn more about English Language Teaching
- To solve some of the main problems of students and make them improve in written and spoken English
- To be specialized and be able to teach higher classes
- To learn the theory and demonstration of teaching English (during ECP) and receive follow-up and assistance after the ECP

## Conclusion

Keeping in mind the expressed opinions and concerns of the in-service English teachers, the present proposal on the need of a PGDTE for in-service English teachers

of Bhutan was placed before the Teacher Education Board in 2003 for their consideration and further directives. The proposal was approved and subsequently the Department of English at Sherubtse College is trying to finalize the Course Curriculum, the Teaching Methodology, the Mode of Assessment and Suggested Readings/References for the proposed course. On being finalized the Department of English will launch the PGDTE in the near future.

[Readers are invited to the recommendations made in *The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan*, CERD, 2002].

\* \* \*

## APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

### Part A

- To help in providing a background for the statistical analysis of the data, please give answers to the questions below:
  - Your name :
  - Qualification (Academic/Professional) :
  - Name of the school in which you teach :
  - Your specialized subjects :
  - Subjects you teach :
  - Total teaching experience :
  - Teaching experience in English :
  - Level of students you teach English : IX/ X/ XI/ XII
- Would you like to discuss the idea of this proposed course in detail?  
Yes/No.
- What would you suggest should be the duration of the proposed course?
  - One year
  - Two years
  - Three years
- What kind of certificate would you prefer at the end of the course?
  - Certificate
  - Diploma
  - Degree
- How long do you think should be the extended contact programme?
  - 3 weeks
  - 4 weeks
  - 6 weeks
- What is your expectation from the course during and after the extended contract programme?
- What is your opinion regarding the weighting for the different components of the course? Please write in percentage.

#### Course Components

#### Weighting

- Extended Contract Programme .....%
- Teacher Marked Assignments .....%
- Course End Exams .....%

**Part B**

8. Rank the areas where there is scope for improving the proficiency in English in their order of importance.

	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Rank</b>
a	Speaking and Listening	
b	Writing	
c	Reading and Literature	
d	Language	
e	Any other (please specify)	

9. What is the actual area of difficulty you face while teaching English? Please list in their order of importance.

	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Rank</b>
a	Language (grammar and composition)	
b	Literary Genres (prose, poetry, drama)	
c	Communication Skills	
d	Any other (please specify)	

10. In which area of English grammar do you face problems while teaching? Please list in the order you think important.

	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Rank</b>
a	Spelling	
b	Punctuation	
c	Articles	
d	Modals	
e	Voice	
f	Concord (subject- verb agreement)	
g	Direct and Indirect Speech	
h	Sequence of tenses	
i	Transformation of sentences	
j	Any other (please specify)	

11. Which area of literature do you find difficult to teach while handling the prescribed texts? Please list in order of importance.

	<b>Areas</b>	<b>Rank</b>
a	Background to the text	
b	Background to the author	
c	Background to the literary age	
d	Thematic concerns	
e	Stylistic devices	
f	Summarizing the plot	
g	Explaining and justifying the title	
h	Clarifying the doubts in questions on the prescribed texts	

i	Teaching students how to attempt the answers	
j	Any other (please specify)	

12. What do you do to hone-up the reading skills of your students?

13. When the class is in the writing practice, what are the areas you focus on? Please rank in order of importance.

	Areas	Rank
a	Note Taking	
b	Paragraphing	
c	Punctuation	
d	Use of Appropriate Style	
e	Any Other (Please specify)	

14. During the course of a class lecture, which of the following is difficult to teach? (Please list according to your opinion)

	Areas	Rank
a	Pronunciation	
b	Building Vocabulary	
c	Use of Literal Language	
d	Use of Figurative Language	
e	Any Other (Please specify)	

15. How many hours in a week do you spend in teaching language?

Areas	Hours
Grammar	
Composition	
Comprehension	
Precis writing	
Report Writing	
Any other (Please specify)	

16. What suggestions would you like to make for the improvement of the overall proficiency level in English?

17. Please use the space below if there is any other comment/ suggestions you would like to make regarding the teaching of English

### Part C

18. Make a graph of Conflict, Climax, Denouement and Anti-climax of a Shakespearean tragedy?

19. What constitutes the Tragic Hero of a Shakespearean tragedy?

20. The standard procedure for teaching essay writing is: Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising and Editing. What methods do you use and how effective are they?
21. In literature there is a term called the Point of View. Explain briefly the following Points of View:
- The omniscient author
  - The intruding author
  - First person autobiographical
  - First person observer
  - First person protagonist
  - The naïve narrator
22. Which do you find easier to teach, Language or Literature? Why?
23. What are the main ingredients that you concentrate on while you teach short stories?
24. Whether you teach novels or drama, you come across two types of characters. Explain briefly these two types of characters:
- Flat and round characters
  - Static and growing characters
25. Teaching of literature has more relevance now than ever before because of the fast changing human values. What do you do to arouse the interest of the students in the serious pursuit of the study of literature? What do you do to relate what the students study in literature to everyday life experience?

\* \* \*



## **Ecos From the Field** **How We Did It!**

Nangkhor Higher Secondary School started in 1997 as a Junior High School, to be upgraded to a High School in 2000. It was only in 2002 that it got further upgraded to a Higher Secondary School. The first batch of ISC (Class XII) students graduated in December 2003. Yet another year passed with the second batch of ISC students graduating in December 2004.

The graduates were all eagerly waiting for the result, not to mention the whole family of Nangkhor Higher Secondary School. This is when it made the headline. The BBS aired it, Kuenselonline netted it and the phones rang: **Nangkhor Higher Secondary School, Pemagatshel, has topped the ISC results with a pass percentage of 98.61 percent.**

### No Secret

Here in Nangkhor HSS, we tried to reflect on our achievement. The class of 2004 was asked, teachers commented, people were enquired about it.

Going through the events and records of the year 2004, we came across the newly pinned motto of the school *"Ultimately the students"*. This made us realize that the students, teachers and other staff, in fact everyone in the NHSS family, had been working towards it directly or indirectly.

As mentioned in our 'working document' and also as explained to the students, we believe that whatever takes places in the school should finally benefit the students. Therefore, the urge, the driving force and the collective actions all led to the welfare, support and happiness of the students.

The very concept 'clicked' with the ideal of our beloved King's notion of gross national happiness. We realized that if a country can work with a concept of 'Gross *National* Happiness', then why can't a school work with a concept of 'Gross *School* Happiness' as a part of the national goal? This could be the first of our 'secret', if at all.

Attitude - positive attitude – could be the second secret. Since the inception of values education into our education system, people, particularly the educationists, have been briefed and trained in imparting this. Schools have tried various methods - through classes, assembly speeches and through representation. This school too has tried it the self-same way.

We found out a new way to tackle this. Helping children change their attitude towards life and walking ahead. If young minds are susceptible to drug abuse, juvenile crime and such other influences, so are they to positive attitude. If we are successful in changing this attitude positively, then the rest is taken care of. No patriotism talks, no elder respects, no anti-drug campaigns nor any sweet parleys would work without the positive attitude.

It is said that 'doing what you are supposed to do is common sense'. This could be the third secret- 'common sense'. In fact, we would call this an open secret. As

**TEACHERS** we are supposed to **TEACH**, as **STUDENTS** we are supposed to **STUDY**, as an **INSTITUTION** we are supposed to **BE COHESIVE**. What or where 'we' fail is to "do what we are supposed to do". Teaching is not only to impart knowledge nor is studying just to read books.

Looking Ahead

The future is uncertain. If we were to predict the future, at this point, then we would be unfair to Nostradamus. But, definitely to keep our position would be our aim. It may be 'difficult', but surely not 'impossible'. Working harder, being better organized, working longer hours, putting in more effort and doing our best shall become our way of life at Nangkor.

*"Our approach across the hundreds of students is in itself a curriculum".*

\* \* \*

## **The Sonam Kuenphen Way...**

Sonam Kuenphen Higher Secondary School  
(II Position in the 2004 Class XII Examinations)

Sonam Kuenphen Higher Secondary School, with its latest achievement in the ISC-XII December 2004 examinations, has become the talk of the town. Many appreciated the success; some thought it just a stroke of luck and a few were even suspicious. While we cannot rule out the play of luck, other factors have been critical. Sonam Kuenphen, with its 98.13 pass percent, has placed itself second in the country and gone down in the history of private schools in Bhutan.

Many things contributed our success – some major and some minor, yet all important to the success we achieved. We may not be in a position to list every one of them, but we think the following factors have tremendously contributed to our success.

### 1. Cooperation:

Cooperation among staff, head, management and student is the crucial factor for these are the elements that make up the real school. It is the duty of the head and management to look after the coordination of these four elements. Sonam Kuenphen has been fortunate in this respect.

### 2. Experience of Teachers:

Experience and work habits of teachers have contributed a lot to the school. Our teachers are experienced enough to know how students in their class learn and accordingly adjust their methods of teaching. Remedial classes given to the weaker students have been another added advantage to the students. Besides, all teachers reside within the campus and students can clear their doubts anytime of the day.

### 3. Individual attention:

Owing to the lesser number of students in the class, our teachers are able to give individual attention to the students and help them. We also provide counselling to the students, both individually as well as in groups. Special attention is also given to students who tend to be going away from the mainstream.

### 4. Reminders:

As a private school, we always remind our students of their purpose in the school and how their parents are paying just to have them educated in a private school. We tell them that realities in life are different to their imagination.

### 5. Tests and assessment:

Regular tests beside the classroom assessment after every unit/chapter help keep students on their toes.

#### 6. Support and Revision:

Our teachers give notes on important topics and stress the importance of referring to notes. Revisions are a regular feature.

#### 7. Reinforcement:

We make sure that students are rewarded for their improvements. We award small tokens and certificates to reinforce them to work even better next time. We congratulate them publicly and personally.

#### 8. Problem solving:

Whenever students come to us with a problem, whether personal or otherwise, we listen to them and try to help them in whatever way we can. We also listen to their suggestions for improvement and if accepted, we declare publicly the source of suggestions and acknowledge the concerned student or students. This has an advantage in curbing students from misbehaving as he/she is honoured in public.

#### 9. Curriculum coverage:

We make sure that teachers teach as per the syllabus and cover it properly. A monthly meeting is called to report on the status of syllabus coverage. Teachers also submit their daily lesson plans and the head sometimes goes around and observes classes. The head also asks the students about the method of teaching by the concerned teacher/s.

#### 10. Supervised studies:

For boarding students, we have supervised morning and evening studies. That way, students are obliged to study at least for two and half hours a day. They can also clear their doubts discussing with their peer and teacher on duty.

#### 11. Atmosphere:

One advantage we have here in Sonam Kuenphen is that our school is located 24 km from the main town. There are no night clubs or big towns to distract the students and the environment is very serene for studies.

We hope to continue doing better as the years go by.

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**Zhemgang Higher Secondary School**  
(III Position in the 2004 Class XII Examinations)

Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of burning much midnight oil. Its equation is hard work. Much trouble sweat and perseverance are the backbone of any notable achievement. The Primary concern of a school is to do well in academics associated with its moral obligations. The type of result it boasts of in the conducted courses defines quality education at a school. Such an institution is an ideal institution where quality education is imparted.

Z.H.S.S is a landmark in the field of secondary education. Nestled in a serene and tranquil valley, this institution has been establishment in 1958. The school engraved a name of its own as a Higher Secondary School with its I.S.C. debut in 2002. Z.H.S.S.. showcased a widely-acclaimed result in the I.S.C. and B.B. Examinations in 2003 bagging fifty seats in Sherubtse College, and in the same year, the institute distributed fifteen out-country and sixteen in-country scholarship candidates to the nation.

Many of its pass-outs opted for the profession of teaching. History repeated itself in 2004 as well. Many qualified from this institution for professional and college studies. Master Tshering Norbu, a science student stood third in aggregate in the entire kingdom. Z,H. S.S. seems to shake the belief of the urban educational institutions' superiority in result and quality – that quality education is never accessible to rural educational institutions.

The secret of success is primarily hard work, and more importantly hard work with a difference. The notion of hard work alone does not necessarily contribute to the desired goal. For fruition, hard work should be rightly directed, properly guided, well assisted and appropriately programmed, The faculty of this institution never leaves a stone unturned in this regard. This commitment of the teachers and the taught is one of the key-notes of success of this Higher Secondary School.

There are other factors of prime importance helping to bring success. The school's morale is often boosted by the periodic and kind visit of the concerned officials from centre and dzongkhag. These are occasions to set high goals in the minds of students with determination. The school will ever remain indebted and grateful to the service of His Majesty our King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck for His Majesty's benevolent visit and audience to Z.H.S.S, students in 2004.

A healthy teacher-taught attitude, high discipline, innovative teaching, a congenial working atmosphere initiated and maintained by an efficient, nurturing and result-oriented administration of the principal etc. are the direct attributes of the success of this institution. The geographical placement of this institution, away from the whirr and chatter of the towns, makes it an ideal home of learning.

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***Portrait of an institute: the Institute of Language and Culture Studies,  
Semtokha.***

- Dawa Lhamo, Lecturer in English, and  
Karma Drupchu, Lecturer in History and Translation, ILCS.

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### **The History**

The Institute of Language and Culture Studies (ILCS) is situated, about five kilometers away from the capital city of Thimphu, on the lap of a lofty hill just above the Semtokha Dzong. The ILCS is the only institute of its kind in the country. The Institute embraces a comprehensive curriculum to inculcate refined knowledge and wisdom of culture and traditions in the contemporary Bhutanese youth and the future generations of the kingdom. The Institute has become the centre for the study of culture, language and philosophy. In other words, we can even define it as one of the fundamental props for the development and preservation of our culture and tradition.

With the introduction of socio-economic development in the country in the early nineteen sixties, His Majesty the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1928-72) felt the need for an institute that would preserve the age-old cultural legacy and traditional values of the country. Thus, under the command of Drukgyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the Rigney Lobdra came into existence on the auspicious 4<sup>th</sup> day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the Male Iron Ox Year corresponding to the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1961 at Wangdi Tse, which is about half an hour walk up from Dechen Phodrang and Zilukha.

On the plea of Royal Queen Mother Ashi Kelzang Choden Wangchuck, His Majesty the late King invited His Holiness the late Chabjey Dilgo Khentse Rimpoche (1910-91), an accomplished spiritual leader from Tibet to be the first principal of the Lobdra.

Over a hundred students with different cultural backgrounds from various dzongkhags came to join the Lobdra. Altogether, there were fifty monks and fifty lay-practitioners. The Lobdra enjoyed a continuous shower of blessings under His Holiness's spiritual guidance.

However, owing to the unsuitability of its location, the Lobdra had to move to its new site at Semtokha just after a period of two months of its establishment. The first batch of graduates was considered to be very fortunate as they had the opportunity to receive spiritual education from His Holiness in person. Some of them are still serving in various capacities as policy-makers, educators, writers, editors, teachers and heads of the departments and divisions in different ministries, private sector agencies and corporations.

In the earlier days, there were no boarding facilities. Each student was paid Ngultrum one hundred as a monthly stipend by the government for sustenance. The students made small shacks out of mud, shingles, stones and bamboo around the Dzong. And they had to cook their own meals, fetch firewood, and water.

The Institute was entirely based on a monastic system of education. The beginners had to set off on their academic journey by memorizing Ngagdrön to a set of thirteen volumes of philosophy. It was completely based on rote-learning and the students had

to struggle in the memorization of all the root texts and their commentaries. As in the monastic system, a student had to go to the lama's residence to recite the memorized text. The students in general would have instructional explanation on the text from the lama at his residence.

In 1974, during Lam Gyalwang Nima's tenure as principal, the boarding system was established for the first time with the aid from the World Food Programme (WFP) and in addition, the formal class system was introduced to facilitate meaningful and wholesome learning. In those days, Semtokha Dzong played a pivotal role. It was the centre of teaching and learning activities. However, in the late nineteen nineties, the Dzong was taken over by the Dratsang Lhentshog and now the Institute is no longer a part of the Dzong.

In 1988, Dasho Lam Sanga officially took over the office as the head of the Institute and during his term the curriculum was revised for the first time and a number of relevant cultural subjects and co-curricular activities were incorporated for physical and mental growth. The subjects were also categorized as major and minor subjects. In the same year, the Lobdra was upgraded to a Rigzhung College and a batch of 43 girls was admitted for the first time, in keeping with the government's policy to provide equal opportunities to both girls and boys. Dasho Lam Sanga brought the Institute out of its monastic mode of learning towards a modern mode.

Even after an exhausting odyssey with a lot of changes in the curriculum and the system of delivery, somehow the Rigzhung College still remained shrouded in a thick cloak of mystery, anonymity, and ambiguity. Not many people knew about the existence of the Rigzhung College above the Semtokha Dzong, except for a few people who toiled uphill to get their puja done. Many people were and still are under the notion that the Institute's teaching/learning activities are carried out in the Dzong. Although, the Institute was part of Semtokha Dzong at one point of time, the Institute's teaching and learning activities are no longer held in the Dzong, as in earlier days.

In the year 1997, the Institute did manage to catch the public eyes when it was formally upgraded to the Institute of Language and Culture Studies and started implementing the new curriculum during the tenure of Principal Singye Namgyal, who is now the Joint Director, Non-formal and Continuing Education, Ministry of Education. With the introduction of the new curriculum, the old curriculum was phased out. The first batch of 35 ICSE passed students was admitted into the new programme in 1997. Among the 35 students, 9 were girls. The occasion was graced by the 70<sup>th</sup> Je Khenpo His Holiness Trulku Jigme Choeda and many other dignitaries.

In 1999, Lopen Lungten Gyatso formally took over as the Principal of the ILCS. The Institute has come a long way under his principalship. Although the Institute has limited space and infrastructure for further development; under the current head, ILCS enjoys a few modern amenities. With the inception of the new curriculum, subjects like Philosophy, Poetry, Language, and English are taught as core subjects. Besides, many other elective subjects like Logic, Astrology, History, Traditional Painting, Traditional Music, Weaving, Traditional Architecture, are taught. The third Rigzhung Curriculum Development Workshop was held to design the curriculum for

the three-year degree programme in February 1999 and the first batch of 19 degree students was admitted in the month of July in 1999.

It was another historic event in the history of ILCS. The inaugural occasion was graced by Their Excellencies, the then Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigme Y. Thinley and Lyonpo Sangay Nidup, the then Minister of Health and Education and other officials. The first batch of 19 degree students graduated in June 2002 and they are now employed in various capacities in the different ministries, police force, judiciary and corporations. The ILCS was the first institute to be formally handed over to the Royal University of Bhutan by the Ministry of Education. The handing and taking over was formalized on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2004. Now it is one of the federated institutes of the Royal University of Bhutan.

The ILCS of yesteryears is not as same as the present ILCS. Besides, the implementation of the new curriculum and the introduction of the degree programme, the ILCS can boast of being the pioneer institute to undertake a project to document and inventory some of the endangered cultural practices with financial assistance from the UNESCO-Japan Funds in Trust.

The ILCS has completed the first phase of the project and is now embarking on the second project to document the Drametse Ngacham. Lopen Lungten Gyatso and his team of staff have compiled a document on Drametse Ngacham. The proposal has been put up for approval to UNESCO in Paris and if the proposal goes through, the ILCS will co-ordinate the project and several centres will be set up to promote and preserve the Drametse Ngacham.

#### **Aims and objectives:**

- To preserve and promote the age-old tradition and culture of the nation through the study of Buddhist Philosophy, Languages, Logic, Indigenous Herbal Medicine, Bhutanese Arts and Crafts, Astrology, Bhutanese History, and translation.
- To promote the National language, Dzongkha.
- To produce graduates with proficiency in both Dzongkha and English.
- To support regional and international scholars to study Bhutanese Languages, Art and Culture.
- To produce modern citizens steeped in traditional values and knowledge.

#### **Courses of Study:**

##### **I. Classes XI & XII (Two-Year Certificate Course)**

A: Language

1. Sumtag (Choekey Grammar)
2. Nyengag (Choekey Poetry)
3. Dazhung (Dzongkha Grammar)
4. English (same pattern as in other Higher Secondary Schools)

B: Philosophy: Choenjug



C: Electives:

1. Literary Arts: Logic, Indigenous Medicine, Astrology, Translation, and History
2. Performing Arts: Mask Dance, Traditional Songs and Music, and Driglam Namzhag
3. Fine Arts: Traditional Painting, Bhutanese Architecture, and Weaving/Designing

NB: A student is required to choose one elective from each of the categories.

## II. Bachelor of Arts (Language and Culture)

Degree	A: Language	B: Philosophy
Year I	Sumtag Nyengag English Sanskrit	Ngoenpar Zoe (Buddhist Metaphysics)
Year II	Sumtag Nyengag English Sanskrit	Uma Jugpa (Madhyamika)
Year III	Nyengag English Sanskrit	Gyud Lama (Uttara Tantra)

Electives: In the first year of the degree programme, a student is required to take up two electives, but she/he has the choice of dropping one in the second year, and then continuing with the same in the third year. The rationale behind continuing with just one elective in the second and the third years is to give the student a field of specialization of his/her choice besides the other core subjects.

### The Taktse Plan

Initially, the ILCS was founded as a monastic school, but now it is a fully-fledged degree-awarding institution. The Institute is envisaged to be a centre of excellence in language and culture. At present, the ILCS is constrained in terms of space, infrastructure, faculty members and other handicaps. The Institute is housed in one building with just nine class rooms. We have no lecture theatre or other amenities to meet the growing need of a university college.

Since the present location at Semtokha has no space for further expansion, it was decided that the ILCS would be shifted to a new location at Taktse in Trongsa district. The plan for further expansion materialized because of Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup who firmly believed in the need for ILCS's expansion.

With assistance from the UNESCO, a grand Master Plan has been prepared for the Institute of Language and Culture Studies. The plan was developed between 2000 and 2001, and it provides major inputs to develop the ILCS into a fully-fledged higher

education institution. The plan proposes the upgrading of the existing programmes and the introduction of a two-year diploma in Language and Literature, a three-year B.A in Language and Literature, and a three-year B.A. in History and Culture, as well as the development of M.A. and Ph.D programmes. It provides the basic curriculum content of the upgraded institute and human resource development as well as space requirements. In short, the ILCS will be developed to meet the future requirements of the country as one of the tertiary institutes under the RUB.

*Bhutan 2020: A Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Happiness*, a vision statement and strategy document published by the Planning Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan (1999) states that "Culture is a living manifestation of civilization (...). If it is to continue to survive and flourish, to continue to serve as a source of inspiration, and to give spiritual, moral, and psychological content and guidance to the kingdom's future process of development, it must be understood in dynamic terms, and we must seek to ensure that it retains its value and relevance to a society in transformation. Without such efforts, our rich legacy could lose part of its value ..." (65).

Thus, it is imperative for Bhutan to protect the rich legacy to retain and sustain our identity and dignity. Bhutan is at a critical juncture, development has been taking place in leaps and bounds and if we don't take any measure to protect our rich cultural heritage, there are chances of our cultural practices dwindling into oblivion. Therefore, the ILCS has a major role to play in preserving the national culture of Bhutan.

The ILCS is the only tertiary institution in Bhutan that is entrusted with the preservation of the nation's cultural heritage. Its planned development and expansion demonstrate the high importance the Royal Government of Bhutan places on the preservation of its rich culture and its promotion through the national institutions, since preservation and promotion of culture is one of the pillars of Gross National Happiness.

The main goal of the new institute is to train students with a sound knowledge of the language, culture and traditions of Bhutan. Apart from the core curriculum, a wide range of cultural subjects will be offered to be in line with the entrusted responsibility of preservation and promotion of Bhutanese language and culture. The main objective of the institute is to train students with a sound knowledge of the language, culture and traditions of Bhutan.

Another important task of the institute is to conduct research, document and enhance the existing knowledge on Bhutan's history, tradition and social customs, arts and crafts. The institute will also promote international exchange and support international scholars to conduct research and disseminate their findings to a wider body of academicians both within and outside the country.

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## Centre for Educational Research & Development

### Goals

- To support and undertake comprehensive and systematic curriculum development activities aimed at bringing about improvements in our education programmes;
- To foster a culture of enquiry and analysis in the continuous search of knowledge through regular interaction with research centres and institutes of repute;
- To study the current educational practices and developments in relevant fields and provide findings to the concerned agencies in education for consideration of policy options in relation to relevant educational goals, content, and methodology;
- Provide a forum for educators and researchers to support action-research and professional development for enhanced performance by our education stakeholders.
- Promote a national pool of scholarship and professionalism in the best traditions of research and development, for the flowering of the Bhutanese mind.

The major thrust areas of the Centre are research, publications and the professional support. To date, the Centre has developed a set of national standards for English for schools in Bhutan called *The Silken Knot*.

It has carried out a study on and made recommendations for the improvement of primary education and initiated modest programmes like the *Rinpung Experiment* and professional development activities, apart from participating in the *National Educational Assessment*, among others.

CERD has been working closely with CAPSD especially in the review and revision of the English curriculum – PP-XII, and supporting the Dzongkha Development Authority in the production of bilingual dictionaries.

The Centre has followed the evolution of our education system and published *The Call: Stories of Yesteryears*, and begun an educational journal called *Rabsel*. CERD has launched the publication of *Yontoen: the CERD Occasional Papers* recently.

Encouraging and initiating action research being one of its thrust areas, CERD invites contributions from our fellow-teachers, scholars, parents, students, and indeed, from anybody who has a stake in education, highlighting issues which have a bearing on the education of our children and the system as a whole.

Please send in your research papers, both hard and soft copies, to:

The Director  
Centre for Educational Research and Development  
NIE, Rinpung, Paro: BHUTAN  
Or email them to [cerdir@druknet.bt](mailto:cerdir@druknet.bt)

