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Editorial

A school or an institute is more than a function of brick and mortar, sand and cement, wood and steel as important as they are in giving us a structure, a facility, a whole complex. Physical space and material resources are but an excuse to express a vision, to translate a dream, to raise a generation. If you want to know what kind of person an individual really is, ask which school he or she studied in rather than which college or university he or she attended.

A school touches an individual at the most critical point in his or her life, permeates the deepest recesses of personality and defines the character of future citizens. Creating and leading such a place of learning is a task few can truly measure up to. It takes the resources of mind, heart and soul. It takes conviction, wisdom and strength of character to guide the destiny of a seat of learning worthy of its ideals. Lupon Phuntsho Dukpa reflects on the challenges facing the person at the helm of affairs in schools in Bhutan.

The challenge of handling mixed-age classes are dealt with in a well researched paper by Aum Tshering Wangmo. The revision and reformation of the English curriculum for Bhutanese schools underway is put through three critical theoretical frameworks by Lupon Karma Yeshey. A fine example of Action Research is provided by Lupon Singye Namgyel as he journeys into his professional life at his new post.

Aum Dawa Lhamo's discussion of gender issue in tow of Shakespeare's immortal plays is a chastening reminder that gender inequality is no new found quarrel. Lupon Bak Bir Rai presents some excellent tried and tested strategies to improve reading habits in children, with Aum Karma Choden sharing her experiences of working on remedial classes and worksheets to enhance the performance of weaker students.

Fine reviews of Ta She Gaa Chha and Drukgyel's Destiny done by Lupon Needrup Zangpo and Lupon Sonam Wangdi respectively throw much light on the publications. Mr Santosh Chawdhury's experiences in a remote village tell a story of success that is at once inspiring, at once challenging. The golden jubilee anniversary of Dorokha Lower Ssecondary School presents the portrait of an institute this time around.

Despite the diversity in theme and presentation, this Autumn Issue of Rabsel acknowledges the eternal quest for excellence that is ever such critical in establishing and sustaining the content and character of our society that we expect education to affirm and advance. Please join the mission!

Tashi Delek

Thakur S Powdyel.

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Effective Strategies for Mixed-Age Classrooms

- Tshering Wangmo, Lecturer in English, NIE, Paro

Introduction

In literature, the two main terms used to describe mixed-age classes are *multi-age* and *multi-grade*. Multi-grade is further termed variously as *multilevel*, *multiple class*, *composite class*, *vertical group*, *family class*, *combination class*, *split class*, and in the case of one-teacher schools, it is termed as *unitary schools*. The multigrade is defined as a class in which students of two or more adjacent grade levels are taught in one classroom by one teacher for most, if not all of the day. Mason & Burn (1996); Veenman, (1995) say that such multigrade classes are embedded within the traditional graded system: students retain their grade-level labels and are promoted through the school within their grade level cohorts. It is this entrenched 'gradedness' which makes multigrade classes multigrade rather than 'multilevel, multi-skill or multi-personality'. If teachers were not required to teach and assess against a curriculum divided into grade levels, teachers might differentiate among students in ways other than by grade, for example by mastery of particular skills, knowledge or attitudes (Hargreaves 2001:555). Anderson and Pavan,1993 and John O'Neil ,1992 (cited in Gaustad 1994:17) assert that research clearly supports the ineffectiveness or harmfulness of certain graded practices such as competitive goal structures; homogenous treatment of heterogenous students and long-term rigid ability groupings.

On the other hand, the multi-age class or the non-graded school have an individualized, developmental focus and manifest in a continuous progress rather than lock-step, graded curriculum for class groups of students, varying in age. Students remain with the same teacher for two or more years (Mason & Burn 1996; Veenman,1995). Multi-age approach is more than an organizational structure; it is a philosophy that demands curriculum and instructional methods that provide appropriate educational experiences based upon individual needs and a developmental approach teaching (Education Queensland 1996:10). Baker (1995) in Education Queensland (1996:11) says –

A multi-age setting closely resembles the natural social and learning contexts that students experience outside school. Due to the strong emphasis on providing appropriate educational experiences, these multi-age class settings exhibit certain features that are indicative of them, which can be used in the best interest of any multigrade schools because of the magnitude of the diversity in these classes.

Veenman (1995:319) says that multi-grade classes are formed out of necessity whereas, multi- age classes are formed deliberately for their perceived educational benefits. Kostelnik(1992) cited in mcclay1996:33) says that there is no single approach which represents the only way to correctly teach a multi-age class. Just as each student is unique, so is each teacher; individual strengths, weaknesses and instructional styles differentiate one from the another. However, a teacher who believes in the necessity to meet the needs of each student cannot use whole-class delivery as the means for all instructions. Variety in structure is important. Research

shows that individual learning styles vary and, therefore, students learn best if more than one method of instruction is used (Lazear, 1991 cited in McClay, 1996:34).

Many of our teachers are of the opinion that multigrade is a temporary inconvenience that will go away as soon as resources become available. However, in many other developed countries, multi-age classes and schools are deliberately set up for their many educational benefits. We too must acknowledge, recognize and accept the reality and existence of the multi-grade classroom because they have been, are and will continue to be a significant feature of our educational landscape.

It is a challenge for a multi-grade teacher to provide every child in his or her class with educational experience, equal in quality to that provided for the children in the more urban areas. During the multigrade in-service programmes, a major issue of discussion is on curricular and pedagogical issues related to multigrading. Difficulties arise in mandating provincial curriculum, which heavily prescribes textbooks, content coverage and time allotments, which is designed and developed with urban schools and single grade classrooms as its guiding images. Therefore, the result is frustrated and overworked teachers and children who are receiving an educational experience that Mulcahy (1993:25) describes as short-changed, watered-down and inferior. The generally poor results and the consistently higher drop-out rate in rural areas stands as an indictment of such a situation. Stone (1994:102) too, asserts that successful multigrade classrooms require teachers to shift attention from teaching *curriculum* to teaching *children*. Teachers, who have instituted appropriate instructional strategies, find multigrade classes to be exhilarating and professionally rewarding. Therefore, I feel it will be useful to look at some of the 'best practice' strategies employed by many successful multigrade schools.

Some of the 'Best Practice' strategies for the multigrade classes

Self-directed learning – A touchstone of effective learning is that students are in charge of their own learning (Vincent, bk.6, 1999:1). An emphasis on student self-direction and efficacy means that students are taught and engaged in specific strategies that offer them opportunities to make decisions and solve problems on their own without being told what to do all the time. It means providing students with strategies designed to help them process information effectively and be self-confident, believing that they have the ability to succeed. And perhaps most important, we help students become more reflective about their thinking and learning process.

In the multigrade classroom, self-management activities tend to be of first concern to the teacher. Students who can manage their time, follow schedules, find needed resources and stay on task until assignments are completed, facilitate the teacher's ability to manage the diverse levels found in the classroom. Successful multigrade teachers create environments that encourage these skills.

Creating and maintaining a classroom atmosphere conducive to self-directed learning benefits both the teachers and the students. A self-directed student enjoys significant advantages over students who are deficient in self-direction. Classrooms with self-directed students provide superb role models for the weaker and the younger students to emulate. Therefore, by enhancing students' self-direction, multigrade teachers can devote a larger percentage of time to students with greater needs. Of special interest to

multigrade teachers is the emphasis that self-directed learning places on eliminating the competitive climate from a classroom and replacing it with a cooperative atmosphere. Self-directed students must operate in an environment where learning is viewed as a benefit and a necessity for all, instead of a reward for the talented (Vincent bk.6, 1999:7).

Self-Instruction Materials – If self-directed learning is a necessity in the multigrade class, then self-instruction materials are of equal importance too, because the self-directed student would work most of the time with the self- instruction materials. Dr. Pridmore in the Dgroup describes learner and material-centred situation as a strategy which involves the learners working through interactive self-study materials either alone or in groups guided by the teacher who stimulates and checks on progress.

The largest remarkable point in the Escuela Nueva in Colombia is the introduction of self-learning instead of forcing traditional frontal teaching. Detailed and systematic learning guide for self – learning was developed in order that the students can learn individually or in small groups. The role of the teacher is changed from a lecturer who provides all the information and knowledge to a facilitator to support the students who are learning by themselves (Saito, 2000:2). It adopts a method which promotes active learning, cognitive skills, discussions, and the development of application skills within the local environment. The materials contain sequenced objectives and activities; they reflect both the notional curriculum and the regional and local adaptation (Little 1995:11). She says that the materials can be used by groups of 2 or 3 students at a time and facilitate the work of the teacher required to work with several grades in the same classroom. Conventional textbooks tend not to facilitate self –instruction.

Peer-tutoring/Cross-age tutoring – Vincent (bk.7, 1999:1) describes peer-tutoring as cooperation between two or more students, where one individual imparts knowledge to the other(s). He says this can occur between students of the same age or grade or between students of different ages or grades. In the multigrade classroom, this method provides the teacher with a powerful strategy for extending the teacher’s instructional influences because teaching two or more grades in the same classroom always poses the difficulty of not being able to cater to individual needs.

According to Miller1989 (cited in Hussain 2003:41), peer-tutoring need not be planned but it is part of a good teacher’s arsenal of methods to help students. He says that successful multigrade teachers have learned through experience to capitalize on the capabilities of their students to help one another.

Children have certain advantages over adults in teaching peers. They may more easily understand tutees’ problems because they are cognitively closer. The fact that their cognitive framework is similar may also help peer-tutors present subject matter in terms their tutees understand. Moreover, tutors who have struggled academically may be more patient and understanding than those who have not. Empathy contributes greatly to low achievers’ effectiveness as cross-age tutors. In the whole process, the tutor too benefit academically from the time spent reviewing and practising materials with their tutees (Vincent, bk.7, 1999:6). Cohen,1986 (cited in Vincent,bk.7) says that in the process of peer-tutoring, the tutor learns a lot because organizing material to teach facilitates long term retention as well as aids in the formation of a more comprehensive and integrated understanding.

Learning Centres – Hart-Hewins & Villiers, (1997:28) say that teachers who do not believe in empowering the children, create learning environments that are teacher-directed. They make all decisions about what and how learning takes place. On the other hand, we want to create an optimum learning environment where students and teacher share responsibility for directing the learning. Therefore, establishing a non-threatening atmosphere where risk-taking is encouraged provides a good place to begin. Children in the primary division need hands-on active learning opportunities; overemphasis on teacher-directed paper and pencil tasks do not respect children's varying developmental levels. Organizing the activities into learning centres is the best way if there is enough space in the class. In the primary classes, the following centres are a must – visual arts, writing, drawing, reading, sand table, water table, interest table, construction materials and home. These centres provide learning opportunities for the children to acquire skills, knowledge and attitude that education authorities generally prescribe. The four major subject areas of the curriculum can be integrated into the centres (Hart-Hewins & Villiers, 1997:30).

Vincent (bk.5, 1999:35) defines learning centres as independent stations set up through out the classroom to cover a variety of academic subjects. He further adds that the centre activities are to be open-ended whenever possible to encourage exploring subjects to a satisfying conclusion. Centres are to be used for reinforcement, enrichment, remediation and review. In this environment, the teacher is the facilitator of learning rather than the dictator of it. Students learn on their own developmental timeline, construct their own meaning and experience success at their own levels. While the students are meaningfully engaged in the independent learning activities, the teacher can work with students in small groups to teach specific language areas or math skills and assess the students' progress.

Groupings – In the conventional class, the teacher is responsible for trying to meet the various needs of 20 to 30 students. In the multigrade setting, these needs are even more numerous. To manage both the number of students as well as the range in ability, grouping strategies have to be employed.

The strength of the multigrade classroom is the process of collaborative learning. For this to be achieved, the teacher needs to consider various models and approaches to group work and to provide skills and opportunities for collaborative decision making and social skilling. The multigrade teacher should understand the power of group work and how to use it advantageously (King & Young, 1996:34). Most multigrade teachers must be aware of the varied groupings that they have learned during their trainings, however, practically using them effectively in the class is a great challenge for most. Choosing a grouping strategy which is appropriate to the situation and which facilitates optimum learning is of crucial importance. The composition of groups affects not only how and what students learn but also the way students feel about themselves and the way they relate to each other. Vincent (bk.5, 1999:26) is of the opinion that heterogenous (mixed-ability) grouping is the most effective way to maximize student success. He says that long-term, static ability grouping affects children negatively. Flexible grouping allows the teacher to instruct children on the basis of interests and learning needs. When children are grouped according to their interest, not ability, the opportunities to learn from each other are maximized. Some criticism of ability grouping is based on the supposed negative impact on self-esteem

for those students placed in the low-ability group. However, beneath all these debates about ability groupings, research still provides strong support for this particular kind of grouping. Allan, 1991 (cited in Vincent, bk.5, 1999:30) says that grouping on the basis of ability with appropriate differentiated instruction is clearly beneficial, not only to high-ability students but also to average and the low-ability students. Banks (1998:11) writes that less able children will learn by observing and listening to what the more able children are doing, they will learn to apply their skills as they discuss their understanding, listen to the interpretations of the other students and write about what they have learned. Teachers too will have more time to work with smaller groups and individuals on the correct developmental levels. Therefore, greater progress will be made by the students. He further adds that 'best practice' in the multi-age setting revolves around these tenets.

Collaborative Learning – Effective communication and collaboration are essential to becoming a successful learner (Tinzman, Jones, Fennimore, Bakker & Pierce, 1990 cited in Vincent, bk.5, 1999:45). Collaborative learning affords students enormous advantages not available from more traditional instruction because a group, whether it be the whole class or a learning group within the class, can accomplish meaningful learning and solve problems better than any individual can alone. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is the sole information giver; however in the collaborative classroom the teachers build upon the students' knowledge, personal experiences, language strategies and culture that they bring to the learning situation. Vincent (bk.5 1999:46) writes that the perspectives, experiences and the background of all the students are important for enriching learning in the classroom. As learning beyond the classroom increasingly requires understanding diverse perspectives, it is essential to provide students the opportunities to do this in multiple contexts in schools. In the collaborative classroom where students are engaged in a thinking curriculum, everyone learns from every one else and no student is deprived of this opportunity for making contributions and appreciating the contributions of the others.

Self-regulated learning is important in these classes. Students learn to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress, making changes accordingly, self-questioning and questioning each other. Such self-regulating activities are very essential for students to learn today. Collaborative classrooms are natural places in which to learn self-assessment; because decisions about materials and group performance are shared, students feel freer to express doubts and uncertainties than when they are evaluated only by a teacher. Furthermore, the sense of cooperation (as opposed to competition) that is fostered in collaborative work makes assessment less threatening than in a more traditional assessment situation.

Integrated/Thematic Approach – Most teachers struggle with the issue of curriculum. The idea of teaching separate topics with separate agendas to different students is overwhelming and it is based on a misconception of the multi-age philosophy (McClay, 1996:35). Bozzone (1995, cited in McClay 1996:36) emphasises that teachers should 'teach one curriculum' because multi-age classrooms are not composite classes where students in each year study a different curriculum. The fact is that although these curricula are broken down into year levels, most documents share common benchmarks and topics throughout the year levels. Therefore, a thematic approach cuts across subject-matter lines, bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association. It in fact reflects the real world which is

interactive. It unifies knowledge and provides a benefit greater than that which can be obtained by examining the parts separately (Gaustad, 1994:12). For example, Banks (1998:10), explains that an effective way to teach maths in a multi-age classroom is to follow the separate strands of maths as given in the outcome statements or learning standards. If we work on one strand at a time, we can diagnose what the students know and are able to do in relation to essential learning outcomes, and then place correctly each child for that strand. It makes teaching and learning much easier for both the teacher and the learners.

Another way of viewing the curriculum is to begin with the outcomes a school seeks for its students. Once these outcomes are identified, the curriculum is then used strategically to help bring about the desired outcomes for all students. Or also by using a generic framework that is by using a set of generic headings, it is fairly easy to take the curriculum documents and convert them into the framework without doing damage to their vigour or integrity (Middleton1998:4). Chase & Doan, (1996:81) emphasize that theme work is a good way to integrate various curricular areas. They say it's even better if the guidelines are fairly open-ended – contents are given and the teachers can choose the methods. Given this leeway, children can be involved in directing the learning of the class. They say – We do not consider curriculum content to be sacred. Instead, our objective is that our students learn how to learn, that they are inquisitive and that they want to learn. We do not attempt to 'cover' a body of knowledge in a sketchy way. We want our students to be deeply involved in learning things that interest them.

Authentic Assessment – Most multigrade classes use summative test coverage of grade level materials. This does not encourage teachers to view the class as consisting of several different groups with varying learning needs. This is detrimental to students in both multigrade and mono-grade classes. Other approaches to assessment need to be explored which reduce the levels of competition in classrooms and give formative feedback to the teachers. Such feedback enables teachers to make decisions about the appropriateness of the pace of the instructions and to identify areas of strength and weakness in the teaching-learning process (Berry 2001:548). Therefore, authentic assessment refers to a range of assessment practices unlike those used in the traditional graded education. The Kentucky Department of Education, 1993, defines it as an assessment of what we actually want students to be able to do or understand. The British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1990, states that authentic evidence of learning is selected in terms of programme goals and learning experiences, reflects the regular conditions of the classroom; documents growth in children's actual products and reflects some kind of real-life purpose, meaning or validity (Gaustad, 1994:12).

Individualized responsibility for learning may be encouraged by teachers making continuous summative assessments of the child's progress; using records of achievements (Broadfoot,1998 cited in Hargreaves 2001:556); portfolios in which children and the teacher collect evidence of the best achievement (Gipps,1994, cited in Hargreaves 2001:556) or children's presentations in which they verbally or visually display their achievements to others in any way they choose (Wiggins 1989 cited in Hargreaves 2001:556). The objective and closed examination question used to assess curriculum coverage does not usually provide detailed information about a child's learning strategies. Authentic or classroom assessments have higher validity than

externally prescribed ones and, therefore, allow teachers to make better founded judgements about students' learning needs (Dr. Pridmore 2004, Dgroup discussions).

The Flexible Continuous Progress – There is an assertion that continuity is a major benefit for children in multi-age settings, broadly in two ways- the length of time a child is in a specific class and the length of time spent with the same teacher in a multi-age setting. The child becomes familiar with the classroom organizational patterns; the teacher gets to know the individual needs and interests of the children better and there is definitely a better rapport being developed between the teacher and the children (Education of Queensland, 1996:24). Flexible progression is a means by which each individual student as far as possible is able to progress through the years of schooling, according to his/her achievement, capacities and needs (Files 1996:5). Therefore, students do not repeat grades because research establishes that retention in schools has more negative effects on academic achievement and attitudes than anything else. For instance, Abhayadeva 1989 (cited in Little 1995:12) writes that although Sri Lanka has almost full enrolment, grade repetition is found at each grade level, cumulative effect of learning problems mostly caused by the necessity to adhere to the grade-wise curriculum is highest in the primary classes. Thus, the grade repetition and the accompanying sense of failure leads to early school dropouts. Therefore, a non-graded approach where all children need not be transferred to the next grade at the end of the year will help certain children to overcome some of the learning problems encountered due to competency level.

The Community and the School –Obed mfum-Mensah rightly says in the Dgroup discussions that multigrade teaching programme should emphasize the importance of school and the home linkages. He says that getting the child to the class is seen as a major success in most of these hard-to-reach areas where social, cultural, economic, religious and political factors sometimes deter parents from sending their children to school. In such contexts, no matter how the multigrade teacher tries he or she cannot do it alone to promote high achievement of students if the parents and the community do not cooperate with him/her.

Researchers show a direct relationship between parental involvement and increased student achievements. Inviting community members to work with the teachers develops among them a comfortable sense of being a part of the school setting. Most multigrade classrooms face the issue of inadequate resources both human and material. The engagement of the community suggests that a partnership between the school and the community can open an avenue through which resources can be strengthened and the community can participate in the education of the child and the life of the school (Hussain 2003:52). A key factor of the Escuela Nueva in Colombia is the strong relationship between the school and the community. The school asks for the support and understanding of the community and at the same time the school promotes rural development through sanitation campaigns, health messages etc. The community can help in such activities as celebrations, fund raising, school maintenance and some of the skilled parents can teach the children the skills such as painting, pottery, carving etc.

Nicholas & White (1991:22) assert that a school must have an open-door policy in which parents are encouraged to visit, work with children or support the classroom programme in the time they have available and at a level that they are comfortable

with. That way parents become familiar with the classroom routines, the teacher's beliefs, expectations and methodology through being involved over a number of years.

Cooperative Group work- Cooperative learning is based on the idea that a group of students working together can accomplish something none of them could have alone (Foyle et al. 1991 cited in Gaustad 1994:11). Cooperative learning is a teaching strategy in which small groups of children participate in learning activities that promote positive interaction. For cooperative group work to be effective, tasks must be appropriate. This is a potentially useful strategy in both multigrade and the mono-grade classrooms because it can allow the teacher to assign work to groups of students in the knowledge that they will then be able to work productively. Reciprocal teaching is one example of a cooperative group work strategy that can be used in the teaching of reading (Veenman 1995 cited in Berry 2001:549).

Class Climate- Be it in a multigrade class or mono grade class, a healthy atmosphere which is conducive to learning is a must. The maintenance of positive personal relationships within the classroom between the teacher and students and amongst the students is the responsibility of the teacher. The teacher should support each child emotionally and avoid causing embarrassment and discomfort. Use humour which can be valuable in creating a good class climate. Even when children need to be corrected for misbehaviour, it is believed that it was best to do it in as mild a way as possible in order to preserve a positive classroom effect and to minimise disruption to the forward press of the work. A strong cohesiveness and a minimum of friction were noticed in the classrooms of the outstanding teachers of multigrade teaching (Watson 1995:156).

Conclusion

Adapting the classroom learning to the needs of students is a complex and demanding task, especially when teaching a multigrade class where diversity among students is extreme. However, outside the classroom too, diversity is the normal condition that characterizes life. People must learn to work well with a wide variety of individuals in many different social settings. No single best approach has been defined for problem solving or getting along with co-workers, or learning something new. People learn and manage their lives in a variety of ways.

Vincent (bk.5, 1999:59) writes that the multigrade classroom with its wide range of student levels reflects this real-life diversity better than any other classroom configuration. It is, therefore, important that teaching methods and grouping patterns reflect the variability of the students being taught and help to prepare them to live in our diverse and complex world. Therefore, the bottomline as Terry (2000:6) puts it, is those of us who are in the business of education are there for one reason only and that is to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest possible standard, regardless of gender, religion, or social position. And regardless of the fact that they are probably one of the million of children world-wide who live in poor, rural communities where multigrade teaching is necessary.

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The New Bhutanese English Curriculum– Seen Through the Lenses of Conceptual Curriculum Frameworks

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Abstract: This paper attempts to analyze the New Bhutanese English Curriculum through the lenses of conceptual curriculum frameworks. Three conceptual curriculum frameworks are used to analyze the new English curriculum, which are 'A Socially-Critical Framework', 'The Habermasian Framework', and 'A Critical-Reconceptualist Framework', discussed through the works of Kemmis et al (1983), Grundy (1987), and Green et al (1998). The analyses result in a reassuring note for the new Bhutanese English curriculum.

1. Introduction

Bhutan's modern education system is growing rapidly. We now have 476 schools and institutes, with 145,817 students, and 5,170 teachers (Education Statistics, 2005, p.1; *excluding Non-formal and Day Care Centres*). In 1977, we had only 112 schools and institutes and 922 teachers, which itself was an achievement from early 1960s when the Kingdom had only 11 primary schools and less than 500 students. (Planning Commission, 1999, pp.16&19)

Bhutan follows a seven-year primary education cycle leading to six years of secondary education progressing to tertiary education. Basic education level in Bhutan has been defined to include 11 years of free education i.e. seven years of primary and four years of secondary till the end of class X. Children begin their schooling at the age of six years when they enter the first grade of primary, known as Pre-Primary class (popularly known as PP). (Department of Education, 2003, p.5 and PPD, 2005, pp.4&5).

The Royal Government of Bhutan recognizes education both as a basic right and as a pre-requisite for achieving the wider social, cultural and economic goals set for the country in the national vision Bhutan 2020 (Planning Commission, 1999, p.52 & Department of Education, 2003, p.1). Therefore, it is the desire of the Royal Government of Bhutan and the commitment of the Ministry of Education to enhance the student enrolment rate and expand the provision of quality education to all our children in the Kingdom.

Reflecting the aspirations of the nation as enunciated in the *Bhutan 2020: Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness* (Planning Commission, 1999) vision document, the *Education Sector Strategy: Realizing Vision 2020 – Policy and Strategy* (2003) document states that one of the six strategic objectives of the sector for the next 20 years is to 'continuously improve the quality and relevance of education to ensure holistic development of the child, encompassing innate abilities, moral and social values, social cohesion and the world of work including agriculture and other vocations'(p.1).

Simultaneous to the work on the development of Bhutan 2020 and the Education Sector Strategy document, there has been a general out-cry in the system over the perceived fall in standards of educational provisions, particularly in English and Mathematics, and Dzongkha to a certain extent, in the Bhutanese schools. So it was no coincidence that the Ministry of Education decided to put a special emphasis on reforming the English and Mathematics curriculum during the 9th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) in the Bhutanese education system.

In this paper, I attempt to map the current curriculum initiatives in the Bhutanese education system, making particular reference to the English curriculum reform initiative based on the framework in 'The Purpose of School Education in Bhutan – A Curriculum Handbook for Schools' (1996 & 2003 2nd ed). In the following sections, a few curriculum frameworks will be discussed and I analyze the Bhutanese curriculum initiative in English through the lenses of those curriculum frameworks. The paper concludes by drawing appropriate conclusions from the analyses and discussions, and providing appropriate recommendations where necessary.

2. Curriculum Initiatives

The Bhutanese Education System has gone through some substantial curriculum initiatives over the past several years. The mid-1980s saw the introduction of New Approach to Primary Education, a major curriculum initiative, popularly known as NAPE. Other curriculum initiatives have been seen in Bhutanizing the secondary education curricula and taking over of the classes X and XII examinations from the Indian Council of Secondary Education in Delhi. Matters of Values Education, Continuous Assessment, Reading Programme, Multi-grade Teaching, teaching of Environmental Studies in Dzongkha, teaching of Bhutan History in Dzongkha, to name a few, have been other initiatives. Major curriculum initiatives we have at the moment are the curriculum reform projects in English and Mathematics, to be followed by Dzongkha, and it is the English curriculum reform project that I turn to now for my focus of discussion.

The English Curriculum Reform includes the whole range of school programme from PP to XII. This curriculum initiative stems from the Ministry of Education's 9th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) document (2002), wherein one of its objectives is to focus on improving the quality of English curriculum in schools as one of the three tool subjects. English is a "tool" in the sense that being the medium of instruction in the schools, it is generally assumed that the enhanced quality of learning in English will enhance learning in other subject areas. Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigme Y Thinley's Annual Report to the National Assembly of Bhutan in July 2004 brings out the importance of English in Bhutan for global engagement: 'We remain grateful for the wise policy of His Majesty the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck to take full advantage of the English language which is in fact the international language - the language of the sciences, technologies, trade, and international relations' (quoted in CAPSD's PP-XII English Curriculum Framework, 2004, p.vii; draft).

One fundamental difference taking place in this initiative from the past, even if it means in form, is the holistic approach, i.e. seeing the whole range of grades PP-XII together. Accordingly, the 'Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan' was developed by the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) and enunciated in its document *The Silken Knot: Standards for English for Schools in Bhutan* in 2002. Following the *Silken Knot*, the Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD) developed a School English Curriculum Framework PP-XII (Draft 2004). This framework document maps the learning outcomes of the English programme from Pre-Primary to grade XII, separately for each of the major learning areas in English – Reading & Literature, Listening and Speaking, Writing, and Language. These documents have been developed with teachers from the field ensuring geographical distribution and representatives from the teacher education, examinations, educational research, educational monitoring, and curriculum unit with the help of consultants. The approach to curriculum development has been markedly different from the NAPE days which were largely consultant-driven.

Other changes include the selection and presentation of the content within a process and learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. The main focus in the current initiative is on the development of communication skills while keeping content as a guide. The change assumes that the classrooms are interactive with teachers playing largely a facilitating role.

To address this change, two in-service courses – Postgraduate Diploma in English and Diploma in Teaching of Primary English – are being launched at two colleges. While the former is for enhancement of content in English, the latter is designed to take on leadership roles in teaching English at the primary levels. Mechanisms to support the change process are also being explored.

In discussing the current curriculum change initiative in English, a certain kind of a framework emerges, which will, together with 'The Purpose of School Education in Bhutan', be a point of analysis as seen through the lenses of various conceptual frameworks in the subsequent sections.

3. Curriculum Frameworks

Various curriculum theorists have attempted to provide various curriculum frameworks over the past few decades. In this section, I attempt to discuss three of those frameworks, namely the Socially-Critical Framework, The Herbasian Framework, and A Critical-Reconceptualist Framework and through those lenses attempt to analyze the afore-mentioned current curriculum initiative taking place in Bhutan.

3.1 A Socially-Critical Framework

Kemmis et al (1983, p.8), in their work on 'orientations to curriculum' express strong views that 'education principles' are 'social principles'. They argue that their views of education, and therefore of schooling, find their justification in views of society and the proper role of education for participation in the life and work of society. They also argue that the contemporary debate about transition ['preparation of young people for adult life' (p.1)] is, in reality, nothing more than an argument about different views of the role of education in society. In their work, they essentially provide a conceptual framework that brings the socially constructed nature of the curriculum centre-stage.

Offered as a contribution to the education transition debate of the 1980s, Kemmis et al have chosen to present three orientations – the vocational/neo-classical, the liberal/progressive, and the socially-critical – to tease out some of the differences in education codes (p.8) and argue for the socially-critical orientation to curriculum.

Kemmis et al (1983) describe vocational/neo-classical orientation as 'one in which education is understood as a preparation to work' (p.9). This discourse is based on a view that schooling is a 'preparation for work' in a world that is 'hierarchically-ordered and [in which] the best endowed (in ability and background) will ... find their way to the most rewarding positions' (Kemmis et al, 1983, p.9 in Grundy et al, 1994, p.115). They describe how this discourse is vocational/neo-classical in the following quote:

[It] is 'vocational' in two senses: in the sense that it prepares students for work, and in the sense that it identifies and develops the sense of vocation students reveal through their participation in school life. It is neo-classical in the sense that its view of substance of education is based on

time-honoured beliefs about what is worth knowing (skills and disciplinary knowledge), revived and reinterpreted for the modern world' (p.9).

The liberal/progressive discourse presents education as 'a preparation for life rather than work ... and sees the development of autonomous persons as the aim of education' (Kemmis et al, 1983, p.9). Kemmis et al note that the orientation is 'liberal' in the sense that it sees education as the liberation of persons by reason, both individually and socially. Grundy et al (1994, p.116) find this liberal/progressive discourse in direct contrast to the vocational/neo-classical. Here they find that society is perceived to be 'open to (and needing) reconstruction' (Kemmis et al, 1983, p.9 in Grundy et al, 1994, p.116) and an assumption that 'this reconstruction will occur naturally as a result of having a better educated and more tolerant citizenry' (p.116)

Socially-critical orientation emphasizes 'social and critically-reflective processes, not only what history has thrown up as worth knowing' (Kemmis et al, 1983, p.9). Here, Grundy et al (1994, p.116) find that education is regarded as an intrinsic part of life and work within a socially-critical discourse in education. They note that 'it is taken for granted that school and society should reflect one another, so that what is done in school, the learning process and social relationships, *is* work and *is being* a democratic citizen; it is not just preparing to do or be those things' (p.116). In this view, education must 'engage social issues and give students experience in ... critical reflection, social negotiation and organization of action' (Kemmis et, 1983:9 in Grundy et al, 1994, p.116).

Kemmis et al (1983, pp.9-14) have used eighteen topics, ranging from knowledge, desired student outcome to the roles of consultants and the transition problem, to differentiate the three orientations and present in a matrix form in terms of the stances they take on each of the topics.

Analysis of Bhutan curriculum initiative based on Kemmis et al

The English curriculum reform as described under section on 'current curriculum initiatives' is strongly based on graduate standards. The document – *The Silken Knot* (CERD, 2002, p.1) - contains Standards and Indicators of levels of Achievement which present what students, who leave school, can be expected to know and do in each of the major areas of English namely Speaking and Listening, Writing, and Reading & Literature, and Language.

The document defines standards as:

'The Standards are statements of what the public can expect students to know and be able to do in English when they graduate from the school system. The Indicators of Levels of Achievement are used to show the progress that students make towards these standards as they move through each of the class years PP-12'. (p.1)

Based on the English Standards enunciated in the *Silken Knot*, a Bhutan School *English Curriculum Framework: PP-XII* has been developed. This document contains learning outcomes for each of the major learning areas in English for grades PP through XII. Based on the newly developed PP-XII English Curriculum Framework, *Curriculum Guides for Teachers* and Student Texts – *Reading & Literature* for each of the grades from IX to XII have developed so far; developments for other grades are underway.

This current initiative in English curriculum, seen from the curriculum framework espoused by Kemmis et al may seem more 'Vocational/Neo-classical' in orientation to curriculum development, particularly with standards and learning outcomes expected to be achieved by students which are expressly articulated in the curriculum documents. This may seem even more divergent from the framework under discussion when students will be assessed based on the student learning outcomes as spelt out for each of the major learning areas.

However, it may be argued that the standards themselves have been socially-constructed involving the teachers, teacher-educators, personnel from professional bodies, curriculum officers, and experts with the standards put through stringent forums of teacher groups, professional bodies, and Curriculum Board for acceptance. Development of PP-XII English Curriculum Framework as well as Teacher Guides and Student Texts have gone through a similar process. The initiative itself has been socially driven. The community of Bhutanese educators decided on the contents of the curriculum with the consultants taking only a facilitating role in the reform process.

In the view of socially-critical orientation, education 'must engage social issues and give students experience in ... critical reflection, social negotiation and organization of action' (Kemmis et al, 1983, p.9 in Grundy et al, 1994, p.116). In this regard, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at one of the text materials, the objectives it sets, and the student activities it designs in the new Class X English text.

'Layaps Go Home', in *Reading & Literature for Class X* (CAPSD, 2005, pp.6-14; draft) and *English Curriculum Guide for Teachers – Class X* (CAPSD, 2005, pp.33-35; draft), is an essay that talks about the secluded lifestyle of the Layaps (nomadic people in northern Bhutan). The essay, besides providing a detailed description of the world of the Layaps and the picturesque view of the place, presents two important issues: the changes that are emerging in the mindset of the Layaps brought about by "progress" in Bhutan, and the Layaps' pride in their unique cultural identity. The changes experienced by the Layaps reflect the inescapable challenge faced by the Bhutanese to balance preservation of cultural identities and modernization. (p.33)

While the essay itself is based on social issues in Bhutan, objectives such as: 'Evaluate the point of view of the writer on issues like right and wrong, justice and injustice, in literature', 'Evaluate the point of view of the writer on issues such as the secluded lifestyle of the Layaps, the changes that are emerging in the mindset of the Layaps brought about by progress in Bhutan, and the Layap's pride in their unique cultural identity', and 'Compare and contrast their cultural values, traditions, and beliefs, using situations encountered in the essay' would help to give students experience in critical reflection in social issues. (p.34)

Further, student discussion activities through questions such as in the following are expected to give them experience in critical reflection on social issues: (p.35)

- What are some of the derogatory comments passed by other Bhutanese about the Layaps? Does the author feel that the derogatory comments are adequate enough to talk about the Layaps? How does he feel about the Layaps?
- What did the Layaps observe from their visits to Punakha and Thimphu? How is this knowledge of modernization changing their culture?
- What policy has the Royal Government of Bhutan pursued with regard to Laya? What developmental activities has the Royal Government of Bhutan taken up in Laya?

- "Laya today confronts an issue which Bhutan, as a nation, has been grappling with for the past four decades." Discuss this statement.
- Read the last paragraph. What does this tell you about the qualities of the Layaps?
- After reading the whole essay, what lasting impression about the Layaps have you been left with?

The above is just an example, not necessarily the best, of the treatment and contents of the new English curriculum materials. From this point of view, it may be construed that many of the aspects in the current curriculum initiative in English can be treated as 'socially-critical framework'.

However, the real challenge will be to carry the changes into the classrooms in the true spirit of this framework. Even Kemmis et al do not believe that 'individual teachers, students, parents, or even whole schools can easily adopt one orientation as a practical matter. The realities of social interchange and momentary circumstances are different: one can live by ideals but only saints and martyrs can sacrifice all to them.' (p.8)

3.2 The Habermasian Framework

To understand this framework, it is important to talk about how and what one thinks and talks about curriculum. Grundy (1987, p.6) points out that 'talking about curriculum' is really 'talking about educational practices of certain institutions'. This means that it is in the actions of the people engaged in education that one looks for the curriculum, not on the teacher's shelf. She finds the question 'What is curriculum?' more like the question 'What is football?' than 'What is hydrogen?' What this means to think about curriculum, she points out, is to think about how a group of people act and interact in certain situations. It is not about describing and analyzing an element which exists apart from human interaction.

In this regard, Grundy (p.7) is convinced that the theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' proposed by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas provides a framework for making meaning of curriculum practices.

An understanding of this theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' espoused by philosopher Jurgen Habermas may be in order before we try to put the framework into an understanding of curriculum. Grundy (1987, p.9) explains that the theory of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' posits that the 'interests, in general, are *fundamental orientations of the human species* and pure interests are fundamental, rational orientations'. To Habermas (1972, p.211 in Grundy, 1987, p.9) this does not only mean that human beings have a fundamental orientation towards rationality, but rather that the fundamental interest in 'the preservation of life is rooted in life organized through knowledge [as well as] action'. Grundy (1987, p.9) further clarifies this meaning: 'even something as basic as the survival of the human species is not a matter of instinct and random behaviours. It is grounded in knowledge and human action'.

Grundy (p.10) argues that 'these knowledge-constitutive interests do not merely represent an orientation towards knowledge or rationality on the part of the human species, but rather constitute human knowledge itself.' She further argues that 'knowledge-constitutive interests both shape what we consider to constitute knowledge and determine the categories by which we organize the knowledge'.

Habermas (in Grundy, 1987, p.10) identifies three basic cognitive interests: technical, practical and emancipatory, which constitutes three types of science of knowing – empirical-analytic, historical-hermeneutic and critical – by which knowledge is generated and organized in our society.

'Technical interest' is explained (Grundy, 1987) as being: *a fundamental interest in controlling the environment through rule-following action based upon empirically grounded laws*. Grundy (p.10) points out that implicit within objectives models of curriculum, such as Tyler's (1949), is an 'interest in controlling pupil learning so that, at the end of the teaching process, the product will conform to the *eidos* (that is, the intentions or ideas) expressed in the original objectives.' In terms of the Habermasian framework, the objectives models, such as Tyler's are rejected for the reasons as stated. In my view, however, objectives provide directions and parameters within which to practice, and clear milestones can be found as to whether one is heading in the desired direction. In that sense, objectives model curriculum is not necessarily for controlling pupils' learning but for providing a sense of direction.

Grundy (pp.13-14) explains 'practical interest' as an interest in taking right action ('practical' action) within a particular environment. It is the 'interest which generates subjective rather than objective knowledge'. This is explained further as 'knowledge of the world as subject rather than knowledge of the world as object'. This interest is defined as *'a fundamental interest in understanding the environment through interaction based upon a consensual interpretation of meaning'*.

Grundy argues that a curriculum informed by a 'practical interest' is not a 'means-end' curriculum by which an educational outcome is produced through the action of a teacher upon a group of objectified pupils. Curriculum design is rather regarded as a process through which pupil and teacher interact in order to make meaning of the world. In this regard, Stenhouse's (1975, p.85 in Grundy, 1987, p.15) claims quoted below make this meaning-making clearer:

The infant class considering the origins of a playground fight and the historian considering the origins of the First World War are essentially engaged in the same sort of task. They are attempting to understand both the event and the concept by which they seek to explicate it.

Grundy (p.17) points out that although there is a potential for freedom through emphasis upon consensual meaning and understanding in the 'practical interest' oriented curriculum, it proves to be inadequate for the promotion of true emancipation mainly because of the propensity of the persons to be deceived, even when understandings are arrived at in open discussion and debate.

Emancipation to Habermas (in Grundy, 1987, p.16) means 'independence from all that is outside of the individual and is a state of autonomy rather than libertinism'.

Grundy points out that the so-called emancipatory interest is an interest towards freeing persons from the coercion of the technical and the possible deceit of the practical (p.17). She further goes on to say that 'while the other two are concerned with control and understanding respectively, the emancipatory interest is concerned with *empowerment*, that is, the ability of individuals and groups to take control of their own lives in autonomous and responsible ways' (p.19). She defines emancipatory cognitive interest as: *a fundamental interest in emancipation and empowerment to engage in autonomous action arising out of authentic, critical insights into the social construction of human society (p.19)*.

Habermas (1972, p.208 quoted in Grundy, 1987, p.16) explained emancipation as being a fundamental pure interest of persons. To quote:

Self-reflection is at once intuition and emancipation, comprehension and liberation from dogmatic dependence. The dogmatism that reason undoes ... is false-consciousness: error and unfree existence in particular. Only the ego that apprehends itself ... as the self-positing subject obtains autonomy. The dogmatist ... lives in dispersal as a dependent subject that is not determined by objects but is itself made into a thing.

Grundy (1987, p.17) poses a question as to whether technical and practical interests were not capable of fulfilling the human orientation towards autonomy and responsibility. The answer is negative. She points out that 'technical interest will not facilitate autonomy and responsibility because it is an interest in controlling'. She argues that an interest in control is a false autonomy which entails regarding fellow humans and/or the environment as objects. She also points out that the technical interest arises from inclination rather than from reason.

Similarly, although practical interest comes closer to serving the interests of autonomy and responsibility, Grundy points out that it will still not suffice as it proves to be inadequate for the promotion of true emancipation mainly because of the propensity of persons to be deceived. Therefore, the argument is inclined in favour of the emancipatory curriculum.

One might ask the same questions as Grundy (p.19) did: 'What does it mean for curriculum to be informed by an emancipatory interest?' She points out that in order 'to understand emancipatory curriculum, we need to grasp the short-comings of the practical orientation ... [T]he problem with [this] meaning-making process curriculum is that we may be deceived as to the true meaning of events'. She argues that 'if true emancipation is to occur, it is important that the subject be freed from 'false consciousness' (p.19).

Grundy (p.19) points out that an emancipatory curriculum will work towards freedom on a number of levels as shown below:

- *At the level of consciousness:* the subjects participating in the educational experience will come to know theoretically and in terms of their own experience when propositions represent distorted views of the world (views which serve interests in domination; *it may be pointed out that Socially-Critical also does this*) and when they represent invariant [invariable] regularities of existence.
- *At the level of practice:* the emancipatory curriculum will involve the participants in the educational encounter, both teacher and pupil, in action which attempts to change the structures within which learning occurs and which constrain freedom in often unrecognized ways.

She adds that an emancipatory curriculum entails a reciprocal relationship between self-reflection and action.

Grundy (p.19) advises that while these relationships are complex to grasp, 'the most important principle to acknowledge from this overview of the cognitive interests is that curriculum is a social construction'. Furthermore, the form and purposes of that construction will be determined by some fundamental human interests which imply concepts of persons and their world, she points out.

In many ways 'technical interest' of the Habermasian framework resemble 'vocational/neo-classical orientation' discussed by Kemmis et al (1983), particularly the student role in learning, teacher's role, teacher-student relationship, assessment, control, broad curriculum organization, etc. However, both curriculum as espoused by Kemmis et al and Grundy are socially constructed and seek to work for autonomy and empowerment.

An analysis of the English curriculum initiative based on Grundy's work:

Viewed through the lens of the Habermasian Framework, the current curriculum initiative in English with its standards and learning outcomes articulated in the School English Curriculum Framework PP-XII may appear to have 'technical interest' to control the learning of the pupils. Similarly, standards such as 'Graduates know and use appropriate reading strategies for making meaning with a variety of texts – fiction and non-fiction', for instance in the Reading & Literature strand (CERD, 2002, p.27), could be viewed through this lens as 'practical interest' oriented for understanding. However, graduate standards such as 'Graduates use writing to develop critical thinking skills – review, analysis, hypothesis, recollection, summary, evaluation', under standards for writing (CERD, 2002, p.17), is truly reflective of emancipatory curriculum, wherein critical thinking skills for empowerment are the key to this interest.

In my view, based on sample work as seen under 3.1 above – *Layaps Go Home* – the current curriculum initiative in English for schools in Bhutan is in many ways an emancipatory curriculum which will empower our students. As expressed earlier on, the standards and learning outcomes only provide direction and focus and present parameters for practice and not a means of controlling pupils' learning. We have a better appreciation of the current curriculum viewed holistically.

Further, the whole curriculum initiative in English is based on the development of skills in the major learning areas. Introduction to the Bhutan School English Curriculum Framework (CAPSD, pp.vii-xii; draft 2004) document, highlighting the revisions, is filled with discussions on "content to skills", "content a secondary role to the advancement of skills", "student-centred learning", "student-centred classrooms", "students as active participants in learning", "teachers taking on facilitating roles", "gender sensitivities and equities", "contemporary English", and so on, speak volumes about empowering future citizens. Developing skills in such an important area of learning as English, as expressed in the introduction to this paper, is giving them power, the *empowerment*, which is the main thesis of emancipatory interest, and thus the curriculum.

However, it must be mentioned that this is still on the 'teacher's shelf' as Grundy might put it. They will need to be translated into classroom action by teachers who have little experience of this kind of curriculum for the students to reap the full benefits, which will be an entirely different ball game.

3.3 Framework 3 – A Critical-Reconceptualist Framework

An understanding of Green et al's (1998) work on the 'Critical-Reconceptualist Framework' would require an understanding of how the terms, particularly curriculum work, are viewed. While they describe *curriculum studies* as a specific field of educational enquiry, *curriculum work* needs to be understood as 'an appropriate term for describing the activity of all of those involved in curriculum matters, from teachers working in classrooms at various levels of the school system and different institutional circumstances, through curriculum and syllabus committees, professional associations, consultants, principals and other administrators, and policy-makers

at the State and Federal level, to researchers and teacher educators located in university and college settings'. (p.4)

Green et al employ the notion of *curriculum work* as an umbrella term which brings together people and groups concerned with theory, practice and policy concerning curriculum. They argue that 'these people and groups may work differently as regards curriculum and their focus and concerns may differ; but in the larger scheme of things, they are all inescapably interrelated.' They point out that this interrelationship and integration of many different aspects of curriculum, operating as they do in many abstract ways, is complex, which needs to be grasped by all those involved in curriculum work. (p.4)

Green et al's search is 'to find a way of thinking about curriculum and about curriculum work which takes account of *both* its role in cultural transmission and ideological practice *and* its relation to and significance in terms of student learning, however that is conceived.' (pp.4-5)

In trying to look for a way of thinking about curriculum, Green et al critique 'binary thinking', a system of thinking, in which opposites are set against each other and where in effect one set is privileged over the other, and which is at the very heart of Western thinking (Derrida, 1976, 1978; Green, 1986 in Green et al, 1998, p.7) – the macro-micro perspective.

In this scheme of thinking, 'periphery', 'classroom', 'teacher/student', 'practice', and so on can be coded as *micro*. Similarly, 'centre', 'administration', 'theory', etc, along with the 'abstractions' of matters of economy, the State, the global environment, and new technologies, are often coded as *macro* level phenomena (Green et al, 1998, p.8).

In this mode, Green et al argue that 'within an either/or framework, the implication might be that 'theory' exists at the centre ... while 'practice' exists at the periphery, in the classroom – or vice versa' creating vast gaps. They argue that there is the need for a concept to describe the 'middle ground' between the traditional poles of micro and macro, which they label as 'meso'. Their argument is consistent with Goodman's (1990, p.176 in Green et al, 1998, p.9) observation that "we need a dynamic model of how syllabuses, pedagogy, finance, resources, selection, the economy and the like *all* interrelate". A picture of this so-called 'meso' was created in the introductory note to this section while discussing *curriculum work*.

Following and adapting the work of Bernstein (1971), Ball (1990), and Bigum and Green (1995), Green et al conceive curriculum as a discourse interweaving the social practices of: school knowledge, pedagogy, evaluation, and organization.

They put them into a matrix with the 'macro', 'meso', 'micro' perspective to produce a 'map'. They contend that such a map provides a basis for developing a comprehensive programme of research and teaching across current work in curriculum and administration studies. (pp.9-11).

They explain their model as in the following quotation:

In this model, none of these scalar terms – 'macro', 'meso', 'micro' – is privileged over the others. They co-exist, in a constant state of dynamic tension and interrelation. This means that each one is present in each of the others, as well as in and through the relations between them. ... Here, what is important are the *relations*; that is, we are working with a *relational* view of curriculum, with each of these three terms being in a network of relations with each other. Viewed from another perspective, they must be

understood as connected *contextually* with each other: each is a context for each other, and for the relationship between them. (p.11)

They go on to say that –

To put the emphasis in this way on ‘relations’ and ‘contexts’ is to work with a social-semiotic view of curriculum, and the usefulness of doing this is that it helps us to understand better the notion of curriculum as both a social practice and a social construction, involving complex exchanges of matter, energy and information. Curriculum is social practice – something produced in and through history, that is, and therefore historically and socially *meaningful*, as well being something that can be changed (Lemke, 1995 quoted in Green et al, 1998, p.11)

They hope that the frameworks and arguments outlined provide a resource for bringing together both of these projects, in the interests of socially-critical, applied curriculum work. (p.12)

Green et al’s concept of curriculum work is consistent with Grundy’s: ‘one does not look for curriculum on the teacher’s shelf’. Curriculum being socially constructed remains the thread throughout all three frameworks. However, what is different in this framework is a way of consolidating the work of all stakeholders so that the curriculum work actually works for the benefit of the learners. In my view, working in this way, we would be able to bring genuine changes in the curriculum work.

An analysis of the English curriculum initiative based on Green et al’s work:

Even in Bhutan, there is a tendency to view curriculum in ‘binary thinking’ – ‘the centre and periphery’, ‘the Headquarter and Dzongkhag’, ‘Headquarter and School’, ‘CAPSD/NIE/BBE/EMSSD/CERD and Dzongkhags/Schools’, and so on and so forth. Many times the classroom does not even get mentioned. We are operating at ‘macro’ and ‘micro’ level.

The current curriculum initiative in English recognizes the school knowledge, pedagogy, evaluation, and organization as essential and crucial aspects of a sound English curriculum that we desire as a nation. Green et al (1998) recognize the same elements in a good curriculum. At this point, it might be worthwhile to provide an example from the new English curriculum into Green et al’s curriculum map for ‘goodness of fit’, which is given below:

	MACRO	MESO	MICRO
KNOWLEDGE	Graduates are able to read a wide range of texts – fiction and non-fiction – independently. (p.27)	Students are able to read a range of texts using a variety of strategies to make meaning including an understanding of the key features of various forms. (p.29)	Students are able to identify figures of speech and explain their function in the text (p.29)
PEDAGOGY	Teachers will teach students simple distinctions between	Teachers will teach students the reading strategies to make	Teachers will help students practise the different strategies to read a wide range of texts

	fiction and non-fiction. (p.31)	meaning with a wide range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction. (p.32)	both fiction and non-fiction make meaning. (p.32)
EVALUATION	End of the year home examinations.	Mid-year examinations	Continuous formative Assessment.
ORGANIZATION	Curriculum Frameworks, Syllabuses, ministry, Professional bodies such as CAPSD, BBE, NIEs, EMSSD, etc (Dzongkhags, schools)	Teacher guides, textbooks, Dzongkhags, Schools, Regional groups (Professional bodies)	Classroom teaching and Learning activities/experiences Teachers, Students, School community at large (Professional bodies)

[The Silken Knot, 2002]

This current curriculum initiative in English attempts to bridge that gap. At least in terms of developing the Curriculum Framework and the Teacher Guides and Student Textbooks from classes IX to XII, which, as mentioned earlier on, were developed with teachers from the field and representatives from teacher education, examinations, educational research, educational monitoring, curriculum unit, and the experts. Teachers have been drawn ensuring geographical distribution. To kick off the implementation of the new curriculum, nationwide teacher orientation workshops have been organized or are being organized.

The new curriculum also seeks to localize implementation support mechanisms so that the change is understood, confidence is built, and the change is sustained well beyond the initial years. With such a stream of thought and discussions taking place to move the change essentially into the classrooms, with the active involvement of all stakeholders in the change, this could be akin to Green et al's 'meso' sphere. From this point of view, the current curriculum initiative in English is consonant with the ideas in the 'Critical-Reconceptualist Framework' espoused by Green et al (1998).

However, this is still the thinking which needs the active support of all stakeholders. This would be the greatest challenge ever in this curriculum initiative. If this works, the change will take root in the system.

4. Conclusion/recommendation

In this paper, I have attempted to present three curriculum frameworks – The Socially-Critical Framework, the Habermasian Framework, and the Critical-Reconceptualist Framework, based on the work by Kemmis et al (1983), Grundy (1987), and Green et al (1998). Socially constructed nature of curriculum, emancipatory curriculum for the autonomy and empowerment of the learners, and bringing all players of the curriculum work into a 'level playing field' have emerged as very important in the understanding and practice of curriculum. I have analyzed the current curriculum initiative in English through those lenses of the frameworks presented and argued that the curriculum initiative under scrutiny is largely consonant with the major works of curriculum theorists under discussion.

However, one major concern that emerged consistently in the analysis was over how all those grand ideas and schemes in this curriculum initiative might translate into classroom practices. Once brought to trial in the classrooms, how might they be continued and sustained? What

kind of implementation support mechanism might be required that will bring and sustain change? In the ultimate analysis, my recommendation is that a sound implementation support mechanism be developed which will address Green et al's 'meso' and also the support mechanism at the local level, both within and without the school.

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What are the students' preferred teaching-learning methods and strategies in the Bhutanese Education System module? An inward journey to improve delivery: An Action Research Report

- Singye Namgyel, Principal, Academic Affairs, NIE, Paro

1. Introduction

Bhutanese Education System (EDN 3308) is one of the professional studies modules offered to the 2nd year students at the NIE, Paro. I am a new faculty member in the institute and have been teaching the subject since August 2005 for the first time. I keep reflecting and asking to myself what must be some of the best ways of delivering the course? Moreover students have been oriented to various teaching strategies in the first year and they have also gone through Apprenticeship and Practice Teaching programmes and hence have a fair understanding of the type of teaching methods and strategies. I wanted to seek my students' views and suggestions to improve my teaching, which has been bothering me for sometime.

2 Statement of Research Problem

It was a study to find out the effectiveness of teaching, to remedy the flaw (if any) on time and improve further by seeking views and opinions of the learners themselves. The following questions were used to collect data:

What are the students' preferred teaching-learning strategies for the BES module?
Which of the strategies used did the students not like?
Which of the strategies used did the students like?
Which of the teaching aids the teacher used helped students learn better?
Suggest ways to improve the teaching-learning of BES.

3. Methodology

Essentially, it was a survey research. Survey questionnaire containing both pre-coded items and open-ended items was administered to the students in the class, which took about ten minutes. All students of IIA & IIB participated in the survey. The sampling technique was that of purposeful sampling because all students who I taught were asked to respond to the questionnaire.

The statistical data was analysed using SPSS. For the purpose of keeping it simple to be comprehended by all, statistical data have been confined to descriptive and frequency distribution. Insofar as the qualitative data are concerned, patterns and themes have been derived from the open comments and treated accordingly.

4. Results: Reflections

4.1 Statistical Data: Effectiveness of teaching-learning strategies being used:

Some 83 students participated in the survey from two sections of the 2nd year B.Ed with 59 men and 29 women and one missing.

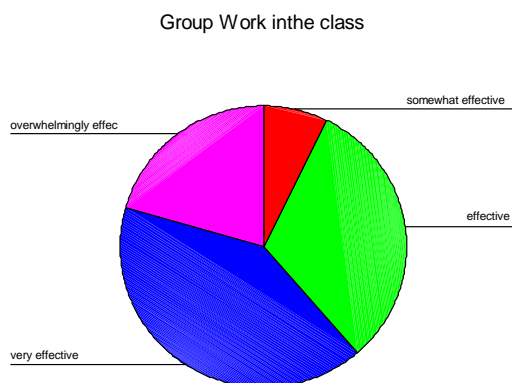
Table 1. Frequency distribution of the rating on the 5-point likert scale

	Group Work in the class	Discussion on pre distributed handouts	Use of worksheet questions	Use of teaching aids	Reading assignment	Teacher's Lecturing
1. Not at all effective		F= 1 1.2%	F=1 1.2%		F=1 1.2%	
2. Somewhat effective	F= 6 7.2%	F= 4 4.8%	F= 8 9.6%	F= 18 21.7%	F= 10 12%	F= 6 7.2%
3. Effective	F= 26 31.3%	F= 31 37.3%	F= 20 24.1%	F= 25 30.1%	F= 29 34.9%	F= 31 37.3%
4. Very effective	F= 34 41.0%	F= 35 42.2%	F= 33 39.8%	F= 26 31.3%	F= 4 41%	F= 32 38.6%
5. Overwhelmingly effective	F= 17 20.5%	F= 10 12%	F= 20 24.1%	F= 10 12%	F= 6 7.2%	F= 14 16.9%

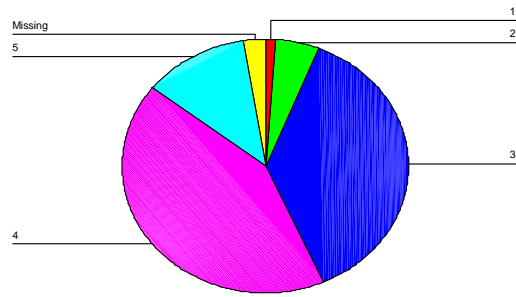
Table 1 shows that in general terms the teaching-learning of the BES module is effective as a majority of the respondents have rated it on the higher scale. "Very Effective" has been rated between 31.1%- 42.2% as all the areas of teaching-learning identified. This scale has been higher compared to all others. It is encouraging to report that the scale, "Overwhelmingly Effective" has also been rated between 7.2%- 24.1%. Students thought that "Group Work in the class" and "Use of worksheet questions" were overwhelmingly effective as 20.5% and 24.1% respectively rated the scale.

However, one respondent each for "Discussion on pre-distributed handouts", "Use of worksheet questions" and "Reading assignment" rated the lowest scale of "Not at all effective". One can also take two positions in the "Use of worksheet questions" with 1.2% saying "Not at all effective", while on the other hand as high as 24.1% said it was "Overwhelmingly effective".

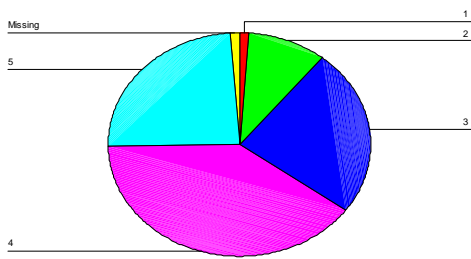
Statistical data can also be presented in the form of Pie Chart and Histogram with Normal Curves as below.



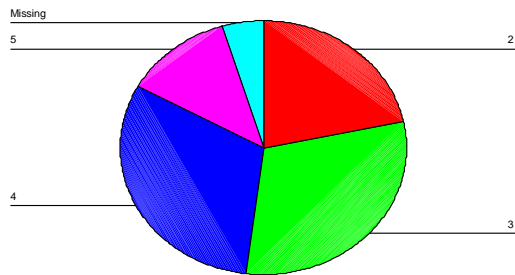
Discussion on pre distributed handouts



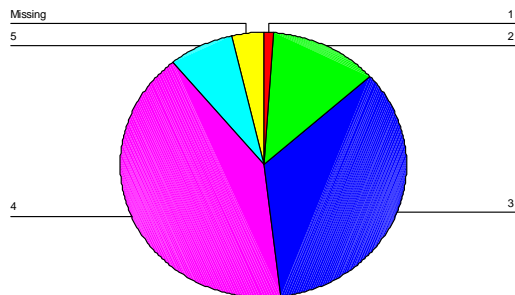
Use of worksheet questions

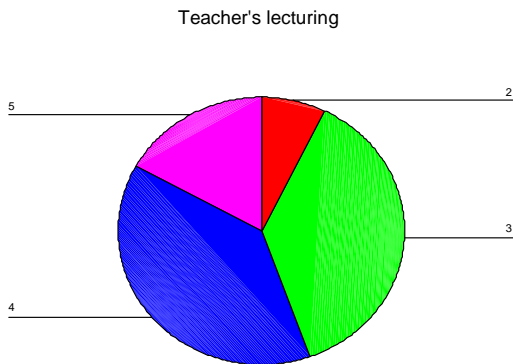


Use of teaching aids



Reading assignment





4.2 Best practices:

An open-ended question was included in the questionnaire, which asked the respondents to list what they observed to be the best practices of the teacher. Of the 83 respondents, 78 (94%) of them had provided comments in this section. Five of them had no comment making no response rate to be 6%. While reading through the data their comments seemed to be circling around the various qualities of a teacher namely, punctuality, planning, preparedness, various stimulation, helpfulness, acknowledgement of students' responses, specific teaching strategy (shopping list, carousel), resourcefulness. It would be useful to highlight briefly on each of these.

4.2.1 Punctuality:

*Some students said that I am punctual in the class. It is true because I am never late in the class and I have also not missed any class. ID 021 had this say, "Approachable (with trainees) + ready to help in need, **Punctual**, Accepting trainee's view". Another respondent also shared a similar observation on the punctuality, "Good interaction with trainees, **Punctual**, Writing shopping list before teaching" (ID 076). ID 071 pointed out, "**Being on time for the lesson** (well planned/prepared), Feedbacks provided for group/individual works, Being responsible for effective lesson".*

4.2.2 Planning & Preparedness:

A good number of respondents observed my preparedness and well planned lesson as one of the best practices. One of the basic requirements of a good teacher is planning the lesson and being prepared with the teaching learning materials. I have been doing the same for teaching BES this semester. I do prepare daily lesson plan and I try to use different approaches and strategies in every lesson. Students observe them in me. Following responses substantiate:

ID 020: Very good teaching strategies, Always prepared for the lesson.

ID 023: Very casual and jolly, hence approachable, Good background of the module though for the 1st time, Well planned lesson and activity.

ID 032: Good interaction with trainees, Different strategies every time.

ID 034: Teacher's manner, Use of different strategies is quite good, Friendly atmosphere (in the classroom).

ID 036: Carousel activity.

ID 044: Group work/discussion, Work sheet questions, Reading assignment.

ID 049: Teacher friendliness (with learners), Keeping the class informed in advance regarding the content to be taught (Task ahead), Carousel (Activity).

ID 059: Classroom participation is equally given to all, Well planned activities, Good sets of questions.

ID 065: Activities (questions) based on handouts, eg. Carousel activity.

ID 068: Mostly self-regulated learning, Learner centred, Group discussion.

ID 015: Use of different strategies with lots of teaching aids in every lesson, Creation of friendly atmosphere in the classroom situation where we feel free to share our views.

4.2.3 Specific teaching strategy (shopping list, carousel):

Quite a few respondents specified some of the strategies I followed, particularly Carousel, listing things to be done for the lesson and tasks ahead. I employed "Carousel" a couple of times as a strategy to debrief reading. I do list items coming up in the lesson and inform what is to be done in the next lesson or the following week and provide handout or any reading assignment. Many students find them good practices in me.

4.2.4 Helpfulness & Resourcefulness:

I have been sharing my resources such as books, articles, etc. which the students listed them as some my best practices. I also help some students with printing of their assignment, materials for various modules as they say the common printing facility is out of order. I cannot just refuse when they come to my office for such help. Although these do not have much to do with my classroom teaching, they seem to link to it as well:

ID 001: Sharing of information in advance regarding the future topics (i.e. divisions of groups), Imparting information which were fundamental for teachers besides the module teaching, Being very helpful to the trainees in photocopying, printing & other academic needs, Moreover providing reference books for use of class was appreciated.

ID 003: Interaction with trainees was excellent, Caters to the needs of the trainees, Understands the problem as a friend (friendly help when needed).

ID 035: Understanding nature, Always ready to help with resources and time, Frankness and makes the class a lively one.

ID 040: Friendly discussion, Problem solving, Showing the resources available.

ID 046: Teacher's manner and style-effective, Guiding and giving resources.

ID 047: Use reinforcement/motivate the learners to learn, Provides enough materials, Listen to students needs and help.

ID 072: On time, Openness (supportive), Readiness to do for trainees.

4.2.5 Stimulus Variation:

A significant number of students seem to appreciate my dealing with them. By some counts, these may be equated with stimulation variation: way of talking, listening to them, acknowledgement of students' responses, tackling questions and responses, reinforcement, motivate learners, bring lot of learning materials, excellent interaction with trainees, and so on.

5. Bad practices

A question also invited the respondents to write any bad practices that they observed in the teaching-learning process. Only 31 trainees responded making response rate only 37%, while rest of the 52 participants had no comments. While going through the comments in this section these themes and trends can be derived: time management, individual monitoring, individual involvement, notebook checking, monotonous strategy, specific feedback on presentation, few dominating discussion, heavy workload.

5.1 Time management

A few respondents commented saying that I always used their 5 minutes of interval time. It is true that most of the time I used the time to conclude my lesson.

5.2 Individual Monitoring

Some students observed that I did not monitor individually. Since most of the teaching-learning took place through group work, it is possible that I missed proper and individual monitoring.

5.3 Individual involvement

It seems group work has the flaw of not being able to involve every body. Although instruction was that everyone in the group should contribute but some respondents feel that a few members in the group remain passive as the comments suggest. My inability to look into this area has been observed as one of the bad practices.

5.4 Notebook checking

This comment made by few participants is quite interesting because I did not intend to look at individuals' notebooks. I asked them to copy points of the presentations made

by various groups on any topic. When I clarified on any issue, they were also asked to note it down. But it makes sense to expect me to check and do correction.

5.5 Monotonous strategy

At least a couple of respondents did mention the strategy I employed to be monotonous. It is rather difficult to understand this very comment because many of the students described my strategies to be very varied and interesting but one or two said otherwise. Class is divided into six groups with the same members. Most of the lessons are to do with groups which some of them find monotonous.

5.6 Specific Feedback on presentation

Some felt that I missed providing specific feedback on the group presentation. This shows that they are not confident with the information and knowledge their friends presented to them. As and when the presenters made any errors with facts and figures, I corrected them but generally left them without much comment.

5.7 Few dominating discussion

This has definitely been a weakness on my part and it still continues. There are quite a few who are vocal and confident in the class. They always seem to come forward to respond to any question. But I also observed that they do not really rush to take chance of others.

5.8 Heavy workload

Another peculiar and interesting comment made by one or two is on the lesson being too heavy and there being no rest. It is true because I tend to make best use of time. Perhaps, it is important to slow down a bit, may be by reducing the amount of content the students are to learn.

6. Suggestions for improvement of BES Teaching-Learning

Another question, "Open comments" asked trainees to write suggestions (if any) on how the teaching learning of BES can be improved. Some 17 (20%) respondents did not write any comment. In other words, this section of the questionnaire was left blank. Another 22 (27%) participants' comments included words of acknowledgement, appreciation. Some said excellent, exemplary, no comments, no suggestions, keep it up, best strategies followed; maintain the same spirit, etc. Only 44 (53%) students gave some kind of suggestions for improving the teaching-learning of BES module. Their suggestions can be clubbed under the following themes. While reading through the suggestions, they seem to complement the comments mentioned in the "Bad Practices" section of the questionnaire. A few of the respondents point to that section for addressing.

6.1 Focus on individual contribution

Some suggest that I should focus on the individual contributions made in the presentation and in the group work. Of course, it is quite difficult to concentrate on the individual's work. May be I should find a strategy to do so.

6.2 Mixture of lecture and group work

It is again interesting to read quite a few comments which said that they would prefer a mixture of lecture and group work. One could argue this comment from two angles; one is that the students still like being spoon-fed because lecturing in fact does that. Students become passive listeners most of the time while lecturing. On the other hand, group work requires them to work. They seem to feel overburdened when they have to do it quite regularly. Next area of improvement is on effective/constructive lecturing. I say this because when I was lecturing, I observed some students beginning to drowse, small group murmuring and not paying full attention.

6.3 Handout to individual student

A few of them said it could help if teacher could give handout individually. The reason cited is that they cannot afford to use the photocopier. I do understand the appeal but on the other hand many of the tutors give only one copy to the whole class. At least for the BES, I give one copy for 2-3 students. This is something the management has to look into. There will be huge budget implications. More important concern is whether the students make best use of the handouts. Past experiences are that they throw them away after the examinations.

6.4 All work sheet questions are done

This is an area, which I should improve upon. It seems some students or groups do not complete the worksheet questions that I give in the class. Henceforth, I must make a point to see to it.

6.5 Additional information on the topic discussed

This is yet another interesting comment/suggestion in that it seems they do not find the information contained in the handout adequate. They are asking additional information input although only a handful of them said so.

6.6 Summary of the topic discussed

Although I usually summarise after the presentation, it seems some of them do not seem to get it. Henceforth, I should specifically mention it whenever I summarise after presenting each topic.

6.7 Attend to hearing problem

This is one of the most important revelations of this action research. Generally teachers are ignorant of such special needs of the students. Here is a student who has

a hearing problem, when the rest do not seem to have it. It is important to address this need in the class.

6.8 Going around to attend to individual students

I do make an attempt to go round the class but space hampers me in doing it effectively and I cannot reach each individual student. What this calls for is to reduce the class size to about 25 students, which would provide sufficient space for the teacher to go round the class.

6.9 Mass involvement

It seems that still some students do not actively participate in some of the activities. It is either said by those who are involved or said by the ones who do not participate actively.

6.10 Scan questions asked by students (lots of useless questions)

It is obvious that during question/answer time, I let students ask questions. It seems at times some students find questions asked by their friends out of topic. They prefer me to scan them to save time.

7. Further Reflections

7.1 Ambivalent comments

Although quite a few comments and suggestions are worth considering but only a few of the respondents mentioned them. Many of the participants reported finding my teaching very and overwhelmingly effective. A case in point is a contradictory suggestion on lecture and group work. A few seem to prefer lecture, some group work, and still others prefer mixture of both. This is where I the teacher am left in a dilemma. One of the ways forward may be to group students into individual interest: group work, lecture, etc.

7.2 Spoon-feeding

Quite a number of students' suggestions and comments imply their preference for being spoon-fed. They ask for page numbers of texts, references, model answers of the questions. This is a tertiary institute and we believe that independent learning should take precedence. But some students do not appear to be comfortable with this approach. Perhaps, they should get used to being independent learners.

7.3 Student/Trainee Friendly Institute

Views and opinions shared by students also suggest that the teacher's approaches and supporting attitudes to them in some ways were student-friendly.

8. Conclusion

This small work on action research has been very significant for me. Basically, I carried out this exercise to improve my teaching of the subject. Quite a lot of data are expected. I was of the opinion that I have been doing the best. While generally the teaching is very effective and students prefer the strategies I follow there are few areas for improvement as highlighted in the "Bad practices" and "Suggestions for improvement".

Another reason for doing this small research is to motivate my fellow lecturers to embark on a similar work by them because I believe some of the teaching is not in line with "practise what you preach". Teacher educators at this institute are expected to be exemplary, especially in "methodologies and pedagogy".

Yet at third reason is to increasingly make students our monitors and critics. In many ways, they are effective monitors. Asking them to critique the teaching of their teachers would bring a lot of insights for the teachers to improve their delivery as indicated by the findings I have just experienced. These gave me lots of room for reflection in my profession in general and teaching in particular. Finally, to a large extent, objectives concerning me personally have been achieved. Whether the objectives regarding my colleagues to embark on a similar exercise has been achieved is yet to be seen.

Questioning Filial Bond in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*

- Dawa Lhamo, Lecturer in English, ILCS, Simtokha

Critics like Leventen (1991), Newman (1996), Drakakis (1996) and many others have studied the female characters of Shakespeare, and they say that there is a deep-rooted patriarchal thought in Shakespeare. It cannot be denied that Shakespeare belonged to the Elizabethan era or the Renaissance England, in which women were highly gendered and considered unruly if they happened to go against the existing norms of the society. The female identity was conceptualized into the patriarchal economy, a material object to be exchanged between two men to symbolize a completion of a business deal. There is this grounded notion that daughters must accept that fathers are owed particular duties by their daughters and be appalled by the chaos, which ensues when those primal links are broken. Family relations are seen as fixed and determined, and any movement within them is portrayed as a destructive reversal of the rightful order. Therefore, this paper attempts to look at the premise of gendering and transgression in the female characters in *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear*.

Both the plays are concerned with the father's will, to be executed by the daughters. As the plot of the play unravels, we see strong traces of power play between the daughters and the fathers. Both the plays place gender issues at centre-stage, and it slowly reveals the precarious status of the masculine macrosystem, and questions the hierarchical orders of the Renaissance thoughts. The plays are organized around various modes of female transgression, by which women are presented as a threat in the social, economic and political spheres. At the outset, the plays present a picture of women as weak, submissive, and self-effacing beings. On the one hand, there is something indecorous about a woman who transgresses the social codes, which require her to observe a modest silence and passivity in public. From a feminist perspective, this indecorous nature is to be celebrated as it brings out a subtle form of management. This indecorous nature of the women in *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* subtly govern the male action.

The Merchant of Venice and *King Lear* differ from each other in terms of the former being a comedy and the latter a tragedy. Certainly, there are differences in the construction of women in these two genres- comedy celebrates the feminine sphere and locates the space for empowerment strategy. Comedy downplays oppression and portrays women as having power over men. Linda Woodbridge, a critic, says that "comedy is a more accurate reflection of real Renaissance women and men's attitudes toward them" (cited in Callaghan, 1989: 38). Women in comedies are clever and witty, and try to invert the hierarchical gender relations, with subtle insinuations of governance. On the other hand, tragedy seemingly portrays a picture of a male sphere. It cannot be denied that tragedy situates the female gender in the political sphere, and the dominant ideology is profoundly hierarchical. The plot of the tragedy uncovers the complex familial relationship that is juxtaposed with the political and social order. And the stability of the family structure requires, as Catherine Belsey points out, "the subjugation of the women on the point of effacement" (quoted in Callaghan, 1989: 14). Thus, marriage is considered as the foundation of the family, which in turn is projected as a basis for state and society. The theme of tragedy examines power relations and the gender opposition built around familial ground that in turn shifts toward a political ground. Some say that tragedy was privileged that in turn shifts

toward a political ground. Some say that tragedy was privileged over comedy because tragedy dealt with characters of class and society of high order. Nevertheless, tragedy revolves around various contradictions that bring about the downfall of a powerful man. From a feminist perspective, the contradictions are an area of interest because they locate the space whereby women exude a subtle form of governance. Michel Foucault states that, "The reconfiguring of the subject of government confers obligations and duties at the same time as it open new spaces of decisions and action" (Barry et al, 1996: 58). Undoubtedly, both Portia and Cordelia are bound by the father's will; yet the will does offer some space whereby new decisions can be made and the outcome of free choice can be enunciated. Thus, we see here instances of each individual trying to govern their own conduct so that they can subtly govern the conduct of others. However, as the plot of the play progresses, we are made aware that Portia has more freedom than Cordelia. Although the first impression of Portia and Cordelia are different, we later see that Portia glories in the will of her father; as for Cordelia, she becomes the epitome of patriarchal oppression that ends in death, despite her momentary victory over her father.

The Merchant of Venice not only portrays a picture of love and marriage; the play also projects a picture of filial love and concern. Portia's father leaves her rich. But together with love is attached a binding will. In Renaissance England, it was a common practice for the father to leave behind a bequest conditional upon strict obedience. That is how it enabled the father to protect his asset. The play when divested of romance, it alludes filial love to patriarchal power operating as a form of management. Women, at all levels, as either daughters or wives were subject to the power of this patriarchal system. They had to be decorous and submissive and only then were they considered as good women. In *King Lear*, the image of the father legitimises and centralises the power of the state by utilising the argument and obedience due to king, simply because he is in power. Thus, both Portia and Cordelia are subject to the rule of their father; and when they marry them they become subject to the rule of the husband. The fact that tradition and custom allowed fathers to contract marriage led to the women being perceived as a piece of property; a commodity to be exchanged between two men to symbolize a completion of a business deal as stated above. This virtually led women to be considered as material object. Therefore, the female gender is conceptualised as part of patriarchal economy, redefining female as a commodity, to be passed on from the father to the husband through the institution of marriage. Lawrence Stone states that, "the key to the system of controlled marriage was the exchange of property" (quoted in Wayne, 1991:63). Hence, there is an implicit notion about the equation of women to a material context, which is the subversion of her identity as an individual.

Males are not only projected as the head of the family, they are portrayed as having control over the conjugal unit that threaten the role of Portia and Cordelia. Both are bound by father's will except Portia's father is no longer alive. Still then, the will is extremely oppressive and binding. However, Portia artfully manages to transform the situation to her advantage without going against her father's will. Although, Cordelia's situation is very grim, she goes against the wishes of her father and poses a threat to the patriarchal and political obligation. For Cordelia, to rebel against one's father is to be guilty of treason and heresy. Robert Filmer says, "Natural paternal power was a justification of absolute monarchy as a natural extension of the power of the father. This patriarchal politic also centralises the power of the state in the system in which

power emanates from king down to all fathers" (quoted in Callaghan, 1989:15). The patriarchal rule in *King Lear* is an absolutist kind of governance that demands the subjugation by the female subject. However, Foucault says that there are "limits to governance, it is always incomplete; it consists of attempts and is always subject to avoidance, evasion and resistance" (Barry et al, 1996:174). Maybe Cordelia's open refusal to abide by the traditional norm at the love contest could be viewed as a form of resistance against paternal governance.

The gradual shift of the daughter into the hands of the husband conveys the underlying ideology of the Renaissance era that identified woman as a weak, incapable being who would need management under a masculine hand. Ian Maclean observe that "the belief that woman cannot be considered except in relation to marriage is reinforced by the ethical and medical vision of marriage as a natural state, found even in animals who possess neither a deliberative faculty nor freedom of choice" (quoted in Callaghan). Maclean's statement clearly brings out the underlying patriarchal power operating and interwoven into the cultural and social structure. We see instances of female gender subverted, and considered as an object of exchange. The context of the will and the legacy posits a form of mercantilism operating in the fabric of society that places daughter as a commercial being to be acquired in the form of transaction in the material world. The issue of the will and the legacy questions the relationship between a father and a daughter. It definitely speaks of the patriarchal authority as a form of management at the elemental level. Incidentally, this picture of Portia as a submissive daughter is absolutely in contradiction to her role in the courtroom. Her role as a lawyer downplays the picture of demure Renaissance woman. Maclean says that "despite all the limits on women's freedom arising from marriage, women may have possessed greater freedom, independence and power than is generally recognised" (quoted in Callaghan, 1989:40). Even though there is the implicit reference of daughter as subject of the father, Portia subtly transcends gender bias and inverts the picture of traffic in woman with the careful manipulation of her father's binding will. Portia utters, "so is the will of living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father" (1.2.23). The immediate picture that is presented is that of a daughter bound by the will of a dead father that alludes to patriarchal politics. Shakespeare's portrayal of Portia's predicament in Act I, scene ii, is in contradiction to the trial scene. This scene exposes and summarises the provisions of the will, outlines the rules of lottery and reveals Portia's feelings on the patrimony left behind by her father. Portia finds this will very binding and oppressive. The scene presents Portia as conflicted and depressed young woman. Therefore, she retains the traditional gender role of obedience and virtue. As a daughter, she has imbibed the values of the traditional Elizabethan society. She does not direct her anger at the law of the father. She is almost complacent about the whole issue of her being placed on a mercantile state as a commodity of exchange. Hence, patriarchal power is cleverly and unobtrusively posited as existing prerogative. Portia does lament over the lack of choice: "I may neither choose... nor refuse.... Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?" (I, ii, 23-6). To go against the wish of the father is to commit a "sin" (III,ii,13), and for that she might probably "go to hell" (III,ii,21). This reveals that as a daughter she projects good Christian virtues of love and obedience that has been instilled in her.

The casket scene obviously shows Portia standing for sacrifice. She stands there as each man comes and tries his luck to claim her as the prize. The exchange of Portia

via the caskets to Bassanio is the exchange upon which the whole narrative of the play is situated: "Myself and what is mine to yours is now converted" (III,ii,166-7). The word "converted" gains a monetary term, implying that she is now converted into his property. Portia's role in the play is a pseudo-centre, a figure of exchange but not an equal partner. Thus, the exchange of women produces what Gayle Rubin has termed as "sex/gender system" marginalized by the masculine and patriarchal prerogatives. She comments that "Exchange of women is a shorthand for expressing that the social relations of a kinship system specify that men have certain rights in their female kin, and that women do not have the same right either to themselves or to their male kin" (quoted in Newmen 23). The exchange of gifts not only conveyed kinship relations, but power relations as well. That Portia offers her loves to Bassanio shows that she epitomizes the Elizabethan sex/gender system. Portia says "...now, this house, these servants, and this same myself are yours,-my lord's!-I give them with this ring..." (III,ii,169-71). The ring-giving is a visual pledging of her subjugation to the hierarchical relation of men and women in the Elizabethan sex/gender system. It signifies her place in a defined man's macrocosm. Portia's declaratory speech of love seems to fit the picture of compliant Renaissance women, whereby Portia calls Bassanio her supreme lord, a governor. Thus, the play presents conventional gender roles and patriarchal marriage arrangements in which women were commodities who exchange both produced and reproduced hierarchical gender relations. Yet Portia's act of gift-giving when looked from a different vantage point entails prestige and power. Portia gives more than Bassanio can ever reciprocate and in so doing ties Bassanio's identity to her economy. The passing of the ring from Portia to Bassanio becomes a sign of hierarchical subordination. And later in the trial scene, Bassanio is prevailed upon giving up the ring to the woman who gave it to him, and subtly slides into the influence of woman with power. Thus, when it passes from Bassanio to Balthasar's hands, it takes on a different meaning and undermines its prior signification. Instead, it projects a picture of disorder, gender instability and cuckoldry. Ostensibly, the exchange of the ring questions the decorum of the Renaissance marriage. Though Portia evokes a picture of conventional woman when Bassanio has left for Venice, "For mine own part, I have toward heaven breathed a secret vow to live in prayers and contemplation, only attended by Nerissa" (III,iv, 26-9). She transgresses the stereotype role by stepping out of the conformity by cross-dressing as Balthasar. Thus, Portia's stance at this point inverts the social and hierarchical gender relations. Instead, she becomes the exemplary woman with knowledge in a male sphere. The legal knowledge she deploys at the trial scene to save Antonio shifts the picture of a patriarchal obedient conformity to unconformity. Here, we get the picture of a knowing woman, who subtly uses her intelligence to govern the men around her. Portia's assertion of her knowledge and ingenuity becomes the crux of the plot. Her disguise as a young lawyer and her persuasive speech presents the portrait of a feminine williness that convincingly and artfully dislodges the man from a dominant position. In her disguise as a young lawyer, Portia persuades Bassanio to part with the ring, which Bassanio had promised he wouldn't. In the beginning when Portia seals the betrothal with the pledge of a ring, she enters into the position of a subordinate under the circumstance of her father's will. But somehow, she manages to retain her control over Bassanio: "... this ring, which when you part from, lose, or give away, let it presage the ruin of your love, and be my vantage to exclaim on you" (III,ii.171-4). At this juncture, Bassanio is in no position to let go the rich heiress from his hand. Thus, Shakespeare in creating Portia-a daughter, an heiress who has control over land and money, constitutes a challenge to the social order thereby

creating anxieties. These cultural anxieties are further intensified by her intelligence and knowledge; thus Shakespeare has neutralized her power by making her internalise her father's norms and values. Nevertheless, since she is a woman of intellect; she conducts herself with deference governing the conduct of others yet maintaining the picture of a demure Renaissance woman.

Moreover, all the men in the play are socially and financially inferior to her, despite their gender superiority. Because of her superior intelligence, Portia saves Antonio's life, restores his lost fortune. The deliberate ring trick places Bassanio and Gratiano at a disadvantage, since Portia and Nerissa warn them of a sexual misdemeanour. These manage to bind both the men to their side. We see traces of knowingness exuding power and a form of management in the plot strategies of Shakespeare's female characters, thereby transgressing gender/sex marginalization. Jonathan Golberg thinks that "women probably had more power [...] because of the abundance of contradictions in the patriarchal ideology which sought to subordinate them" (Callaghan, 1989:40). Hence Portia transcends those subverting ideologies by her conduct with the skilful application of her intellect and her knowingness.

There are traces of a little contradiction in the way Shakespeare has situated the play and the role of the women. Stanley Chojnacki asserts that "Shakespeare has situated the play in Venice but has not placed for women of similar status in England possessing money and land independent of marriage," (quoted in Leventen, 1991:64). Shakespeare has ingeniously interwoven the patriarchal overtone of the play to that of an Elizabethan context. Portia is left very wealthy by her father, yet she does not have the similar freedom enjoyed by the Venetian women. Although, she is gendered and highly subject to male domination; yet by her ingenuity and knowingness she transgresses those margins of patriarchal hegemony. And on the other hand, it was quite common in the Elizabethan period for the young male aristocrats to squander their wealth and look for wealth in the form of dowry through marriage. Thus marriage became a form of exchange and woman/daughter became a commodity. This ostensibly shows how women were oppressed by patriarchal prerogatives, and after the marriage, it was passed over to the husband to govern as and how he liked. This play is well grounded in commerce and finance, and the commodification of womanhood.

The play not only raises issues regarding the fears and expectations of Portia's status but it also indirectly comments on the unruly behaviour of Jessica. There is almost an underlying biblical allusion to Jessica being the prodigal son, and Portia, the good son. But the irony is that both of them are female and the art of patriarchal governance operates on different scale for both of them. Portia embodies a patriarchal idea of a compliant daughter to which Jessica is contrasted as a father's nightmare. Portia seems well bestowed with Christian virtues, while Jessica is not. Here, the Christian virtues could be equated to a patriarchal power that subjugates women. Jessica is portrayed as rebellious and disobedient to her living father. It presents a binary structure: dead father/living father; obedient/rebellious; benevolence/ingratitude. Jessica takes matter into her own hands, elopes with Lorenzo; she marries whom she chooses. She takes money from her father's coffer and spends it recklessly. But even though Jessica presents a picture of flouting her father's wishes, the all empowering force of love eventually subjugates her. Not only that, her unruliness seems to get neutralised, by her willingness to be absorbed into a

Christian society. Her desire to be converted to Christianity tells of self-subjection to the power of Christian patriarch. She feels she can be assimilated into Christian patriarchy to which she may defer with gratitude and benevolence. Even though Jessica is projected as asserting her individuality, the play makes limited allowances for her. Because she takes money and rings from her father's treasury, and spends the money and sells off the rings inconsiderately, she is looked at with disapproval. So the play not only confronts the patriarchal ideology but it also brings into focus the equation of women to coffers, boxes, baskets, gifts etc – that constitute a commercial activity. Women are considered good and virtuous if they are passive and do not interfere with the masculine world. But Jessica at one point goes against the norm of a dutiful daughter, and she is looked at with disapproval. Perhaps, Shakespeare felt the need to silence Jessica through the remainder of the play because of her unruliness and her posing a danger to male authority. On the other hand, Portia's subservience to her father and her eventual marriage to Bassanio speaks of masculine powers she had to abide by as the conditionality of her father's prescriptions governing the method of her marital choice. Even though Portia is portrayed as the oppressed daughter in the beginning, somehow Shakespeare makes her glory in the trial scene. Portia manages to slip out of the binding situation by her crafty knowledge thus transgressing into a woman of authority and knowingness. Her role inverts authorized systems of gender and power, and shows a subtle form of crafty management. Portia, despite her father's patrimony, is a rich and potentially powerful woman. She primarily conceives herself as a daughter and never seriously questions the necessity of submitting to her father's dictates. And the fact that she worries over the lottery and its outcome establishes that her compliance is a matter of choice. She chooses to follow her father's will but transforms the oppressive will into a positive force, whereby she glories as a woman of power and authority.

Parallel to Portia's role as a daughter curbed by the binding will, there is Cordelia who is also faced with the similar situation. The difference between the two plays is that one is situated in the mercantile world of Venice, while *King Lear* is set in ancient Britain. In *King Lear*, at the centre of patriarchal scheme of things is the emotional conflict of a political order that demands the severing of paternal bond. The patriarchy in *King Lear* is situated on two orders: the family, over which the father rules; and social/political system grounded in male authority. And in the core of the play are the daughters who must violate to transgress the patriarchal world. A complicated father-daughter bond is subtly built into the play. From the beginning itself, it is very clear that Lear loves his youngest daughter, and he wants her to have the biggest portion of the kingdom. It is very explicit that King Lear manipulates his power to motivate to love contest whereby he can consolidate his power.

King Lear's abdication of the throne is analogous to transference of power from a male hand into the hands of the female. Lear compels his daughters to a certain form of behaviour; he displays the terms and conditions for love. If the daughter wishes a different form of a contract, she is disowned. Ironically, Goneril and Regan slide along with the father's terms and conditions, and the social order. When Lear asks, "which of you shall we say doth love us most? That we our largest bounty may extend where nature doth with merit challenge" (I,i,51-2), Goneril replies, "I love you more than word can wield the matter; dearer than eye sight, space and liberty; beyond what can be valued rich or rare; no less than life [...] beyond all manner of so much I love you" (I,i,54-60). Regan also says, "... myself an enemy to all other joys which most precious

square of sense possesses, and I also felicitate in your dear highness' love" (I,i,68-74). This contest scene not only presents a picture of the power of the archetypal king and father, it also shows the falsity of love of the two daughters. Part of the problem is the equation of love to a material context. For Lear, love seems to be evaluated as a commodity, a standard quantitateness instead of qualitateness. Thus, the father measures love not by action but by words. The pretence of Goneril and Regan has a more deleterious effect on female gender. It encapsulates the women as following the traditionally expected behaviour to do for men. Later in the play, his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, throw out Lear. This scene is in contradiction to the scene where they profess their love for their father. The picture of the father begging at his daughters' doorstep reverses the gender hierarchies.

The dispute between the father and the daughters is in part concerned with love and filial gratitude but it also dramatises the tense relationship between these bonds and the material circumstances in which they function. Lear's power over his daughters is tyrannical, especially with his treatment of Cordelia. Cordelia, by contrast with her sisters, is much less stereotyped. Her refusal to pretend as a means of survival transgresses herself. She refuses to abide by the will of the father and his coercive contest of love that patriarchy seems to demand. When Lear demands that Cordelia speak, she replies: "I cannot have my heart into my mouth: I love you according to my bond; no more, no less" (I, i,90-92). When the father again commands her to mend her speech, she is adamant and holds her fort strongly. Her little speech, "you have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I return those duties back as are right fit, obey you, [...] to love my father to all" (I, i,95-103), clearly depicts the picture of a young woman with intelligence and a steadfast nature, not easily swayed by threats. This statement of Cordelia sends a wave of shock, since the daughter is expected to be submissive and obedient.

She transgresses the picture of an obedient daughter. Her refusal to follow the traditional role of a compliant daughter posits a problematic filial bond. Thus, Cordelia's transgression involves refusal to meet her father's demands. Consequently, Cordelia's staunch stand against her father's will is disowned.

Moreover, Lear's insistence that his daughters flatter him is clearly his last act designed to retain control. Lear appropriates the patriarchal terms and conditions, which presents a picture of absolute sovereignty. Cordelia's refusal to flatter her father and her rejection of her father's authority is analogous to her repudiation of his claim over her. This picture of Cordelia flouting her father's will is placed in contrast to Portia, who is portrayed as a daughter waiting for sacrifice. Lear, confronted with the emotional truths, continues to abuse his power as a king to protect his emotional tension. Thus, he disowns Cordelia with ruthlessness, presenting a picture of a despot. This particular scene of Cordelia's marriage transaction echoes the casket scene of *The Merchant of Venice*. However, Portia is left rich by her father whereas Lear deprives Cordelia of the inheritance. Portia as a woman has choice of men whereas Cordelia has only two. Ironically, both are measured in terms of the dowry. However, we get a sense of Portia having more freedom than Cordelia. In the contest scene, with her refusal to accept a conventional role, she loses her value. Cordelia is equated in terms of commodity in exchange. Since she is divested of the exchange value, she loses her worth, which is a subversion of her identity as woman. She is measured not in terms of her worth as a person but in terms of exchange rate. When Lear says,

"when she was dear to us we did hold her so, but now her price is fallen. Sir, there stands [...] she is all yours" (1, 1, 195-200), this speech of the father questions the quintessence of filial love. When Cordelia's character is compared with that of Portia, Portia seems more refined and suave. Portia, despite a binding will, ends up being a celebrated woman. Whereas Cordelia lacks the suavity to manipulate the situation to her advantage, thus is considered not fit to receive paternal love. Lear, as far as possible, makes Cordelia look unattractive. He says her "price" has fallen. He succeeds in convincing Burgundy of her unworthiness. Nevertheless, France marries her with the future hope of gaining control over England and nothing else.

Lear's demand of a declaration of love is juxtaposed to Cordelia's refusal to compete in the love contest. At this juncture, she has just two choices -to obey the father and fall into the category of the conventional daughter or to refuse and be disowned. She chooses the latter and utters, "why have my sisters husbands, if they say they love you all? Happily, when I shall wed, that lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry half my love with him, half the care and duty: sure I shall never marry like my sisters, to love my father all" (1, i, 98-103). Thus, with a single stroke she strikes the truth at her father and this enrages Lear. He is still the king and has absolute power; he wields his power by disowning Cordelia on the spot. Ironically, later in the play, when Goneril and Regan refuse to let him keep his retainers, he feels frustrated but he has already lost his political power to be able to disown them. He cries out in frustration: "you unnatural hags, I will have revenges on you both [...], they shall be the terrors of the earth" (II, iv, 276-280). But his threats are empty words because he has no power left: to wield over them. Thus, it drives him to the verge of madness. Besides Cordelia becomes a 'tragic figure despite her short-lived victory over her father. Callaghan seems to think that, "women were frequently constructed as catalysts of tragic action, throwing moral order into confusion rather than merely ratifying its boundaries: they serve not just to define limits but also to uncover the limiting structures of society" (63). Therefore, woman in tragedy is a premise for both ambivalence and contradiction. Cordelia is the agent as well as the victim in the Renaissance scheme of things. Later, the need for forgiveness reverses hierarchies of both age and sex, and suggests their limitations. Lear abuses his power and loses, and Cordelia gains some, but to no affect. Consequently, Cordelia descends from being the self-governing woman to the obedient daughter.

Though the plays seem to project notions of patriarchy and sovereigntist rule, we see gaps and contradictions that give space for womanly transgression. Moreover, both the plays investigate Renaissance patriarchy through the relationship between the daughters and fathers. Besides the depiction of father-daughter relationship, it questions cultural situations that classified women as more or less a matter of exchange. However, we see some difference between the women in comedy and tragedy. From what we have seen so far, Portia seems to have transcended the norms of the conventional daughter. In spite of the binding will, she has overcome certain restrictions. Her action and her manner of managing are in line with her conduct and her conduct upon the rest of the males in the plays. Her control of the situation and her subtle artful manipulation inverts the gender subordination, whereas Cordelia first projects the picture of an independent daughter, flouting the wishes of the father/king. But later, we see her falling into the quiet and forgiving daughter. Callaghan emphasizes that, "women in tragedy extends through a range of discontinuities from the instigation of the tragic situation by means of an initial

transgression, to her sanctification as the chief corpse of the denouement" (Callaghan, 1989:67). However, both the plays work towards an historicized notion of gender and the Renaissance culture, Portia and Cordelia are the epitome of transcendence and transgression. Though one ends in death, nevertheless it does problematise the whole issue of the heterogeneity of patriarchy and the concomitant gender imbalance.

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Principalship for the Bhutanese High Schools

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Introduction

The point is that the principal does indeed make a difference in the life of a school, however that difference may be characterized. Even by doing nothing, the principal affects the life of a school, if for no other reason than that by doing nothing he or she creates a fragmented system in which people work and survive as best as they can.

(Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986:3)

The work of principals is onerous and clearly building principals is of paramount importance in the life of a school. It is not teachers or other people sitting in the central office who are really causing schools to be the way they are or changing the way they might be. It is whoever sits in the principal's office (Leithwood,1992). It is impossible to find a precise definition that adequately describes the role of a principal (Thomas, 2000: 135) as definitions of the principal's roles and responsibilities keep changing over time (Sergiovanni, T.J., 2001:4). Earlier definitions focused on processes and functions of the principal which later gave way to focus on competencies and proficiencies. In recent years, more emphasis is given to accomplishment of goals and defining of the job, called the outcome approach. How principalship is defined, therefore, depends on "our mindscapes of leadership, how schools work; and the nature of human rationality shape the way we think about theoretical knowledge and the link between knowledge and how we practice" (Sergiovanni, T.J., 2001:3).

The Context

The Bhutanese Education system is slowly emerging out of its adventure through uncharted waters after a period of four decades of its beginning in 1960s. The last four decades were characterized by rapid growth in student population, expansion of schools and acute shortage of teachers and resources. From a handful of schools in the 1960s, the Kingdom now has over 450 schools with an enrolment of 150,000 students (Education, 2003). Now, the country has achieved a literacy rate of over 74% with 90% spatial coverage across the length and breath of the country (Education, 2004). Perhaps these are important milestones erected through the sheer will of the Government whose lion's share of the five year plans budget outlay always being given to the education sector since its inception in 1960. That is why in less than a generation, the country has made tremendous progress in the field of education.

We are now in the threshold of change and perhaps in a period of reflection to look back to our past achievements. It is also perhaps a period to contemplate and take respite as the system moves on to the shores of calmer waters and predictable times.

The Forces of Reformation

As the education system emerges out of its roller coaster ride, there is now a period of reflection and contemplation, of perhaps a better hope and aspiration. In the last three or four years, there has been a number of initiatives taken by the Ministry of

Education to align education with the rest of the world. These are the forces that will propel the system further into the 21st century.

Quality Education

The voice of demand for quality education was raised during the 2nd Annual Education Conference in Paro, 2002 (Education, 2003). As a result of the concern raised thereafter, massive curriculum review is being conducted and standards drawn for each subject for all levels of schooling. The standard for English is completed, which is being followed by other subjects. A national level education review is being conducted to gauge and measure the health of the education system in Bhutan. There is now a drive towards provision of quality education by drawing up standards, making the content relevant and responsive to the needs of the youths of the nation (Education, 2002). As a result, the management philosophy, structures and values of the schools will have to be altered to live up to the standards and expectations.

Changes in the Political Climate

Most schools which were centrally administered are now being decentralized to district administration in line with the policy of the Government. Schools are now increasingly becoming complex structures. The idea of school based management is slowly making inroads into the education system. School Management Boards have been established as far back as 1992 followed by School Based Inservice Programmes in 1993 (Thinley, 1997:27), School Based Career Counselling Programmes in 1998 and School Based Parent Counselling Programme in 2004. This entails opening the domain of school administration to other stakeholders, especially the parents and the community. This will bring about inevitable changes in the administration and management styles of schools.

Bhutanisation of Education

The curriculum of the Bhutanese education system was a direct transplant of the Indian/British system of education. There was no alternative in the initial years as our students had to go to India and abroad for higher education. The Bhutanisation of the curriculum started in the late 1980s from lower levels of education with the NAPE programme (Thinley, 1997:34). The Ministry created the Secondary Education Certification Board in 2004 and with this the country has severed the umbilical chord with the Indian education system to which our system was attached to since 1960s. With this new found freedom, the drive for Bhutanisation of the curriculum of secondary schools has started to make education meaningful to our youth and relevant to the needs of the country. In this drive, there is also, another aspect of what is now termed as wholesome education, which envisages to impart values and skills relevant to Bhutanese culture and the way of life.

Globalization and the advent of new cultures

With the opening of satellite television in 1998, the advent of the phenomenon of mass culture will greatly influence the youth. The revolution in information technology will also bring about profound changes in the system. The advent of new cultures and the access to new information will create conflicts with the values that is in place. As a

result, there is now a heightened sense, an urgency to ensure that our younger generation will get a balanced view of the world at large and at the same time ensuring that they do not forget our own culture and values. This challenge lies in the domain of education to mould our youths to the desired shape and form so that we do not land up in the melting pot of this global culture.

The Guiding Principles

According to Murhphy & Beck, principals must be aware of the various forces shaping conceptions of schooling and education (Murphy & Louis, 1994:5) to understand and be aware of what they do and should do. The forces shaping the Bhutanese education system will demand the kind of roles that principals will have to play. In light of the challenges ahead as our education system moves into the 21st century, the principals in the Bhutanese education system will need to inculcate the values of ethical and cultural leadership, practise the skills of distributive and instructional leadership and learn the concept of school-based management. Only this will ensure an education system that is in tune with the times and relevant to the vision of our society.

Being Ethical is Authentic Leadership

Environmental complexities and turbulence have brought to the forefront fundamental issues of tensions relating to leadership, organizational structures, culture and management practices. Many complex forces have emerged over the last decade in the Bhutanese education system to put both the organizations and their management under greater scrutiny. Management and leadership are no longer regarded as sacrosanct and are subject to increasing criticism (Bhindi and Duignan, 1997: 117). Negotiating the turbulence requires a leader who thinks carefully and reflectively yet acts decisively; who cares about others but has the courage to confront them; who has a sense of history but also sees the world as it might be. Most of all, it requires leaders who are carefully aware of their own humanity, with all its faults and virtues.

To be a school leader is to live with ethical dilemmas (Larry Lashway cited in Smith and Piele, 2000: 103) and leadership is authentic to the degree that it is ethical action (Bhindi and Duignan, 1995). It implies sincerity, genuineness, trustworthiness in action and in interaction and rejects motives and actions that are deceptive, hypocritical and duplicitous. It is based on personal integrity and credibility, trusting relationships (Kouzes and Posner, 1991, cited in Bhindi and Duignan, 1995) and commitment to ethical and moral values (Hodgkinson, 1991, cited in Duignan and Bhindi, 1995). Leaders earn their allegiance through authentic actions and interactions in trusting relations, and through the shaping of organizational structures, processes and practices that enshrine authentic values and standards. Such leaders help nurture, inspire and empower others. They encourage sharing and partnership and make organizations better places in which to work not only in terms of productivity but also in terms of the quality of life of its constituents.

According to Bhindi and Duiganan (1995), four qualities of leadership include authenticity, intentionality, spirituality and sensibility. These are the threads which can be woven together into the fabric of leadership in organizational settings of Bhutanese schools to make it more authentic and therefore more ethical.

Developing School Culture is Cultural Leadership

It is clear from reviews of the successful schools literature that building a school culture is key to the success of schools (Sergiovanni, 2001: 105). Educators, therefore, spend considerable time developing effective school culture as they have learned that culture yields rich dividends (Cuningham & Gresso, 1993:19). Every school has its own unique culture, either effective or ineffective (Stolp and Smith in Smith and Piele, 2000: 157), strong or weak (Sergiovanni, 2001: 105), tangible or intangible (Beare, Caldwell and Millikan, 1989: 173). Although all schools have cultures, successful schools seem to have strong functional cultures, nourished and nurtured with a vision of quality schooling.

The development of schools in Bhutan has been characterized by constant changes of school heads from one school to another. It is a policy of the Ministry of Education to rotate school principals every three to four years. This has adversely affected the development of school culture. What one principal builds is often torn down by the other. This has bred a culture of scepticism and cynicism in most secondary schools. Therefore, building a school culture is an imperative in Bhutanese schools. Culture is the distinct way of life which gives meaning and order to the particular group or community (Beare, Caldwell and Millikan, 1989: 177). In cultural leadership, the principal assumes the role of a *high priest*, seeking to define, strengthen and articulate those enduring beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity over time (Sergiovanni, 2001: 105). Culture serves as a compass setting to steer people in a common direction; it provides a set of norms defining what people should accomplish and how, and it is a source of meaning and significance. Culture is the glue that helps hold the organisation together by providing appropriate standards for what employees should say and do (Robbin in Smith, 2003 :249). Strong cultures are developed, nourished and nurtured through the correlates of, vertical team approach, vision, collegiality, values and trust, quality information and improvement, personal and professional development, employee empowerment and sustained innovation (Cuningham & Gresso, 1993:19). Strong cultures, according to Yin Cheong Cheng, is associated with positive organizational characteristics, teachers' job attitudes, and students' academic outcomes (Stolp and Smith in Smith and Piele, 2000: 173).

Leadership is intertwined with culture formation. Developing an organizational culture and shaping the creative process of its evolution is the 'unique and essential function' of leadership (Stolp and Smith in Smith and Piele, 2000: 173). However, principal alone cannot bring about change. Culture can be transformed only through collaborative engagement of teachers, students and the community. This is an imperative that principals in Bhutan need to keep in mind.

Leading from the Centre is Distributive Leadership

The management recipes in literature usually apply to selected aspects of specific situations, whereas the problems faced by daily practitioners always appear far too complex (Duigan and Macpherson, 1993). In the light of the emerging forces, principalship in Bhutanese schools is becoming far too complex. The changes in political climate, the demand for quality and the forces of globalisation will demand increased leadership roles. If principals are to be successful and effective then, they

must relocate from the apex of the pyramid to the centre of the network of human relationships and functions as a change agent (Wilkinson quoted by Chapman, 1990:227 cited in Murphy and Louis, 1994:25). Principals must find their authority in their personal, interpersonal and professional competencies, not in formal positions; they must cultivate collegiality, cooperation, and shared commitment among all with whom they work (Murphy and Beck cited in Murphy & Louis, 1994: 15). Principals must become more consultative, more open and more democratic in order to cater for participative management and for more staff ownership of management of the school. Shared decision making vis-à-vis collectively made decisions are usually easier to carry out, have more staying power and gain greater acceptance (Balster and Lashway cited Smith and Piele, 2000: 229). Shared decision making is the cornerstone of distributive leadership whose primary purpose is to make teachers feel more satisfied with their work. As a result, teachers

have greater impact on decisions, are better informed, have greater commitment which translates into improving the quality of educational services and ensuring responsiveness to the needs of students and the community (Balster and Lashway cited in Smith and Piele, 2000:228). The promise of sustainable success, therefore, lies in creating cultures of distributed leadership throughout the school and community (Hargreaves and Fink, 2003).

Leading Instructional Programmes is Instructional Leadership

The principal is not only accountable for academic quality but has also been confirmed that academic quality is the direct result of input from teachers and their expectation of instructional leadership provided by the principal (Smith and Andrews, 1989:3). In the quest for excellence in learning and quality in education, it takes more than a strong principal with concrete ideas and technical expertise. It requires the redefinition of roles based in a model of instructional leadership that removes the barriers to leadership by eliminating bureaucratic structures, reinventing relationships, and developing strategic time horizons (Doyle and Rice, 2002). The principal must assume the role of 'principal teacher' who bring expert professional knowledge and bearing to teaching, educational programme development and supervision (Sergiovanni, 2001: 103).

The instructional leadership has to exercise five domains of leadership of defining the school instructional mission, managing curriculum and instructions, promoting positive learning climate and assessing instructional programme (James Weber cited in Smith and Piele, 2000:258). The instructional leader must also build effective learning communities (Senge, 1994:11) through collaborative goal setting, professional development, teacher assessment and sound personnel practices (Larry Nyland cited in Smith and Piele, 1998:279).

This is the challenge in the role of the Bhutanese principals as instructional leaders to bring about qualitative changes in the education system in Bhutan.

Managing School-based Management is Extending School Community

School-based management is a widely instituted governance reform, a means of decentralizing authority to the school. The idea of school-based management is slowly

making inroads into the Bhutanese education system as discussed in the context of the forces influencing the system. School-based management is grounded on the assumption that there is direct relationship between participation and increased morale productivity, and the general effectiveness of the organizations (Conway,1976:13). The other imperative is that those nearest to the students should make the decision about the education programmes, that is the curriculum, instruction, the organization, time, people, facilities and other resources for the students. The central tenets of school level autonomy and participatory decision making form the heart of school based management (David, 1989:50). Essentially, the school-based management approach involves creating formal structures composed of buildings, teachers and parents at school. The emerging role of the principals of Bhutan under school-based management can be summed up as:

Designer/champion of involvement structures (by developing and empowering decision making teams), motivator/manager of change (by encouraging staff development), and liaison to the outside world (by bringing to the school new ideas and research about teaching and learning, for example).

(Woolhstetter & Briggs quoted by Ostwald cited in Smith and Piele,2000: 189)

The principal must have the vision to integrate the role of the manager, coordinator, facilitator and delegator and make them into a meaningful whole.

Conclusion

The world of the principal is shaded in greys and there are few clear cut issues (Blumberg and Greenfield,1986:3). The challenge of principalship does not end with the few roles that have been illustrated. All the above roles must be guided by vision. Vision is crucial not because it marks a beginning or an end, but simply because it reminds us where we want to go (Larry Lashway in Smith and Piele,2000: 156). Steering a self-managing school successfully appears to be dependent on leadership that is transformational in nature, leadership that is demanding for principals and also for teacher (Thomas.2000: 151). Principals as educative leaders should be flexible thinkers, versatile and reflective practitioners (Duignan & Macpherson, 1993). Educative leadership should give balance and integrated attention to the imperatives of all three realms: ideas, things and people. Ultimately leadership is a personal thing which comprises of three important

Dimensions: one's heart, head and hand (Sergiovanni,2001:343).

The heart of the leadership has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about and is committed to- that person's personal vision. The head of leadership has to do with theories of practice each of us has developed over time and our ability to reflect on situations we face in light of these theories. The hand of leadership has to do with actions we take, the decision we make, the leadership and management behaviours we use as our strategies become institutionalized in the form of school programs, policies and procedures.

The challenge of principalship is, therefore, to make peace with two competing imperatives, the managerial and the moral imperatives to be a successful and an effective school principal.

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Fostering Interest in Reading

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The Purpose of the study:

The purpose of the study is to help grade seven students develop a keen interest in reading with joy and fun. The motive behind the study is to improve their reading habits and ultimately their reading skills.

It is not always easy to ask our students to select a book and study. Getting many students to just pick up a book is often a struggle. It is often quite disheartening to see our students fumble with words and sentences as they are made to read during the lesson. It is also a fact that most of the students in my school are never seen with books during their leisure hours. They hardly read.

Thus, to inculcate the habit of reading and gain confidence, we started the reading culture as a measure to instill the habit of reading, irrespective of the class. Everyday, during the assembly, four boys and four girls are selected roll number-wise from each house. They will read both in Dzongkha and English on any topics.

Each student in the school is supposed to have at least a book each while they come for the assembly. Six teachers are selected to award the marks house-wise based on the criteria and the total marks awarded are reflected in the house-wise reading competition at the end of the month. The strategy has worked as planned.

However, I felt that the majority of the students read in the assembly because it was a must and points awarded for the same. I also observed that the standard of reading of grade seven students was very poor. To what extent has their interest developed? Is there any other way that could arouse students' interest in reading? These questions bothered me and I started to browse through books in the library in the quest of getting some suitable ideas. Fortunately, I came across a book titled "Fifty creative ways to use paperbacks in the middle grades" compiled by Diane Hellriegel (1980). I adopted two of the many strategies from the list. The adoption was purely to test the western strategy in our own Bhutanese classroom and share the findings/result with my colleagues and in other lower classes in future.

Strategies: Joy of Reading

To make reading fun and joyful, and thereby develop interest in reading, I selected two of the strategies:

1. Wanted: Great Reading!

2.

This is a strategy where the teacher prepares several "Wanted" posters showing the titles and covers of different books. Each poster tells just enough about the book to stir up interest and offers a "reward" to anyone who can track the book and read it. After a student reads a book featured on the "wanted" poster, he or she fills out a "Reward Claim Sheet" prepared by the teacher. In this sheet, the students have to write what the book is about, classify it (i.e., mystery, biography, adventure, etc.) and also write why he or she liked or disliked it. When the sheet is completed, the student

hands it to the teacher. The teacher in turn will add his or her name to the list of "Bounty Hunters" together with the reward indicated in the poster. Completed "Reward Claim Sheets" are maintained by the teacher in a file. New "wanted" posters are added to the bulletin board weekly with new set of books after every student completes the first reading.

3. Book Blast-off

4.

This strategy is followed individually. The teacher prepares a bulletin board display showing the nine planets in the solar system. Each planet will have a name tag pinned against the planet. Each student then designs his or her own mini spaceship or any tag of their interest on paper, colours it and cuts it out. All the space vehicles are attached to the sun. Each time a child shares with the class a book he or she had read-by acting out a scene from the book, book review or question-answer-the teacher will make a small star on the child's spaceship and the spaceship is moved to the next planet away from the sun. When a spaceship reaches Pluto, the student it belongs to is rewarded. A student who completes the "Book Blast-off" is allowed to make new tags and begins again at the sun.

Literary aspect of the study

Phuntsho Lhamo, (2003), has reported that, "reader's fluency depends on lot of practice in reading. Therefore, it is mandatory for children in the school that reading must be a major focus of the English lesson. Readers bring their individual and personal concerns to interact with the text on all levels". Through my own teaching experience, I have observed that reading differs from person to person and the main limiting factor in ones fluency in reading is the socio- linguistic background the children come from. It is observed that, usually children coming from urban areas tend to have a better command over reading than the ones from the rural areas. It leads me to conclude that it might be because children in rural areas communicate in their mother tongue or the medium of teaching in the schools is of mixed language or reading is limited only to the school hours. That is why I feel children from rural areas are not very confident in reading, as is the case in my school.

To my mind, the only sensible reason for reading anything is because we enjoy it or hope to enjoy it. Of course, pleasure covers a whole variety of feelings. *But* my strongest belief about reading is that one should read only what one likes, and because one likes it. When we are studying special subjects, or working for examinations, we obviously have to read a good deal that we would not choose to read in other circumstances. It may seem odd to have to insist that one should only read because one likes it; but people read for a variety of reasons. There are people who read a book, not because they enjoy it, but because they want to be able to say that they have read it. When they read a book for such reasons, they only skim through it, because all they really want to do is to be able to talk as if they had read it. A good and effective reading comes when one's spirit and the book's spirit come together. One reason I have observed why students read books is to please the teacher. The teacher recommends a book and the students go sprinting off to get the book and read it. A few may genuinely like it and they will be grateful to the teacher for putting it their way. But many will not honestly like it, or will persuade themselves that they like it. Thus, reading should not be forced upon, but developing ways to invoke or arouse

their interest for reading is the vital aspect when we are preparing students to read either in or outside the classroom. This aspect is reflected in this study.

Study Pattern

A simple activity was planned to carry out this activity. [Reading Strategies). As I was teaching English in one of the seventh grades, I chose my own class to carry out this action research. First of all, I selected the strategies, read it and collected all the materials required for the activity. It was on October

20, 2004, I started the activity in the class consisting of 34 students. With all the materials ready, I introduced the activity by displaying the activities 1 and 2. Students were anxious to know how to go about it. The students were given a briefing on the rules and procedure of the activity. They were also made aware that each day, the 50-minute English period shall be divided into two parts, that is the first 15 minutes of the class shall be kept for the activity and the usual class resumes after that. The reading materials for the activities were all selected from the library as per the level of the students. Students were free to choose any book of their interest and go on reading as many books as possible and move their spaceship or get a reward for the second activity on "Wanted".

Data Collection

All the observations that I made were recorded in my journal from 20 October to 20 November. To make the study more authentic, students were also requested to voice their opinion regarding their learning from these activities at the end of the study period. This was done to cross-check my observation with their opinion and validate the findings. Each day, students who had finished reading a book would come in front of the class and answer the questions the teacher asked pertaining to the book read. Upon successfully answering the questions, the students were rewarded or they could move their spaceship tags to the next planet, which they had made themselves. Every week, I collected at least ten new books and added to the mini library created in the classroom. This was done to give them more access to varieties of books and thereby head on toward the last planet. Also six new "Wanted" posters were displayed every week so as to give opportunity to every student. Every bit of observation that I could make during the first 15 minutes of the lesson, throughout the study period, during recess time and other free time and my own self-reflection reports formed the basis of data collection.

Discovery

I was impressed by the way students engaged themselves whole-heartedly in this activity. Even a single second was of paramount importance for them as the aim was focused on the completion of the last book and reach the last planet. Surprisingly, each student was able to reach the last planet, completing all the planets: which indicated that each student in the class could at least complete a set of nine to eleven books (comprising both the activities), which they would not have been able to do in their one year time of schooling!.

It was noticed that students were so keen in the activity that they were found reading during free time, lunch time and other periods when they were free. This reaction could have been because they were very keen to reach the last planet or finish up the "Wanted" posters. It is also an indication that the activity really aroused interest in them and prompted them to read and read. It also improved their confidence, communication and book reviewing skills as each student had to come in the front and answer the questions from the book that they have read. During the question-answer session, students were quite eager to go for the books which their friends have just answered and move their spaceship further as done by the others. This moving of spaceship further gave students a feeling of pride and it was evident from their facial expression. The success of these activities lay in the fact that students were reading the books of their own choice and their prompt reaction to the questions asked by the teacher (who wants to say something about what you have read?) was evident in the fact that the students were taking keen interest in reading.

Besides the usual interaction among the teachers and the students, it was also observed that students were busy among themselves interacting and asking questions among themselves before finally coming for the presentation.

Since students had to do a presentation after finishing the book, they were not hesitating to come in the front and have an interrogation session with the teacher. Despite there being many passive and reluctant students in the class, all of them waited anxiously for their names to be called. I, therefore, realized that these types of activities really help the passive ones build their self-confidence.

The most striking feature of these activities lay in the fact that it aroused the interest of the students. Unlike the regular reading session for ten minutes before the lesson, these two activities really helped them to choose books of their own interest and read. In addition, students were knowingly or unknowingly taking a step or two forward in memory development, as they had to answer the question asked by the teacher.

Based on the findings, I strongly feel that as teachers, we must develop a keen interest in students to read by allowing them to choose books of their interest, taking them into the world full of fun and joy and not forcing them to read, if reading is to become a life-long hobby for them. Unless children take interest in reading, not much of learning takes place even if they finish volumes, as is the case during the examination. Children read during the examination because they have to appear at it and their reading habits die as soon as the examination is over. Thus, it is very pertinent that a habit is developed in reading and this could be done not by asking students to read volumes, but by taking them with us into the world of activities, which arouse interest in them. This interest in the long run develops into habit.

Summary of the study/Conclusion

Before adopting these strategies in the classroom, I was not very sure as to whether they would be applicable to our context, because it was a borrowed idea practised in the western countries. It is obvious that schools in the west are fully equipped with resources and technology, spacious classroom and less number of children in the class where effective teaching /learning takes place. However, from this study I came to realize that the approaches they apply in imparting education would work in our

context, if a little effort is put by our teachers in the school. I got the result: students in my class not only shared the information from the book, but also learned the technique of answering questions. A class of thirty-four was not the same at the end of the study period. Each of the students had finished a set of nine to eleven books, improved their self confidence (as even the most passive child had finished reading around five to six books), deepened their reading interest, thinking power and had enriched their vocabulary. At the end of the study, children did speak and read with much difference as compared to beginning of the academic session.

Many students also suggested that if reading could be focused using these kinds of activities in the class, which arouse their interest rather than the compulsory reading where they do not get the reading materials of their own choice. Some even said suggested introducing these activities in other sections.

Initially, most of us failed to understand the true concept of reading in its true sense, including myself. We always presume things and react to them differently. Of course, reading during the examinations is compulsory whether the students like it or not, but developing a habit is the most important aspect of reading because if one does not possess this, learning does not take place. Unless children understand and perceive reading as a medium of deriving pleasure and at the same time learning, they will never take advantage of the benefits of reading. And, one way of making students to read is to arouse their interest through such strategies I used in this study. These strategies are a bit funny in the process but I bet anyone trying these especially in the lower grades will realize how wonderfully it works!

I was most impressed with the enthusiasm shown by the students toward the activities and the way they read books one after another. I was able to do some justice to our usual ten-minute reading in the class where a few children are directed to read whether they like it or not. Through SBIP, I also urged my colleagues to adopt these types of strategies instead of the usual reading session and prepare our students in the school as avid readers in future.

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How can remedial classes and worksheets as extended activities help the needy students?

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Abstract

These days, we talk of the deteriorating standard of English at all levels in the school. But I wonder how many of us have considered why the students perform very poorly in English and what measures could be adapted to help them perform better. Some of the questions that came to my mind when I was given to teach English in Class VIII were: *Is the problem with the students or is the problem with the teachers? Could it be their background that affects the learning of the students? Will there be a way of finding out their difficulty level? And could we find out some means to help them perform better?*

Thus, in the following pages, I have tried to find out answers to some of the above questions.

Introduction

In 2005, on the first day of our English class, I started with a needs assessment survey in Class VIII through a questionnaire containing a set of questions (see: Annex 1). The purpose of this needs assessment was to find out the interest, problems and difficulties of the students in English at their level.

From the questionnaire duly filled in by the students, (see: Annex 2 for details), I came to an understanding that the most difficult topics that the students found in English were Grammar followed by idiomatic expressions, note taking, summarizing, punctuation, figures of speech and poetry. Students expressed less difficulty in other topics like comprehension passage, dialogue writing and letter writing.

I also learned that the students found the topics difficult due to the difficulty in their pronunciation, not getting enough explanation from the teachers, lack of enough exercises for practice in grammar, not knowing the different ways of taking notes and numbering in the classical note taking among other problems. They also expressed that some words in poetry were out-dated and it was very difficult for them to read some poems on their own as finding meanings from the dictionary is difficult.

Students also expressed their opinions on how English can be taught to them and they suggested that the teacher should teach with interest and with good teaching aids. They further suggested that the teacher should teach by giving enough examples and exercises for practice besides teaching slowly and explaining the difficult words and phrases.

Based on this needs assessment survey, I started giving worksheets after every class as an extended activity for the students to do as home work. This was done with a view to letting the students have enough practice so that they do better in English. However, after two months, when I did another questionnaire (see: Annex 3 and 4) to find out the effectiveness of using worksheet, I learnt that even though the worksheets

gave them lots of practice, it was also a very big burden for them because of the way it was done.

Till then I always thought that I was being a very good language teacher taking the trouble to make worksheets every day and correcting them very religiously. After every correction, students were required to rewrite their work and submit the following day again for correction. I thought I was doing a very good job through all these processes only to realize that the students found it very tedious.

Through the questionnaire, students expressed that they got lots of other homework as well every day besides the studying and revision that they had to do. They also expressed the need for me to follow the homework time table and to give worksheets only once or twice a week. The Concern was also expressed regarding the quality of the paper and the spacing in the worksheet and taking care of them.

Some of the positive things expressed by the students regarding worksheets were that they saved their time, they found the worksheets easier to carry, they got their work corrected very fast and they got to know their mistakes soon.

Keeping the above two findings as baseline for my action research, I picked out fifteen students who I noticed to be very weak in English as compared to the remaining sixteen students in Class VIII. The topic of my action research was *'How can remedial classes and worksheets as extended activities help the needy students'*.

Purpose of action research

The purpose of this action research was to find out the effectiveness of the remedial classes and worksheets as an extended activity to help the needy students. It was also to find out the impact of remedial classes on the weaker students and how best we can make use of some of the extended activities to help them catch up with the rest of the students in the class. This action research would also help me to explore the reasons behind the difficulty levels of the students in English and to explore the possibilities of teaching them differently so that the students improve in their understanding of the text being taught to them and help them in learning English better.

Method

Out of the 32 students in the class, fifteen students who were found to be weak in English as well as other subjects (after discussing with the other subject teachers) were picked out to have remedial classes three days a week for a minimum of thirty minutes or a maximum of one hour depending upon the type of lessons taught in the class and also checking out with the remedial classes in the other subjects. These students were also given certain works to be done at home in the work sheet that was prepared for them as a practice exercise. They were required to show their completed worksheet in the next remedial class for further clarifications and necessary corrections. Sometimes during the remedial classes, peer-tutoring was done by bringing in some bright students to help the weaker ones. This was continued for two months and after that a class test was conducted for the whole class to see if the work that we did made any difference to the weaker students.

Discussions:

During the remedial classes, I first checked their difficulty levels and what hampered them from performing like others in the class. I used to then ask them some of the difficulties that they found in the topic that we covered in the class and then continue with further explanation through a series of questions and by giving prompts. Sometimes I used to make them into two groups and give them spelling test or at other times by letting them learn through games like *jig saw puzzle*, *hang man* and even *Bingo* for spelling practice

For the other structure and grammar practice, I used to give them worksheets that needed to be completed by the students and show in the next remedial class. Immediate correction and feedback used to be given to them so that they figured out their mistakes and corrected these themselves. As for pronunciation, the students were asked to keep note of the words that they found hard to pronounce from the class discussion. During the remedial classes, I would teach them how to pronounce the words correctly and make the students repeat after me. Then the individual students were made to pronounce the words on their own. In the next remedial class, they were required to pronounce the words that they had learned in the earlier remedial classes.

Findings

After two months of remedial classes, I conducted the first class test to find out their effectiveness and impact on the weaker students. To my delight, I found that the effort I put into my work did some magic on some of the students who were picked out as weaker ones. I also found out that though it helped many of them, yet there were still a few who needed more care and attention. With this finding my remedial session group reduced to eight students from the earlier selected lots and I decided that these students needed some more time to catch up with the rest of the students.

I also decided that when I spent my time giving special attention to this group of students, others would be given practice by giving worksheets at least twice a week so that they were not neglected.

Above all, I found out that when individual attention and special care were given to the weaker students, they tended to perform better than teaching the whole bunch of students in the class. It is tedious in the beginning but when you find out the improvement in the students, you get a certain sense of satisfaction that will boost your energy and the desire to help them perform better.

Keeping the consistency of the remedial class and giving individual attention also helped in the smooth communication between the teacher and the students. They could express themselves more freely regarding their problems and did not shy away in the class like they usually do when they are not sure of anything. It also helped them in boosting their confidence and the will do to better.

Recommendations:

Teachers can study the students in the class and give extra support and special care to the needy ones so that they are able to catch up with the lesson as well as with other better students in the class. One way of doing this is through the remedial class and giving extended activity. In the remedial class, different and simpler activities could be designed on the same topics that we deal with in the class. The teacher can try to deal with a few students at each session so that every individual student gets the attention that they do not get in the whole class.

Conclusion

We all know that every student has different learning ability and each one needs to be addressed in a different way in the class but doing this is not only impractical but time consuming as we need to cover various topics in a year according to our syllabus. However, with this action research, I found out that it is not impossible to address the individual differences. I realized that we can take our class in the usual manner but we can address the learning disability of some students during the remedial class by designing different activities on the same topics that we deal with in the class. In the remedial classes, every student can be given individual attention which in turn boosts their confidence and will to do better.

This extra support from the teacher can be given as part of student support service and in keeping with the motive of creating a caring school. with the special care given to the needy students, they not only tend to perform well but it changes their whole outlook on performance.

Annex 1

Dear students,

I have here a questionnaire to find out your interest, problems and difficulties in English and find out how we can make it better for you all. Please answer every question honestly so that we can make teaching and learning English interesting and meaningful for you.

Questionnaire

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| 1) | Do you like English? | yes | no |
| 2) | If no, why? | | |
| 3) | Do you find English difficult? | yes | no |
| 4) | If yes, why? | | |
| 5) | What topics do you find difficult in English at this level? | | |
| 6) | Why do you find them difficult? Can you explain in few lines the difficulties and problems faced in various topics? | | |

- 7) In what way can English be taught to you? List some ways that you might prefer.
- 8) What are some of the ways you think can improve your English?
- 9) Are teaching aids necessary in teaching English? If so, why?
- 10) What kinds of teaching aids do you suggest in teaching English?
- 11) In what way would you prefer to study poetry?
- 12) How do you think you can learn grammar better?
- 13) Any other general comments

Thank you very much for your good suggestions. *Together we will make teaching and learning English better for you all.*

Karma Choden
Subject teacher

Annex 2

Report of the needs assessment survey done in Class VIII for teaching –learning in English.

1. Topics that the children found difficult:

Topics	No. of Children
Ø Idioms	27
Ø Note-taking	12
Ø Grammar	32
Ø Comprehension passage	05
Ø Summarizing	17
Ø Poetry	17
Ø Dictionary	01
Ø Figures of speech	14
Ø Parts of speech	16
Ø Tense	18
Ø Essay writing	8
Ø Information transfer	13
Ø Dialogue writing	00
Ø Punctuation	18
Ø Letter writing	00

2. Reasons for difficulty level:

- Ø Difficult to understand
- Ø Pronunciation problem
- Ø Not able to understand the meanings of idioms
- Ø Don't know the proper way of taking notes
- Ø Lack of enough examples

- Ø Numbering in the note taking is puzzling
- Ø Some words in poetry are out- dated and difficult to find their meanings
- Ø Making short sentences is difficult in summarizing as finding proper word is difficult.
- Ø Putting proper punctuation is difficult.
- Ø Don't understand the explanation.

3. Ways of teaching English as recommended by the children:

- Ø Explaining and giving notes.
- Ø Poetry to be taught with actions.
- Ø Summarise the topic at the end.
- Ø Teaching slowly.
- Ø Teaching in English only.
- Ø Giving word meaning.
- Ø Giving spelling test.
- Ø Explaining difficult words.
- Ø Teaching with interest.
- Ø Explaining the topics.
- Ø Giving good examples.
- Ø Giving enough examples.
- Ø Giving enough exercises.
- Ø Giving notes.
- Ø Teacher should be well prepared.
- Ø Asking questions.
- Ø Giving class test.
- Ø Giving homework
- Ø Bringing good teaching aids that can be referred to from time to time in the class.
- Ø Writing properly on the board.

4. Ways to improve English as suggested by the children:

- Ø Doing spelling test.
- Ø Reading other books.
- Ø Talking in English with friends.
- Ø Reading stories, kuensel, newspaper etc.
- Ø Providing library books on time.
- Ø Practicing writing.
- Ø Referring to dictionary.
- Ø Inculcating the habits of reading more books.
- Ø Improve spelling.

5. Are teaching aids necessary in teaching English?

30 students responded "yes" and 2 students responded "no".

6. Reasons for the use of teaching aids as suggested by the children:

- Ø Understand more with teaching aids.
- Ø Easy to refer to.
- Ø Remember better.
- Ø Easy to memorize.
- Ø Learn better with teaching aids.

- Ø Come back to it and recall whenever we forget.
- Ø At leisure we can make use of it.

7. Suggested kinds of teaching aids:

- Ø Use of chart paper.
- Ø Reference books.
- Ø Grammar books.
- Ø Notes.
- Ø Other story books.
- Ø Articles.
- Ø Use of pictures.
- Ø Use of chalk and chalk board.
- Ø Worksheet.
- Ø Hand outs.
- Ø Marker pen.

8. Ways to study poetry as suggested by the children:

- Ø In the form of actions.
- Ø With good explanation of difficult words.
- Ø With questions.
- Ø Explanation stanza by stanza.
- Ø Explanation line by line.
- Ø Explanation of paragraphs.
- Ø Explanation sentence by sentence.
- Ø Referring to dictionary.

9. Ways of improving grammar:

- Ø With more explanation.
- Ø Lots of grammar exercises.
- Ø Reading.
- Ø Enough examples.
- Ø Use of dictionary.
- Ø Writing essay.
- Ø Asking help from teachers.

10. General comments:

- Ø Teacher should come on time.
- Ø Teacher should be slow in teaching.
- Ø Teacher should be understandable.
- Ø Check the class work and home work regularly and properly.
- Ø Teaching should be interesting and the teacher should be interesting.
- Ø Some times stories could be read to the class.

Annex 3

Effectiveness of using work sheet as one of the teaching aids in teaching and learning English in class viii.

Dear children,

We have done quite a lot of exercises using worksheets. I want to find out if the worksheets have been effective for you or not so far. For this I have prepared a questionnaire which I would like each one of you to answer honestly so that I will know whether it is worth giving you a worksheet or not.

Questionnaire:

1. Where do you prefer to do your home work? (In the work sheet/home work note book). Tick the appropriate one.
2. Explain the reason for your choice in question 1.
3. Which of the following do you prefer?
 - a) Doing class work in the worksheet.
 - b) Teacher writing on the board and students copying in their notebook for class work.
4. Explain the reason for your choice in question 3.
5. Do you get enough practices from the worksheet that you get after each lesson? Yes or No. Tick the appropriate one.
6. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using worksheets?
7. Why do you think so?
8. Do you think you should be given worksheet every day? Why?
9. If not, how often do you think you should be given worksheets?
10. Are you able to take care of your worksheets and how do you do that?
11. Will the worksheets be easier to use as your future references than your note books? Why?
12. Any general comments.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and your honest feedback.

Karma Choden
Subject teacher.

Annex 4

Findings from the questionnaire given to 31 students of Class VIII on 28th March 2005 regarding the effectiveness of worksheet as one of the teaching aids in teaching - learning English in Class VIII.

17 students were not in favour of worksheets while the other 14 students were in favour of worksheets.

Reasons for their choice:

1. Those who were not in favour of worksheets:

- Ø We can maintain our notebooks but we may lose the worksheets because they come in separate sheets.
- Ø Many worksheets will be difficult to take care of.
- Ø No point having homework book if we have to write homework in the worksheets.
- Ø It is easier to take care of notebooks than the worksheets.
- Ø It is much cleaner to write in the notebook than the worksheet.
- Ø Since worksheets come in loose pages, they can be torn very easily.
- Ø We get much interest to refer to our homework book than the worksheets.
- Ø Space is not enough in the worksheets.
- Ø Paper gets spoiled.
- Ø We cannot improve our handwriting.
- Ø Wastage of papers if they are lost.
- Ø Our worksheets get stolen by others as it is a loose paper.

2. Those who were in favour of work sheets:

- Ø It is time saving.
- Ø It is much easier to carry.
- Ø We get our works get corrected faster and we find our mistakes soon.
- Ø We don't have to copy the questions.

When asked if they preferred to be given worksheets every day:

Out of 31 students 28 students responded negatively and only 3 students responded positively.

Reasons for not wanting the worksheets every day:

- Ø We do not get the time to read books.
- Ø We get lots of other homework as well,
- Ø When we get worksheet everyday, sometimes we forget to do our work.
- Ø We have to do other homeworks and have to have time for revision.
- Ø There should be a limit for worksheets.
- Ø Teacher should follow the homework time table when they give worksheets.

Reasons for wanting the work sheets everyday:

- Ø We get enough practices.
- Ø It will improve on what ever we have done in the class.
- Ø We can refer to them very easily.

How often do the students need worksheets for practices?

- Ø Once or twice a week.
- Ø When there is a long break.

Are the children able to take care of their worksheets?

Out of 31 students, 27 responded that they can take care of the worksheets because they maintain a file for their worksheets while the other 4 students are not able to take care of the worksheet because it is a piece of paper and it gets torn very easily even if they put it in the file.

General comments:

Students wanted the worksheet at least twice or three times a week. If possible, works could be given in the exercise book only and not on the loose paper.

Book Review: *Drukyel's Destiny*

- Sonam Wangdi, Teacher, Shali CPS, Dungsam, Pemagatshel

I blinked my eyes several time. I had been mesmerised by the sacred photograph on the cover of the book called *Drukyel's Destiny*, published by the Tarayana Foundation under the presidentship of Her Majesty Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, last year.

The book is divided into two categories: 'A' and 'B' and each category is further divided into two sections: Poems and Essays. Category 'A' is for the children of 15 years and below, while 'B' is for 16 years and above. The book has 210 pages and every page is overwhelmingly emotional. The great convincing power of the writers of their patriotic feelings makes them praiseworthy and the book unique.

Having read this book, I felt a strong curiosity welling up in me to review it. I had last reviewed a book for my morning speech during my 3rd year at NIE, Paro, but this time I do not mind where or not I am following certain patterns of reviewing a book designed by someone else in a foreign land because I am doing it with a feeling so pure that comes right from my heart.

Drukyel's sovereignty is a priceless legacy of peace and harmony which had been handed down to us by our great monarchs and thousand others unwept and unsung HEROE who sacrificed their golden lives on the altar of sovereignty. It has been more than a century and three decades that this priceless legacy needed to be safeguarded with lot of sacrifices. Unlike in the past, those heroes, who offered their invaluable lives, are being put on record. They are being sung and wept:

You came as soldiers of Bhutan,
Duba from Ngangla, Nado from Uma,
Yeshi from Martshala, Sonam from Sanglung,
Pema from Khaling, Karma from Uzorong,
Sonam from Umling, Damji from Khibisa,
Kinzang from Metsho, Pema from Jurmey,
Chophela from Saling, in hours of our need,
You were the true sons of the soil.

So writes the Auditor-General, Dasho Kunzang Wangdi and true indeed is he when he says;

You gave up your lives,
So we shall live,
In death you live forever.

For sure, they have made their lives sublime and departing left behind memories in the heart of every Bhutanese.

In any case, a war was not expected. Atleast, it was though it would never happen in a peace-loving country like ours. Yet, it did at last but why.....? Some may think we have failed to uphold the value of peace. The justifications are ready. Sonam Jamtsho writes:

Left with no choice, but to use force
To war this peaceful nation had to resort.
And Kinley Wangchuk is more distinct:
Leave us alone, we coveted, and, 'go back in peace'
For long arduous years we made attempts to plead;
While they took to subterfuge with intent fleece,
To circumvent all means and never to heed.
Still more, Needrup Zangpo justifies:

Deeply concerned, His Majesty the King and the Royal Government painstakingly explored every peaceful means possible to coax the militants into leaving the country. But the earnest plea of the King and the benign Government fell on deaf ears and ultimately paled into total failure in the face of the defiant and rebellious militants. Then, what next? After all, the kingdom could not and would not stake her independence for non-violence. War! Indeed. It was on the horizon.

Thus, we feel remorse. Had ever those militants paid any heed, a war, though brief yet grave as that of 15th December, 2003 would not have been a new chapter in the history of Bhutan.

Through the poem written by Kinley Tshering, one can virtually see a soldier leaving his dear (pregnant) wife for war with an unknown fate to meet the call of our nation. He leaves this message for his unborn son:

Father's honest sweat may give him strength,
Father back with hand raised may give him pride,
Yet father died for his country may give him inspiration.

and departing thus, says again;

Pray "Pelden Drukpa Gyalo"
Convey this to our little one when he is up if I'm gone.

That is perhaps, a heart breaking story of dreams being shattered and, of families being broken.

In due course, anger had surfaced while fear took grip. While hearts skipped beats, emotions had brimmed to the eyes blurring the Drukyel's Destiny and in confusion many worried that Bhutan might exemplify Tibet, otherwise Iraq. Such internal turmoil's inflicted on Bhutanese could be only attributed to those breed of antagonists who failed to foresee their doomsday.

On the other hand, the war did good. It brought all the Bhutanese of east, west, north and south together both in spirits and action which otherwise would have been impossible. It also gave the Bhutanese an opportunity to prove to the world that non-violence does not mean weakness and particularly to our friend India that this soul has never cultivated any energy for the militants, not to forget that the war has taken the Bhutanese to another milestone through a different lesson.

At length, the writers offer their pious and unfathomable gratitude to His Majesty the King and this gives the readers an opportune moment to pay our own tribute through their words. Let us then go along with Chogyal:

For we the people, he is the saviour,
Like the warrior-king, conquered the devils,
Bringing victory for our nation and people,
He is the one to whom I bow.

And again with Sampa Tshewang:

Do you know a land,
Where the wisest King rules
With the greatest wisdoms?
He is the greatest ruler,
With the noblest heart;
Let it be known
That the glorious King Jigme Singye Wangchuck
Rules wonderful Bhutan.

And still one can add that he is the King whom all admire and revere the most, who avoids personal leisure and dedicates himself to the country's sovereignty and people's security. He is more than the symbol of a dynamic leadership in this modern world and all the most, a humanitarian King who possesses the finesse of human emotion. About him and his deeds time will fail to erase and even eons hereafter people will talk about him. A 15 years old girl Karma Yeshey Wangmo writes:

When I will be old enough,
I will talk with a cough,
Amount our wise King,
And sing,
How he looks after the country every day.

However, we have also the share of our regrets to be expressed. I think I should best summarise with Mr Karma T. Wangchuk's:

I feel that I have let you down,
In your times of need and despair,
I feel I should have been there
To feel and share your pain.

It is therefore, evident that His Majesty alone had suffered the pain of safeguarding the nation and I would say that the knowledge of "Jewel being away from the Golden Throne" sends a chill through my spine. What...? What could have happened if a mortar had been triggered or a landmine had blasted. Such thoughts and questions will make one's heart contract with fear, otherwise emotions.

However, nothing happened. Thanks to His Majesty's own divinity and to the gods and deities who proved their unfailing protection over us. Thanks to all the armed forces and to all those involved both in spirits and actions. Thanks to our prayer and unity.

To conclude, I would like to say that this book is a movie that must be watched by every Bhutanese, a treasure to be preserved, a gift to be presented, a history to be read and a legacy to be handed down to infinite generations. And all the more, this book provides every Bhutanese a precious moment not only to celebrate the victory, but also to pause, reflect and to ponder what could be done to strengthen it and take it to its full glory.

Book review: *Ta She Gha Chha*

- Needrup Zangpo, Assistant Research Officer, CERD

Long time ago, while meditating in a cave in the mountains, the great Tibetan saint Jetsun Milarepa wanted to move to another cave on a particular day. He knew that the day was inauspicious to undertake the journey. But he thought that for a yogi like him, who had moved beyond the influence of the ordinary, there was no such thing as auspicious or inauspicious. So he left his cave for the other one, with his prized possession, a clay pot.

The belief could not influence Jetsun Milarepa's decision. But he, nonetheless, believed in the inauspiciousness of the day. Likewise, we have numerous beliefs which influence and guide our behaviour and conduct, or at least our thinking. This is what Ms Karma Pedey's 154-page book *Ta She Gha Chha: The Broken Saddle and other Popular Bhutanese Beliefs*, the latest book by a Bhutanese author, is all about.

Ta She Gha Chha. The title of the book itself could be an enduring metaphor for the fundamental characteristic of popular Bhutanese beliefs- supernatural elements taking the centre stage in the human drama of trials and tribulations, sins and retribution, death and disaster. It could also be a metaphor for the established link between the human world and the world beyond. In the context of popular beliefs, the moment something happens to us, we attribute the cause of it to something, and that is often supernatural and otherworldly.

Ta She Gha Chha is a comprehensive documentation of popular beliefs from across Bhutan. It contains over 400 beliefs, the logic and reasoning behind some of which are elucidated. Some of the beliefs which have social, spiritual, or environmental significance are explained with modern reasoning. But the author does not make it a point to give modern reasoning to all the beliefs for she believes that "attempting to decipher and unravel [their] mysteriously illogical significance with modern reasoning will smother the sensational experience that popular belief(s) bestow upon [their] believers." The logic, and sometimes reasoning, behind some of the beliefs are, however, self-evident.

The book contains all kinds of beliefs- logical and illogical, senseless and sensible. The author records what the Bhutanese believe, whatever they are, not the sense their beliefs make or the sensible beliefs. There is no distinction made between religious and secular beliefs. While one cannot draw a clear-cut line between them, at a closer look at the beliefs, most of them originated in or stemmed from Buddhist beliefs. Some of the beliefs like what Jetsun Milarepa held have Buddhist astrological reasoning behind them.

Ta She Gha Chha is not just an anthology of popular Bhutanese beliefs. It briefly defines and examines their significance and role in the human society. It also takes a brief look at some of the popular beliefs in different cultures around the world and puts the Bhutanese beliefs into a broader context.

In his forward to the book, T S Powdyel, Director of Centre for Educational Research and Development, writes that beliefs "are an affirmation of the intimation and

presences of powers that lie beyond us and inform our thoughts and behaviour." Beliefs, he says "are a window to the inner life of a community and a society." Ms Karma Pedey writes in her introduction that a belief "crosses the realm of rationality and reasons" but believes, though, that they "can still be very alluring amidst the growing fascination of modernity."

Before dwelling on the main subject, the reader is given an insight into how the Bhutanese beliefs work on Sir James Frazer's law of similarity and the law of contact. The author also briefly mentions that the popular beliefs could be grouped under different branches of beliefs like *mongpa*, *takpa*, *namtog*, *tendi zam*, and *tendi nyem*, but the groupings in the book are not based on them.

In the Bhutanese society, if you are sick, you are possibly harmed by an evil spirit, which is often the case. But take heed! Do not consult a doctor- your health will deteriorate if you do so. Propitiate the spirit that harms you, and you are well! Do you wish to have a stable life? Go buy a goat and raise it, and you are no more a rolling stone!

For the Bhutanese, an animal or an insect can be good as well as bad. The cat is considered a gem. But the noise of two cats (two gems) fighting in the night in your house augurs disputes and feuds in the family. A single bee hovering around your head brings you good news from your loved ones, but a swarm of bees settling on your house does not bring you a lot of good news! A rat that bites the upper part of your body (which, of course, is more vulnerable) in your sleep is a kind rat for it bodes *something* good for you, and the one that nibbles the lower part of your body is an evil one.

If your wife has a thick moustache, do not despair! But if she grinds her teeth in her sleep, you certainly have a reason to despair! Do you have a mole on your face? If you have one, you might have to find out where it is exactly located to find out your fortune.

If you are an expectant mother who wants to know the number of children you will bear, prepare a gold ring and a long strand of hair to carry out the trick to find out. Next, you might like to learn to do a prenatal study of the sex of your child. There is no need of an obstetrician. Observe the changes happening to your own body, and you will find yourself planning for a girl or a boy! But in the meanwhile, be faithful to your spouse for your infidelity will deform your child. And also mind you, do not blow out the birthday candles of your child. It means blowing off luck.

If you are unmarried and would like to know who your future spouse will be, you have to count a *certain number* of stars for a *certain number* of days at the same time and go to sleep. The person that you see in your dream is your future spouse! However, if you do not love the person who you dreamt of and want to go for the one you love, you have a way out! Simply get a strand of hair of the one you love and prepare a magic potion out of it for yourself. But how? Burn the hair... and go on.

In the Bhutanese beliefs, dreams are prophetic informers for you. If you dream of cow-dung, human excreta, and dead bodies, do not interpret them negatively. Expect good

luck and financial gains. But if you dream about feasting, butter, or monks, brace yourself for death and disaster.

A stolen flower blooms better than the one acquired otherwise. But beware, if you steal something, you will be possessed by *ah lha*, the deity of thieves. And your kleptomaniac tendencies cannot be got rid of.

Make sure you do not start a journey on the day of *ta she gha chha*, the day on which, if you travel with a saddled horse, your horse will die and the saddle will be broken. Jetsun Milarepa moved to another cave on such a day, and his horse and saddle, in fact, his everything- the clay pot -were broken.

But even if you are at home, be careful of breaking a glass in your hands, particularly if you have a limited number of glasses. That spells ill omen and you have to break another deliberately.

On simple analysis, the popular Bhutanese beliefs are a mix of superstitions and Buddhist and Bon beliefs. As Bhutan is a highly spiritual country, beliefs seem to have been invented and fostered to teach and instruct, coax and discipline. Most of the beliefs have a moral, spiritual, or a social significance.

For instance, the eyes of a person who defecates on pathways, it is believed, will be affected by smoke. Apparently, there is no connection between defecating on pathways and smoke affecting one's eyes, but it teaches that it is not morally and ethically good to defecate on pathways. Likewise, does slamming a door shut displease the spirit of the door or human beings? Or does dirtying a lake harm the spirit of the lake or ourselves? And why should a liar become a bear's victim, logically speaking?

While beliefs that concern auspiciousness or evilness of days, months and years, and the temperament of a person being determined by the time and circumstances of his or her birth are mostly based on Buddhist astrological calculations, those concerning spirits and natural elements are mostly based on Bon beliefs like shamanism and nature worship. It seems that Buddhist or Bon concepts which are of significance in day to day life have become popular beliefs. Some of the beliefs which originated in religion have become so popular that over time they have lost their religious context and significance. *Ta she gha chha* is a case in point.

Ta She Gha Chha, which draws on the rich reservoir of beliefs in the older Bhutanese, also contains some of the author's own and her family's and friends' experiences concerning popular Bhutanese beliefs, adding a personal touch to the book. It should make a fascinating reading to all. But, take heed! If you cannot finish reading the book at a sitting, do not leave it open for the devil will complete it and grasp its fascinating content.

Written in simple English with a fine literary touch, which at times tends to be informal and communicative, *Ta She Gha Chha* will greatly appeal to all people who have a keen interest in and sense of folk culture. The book can also appeal to critical, skeptical and cold modern minds by virtue of its quaint and eccentric contents.

In the meanwhile, if you are planning to travel somewhere, see if the evil day that broke Jetsun Milarepa's pot affects you too. If you are going to remain home, observe your cat and the hearth fire. If your cat wipes its face with its paws and if the fire crackles and sparks go flying, expect a guest. And remember, when the guest is come, do not let a hot tempered member of your family prepare *emadatsi* for him or her.

Echoes from the Field:
Art of living in a remote village

- *Santosh Chawdhury, English Teacher, Nangkhor Higher Secondary School,
Pemagatshel*

One will agree that teacher's life in remote schools can be boring, hard and sometimes dangerous. This mainly because remote places lack adequate facilities of recreation, besides other socializing avenues. As a result, many of our friends in the far-flung areas indulge in alcoholism, gambling and other undesirable practices as their leisure hour pursuits, and thereby often risk their lives. I know of teachers who wrecked their marriages and risked their lives on alcohol addiction, and some disgraced themselves by their unethical relationships and extra-marital affairs.

But my experience of more than ten years in a remote school is unique and memorable. Providence had it that my initial posting in a difficult place be a blessing in disguise. It offered me an opportunity to struggle to refine and humanize myself.

I was posted as a teacher at Tsebar Primary School under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag in March 1987. This being my first time outside my state, West Bengal, I felt miserable to live in the ancient and hard condition of Tsebar. I was not able to appreciate any aspect of life that prevailed there.

However, being raw and inexperienced, I tried to follow that other teachers did. I went round the village everyday after school hours in the company of my friends and colleagues. I found people very kind and hospitable. But I was shocked when they offered *ara, bangchhang, shingchhang*, local alcoholic drinks. At one time, someone said in Hindi, "Sir, larki chaiye to bataiye, mil jayaga." They offered all these as tokens of their love, respect, and goodwill for me. Though I reciprocated saying, "Nami Chhami Kadunchhela," none of their offers appealed to my heart. Rather, I felt confused.

My students in class I were of the age group 9-20 years and some bigger than me in size. I was taken aback. But their simplicity, honesty, frankness and loyalty touched me. The foul smell in the classroom was a horrifying experience which was due to the innocent and ignorant students' inability to maintain personal hygiene. On top of those repelling factors, my Canadian resource teacher Mr. Brian Zaff, shouted at my incorrect pronunciation of the words like 'her', 'girls', 'bird' and so on. He wanted me to pronounce the words in his accent. But I was not able to understand his Canadian speeches. As a consequence, I made no improvement in my pronunciation, much to his anger and to my sadness. Mr. Zeff observed my lesson daily.

Towards the end of the first year, I left for home bag and baggage not to return the next year. But I came back, In the second year, my backache made life worse. Dr. Nado, the then D.M.O., Pemagatshel, said he was not authorized to treat my problem and advised me to go to India. I went to my hometown and underwent a host of investigations in Alipur Duar and Cooch Bihar. The investigations revealed no disease and I was further advised to go to Siliguri for ultrasonography. The severity of the backpain seized me and turned my world gloomy. I thought I had some fatal disease.

My meagre financial capacity prevented my visit to Siliguri or Calcutta hospitals for further treatment. So I decided to accept my fate.

One afternoon, I came across an article about yoga and an internationally renowned yoga teacher, Mr B.K.S. Iyengar. Instantly, I felt motivated to take to yoga. So I contacted the teacher, purchased some of his books and attended some yoga classes in his Institute in Pune. Equipped with the basic knowledge and skills, I began my journey of yogic life in Tsebar. With the practice of yoga, my backache disappeared within a week and my philosophy of life took a sharp turn.

I stopped going round the villages, Instead, I devoted myself to the yoga practice and the study of yoga philosophy everyday after school. This resulted in a drastic change in my discipline and lifestyle, which was noticed and appreciated by the people. Nobody interfered with my yogic life. I maintained a little distance with the villagers yet lived in harmony with them. We respected each other. They fondly called me "Apchi" and I tried to live up to the demands of the title. I felt no more bored, time became very precious, teaching became more enjoyable; I liked the students, the people around and the place.

After three years of bachelor's life, I was blessed to marry a good lady. My wife happened to boost my yoga practice. She influenced me to live a more virtuous life. So I gave up smoking, the only unhealthy habit. I had till February 1990, and I endeavoured ceaselessly to refine myself and to live according to the principal of yoga.

Thus yoga enabled me to live a very happy, healthy and productive life at Tsebar till 7th April 1997, when I was transferred, upon public interest, to the newly built Nangkhor Junior High School, the present Higher Secondary School of the Dzongkhag. In the beginning, even a day at Tsebar Primary School was hard to me. Gradually, I was able to live there for almost a decade very successfully; recognized by the authorities and admired by the students and the community. There were times when I found every Bhutanese around me an odd creature but gradually they grew wonderful in my eyes and they became a source of strength, inspiration and support of my life. The world around me tuned magnificent as positive changes took place in me.

Now, I am in the 9th years in the present Nangkhor Higher Secondary School out of my total service of 19 years in Pemagatshel I believe now I am a better human being and a better teacher by the grace of yoga. I find great wealth and joy in serving the students round the clock as a matron, the health coordinator and English teacher with little consideration of personal benefit. I have experienced the truth of the saying of Lord Buddha: "Life becomes what we make it." Tsebar village which initially I found a hell later turned out to be a temple of my transformation. And this is a wonderful phenomenon in life.

Portrait of an Institute: GOLD for DOROKHA

- T S Powdyel, Director, CERD

The only time forlorn and front-shy Dorokha grabbed world attention was several years ago when the World Health Organization accorded pride of place to the dungkhag's Lotokuchu area as the largest producer of goiters in the world. Thanks to the royal government's timely intervention by supplying iodized salt, even that distinction has been rendered no longer news-worthy now.

But when a place waits for five decades to roll, it creates more than news. And so it happened. As the nation came together on November 11, 2005 to celebrate the happy occasion of the fiftieth birth anniversary of our beloved king His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Dorokha had an additional reason for joy. The dungkhag's oldest school had won gold!

The seeds of what is now Dorokha Lower Secondary School were sown even before the country's economy was monetized. Perhaps not a school in today's grand scheme of things, but certainly a place of learning, the genesis of the school can be traced back to about 1951 when a certain Mr Tsho Tshering Lepcha from Kalimpong started a school of sorts in the premises of the old S. D. O's office. This arrangement continued till 1955 when the school moved to its present location in better surroundings and formal education started with 11 students, including a lone girl, in the auspicious year of the birth of our fourth Druk Gyalpo.

The Autumn of 2005 was, therefore, more than 'a season of mellow fruitfulness' for Dorokha for all its golden fields of bending rice, mandarin magic and the rich fragrance of harvest time. The four gewogs of Dorokha. Denchukha, Myona and Dumtoe converged on the festive grounds of Dorokha Lower Secondary School to celebrate joyous event of the birth anniversary of our beloved king. They came too to honour this old seat of learning on the proud occasion of the Golden Jubilee of its foundation.

The finery and fun, exultation and jubilation were a perfect match to the glory of Dorokha's Autumn sun that presided over the celebrations. Young and old, men, women and children from all walks of life from far and near came to partake of the joy of the occasion. Many alumni including some from the first batch traveled long distances to pay tribute to their alma mater.

The chief guest, drangpon Dasho Pemba Gyeltshen of the Samtse Royal Court of Justice addressed the thousands on the importance of the day and reminded the gathering of the momentous developments that have been brought about in the country in all spheres of national life during the many glorious years of the reign of His Majesty, our beloved king. He paid tribute to Dorokha Lower Secondary School for its contribution to the service of the nation during the past five decades through its many alumni working in different capacities in all parts of the country. The chief guest acknowledged the services of the head teachers and teachers, Bhutanese and non-Bhutanese, past and present, and thanked the royal government for bringing the light of learning to this remote place.

The celebrations featured a delightful assortment of educational and entertainment fare presented by school children, alumni and the public. A splendid display of tae kuando skills by the school was a first-timer that particularly excited interest of the crowd. The rich local culture found expression in the *naumati* orchestra and *sangini* performed by the public. *Druk gi Gyelkhap* presented by the students of the Non-Formal Education Programme was an especially moving item. Alumnus Shyam Lal Adhikari of the 1957 batch paid tribute to his alma mater in a fine composition that highlighted all the major milestones in the history of the school.

Other highlights of the celebrations were a number of stalls that included a health stall that focused on the dangers of HIV/AIDS infection, a history stall that followed the evolution of the school, a handicrafts stall that displayed several items made by local artisans out of sheep wool, wood, rice straw and maize spathes. A souvenir stall sold jubilee T-shirts and caps, and the scouts had their exclusive area. *Windfall – whispers from the past*, and the school magazine were also released. A major crowd puller was the raffle draw that blew people hot and cold. The evening camp-fire programme assembled a wide range of talents from the community, school, dungkhag office and guests and alumni.

The school's Golden Jubilee celebrations actually started in 2004 itself. Assistant head-teacher, Mr S B Pradhan says that the school has been able to mobilize funds and goodwill with which the school has been able to do many things all geared towards the jubilee celebrations. Through contributions from alumni and well-wishers and voluntary service put in by staff and students as well as local officials and Gashelling dratshang, the school has constructed a *Manidungkhor* and an altar. It has built an open-air stage, improved its volleyball and basketball courts, cemented the assembly ground, and augmented the water supply system. "A lot of hard work, but very fulfilling at the end of the day", Mr Pradhan smiles.

A golden jubilee is no ordinary event. For Dumtoe gup Mr Tshering Wangdi, it was a 'special day' in that 2005's November 11 was doubly significant as the fiftieth anniversary of our king's birthday and the golden jubilee year of our school. Alumnus Mr Lok Nath Acharya, retired agriculture officer, felt that it was 'a family reunion'. Retired alumnus and first Bhutanese head-teacher of the school, Mr H B Vishwa, recalled his days at the school which featured elephant-brand rough cotton *thutey surual* and shirt as uniform and *jyamir* – citrus sinensis – or cloth-ball for soccer. Noting that the school has not grown beyond the lower secondary level even after fifty years, he felt that its 'umbilical chord hadn't dropped yet'.

A jubilee celebration touches all. For veteran former gup and several times National Assembly member, Mr Mani Raj Rai, it is not a question of having been on the rolls of the school per se. Like his many other fellow-Dorokhapas, he has made his contribution to the building of the many facilities and the upkeep of the school to educate the many children who come to study here. 'I am very happy that our school has turned fifty and that it has educated many of our young men and women. It is a moment of deep joy for me. I pray for this school to grow further'.

Dorokha Lower Secondary School has undergone many incarnations – non-formal, outdoor, middle school, primary, and now a boarding lower secondary. It has come to roost in the present location after moving house at least twice. It has graduated from

charcoal and plank, maize grains and mud-floor, to chalk-stone to slate to pencil and pen to textbooks and notebooks. Thanks to the Resource Centres initiative, the school even has a computer and printer, a photocopier and generator. The school has moved too from the much-anticipated weekly gramophone songs that Mr Namchu used to play in the upstairs room to video programmes powered by solar energy, and even a VHF telephone line.

In spite of the rugged terrain and lack of space for expansion, the school infrastructure has grown from the old four-roomed two storied single building to several concrete structures that house the classrooms, library, office, resource centre, staff and student accommodation. Furniture quality and quantity has improved. Unlike the conscription days, the annual enrollment has exceeded all expectations and the school is under pressure to live up to the goal of providing 'education for all'.

With all its constraints and challenges, Dorokha Lower Secondary School has moved on. Thanks to the dedicated service of great educators, both Bhutanese and non-Bhutanese, the school has produced hundreds of alumni who have been serving the country with loyalty and dedication. They are in teaching, medicines, engineering, administration, security forces, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, communications, financial institutions, hospitality industry, media, private sector and business. There are others who have chosen to be farmers and local leaders and enterprisers.

'This school taught me dignity and gave me whatever I have today – my job, respect, family, and above all meaning to life', wrote Dr Shiva Raj Bhattarai, head of Botany Department in Sherubtse College. For the recipient of the best agriculture extension service award in Paro dzongkhag, Mr Dhanapati Sharma, 'the existence of the school there has given to many people the opportunity of opening their eyes towards the outside world'. The dungkhag's first girl student and lady teacher, Mrs Tulasa Bhattarai, confesses 'the school premises, buildings, football-field, and the trees and the chorten nearby are a part of my life, and I love and revere them close to my heart'. Head of the Pathology Department in Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital, Dr Krishna Prasad Sharma, remembers his alma mater as a significant milestone in his life. Retired Lupon Tharpala, one of Dorokha's much-loved teachers, feels proud to see many of his old students doing well and serving the country.

Given the size of the catchment area and the seniority of the school, it is in the fitness of things that by now, Dorokha Lower Secondary School should have scaled greater heights. However, the biggest hurdle for any development activity in the dungkhag is the absence of a road. The completion of the ADB-funded first ever mechanized road scheme linking Dorokha and Samtse with a 65 km motor-road would give Dorokha's human beasts of burden a sigh of relief and enable all development activities to flourish in acknowledgement of the growth potential of the place.

When the music of the celebrations stops and it is time to go home, one is chillingly face to face with the prospect of battling serpentine Dham Dhoom some thirty times and trudging for hours without end to touch the nearest road-head. It is my prayer that when the nation comes together again in another fifty years to celebrate the one hundredth birth anniversary of our beloved king, and the centenary of Dorokha Lower

Secondary School, by then perhaps a college, this alumnus might be able to drive home to honour his alma mater. That will be two golds for Dorokha.

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
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Or email them to cerdir@druknet.bt

