

# **The Call**



Stories of Yesteryears

**Centre for Educational Research and Development**  
**December 2002**

**The Call**  
**Stories of Yesteryears**

A Publication of the

Centre for Educational Research and Development  
Department of Education  
Rinpung, NIE, Paro.

Telefax No. 00975 8 272 011

E-mail address: [cerdir@druknet.bt](mailto:cerdir@druknet.bt)

December 2002

@ Centre for Educational Research and Development. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form without permission from the CERD.

ISBN: 99936-19-02-7

The views and reflections documented in *The Call* are those of the authors.

The printing of *The Call* has been supported by the Canadian Cooperation Office, Thimphu, Bhutan.

Printed at: **KUENSEL** Corporation Press, Thimphu, Bhutan.

**ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN**  
**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION**  
THIMPHU BHUTAN

**Foreword**

The progress of the Kingdom of Bhutan has been a dream surpassing itself. The will of man matched the warrant of history. The cloistered and sheltered valleys and hamlets awoke to the call of the moment. The doors opened. We embraced the brotherhood of nations. The land of the peaceful dragon has moved on...

It has been a most exciting journey – at once baffling, at once beckoning. The inexorable logic development has not thrown us adrift though. Thanks to the wisdom of our forefathers and the vision of our enlightened leaders, we have sailed along keeping our souls largely intact while at the same time reaping the fruits of the endeavors of the wider community of mankind. From the simple complements of an agrarian society soaked in the values of religion, we have stepped on the threshold of the digital age.

The history of the evolution of our education system has followed the pattern of the development of our country. From the humble beginnings of a handful of monastic institutions, through a couple of schools and a few hundred students, to an enviable system of modern education covering the length and breadth of the country, we have made impressive progress within a span of a about four decades. And, we are poised to start the National University of Bhutan in the coming year.

During my many travels to the remote parts of our country however, I still meet many of our fellow-citizens having to work very hard to eke out a living. I still come across many of our teachers and students making do with the barest minimum facilities and working against many odds. These have been deeply humbling experiences for me.

We can only imagine how difficult life must have been to our first cohort of innocent village children having to hide from government officials who came to register them for school, having to leave home, putting up make-shift camps, and entering the world of the unknown.

But the brave men and women forged on. That generation of those school-fearing, timid little children of inexperienced, indulgent farming parents are today our prized senior government officials, making invaluable contributions to the growth and development of our country.

Through sun and rain, hunger and thirst, innocence and experience, they taught us what it is to be educated, the value of hard-work, the fruit of sacrifice. They listened to the call. And made all the difference.

*The Stories of Yesteryears* are twice-told tales. In the text of the personal narratives of our education's pioneers, we discover the sub-text of the history of our education. *The Call* will be an invaluable record of our experiences and form a basis for future educational historians and researchers.

I commend the Centre for Educational Research and Development for the good work and urge it to continue giving us opportunities for reflection and appreciation.

Tashi Delek.

(Sangay Ngedup)

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In the beginning was the call. And then it happened. It was hard. It was slow. Often tending to impossible. But it happened all-right. And that was the important thing. The royal wish for an educated Bhutan was to begin the transformation of a society. And so it has been.

I would like to record my deep homage to the prophetic souls who gave the call and to all the enlightened leaders and mentors who have nurtured our education system. I would like to pay my humble tribute to our contributors to *The Call* for sparing their very precious time to record the experiences as they lived them.

The individuals who followed the call are extremely busy people with tremendous responsibilities. However, they have been very kind with their time and mind to travel back to the childhood of our education system to leave behind for future generations a record of a most important symbol of our national development.

All these in the face of crucial commitments commanding priority. I can never thank them enough for bearing with my constant pestering and presumptuousness. But *The Call* is your gift to future generations of scholars and historians.

I offer my deep gratitude to our honourable Minister, Loynpo Sangay Ngedup, for the inspiration and support that His Excellency has always been kind to give me. I am grateful to our Secretary, and our Director General for their guidance and encouragement.

Dr Jagar Dorji, Director, NIE, Paro, and Dr Phub Rinchen, Joint Director, CAPSD, have been very helpful and I express my gratitude to them. I am very grateful to the Director of NIE, Samtse, for permission to use materials from the alumni profiles of published by the Institute.

Mr. Nima Tshering, Coordinator, Resource Centre Unit, CAPSD, wove my dream into a wonderful work of art that is the cover to *The Call*. I am very grateful to him and Tashi for their support.

I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to all the dignitaries and contributors who made *The Call* possible. May our future generations of Bhutanese scholars derive inspiration in their search for sweetness and light.

Thakur Singh Powdyel

Director.

## Contents

---

### Foreword

### Acknowledgement

1. How it all Began .....  
- William Mackey
2. The Journey .....  
- Jigme Zangpo
3. First Day in Tongsa .....  
- G B Kurup
4. My School Days .....  
- Gagey Lhamu
5. Thirty Two Years Ago .....  
- M Prasad
6. Reflections of an Educator .....  
- Zangley Dukpa
7. Tangsibi and Beyond .....  
- Jagar Dorji
8. The Long March .....  
- H B Vishwa
9. Glimpses of a Life .....  
- Phub Rinchen
10. Down Memory Lane .....  
- Dorji Tshering
11. Recollections and Reflections .....  
- N B Gazmere
12. The March of Education: Some Glimpses .....  
- K C Jose
13. Some Personal Perspectives on Developments in Education .....  
- Lop Jampel Chogyel

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN

- William Mackey

---

Bhutan always had monastic education. Clever young monks were sent to Tibet for 12 to 15 years. They returned to BHUTAN with a solid foundation in SCRIPTURE, ASTROLOGY, MATHEMATICS, MEDICINE and CHOEKI, the religious classical language of the KANJUR, the TENJUR and ZUNGCHEN THUSUM. These lopons set up centres of Bhutanese religious learning.

In many villages, the local GOMCHENS, married village clergy, taught a small group to read and write CHOEKI. These groups had a tremendous influence on the local villagers. They were called upon to guide, encourage and help the local people in sickness, death, marriage and birth.

The first King, Ugyen Wangchuk, had a mobile court school that moved with him around the country. Clever young men were selected by His Majesty and were given experience in dealing with money, solving local problems, directing villagers to take responsibility in improving the surroundings of villages. These men became the first DZONGPENS and PEONKHAGS.

The second King, Jigme Dorji, set up 7 to 10 HINDI MEDIUM schools, in Bumthang, Ha, Wangdi, Tashigang, Damphu and Paro. This was the beginning of our present Bhutanese Education System.

The third King, Ugyen Dorji Wangchuk, decided to go in for ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS. The Prime Minister approached the Darjeeling Jesuits of St. Joseph's College, North Point, in 1962. I was asked to come to Bhutan by the late Prime Minister, in March, 1963. It took some time before I could get the necessary papers from India. I arrived in Paro, early October, 1963. At that time Bhutan had some 20 HINDI/ENGLISH MEDIUM PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Lyonpo Dawa Tshering, the then secretary of the Development Ministry, slowly replaced Hindi textbooks by English ones.

His late Majesty and the late Prime Minister asked me to set up an English Medium Education System, based on the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. Mr. Rustomji, the then Political Officer in Bhutan, promised that he would get our High Schools affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education.

We ran into the Indian Constitutions. The first two graduating classes could not get admission in Indian Colleges. We needed a Migration Certificate, which Bhutan could not issue. The first two classes of graduates were sent to AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND. The present Secretary General joined them. The first Class X Graduates from BHUTAN, graduated in 1967, 1968.

The first Bhutan School to appear at the CLASS XI Cambridge System was Tashigang High School. Paro High School joined them the second year.

The Indian School Certificate Class XI (old Cambridge System) became the INDIAN SCHOOL CERTIFICATE, CLASS XI. Two years later this broke up into ISCE X and ISC XII, the system we are following at present.

Many of these first schools still exist today:

Tashigang: Radhdhi, Bidung, Tashigang, Wamrong.  
Mongar: Mongar.  
Lhuntshi: Lhuntshi, Zangkhar.  
Ha: Haa.  
Paro: Paro, Drukgyel.  
Samchi: Samchi, Kalikhola, Sibsoo, Chengmari.  
Tashiyangtshi: Tashiyanagtshi.  
Punakha: Tschosa, Logodama.  
Wangdi: Gaselo, Samtengaang, Gangtey Gompa- now Phubjikha.  
Bumthang: Ura, Jakar, Domkhar, Tang.  
Chirang: Damphu, Gopini, Pataley, Khorsaney, Lamidara.  
Dagana: Goshi.  
Sarbhong: Gaylegphu, Surey.  
S/Jongkhar: Deothang Primary.  
P/Gatshel: Yurung, Shumar, (which grew into P. Gatshel Junior High School.)

NIE began in 1968, as TTI, this has grown into NIE.

The first Principal of TTI was M. Modak, he was followed by Sivedasan, B.S. Sharma, and MISS C.K. GURUNG – the longest reigning Principal. She retired from NIE in Dec. 1992. Pema Thinley is the present Director. In 1975 Paro TC began.

We now have 95 Community Schools  
144 Primary Schools  
14 Junior High Schools  
8 High Schools  
7 Institutions

Still we are expanding Education facilities, so as to have UNIVERSAL – at least 95% - literacy by the turn of the century. No small achievement.

The Department of Education HAS HAD A LONG LIST OF DEVOTED CAPABLE DIRECTORS:

Late Prime Minister Jigme Dorji  
Ashi Tashi officiating Prime Minister  
Lyonpo Dawa Tshering – The first official  
Director of Education –

Dr. S.C. Mittal  
R.S. James  
A.N. Dhawan  
Dasho Nado Rinchen, Longest reigning Director,  
Dasho Jigme Thinley  
Dasho Thinley Gyamtsho – Now called Director  
General of Education.

Lyonpo Dawa Tshering went to Kerala in 1962, and came back with some 20 teachers. They arrived in SAMDRUP JONGKHAR, WHERE THEY WERE GIVEN RATIONS AND A LITTLE MONEY. THEY STARTED WALKING (NO ROADS THEN IN THE EAST), from

village to village. He left two teachers in each of the schools. He told them he would pick them up some 10 months later. Some of these, like Mr and Mrs. R Krishnan, recently retired.

Spent almost two months of their winter holidays walking to and from LHUNTSI. These were very devoted sincere teachers, who sacrificed their whole life for Bhutan Education. Bhutan is grateful. Their contribution to our present education system in the early years was enormous. Without their devoted and sincere teaching in isolated difficult rural areas, Bhutan could never have reached its present high standard of education in the INTERIOR SCHOOLS.

Those who have made an outstanding contribution to Education are listed below district wise:

Tashigang: Rev.Fr.W. Mackey  
Babu Tashi  
Lopon Karpa  
Dr. Karchung  
Late Dasho Karma Dorji  
Mrs. Lingshi Anayat (GURU AMA)  
Mr. R. Sing  
Mr. K.P.Nair

Ha: Lopon Dago – He and Father Mackey received the Thuksey Medal from His Majesty, on National Day, 1973, for their work in Education.

Paro: Mr. Philby  
Mr. P.B. Nair  
Mr. M. Prasad

Punakha: Fr. J. Coffey  
Mother Peter

Jakar: Mr. M.K.G. Kaimal

Mongar: Mr. R. Shivadasan  
Mr. P.B. Nair  
Lopon Phuntsho

Thimphu: Late Dasho Pema Wangchuk, Father of the Joint Director of Education, Nima Wangdi  
Mrs. Namchu.

AND MANY OTHER UNSUNG HEROS AND HEROINES.

Jesuits involved in Education: Fr. Mackey, Fr. Coffey, Bro. Quinn, Fr. Cherian, Fr. Perry, Fr. Paikedey. The Fathers began in Tashigang, 1968, moved to Kanglung and Sherubtse School, High School, College.

Father Coffey and Mother Peter moved to Punakha to found Punakha High School. Father Mackey and Bro Quinn moved to Khaling to begin Jigme Sherubling High School. Father Mackey moved to Thimphu as: Head of CTDD, Chief Inspector of Schools and finally as Honorary Advisor to the Division of Education....until the "DAY HE DIES."

(Druk Thukseu Rev.Fr. William Mackey passed away on October 28, 2005. a few weeks before he put this paper together.

## The Journey

- Jigme Zangpo

---

The year was 1959. The *Khochi* from Mongar Dzongkhag headquarters came to my house with a clerk. We did not know why they came. My grandfather and parents had a chat with them. They were served some food and then they left.

I followed my uncle to herd the cattle and this meant a day's journey. Looking after the cattle involved a lot of hardships - living in the midst of the forest, fetching water from long distances, milking, churning and doing innumerable other odd jobs.

One morning, a messenger from my village arrived at our camp asking me to come home with whatever cheese and butter we had made during that period. I left immediately and on reaching home in the evening, I saw many of our relatives gathered there. They all seemed very busy - some were cooking while others were pounding *tengma* (beaten maize). My grandfather was sitting in a corner and I heard him say "This *Khochi* is very well known to me and he has assured me that he will delete my grandson's name from the list. However, since the case the *Kasho* has come from Mongar, and we must go".

He then ordered my mother to get ready. My father was also very busy discussing with a monk to find an auspicious day to proceed to Mongar. The good day to travel was found and we set off on our journey.

Many of our relatives came to see us off and they brought pack lunch, *jandops* of *aara* and *tengma*. Some of them even gave me 25 *chhetrum* coins and my small bag, stitched by my grandfather, was soon filled with coins. I was very excited to see all those coins. It was, however, an emotional departure. Everyone started crying. The journey began and I was accompanied by my grandfather, parents and a horse.

On reaching Mongar, we camped in the bushes above Mongar Dzong since the nearby places were already filled with people. There were also parents and children who had travelled from far like us. At night, there were campfires everywhere and the whole place looked very starry. I could hear some people singing and dancing in groups while others were exchanging gifts and offering *aara* to each other. It appeared like a festive occasion for everybody.

Finally, the day arrived for us to go to the Dzong. All the children and parents were asked to gather in the Dzong courtyard. Babu Tashi, the Governor, and some officials came and we were lined up according to our villages. My village, Depong, was to be assessed first for the final selection of children for admission to school.

We were eight children from Depong and our parents were reluctant to admit us to school. They were all busy lobbying and making false appeals that their children were deaf and dumb. Babu Tashi explained to the gathering the value of education, the benefits of admitting the children to school, the regrets that would follow if they were not admitted and the roles that these children would play in serving the parents and the Government in a more fruitful way than now.

My grandfather shared this information with me when in 1970 I passed out as a teacher from TTI, Samtse, now better known as NIE.

We were all admitted and the school started with two teachers. One taught us general subjects and the other Dzongkha , Language (the classic *Choekeyd*). Each of us was given a stone slate and a piece of chalk. The more unfortunate ones had to resort to using wooden slates and a bag with ash powder.

The medium of instruction was Hindi. The Dzongkha classes mainly consisted of teaching and learning of prayers. Over 200 students were crammed in a hall. The school rules were strict and the punishments barbaric. The teaching was memory-based and the examinations were both oral and written.

A student was branded excellent if he/she could memorize the whole text and recite to the classes. Poor performers would get slapped and ears twisted by the better students. Multiplication table till 16 had to be memorized by everyone. Those who failed were subjected to 'BUND' by the teacher. This meant that the students were locked in one room till late in the evening and their parents would wait on the verandah for them to come out.

There were times when the teachers forgot to let the students out. To add to this, the notorious older students would bully the younger ones. Whip lashing on the palms, being placed in a basket of stinging nettles and kneeling on the sharp pebbles were some of the unbearable and unforgettable punishments of those days. When I recall some of those merciless punishments, my hair stands on ends even now.

We had no classroom furniture. We sat on wooden floors. The long desks and benches came in later and these were used by four or five students sitting very close together. These days, the schools have individual tables and chairs which are portable for group works and related educational needs. I also remember that for two years we played football with a ball stitched out of rags on a small playground. Another strong aspect of the school culture then was the very lengthy morning and evening prayers.

Our school had no boarding facilities and so my mother spent three years cooking and caring for me. Most students constructed small huts for themselves while a few stayed with their relatives

nearby. I was fortunate that my village was only two hours' walk from the Dzongkhag headquarters and it was easy for my father to reach ration on time. Those students from far could not go home and had to even beg and borrow ration very often.

In 1961, the medium of instruction switched from Hindi to English. Two Indian teachers from Kerela came and introduced the subject-teacher system. These teachers were committed, hard working, and strict disciplinarians. Although the schooling was teacher-centred, a lot more emphasis was given on physical training, drama, and cultural activities. The text books and supplies provided were based on the syllabus. Later, two more schools were established - one in Kengkhar and the other in Kheng Wirringla. The students from these villages were, therefore, sent back to these schools.

The government introduced boarding facilities in 1964 and a three-storied hostel was completed in 1966. The parents' burden of providing ration was reduced; however, the meal quantity provided was too little. Most of our meals comprised of porridge only. Students had to fetch firewood and contribute towards the supply of vegetables. At times when vegetables were not available, we had to go looking for ferns in the forest. We also had to grind maize on the water mill at Gangula.

Classes were mostly lectures and lots of note-taking. The students had to memorize pages from the texts. The main emphasis was on grammar, meaning and structure. Indian history, names of places and people had to be memorized during the examinations. Explorations of any kind by students were not encouraged. Spoken Dzongkha was non-existent. Besides the regular classes and examinations, the teachers also took us out for picnics and encouraged participation at the annual *tshechus*.

Gradually the local authorities and community were involved in the school development programme. The existing playfield of Mongar High School was manually levelled by the people under the supervision of Babu Karchung who was then the head of the Dzongkhag as *Nyerchen*. The participation of the Dzongkhag officials also increased. The Late Prime Minister, the Deputy Director of Education, and the School Inspector were some of the very important visitors to our school.

The first group of two students was sent to Kalimpong for further studies. Another three students were sent for Postmaster's and Driver's training in 1965. This does indicate that even then, there was a tremendous pressure on manpower requirement as many development and service organizations opened.

Education received the highest priority in terms of budgetary allocations. Like the present His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the late King also gave top priority to education by

visiting schools. His Majesty the late King, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck visited our school in 1965 by helicopter. We were honoured by his visit to our classes. We also received royal command to come to Trashigang to stage a drama and perform mask dances.

Sixty five students along with three teachers started the journey at 3.30 pm. and reached Trashigang the next day at 12.30 pm following the old mule tracks. The official journey period was four days. We walked throughout the night using a petromax. His Majesty was very pleased and commanded provision of necessary costumes for mask dances to us. This clearly shows that the Government's strong policy of preservation of traditions and cultures was in place right from the beginning of the First Five Year Plan.

All the teachers and students were granted a royal audience in the Trashigang Dzong and we received some cash as *soilra*. That was a great source of inspiration and honor to both the teachers and students. The fame and reputation of the school reached far and wide because of this honor. Probably, this is the main reason why we have a good number of officials from Mongar holding key positions in Government service.

Till the end of the First Five Year Plan, the criterion for distribution of schools was mainly one school per Dzongkhag. However, due to rapid expansion of schools this criterion could not be applied. The increase in the number of schools also affected the teacher requirement crucially. Thus, the Royal Government established the two-year teaching training programme at the NIE, Samtse, on 29 May 1968.

The first National Institute of Education, then TTI, was inaugurated by our beloved late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The teacher trainees comprised of a few in-service teachers and the maximum number was selected from students of the junior and high schools ranging from classes VII and X. The Institute started with 40 male student-trainees and four lecturers.

Five women-trainees joined the following year in 1969. These ladies were well taken care of by a Matron and a Caretaker and a hostel that was well protected by a boundary wall.

The curriculum of the Institute comprised of the academic revised syllabus of the junior high school level with theoretical and practical lessons.

After two years of teacher training, 40 teachers were distributed to far flung areas. Almost all the teachers were posted in remote schools which were 2 to 3 days walk from the road head. In August 1970, Mr. Naiten and I were fortunate to be posted at Martshala Primary School under Samdrup Jongkhag Dzongkhag. The appointment letter reached my hometown in July 1970 through wireless.

We took a hard 3 days' walk from Mongar to Trashigang after spending two nights on the way. From there, we took a lift in the DANTAK truck till Narphung from where Martshala was officially two days away. We, however, took three days to reach as one of the rivers between Martshala village and Yarphu had swollen. All the traditional wooden bridges had been washed away and the people were commuting by using a basket that was hung from a single cane rope. The heavier you were, the tougher it was to slide since it sagged with the weight.

I had never seen such a ropeway before and I was reluctant to use it. I started inquiring for any alternative road to reach the school. The village elders informed me that there was no short cut. My father, who accompanied me all the way from Mongar, was convinced by them and he crossed over with my bedding. Mr. Dorji Thinley, seeing my hesitation, demonstrated twice with a full load to convince me that the ropeway was safe. He also applied some locally extracted oil to the rope to help slide easily. He was very helpful but I was still reluctant to get into the basket.

In the meantime, a couple hurriedly got into the basket and managed to reach the other side with some difficulty. Watching this, I gained a little confidence and chanting prayers I got into the basket. I could see nothing except the fearful river flowing violently underneath. I closed my eyes and started sliding gradually. It was easy halfway through but very difficult as I climbed up from midpoint.

As I travelled in this basket, I could only think of my loving mother back home. Crossing a river using such a means of transport was risky but very challenging at that time. But this has become history since such traditional bridges are now replaced by suspension bridges. I deeply regret not having possessed a camera to capture this historical means of transport.

After this historical event in my life, my friend and I reached the school just before dark. There were over 100 students with three teachers including a language teacher. The students were all older and taller than us. They could very easily carry 40 kg of rice. The school was roofed with banana leaves and classrooms were created with partitions of bamboo mats. There were no teachers' quarters and the Headmaster accommodated me in a corner of a room which was used as his chicken coop.

Two of us spent two adventurous years in Martshala School. Martshala is one of the poorest villages under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag and most of the students attended school from their homes by walking long distances. The teachers had to stock their rations for at least six months before the monsoons set in.

Our monthly salary came from the Education headquarters at Paro, the present Rinpung Primary School,

through Dasho Dungpa's Office in Samdrup Jongkhar.

A teacher would go to draw the salary and do shopping. This responsibility was given to teachers on a rotational basis. There were times when our salaries did not arrive for months together and we had to take ration on credit from Bamanjuli, the nearest Indian town. Since I was the youngest teacher, the Headmaster would often ask me to go to Samdrup Jongkhar to draw the salary. It was a life-risking journey to cross a big

river and walk through the dense forest of wild elephants. There were no decent hotels in Samdrup Jongkhar. *Madras* and *Hamro* Hotels' room charges of Nu. 6/- per bed was expensive for me and so I always stayed at *Sherpa* Hotel where bed was free if we ate their food which cost Nu. 1.50 only. My salary then was Nu. 160/- per month and this was more than enough since expenditure was bare minimum. A kilogram each of rice and pork cost 48 chhetrum and 50 chhetrum respectively.

As a teacher, I also adopted the same system of admitting children to schools (that I went through years ago) by visiting the entire villages with the Gup. The parents were unwilling and would try to explain their inability to send their children using the same pretext that they were either deaf or dumb. It was a pleasure to have the children rushing towards us for a piece of sweet.

Using this tactic, we were successful in enrolling a good number of children. Amongst them, we had a few brilliant students. Three of them were selected and sent to Yangchenphug High School after the Class V Common Examinations. Two of them, however, returned on the pretext that they could not understand Dzongkha. Mr. Pelzang Wangchuk who continued may be the only university graduate from Martshala.

Realizing that it was not possible for the Education headquarters to monitor and provide professional support to the numerous schools, a Regional Inspectorate was established in 1974. It was a rare occasion for an inspector to visit a school once in a year. The role of an inspector was multifaceted and very demanding. The inspection also varied from one inspector to another.

Some inspectors observed classes and provided feedback to teachers but most of them were engaged in administrative duties such as correspondences and supervision of school constructions. Many teachers were not used to external supervision and some teachers were so frightened that they literally shivered during the observation of their lessons.

This Regional Inspectorate was later upgraded to the Regional Education Office. This office was empowered to transfer teachers within the region with complete financial powers and could also

carry out educational planning in consultation with the Dzongkhags concerned. The Regional Education Officer (REO) was assisted by a team of inspectors and administrative staff.

The role of inspectors gradually shifted from administrative to academic and professional works. As time went by, the inspectors were accepted as colleagues and academic leaders and not as fault finders. Some of the teachers and Headmasters spent days and nights to keep everything in order during the visit of the inspectors.

Here I must relate one of the incidents that occurred when I was promoted as the Inspector (grade II) in 1977 and worked at the REO's Office in Trashigang. My first visit was to Zangkhar Primary School. Late Perna Wangdi was the Headmaster and he extended a warm hospitality. I was asked to share his bedroom. I was tired and went to bed early.

In the middle of the night, I woke up to find the Headmaster missing from his bed. I was curious and went out to look for him. To my surprise, I found him in his office amongst a heap of registers with a candle light. He explained to me that during the previous year, one inspector had warned him for not tallying the stock and the issue registers of text books and stationeries. He was worried by my visit and he had come to the office to check on that again.

On close scrutiny, I found out that he had misunderstood the remarks and advice given by the previous inspector and in fact he had spoiled the records. I, therefore, asked him to retire for that night assuring him that we could rectify the records together the next day. He was happy and came along with me. This also goes on to show that the schools misunderstood the roles of the inspectors and they rather looked upon them as fault finders who only meted out punishments. This was quite true to some extent since some ineffective teachers were sent on punishment transfers to remote schools.

On the other hand, it was also not the fault of the inspectors since all of them were not trained teachers. Some of them were untrained Dzongkha Lopens while others were class X graduates with no professional training. Variation in their professional backgrounds resulted in a kind of individual-led system. Due to lack of training, they had no clear direction of school inspection.

Visit to a school lasted about 2-3 days and during this short time, it was difficult to understand not only the learning outcomes of students and teachers but also to assess the academic and general contributions made towards the development of the school. Reaching a school was difficult and generally the distance from one school to another was at least 4 to 5 days, particularly for rural schools.

The inspectors who were expected to give guidance and support to teachers were themselves outdated and not competent enough. Those days, workshops and trainings of any kind were

almost non-existent. These days, there are numerous workshops and trainings conducted for all levels of education staff.

A system of annual visit was, however, instituted and teachers gradually accepted the inspectors as their professional colleagues. This was the biggest achievement for the Inspectorate. The current Educational Monitoring and Support Services Division (EMSSD) of the Education Department is actually an offshoot of this Inspectorate.

The Education Monitoring Officers (EMOs) stress more importance on academic performance of the schools and the delivery system. They are all qualified and the system of using competent people in the field as focal persons to monitor schools on their behalf is very effective and productive. The roles of the EMOs are difficult and challenging. Recognizing this aspect, the school level monitoring is being institutionalized and I think this is a very positive move.

It was 1978. I was returning from Lhuntse after visiting a few schools. Since there were no hotels, we had to carry complete bedding. The night halts on the way used to be both romantic and difficult when we had to sleep in caves and under trees along with fellow travellers. Tedious journey through dangerous mule tracks and leech-infested forests is a memorable event now. In one incident, I hired a pony to carry my cotton mattress and quilt and there was a heavy downpour. On reaching Mongar, to my utter dismay, I found both the mattress and quilt turned into balls of cotton. Since they could never be used again, I had to throw them away with a heavy heart. They were cheap but very precious to me since there were no sleeping bags or hotels those days.

The art of rural survival for both the teachers and students was very important for the smooth functioning of a school in those days. Teachers had to travel many days to reach the school. It was very expensive to carry food commodities due to transportation costs and lack of storage facilities. Hence, essential commodities like sugar, tea and salt were stocked for months.

Many teachers in the rural schools developed kitchen gardens to produce vegetables and cereals to supplement their supplies. Several vegetables were air-dried and preserved for the next season. Only maize, rice and chilly, which were grown in excess, were loaned out to villagers and collected back when the school re-opened after the winter vacation.

Ms. Nancy Strickland (presently the Field Coordinator of CCO) shared with me her interesting dialogue with Mr. Kabi Rajan, Headmaster of Trashigang Jr. High School when she first joined the school. The Headmaster had asked her to share her ideas on school development. Ms. Nancy talked about staff development, team work, literary competitions and extra-curricular activities. After patiently listening to her, he said that he agreed that what she said were important but not as important as keeping the kitchen fire burning to keep the school going.

The firewood in the kitchen was very important since the school would have to be closed down if the children could not be fed. Thus, the whole focus of the school was on the hostel management and rural survival. This does not hold true anymore now that most of the schools are accessible by roads and transportation is not as difficult. To encourage teachers and students to be in rural schools, incentive packages are being provided to them.

To mention something about examinations, there were no set rules about its conduct. It depended entirely on the Headmaster's personal understanding and initiative. So there used to be a variety of examinations. Marcella Primary School had monthly tests, half yearly and annual examinations to assess the performance of students and teachers. Sherubtse Public School (presently Sherubtse College) had weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual examinations.

Teachers would write questions on the blackboard for students to copy them and answer. The question pattern was similar in all schools: starting with passage writing, meanings, sentences, opposites, true and false and fill in the blanks - covering 7-10 pages. The teachers had a difficult time during the examinations preparing the question papers using carbon papers. Six copies could be made at a time using a ball pen and writing with full might. There were no typewriters and duplicators those days. Some schools even developed a local manual duplicator to make copies using cut stencil papers.

The first All Bhutan Class V Common Examination was introduced in 1972. The question papers were prepared by a group of subject specialists and this examination was coordinated by the Examination Centre based in Thimphu.

There were no supervisors and invigilators assigned but instead the head teachers concerned were made responsible for the smooth conduct of the examinations. The results produced were extremely good for most of the schools while a few schools produced very poor results too.

Good results were outcomes of either good teaching or teachers helping the students during the examinations so as to gain fame for their schools. No impact assessments were carried out to improve the examinations. Instead, they were discontinued for some years and re-introduced in 1975 as a new system where teachers from the nearby schools were appointed to conduct the examinations as supervising examiners and invigilators.

The best students were selected and sent to Darjeeling on scholarships and a good number of them were provided with boarding facilities at Sherubtse, Punakha and Yangchenphug public schools.

I believe that significant development has taken place in the areas of assessment and evaluation of the teaching/learning outcomes of teachers/pupils. Since the early seventies, the Examination

Cell has been upgraded to a fully-fledged Bhutan Board of Examinations Division (BBED) that has initiated many changes. An internal continuous assessment system has been institutionalized to help assess the overall performance of the students. The classes X and XII examinations conducted by the Delhi Board have now been taken over by the BBED.

The screening process of students, referred to as 'Passed for Training' at the classes VI & VIII Board Examinations was at one point very unpopular. These days, averages of about 85% of students pass in the classes VIII and X examinations. The admission to the next higher class is, however, determined by the availability of seats, particularly for the Class X passed students.

Most of the failed or disqualified students continue their studies in private schools in or out of Bhutan as the employment opportunity is better after Class XII. My personal fear is that should this trend continue, there will not only be a heavy economic drain but also degradation of traditional and cultural values. This surely calls for immediate increase of government or private colleges for students who can afford. Much emphasis on streamlining and diversification of courses in the field of vocational trainings is imperative and critical at this stage.

As regards to syllabus and curriculum, many changes have been made. The Royal Government realized that the curriculum borrowed from other countries was not relevant to our students. A major step on the curriculum initiative was taken by establishing the Curriculum and Textbook Division and introducing the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) to primary schools in 1985. Large numbers of teachers were trained on its concept, philosophy and methodological components. This new initiative emphasized the pre-service and in-service primary teachers.

Under the banner of the NAPE, the social studies subjects were written based on the local needs by Bhutanese curriculum officers. Hundreds of teachers were trained every winter vacation. The new curriculum was pilot tested in a few schools before nationwide implementation. This was a cautious step taken to avoid human and financial resource wastage. These pilot schools were evaluated by a group of educationists and further confirmed by external experts to be successful.

NAPE was then implemented nationwide with a lot of enthusiasm and high expectations of providing wholesome education to all Bhutanese youth to prepare them to serve the country with loyalty and dedication as proud Bhutanese.

After 15 years of the implementation of NAPE, many parents, government officials and some sections of teachers felt that the quality of education was deteriorating including school discipline and values that are very important for a small country like ours. Criticism of something abstract or too general such as 'quality of education' would be difficult to judge unless we are sure of what we are referring to. The answers could be many: curriculum change, ineffectiveness of

classroom teaching, lack of supplementary instructional materials, crowded classrooms and so on and so forth.

We all tend to forget that from approximately 400 students before the 1st Five Year Plan in 1961, enrolment has now crossed over the 120,000 mark. The pleasure derived by a teacher in managing a small number of students is a thing of the past now.

Again, contrary to the allegation that the quality of education is going down, the students' performance in the annual examinations is 60% and above. The students are also aware that in this competitive world, they must work hard to produce excellent academic results required for pursuing higher education. With the education not being as free as it used to be with a small amount of school fees in place and the urban students having to buy their stationeries, the children have realized the value of education and they strive hard to produce good results. Students have also realized that the world of work has become very competitive and they have all the more reason to work harder. Perhaps, I was lucky to have been around at a time when I could choose and pick up any job that I wanted.

Many people point out that the school discipline has deteriorated since the students are not as respectful as they used to be. The sense of respect to teachers is the key to self-discipline since this contributes to the seriousness of attention in the class which ultimately affects the learning outcome in the students. I still remember my class-teacher (in Class V), Mr. Nair, who was popularly known as Sir Balan, teaching us this proverb 'If wealth is lost, something is lost, but if character is lost, everything is lost'.

Therefore, at times I feel that giving too much freedom to students may also affect values such as self-discipline and character-building in them. The morning prayers and moral lessons on the lives of great leaders should be further emphasized in schools to make a positive impact on our students. Schools should also strive to develop a forward-looking attitude and inquisitive, questioning minds in students.

Another strong criticism faced by Education is poor writing and retention skills in students. This could be because the class/home assignments are more of oral nature and factual memorization is almost non-existent. Also, those days, letter writing to parents and friends was a regular, prominent and popular activity which is sadly lacking now. Students prefer to use the telephone or e-mail and fax - one of the few disadvantages of modern technology!

In the early sixties, there were no standard school buildings. Schools consisted of long double-storied, mud-rammed traditional Bhutanese buildings with poor ventilation and lighting. In the seventies, however, two standards of structures came in - one was an RCC structure of Indian architecture usually constructed by the

Public Works Department, and the other was a V-shaped usually seven-roomed single structure constructed by the beneficiaries. No designs and specifications were available then.

The Education Directorate would send a wireless message approving the establishment of the school. The message would read something like this "The construction of Phongmey Primary School approved. Please construct V -shaped seven class roomed and one-storied school building". We would then sit together with an experienced carpenter and translate these two sentences into one page sketch plan and start the work with no cost estimates. The success and beauty of the school building solely depended on the skills of the local carpenters.

Looking back, the site selections were done very randomly and irrationally with no scope for future expansion. The acquisition of private land was not initiated at all and instead any barren government land was opted for. Tsamang Primary School is one classic example of such poor planning.

There are several other schools like Trongsa, Wochu and Babesa which do not have any space for expansion and are located on steep slopes prone to land slides. Most of the time, the site selection was entrusted to village elders who had vested interests. Consequently, unproductive private land or government land was selected. Sometimes, the Gups and Chimis selected sites near their girlfriends' houses, thus undermining the interest of the general public.

As a result of such wrong site selections, the government had to either provide boarding facility or relocate the school which proved to be very expensive. Now, the School Planning and Building Division (SPBD) in the Education Department has standardized drawings and designs of schools including those of hostels, teachers' quarters and sports facilities which are educationally conducive and sustainable. Many opine that if one is a good teacher, education can be provided even under a tree. I, however, disagree. I believe that good physical facilities are essential to provide good education to students besides having good teachers.

Realizing that education was not cost-effective, the Department of Education made a policy shift on reaching out education to the rural pockets by opening extended class rooms (ECR) rather than drawing the children to a centrally located school. The guiding principle for establishment of an ECR was that there should be at least 30 students. The nearest primary or the junior high school would act as a parent school to provide professional support and guidance to the ECRs.

My personal deduction is that opening too many ECRs during the Seventh Plan had numerous adverse effects. Firstly, it created tremendous accommodation pressure in the junior high and high schools owing to which many primary schools had to be upgraded. Secondly, this unplanned

up-gradation led to acute shortage of teachers and classrooms which adversely affected the effective delivery of education.

The classroom crisis was solved by constructing temporary sheds while the teacher shortage was made up by appointing temporary teachers or by introducing multi-grade teaching in the community and primary schools. Thirdly, with the rapid increase in the number of schools, the cost of education again sky-rocketed, thereby bringing us back to our original issue.

Prior to 1985, the Education Department had an Administrative Division, Personnel Division, Inspectorate and Examination Cell. Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley, then Director of Education, opened several new divisions to cater to the needs of the ever increasing demands of the schools. These divisions were Teacher Education,

Non- Formal Education, School Planning and Building, Planning and International Coordination and Curriculum & Textbooks. Later in the 1990s, Youth Development and School Liaison were also established.

Where other countries took centuries in terms of educational development and coverage, Bhutan achieved significant progress within 40 years. This was possible mainly due to clear policy, political commitment, and technical and professional support given by the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) towards education on top priority basis in the successive plan periods.

We have daunting challenges ahead to keep ourselves abreast of the ever changing technologies in the era of globalization. Therefore, our education policy should be dynamic and forward-looking to prepare our future citizens to take up the responsibility of serving our motherland, Drukyl, with loyalty and dedication.

In retrospect, the 32 years of my career has been very fulfilling and satisfying. Out of these years, I served 27 years in the Education Department under many dynamic and visionary Directors and 5 years as Dzongdag in Bumthang and Paro Dzongkhags. It is my good fortune that my humble contribution is being recognized by the Royal Government of Bhutan and I am very grateful to the Education Department for grooming me and making me what I am today.

\* \* \*

## First Day in Tongsa

- G B Kurup

---

With acute pain of a swollen knee (arthritis), I have been lying in my bed, thinking about my past: why did I come to Bhutan leaving a fairly good job at home? Why did I stay here for 26 years...?

I remember my first day in Bhutan. I was posted to Tongsa School. In 1962, Tongsa was 10 days from Geylegphug. With my horseman and his loaded ponies, I walked all the way. By the time I reached Tongsa, I picked up a few Dzongkha words from him. He was my first Guru in Bhutan.

He dumped my luggage in a classroom of the dilapidated old school building, collected his fare and went away driving his horses. I stood looking at the disappearing horses and mule track that connected me to the external world. There was not a single human being around.

I went inside my room. The floor was covered with dust an inch deep. I spread my bedding on the dust and stretched my body thinking of the ways and means to escape from the forlorn place at the earliest, if possible, the next day. My aching body did not allow me to stay awake for long.

I woke up hearing somebody knocking at the door. I couldn't believe somebody would come to see me at the night. All around, it was pitch dark. Was I dreaming? I pinched my body to check whether I was dreaming or not. No, I was not dreaming.

The knock was still continuing, now followed by giggles. Collecting all my courage I got up and opened the door. It was neither ghosts nor dacoits. A small boy and a girl with a kettle full of suja and bangchu full of red rice and ema datchi.

I accepted the 'manna' with gratitude. I tried to thank them. They continued their giggles. They said something. I did not understand the language, but I understood the meaning. "Sir, as long as we are here, you have nothing to worry about". Language cannot create a barrier between love and affection.

Leaving the kettle and bangchu with me, the children left with their bamboo torch.

I had to fight back my tears of happiness. I changed my mind. I will work for these children. I will give whatever I have to make them better persons.

I came into my room, lighted my candle and ate the food. I never had, before or after, such a wholesome meal in my life.

What those two children did was the real culture of Bhutan. Since then I have had innumerable experiences of this nature. These experiences enriched my life, changed my life and made me what I am today. I learned more than what I taught...

\* \* \*

## MY SCHOOL DAYS

- Gagay Lhamu

---

I started going to school at the age of seven. At that time, it was not common for girl child to go to school. About ten girls, including myself, were selected for admission to Haa School in the early 1950s. There was a festival in the Dzong at Haa where every one's attendance was compulsory. So, I went with my parents to witness the festival.

At the Dzong, people were made to sit region-wise and I sat in a row which was meant for Katso Gewog. We were served with tea and snacks. As I sat in the line, some officials of Haa Dungkhang, along with Dasho Jigme Dorji (the late prime minister) came, writing the names of the children to be admitted to Haa School.

Many parents were successful in hiding their children, but I could not escape because I was in a different row and my parents were sitting elsewhere. It was so ironical that in the place where I sat, I did not know the neighbours sitting on my left and right side. Since I did not know them, they did not come to my rescue. The officials approached row after row, asking the children's names and writing them in the register. This is how I got picked up and admitted to the school.

In the following year, when the school reopened, my grandfather took me to school. I was introduced to my head teacher. Actually, my village was not far from the school, but since I was very small, my grandfather managed a hut nearby the school. He stayed with me in that hut and cooked food for me. Away from my parents, I lived in a small hut with my grandfather close to the school.

The Government gave me a set of uniforms (cotton jean clothes), 160 kilograms of paddy, 60 kilograms of wheat and 12 kilograms of butter in the school for the first year. From the second year onwards, boarding system was introduced and I was provided with lodging and food facilities in the school.

In the first year of my schooling, all the girls and boys who were selected along with me were in the Infant Class and we were taught the alphabets of Dzongkha and Hindi. All books were written in Hindi and we were provided with slates, pencils and other necessary stationery, free of cost. We had three teachers, including the head teacher. The classes were conducted from morning 9 am. to 3.30 p.m. with a lunch break of one hour in between.

Extra-curricular activities like football, skipping, archery, folk-dance and athletics were also taught in the school. Whenever the teachers were insufficient, the senior students used to teach us.

I studied in Haa School till the end of 1956. At the end of that academic year, some boys and seven girls, including myself, were selected to go to India for further study. From Haa, I, along with my friends, walked for five days to reach Samchi. Our head teacher escorted us to India. From Samchi, we went by jeep to Banarhat, a train station in India, and from there, we boarded a train which reached us to Siliguri. Again, from Siliguri, we went by taxi to Bhutan House in Kalimpong.

When we reached Kalimpong, the students were on winter vacation but all the seven girls, including myself, were given tuition in Nepali for three months. After three months, we were

admitted to St. Philomena Girls' High School. The boys were sent to St. Roberts High School, Darjeeling. In both the schools, lessons were taught in Nepali medium.

However, I studied at St. Philomina only for two and half years because I received an Indian Government Scholarship to a missionary school run by Australians and there I studied till Class X. Thereafter, I joined Dr. Graham's Homes where I did a Secretarial Course for two years. I completed the said course by the end of May 1965.

On 1<sup>st</sup> June 1965, I joined the service at Thimphu Public School as a primary section teacher-cum-office assistant. For three consecutive years, I received a monthly salary of Nu. 200. I lived with my husband Dasho Bap Yeshe Dorji. He was a lieutenant in the army at that time. My mother and the younger sister also lived with me. From 1969 onwards, I was employed on a regular scale. I worked as a teacher from June 1965 to September 1993.

On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1993, I received the royal decree to join the High Court. His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk awarded me with the Red Scarf on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1993 at the Tashichhoedzong. Since then, I have been administering justice in the High Court, Thimphu.

When I look at those days and compare and contrast the school facilities after the commencement of the First Five Year Plan, there is a drastic improvement in the schools both physically and academically. During my time, one could easily count the number of schools and its teachers on fingertips, but now due to drastic increased in the enrolment of students both in urban and rural areas, it is extremely difficult to accommodate them.

Many new schools have been opened where good, dedicated and highly qualified teachers are available. Besides, many more private primary and high schools have been opened. Now if parents want to send their child to school, facilities are easily available. The only problem for the parents of today is the choice between the government and private schools.

During my time, parents were very reluctant to send their children to school. As such, they resorted to every means in hiding their children even when they heard about the coming of officials to select the students. But now, parents are facing some problems in admitting their children to schools.

However, time is not too far when parents will face extreme difficulties in finding schools for their children despite increase in the number of schools and expenditure. The sense of competition will gradually grow in the minds of the students and hence the quality of education will definitely improve.

## Thirty Two Years Ago

- M Prasad

---

I took up my assignment as an assistant teacher at Paro High School on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1969. My headmaster was Mr. Stewart Philby from the Isle of Wight, England. I was informally interviewed by Mr. Philby at Kalimpong, and later the other formalities of appointment were completed in the office of Mr. A.R. Bose, the first Director of Education, Bhutan. Mr. Bose was on deputation from India and was almost on the verge of his retirement. As such, I had very little time to work under him. However, from what I could gather, Mr. Bose could pick up the laurels for bringing in some of the important changes in the Bhutanese Education system.

The credit should also go to Lyonpo Dawa Tsering, the then Secretary General in the Ministry of Development for his enlightened and active role in introducing modern education in Bhutan. Till then, students were sent to India, especially Kalimpong or Darjeeling for education purpose. Monastic schools, Simtokha Rigney School and a few Hindi-medium schools existed in the country prior to 1960. It was a major transition period when Bhutan was opening its doors to modernization. Mushroom growth of schools started taking place: seven high schools, eleven junior high schools and approximately hundred and twenty one primary schools came into existence within a short span of time.

The Education Department was situated on the river bank at Paro. After Mr A.R. Bose, Mr. Auku Tshering officiated as the Director of Education. Within a period of ten years, the following Directors of Education came on deputation from India: Mr. R. S James, Mr. A N Dhawan and Mr. S C Mittal. Dasho Nado Rinchhen (currently deputy minister, National Environmental Commission), who was the OSD in the Department of Education had the privilege of shouldering the responsibilities of a fully-fledged Bhutanese Director of Education. Lyonpo Jigme Thinley (currently foreign minister of Bhutan), Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho (currently home minister of Bhutan), Mr. Nima Wangdi (currently director, Department of Revenue and Customs) and finally, Mr. Pema Thinley (director general) have followed suit.

Life at Paro was not altogether a bed of roses; the school was far from the market; there was no motorable approach road to the school, and fresh vegetables, meat and fish were not available. Provisions had to be carried from the market. However, being young, we did not feel the pain of walking up and down practically everyday after school.

Our rendezvous was a 'momo shop' in the market where the teachers, clerks and officials of the Education Department used to meet and relax. On the average, we used to pay Nu. 90-100 per month individually, as dues for momos and drinks. Paro High School on the whole, was a good school: the teachers were young, energetic and willing to take responsibilities. The students were simple, happy, hardworking and obedient and the academic standard of the school was exemplary.

There was not much social life in Paro, except on occasions like 'Paro Tshechu' monthly social gathering of teachers and students in the Multipurpose Hall and occasional visits to Khanku for Hindi movie shows and meeting friends at the Air field, IMTRAT and Education staff at Gangtey.

Public relation was good, parents had high regard for teachers and the teachers, on their part, tried their utmost to help their wards. On the whole, my stay at Paro was fruitful in many ways: I got the opportunity to teach and guide the students who were innocent, simple, caring and highly devoted to their teachers. Paro was a peaceful place to work in. The custom, tradition,

the lhakhangs, the people, the landscapes and the Pachu meandering through the valley gave a serene look to the place, in fact, an ideal place for deities to live in.

There was no written syllabus for classes PP to VIII. The textbooks were those followed by the ISC schools in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. Mr. Philby used to go to Dr. Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, once a year, and bring back question papers for classes PP to VIII and the same were set for the half-yearly and yearly examinations for his school. As such, every class had to face a Board Examination, Mr. Philby being the Chief Executive. The practice seemed to be good as all the teachers were on their toes and a minimum standard which was at par with the Anglo-Indian Schools in Kalimpong and Darjeeling was somehow maintained.

The need for a written syllabus was felt during the time of the Director Dasho Nado Rinchen. Committees for different subjects sat in the auditorium of Thimphu Public School and drafted the syllabus for classes PP to VIII within three days. This syllabus was followed by schools almost for fifteen years. Finally another syllabus PP to VIII surfaced in 1989-90.

The NAPE (New Approach to Primary Education) was introduced in the Pilot Schools and, later, in all the primary schools. Almost at the same time, the Education Policy was also drafted; Fr. Mackey, Dasho Zangley Dukpa, I remember, talking about the cold, winter days they had to sit and draft the policy in the guest house at Paro. The policy states that the students should have a working knowledge of English by the time they leave class VIII; they should be able to speak, read and write simple English.

The NAPE syllabus was also drafted in a similar spirit and there was no place for literature in the syllabus. The traditional way of teaching grammar was discouraged. Graded grammatical structures were incorporated in the syllabus and were to be taught in a functional way. Teachers were, however, neither provided with work-books nor other teaching materials. The only textbook available for reference was *Guided English*. As no questions were set from this text, neither the teachers nor the students gave much importance to it.

It became extremely difficult for teachers to provide exercises for children's practice on their own. As such, both grammar as well as spellings started deteriorating in schools. As inspectors of schools, we were conscious of this matter and the same was discussed several times with the Department. However, there was no one willing to accept this fact as it was too early to be skeptical.

In the lower classes PP to III, lessons are taught in water-tight compartments: each book is to be taught within a stipulated time and the teacher is expected to move on to the next block. There is no time to look back and take up formative measures. All the activities cannot be completed within the given time. By the end of the term, the syllabus is covered but in a superfluous manner. The Bhutan Board of Examinations was established in 1970's. The common examinations were conducted at class V, VIII and XI levels.

There were a few inspectors of schools like Mr. Gupta, Mr. Kaimal, Lop Namgay Dorji and late Mr. Thinly Dorji (Mr. Thinley was bitten by a dog and died of rabies). These inspectors were mostly utilized to settle disputes in schools, check accounts, look after the construction works and devoted very little time to academics. The Inspectorate of Schools was created in 1984. Rev. Fr. Mackey headed the Inspectorate as the Chief Inspector of Schools with three other inspectors, namely Lop. Tshewang, Mr. Prasad, and Mr. Mohan.

In March 1978, I was transferred to Sarbhang High School. It was a big school. The primary section had recently been separated from the High School. Both were still under the same administration however. I worked there for more than six years as the Officiating Principal.

We had students from all over the country. Sarbhang High School was a boarding school. Essential commodities were available in the market half a kilometer away from the school. Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon were the nearest neighbouring towns, approximately 60 kms away. Summers were hot, humid and rainy. The local community consisted mostly of Lhotshampas and the business community from India and the locality. Hindu festivals like Durga Puja, Dassera and Deepawali were some of the attractions. People were simple and cooperative.

In July 1987, I was transferred to the Education Headquarters, Thimphu, as an Inspector of Schools. I worked as the Inspector and Deputy Inspector of schools for a little more than 11 years. I had the opportunity to travel and see almost all the major parts of Bhutan. We should give credit to the teachers working in the interiors. They need to be admired for their perseverance, hard work and sacrifice. Many of these teachers have to walk for days in order to reach their schools from the nearest road heads.

Being in the Inspectorate for 11 years gave me the experience of knowing the people, culture, tradition and their mode of living, in the urban, rural and remote areas in an elaborate manner. We had to trudge along the mountainous terrains, deep gorges, cross the traditional type of bridges, penetrate through leech-infested areas and walk for four to five days in order to reach some of the schools like-Wirringla, Gasa, Tshochasa, Burdoh, Shingkar, Lelegang etc. I would highly commend the good works of our teachers working in the interiors, living with their families, leading a hard life, yet, satisfied with the social life and bringing enlightenment to the community which, otherwise, would have remained ignorant throughout.

However, the facilities have improved from year to year – communication, transportation, medical and postal facilities are linked to every nook and corner of the country. The people wherever we went, were helpful and hospitable. The local gups provided us with riding and pack ponies and porters at our request. The journeys we took, though exhausting, were adventurous, challenging and exciting, on the whole.

I should say that my stay in Bhutan, was something to relish throughout the remaining part of my life. (I will be reaching my superannuation age by the end of academic year i.e. 2002). I have no regrets- I feel I have lived my life to the brim. I am proud of my students who are shouldering responsibilities in the most satisfactory manner, wherever I go. I don't know how much I have been able to contribute, but I have received a lot from my students, friends and the Bhutanese people.

## Reflections of an Educator

- Dasho Zangley Dukpa

---

I was born in 1950, the Iron Tiger year of the Bhutanese calendar to a religious family in the village of Dungmain, also called Oongkhar, in the present Pemagatshel Dzongkhag (previously under the Shongar Dzongkhag). My name, unique as it sounds, has an interesting history behind it. A son before me had died soon after he was born. So, my maternal grandmother covered my infant body immediately after birth with "Zang". Thus, I came to be known as Zang-ley, meaning "good Zang" in the Sharchhogkha dialect. Dukpa was added at the Teacher Training Institute (popularly known as TTI) in Samtse by Chamling because I had only one name, which he did without my knowledge. He also misspelt by name as Jangley, apparently using all of his discretionary powers or liberty to exploit my name.

My father, who is gifted with good voice, was "Umzed" to his father, my grandfather who died in 1959 after six months of my admission to Yurung Junior Secondary School (now Primary School). Landless with five brothers, the parents of my mother initially objected to her marrying my father. Taking it as a challenge, my parents worked hard, bought lands, constructed a house of their own and brought us up like any parent would do. I vividly remember the old lady who has also objected to the marriage of my parents but later apologized to my father who was by then doing fairly well both economically and in his career as an influential religious personality.

Until I went to school, I used to enjoy sitting on the lap of my grandfather and playing with his moustache and beard. All villagers would request my father to do their religious rites. Being the eldest son, I followed him like his tail and began to pick up the use of some religious instruments. During winter vacations from school, I would assist him in his religious activities. One of my distant uncles, a gup, would ask me to write agreements for people involved in land disputes. Such was the atmosphere in which I grew up as a child.

The preceding description clearly demonstrates the great amount of influence my parents had on me especially in the growth areas of integrity, industry and spiritualism. There are a number of other people whose lives had a great influence on my growth and development as a person in the formative stages and later. The list is long. I will mention only a few. The influence of my paternal uncles cannot be forgotten. My teachers, especially Lupon Dorji Wangchuk, Mr. Chhewang Norbu and Mr. G.M. Mukherji, the headmaster, had great impact on the development of my character. Looking back, I realize they were great teachers. And in my later life, Mr. Sivadasan and Ms. C.K. Gurung of TTI, Samtse, Professor Gho of NIE, Singapore, Dr. White of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Eric Hole of the University of Bristol, the Late Lam Nado, Dasho Nado Rinchen and Dasho Jigme Thinley (now Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs) all had significant influence on the growth and development of my personality.

It was Babu Trashi who opened the Junior Secondary Schools in Yurung, Mongar and Trashigang in 1959. It was mandatory for all children born in the years of the Ox, Tiger and Hare to attend school. All parents tried their best to retain their children of this age group and not send them to school. Their efforts were in vain. There were twenty-six children belonging to this unfortunate age group in Dungmain. I was one of them.

Babu Trashi was settled in Nangkhor although he was from Dungmain. Therefore, our parents took us Nangkhor (six hours journey on foot) towards the end of 1958. In the evening of our arrival in this important destination, we were given a kind of feast by Babu Trashi - red rice with red, big and long dried chillies and pork *paa*. We were not allowed to look up when Babu Tradhi

walked in while we were enjoying the special meal. It was indeed special because we had never eaten in such a splendid meal-basket.

In the morning of the next day, we stood in a circle with our respective parents behind us in the courtyard of the Nangkhor nagtshang. There came Babu Trashi again and distributed three "shikhis" and four/five round sweets to each of us as he came around talking to our parents individually. He said we would get more of those sweets and "shikis" if we went to school. When he came to my father who, along with others, begged him for Kidu in the pretext that I should succeed my father as the village Lam in Dungmain. Babu Trashi said in a philosophic tone: "Sending your son to school is my Kidu for you. You will soon realize it". My father now discovers truth and wisdom in what Babu Trashi said to him in 1958.

It was the first and the last opportunity for me to see Babu Trashi, a highly trained teacher as I realized later.

Yurung, now divided into three gewogs, was among the biggest gewogs under the erstwhile Shongar Dzongkhag. Being centrally located in what was then the sub-division of the Dzongkhag, Yurung was selected as the site for the new school. Nestling on a small hilltop surrounded by a lake on one side and paddy fields on the other, Yurung school (which was rightly called Yurung Dzong by the people) looked very prominent and commanding. The site was ideal as there were adequate play-fields. This double-storeyed Dzong-school with eight or more classrooms and verandas all around it on both floors was magnificent and equally functionally practical. Whoever designed the 'Dzong' was a genius.

Children from lower Wamrong in Trashigang and from Deothang, Dechencholing, Nganglam and other villages in Samdrup Jongkhar and all the present gewogs in Pemagatshel Dzongkhag attended the Yurung School. At the time of admission, there were over six hundred students with only two teachers, although after a few months, some more teachers joined the school. All of them were Bhutanese.

Students lived in their own hutments (built village-wise) which mushroomed around the school. They were also put in classes village-wise for about six months after which they were classed on the basis of their performance in the tests.

We were fortunate to have some good teachers. The teacher-in-charge, Mr. Chhewang Norbu, who studied in Kalimpong, was a versatile man - speaking Bengali, Nepali, Hindi and English besides the local dialects. He was good in sports and more importantly very caring towards his students. And Lupon Dorji Wangchuk, who studied in Tibet and completed a meditation course, was virtually forced to be a vernacular teacher by Babu Trashi because of his vast knowledge in this area. He was a fantastic teacher in every respect.

Later, we had a trained and qualified headmaster in the person of Mr. G.M. Mukherjee from Calcutta. Sacrificing the comforts of city life, he worked in Yurung for more than eleven years, a rare non-Bhutanese teacher committed to his profession and clientele. Yurung was to see many other good Indian teachers among who was Mr. Girijan who later resigned as the Principal of Mongar High School.

In Yurung, all of us tried to be good in *Chhoked* because we were encouraged with our villagers coming to us with Kashos or letters to be read and interpreted to them and also by replies written for them. Thanks to Lupon Dorji Wangchuk, many of us became quite good in "Yigkur Namshag". Story telling, especially about Akbar and Birbal by Mr. Chhewang Norbu, formed an important aspect of learning.

Rote learning was common. I memorized the whole history book of Napoleon in Hindi without understanding the meaning of the text! The same heuristics applied to the learning of other subjects also. Most of us memorized and recited the whole prayer book. I am still fairly good in memory power. Another interesting aspect of learning in those days was learning by rote the definition of parts of grammar both in English and Hindi.

For want of textbooks, some of us (the good students) had the privilege of having textbooks in Hindi. By 1963, the medium of instruction was changed from Hindi to English. With the change of policy, textbooks in English came in plenty. Every one was proud to have his (no girls in our time) own textbooks. In short, a good foundation of learning for me was laid in Yurung, although there were students who studied in classes I and II for nine consecutive years. By the time I reached Class VII, there were only eight of us from amongst 600 students admitted in 1958.

In June 1967, Yurung, which started as a Junior Secondary School, was downgraded to a Primary School. Since our headmaster was concerned about the future of his students, he made sure that all his students who were affected by the change of policy were gainfully employed or given a chance to continue their studies. On his recommendation, some students were sent for training in Animal Husbandry, some went to the then Don Bosco Technical in Phuntsholing.

Two of us from Yurung were among many other students from other places who were sent to the Government Workshop. I wrote an application to the Deputy Director of Education for allowing me to continue my studies. After a month or so, I was asked to join the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) in Samtse. It was in July 1968. It was my destiny or Karma that took me to the teacher training institute, a launching pad for my career.

Jagar Dorji, now Director of NIE, and I joined TTI two months later, sometime in August 1968. I went there with the sole aim of improving my command of the English language, written and spoken. If I correctly remember, there was a system of monthly tests whose results were displayed on the notice board. For the first two months, I managed to get only a C+. Very soon, I felt a deep sense of satisfaction and pride to see my progress curve go up the result chart on the same notice board. And in the annual examination, I was overwhelmed to get an "A". Thanks to Ms. C.K. Gurung who tutored me at her residence also.

There were two groups of trainees at TTI. The first group comprised of students who came directly from schools and the other comprised of students who were already teaching in schools. Pulami, who is now the Chimi of Chirang, was one such trainee. It was the highly motivated and committed Principal Mr. Sivadasan who divided the trainees into two groups for practical reasons: Group "A" students to which I belonged were taught the English textbooks of Class X. What the Principal desired was that we should have acquired in English and Mathematics a standard equivalent to Class X.

The Late Fr. Mackey taught us Mathematics for three or four months during winter holidays. This was a wise move by the Principal. Mr. A Modak, highly learned and scholarly, was the Principal before Mr. Sivadasan. He was a strict follower of Mahatma Gandhi. And Ms. C.K. Gurung brought the experiences from her exposure to Singapore, Hong Kong and other places. There was thus a galaxy of experts coming from different backgrounds and experiences at TTI.

The trainees at the institute belonged to different ethnic and regional backgrounds. Almost all of them were there not by their own choice but by the order of the Government. Students seemed to be happy because we thought that the TTI was just another school for studies.

Participating in dramatic performances and various other cultural activities was my interest. I had my feet more in cultural activities and less in sports and athletics, although I was the Sports Secretary in Singapore five years after I left TTI. One Mr. Tika Gurung, the famous dance teacher, also taught us Lhotshampa songs and dances.

When five women trainees were admitted, boys began to change their behaviour for good, dressed better, talked politely probably to win over the hearts of the highly prized five women-trainees. This was another experience at TTI.

Teaching practice was quite eye-opening. I earned the name of Arithmetic teacher as I fared better in this subject in teaching. On the whole, the TTI was a benchmark for my career advancement.

After I became a teacher, I felt convinced that I needed to improve my academic and professional qualification. Through friends who studied in schools in Darjeeling, I obtained textbooks for HSC examinations. However, before I could sit for the examinations, I was fortunate to be enrolled in the Institute of Education, Singapore, in June 1975 along with Ms. Ruthangmo Lepcha, who had recently completed her ISC from Dr. Graham's Homes in Kalimpong.

The entry level for the Certificate Education course at the Institute of Education (IE) was GCE 'A' or Class XII. A student had to specialize in two subjects. Core professional subjects like psychology and philosophy were common. Ruth and I opted to specialize in English and History (Modern Asian History). We had to do these subjects for two years following the almost similar curriculum of BA course of the Singapore University. (By the way, the B.Ed. course at NIE is based on the Singapore course model). I must admit that I had to struggle in English - especially poetry and fiction. For fiction, we had to read Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence and a host of other modern writers.

We also studied Noam Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar (TG) which was then very popular. With my determination and help from my Chinese friends, I passed the final examinations. For two years, I must have slept only four hours a night, as I had to do more work than others because of my background.

When I got an office order for appointment as a teacher in July 1970, I felt excited and exhilarated, and, of course, enthusiastic. I was sent to Sarbhangshir Primary School where I had two and a half years (August 1970 to February 1973) of fruitful teaching experience, Sarbhangshir was followed by postings at Paro High School (March 1973 to June 1975), Trashigang Junior High School (part of National Service on return from Singapore in 1977), Lamidara Junior High School (March 1981 to July 1981) where I worked as headmaster from September 1980 to February 1981, and Haa Junior High School (March 1981 to July 1981) where too I worked as headmaster.

As a beginning teacher, I was disappointed to find the magazines like the Illustrated Weekly, Readers' Digest, Kuensel and others kept in the corner of a room uncared for and unread. A certain DLT (Dzongkha Language Teacher) was fond of applying military-style punishment on children. It took me a long time to convince the Lopen that "A child is a rational being. He must be told why he is punished. I tell my students that if one does not do one's homework, one will be given one or two strokes on the hand. The number of strokes to be given can be decided by the children themselves and I find it very useful". By the way, I am a disciplinarian too but am rational and logical in approach.

I feel that as a teacher, one must do justice to the profession. As a novice in teaching, to apply what I learned at the TTI in Samtse and at the Institute of Education in Singapore became my priority. In Sarbhangshir, I was fortunate again to have good fellow-teachers. One Mr. Dayadas Pradhan, who passed Matricriculation in 1945, was rich in experience. He had also worked in the British Navy. One Lopon Phuntsho, who worked as a clerk with Babu Trashi in Trashigang, brought a different kind of experience. The Headmaster, a Bengali gentleman who just joined the school, spoke good Dzongkha. Since all of us were virtually new comers to the place, we formed a good team. Eating together in a mess further strengthened our team spirit. Because of the various initiatives I took, I earned the name of "Second Sir" from the public.

Our student strength rose from a mere 44 in 1970 to 105 in 1973. Our goals of increasing students strength, introducing games and sports and interacting with the parents to discuss issues related to their children's education and their own roles were to a great strength realized.

Teaching itself is challenging. The task of educating, civilizing and spiritualizing children with an aim to shape them into good human beings and good citizens of a nation is indeed challenging. And it is a challenge for every teacher in this world plagued by a brutish sense of materialism and consumerism. Apart from this challenge arising from the nature of the task itself, I don't remember a major challenge worth-mentioning.

Self-[raise is no praise. Faced with this axiom, I hesitate to mention the little contributions I may have made through my service to education. But I would like to say that I enjoyed every minute of the time I spent as a teacher. In the schools I worked, I had the privilege of having to work with good colleagues. Sarbhangshir, which is surrounded by Moakhola and Sarbhangkhola, gets completely cut off in summer. When I joined the school, there were only a few students; the school building, roofed with thatched straw, was in a terrible condition. During my stay, we got the school roofed with CGI sheets, which were then misused and as already mentioned the strength of students increased dramatically. We now had students coming from Gopini, Chirang!

In Paro High School, I was a warden, becoming a part of the school management team. Besides, I was involved in organizing performances of cultural activities.

Being head of the schools where I worked, I stressed the essence of teamwork. My sole aim, as a headmaster, was to make that school a model in every respect. This made me work harder. Assuring that teachers did justice to their children was a difficult but not an insurmountable task. By justice, I mean teachers teach their children well and they possess all those good qualities of a teacher we theoretically talk about. In Haa Junior High School, the management of the hostel was in a mess. I cleared the mess and streamlined the hostel management system. Building up of one's staff is important. Many teachers who worked with me became headmaster and DEOs.

As a teacher, I was also involved in the recruitment of teachers every year. Travelling together with Mr. O.P. Arora and Mr. Haridas and interviewing teacher-candidates in India gave me a good insight into the difficulty of recruiting good teachers.

Treating children as rational beings and interacting with them was most satisfying. In a larger class, it was not possible but at times I used to interact with them outside the class. I learned something from such interactions. There is a marked difference between then and now. We now have our own teachers, trained and qualified. Being better exposed, teachers are more effective today. The sincerity, hard work and commitment of present-day teachers are yet to be compared and adjudged.

As a teacher who the society looks up to as being exemplary in all aspects of behaviour, in other words, a role model, one cannot afford to indulge in vices like alcoholism, smoking and the like.

Personally, I had to act and behave like a matured old man when I was only 26 years old. Teaching has taught me to be tolerant and patient and also reflective. It gave me an opportunity to practise something good in life.

My idea of a good head teacher is one who is dynamic, selfless and committed, one who possesses a thorough knowledge of government policies, educational principles, educational management and administration, spiritual values, and one who is a visionary. Such a head teacher should lead an ideal school. In an ideal school, the head teacher is supported by professionally committed teachers whose services are recognized by the head teacher, community and the government. It has also a highly motivated support staff. The staff make students appreciate and respect the school rules and regulations. The principles of justice and fairness are upheld and practised.

The head teacher's job is to direct, support and manage his staff, following the principle of consultative management. Everyone must know what one is expected to do and why. In an ideal school, one should feel that one belongs to that school. And that school is his or her or theirs. Creating a sense of belonging is an important factor that contributes to making a good school. Discipline, decorum and sanctity – all necessary ingredients of a conducive learning environment – must be maintained in this ideal school. My understanding of learning would include all the four pillars of learning included in the Delores Report.

History says that there was no complaint or agitation from amongst the ten thousand monks teaching and studying in the Nalanda University in India. They were engaged in the activity of meaningful teaching and learning in which both the teacher and the taught were guided by common precepts, principles, rules and regulations (Vinyana). This seems to be an appropriate teaching-learning paradigm to be studied and emulated by a good modern school.

"I am a self-made man", say many including some lyonpos. Looking back at what I did in the schools where I worked, I derive satisfaction. It is more satisfying when your students come and see you. And you feel happy seeing them do well. Thanks to the royal government, I had better opportunities than most of my friends for pursuing my studies, although I had to pay a price for improving my educational qualifications. I am aware that the sons and daughters of my friends have completed University education while even my eldest son who is almost sixteen years old has just finished high school (Class X). Some of my friends are well settled. I am not. This was the price I had to pay and it was worth-paying.

My hard work in Singapore paid me good dividends in Edinburgh. I excelled in my studies. I got four "A's" and one "B". My professors there seemed to have recommended my case to the royal government proposing that I be allowed to study a Master's programme in education. I was the only Bhutanese to get admitted to the University of Bristol, probably on the recommendation of my professors at Edinburgh.

In Edinburgh, I chose to stay in a hostel, expensive though, run by the Edinburgh Medical Society. There were only eighteen inmates of whom three (including myself) were from overseas and the rest from England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Living and eating together with the local people itself was educative. At Bristol, I was happy to compete with the local students. The study programme was very demanding.

It is appropriate to mention here that on my return from overseas what almost all people asked me was how much money I brought. Hardly anybody would ask me about the academic and professional benefits of the course and how it enriched my knowledge. Very embarrassing to encounter such questions! Someone asked me such a question while I was helping in the drafting of education policy in 1983. Realizing the need to make this person feel that the issue in

his question was not my priority during my study overseas, I answered him in these words: “ I earned a lot of money from overseas. I am now taking them out from the bank of my body and using them in the drafting of education policy”. This mentality, very sadly, persists even today.

On return from the University of Bristol after a successful completion of a Masters programme in October 1983, I was asked by Dasho Nado Rinchen, the Director of Education, to participate in the drafting of the country's education policy. The National Education Committee was formed mainly to draft this policy. Its chairman was Lyonpo Dawa Tsering who was assisted by Late Dasho Lam Penjore, the Vice Chairman, Dasho Jigme Thinley, Late Fr. William Mackey and Dasho Nado Rinchen. The Drafting Committee comprised of Dasho Nado Rinchen, Fr. Mackey and Mr. Pema Thinley. I joined the latter committee later. The draft policy document was to be completed within two months! It was an honour for me to be involved in drafting an historic document.

Although fresh from the University, because of my practical experience as a teacher and headmaster earlier, my contribution – especially in the area of general education and pedagogy – was acknowledged.

I was finally and formally transferred to the headquarters as Officiating Deputy Director in place of Dasho Dorji Namgyel, who was transferred to Haa as Deputy Dzongda. I continued to work on this policy document. The government hired the services of Mr. Peter Collister to edit the English language of the text of the policy document. I was his counterpart. This document is not formally approved but it forms the basis of other policy documents.

Apart from administrative tasks which began to increase, I got satisfaction from my involvement in the Primary Education Project right from the beginning (sectoral studies stage) in 1984 to the signing of the Project in 1988. I signed the project in Washington D.C. as the Acting Director of Education. This aspect of my work gave me enough opportunity to learn the techniques of project preparation and skills of negotiation, and acquire knowledge of diplomatic affairs.

Another major policy decision in whose formulation I was involved was the recognition of head teachers in rural schools who were the backbone of the education system. They were to be sent to England or elsewhere for short courses. A professor from London University who came to Bhutan and I worked out tailor-made courses for our rural head teachers. Based on seniority, they were subsequently sent out to attend these courses. I would consider this as one of my contributions to the professional growth of my colleagues in the field.

As the years passed by, I began to shoulder the responsibility of all aspects of educational services, culminating in the presentation of Education Sector Paper to various Dzongkhag Sixth Plan Meetings in late 1987 and early 1988.

Being the only person with a teaching background at the headquarters (now there are many), I could see things there from two perspectives, which I thought was useful. Working in the headquarters enabled me to understand things in the context of government thinking and policies, and it exposed me to important issues of national concern. I enjoyed the trust and confidence of all the Directors of Education from whom I learned a lot.

Obviously, there was a difference between working in the school and at the headquarters. School management, though demanding in its own right, requires you to function only at a micro-level. Conversely, as an administrator at the headquarters, you handle things at the macro-level.

Late eighties, in Bhutan, saw the Bhutanization of heads of schools and institutes. I was among the key members involved in the task of selecting principals for high schools from amongst a few qualified Bhutanese teachers. Selecting head teachers for primary and junior high school was not as difficult.

In late November 1988, I received a Government order to head Sherubtse College in Kanglung. I could not sleep for days as I found it difficult to exude confidence in myself to be at the helm of the country's premier academic institute. Realizing the futility of my apprehension, I got down to job. It was useful asking several ex-Sherubtseans as to what they would do if they were made the Principal. The responses they gave me were helpful. It was real time to read numerous books on higher education, which I did. Doing a mental mapping of how I should go about in running the affairs of the college proved to be a useful exercise. In time, I gained confidence in myself through preparedness.

I invited Fr. Leclaire to my house and discussed issues concerning the College. Through the several meetings and interactions we had formally and informally, Fr. Leclaire, as I learnt later, seemed to have gained confidence in me. His written briefings including where he went wrong served as a Bible for me.

Equipped with this preparation plus my theoretical and practical experience in education, I formally took over the charge of Sherubtse in a befitting traditional manner on February 28, 1989. Initially as anticipated, I faced the problem of acceptance from some circles. Students saw me as someone coming there to introduce Driglam-namsha, which was partly right.

In management, when you take over such an important organization staffed by professionals and clientele comprising young men and women, you are guided by four questions, namely 1) Where are you? or situational analysis, 2) Where are you going? or aims and objectives, 3) How are you going there? or programmes and activities, and 4) How do you know you have reached there? or evaluation.

Following these management principles and keeping in mind my two distinct functions of providing executive and academic leadership and directions, I spent some time analyzing the situation. There were also some changes that had to be brought into effect immediately. I made a careful study of the courses offered, the attitude and commitment of teachers as well as of students, administrative, admission and examination procedures and related issues.

It was important to have the changes thus effected prioritized. Literary Societies for different languages – Dzongkha, English, Nepali, etc. were dissolved as advised by Fr. Leclaire but not without having its share of problems. I realized that the memberships of these societies were based on ethnic backgrounds, although they were not intended that way. Through a series of formal and informal interactions, I could convince the teachers and students who functioned as office bearers for these societies of the reasons for the dissolution of the societies. The Forum for International and National Affairs (popularly known as FINA) was constituted in place of the dissolved Literary Societies.

Then came the ngolop problem. Initially, I had problems with some Lhotsham students but in the end, things became favourable for me and like-minded colleagues to chart out new courses of action. Among my list of priorities were planning of personnel which required job description and specification, streamlining the administrative system including discipline and decorum, finding ways and means to keep students busy and making them work hard, improvement of examination results, revising the course structure wherever possible, and improving the student mess. The issues were discussed with teachers and senior students mostly through informal

interactions. It took me a series of meetings and debates with teachers department-wise after college hours, that is, after 4.30 P.M.

All teachers were allowed to express themselves freely. One teacher wrote to me about twenty points, all suggestions about what I should do and concerns about where we were going wrong. It became necessary for me to explain to such teachers the government policies and how I should go about to achieve those goals. In time, much to my satisfaction, I won them over before introducing such programmes that affected them directly such as having classes in the afternoon.

The academic building used to look like a haunted place in the afternoons. Teachers enjoyed resting in their apartments; student-couples would disappear in the bushes while some students played games. The Library was not used.

The process of Bhutanizing Sherubtse was carried out slowly but firmly. Student admissions were conducted by the newly formed admission committee and enrolment for any course was based purely on merit, although initially we had tremendous pressure as a result of the new system. The college started offering Honours courses in a few academic disciplines and research programmes were introduced. There was a need to create a vibrant intellectual climate suited to the Bhutanese needs at Sherubtse.

We started having international and college-level seminars, conferences and workshops conducted in the college; academic journals and books were published to achieve the college's motto of *Education for Excellence*. For all these ventures, responsibilities were delegated to teachers and students alike, which made them accountable. The administrative system was streamlined, making all members of the college know who was doing what and why. The system of subject Department was introduced and it was fully consolidated with the appointment of Heads of Departments. The post of Assistant Principal with a two-pronged purpose of creating more promotional posts and providing on-the-job-training for teachers to assume bigger responsibilities was created. The Education Division liked the ideas of assistant principalship and many others.

With the restructuring of the organization, teachers' morale, especially that of the heads of departments was boosted. The Principal had to deal with twelve heads rather than fifty over teachers of different characters. Similarly, all final year students had one office responsibility or the other. With the introduction of honours courses for degree students, there was an increased sense of competition amongst class twelve students for professional courses.

The introduction of research programmes, publications and workshops encouraged both teachers and students to use the library more frequently, thus keeping themselves busy for good. The results of examinations began to improve. By doing so Sherubtse was placed on the road to its name 'Sherubtse', the peak of learning, although a long journey had just begun.

Sherubtse should be truly the Centre of Learning in the next millennium and it is very much possible. We have the right atmosphere, and professionals are now recognized for their professionalism and expertise.

I felt highly honoured to receive the Red Scarf from His Majesty the King and I attributed it to all teachers and students of Sherubtse and the teaching profession as a whole.

I was appointed Dzongda of Chukha in May 1997. I would like to maintain close association with education through Dzongkhag high, junior high, primary and community schools. I feel satisfied and happy to have the Chukha High School and Phuentsholing Junior High School upgraded to

Junior College and High School respectively during my tenure. Already two Project high schools are being established at Chhukha and Gedu.

To work in Chhukha, the dzongkhag that earns the highest revenue for the government, is very challenging and satisfying. It is a variety of responsibilities. One has to keep switching one's thinking from health and Education to RNR sector; from rural development to urban and industrial development; from religious activity to issues concerning security; from being an administrator to being a diplomat; from dismantling of illegally constructed houses on government lands to resettlement of people; from introduction of bus services to accidents of vehicles; from being the Chairman of DYT to being the chairman of municipality; from rural electrification to giant projects like Tala Hydro Project. And one is responsible for any thing that takes place in one's Dzongkhag.

Among my priority areas are: rural development, making contributions to the fulfillment of our Beloved Druk Gyalpo's aspirations, timely implementation and completion of the Tala Hydropower Project, keeping law and order situation conducive for economic activity, especially in Phuentsholing - the nerve centre of economic activity in the country, injecting new ideas into the dzongkhag, interacting with the rural people, streamlining the whole administrative system stressing on participative management, and having a good heart for the people, especially the rural ones.

Being a member of the kingdom's National Assembly is a great honour for a Dzongdag. It enables one to participate in debates and discussions on issues of national importance.

Creating a unique system of education suited to our needs is our goal; and it should be. Under the leadership of the dynamic, visionary, highly knowledgeable and committed Minister of Health and Education, Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, creating such a system is not far from reality. Since knowledge and education have no national boundary, there is no harm in picking up some good elements of systems outside ours and blending them with our own. That was what exactly Japan, Thailand, Singapore and some other countries seemed to have done, especially in the area of higher or university education. That does not mean their systems are the best and are paradigms for emulation. Adaptation of something good in other systems to our needs is what we need to do.

We say "change is the only permanent thing". This requires us to prepare ourselves and be ready to accept changes that are good for our country and society. Amongst many areas of change for the better, I must stress this one: that our teachers must cultivate the habit of reading and keep improving their qualifications, academic and professional, so that they are better able to face new challenges. They have to be a new breed of teachers to face new challenges in the next millennium.

Civilizing and spiritualizing are two words I am fond of using. They seem to me to be the core and key words of wholesome education. Spiritual or moral values are inherent in our culture of learning, which we need to preserve and promote. The knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Zorig Chusum (the thirteen traditional crafts) is also an important aspect of wholesome education in the Bhutanese context. Training in self-discipline is important and a person who lacks it is like a kitchen without utensils.

And the four pillars of learning propounded in the Delores Report are also salient features of wholesome education.

Teachers should practise those aspects of the code of conduct for teachers developed by the Education Division. The eightfold path propounded by Lord Buddha is a teacher's unflinching

friend. The need to be committed to one's profession in a consistent way should always be in the minds of teachers.

Keeping some of the things that I have mentioned above always in mind while performing one's job a teacher can contribute a lot to the collective task of nation-building. To be a teacher is very demanding but very satisfying once you are into it. We must have confidence on ourselves in order to gain confidence in us from others, especially from our students. For this, we must be fully committed to our profession as half-baked bread is not palatable to anyone. With this in mind, teachers should work hard and contribute towards the fulfillment of our Beloved King's aspirations. Teachers can do a lot. With the right attitude and outlook, there is no other profession besides teaching, which is very rewarding. Let's take this opportunity to pledge our loyalty to our King and service to the nation.

## Tangsibi and Beyond

- Dr Jagar Dorji, Director, NIE, Paro

---

I was born to Lam Dorji and Goemn Lham in the village of Tangsibi in Trongsa. The exact date of my birth according to Western Calendar is not known. In the Lunar Calendar, it is on the 21st day of the 11th month in the Female Ox Year. My mother Goemn Lham is reborn in another family as a girl child and already goes to school.

My mother told me that I was born outside our village when my parents were herding the cattle. My mother was not even staying inside the little hut in the forest pasture, which is an hour's walk from the village. I was born on a mattress of thick leaves inside a pen built for feeding milking cows. I spent most of my childhood with my parents and brothers looking after the cattle or horses.

As I grew, my responsibility changed between horses, cattle or sheep herding, sometimes with my brothers and often on my own. At the age of ten, I was called to attend the new school at Trongsa. It was a journey straight from the forest pasture to the magnificent Trongsa Dzong where we met our teacher.

The circumstances in which my early schooling happened are interesting, hence they deserve mentioning. I joined a contingent of about 80 other boys from various parts of the Mangde valley at the primary school in Trongsa. There were ten boys from my village. Our class began in a two-room apartment on the top floor of a water mill located close to the massive Dzong. Our teacher lived in one room while he conducted the elementary lessons in the other room.

We first learnt the Dzongkha, English and Hindi alphabets and the numerical figures by heart. No one was sure of the meaning and of the significance of these figures, but we learnt them, like what C.E. Beeby (1966) called, as symbols. I did not realize that these very strange symbols help me in writing my own account today.

Teaching at that time was basically traditional, lecture-oriented. Teachers used to teach us by reading the text from the books and explained their meanings, and we learnt the texts by memorizing. For instance, by the time we were in class six, I was able to recite the text from all the three *Brighter Grammar* books.

In class two, we were reading the story of *Ram*, taken from *Ramayana* (an Indian epic). I remember it took us a long time to grasp, as we did not understand what the words were saying meant. For example, we had to rote-learn this sentence in Hindi, *Ayodhya ki raja dasrat ki teen rani the*, which meant that King Dasrat of Ayodhya had three queens.

At that time, this sentence did not mean to me anything more than a line to be recited. Learning the Arithmetic was another trouble. It took us a long time to learn the multiplication tables, as it did not connect to any concept in our daily life. It was just a group of symbols learnt by heart. This experience has impressed on me so much that even now the multiplication sum in Hindi comes spontaneously.

Yet, I consider my first teacher Lopen SangeyTshering, the prime teacher in my life. He was the first to sow the seeds from where I am harvesting the fruit of the labour. Without the base he had helped build, the subsequent learning could never be possible. I therefore prostrate to my teacher and all the subsequent teachers and pray that if I am reborn as a human being, let me be born with an opportunity to serve them in return for what they contributed to my present life.

In five years, our school shifted from Trongnang (the water mill apartment) to Chhoekorling, near Taa Dzong (the school in Chhoekorling does not exist anymore), and then to Thruelpang (the palace where His Majesty the late king Jigme Dorji Wangchuk was born) and then to Sherabling (the present location). Our school was a simple building with benches in front and we sat on the floor. Chhoekorling was supposed to be a proper school with a C shaped building. The previous places were guest houses turned into schools.

We sat on the floor with low benches in front. We learnt how to read and write during the day, said our prayers in the evenings and slept in the same rooms during the night. During the day, we used to keep our beddings in the attic. There were huts built around the school campus where we kept our rations and cooked our meals. During the initial years, our parents took turns to cook for ten of us.

Two or three years later, they came and built the huts and we cooked our own meals. We went to the forest to collect firewood one weekends and to wash our clothes another weekend. Sometimes we went home to fetch ration but most of the time, our parents would bring it to us.

I remember watching my mother staggering up the hillside with a heavy basket of ration on her back, perspiring. Even under this condition, her face would brighten up as soon as she saw me running towards her. I must have been 12 to 13 years old. The first thing she would ask me was whether I had finished my foodstuff, or whether I was hungry. But all my hunger and difficulties would vanish when she was with me.

Years later, she told me how shabby and disgraceful I would appear running towards her with all the happiness on my face. After all, she was my mother.

When we started our school, there was only one teacher who taught us Dzongkha. Hindi and English for the first two years. He is really the founding figure of our literate life. Two years later, as we moved to the proper school, we received a young Lepcha gentleman as our head master. He had studied up to class ten in Darjeeling.

An elderly monk was also appointed from the Trongsa monastery to teach us Dzongkha (then Chhoekey). The new school was run with these three teachers and we had our examination for the first time in 1963. After that, I was to go to class III.

Teaching was mainly from the front of the class. But the explanations from the teachers were clear, interesting, non-offensive and laden with wisdom. All our teachers did not go to university, but they were mature, full of discipline themselves, and they would expect us to be the same.

Enrolment was not very high in those days. Many parents did not want to send their children to school. Some parents even wanted to take their children out of school. In 1962, the late Prime Minister Jigmi Dorji came to our school and asked the older students to go home, as they were too old to be in school. They were thrilled. He also brought footballs, skipping ropes, indoor games such as caroms, snake and ladder.

But the most important was many pairs of boxing gloves. Boxing was a compulsory sport for all boys. On the days when we had boxing, many boys would return home with a bleeding nose. After some time, the rubber smell from the gloves made us sick. But we played, in tears and blood, punching, receiving punches, until we were exhausted.

We learnt calligraphy, singing and dancing. Our evening prayers earned a lot of respect from the public so much so that they would make offerings for their long life (Tshedrup). It is difficult to say what kind of atmosphere it was in our school as we were too young to observe and things were totally different when I went back years later. Even our school building had become a hospital. But I think our school was a place for learning. We had a lot of respect for it. Even the people would look at our school with awe.

There is definitely a vast difference between schooling then and now. Those days, we took school as something sacred and a place to learn and to worship. It was a very formal place. No one put on caps, or shoes during summer. I used to observe that when other people came to our school premises, they put off their caps, and wore the sleeves of their gho ( Khoetoe) as a mark of respect. Every instruction from the teacher was taken seriously and obeyed. There was a lot of respect for the teachers and we even spoke to elders with awe and respect.

In modern day schools, the atmosphere is very relaxed. Even in the classrooms, both teachers and pupils are more relaxed and tension-free, so much so that very little teaching is observed. When a teacher gives corporal punishment, there is a hue and cry over the issue, even if it is a minor one and not worth the trouble. But those days, our parents would add on to what the teachers had already provided. So we made no complaints. Today, even where there is a national flag fluttering in the school ground, people do not feel awkward to walk in casuals and with their hats on.

These days, we have to teach etiquettes deliberately, while in the early days, we learnt them by observing, through individual guidance from teachers and parents.

I was at the TTI, Samtse, then. There were only 40 students (all boys) in the first batch of which I was the last in the list, as I joined 2 months late. We were taken in without a question regarding our age or qualification. The girls came only in the second year. There were 40 students in the first batch in 1968, but unfortunately only 38 completed the course in 1970. One was washed away while crossing the Jaldhaka River in the 1986 flood and another died of malaria in the same year.

The types of courses at the TTI were very simple. We studied Educational Psychology, Principles of Education, School Organization and Health Education. We also learnt some Maths and learnt how to teach various subjects in a primary school. Teaching Practice was done only in Samtse Primary School, now upgraded to a high school. It was a weekly practice during the session. We also played games ourselves but did not learn how to teach them.

Teaching was again mainly from the front. There was hardly any discussion. There was a library, but I did not find a book that I could read and understand at my level. I remember, when the then Secretary General of Development Wing, Dasho Dawa Tsering, (later the Minister of Foreign Affairs) asked our Principal if we were able to understand words like "culture", I did not. I never did. I learnt by learning all the notes by heart.

I remember my first morning assembly experience. Mr. Modak, the Bengali Principal, was making a speech in English. I could not make out a single word he was saying and I bet he was using those words I did not even remember seeing in the dictionary. There was nothing I could do but to return to my room and sob for a while and think of how I could catch up with the others.

TTI consisted of one academic building, one boys' hostel (exactly like the Silver Jubilee Building) in the spot where the present academic building stands. The present staff cubicles were the multipurpose hall. Then there was the Principal's house, and three staff quarters. The girls' hostel was enclosed by tall walls with only one entrance gate. The rest of the area was a terrace. We worked hard to come up with a ground big enough to play volleyball on the spot where the present football field stands.

There were no organized games and sports, but students managed to play some matches. We did have a teacher from Samtse Primary School who came to teach us dance and music in Nepali, for he was from Darjeeling. We had arts classes, debates, and essay competitions.

The general atmosphere in the institute was more relaxed compared to a school. We felt important because there were grown up boys. It looked as if we were going to college, just like what we saw in the films. I liked being in TTI.

In spite of some of the problems we faced at the TTI, it was another watershed in my career. I was able to communicate much better in writing and in speech after two years of stay in it.

There is no comparison between the TTI I knew then and the NIE now. The TTI of that time seemed so scarce and little. It was no bigger than a primary school in physical terms, and there were very few students. The academic works, the challenges and the number of activities have grown many fold.

After our final examination in the summer of 1970, I went home and resumed by responsibility of tending the cattle, as the Lakhaps (highlanders from Sephu, Dzeri and Sektang) had taken the sheep to the mountains.

In August, I received a letter instructing me to join Tshokana Primary School in Tsirang as a teacher. It was the first time I heard about that school and place. Not many people in my village knew about it. But I left for it anyway. The idea of how to go and the possible difficulties and requesting for a change of posting to a better place had never once occurred to me, neither did it to my parents. Every body at home thought I must leave immediately. I did finally make it to the place using my little knowledge of the language people spoke in different places.

I never worked as a head master. But I observed some good head masters who were maintaining the schools through daily routine works as best as they could. I also observed those who never cared for the school, but grabbed every opportunity to take advantage of the situation. But both types of heads and teachers received good commendations. Fortunately, these are only past memories. I like to think that the latter have left no heirs behind.

While at Tshokana, I went to Kalimpong and bought class X books and started my private study with the help of my headmaster. He coached me in Maths and Science, and I managed in other subjects on my own. I sought the help of a monk to learn Umi (Tibetan writing). This enabled me to pass the class X examinations in 1974 from the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education in Kalimpong.

I was granted a Government of India Scholarship in 1976 to study in Punjab University, India. I came out of the University with a BA and a B.Ed. degree in 1980. On my return, I taught for five months in Trongsa Junior High School and then moved to Gelephu to teach in Bhur Primary School. At that time, schools in the foothills were kept open during winter. After that, I was transferred to Kalikhola Junior High School in 1981.

Already by 1981, there was a plan to upgrade the TTI into the National Institute of Education (NIE) and it needed university graduates as lecturers. I was then offered a scholarship in the University of London Institute of Education (ULIE), UK, to do my masters. I had great difficulties coping with the demands in England. At the end of the first year, which was a post graduate diploma, I was required to stay back and improve upon my performance when others were going away on summer vacations. But I took that with humility and stayed behind to work. I managed to qualify for Masters.

The British system of education was very different from what I had been exposed to. The lecturers came with an issue and put it on the table. We were then asked to give our views and comments from experiences and readings. My course mates were mainly British. So I found it hard to bring in my own experiences and articulate around them to make a case of discussion in the group. I became more self-conscious in speaking with them for fear of making mistakes. I found myself easily blushing in public. So I was mainly listening through the seminars. How wrong!

Living in England was a different experience. My English pronunciation was ridiculous, my accent was very funny and my grammar confusing. I had to accept the fact that I needed to work very, very hard. I am still far from perfect, but a little better. Thanks to my sense of perseverance.

I returned from England in the autumn of 1984 and joined the NIE, Samtse. I worked as a lecturer in Geography Education until the beginning of 1989. When I began teaching in NIE, I thought it was a great privilege. For one thing, I could not overcome the feeling that I was giving back what I had received from the institute as a trainee teacher some 14 years ago. The other

reason was that I was working with colleagues who had greater experiences and were personally richer in wisdom and knowledge and skills.

In spite of my hard work and careful preparation, I think I had many disastrous lessons. Some lessons were more enjoyable as my students would tell me later. Besides teaching, we were also working with visiting professors from London University to develop the B. Ed. syllabuses in the institute. Although there have been a lot of changes, I am happy to be a part of the initial development, both as a lecturer and as the head of the B.Ed. programme.

The initial establishment required endless meetings and assignments. While students were complaining about their inability to cope with assignments, we had no place to complain about coping with reading student's work, meetings, assignments, lesson preparation and administration. I wonder if those students who have returned to the institute as lecturers recall any difficulties they had undergone and compare them with what they need to do in the other garb.

In 1989, I was transferred to Thimphu to head the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD) in the education department. I assumed the post of Director of CTDD in 1991; in 1993, we renamed the division as Curriculum and Professional Support Service (sometimes called 'Section' for administrative convenience). In my capacity as the head of CAPSS and the coordinator for social studies, I started working on the History and Geography syllabuses for classes VI to X, which I completed in 1994.

In the early 1990s, I was not involved in policy decisions. My responsibilities were mainly to carry out the decisions made in the Director's office. Among other administrative matters, my main job was to prepare syllabuses and course books in Social Studies. Although other people had worked on Social Studies for lower primary classes, my main focus was on developing Geography course books for classes VI to X. At the same time I was also assisting in the development of History and Civics curriculum for IX and X. More people were thus involved in the policy decisions.

After CTDD became CAPSS in 1993, the CAPSS Board made much of the decisions and provided directions regarding the works carried out in the division.

**In** 1994, I was blessed with yet another opportunity to return to Samtse as the second Director of the Institute to succeed Mr. Pema Thinley. As a Director, my experiences were varied. There was continued concern about quality input in the programme and safety of the staff and students. I had many lonely days when there were hard decisions to make and was even compelled to tell people (I have never enjoyed this part, and I guess nobody does).

Before I left for NIE, I was reminded that I should use my head rather than my heart. I could never separate the two. I also had direct confrontations with some, which, on reflection, only spoke of my shortfalls and myself.

In reminiscence, these confrontations taught me some good lessons. There were also incidences where students were penalized for not fulfilling the responsibilities given to them. I never enjoyed doing that but I thought this would be in their best interest in future.

I was very fortunate, on the other hand, that most of my colleagues were always by my side when needed and they gave their time and energy unconditionally for the development of the institute. In a social set up where everyone is well educated and have their own right to think and act, there is bound to be some anomalies and some differences. I was prepared to accept this too.

In 1997, when Mr. Perna Thinley was transferred to Sherubtse College as Principal, I was called back to Thimphu to head the CAPSS. By then, the style of working had changed dramatically. Earlier, we received directives, but now, I found that most of our works depended on the initiatives taken by ourselves. Policy directions were very general and we were to deal with the depths and initiate programmes to implement them.

In March 2000, I was transferred to TTC, Paro, as part of the package of amalgamating the CAPSS and TTC under the new nomenclature of NIE, Paro. Here, I found an institute bubbling with energy and enthusiasm. In these, I discovered tremendous opportunities.

Pre-service teacher education in Paro has a great responsibility towards the general education of the children in the country. It was here (as well as in Samtse) where they make or break the hopes of thousands of children in our schools.

I thought the goals must be clear to every teacher educator as well as to the student teachers. There is no need for new goals and dreams. NIE already had a marvelously carved set of goals.

As the Director of NIE, both at Samtse and Paro, I wanted to make the Institutes places that people will look up to as models, as places of excellence in all aspects - academically, culturally, and socially. I also realized that human capacity is the greatest limiting factor in this dream. However, I was fortunate to have colleagues who had given me more than I could aspire. They also gave me an opportunity to work as part of a team.

My enrolment for a doctoral course in the University of New England, NSW, Australia, was a surprise. I had never aspired for such an opportunity. My studies in England had been a great help during the pre-research courses. Some of the matters that I had to use were also familiar to me then. The research became a hard nut to crack.

From 1997 to 2000, I was given the opportunity to visit the university once a year to consult with my supervisors (there were two). During this visit, which normally lasted for six weeks to two months, I had to go through some mental trauma. I normally took about a week to get readjusted to the change of work and atmosphere, trying to recollect and relearn from what had been left about a year ago.

When I finally picked up, other things emerged such as getting control of the computer software and other unexpected situations. I usually worked from 8:00 a.m. till 11:00 p.m. for seven days a week, except for Sundays when I had to visit the market to pick up some foodstuff. It was great relief when I finally submitted my thesis. I was not even in a mood to see how well it read.

Frankly, I joined teaching by chance and not by any special commitment. At that time, many of us were still unclear about what a career was and the scope that a career might provide to an individual. Gradually, I began to feel an obligation and a sense of gratitude towards the government for making it possible for me to upgrade myself academically; especially when I thought how my parents could have supported me to come so far away from home with university degrees and experiences.

My future would have been limited to being a semi-literate farmer or a gomchen. So without the government's support, I could not be what I am today. This has perhaps pushed me to work harder. I have always been complacent as far as my position was concerned. When I was given an opportunity I took it with a sense of gratitude and responsibility and when I was left out, I took it as my fate. But slowly, I had come to the position I am in today, of which I had never even dreamt as a young teacher. Personally, this is the highest I can expect.

I think teachers in Bhutan need to change their practice of teaching. I was impressed by the work of Simmons and Pitman (1994), who analyzed the characteristics of many teachers in North America who were apparently nominated for teacher of the year awards. They came up with six key standards that serve as lamps to illuminate the way to excellence. They are:

i) Flexible: A good teacher is one who is able to adapt to changing situations. He or she is able to abandon short-term goals on any day, in any lesson, for any child.

ii) Interesting: A very difficult job that a teacher faces is to maintain the attention gained in the initial part of the day or a lesson. A good teacher needs to think how to motivate and sustain them throughout the lesson, the day and the years.

iii) Available: On any given day, it is hard to spare a moment. But a good teacher is always there when needed and is always easy to approach.

iv) Informed: The worst that a teacher can be is forgetting to explore the frontiers of knowledge. A good teacher demonstrates, by example, the values of scholarship and benefits of continued learning.

v) Accountable: Many teachers complain "your child is not doing his home work"; "your daughter has been found copying" or "your child is poor in Math". I think these teachers are shirking responsibilities. A good teacher seeks explanation to these problems and looks for alternatives and changes.

vi) Relevant: In Bhutan today, the youth are facing uncertainties. This is an indication that our economy is in trouble, for many youths will not be able to use their productive capacities. Instead, they become potential destroyers of the economy. Having a high school certificate or being educated no longer warrants success. Our children today need proper education, proper guidance, attitudes and ethical values conducive to being effective, mature and responsible persons. A good teacher must prepare to confront these challenges. (Simmons & Pitman, 1994).

These six standards provide enough roles for teachers in Bhutan.

Wholesome education is a noble goal adopted in Bhutan for education. My own personal idea of wholesome education is to prepare students to be responsible, mature and productive citizens who will uphold the pride of the nation and their parents. Having said this, we must not be carried away by the idea that schooling can produce directly employable graduates. This is a wrong notion.

Schooling should be able to produce youth who are disciplined (in body, mind and speech), who are able to communicate well through the use of various means such as written materials and oral speeches and who are ready to learn the trade they have chosen as a career. Students would have adequate knowledge of their own capabilities and aptitudes to choose the right trade for their future. Then we will have given them a wholesome education.

Technology is there to support in our efforts to provide education to our children. Computers possess this potential. But as we know we have not been able to make use of the already existing technological aids such as radio, tape recorders, videos, overhead projectors and so on. We need to reflect on how this was not possible before in order to make full use of the information technology (IT) today.

IT not only motivates students but also sustains their attention. IT can also compensate for the shortage of teachers although it cannot substitute them. However, we need to approach this with caution. There are also elements in the IT that may lead students in the wrong direction. Already, research evidence is available in other countries regarding the adverse effects of computer on the social and personal development of children.

I am afraid my view on the role of parents are far from encouraging. We have three categories of parents in our country. The first group is the uneducated and illiterate parents in the countryside who want the best for their children. For them, children in the schools areas a great investment for a comfortable and proud future. Their children are pampered to the extent that these children abandon manual work as low, shameful and meant for illiterate lots. They cannot accept the idea of returning to their farms, an idea fully supported by their parents.

The second category of parents is the bourgeoisie who have left their ancestral homes and lived on salaries for a long time. They have no means to sustain, especially after their retirement, other than with some support from their children (a tradition still in vogue). For them, it is important that their children get recognizable certificates in order to get better-paid jobs. They neither have the time nor the means to properly guide their children. Instead, they leave the children in the good and trusted hands of the schools and teachers to educate them. Their role is minimal, though they could help schools.

The third category of parents has much wealth, but just do not have time for their children. When the children come home, they do not see their parents, but get food from their servants. Servants are those who can do the work for their children, but cannot give love and moral support. They are pestered to go for tuition, thereby leaving little time for recreation. They also have money and cars that are often the envy of the ambitious but poor children. These children bring with them drugs, money, glamour, and fancy life that many fragile youth cannot afford. So they submit themselves to this glamour at the cost of building their future. Rich parents do not play much role, unfortunately.

Traditionally, Bhutanese parents have little role in educating their children. There is a saying "keep wealth in one's possession, and keep children in other's possession". This means that if you wish children to be educated, and brought up to be productive, mature and responsible, it is not the parents who can do it. They have always trusted the teacher to do so. This tradition has not died down as yet.

This is my message to the teachers: please give your best to children as a classroom teacher and as an adult guardian in the school, and you will be the most effective teacher. Never stop reading and listening to others. Remove the blinkers around our eyes and be aware of the wider views available for our senses.

\* \* \*

## The Long March

-H. B. Vishwa

---

Having completed my two years' Diploma in Teaching in May 1970 in the first batch of teacher graduates from the Teachers' Training Institute in Samchi, I was eagerly waiting for my order to be appointed as a teacher. I spent over one and a half months at home helping my parents in our farm as it was peak rice cultivation season.

As the plantation work over, I received a wireless message from the Department of Education, Paro, directing me to join Dorokha Primary School immediately. I prepared myself and joined duty on July 23, 1970.

The school building, a semi-permanent structure, had only four classrooms –two each on the ground floor and the first floor. One of the rooms on the first floor was used by one teacher as his residence. Two rooms on the ground floor with a bamboo mat partition in the middle and one room on the first floor was used as classrooms for classes from Infant to V comprising of six sections.

The headmaster of the school, Mr. Karma Tshering Bhutia, a resident of Kalimpong, was absent from school most of the time and the classes were by two teachers namely Mr. G. S. Namchu, my first teacher, and Lopen Tharpola. There was a severe shortage of classrooms, teachers as well as teachers' accommodation.

When I joined the school, three classes – III, IV and V, were allotted to me. They were placed in one classroom on the first floor. Being fresh and enthusiastic, I took it as a challenge and started teaching a combined class of three sections together. Shortage of teachers compounded by poor teaching methodology had resulted in the classes being far below the average standard, particularly in mathematics and English, the main subjects.

I had to teach all subjects in those classes except Dzongkha. Finding the standard of those innocent students poor, I decided to concentrate more on English and mathematics taking extra classes arranged in my own house in order to bring their standard to the required level. Being interested in learning, all the students picked up quickly whatever I taught though I was a novice myself at that time. But unlike these days, the number of students in each class was very small-ranging from 3 to 10 or 12 that enabled one to pay individual attention to all students.

As time for annual examination drew near, I had to set questions in 13 papers for three classes. The facilities for preparing question papers like typewriter and duplicating machine were out of question. So I had to write by hand using carbon paper and pencil. I was able to make at least four copies at a time i.e one original and three carbon copies. The advantage at that time was fewer students in the class which saved much time and energy while preparing question papers manually.

After many days of my joining the school, the headmaster, who was on long leave (actually absent from duty), returned to school, but left again before the commencement of impending winter vacation. I thought that in the absence of the required number of teachers, the senior classes would suffer further. So, I arranged to transfer classes IV and V to Samchi Junior High School hoping that they should be able to continue their studies smoothly and also get exposed to developed places for learning new things other than the 3 R's.

The headmaster of Samchi Junior High School, Mr. Om Prakash, Arora, was very helpful in getting the students of these classes admitted to his school. Unfortunately, Samchi Junior High School had no boarding facilities. So they had to be accommodated in private houses and had to

keep on shifting from one place to another. However, the sub-Divisional Officers of the time, Mr. S. Gyamtsho and his successor, Dasho B.K. Thapa, were very kind to render all possible assistance to the students at all times of their need.

The students had to carry their rations all the way from Dorokha and Denchukha, collect firewood during weekends and prepare the food themselves as I had done during my school days in Samchi. I am well aware of the pains those students had to take at that time.

There were only three students in the first batch of class V who went to Samchi viz. Rabi Lal, Khewa Nath and Dola Prasad – all boys. It is sad that none of them are around. Rabi Lal had to leave the county during early nineties, Khewa Nath lost his life in a bus accident in August 1988. Dola Prasad, the only son of his single parent, expired in the prime of his life when he was on a short leave from the school.

Mr. Karma Tshering Bhutia left the country during 1971 handing over the school to me. In the beginning of 1972, Mr. G. S. Namchu, also from India, resigned the post and left the country. Giving up the service was very easy at that time as no one had to wait for his/her resignation to be accepted by the competent authority, Some did not even write the resignation letter. They could leave the school if they did not like to work. There was no system of paying any sort of repatriation benefit.

Being the in-charge of the school, I started writing to the Department of Education for appointment of teachers. Getting trained Bhutanese teachers was out of question and untrained teachers were recruited from India. Gradually, the school could have at least six teachers. But suddenly, three Indian teachers, all from Kalimpong, fled at a time causing serious problem to the school.

One teacher, Mr. Dilip Kumar Chatterjee, hailing from Hoogly district of West Bengal who had joined the school before the above mentioned three teachers, was a very nice man and a good teacher, developed some mental problems and had to be sent to his hometown for treatment. But he could not return. All my hopes of having him back turned futile. I continued writing to the Department for appointment of additional teachers, but it was never possible to have the number of required teachers appointment.

Consequently, the practice of running two or three classes combined together had to be followed all the time. Getting professional support and guidance from the Department was difficult at that time, so one had to pull on with what he/she had learned in training period. A handful of inspectors available in the Department were bogged down with the administrative works. The inspectors of schools used to visit schools for only the administrative matters and collection of statistics.

There was never a thorough inspection conducted by any inspector as expected of him. So far I remember, only Mr. N. B. Chhetri the Inspector for Southern circle base in Samchi, had provided some professional guidance during his visit to school when I was still continuing as teacher in-charge in the absence of a fully-fledged headmaster.

The Department of Education had decentralized the fund to the Sub-Divisional Offices and Dzongs for meeting the expenses of teachers' salaries, traveling allowances and related recurrent expenditure of schools. A copy of the appointment order of the teachers and support staff appointed by the Department used to be made available to these offices to facilitate the disbursement of salaries of the staff of schools under their paying jurisdictions.

As a result of the increase of workload in the offices of the Sub-Divisional Officers (SDO)s and Dzongdags, the Department of Education took over the fund and started disbursing the salaries of its staff across the county by money orders. Since there was no bank in Paro during that time, the money order for staff salaries used to be send from the Thimphu branch of the Bank of Bhutan on completion of paper works in Education headquarters at Paro.

The maximum amount that could be emitted by one money order was restricted to Nu.1000/-, Although the postal services were not strengthened and improved, we used to received the salaries by money orders before the end of month for which it was remitted.

Again, when Regional Education Offices were established sometimes during mid-seventies, the responsibilities of disbursing staff salaries and other payments fell on the Regional Education Officers who continued the same mode of disbursement i.e. remittance of money order for schools located at long distances. There was not much delay in receipt of salaries from the office of the Regional Education Office in the beginning, but at the later stage, we had to face a lot of problems owing to delay in the receipt of salaries. So much so that we had to struggle for two to three months waiting for salaries sometimes.

The Regional Education Officer for southern Region under which Dorokha Primary School fell was based at Sarbhong and the first Regional Education Officer appointed there was Mr. Sherub Thaye who was conferred the Red Scarf at a later stage and worked in different capacities. He also served as the Inspector of Schools before 1970.

All the Regional Education Office for Eastern , Southern and Central/Western regions established in Trashigang, Sarbhong and Punakha respectively, (later shifted to Thimphu) were dissolved during the fifth five-year plan when decentralization policy took place in the Dzongkhags. From that time onwards, the salaries of Education staff along with others are being disbursed from respective Dzongkhags.

As mentioned earlier, there was only one unit of staff quarters constructed during the mid-sixties under the initiative of our headmaster, Mr. F.C. Gupta, who was our real guide. The other teachers being local managed from their own houses while some were accommodated in private houses hired on rent. There were very limited furniture for use by teachers and students. In order to ease the problem related to classroom accommodation, I arranged to construct a temporary shed through my own contribution where two classes could be housed.

The Department of Education accepted my proposal for supplying the furniture required for school and sanctioned by 4,000/= (Nu. Four thousand) only to meet the cost. This work was entrusted to the Public Works Department but they could not do it even after the lapse of two years. Then I visited the headquarters in Paro to discuss the problem of the schools.

Hearing that the Public works Department did not respond to the matter, The Director of Education, Mr. A. N. Dhawan, advised me to take some advance from the office and manufacture the furniture locally. After returning to the school, I hired local carpenters to manufacture the furniture using my own timber that was sawn for constructing my own house. This initiative had to be taken to alleviate the severe problem of the school.

I was able to manufacture same number and type of furniture at a cost of around Nu.1600/+ against the approved amount of Nu.4,000/= and surrendered the balance amount to the Department along with detailed account. The carpenters being local, they could not give the standard finish to their products. But this solved the problem of the school immediately.

The next step I took was to apprise the Department of the classroom accommodation problem and seek approval for extension of the existing building by four rooms. This proposal received a prompt response of the Department and the Public Works Department was asked to submit an estimate to carry out the work. The Public Works Department submitted the estimate to the tune of around Nu.31000/-. The estimate was approved and the same Department was asked to carry out the construction. But they could not carry out this work also and I received instruction to do it in addition to my routine works.

Having felt the need of the school, I took up the construction though it was a very bitter experience for me. Arranging sawyers for sawing timber, getting the trees marked from the forestry personnel, looking for carpenters, masons and collecting other construction materials from Samchi was a mammoth task. There was no support from the local authority and village headman as they were jealous of the initiative I had taken for the development of school.

Finally I could complete the extension works at a cost of Nu.14000/- i.e, less than half the estimated cost! The classes could be conducted very smoothly when these additional rooms came up and we could organize other things in a desired manner. But as a result of delay in procuring and transporting roofing materials, the rain spoiled the construction to a disagreeable state before giving the finishing touches.

When I joined the training Institute in May 1968, the Department of Education was headed by Mr. A. R. Bose as its Director. He accompanied His Majesty the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck who came to inaugurate the Teachers' Training Institute on May 28, 1968. This day is a great landmark in the history of Bhutan. It was on the same day that the Bank of Bhutan in Phuntsholing and the earlier bridge of Chukha were inaugurated by His Majesty on his return from Samchi.

When Mr. Bose left the country, He was replaced by Dr. S.P. Mittal, also from India, who presided over the closing ceremony of our training programme as Chief Guest and awarded us the certificates of Diploma in Teaching. After he left the country, Mr. Anku Tshering, the then Assistant Director of Education at Bhutan House in Kalimpong, served the Department as Officiating Director till Mr. R. S. James took over as the new Director of Education in April 1971.

Mr. James was a person having sound academic background and professional knowledge which are evident from his introductory letter sent to all schools and teachers as well as other circulars we used to receive from time to time. I personally consider his introductory letter dated April 28, 1971 as a great treasure of knowledge which has been a great source of inspiration to me till today. The text of the letter is reproduced below except its last page which got misplaced later.

**His Majesty's Government of Bhutan,  
Ministry of Development  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

R. S. James  
Director of Education

Paro, Bhutan  
28<sup>th</sup> April 1971

Dear Colleagues,

*You will be pleased to learn that I have assumed the office of Director of Education of His Majesty's Government of Bhutan on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 1971. To all of you I send my hearty greetings and best wishes; and I look forward very much to meeting each one of you personally sometime in the near future.*

*Bhutan is a wonderful country, with its lofty mountains and snowy peaks: Its beautiful valleys and mysterious Dzongs; its dense forests with varied types of vegetation; and its hardy strong and honest people. It is an exciting adventure to work for the development of education in this country, and I hope you will find it a rewarding experience too, because from good education will flow all the benefits of progress and well being of the people. And I am happy to join you in this adventure.*

*I have already had the opportunity to visit a few schools in Bhutan and to meet the heads and teachers of these schools. Some very good work is being done in some of these schools. I was especially pleased to see the results of devoted work in Dan Bosco Technical School in Kharbandi. I know that many of you are working under some strains and limitations. but one of the most important things is to make the best of the available resources and improve the quality of education. There is no end to the human ingenuity and inventiveness in the face of necessity. In this connection, one of the things that I would like to impress upon you is Creativity in Education. This can be done only using one's imaginations. Most of us tend to be satisfied with the routine methods of teaching. How can we make our work creative and rewarding? I give some suggestions:*

- a) Before a lesson is taken up for study, plan it well; think about points of interest in the child's environment, which have a bearing on the topic of the lesson. Make it your starting point. Reuse the child's curiosity. Or ask the children to bring some information, pictures, leaves flowers – anything that had a bearing on the lesson*
- b) Use plenty of audio-visual aids: those made by children have a greater Significance and are more meaningful to them than those which are bought in the market.*
- c) Use of local available materials, and making and using flannel graphs, maps, charts, painting, drawing, and clay modeling done by children. Fabric stone local crafts, arts- anything that can be pressed into service to illustrate a point in a lesson, would make a tremendous difference both in the presentation of the lesson by the teacher and its understanding by the pupils.*
- d) Projects: Lessons in nearly all the subject can be divided into convenient portions which can be worked out into projects. The class can be divided into a number of groups. Each group taking up one project. The group leaders on completion of their projects,*

present them to the whole class. The rest of the class may ask questions which have to be answered by the member of the group. Project needs very careful planning on the part of teacher. Once he has turned over the project to the groups, he will have to observe and sometimes guide the groups. He may, with the help of other group leaders, assess the projects completed by the groups. You will gain experience with each project.

- e) Dramatization, acting and demonstration both by the teacher and pupils to explain a point of person in the lesson, will give many opportunities for participation by children. In other words, I would like to remind you of the shifting of emphases as follows:-
- i. From subject to the pupil: a teacher s a pupil and not merely a subject.
  - ii. From teaching to learning: Active learning by children is more important than active teaching.
  - iii. From passive listening to active participation by children in every lesson.

Another aspect, which deserves your serious consideration, is the teaching of the language, especially the teaching of English language. IT is a very bold and wise decision of His Majesty's Government of Bhutan to make English the medium of instruction and the language of administration. English is a foreign language, but it has now become a universal language. It is being taught in China and Russia and is learnt in most of the European. African and South American countries, in-fact, all over the world.

The importance of teaching of English language in our school in Bhutan can, therefore, be never over emphasized. I would like all the teachers of English language to remember that on their shoulders rests a heavy responsibility, because this universal language is the medium through which all progress and development become easier, as this language opens the windows on the wide world. At this point, I would like them to understand the different between language and literature. Language is what is used in daily speech. It must be simple, correct and idiomatic. Literature is serious, organized writings in that language. This is a simple explanation, but I hope it will serve to show the difference between these two expressions.

Teachers of English, therefore, must in the first instance teach the language especially in the primary and earlier periods, great care should be taken to teach English language. The natural sequences in learning languages by a child are: Listening understanding and speaking; and then only come reading and writing. Most teachers start at the wrong end, with reading and writing, in fact with alphabets, which are of no interest to the children, as they lack meaning. Speech and words has meaning. Till the child understands spoken English and speaks it himself, no serious attempt should be made at teaching of reading and writing. Which a child already knows a words and can write it and if it had some meaning for him, he will learn to recognize it in print more readily and reproduce it in writing more easily. Action followed by speech and naming of objects followed by action, can be useful employed. Children must be encouraged to talk among themselves, and make pictures, models to express words and action.

The text book, in the primary classes, are to be used more as aids than as prescribed tools for learning the language. "Oral language should received due emphasis in modern primary schools. The teachers should give much consideration to speech that is vital in everyday living. They must use the children's interest as the basic for speech, and arrange social situations, which are conducive to natural and free expression when proper conditions are provided for the stimulation of language there is a wholesome growth in a child's personality.'

Use of a dictionary by the English language teacher, to ascertain the accent, correct meaning, spelling and usage of a word, is important. For instance, in the nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty

*sat on the wall," try on and 'a' are unaccented syllables. Even a nursery rhyme, unless you have learnt it in good school from a teacher who knows English well, can be very difficult to recite. I have heard children say: Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall-with accent on the wrong syllables. Try to say it this way and the correct way I showed you earlier. You will see the difference. Again, you may think you know the meaning or the spelling of a word you will be surprise when you look it up in the dictionary. Your guess is far wide of the mark. So, use a dictionary constantly. If you want to be a successful teacher of English, and get the children into the dictionary habit. I always keep a dictionary by my side.*

*There are some of the important things that I wanted to share with you. I have many things to tell you but this should do for now I hope to meet all the heads of schools sometimes in a meeting soon, after I have settle down. My family hopes to join me here in the middle of May. I shall then feel more settled and will be able to give more time and attention to this important task of improving the quality of Education in our schools, which is the major educational objectives of the III Plan which has been launched on the 1st April'1971.*

*I am hoping to start an educational magazine for the teachers to write about their experience, results of their experiments, project and teaching-learning processes through projects, so that other teachers will know what their friends are doing in another part of the.....*

He understood the status of our education system as soon as he assumed the office as Director and took many innovative steps for further improvement. Among the things he initiated the introduction of common examination at Class V level is remembered most vividly. The examination was conducted in class 6 from the year 1986. The common examination was also introduced in Class VIII level as a screening process for admission to high classes. The prime objective of introducing the common examination in Class V was to maintain the uniformity of standard of education throughout the country and serve as a tool to gauge the performance of each subject teacher.

Later a separate cell was established under the Department of Education to coordinate the class V and VIII examinations that was headed by the Assistant controller of Examinations and he was Mr. Om Prakash Arora. The same cell has taken the shape of today's Bhutan Board Examination Divisions, a separate entity within the Ministry of Health and Education.

Appointing many qualified teachers, strengthening the Department by appointing required staff and providing educational magazines and periodicals like *Indrajal* comics, imprint magazine, The Illustrated Weekly of India, Reader's Digest, News Bulletin of Sikkim, etc to schools were other initiatives.

Upon Mr. James leaving the country on sudden closure of his tenure, Mr. A. N. Dhawan, an Indian gentleman, was appointed as the Director of Education and he served as the last expatriate director. Dasho Nado Rinchen who is new Deputy Ministry for National Environment was appointed as Officer on-Special Duty in the Department –the first Bhutanese Director of Education, subsequently becoming the Director General.

It was during Mr. Dhawan tenure that the Education headquarters was shifted from Paro to Thimphu and housed in the auditorium of Yangchenphu Public School till a permanent office accommodation was found in the premises of Tashichho Dzong. He framed the code of conduct for teachers and recommended the forms of punishment to be applied to the students in a constructive manner. He also introduced the concept of in-service training for the in-service teachers, the first one having been held in Kanglung Public School under the direction of lat Father M. Mackey, the Principal of the school, from July 25 to August 10, 1974.

So far as my knowledge goes, the first version of Nation Education Policy was drafted during Dasho Nado Rinchen's tenure as the Director of Education. After the transfer of Dasho Nado Rinchen to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Zangley Dukpa, the present Dzongdag of Chukha Dzongkhag who was serving as Deputy Director officiated as the Director till Dasho Jigme Thinley, the current Honorable Foreign Minister, joined the Department as Director on transfer from the Royal Civil Service Commission.

Dasho Jigme Thinley initiated many reforms through his tenure in the Department of Education as its Director was very short. The introduction of the concept of Extended Class Room (ECR) to cater to the needs of far flung areas, establishment of the School Planning and Building Cell (SPBC) for designing modern educational facilities, celebration of National Education Week, institution of National Awards and medals for outstanding teachers, higher studies for many teachers and education officials were some of the noteworthy contributions he made to Education Department among other things. He was very much concerned about the welfare of teachers like Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, the Honorable Minister for Health and Education.

Mr. Parshu Ram Sharma, one of the senior –most Officers in the Department of Education who had started his career as a teacher served as the Joint Director of Education during Dasho Jigme Thinley's tenure. The present Home Minister, Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho replaced Mr. Parshu Ram Sharma as joint Director later becoming the Director of Education then the Director General and finally Secretary till his transfer to the Royal Civil Service Commission as its Secretary. Mr. Nima Wangdi, the Officiating Regional Education Officer, Southern Region, Sarbhang, was transferred to the Education Headquarters, Thimphu, as Assistant Director. He was subsequently elevated to the positions of the Deputy Director, the Joint Director and the Director of Education before taking over the Department of Revenue and Customs as its Director. After Mr. Nima Wangdi's transfer, the present Director General Dasho Pema Thinley joined the department as Director in August 1999.

As stated at the outset, my first place of posting was Dorokha Primary School where I started my career as teacher on a monthly salary of Nu. 195/- per month (Nu. 160/- basic pay and Nu. 35/- dearness allowance) in the time scale of Nu. 140-10-300 with effect from July 1970)

During my tenure as a teacher and later as a headmaster, I devoted my time not only to carrying out routine works but initiated many other activities that were beneficial to the school as a whole and the students. Among many of such activities organizing an educational trip to Jaldhaka Hydel Project, Phuntsholing and industrial places in Samchi are noteworthy.

Since financial support from the Regional education Office was very limited for the trip, Mr. G. B. Kurup, the Principal of Samchi Central School, Director of the Geological Survey of India, Bhutan Circle in Samchi, the Base-Incharge, Bhutan Government Transport Service (BGTS) were kind enough to extend me the required help for making the trip a success.

Later in the year 1978, I was given the opportunity of visiting India leading the student delegation. This tour was sponsored by the Indian Council for cultural Relations (ICCR) that lasted for fourteen days. We were fortunate enough to see many places of historical, cultural, and educational and industrial interest throughout India. Apart from the sights of interest, the reception accorded to our delegation by the Regional Representative of the Council in Calcutta Airport has left a lasting memory in me.

Traveling all over India by air, staying in Five Star Hotels and meeting the important dignitaries of the great country were my first experience. The important places visited during the tour were Calcutta, Patna, Delhi, Chandigarh, Bombay Bangalore, Mysore and Madras. The sights of the

Taj Mahal of Agra, Bhakra Nagal Dam of Pubjab, ruins of the Nalanda University in Bihar, Qutab Minar, Red Fort and other historical places in Delhi are firmly etched on my mind.

Prior to this, I had the opportunity of visiting Gangtok The capital of Sikkim on August 15, 1968 as a delegate from Bhutan to receive an award from Chhogyal, The Maharaja of Sikkim. I had participated in an essay competition through my school which was organized by the then Political Officer of Sikkim on the topic changes in my village/home town from the time of grandparents to the present. I was declared "second" and invited to Gangtok to receive the prize on the auspicious occasion of the Independence Day of India.

I was transferred to Chapey Primary School in Haa during June 1978. This was a very small primary School compared to my first school having a roll strength of just 44 students and classes only up to II. My predecessors, Mr. Kezang Wangchuk, was already transferred. The two teachers, one Indian national and the other a Bhutanese, were there just for name sake. The Bhutanese teacher was on a long leave and reported after several days of my joining the school.

I found everything totally different and uncomfortable in the school and did not know what to do for some days. The student population being too small, work in the school was not so heavy but it was very difficult to lead our personal life.

The Engineering Cell of the Indian Military Training Team (IMTART) was of great help to us in many ways. I was wondering about how I should manage to spend three years there as it was compulsory for a civil servant to serve in one place for a minimum period of three years. But luck favored me very soon. I received my transfer order within four months and did not have to suffer there for long as feared.

The transfer order was for Drugyel Primary School in Paro. I was told that the people of locality popularly known as 'Tsentops' being known to be tough, the Education Department had to keep on transferring the headmaster of the school every year. That time, the problem between the headmaster and the local people being without a solution, the Education Department had even thought of closing down the school for an indefinite period.

I was selected and transferred there to rectify the situation of the school. I was relieved by my successor, Mr. M. H. Subba, Headmaster from Chhapey soon after the reopening of school from winter vacation, to join my third place of posting – Drukgyel Primary School with effect from March 6, 1979.

Studying the situation thoroughly an understanding the causes of past problems, I called the parents' meeting presided over by the Dzongdag soon after taking over the school and made the people aware of their roles for the smooth functioning of the school. Secondly, I arrange to clear the thick jungle with which the school area was almost covered and improved the surrounding with the help of local students' parents. I got full support from the Regional Education Officer, the Director of Education, Dasho Nado Rinchen and cooperation from the public in all matters needed for the improvement of the school which was found neglected for a long time owing to lack of initiative on the part of the headmasters and cooperation from the parents.

I could also get immense help from the armed forces comprising of Indian and Bhutanese army running their training programme near the school for a period of six months of every year, with the support and cooperation received from all concerned, we could have a very healthy working atmosphere. Visit of the officials from the Department of Education, foreign dignitaries, local authorities and others from time to time gave me an inspiration to perform my duty even more vigorously.

Being unsatisfied with mere routine works, I used to take extra initiatives in many other areas related to students' all-round development. With a view of broadening their thinking and imagination and providing the, the opportunity to know about the hydro electric that was coming up in our own county. I decided to take the senior students and teachers to an educational trips to Chukha Hydel Project. The Dzongdag of that time, Dasho Rinchen Tshering was very supportive of my plan and helped me by providing with the transport facility required fro the trip. The students, teachers and even myself could learn a lot about the project visiting it three important phases viz.. dam site, surge shaft division and the gigantic power house being built inside a solid rocky hill. It was a very fruitful trip.

Everything moved smoothly and peacefully till my fifth year in this school. When the sixth year began, an unforgettable incident took place which was not even dreamt of by anyone. On Saturday afternoon, I was washing clothes in the tap near my residence. One school cook, Tashi who was sent to the Dzong for some official works, came running and reported to me that a student, Karma Wangdi of class four was stabbed to death on his way to home by another student of class one.

At first, I would not believe it and found myself at loss. I rushed to the spot still with some hope of saving his life but alas he had already breathed his last and turned pale before I reached the spot. My heart filled with grief seeing the body of the boy whom I had taught in the class that very day.

I reported the matter to the concern authorities like the District Education Officer, OC, Royal Bhutan Police and the Medical Officer. They all came to the spot, inspected the site of incident, completed the necessary formalities and handed over the dead body to the relatives of the deceased. The whole school family was immersed in grief by the death of the student who was so simple and humble.

The next day the Officer Commanding the Royal Bhutan Police called me to his office and ask me to write a statement about the incident. That was my first experience writing a statement relating to such an incident. I remember a trainee Officer of the Police helping me with the layout of the statement and I wrote everything that had come to my knowledge about the tragedy and submitted is to the Commanding Officer.

After a week Dasho Thrimpon called me to his office and asked to write the statement gain about the same incident. I did as desire by him and hope that was the end of my duty concerning the episode. But after about a week, two gentlemen fro the high court came to me and asked for a statement again.

This time I got a bit annoyed and told them ' I have not caused the death of the student, why do I have to writ the statement again and again as it is my fault.' They told in a humble way " This is the requirement of the law and this is going to b the last statement for closing the chapter on the case that has taken place in your school".

As the would in my heart caused by the incident was just heating, four or five students fell ill and the cause of their illness was reported to be a case of poison though no authentic evidence was establishes by a competent authority.

In spite of all these impediments, I continued working without being discouraged. My tenure in this school had been very challenging and memorable. While serving in this school, I had the opportunity of attending a short training programme in the premier institute of India – National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) under the sponsorship of UNESCO through short, it was very educative programme. Secondly it was in this place where most of my

children were born and brought up. Thirdly, I had the opportunity of having contact with the people of many nationalities and positions that enriched my knowledge immensely. Finally, it was in this school where my hard and sincere works were accorded recognition. I am carrying many sweet as well as sour memories of Drukgyel which will last throughout my life.

My career in Drukgyel Primary School having ended in December 1985, I was transferred to Daifam Primary School under Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag. There was a mass transfer of teachers and headmasters of schools in that year. I was not happy with my transfer to Daifam in view of the location of the people. Luckily, there was a change of the place from the Department itself and I was placed in Khasadrapchu Primary School.

I joined in this school in March 1986. I like that place and working atmosphere, I had a very successful year. As the session was ending, I got selected for undergoing a study course on Administration and Management of school in the University of London, England, along with other nine friends. I was also selected to appear at the interview for inspector/DEO's post. When these opportunities came together, I chose to go to England for the Administration and management Course thinking that getting the post of DEO and/ or inspector would not be a problem after undergoing the aforesaid training course.

I felt it a long dream comes true to go abroad at least once in life. We reached London in January 1987 and attended the main course of study in the famous University of London after completing a three week long basic English Language course in the Sussex Institute of Higher Education in Bognor, towards the south of England. The study in the University provided me a concrete foundation, My ability in writing and reading developed enormously during seven months of study programme in the UK. I know, I worked hard without missing the golden opportunity I was provided.

Our course tutors – Dr. Bob Smith and Mr. John Cameron- were impressed with my performance. They even advised me to stay back and take up a degree course in Bachelor of Education from the same university. The project assignment I took during the study programme was Supervision and Administration of Education with special reference to the role of District Education Officer.

Returning from the study during August, I was teaching in my village school on a voluntary basis while waiting for the confirmation of my place of posting as a headmaster with renewed vigor and skill learned during the training. But unexpectedly, I was directed to join Samchi Dzongkhag as District Education Officer against the post lying vacant due to the nomination of the former DEO for high study in Canada.

Later I came to know the Dasho Rinchen Tshering, The Dzongdag who had appreciated my performances in Drukgyel while he was the Dzongdag of Paro had recommended my appointment as DEO of Samchi. That was a gigantic leap I had to take from the headmaster of a middle-sized Primary School to the post of District Education Officer in a big Dzongkhag like Samchi having the highest number of Schools in those days.

Soon after the joining the new post, I had to prepare for the celebration of the National Education Week, a new concept initiated by Dasho Jigme Thinley, the Director of Education of that time. That was a big challenge for me and also an opportunity to demonstrate my efficiency. Teachers and headmasters of all schools, faculty of NIE, Samchi, and Dasho Dzongdag himself extended their kind cooperation for my success as the DEO of Samchi.

That was a great opportunity for me to serve my own Dzongkhag in the capacity of the District Education Officer which I consider a prestigious post. I still remember the cooperation rendered and a high degree of respect accorded to me by those teachers and headmasters though I was

not very competent to shoulder my responsibility efficiently. I was highly inspired by the mannerism with which Dasho Rinchen Tshering, our Dzongdag, used to deal with us. He was a diplomat, a sociable person, a firm administrator and a good friend.

Appointment of new DEOs in the Dzongkhags that were without on, mass reshuffle of existing DEOs and the new rule of abolishing the home posting were enforced from the beginning of the year 1989. I became a subject of this change and got transferred to Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag in July of the same year. Dasho Rinchen Tshering was already transferred to Monggar Dzongkhag by then. I remember the concluding remarks Dasho Lhakpa Dorji, the new Dzongdag, made during the farewell party arranged on the eve of my transfer from Samchi. He said "While in Samchi, Vishwa was always seen very busy with his sector's activities. Now he is going to the Dzongkhag where there are very few schools, He will get time to relax and go around". I felt that he was satisfied with my performance.

As a result of the ULFA-Bodo problem in Assam. I had to take about a week of extra time for joining my duty in Pemagatshel, leaving half of my family at Samchi and accompanied by the other half, I proceeded to Pema Gatshel and called on Dasho Thinley Yoser, Dzongdag, for my duty.

I took over the office of the DEO from Mr. Namgay Tshering, an Office Assistant who was in charge of Education Sector Joining my duty on July 17 1989. As said by Dasho Lhakpa Dorji, there were only a few schools, just six in all. Except Pema Gayshel Junior High School which was centrally administered, all other schools were very far from the Dzongkhag headquarters, I had to walk for two whole days to get to the furthest school- Mikuri.

I had relaxed schedules during 1989 and 1990. But the year 1991 was a hectic one again; Many schools in Southern Bhutan were closed down as a result of the disturbance from October 1990. This pressurized the Northern and Eastern Dzongkhags to open new schools and adsorb those teachers who were being rendered jobless –m the ultimate goal being to benefit those areas which did not have schools.

The student population in Pemagatshel was just about 1200 in one Junior High School, three primary and two community Schools. As the proposal to open new schools was conveyed to the Dzongkhag by the Department of Education, the people of different localities without schools came forward requesting for establishment of schools in their villages.

So a total of six community schools were proposed to be opened in the Dzongkhg in the year 1991 and to start the classes immediately. There was no time and resource to construct permanent school buildings and staff quarters. The only alternative left for us was to construct temporary sheds using locally available materials thereby mobilizing beneficiary labourers on a voluntary basis.

Being keenly interested in the education of their children, the geog authorities arranged to complete the temporary sheds for housing the schools within a fortnight and started pressurizing the Dzongkhag administration to open these schools as soon as possible. But we were not able to open these schools in March as committed. The reason for the delay was the non-availability of teachers.

Therefore we decided to pickup at least one teacher from the running schools and place them in each of the new community schools to make a start without further delay. We did this without wasting much time. With the ambitious decision of inaugurating all those six community schools on the same day, an auspicious day was proposed with the help of Dratsang and April 12 was fixed. The beneficiaries of every new school wanted their schools to be opened formally in a

ceremonial manner presided over by a chief guest. The responsibility of arranging the chief guest fell on me and I did this without difficulty involving Dasho Dzozungag, Dasho Thrimpon, Dzongkhag Officers and Gups and chimis of the concerned geogs.

On return from the inauguration ceremony of new schools, everyone was heard saying that the inauguration ceremony was a grand success. Truly speaking, it has been a great achievement of the Education Sector under the Dzongkhag. The percentage of the increase in the number of enrolment was the highest in Pemagatshel in that year as per the comparative statement of enrolment published in the Quarterly Policy Guidelines and Instructions covering that year.

Though my tenure in Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag was very short (July 17, 1989 to May 6, 1991), I felt a very high degree of satisfaction with my performance. I must make a mention here that the credit for this success goes to my immediate boss, Dasho Dzobngdag, all government officials of the Dzongkhag, the public and the Project Director to Save the Children (U.K.) Mr. Gordon Temple. Soon after opening these schools, I had to prepare myself to proceed to Trongsa Dzongkhag on transfer. Though the junior high school of the Dzongkhag was not under direct administrative control of Education Sector, I was very much fascinated by the endearing mannerism and cordial relationship the teachers of this school had maintained with me and my family.

My transfer order was issued sometimes in November 1980 itself but I had to continue working till the first week of May 1991 as desired by Dasho Dzozungdag. So I got officially relieved May 7, but could move only on 14<sup>th</sup> owing to transportation problems.

Traveling by a truck for two and half days. We reached my new place of posting – Trongsa and joined my duty on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the same month. It was our expectation that Trongsa, once the capital and being located in the heart of country, must be a good and well developed place to be in. But as we work up in the morning and looked around, we found it quite different at first sight.

But there was no other way out and we had to struggle as per our fate. My children, particularly the eldest one, nearly cried seeing the location and the school atmosphere. He had to appear at the Class VI common examination the same year. But he lost hope of getting through the examination finding the school atmosphere different from the one he was in before.

Admitting the children to the school, I resumed the duty on May 17, 1991. Unlike other places I worked in before, there was no independent office space for the Education Sector. My predecessor had been running his office shared with the Engineering Sector. The office of the Education Officer was not yet set up properly owing to shortage of office space in the Dzong.

Being unused to pull on in the way, I requested Dasho Dzozungda to help me find a proper office space. Finally, he orders to create a decent for my office using plywood with wooden frame. I started working with usual vigor as days passed by. There were only six schools- one junior high, three primary and three recently opened community schools that were housed in the Lhakhangs of Bemgi and Korphu villages. The actual number of students and teachers was very small as per records, but that year the number increased drastically as a result of the closure of schools in the Southern region.

As per the statistic, Trongsa Dzongkhag had the third lowest enrolment rate, so I had to work hard to bring it on par with at least some other smaller Dzongkhags in terms of enrolment rate. But to my dismay, I found the public participation in the Dzongkhag much poor in comparison to other Dzongkhags in the country.

In spite of these predicaments, I continued working hard and raised the number of schools to sixteen from that of seven till the time of my transfer from the Dzongkhag in September 2000. My longest tenure was in Trongsa (May 17, 1991 to September 30 2000)- almost a decade. It will not be out of place to mention here I did not only just survive during this period, but could make many noteworthy contributions for education sector in the Dzongkhag. I also considered myself fortunate to have the opportunity of serving from that historical Dzong, once a royal seat.

I had the pride of being in that elegant Dzong serving under the leadership of four Dzongdags successively. Among the hardships I experienced in Trongsa, establishing the community school in Jangbi, a remote village under Langthel Geog, was a Herculean one. Only the experienced people who have worked in Jangbi can tell how difficult it is to work and deal with the people of that locality historically known as Monpas.

Nevertheless the best community school comprising of three classrooms of standard size, one unit of teachers' quarters having four rooms and a dormitory for distant students is built in Jangbi with financial assistance from Netherlands Government under the initiative and kind gesture of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyel Wangchuck for whom that area is of deep interest. Finalizing the site for establishment of new schools and negotiating with the land owners were the most crucial part of my job as the Dzongkhag Education Officer, among other things.

Though the life in Trongsa was very hard in view of its difficult terrain, tedious journey, unpleasant weather, poisonous snakes, large adhesive striped leeches all round, marshy and sinking location, risk of being attacked by bear, trouble caused by other wild animals, etc. There were other privileges. The main town being located in the tri-junction of the eastern, western and southern highways, I had the opportunity of meeting many old friends and knowing many other new persons on their way to different directions.

It was always the privilege to meet the officials of Education Department and other dignitaries passing through that place. Preparing Chadi at Chendebji for reception of senior officials, diplomats, royal entourage and other delegates provided the opportunity of knowing people of different position and nationalities. Besides the achievement of Education Sector's programme beyond set target, I am pleased with almost all my children's completing their lower secondary education from Trongsa Junior High Schools as a result of my longer stay there. The other things of personal life are two grade promotions conferred by Royal Civil Service Commission, and short study tour to Indonesia and training programme in New Delhi.

I cannot exactly say whether time changes or people change. Sometimes, I feel it is the change of time. Yes, with the change of time, things also change. The new education policy demanded the posting of graduate and post-graduate Education Officers in the Dzongkhags. My proven and dedicated service and sincerity were too weak as arguments in the face of formal paper qualifications.

I had to be replaced by a graduate DO though I had the potential of performing my duty in the said post for still some more years – a most challenging post. I had held successfully for long years. I was given generous choice before processing office order to my transfer. The choices were to go to N.I.E. Paro, as a teacher librarian or administrative Officer in other organizations!.

I felt the last choice was a big blow because having served this department for more than three decades; I have never thought to join other organizations/departments. Speaking from the core of my heart, I had no intention of being separated from the family of Education Department till I am superannuated.

"First impression is the last impression", is a saying heard from the immemorial. The end of a long march could not be more ironical. MY arrival at the National Institute of Education, Paro, has been an anticlimax in every sense of the term.

A truck brought us her on October 2, 2000 at about 4:00 p.m. I was offered the TV room attached to the Boy's Hostel for my accommodation. Not a soul was around. Finally, I met three trainees who helped me and the driver to unload out small belongings. I had to fight to hide my embarrassment in front of my wife and children.

I have everything to lose here,. But I work on. My only wish is to be able to somehow sustain the goodwill and appreciation I have received all these years of my service. I have not even managed to keep myself younger than I am, I wait for another order.

I am very grateful to my government for all the opportunities I have received to serve my country. May this institute develop and cast its bright rays in all directions of the country and other parts of the world eliminating the root of illiteracy.

\*\*\*

## Glimpses of My Teaching Life

- Phub Rinchen

---

It was in May 1975 that I started my teaching career in Byagar (Jakar) Junior High School in Bumthang. A.N Dhawan who was then the Director of Education appointed me. It was after my Pre-University education in Arts, fresh from the college that I started teaching without a formal teacher training. I do not remember the head teacher (HT) of Jakar giving me any syllabuses but there were textbooks used in various subjects, which were published in India for their schools. *The Radiant Readers Book VI* was prescribed for Class V English. There were national level examinations called "All Bhutan Common Examinations (ABC)" at classes V and VIII" conducted by the Examination Cell of the Department of Education (DoE). Mr. O.P Arora was the Controller of Examinations then. The question papers and even the answer-scripts were evaluated outside Bhutan. Not all students the students who sat for the Class V ABC from Jakar Junior High School in 1975 passed in English papers.

I just embraced teaching as a career without any special reasons. At the beginning, I found teaching a strange job - a job that demanded certain confidence to stand in front of the students, talk, and explain about the topic in the book. I also learnt by experience that it (teaching) requires a certain amount of preparation and that not all students are the same. Jakar Junior High School was run by an Indian head teacher (HT) and among the ten teachers, three were from India. After the school hours, the HT would hardly come out of his residence and the entire management of the boarding school was left in the hands of a lopen who was the warden. Evening and morning studies for students were conducted by teachers on rotation.

Two years passed. In the winter of 1977, I put in a transfer request to Dasho Nado Rinchen, then the Officer-On-Special Duty (OSD) in the Department of Education, which was located at the present Yangchenphug High School auditorium. I was transferred to Chang Gangkha - the only primary school in the capital, in June 1977. Mrs. P Namchu, the Headmistress, had the school in good shape in terms of discipline and teaching that was going on in the school. There were large numbers of students in the school. The students looked much cleaner and the class sizes were much bigger compared to those in Jakar. My teaching experience got further boost whether I liked it or not. Again, half of the teachers in the school were from India. My teaching endeavours during this period were highly experimental. There was hardly any lesson planning involved though I would sometimes prepare a few notes that would help me explain better.

In March 1988, I was selected to undertake a two-year primary teachers' training course at Mount Hermon College of Education in Darjeeling, India. Though some teachers from Bhutan were earlier sent there for training, our group of five teachers was the second batch. The entry qualification was class X. The training at Mount Hermon best suited the English medium schools in Bhutan. In those days, the Teachers' Training Institute (TTI) in Samtse trained primary school teachers who had passed Class VIII ABC. The Pre-Care TTC in Paro trained teachers who had passed classes V and above for Lower and Upper Kindergarten classes. I completed TTC Mount Hermon in 1979.

The training at Mount Hermon was an eye opener for me since it gave me a basic foundation in understanding the philosophies of education, child psychology and teaching methodology. I felt that my teaching experience before the training also prepared me well to receive training with a lot of enthusiasm. I realized then that teaching was a highly technical profession.

In 1980 March, I started teaching class III at Chang Gangkha as a trained primary school teacher. The training made a lot of difference in my endeavour to teach. I was motivated to teach more than ever before and made children the focus of my teaching. I was ready to try out new ideas to make the children learn rather than literally teaching the textbooks. For the next three years, I taught the same children in classes III, IV and V. I understood each child very well and got enough time to work with each. I considered this as the best time of my teaching opportunity. The group was the first batch from Chang Gangkha to appear at the Class V ABC in 1982. Out of 23 students, 22 passed which could be taken as one of the indicators of a good performance of a school at the national level.

While at Chang Gangkha, I completed my Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Bengal as a private candidate. All the expenses were borne by the Department. In November 1982, I joined Ha Junior High School as a HT. It was a change over of my role as a teacher to an administrator. The school was in turmoil without a strong leadership, good teachers and facilities. Being a boarding school, it was the 'dumping ground' of students from all over the country who came here looking for the last chance to get admission. The situation in the hostel was horrendous with broken windowpanes, no water, blocked toilets, iron beds in a severe cold condition in Ha, which is located at 9000 ft. above sea-level.

My first few days in the school revealed that the small group of teachers was also sub-divided into several smaller groups according to their ideals and interests not contributing much to the improvement of life in the school environment. Half the teachers came late in the morning assembly and when the classes began, they crept in silently without any apology or preparation for the day. They would pick up a book and start teaching and gave plenty of work to children, which was mostly not corrected. This practice was routine. After the classes were over at 3.30 p.m. most teachers would hibernate in their residences and I was told, remained busy in the games of cards and the world of intoxication. The teachers appeared frustrated, looking forward to a leadership and teamwork and more social interaction.

In the early 1980s, not many schools were run by the national head teachers. The junior high schools were directly administered by the DoE from the centre. My next three years in the school saw many changes and my greatest contribution was to give stability in the school affairs. My effort was to improve the staffing pattern in the school. With all the limitations, there was some improvement in the hostel affairs such as food, sanitary conditions and the extra-curricular activities. For the first time the school staged a successful drama to public, which was also staged in Thimphu to collect school funds. The school performance in the ABC examinations showed improvement.

In September 1985, I left Ha for study in Canada to undergo the Master of Education programme and returned to the country in June 1987 to join Teachers' Training Centre and Demonstration School (TTC/DS) Paro as Vice Principal. Mrs. Gagay Lhamu was the Principal. I taught the teacher trainees as well as helped in the administration of the school. Though the school was called "demonstration school", it was nothing different from any other primary school in the country. The school being attached to the training institute, there were opportunities for teacher trainees to use the classes regularly for demonstration lessons. The disadvantage was that the students quite often became "guinea pigs".

The government decided to introduce Zonal Administration system in the country in January 1989. The country was divided into four zones: Zone One consisted of Chhukha, Ha, Paro, and Samtse dzongkhags, Zone two- Tshirang, Dagana, Punakha and Wangdiphodrang, Zone Three- Bumthang, Trongsa, Zhemgang and Sarpang, Zone Four- Trashigang, Samdrupjongkhar, Pema Gatshel, Trashiyangtse, Lhuentse and Monggar. Thimphu dzongkhag was not included in any of

the zones. I was appointed as a Zonal Education Officer in Zone two in Tsirang and started work at Damphu from March 1989.

During my brief stay in the Zonal Administration in 1989 and 1990, I visited several schools. Apart from listening to teachers' problems, several staff development programmes were also initiated. The schools in Tsirang and Dagana were overcrowded with booming population in the villages. The rural areas were lush green with farms and orchards. There was so much potential for human resource development wherever one went. In October 1990, major southern problem started. It was just before 'dasara' (southern festival) that several agitations and processions were reported from various southern dzongkhags. In Tshirang, I saw two processions. One originated from Goseling and students from Damphu Junior High school and Damphu Primary School were forced to join the procession. The mob surrounded Tsirang dzong to put their political demands. Another procession came from Lamidara and joined the group. There was a minimum of 5000 demonstrators. The so-called leaders had come from Sarpang. All government vehicles were overpowered by them and used at their wishes. At one point, a group of demonstrators also came to Tsirang prison-house asking the police to set the prisoners free. The demonstrators, among other things, burnt down hundreds of gho and kiras. They put their party flag near the national flag and it was told that the written petition laying down all their demands was sent to the government. The text of the petition was not available to give any details.

This agitation led to the closure of several schools in the south due to security reasons. The parents were scared to send their children to schools. The school session in affected areas was closed in October itself. The teachers were sent for early winter vacation giving their full pay from October 1990 to February 1991. The students lost the whole academic session since no examination took place. The Zonal Office faced an enormous task of safeguarding school properties such as books, furniture, foodstuff, equipment and so on.

Subsequently, the government decided on the closure of the Zonal Administrations as well. The offices of zones one, two and three were shifted to Thimphu. At the beginning of 1991, the teachers from closed schools were transferred to various schools in the north. The closure of schools in the south led to a marginal drop in the school enrolment. Nevertheless, I have a fond memory of the experiences in the zone particularly visiting schools from south to north in several corners of the country interacting with teachers and students.

Finally, the Zonal Administration closed down. My next posting was to Teachers' Training Centre and Demonstration School (TTC/DS), as the first Director in June 1991. Mrs. Gagey Lhamu was transferred to the Supreme Court as the first woman judge. TTC/DS had improved over the years with new institute building constructed under UNICEF funding. There were about seven classrooms, a small administrative block and a lecture theatre.

In June 1992, His Majesty visited the institute in relation to the briefing on the Eighth Plan in the Dzongkhag. New Phase II construction of TTC hostel construction under Swiss funding was going on at Nangka. His Majesty spent a few hours talking to trainees and lecturers in the lecture theatre. The arrangement for the visit was kept at the minimum as instructed by the Director General, Dasho Thinley Gyamtsho. However, His Majesty was not very pleased with the toilet condition at the institute. Later, he also visited the construction site at Nangka where he commented on the work of the excavator saying that the driver of the excavator was more important than the machine to get more work done.

The hostel facilities at Nangka were not at all satisfactory. However, the planning for Phase III construction under Swiss funding which included the new academic buildings, staff quarters and hostels was underway. I also got involved in the process of acquisition of land as well. Though

the site proposed initially was at the existing location of Druk Hotel, somehow the site was said to be already booked for the hotel.

It was a brief stay at TTC and again I was asked to join Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD) as a Co-coordinator for the primary education unit in the Education Headquarters in Thimphu in September 1992 to replace Tshewang Chhoden. Mr. Jagar Dorji was the head of the division. I felt that it was a need based posting because the Department was considering a comprehensive review of New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE). As soon as I joined CTDD, my first assignment was to go on a nation-wide tour of schools to collect data on a major survey of NAPE. The study funded by UNICEF Thimphu was assisted by consultants from Australia and Switzerland. There were four major groups visiting sample schools around the country. The final report was published in June 1993.

From 1993 onwards, I was mostly involved in the NAPE program. Several volunteers worked in schools as resource teachers. Some of them also worked as Dzongkhag Resource Teachers (DRTs). However, the Department of Education started reducing the input of volunteers when Bhutanese counterparts were trained. The English teachers' manuals, workbooks, readers, textbooks from classes PP to III were completed. A Board of Curriculum chaired by the Director of Education was established which met once a year to discuss and approve new curriculum development initiatives. Subject committees in Dzongkha, English, Maths, Science and social studies were formed encouraging teachers from schools to participate in the curriculum development process. CTDD was renamed as Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD).

In 1992, the department provided me with an opportunity to pursue study at the University of New England (UNE), Armidale, Australia, through the mixed mode to complete the Doctor of Education (EdD). I found it as a great challenge to study as a part time student with a full workload in CAPSD. In 1992, I completed the preparatory course and was formally enrolled in EdD programme in January 1994. Thereafter, I was required to attend the residential school at UNE every year for three to four weeks in which seven to ten days were spent in the classes to complete some courses and the remaining time was spent to complete at least 70% of the assignments, since back home there was hardly any time available to work on the assignments.

Since 1995, school curricula underwent several changes in which I was actively involved as an advisor and editor. The development of classes IV to VI science and social studies was completed by 1995. Mr. Pema Thinley joined CAPSD as a Director from NIE Samtse. The first curriculum framework 'The Purpose of School Education in Bhutan' was published in 1996. I also coordinated the development of "A guide to continuous assessment for classes VI to X" by involving all the professional bodies in the department, schools and institutes. Then, the department launched Second Education Project (SEP) under World Bank and Swiss Development Cooperation (WB/SDC) funding in 1997. It included, among other things, sub-components such as Resource Centres (RC), Supplementary Reading Programme (SRP) and Continuous Assessment (CA). I was made the co-ordinator of CA. Swiss lecturers from Zurich were also involved in this programme. Another guide for primary teachers in CA emphasizing formative assessment was developed in 2000. Two piloting phases of CA in 2000 and 2001 strongly indicated that the expansion of the program needed careful planning. The CA master plan was developed. It envisaged that formative assessment practices would be in place in all primary schools by 2007.

Further, I was a member of the Environmental Studies Committee, which was entrusted, with the task of introducing the teaching of Environmental Studies in Dzongkha since 1997 from the pre-primary classes and by 2000, it was implemented up to class III in all schools. CAPSD also formed a special and independent Task Force (TF) to conduct a comprehensive study of Dzongkha curriculum and teaching/learning in schools. The TF members were from other

organizations. Though it was a daunting task to work with other people having no control whatsoever, the study came up with a detailed and comprehensive report in two years. Thus, the Dzongkha curriculum underwent a major revision. Integrated science for class VII was introduced in 1999 and for VIII in 2000. Bhutanese Economics and Civics were written for classes IX and X. English Language Teaching manual for classes VI to VIII was developed.

Then emerged a new development. By 1999, several rounds of discussions were held in the Department of Education for the merger of CAPSD with TTC Paro to promote co-operation between teacher education and curriculum development. Consequently, in 1999, TTC Paro was upgraded as the National Institute of Education and Mr. Jagar Dorji joined NIE Paro as the Director in March 2000. The shifting of CAPSD also began in a phased manner. I remained in Thimphu for another year to bring up the rear. In February 2001, most of the sections moved to NIE, Paro. The Art and Publication, Audio Visual and Computer Education Sections remained in Thimphu due to various logistic problems.

After a break of about nine years in teaching, I started teaching the teacher trainees once again in March 2001. It took sometime for me to be adjusted to the teaching life. The entire curriculum officers were also required to teach at least two days in a week and rest of the time was devoted to curriculum development work and school visits. The teaching incentive given helped to adjust better and manage the change in the life style. The year 2001 ended with the Institute hosting the fifth Annual Education Conference from December 24 to 28.

The year 2001 was very remarkable and significant in my life in terms of achieving the most cherished goal of completing my doctoral studies. UNE conferred the degree in October in Armidale where I could not attend the graduation ceremony. However, the Ministry of Health and Education with the Dzongkhag, arranged a special ceremony on November 11, 2001 at Paro coinciding with the celebration of His Majesty's birthday where the Honorable Minister, Ministry of Health and Education, Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup amidst a crowd of hundreds of government officials and public, bestowed upon Jagar and me the official letters of recognition and gifts to honor two of us as the first doctors in Education Department. This was perhaps the most satisfying and happiest moment of my life. I felt finally, "I did it". Several greetings from colleagues all over the country followed thereafter.

At the time of writing this paper, it is already March 2002 and the new academic year has started with new trainees joining in. My journey through the teaching career continues. More and more responsibilities are piled upon me. Working overtime seven days a week has become a routine for me. Still I feel there is a lot more to do and I have not done enough. My family and I feel strange if any day I reach home at 5 p.m.

I have seven years more before I finally retire in 2009. My three children are all grown up. When I look back at my professional career, it has been highly successful and satisfying with a steady progress in my professional growth. I am fully indebted to the government for giving all the opportunities very few lucky ones will get. I have traveled extensively and seen a dozen of countries. I have also attended several international seminars in various capacities. To conclude, I look forward to serving the country until the last day of my life.

\* \* \*

## DOWN MEMORY LANE

- Dorji Tshering

---

I was born on the fifth of the 4<sup>th</sup> lunar month in the iron female rabbit year to a middle class family in a solitary community called **Dungbi** which was a good one hour climb from a more widely known village called **Tangbi** under **Trongsa Dzongkhag**. I was believed to be a second-thought baby from my parents as even my mother who was about ten years junior to my father was approaching a half-century in chronological age. My horoscope revealed that my birth heralded longevity for my father and favoured him. Whereas I was a devil-sent son for my mother and I needed to look for someone else as my mother.

My father was a lay but ardent and devout Buddhist who would leave his own work and run to help someone in need or emergencies. Most people needed him to attend to their spiritual and religious needs. My childhood days, before I was admitted to the school, were spent accompanying him to some of these religious services, most of which were conducted by just the father and son. Apart from the nicest food served, we together endured tremendous hardship of having to travel on bare feet to surrounding villages at odd hours into stretches of wilderness, hostile weather and temperature. I remember him chiding me to the extent of talking down to me his disapproval of my lack of endurance when I sobbed the whole journey out of the pain I suffered from the morning frost biting my tender feet.

Incidentally, I was the youngest child of six brothers, one half brother, one sister and one half sister. Apart from the beautiful moments I had with my mother, I remember how another lady with whom my father used to live, showered kind and loving care. She recounted later on, when I visited her how I relished anything she fed me. I must have been bit of a hog for an infant. I certainly remember experiencing moments of pain caused by indigestion.

I was admitted to school at a time when parents used all their resources to avoid their offspring being enrolled. Most parents thought that their children were being conscripted. My father approached the situation with a difference in attitude. Discipline was not only externally imposed but also severe. Most children were happy when their parents could have their sway and got themselves relieved of the burden of schooling! But unfortunately or fortunately, it was in the least of my father's design of things for me. I stayed on.

My teacher was very young man who was himself stepping into the threshold of adulthood. He taught us Hindi and set out to teach us anything he thought would be useful in our lives. He literally had a free hand in the curriculum he offered us and the duration of the academic session. For almost one year and a half, we went on in right earnest without even a break except for the weekends. Then came the Director of Education, an important official from the capital and we were to be away for over two months on winter vacation.

Our school was housed in the first floor of a water-mill, which was used as a transit camp for bearers of the royal court. The place was known to us as **Churathangkha**, the ground by the water-mill. As our number grew, we moved to a site further up the slope overlooking the majestic Trongsa Dzong. This place was known as **Choekhorling**, the place of the Dharma Wheel. This was when we started to be graded probably according to our chronological ages and physical built.

*Choekey*, the classical language, dominated the curriculum. I remember demonstrating my flare for learning by heart the long incantation praising Goddess Tara and invocation to the Guru for dispelling the obstacles from the path during the evening collective act of devotion. Such sessions ran into the late hours well after dark especially in winter. The students enjoyed leaving a friend

who would doze off during the prayer sessions with the prospect of waking up in the middle of a pitch-dark night in an abandoned hall on a bare floor.

It must have been, as it was for me, very hard for a child, who was used to being pampered, to find oneself woken up to a spooky shadowy night even by the moonlight. It was frightening when it was moonless. The situation was aggravated by the many morbid stories we heard about the place. You would wonder how many of the friends were really sadists as one would hardly ever find someone else with you.

By the third year, the school had an additional teacher, a Lepcha gentleman from Kalimpong who in fact took over the charge, as he happened to be more qualified. The curriculum became more wholesome as I now understand. I remember there were games, singing and dancing. The next thing I remember about the school was that my friends and I spent hours observing in the dark some beings like glow-worms hovering up and down the path leading to the village on the opposite side of the valley.

Soon after, we moved our school to a new and third site called ***Sherubling***, the place of knowledge or wisdom. Our third teacher was a monk from the local monastery and a distant uncle of mine. It did not help me much as he was a strict disciplinarian. He believed that the only and proper way to bring up a child was by not sparing the rod. As the monk in-charge of the mask dance troupe in *Trongsa Rabdey*, he was used to strapping his students for any wrong step or move. A tight slap would follow if you were caught missing the dance practice session. I recall a painful experience of him breaking into pieces a bundle of ten/fifteen willow branches. I remember rubbing and scratching my head to reduce the biting pain and trying to save my eyes. That was just because I was not able to show the *Dazhung* notes that he had dictated on the day he checked without warning.

One of the most pleasant memories I have is of my mother, a relative schoolmate, and his mother journeying to our new school. Just as we were approaching the school premises, my relative friend had to run back to collect something he had forgotten in house we travelled from. I remember walking up flanked by the two elderly ladies. As we reached the front yard of the school, two young women carrying a tin of water between them approached us. My mother was thrilled by the good omen and I can still see the light of joy in her eyes when I imagine her. Her hopes were reinforced when she found me included in the list awardees for academic proficiency.

My mother as I remember her now was sentimental about almost everything. She had come to drop my ration for my subsistence one summer day. She mystified me with her description of an encounter with a muddy surge at the point she went to collect water as she prepared to surprise me with a delicious meal when I returned from school. She insisted later how she believed this was another good omen.

It was at ***Churathangkha***, ***Choekhorling*** and at ***Sherubling*** that schooling continued to be supported by our parents. First, we had our parents and grandparents take turns to cook and feed us in a common kitchen. Each one eating in the common mess would contribute rice, flour, vegetables, butter and cheese using some ingenious methods. It mostly worked. It seems intriguing now, how it worked as this mess was for some twenty-five children with the complexity of varying appetites, sizes, ages and gender. We collected fuel wood during the school break. When the system gave way to its complexity, we were kept as paying guests at the homes of local family friends and distant relatives. The term *paying guest* may be a bit misleading as our families made no payments in cash. We, of course, understand that the economy was largely barter system at the time. So, our parents brought food grains and anything that could be bartered to our host families.

It was fun and pain being a male child. I recall coyly, that we formed gangs and vandalized others orchards and chilly and potato beds under cover of darkness. I went with a few friends one night to raid a vegetable garden below the Dzong at *Chamanyi*, a place that was carefully observed during daylight reconnaissance. We were rather too careless and heedless as lawbreakers in keeping down our voices. No sooner had we entered the garden patch than we were showered upon with a volley of stone pebbles and shouts that sent us helter-skelter. We nearly lost a friend in the process. We managed to escape the stone deluge by barely surviving the stream current. During the following morning assembly, we were not happy to see a man walk out of our headmaster's office with a menacing stare at me and my friends. But we were happy that the matter ended there.

Being absent from the class was visited with not very pleasant experiences. At one point, in order to curb the problem of absenteeism, it became a rule that any student absenting from the school a single day would be subjected to twelve strokes of wormwood (khenpa) wickers on the bare bottom. I once got myself cornered into a situation when I could not deny the use of this rule imposed on me.

It was the beginning of the eighth of the lunar month one year that my uncle-teacher swayed the headmaster to let us go and take part in the *Dungbi Leodim*. Most of my friends packed up on time to return to the school. A friend took a general direction towards the school but a day later. As we left the village and hit the lateral mule track from Trongsa to Thimphu, my travel companion and friend had won me over about the inescapable punishment of twelve lashes as we had over stayed our leave by an extra day. So we ventured a journey to Thimphu. Our pursuers caught us up on the fifth day at Nahizam. The consolation of this trip was that I could spend two nights in the anteroom at the old Wangdi bridge. The walk the following day was tough. We marched off before daybreak and walking over the 3390m Pele La reached home after dark.

My mother packed a parcel with a special request to coax my other uncle, who was Thrimpoen that time at Trongsa, to appeal to the school authority. But before the teachers discussed any punishment, my uncle decided that he would do anything to safeguard the school rule. He, therefore, suggested that he would come and address the school during the morning assembly and witness the setting of an example for future defaulters with full twelve thrashing on our bare bottom. I knew that it would be a double pain to go second. I decided that I should not wait to see my friend in agony. Certainly, it helped me. Soon after I received 2/3 strokes, my friend screamed and wailed in fear and feigned pain. That spared me the need to scream while my friend suffered cutting pain. To sit down was, of course, impossible for the next week. My uncle, however, compensated well his harsh decision by sending me items of special diet for almost a month.

One of the events worth-noting was my participation in a school play. I took the role of a health worker and my friend who played the part of a teacher asked which *Thrungyu* I came from. In my nervous state, I said I came from *Thrungyue Tangsebi* and from then I became famous by that name. Everybody - the monks, the shopkeepers and even those who did not watch the skit called me by that name. It makes me wonder why we do not think at all how an individual gets called by a name he/she is known.

Towards the later part of my stay in Trongsa School, we were probably outgrowing our paying guest years. We used to stay in huts we built ourselves with some assistance from our parents and relatives. Two of my brothers' sons were kept with me basically under my charge as their elder and uncle. They, of course, as younger nephews could be exploited. I feel guilty that they had to go with an empty stomach to their lessons because of my poor management of our provisions dropped from home. They still embarrass me when they refer to my adolescent

generosity. The result of which was that they ended up eating curry of scraped beef remnants from hide under process while we stayed as neighbours to a man who tanned hide. The consumption of this unusual item forced by hunger and living in this cluster of tumbled shacks taught us life's greatest lessons of humility and modesty.

In December 1967, a group of us, students from *Trongsa*, were to be sent as possible candidates for the Royal Body Guard. We left our village on a fine December morning. Horses were loaded with provisions for a good day's march to *Kosala* where we hitched lifts in the GREF's one-tonner. I reached *Lodrai* almost half dead. There was the sickening fume from the tonner's exhaust and dust from the dirt road and remains of the cement unloaded just the night before. But we were to do a further walk of some 10 kilometers to *Gelephu* as that was where the GREF camp was.

The next day, we boarded a lorry to *Phuntsholing*. Once we found ourselves crossing into the Bhutan border, we knew it was our destination, *Phuntsholing*. The place was then just a shanty town made mostly of half tumbled bamboo shacks. We camped out under a tree. The following morning we reported to the commandant of the RBG and three of us were to be sent to *Kalimpong* for further studies which was our sheer luck.

We took a letter from the Education Director, Mr. A R Bose to the Assistant Director at Bhutan House, Mr. Anku Tshering. We were to be admitted to the Scottish University Missionary Institute (SUMI). The unusual thing about my admission to that school was that we had to walk to and from school some 10 kilometers every day. For the next two years, while I stayed at the Bhutan House, I did more walking than studying. For all that walking, perhaps, I was always hungry. I felt drawn to the box of the bread hawker who would often oblige a credit. I sold off a woolen **sethra** (tartan) *gho* for Nu. 30/- and gave away the watch which was presented to me by my eldest brother to a baker.

Discipline at the SUMI was no less harsh. I recollect with a certain feeling in my stomach a situation I got myself into one day during the first year. How I found myself in it is difficult to say even now. But the teacher pulled my ears, slapped my face a couple of times and had me sit on my desk. 'Sit like a lama', he ordered. At that point, I was happy enough that the matter was not referred to the headmaster. I could at least understand that with his reputation as the most senior teacher, it could fetch me no justice even if he were solely responsible for the episode. Anyway, I was the last person to be recognized for involving in a scene with a teacher. So I submitted.

It was at SUMI that I learned my survival and other life skills. I was handpicked and honoured as a school prefect, a hostel captain and the best cadet of NCC. But it was in recognition of my role in the maintenance of school and hostel rules and serving in the many social activities. I attended civil defence and first aid courses as part of the exclusive student leaders. As an SUMI hostel resident, I remember attending and enjoying the Thursday Bible classes and the Sunday churches. I sang hymns and received Bible prizes. I marveled at the morals of the parables and enjoyed reading the psalm. All these must have made a lasting impression on me.

I cannot help but muse over the fact that I took to studying commerce basking in the dream of becoming a chartered accountant since the time I heard the term. But the events that followed after I finished my Class XI and an unsuccessful year at Punjab University due to mathematics changed the course of my life. I made up mind to compromise this dream about CA and moved to an Arts course. But I suddenly had a summons from the ministry of development and my scholarship was withdrawn.

Although my friends and I were struck by an overwhelming panic, we collected ourselves with our friends' support. Teaching was to be a worthwhile calling for me since that event. It could have been Jeane Piaget's assimilation and accommodation but never a sour grape to say that I had no need to look back. Honestly, I have no regrets about that!

Incidentally, my first encounter with my life's calling was a magic moment. It was during the break after my Class X examination that I went to visit my closest cousin Jagar, who was teaching at *Tshokhana* Primary School. I was offered an opportunity to visit one of the classes as a substitute teacher. I remember walking into Class III with a sense of apprehension. But the next thirty-five minutes turned out to be a moment of enchantment. I do not remember clearly what went between the class and me but the children were wonderful. There were thirty pairs of curious eyes. They seemed interested in what I had to offer them, which knew was not much. I walked out of the class sensing a strong hankering after the time that had rushed by so quickly. I felt I would never get bored teaching or being at the head of a class of children.

My most vivid memories of *Chandigarh* were the many visits to the tea stalls just outside the University campus after midnight, riding (often having embarrassing falls) the bicycle to city reservoir lake and taking part in a Bhutanese cultural item during the college foundation day. Of course I vaguely recall attending classes taught in Punjabi and struggling with maths, my worst and most hated subject. The most memorable was the entire Bhutanese students coming to see my friends and me off at the *Chandigarh* railway station on a chilly December night on their bicycles.

It was Christmas Eve in 1975 that we reported to the manpower department for a placement in a government job. My friends and I offered to join teaching and they directed us to the Education Department with a letter to say that we should be nominated for a teacher training course within a year or so. Mr. M B Rai checked the requirements. "We want one at *Surrey*, another at *Pagli* and another at *Kopche*". I chose *Pagli*. The Deputy Director of Education signed our appointment orders as assistant teachers for the Officer on Special Duty (OSD). And thus I got into the teaching profession.

At the time I joined teaching, every teacher was an assistant teacher until he/she was made a head or assistant head. It was possible for a teacher to join as an assistant and retire as one. It did not matter to me at that point of time. Of course my near and dear ones who had pitched their hope on me becoming an important official in the government were upset. One of my own brothers openly protested saying one must be pretty dumb to take twenty-five years' study to become just a teacher. I feel humbled by the fact that my brother passed away without realizing how I failed to become a good *just a teacher* after I have put in almost three decades of service.

My journey to my first school, *Pagli*, was filled with excitement of venturing into an unexplored place. At *Phuntsholing*, I had an emotional parting with my friends whose company had been a valuable support in that situation in my life's trials and tribulations. I enquired and took a bus to the Indian town of *Birpara* as guided. From there, I took a boulder truck to *Langkaparamore*. After leaving all the baggage, I took a three-kilometre walk on a dusty path to the school, which was to be my second home for a little over a year. I reached the school as it was drawing to a close, a bit exhausted but eager to find out what lay in store for me in my new home.

I found out the school was made up of two blocks of semi-permanent and temporary structures. One was the office cum classroom block and the other four-roomed teacher quarters cum store. As three other teachers already occupied the three-rooms, I was given the storeroom. For almost a year, that 3 by 4 metre room served as kitchen, bedroom, dining room, workroom and sitting room for me, and storeroom for the school. I felt I was always watched living in the store. A girl

student who saw me clean a pot where I boiled my milk spread the rumour that she caught me gnawing a pot.

I became immediately fond of the children in my first school. I remember getting thrills simply from being called 'New Sir'. When I was no longer new they called me 'Go-Go Sir' for my long hair and bell-bottomed trousers.

I tried to do whatever I could for my class like talking the whole day and covering the textbook from cover to cover. Often, I did more than I really needed to, even doing the thinking for them. Unknowingly, I felt satisfied when I finished my part. Looking back, I did not have any means to find out if what I did really made sense to the children. There are, of course, teachers who do not bother even if they know how. I understand later.

Before the first year of my teaching was done, I was thrilled to get an official instruction to go to Darjeeling to attend an interview for the Trained Teachers Certificate for Anglo- Indian Schools (TTC) course. About seven in-service teacher candidates from Bhutan and others from elsewhere sat for a written test, a viva and a go at speech making.

The result? I was selected for a two-year course. I was working the months of January and February that year as schools in the south remained open during the pleasant winter months. I, therefore, received a letter informing me that I have been accepted for the course at Mount Hermon College. It was a wonderful experience – I learned much in the two years, in fact, more than what I have learned so far. I learned, taught, planned, played, sang, wrote, researched, fooled around and slogged.

We were greatly outnumbered by Anglo-Indians but it was very difficult to get used to the slangs and swears. I recall being upset and often even losing temper with my friends' habitual use of bad language for the half of my first year. The college had a deliberate plan to curb that. I remember my friends getting inarticulate and even going tongue-tied although English was their first language while we were required to make a speech.

Mt. Hermon is a very small establishment for an institute. During my time, it used to have 50 students divided between the two years course. It would not have existed if not for its school section. The school founded by the Methodist Missionary was large with over six hundred students from Kindergarten to Class XII.

Life was hard for us, especially for anybody who came from a non-Anglo Indian background. We had to do a major child study project and my subject was a Mitra boy from Bihar. I arranged an educational handicrafts exhibition and I was given a proficiency certificate in art. I took part in a major college production with a minor role as a chorus singer in the classical title *The Gondoliers and the King of Baratarus*. I refereed two of Darjeeling Sports Association's second division football matches – one in Jalpahar and the other in Mt. Hermon football ground. In the match at Jalpahar which was my first match, I was so nervous that I offered the players a good laugh when I said as a pre-game briefing *I hope you know the games of this rule*. I also refereed an inter-school hockey tournament at the Mt. Hermon school ground.

I went to teach for two weeks at St. Joseph's school section, another two weeks at St. Andrew's, two weeks at Mt. Hermon junior section and four weeks at St. Paul's all in Darjeeling. I stayed at the school overnight only when I went to St. Paul's. We dined at the head of the tables in the student refectory and spent the nights in the attic rooms of the spooky school blocks. It was not easy, as we had to stay awake planning lesson notes and making teaching aids long after everyone was fast asleep.

Every morning, we rushed to our classes armed with lesson notes and teaching aids. It was unthinkable to teach without these two. We would think we had failed the lesson if the supervisor

said, 'You did not even have a teaching aid.' Yet, I taught six fully planned lessons a day during the last TP.

I have fond memories of Ma Marcus, Ma Rongong and Ma Murray. They were all capable and caring teachers. They loved all and all loved them. Ma Marcus taught us educational psychology and looked after our library. She would say with authority, '*Quiet, don't you know the library of the rules*'. All my friends would then exclaim in an automatic chorus, '*What a howler!*'

Ma Rongong was a stern lady from Australia who loved and married a blind gentleman from Kalimpong. We used to love hearing her heavily enunciated Nepali whenever her pet dog followed her to her office. She taught us methodology and arranged all TP schools and the supervision schedules. I recall with much regret having an argument with her about the way I pronounced the words *won* and *wand* in front of Class III children in St. Paul's. I have always regretted it since there were some Bhutanese students in that class.

Fortunately or unfortunately, I do not remember anybody. Ma Murray, our Principal's wife, was the most adorable lady on the faculty. She taught us music and was instrumental in ensuring the success of the major college production. She also ensured that the interest and enthusiasm of the participants was kept at the peak till it culminated in the staging.

I become a teacher of a teacher. Reporting back to my old school at Pagli, I was given an office order to say that I was transferred to TTI, Samste. The order said *with immediate effect*, which as per interpretation in vogue meant *any time one can*. Of course, I did not intend to go after one year, which by definition I could. So I went to Samtse and reported to the Principal of the institute on 10th February 1979.

I was to share a three-roomed quarters with Mr. D R Gurung for the next four years. TTI was a small institute of some 60 students. There were 10 faculty members recruited by the Royal Government of Bhutan and two UNESCO experts. I was bored to be teaching just 10/15 40-minute lessons a week. I offered to teach at the local high school and I kept myself busy at least the whole morning there. I offered to also take the morning PT (physical training) as I was an early riser right from a tender age.

It was a trip to Samtse's Sunday market in less than a month of my joining TTI that I was cornered to have glass of beer at 9 in the morning in town with two colleagues, Mr. T P Ghalley and Mr. Sumanta Sen. Before the glass was empty, I remember feeling the alcohol working its way up and making my face flushed. My friends had started teasing me for blushing to add to my embarrassment. Meanwhile, a plan was being hatched to go for a picnic. Seeing the absurdity of the proposal for a picnic so late and knowing how square a peg I would be in a round hole, I refused their invitation to join them. It brings to mind how wise I felt when the group was hospitalized and out of action for almost a month as a result of a vehicle accident.

I am a teacher of a teacher of teachers. As I picked up the momentum of being a teacher of teachers, I got drawn into the job even during the well-deserved breaks. There were health, multi-grade, teaching skills, EVS, Dzongkha, teaching aids, sanitation, values education, physical education, etc. etc. workshops that kept me totally occupied. I was been involved especially in the early eighties as an interpreter and translator to expatriate colleagues and UNESCO experts when we conducted a series of workshops.

These involvements had the dual effects of making me what I am professionally and leaving me no time to think and feel disgruntled about life's disappointments if there were any. Is my life what others tell me to be an exemplification of *ignorance is bliss*? I have sometimes wondered! When I completed my third year of teaching at TTI, the Education Department nominated me for a Diploma course in Education at the University of London. I was also offered an opportunity to

continue my stay for a Masters course upon my successful completion of the Diploma. So I did stay on for my masters and came back in 1984.

In October that year, I returned home pleased and confident with my achievement. My first plan was to go to my hometown and share the joy of homecoming with my aging mother. Hardly had I reached my brother's place than he revealed the shocking news that my dear mother had departed this life for her heavenly abode almost seven to eight months sago, it was really a shock.

My older brother explained that I was supposed to be at the height of pressure of my academic pursuits and preparing for my final examination and winding up my dissertation. He though it was a hard decision but they had to consider my academic interest.

That night, I remember now, I kept myself awake till quite late turning from side to side, wondering whether all of what I had achieved was really worth my while. I even wished I had never gone to the UK, I felt miserable with the feeling of guilt of not being around during her hour of need.

The year around the time that my mother passed away, I had a strange dream. It was the nastiest experience dreaming of my aging mother in a putrefying state. I felt sick with the pain she seemed to be suffering. Her comment about how I was unavailable during her hour of dire need and the forgiving gesture she made about my failure sent me into a fit of emotions. I was woken up by my own loud and uncontrollable yowl.

It seems queer but my enduring hunch is that the spirit of my mother traveled to the UK on her death and indicated that though she was no more she would always understand me, her dearest son, whatever happened. I am aware of the greatest lesson of her life: that one should do for others what one can without expecting anything in return. She stood tall, a personification of compassion, as her name Thujey indicates, I can only appreciate her contribution in my life by following her examples or at least intending to repay her love not to her because she is gone but to any other to whom I can. It seems as if I am picking up something precious from her life. What better ways than this to repay her!.

October 1984, I was back in Samchi. But it was no more the good old Teacher Training Institute. Within two years, changes had occurred. There were new buildings, new faculty members and even a new head, now called the Director. It was upgraded to the National Institute of Education. Classes for the new Bachelor of Education course were held in the half completed current main block.

The B.Ed course was for the secondary school teachers. The primary teachers' course remained and it was a pleasure to be made the Head of the Primary Teacher Training Department, managing the oldest course on campus. I loved every minute of my job and I do not remember ever having any other thought about that. Yes, it kept me so busy that thirteen years seemed fleetingly short.

In August in 1992, I was transferred to TTC as its second Director. My arrival in Paro itself was a rewarding moment especially for my children. Late summer and early Autumn is a moment of plenty in Paro. There were tasty wild mushrooms one could pick if one had the time. A variety of fruits were being harvested and marketed cheap. My children knew the Paro of that year to be next only to heaven.

I took over a college that was something like fifty students and twenty staff. Teaching could not be better with a staff student ratio of 1:3 and three expatriate teachers from the Overseas

Development Agency, UK, and Swiss Development Cooperation, Switzerland. By June 1993, we were ready to launch a new course targeted at the Dzongkha (national language) teachers and out number soared.

It was a good posting in the sense of the challenge it posed. I was sent with an explicit instruction that I must give my best. My relation with the Dzongkhag was to be impeccable. Over the next three years, I began to understand why this instruction was so explicit. TTC was growing fast in the academic and physical facilities. There were public dealings through the Dzongkhag. The land acquired for the development of TTC was to be taken over. The campus was to be demarcated. That was not easy, but the whole affair was an experience of immense value.

In August 1997, an office order was out transferring me as the third Director of NIE, Samtse. It was a great homecoming for my family. Three of my four children were born in Samtse. I had many old colleagues on the staff and friends in the community. It was good that NIE, Samtse, has always had a tradition of good working atmosphere and we had very little dealing with the community. Often weeks passed by before two colleagues could sit down over a cup of tea except during a meeting.

During my final years in Samtse, we found ourselves more and more hard pressed for time. There were lecturers who taught 35 to 40 sessions a week. I had 25 sessions on top of my administrative responsibility. The result was that positively I derived tremendous job satisfaction. The down side of it all was that our families felt neglected at times.

A genuine friend and now a senior civil administrator remarked at my appointment to Sherubtse College as a lifetime achievement. He was right. My position here was really unexpected. I had always had a special attitude to my job. I believe that I am in the service of my king. This country and the people. My due is to do my best wherever I am sent. I accepted my transfer to Sherubtse as its Principal with a sense of humility.

On my assumption of role at this college, I could not help but share my adulation for all those who headed and worked here. They were the real jewels in our education's crown. The students are really a good mixture of what human beings could ever be. I have often wondered if the values that hold us as Bhutanese are suffering a setback. Our own laxity and the rising pressure from outside cultures are evidently responsible. We must be united in viewing this with utmost seriousness.

It is said that history progresses from shadows to light, from the unconscious to the conscious and from the instinctive to the rational. The same can be said about education and the institutions for education. Our education system has a comparatively shorter institutional memory than most systems elsewhere.

But our size is really our advantage. We are small and manageable. I think we should try to keep ourselves small. Our strength is the commitment of the people that manage our system. We should try to keep this morale high. There may be lacunae in our working and mistakes in our decisions but we must give our collective interest the upper most importance.

\* \* \*

## Recollections and Reflections

- N B Gazmere

---

Development in all fields in the kingdom started with the launching of the First Five Year Plan in 1961. Luckily, I was admitted to Damphu Central School in 1961 itself. When I recollect how I was admitted and how my education started, a unique story unfolds in its own way. I was a typical grown-up village boy with silver ear-rings, a bangle and crude shirt and trousers when I stepped into the school for admission.

I went to the school with some students and my own younger brother who was admitted the previous year. Very timidly, I went to the headmaster's office and requested him to admit me. He was very considerate and kind and admitted me in Infant Class C. I offered him half a kilogram of rice and one ngultrum as my admission fee as per existing rule. I was rather thrilled and excited in my first adventure. It was a lucky day and a day that would chart my destiny.

In those days, there was no age barrier for admission. We could join at any age. There were some students even bigger and older than me. However, there were smaller and younger ones as well. There were married boys even in lower classes. There were no hard and fast rules for admission. What I realize today is that age doesn't really matter if one is really interested in learning. What matters is our sheer interest and effort in learning and we can acquire education to any level. Though I started school very late, I was able to complete my graduation well in time.

Within a period of 40 years, admission has become very difficult. Parents and guardians have to struggle to get their children admitted. Now, there are strict rules for admission. Children have to be above 6 years to be eligible for admission. Each school has a committee to conduct admissions. Getting children admitted to schools has become a great concern and problem at the national level.

Damphu Central School was a big one running classes Infant to VI. There were nearly 600 students and 15-20 teachers. Almost all the teachers, including the headmaster, were Indians from Kerala and West Bengal. The school was established in the early 1950s and it was well set up.

There were many primary schools in other parts of Tsirang, and after completing Class III or so, students used to go to Damphu School for continuing their studies. They used to have a tough time in studies as the school had a high standard. The school buildings were quite good and equipped with desks and benches from Class III upwards. The students of Infant C had to use the bare floor for sitting but Infant B and A, and the students of classes I and II were given long benches. We were lucky enough to have all these facilities even in those days. There were facilities for playing football, volleyball, badminton and other games.

I was admitted to Infant C. In those days, we had to study in Infant C, B and A classes before going to Class I. I had studied the English alphabets and numbers from my uncles before going to school so I did not find difficulties at all. I was promoted to infant B after studying for a month in Infant C.

I studied very steadily in Damphu for nine years and completed Class VII in 1969. In fact, our batch of 8 students was the first to open Class VII in Damphu. I was very good in studies but poor at games and sports. I used to have 100% attendance every year though I had to travel

almost for one hour to the school. I used to get hardly any time for studies. I used to study in the evening only in the dim light of a kerosene lamp. In those days, we used to face a lot of difficulties in studies. Nevertheless, I built a good foundation with my own efforts and it helped me a lot later on in my higher education.

Most teachers in those days were Indians and a few from abroad. There were hardly any Bhutanese national teachers. Dzongkha lopens started teaching Dzongkha most probably by 1965 or so. They were very different from the present-day Dzongkha lopens in many ways. They had only content knowledge but hardly any methodology. They used to beat students whips.

Teachers in those days used to have good content knowledge and some of them also had some professional qualifications. But most of them did not have much professional qualifications. It was purely teacher-oriented teaching except for the question-answer sessions. Hardly any kind of teaching aids were used. They only teaching aids were the blackboards, chalk and textbooks. They used to teach from the books and dictate notes and make us memorize them. However, whatever they used to teach, they used to go in detail and make us learn well somehow or the other. We used to regard teachers as gods and respected them. Students used to be very obedient and were afraid of them.

At present, we can see so many changes. The attitudes of students towards the teachers are different. Most of the teachers are Bhutanese nationals with both academic and professional qualifications. Modern techniques and principles are applied in the classrooms. The whole scenario seems to be different in many respects. Even the non-Bhutanese teachers have professional qualifications. Professional qualification is a must in teaching.

The school curriculum in those days was totally different from what it is today. We had to follow the textbooks used in English medium schools in India. Dzongkha textbooks were just in inception stage and were different from what we have today. Some of the textbooks were *Radiant Readers*, *Brighter Grammar*, *Deskwork*, *Stream of Time*, *Nature Rambles*, etc. What I presume today is that these books were well graded and had good standard, were informative and reader-friendly.

With the establishment of the curriculum section within the Education Department, textbooks in some of the subjects started appearing in the Department itself. Now, most of the textbooks are designed and published in Bhutan. Some of the textbooks for classes are brought from India for use at I.S.E. and college levels. The textbooks produced in Bhutan are well graded and based on Bhutanese contexts.

There were very few books in the library and we hardly used to read any library book. There were no other sources of material and media in those days. We had to depend solely on the prescribed textbooks and the teachers and our own study. We were lucky to get free textbooks from the Education Department.

After my promotion to Class VII, I got a golden opportunity to go to Thimphu Public School in 1970 along with other seven friends. I found Thimphu Public School totally different from Damphu School in many ways. It was a new inspiration and experience for me. Obviously, it was then and even now is the most prestigious school in the kingdom. Luckily, I passed the interview and test and was admitted to Class VIII. I was really on the top of the world.

It was a big change for me. First of all, it was boarding school and we had to stay in the dormitory with other boys. However, within a short time, I was able to adjust with the hostel system and other norms and rules of Thimphu Public School. We used to get so many things

free of cost. However, we had to follow strict rules as the Principal himself was a retired army colonel.

There were numerous facilities and co-curricular activities. I had a tough time in getting acquainted with and taking parts in the extra-curricular activities as I was not used to these before. However, I concentrated more on studies and I used to do well every year. I have realized that if we have to be good at extra-curricular activities, we must take interest when we are young and after a certain stage, it is difficult to learn and practice. Anyway, I managed somehow or the other.

In those days, it was ISC (Class XI) system followed from the Indian Council for Secondary Examination. In those days, even in Thimphu Public School, there was no Science Laboratory and the first two batches could not go for science. Our batch of 17 students took the ISC Examination in 1973 and it was the second batch appearing at it. The curriculum was the one prescribed by the Indian Council, except for Dzongka.

The teachers were from India and there were only a handful of Bhutanese national teachers. In the Education Department, there was a Controller of Examination who used to coordinate all examination work inside and outside the country. There were no common examinations in classes VI and VIII. The ICSE (Class X) system was adopted in 1976 and the same system was adopted in Bhutan as well.

In 1974, a lot of students were sent to Chandigarh for different courses. In those days, Sherubtse College had not been born. There were almost 75 Bhutanese students in Chandigarh alone, and quite a lot in other colleges in India and elsewhere. I got admitted to D.A.V College in Arts stream. Those who were in Arts and General Science could cope easily with their studies, but those who were taking pre-engineering and pre-medical courses had a tough time in their studies. It clearly indicates that there was low standard in Science in those days. However, the standard of English was good in Bhutan, so we did not face any language problem.

After completing my studies in Chandigarh in 1977, and after the National Service of six months, I was appointed as a teacher in a primary school. No doubt I had good content knowledge but I lacked knowledge of methodology. Somehow or the other, I managed quite well in teaching. However, I was sent for a Bachelor of Education course in Government College of Education in Chandigarh in 1978. I was allowed to continue with M.A in English after the completion of Bachelor of Education. I completed M.A in English in 1981 from Punjab University, Chandigarh. With the completion of education in academic and professional areas, I was confident to teach at any level.

So, I started my education without any destination but with my bit of luck and constant effort and enthusiasm, I was able to achieve that level. What I have realized is that if one is really interested in studies and tries constantly, one can do very well in studies despite one's poor background. However, I am from a poor economic background and I was constantly in great hope that I would be able to do something in future. So, I had a fixed target on education. And I was able to achieve my target somehow or the other within a stipulated time.

After my completion of M.A in English and Bachelor of Education from the University of Punjab, I was posted at Bara Junior High School in 1981. The school was just upgraded to junior high school level from its primary school status. It was in a remote place and we had to climb for almost two hours. The headmaster was very efficient person and the school was in a good shape in many ways. There were almost 600 students and 12 to 15 teachers. We used to teach almost all the eight periods. However, there was a good working atmosphere and we enjoyed working even in such a place.

After some months of my arrival at that school, the headmaster was transferred to another school and I was handed over the charge. After a month or so, I was appointed as an officiating headmaster as nobody wanted to come even as a headmaster. Teachers were transferred one after another and we had a tough time managing the classes. Nobody came to replace them. We had to teach even two or more classes in one period. I had to teach English, Geography, History and even Science in higher classes. As a new person with lots of responsibilities and work, I had a tough in managing the school. However, I tried my best for seven to eight months, and gained knowledge in many ways. Though it was a bitter experience for me, I could learn a lot practically within a short period of time.

I was transferred to the National Institute of Education, Samtse, in September 1982. It was a new experience for me. I had to teach grown-up trainees and make use of both content knowledge and methodology. In the beginning, there were two sections of trainees doing primary teachers' training course. There were 10 to 12 lecturers. We did not have to teach many classes. I was asked to go to Samtse High School and Samtse primary School and take some classes. That way, I was keeping in touch with school experience as well as working in a training institute. Life in Samtse was very much different from that of Bara.

The Bachelor of Education course was introduced in 1983 and all the lecturers had to work very hard. Some expatriate lecturers were brought from India. We were asked to design syllabuses for the B.Ed course and we had a tough time but gained a good deal of knowledge as well. With limited knowledge in syllabus designing, we managed to design syllabuses in some form. However, later on, some consultants were brought and the syllabuses were refined and re-designed.

NIE was growing very fast and we all had to work very hard and keep ourselves busy all the time. Within a short period of time, a lot of changes were brought about in the PTTC in line with the B.Ed course. Now, NIE Samtse is a well-organized institute with lots of facilities and different courses. I have gained a lot of experience in many ways academically and professionally.

After working in the NIE as a lecturer for three years, I got an opportunity to go for further studies in the United Kingdom for two years in 1985. At first, I underwent a diploma course called TEFL for a year in Brighton Polytechnic in Sussex. After that, I did a Master of Education course from the University in TELF for a year.

My two years studies in the United Kingdom gave a lot of exposure to the western system of teacher education. I found the system of education well established and more or less the same pattern throughout the United Kingdom. However, education has become a great commercial type of business and whatever courses are offered, they are offered systematically and effectively. The lecturers seem to be well versed in teaching and they seem to be committed to their work. They have every facility at their disposal. They use different ways of teaching though lecturing is also followed quite a lot. In the beginning I, found it quite uneasy to adjust to their system but picked up pace very quickly. We visited some of the local schools as well. Most of the schools were well organized but a few of them were run quite casually. Their education system is geared towards vocations. Students have a choice of their subjects from the lower level itself.

I could learn a lot within two years. I was very much exposed to the native speakers of English and came to know how English is spoken in their contexts. Even in the United Kingdom, there seems to be variety of English spoken in different regions. I learnt about the education system of other countries from my friends as my class-mates were from many African and Asian countries. That way, I was able to acquire knowledge academically, professionally, socially, and

in many other ways. My exposure to the west helped me a lot in modern ways of teaching in the NIE as a lecturer.

Right from the beginning of my career, as an assistant teacher, as an officiating headmaster and a lecturer, I have seen tremendous changes, innovations being brought about in the education system in the kingdom. The Education Department has expanded to so many divisions and sections headed by different officials. Many changes have been brought about in the curriculum, inspectorate and examining systems.

From a few primary schools in the 1950s, now there are many high schools, junior high schools, primary schools, community schools, private schools and institutes and a fully-fledged degree college. On the whole, the education system has made a tremendous progress in achieving its goals within a short time. What other developed countries have achieved in centuries, Bhutan has achieved within 30-40 years. The achievement is due the sheer interest of His Majesty the King, Education Department, teachers and others.

Looking at the present situation in educational development, a lot of changes are likely to take place in the near. There will be acute admission pressure at all levels as it is already seen. There will be competition in studies and thereby the standard of education could be high. Children from poorer sections of the society might not be able to go for higher education as they cannot afford to pay fees as private students. Many schools might come up and be upgraded but there will be constant admission pressure. That way, many private schools might be opened to meet the demand. There might be competition among the private schools.

In due course of time, a national university might be established and a couple of colleges opened. Opening of a university will be a great achievement for Bhutan. Instead of sending Bhutanese students outside, Bhutan will be able accommodate students from other countries.

If a university is opened and when more colleges come up, there might be shortage of lecturers and they may have to be brought from other countries. It is good that Bhutan has started sending students abroad for masters and Ph.D. programmes and that way, Bhutan need not bring many teachers and lecturers for higher levels of studies. With the present achievement and progress in education made by the Education Department, Bhutan will surely achieve whatever goals have been set for development.

With high literacy rate, there might be a lot of employment problems and competition for jobs. That way, efficiency in work is likely to increase in all fields. And all-round development could be brought in Bhutan. Let us hope for a bright future in all spheres of educational development.

\* \* \*

## THE MARCH OF EDUCATION: SOME GLIMPSES

- K.C. JOSE

---

A fresh teacher-recruit in Bhutan, I, in my simmering youth, stepped into the noble profession, with a handful of vague notions about Bhutan in my mind. To such a fledgling, qualified and trained to teach English, having to teach Chemistry in junior high school classes and English in elementary classes which were mostly under-peopled (with an average of 12 students), using blackboards that seldom wrote (the attempted words just slipped) was not as interesting as queer. But the farming students in the Oxfam fields, their volunteerism and helpfulness besides the family atmosphere among the staff felt like the cool breeze on a riverbank.

It was not cool breeze, however, when I sweated teaching balancing of chemical equations in Class VIII or explaining *The Cat in the Oven* in Class III. I loved, instead, to teach, for instance, Stevenson's *Vagabond* from the *Radiant Readers* and *Voice Change* from the *Brighter Grammar* series. But I was just a junior teacher. This junior teacher at times gasped for breath in his substitution period in PP classes, which more often than not repeated *keep quiet* after him!!!

These "petty inconveniences" (as my seniors gladly phrased them), however, had in them some important seeds for professional growth. Today, if I have mastered a mediocre expressive and explanatory skill or, an average agility and range of pedagogic approaches or, a smattering of Dzongkha, (let my students judge it), it is thanks to those Class III and PP experiences. They, in fact, acted as a sort of ongoing training, which in the long run, paid rich dividends in my profession. Today, I enjoy teaching any level: be it Class VII, IX or XIII. The thrill is almost the same.

Another inseparable part of this ongoing training was the role of a master teacher to the NIE teacher-trainees. Lesson observations gave a variety of exposures to novel methodologies, pre- and post-conferences polished my persuasive skills, besides critically examining my pedagogic convictions (once deemed ironed) long locked up and at times brandished only upon needs. Long years of being a master teacher also made me marvel at the universal gap between practice teaching and actual teaching (debatable indeed).

As an attempt at minimizing this gap, NAPE (New Approach to Primary Education) was introduced - primary education being the foundation stone. As with the DPED in some states in India, the NAPE was plagued - rather blessed - with controversies.

Mr. Sharma, a strong critic of the NAPE, once asked me, "How can you spell well simply by seeing the word daily or regularly? I am good at spelling because my teachers used to drill me in oral repetitions of alphabets in a word."

"Sharma Sir," I replied, casting an oblique glance "do you spell with mouth or hand? You need spelling while writing and not speaking?"

"You are right, Sir Jose. But the oral repetition of letters enhances the memory of the spelling, isn't it?"

Though I bit a small stone in his "isn't it?", I rejoined, "Following your theory, you must have made myriad of oral repetitions in your life to spell well, say 10,000 words in your current vocabulary. In my knowledge, spelling is visual and manual memory. Hence the NAPE approach to spelling."

Mr. Sharma kept quiet for a while as I straightened my spine.

But soon he asked me, "Then, why are there signs of decline in the NAPE?"

"If there are," I answered, "please answer me one question: Is the Communist fiasco in the former USSR a failure of Communism?"

"You are going out of topic". Mr. Sharma disappeared in apparent frustration like the calf that took in some liquid feed into its nostrils.

Whether a system fails because of the system as such or some other factors is worth a debate.

Another debated issue in those days was Mr. John Wood's 'functional' approach to the teaching of English grammar. No language is learned, as all linguists, Mr. Wood argued, through rules in grammar and the study of sentence structures. Yes, all mother tongues are learned without their rules being explicitly taught or learned. Well, if it is a second language, for example? If the exposure to the language is too limited?

No such questions were asked and so no answers given.

Consequently, the much-acclaimed *Brighter Grammar* with memorable stories such as the *Rich Lady and the Poor Beggar* withdrew to oblivion. As alternatives, many a grammar teaching strategies and games were discussed and practised. Thus, we were enriched with a bulk of such strategies and activities. This was naturally reflected in teacher education too.

Thus we have produced, in an interim period, a few generations of teachers and graduates, generally unsure of the correctness of sentences that they, their students or juniors made. In other words, they were able to use English more or less correctly, but stood unsure of their students' sentences such as:

'If I were you, I could have scored high'  
or  
'Our uncle made us to do the work again'  
or  
'My brother is taller than I' etc. or just okayed them.

As one of the resource persons in the grammar teaching NBIP in Khuruthang in 2001, I can assert this with a certain degree of authority. After a decade or so, there echoed authentic and grave concerns about the low standards in English even among the educated and qualified youth.

The question here also is: Was the 'functional grammar' approach in itself a failure or were there cracks in its implementation?

While studying the causes of my students' weakness in expression, our Literary Club in Drukgyel High School conducted a campaign called 'Language precision'. Every Wednesday, we highlighted in the assembly a correct usage each (in English), followed by a poster display on the club's bulletin-board. One such area thus highlighted was the no-use of the preposition after transitive verbs such as 'marry' and 'approach' etc. For, generations, or rather batches after batches of students have used 'marry with sb.', for instance. It was like an endemic, for students in Paro or Thimphu or Trashigang used it so.

However, despite the campaign, most students continued to use 'marry with'. Perplexed, I asked some senior students about it. Their responses revealed a simple but important truth: since

childhood, students have been exposed to 'marry with' and the like, for most elders spoke and wrote 'marry with'; students heard and read it so. After all, children's mind is like wet cement. Whatever falls on it leaves a lasting mark. The same story, I discovered, went with misspellings. Many elders spelt 'distrubance', 'flok song' and 'strick' etc even in print and so did students.

However, some of the successfully surviving contributions in Mr. Wood's radical revision of the English syllabi for classes VII and VIII comprise the teaching of the study skills: such as note-taking, information transfer, dictionary use etc. It was more meaningful because it included activities for listening, speaking and reading skills, which were also tested in the terminal examinations. Accordingly, I was once fortunate to have been one of the oral examiners for Class VIII in Paro High School. I always felt and held that these oral examinations, besides being listening-speaking-reading tests, serve as preparatory or elementary interviews for young students. Such examinations were an improvement on the traditional ones (which were 100% written in nature) in the sense that they tested all the four language skills besides most of the study skills.

Similar attempts at teaching improvement which my profession partook of and got enriched by, during this period comprised 'multi-level teaching', 'remedial English', 'continuous assessment' and 'pandemic care' etc. All of them were and still are thrilling (to the backbone) teaching experiences.

A deep sigh ago, I used to be worried about my students' low achievements despite my 'high-powered' classes. Gradually, my worry melted at the sunshine of a great realization: a class is a vibrant heterogeneity! In this shine, the teacher in me tried the so-called 'multi-level teaching'! The teaching and learning activities I devised differed for low achievers, average ones' and 'above-average ones' and so on. The evaluation through assignments also varied. The response to this approach, especially of the traditionally-labeled 'blockheads', was an eye-opener to me. It was, I firmly believe, to be inscribed golden in any teacher's autobiography. These slow-learners emerged smart and active. I saw in them an unprecedented glow of confidence and interest. What else should a teacher need?

The surge of enthusiasm thus welled in me moved me closer to the slow learners and them to me. I analyzed their weaknesses. My discovery was great – I boasted. I still dare claim. I have tried to show it in the following table:

Levels/Classes				
(a) Strengths	VII & VIII (%)	IX&X (%)	XI & XII (%)	Examples
1.Excellent presentation	50	50	60	
2.Good style	1	2	10	
3.Good vocabulary	30	35	40	
4.Creativity	4	8	8	
5.Convising matter	20	30	40	
6.Weaknesses (correction symbols used)	X	X	X	
1. Spelling error (sp)	80	70	47	compitition, distrurbance, beneficial
2.Tense shift (t)	35	30	20	Students worry too much there were no job opportunities.
3.Run-on sent.(RO)	40	30	23	They don't help each other

				instead they lead their friends in misery.
4.Fragment (F)	30	20	20	Though people in remote places living in huts. They are not much worried
5.Loose vocabulary (VOC)	20	15	13	The word 'competition' has invaded Bhutan for some years.
6.Loose construction (K)	30	25	13	In this present century, life of the people needs much care as there are many obstacles as the life of the people is full of sorrows.
7.Wrong punctuation (P)	35	30	25	Relatives mean's people who are connected to us.
8.Improper usage (U)	40	40	28	True friendship, is the one who help us in time.
9.Wrong article use/No article use (Art)	40	30	18	Topic given itself stresses that.....
10.Ungrammatical (Gr.)	25	15	13	As well all know that.....
11.No sub-v agreement (Agr.)	40	38	38	True friends does not listen to.....
12.Illegible (Ill.)	15	12	8	
13.Wrong paragraphing/No Para (P)	15	15	10	

The figures above are the % of students in that level, who have those strengths and weaknesses specified (approximately).

The findings are a result of the data collection, observations and analyses of about 1010 students at VII-VIII level during a period of 12 years, 315 students at IX-X level during a period of five years, and 950 students at XI-XII level during a period of six years. These students belonged to either or both Shaba High School or Drukgyel High School.

The spectrum of students' strengths and weaknesses directed me to proper promotional or remedial measures to be taken. 'Directed'- did I say? Yes. Each weak student or student group needed my help relevant to his/her need. Thus, my 'remedial English' sessions, first, after the regular classes and later a period a week, progressed. But alas! I needed more time. Miracles cannot be wrought overnight.

"Again, the old refrain of the complaint - inadequate time?" a perfectionist-friend of mine asked me, referring to my complaint about time constraint.

"No" I said, "it's the refrain of a truth. How can you fix the period of a year to cure a young man as well as a weak, old man both suffering from cancer?"

"I am not fixing a year for both. But the doctor is expected to do his best to ensure the recovery of both the patients within a year."

"That's a more sensible argument", I said. "But, in case, despite the doctor's best efforts, the patient does not recover within a year?"

"Normally," he considered the point with the air of a solicitor, "such situations do not arise. If they do, the doctor may discharge the patient towards the end of the year, seeing signs of improvement or recovery. Otherwise, how can the hospital or the government afford to keep the patient or such patients even beyond a year?"

"Dear," I replied, "you are hinting at cost-effectiveness. But, think of a partially cured patient going back home and, after a month or so, returning to hospital worse than before. Will the hospital have to spend more medicines, more care and attention upon him this time? How cost-effective will this second treatment be? After all, a stitch in time saves nine."

"You are trying to silence me with a proverb?" my perfectionist-friend fumed and disappeared.

The next time I met him, however, I told him the following story:

"Kota, the oil supplier at the BOD, pumps 17 liters of petrol into my vehicle. I ask him, 'How much?' Pat comes his reply: "Nu. 459, Sir." This is before the arrival of the latest machine (at the BOD) that shows the cost of the fuel pumped. The same or a similar thing happens a couple of times again. Kota never finds it difficult to calculate the cost each time. I stand stunned. He does not need a calculator. Who said the Bhutanese are poor in Maths?"

A few days later, I prod a Class XII student with this example. He replies, 'That's daily practice, Sir.' Yes, my student knows the answer viz. *constant practice*.

A few more days later, I read the *Kuensel* finding (Nov.24 - Nov.30,2001) that the Bhutanese are very poor in Maths. The next day, referring to the *Kuensel* as well as the Class XII student's reply above, I ask Tseten Gyeltshen – a Class IX student, "Does it mean that the Bhutanese students do not practise Maths regularly?" He replies, "Why Sir, even without that, I will pass." I stand stunned ( for the second time).

Next, I ask a responsible teacher about it all. He replies, "Going by the Maths standards in that class, if Tseten fails, 20 out of the 40 students will fail. This is not cost-effective".

In other words, Tseten passes; he is happy. The teacher is happy as he had projected his subject's pass percentage somewhere at 98. The headmaster is happy and all the rest concerned are happy.

Back home, I ask myself, "Is making everybody happy called cost-effectiveness?"

Soon, I remember the great lama, Marpa's philosophy of cost-effectiveness in education. If Marpa had not rejected Thuchhen, of course by way of testing him, he would have had (1) a circular house, or (2) a crescent-shaped house, or (3) a triangular house, or (4) a quadrangular house, or (5) a 12-pillared annexes to the main building (*Druk English Series: BK-3*). But Marpa knew in his infinite wisdom that many times times better than all these was the refined, educated disciple/student of his - Milarepa. Was it cost-effective on the part of Marpa to get those half-finished five buildings demolished?

The distance between Tseten Gyeltshen and Kota will be big if the misinterpretation of cost-effectiveness exists. The words of a high school teacher quoted by William Glasser (*School Without Failure*, pages 124,125) are worth-remembering here:

"There are only two places in our world where time takes precedence over the job to be done: school and prison. Everywhere else, the job to be done is more important than the time to do it."

After listening to my story, my friend burst out laughing and said, "Well, we started with the issue of 'no time,' didn't we? Why to beat about the bush? Think of the great, successful teacher-priests and teacher-nuns in India who make use of every minute and at last reap rich harvests."

"You cannot compare," I interrupted, "laymen-teachers with teacher-priests and teacher-nuns. A family-teacher with parents, wife and children etc. plays too many roles in life, to spend as much time for his profession as a priest or nun does. An unhappy husband is likely to do miserably at school. A frustrated wife is likely to cut a sorry figure of a teacher in her class. A dissatisfied father at home may prove an arrogant teacher- colleague in the staffroom and so on. Such adverse possibilities are far too fewer in the case of a priest or a nun." I stopped with the sigh of a priest who had driven a nail on a devil's head.

But, my friend did not stop. He said, "Despite this time limit you complain of, don't you support the system of continuous assessment, which allegedly needs a lot of time?"

"Continuous assessment", I replied, "is a beautiful concept. It's as beautiful as a farmer's daily visit to his paddy-field. It's as fulfilling as his supporting of a bent sapling with a forked twig or the like. Will any farmer, after sowing the seeds, sit back at his home till the harvest?"

"Well, you like the concept of continuous assessment but not its practice, right?" he asked me.

"Right, to some extent. Many of our practices need review and revision. For, some of them are like round pegs in square holes."

"That sounds as a nice simile. But, in what sense?"

"Conceptually, all such approaches as the NAPE, multi-level teaching and continuous assessment etc. are well-rounded and excellently conceived. But, if the system or the substratum where they are to be planted or implemented is not rounded i.e. not properly suited, they won't fit in them. Just as unfit as the round pegs in square holes. One should suitably shape, alter and adapt either or both."

"For this, don't you have the subject committees in the CAPSD?"

"There you are. These committees review and revise the curriculum materials in the respective subjects. Besides, they identify the focus areas, plan and devise suitable handbooks, reference books and supplementary (skill) packages or programmes etc., All these efforts are guided by the principle of hole-peg suitability". I stopped with the exhaustion of an emptied cannon.

"Well, to cite some examples of such efforts of, say the ESC, of which you are a member?" my listener sounded curious. "Recently, the ESC has brought out a very useful ELT Handbook for teachers for classes VI through VIII. It conducted NBIPs on various aspects of the ELT, developed English poetry booklets for classes VI and VII and edited that of Class VIII, developed a 100% Bhutanese syllabus and curriculum materials in English for classes IX and X (BCSE), (those for XI and XII are in the pipeline), is carrying out a comprehensive supplementary reading programme for schools, evolved the concept of 'pandemic care' and its strategies and so on...."

"Pandemic care! What is it?"

"It's a meaningfully practical merger of pastoral and academic care of our students. It was pioneered by this author and the former inspiring and towering curriculum officer, Mr. Karma Dorji (former ESC Coordinator). It was piloted by them (as directed by the CAPSD) in two schools and is now recommended for the rest of the schools."

"Well, Mr. Jose, pastoral and academic care is, after all, not a new concept. It is, down the centuries, inherent in traditional educational principles," my friend remarked.

"Yes, just in principles," I retorted. "But the draft document named 'Pandemic Care' authored by them gives details and illustrations of how to achieve this care through the so-called 'micro data', seniors' guardianship of the juniors, PDP (Personally Development period) and IP (Interaction Period) etc. This, it is not a colourful balloon wafting attached, outside the school routine, but is woven into the very texture of school life."

"Well! Your words purport that pandemic care is a practicable approach to wholesome education along with values education. Here, I have a reservation. How can there be, in any time in history, education that is unwholesome and one without value inculcation? Why then is the recent emphasis on both?", my friend was apparently ruffled.

"Well put, dear friend," I said. "Down the years, all people have known that breast-feeding is the best for both babies and mothers. Then, why is there the recent emphasis on it by doctors and medical propagandists?"

"May be because modern trends have tried to question the wholesomeness of breast-milk."

"You said it. When educationists saw a possible danger of education's wholesomeness and its value-content being questioned or ignored in modern times, they naturally hurried to pre-empt it. Pandemic care, in this context, has a lot to do in this direction."

Values education is singularly significant in Bhutan because it is a more concerted and systematized implementation of the already-existing Driglam Namza. His Majesty, the king and the high-ranking officials are very keen about the preservation of Bhutan's traditions and culture. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck in particular has a vision about the country and its people.

Of the many factors that go into the growth of education in Bhutan, a significantly potent one is His Majesty's visits to schools. In fact, I was fortunate to have been present in the schools I worked in during these royal visits. However, that of 24 July 1992 still lingers in my mind.

His Majesty is a 'shrewd statesman with qualities of head and heart...', thus wrote Bikram Jit Hasrat. I had chanced to read this before I got my appointment order in 1986. As I got ready for Bhutan, there was in me a major obsession: "Will I ever meet this charisma of head and heart?" His Majesty's visit on 24 July 1992 to Shaba Jr. High School was a fruition of that dream.

A pleasant impatience – this was, in a nutshell, the reaction of the Shaba School family to the news of His Majesty's possible visit to the school. Before our students proceeded to attend the VII Five Year Plan meeting, a boy came to me and asked, "Sir, how long shall we wait?" I told him, "My child, he also serves who stands and waits."

It was Friday, 24 July. Classes were in full swing. A reassuring breeze blew to Class VIII. I was teaching 'composition'. Hark! The sound of vehicles! I continued the story of *The Cobbler* that would feed the composition we were shaping. Then I saw His Majesty coming towards my class. My heart went pit-a-pat. An inner voice said, "The charisma." I still remember my having repeated unknowingly the same sentence: "The cobbler saw his lord in the poor old man."

All happened in a nick of time. As His Majesty entered my classroom, I felt excited and I forgot myself. I was jolted to reality with a firm, warm handshake His Majesty offered me. A golden moment? An epiphany?... (I fumble for words). The ruler of human hearts, shaking me up my

profession – it was the magic of that moment. A veritable charisma percolated to the very core of my being. I did not know what he talked to students. For, I was still in the caressing shock of the royal handshake.

Soon, His Majesty left Class VIII. I continued the discussion on the composition. To my joyous surprise, I found the students like recharged cells. I concluded that the charisma was all-pervasive.

My conclusion was underlined by the general meeting in our dining hall. As I led Class VIII to the hall, we saw the royal entourage observing us. Inside the hall, the students listened to the words of command like novices receiving benediction. I noticed the majestic dignity, the inimitable composure and the animating words of command that formed the charisma of my dream. “Eureka,” my heart leapt up.

I understood that His Majesty wanted hard work, loyalty and immaculate love from the students. Later, some students expressed their concern over the ngolop problem. Very clear and definite was His Majesty's reply. Students should not worry about those matters. The anti-national problem was fully under control. There was no question of compromise on national unity. Listening to his words, I wished I had learned a little more Dzongkha.

Now, His Majesty stepped down from the stage to the students. Yes, he was literally coming down to them. Like the compass needle that turns with a magnet, the student mass turned right in unison. He then asked them an interesting question: “Can girls do whatever the boys do to serve the country?” Unhesitatingly, the girls replied that they would rally behind His Majesty as well as boys could. At this, His Majesty made a hearty laugh - another spark of joy that spread and lit up the student mass.

Such royal visits act as moral, spiritual boosters on not only the students but also the teachers not to mention the whole education sector. No wonder, the Bhutanese education system is one of the best internationally. There is, however, no room for complacency. There are a lot of loopholes at the level of implementation.

In order to seal these loopholes, we need teachers of high commitment and professionalism, the hole-peg compatibility in policy-making and a strict but realistic monitoring system. However, the government's policy of sustainable development coupled with an emphasis on culture, values and wholesomeness in education made education in Bhutan achieve commendable strides. No wonder, today classrooms throb (if not suffocate) with an average of 40 students. Teachers are privileged to use green chalk boards (not black boards) in many schools. And, Bhutanese students kingdom-wide are soon to be computer-literate.

\* \* \*