

FRP Bulletin

Formative Research Project

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The Formative Research Project is being undertaken by Tribhuvan University, Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) for the Ministry of Education and Sports, His Majesty's Government, Nepal.

FRP Contents

■ Case studies completed in 2005

- Access of Disadvantaged Children to Education
- School Improvement Plan (SIP) Identification of Successful Cases
- Meeting Learning Needs of Children of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities
- Disbursement of Block Grants

■ Organization of Meetings and Workshops

- Capacity Building Workshops
- Visit of MOES and DOE Officials to Norway

Case studies completed in 2005

Access of Disadvantaged Children to Education

About eighteen percent of the total population of Nepal are school-age (5-9 years) children who belong to disadvantaged and deprived communities. A large number of such children are still deprived of basic primary education despite the fact that there has been a significant

increase in the number of schools in the country over the years.

Three separate studies were conducted under "Access to Education for the Disadvantaged Children of Nepal" of FRP Phase I.

The present study analyzed the issues and challenges underlined in the EFA Core documents. The study is based on the information collected from three districts: Bara, Rasuwa and Kavre. It covers Musahars from among Dalits and Tamangs and Danuwars from among indigenous groups.

The study aimed at examining the access of the educationally unreached children in the country, assessing the social, economic, cultural and political barriers to children's access to education, finding ways to get them enrolled and retained in schools, and providing counseling on improving the quality of education.

Major Findings

- The number of drop-out children belonging to Danuwar and Tamang communities was higher in the hills and mountains because of home-school distance.
- Better learning environment could not be ensured for lack of necessary physical facilities in the schools.
- There was a lack of teaching and learning materials in the schools. Textbooks apart, no reference materials were available.
- The so-called upper-caste children disparaged and irritated Musahar and Danuwar children in the school and the community. So the Musahar and Danuwar children did not like to mix with the so-called upper-caste children.
- Parents of Musahar and Danuwar communities want their children to get involved in income-generating activities rather than education.



- Danuwar and Tamang children were deprived of education because of their seasonal migration.
- As most of the parents left home for work in far-away fields or brick factories in winter, their children missed classes.
- Musahar and Danuwar people did not realize the importance of education.

Recommendations

- There is a need of establishing temporary community schools or providing school outreach programs for the Musahars on local initiative.
- There should be a provision of mobile teachers for the children who migrate (with their parents) in particular seasons.
- A policy of providing teaching jobs to Dalits, disadvantaged locals and females in the local community should be adopted.
- A female motivator should be appointed from the disadvantaged ethnic group to coordinate the community and the school.
- There is a need of government grants for developing physical facilities of the school on community initiative.
- The task of monitoring teachers' performance and managing the financial aspects of schools should be handed over to the community.
- Play-way methods should be introduced in the school curriculum to retain children in the school.
- The Department of Education should release the fund on time and the school should be informed about the school budget in advance.
- As the word 'Dalit' has a humiliating effect, this word should

be removed from the educational programs and be replaced with the word 'disadvantaged children' – both for Dalits and non-Dalits.

- The time of the school should be rescheduled in accordance with the local working time.
- Pockets where the educationally disadvantaged groups live should be identified.
- The data of disadvantaged children should be collected from SIP.
- The Parent Teacher Association (PTA), SMC, teachers and resource persons (RPs) should be made accountable in dispelling the caste-based feeling of superiority and inferiority in students.
- There should be a regular monitoring of the program activities of the schools. Resource persons should be made accountable in matters of supervision and monitoring of EMIS.

Implementation of School Improvement Plan (SIP) Identification of Successful Cases

School Improvement Plan (SIP) was introduced in primary education in Nepal under BPEP II. The main objective of SIP is to encourage the schools to work on cooperation of the community. Based on the participatory approach, SIP places emphasis on: involvement of stakeholders (including members of the community) in the decision making process, encouraging schools by providing locally worked out solutions, developing better teaching-learning conditions in schools, gradual devolution of authority, and freedom of control over the resources (by the school and the community). In this connection, efforts were made to equip stakeholders, SMC members and head teachers with appropriate



training and resources for the planning, management and operation of the SIP process at the school level.

SIP was later implemented in the secondary schools under the Secondary Education Support Program (SESP).

SIP was extended under-RC schools to other districts. It has become one of the essential instruments for planning programs, resources and educational outcomes of the school.

A study was conducted to identify the successful cases of schools (selected from different districts) where SIP had been implemented.

In the process of identifying successful SIPs, discussions with concerned DOE officials were made. Stakeholders' participation, teachers' commitment and strong leadership for creating enabling conditions were found to be crucial to the successful implementation of SIP. Discussion with DEO, school visits, observation, and discussion with the school staff were made, too.

Major Findings

- The SIP process created an environment conducive to the promotion of coordination between stakeholders. It helped the head

teacher, SMC members, parents and community people come together for the development of school plans.

- The headteacher's strategic and visionary leadership contributed to the effective implementation of SIP. HT's leadership quality helped to set priorities, estimate resource needs, explore sources of funding, and tap resources.
- Involvement of stakeholders in the process of SIP formulation and entrusting them with the task of SIP implementation have developed a feeling of school ownership at the local level.
- However, SIP did not appear to be the only program for the overall improvement of schools.
- It did not adequately address the needs of girls and the disadvantaged.
- SIP paid attention to quality and physical facility development but it focused more on the better.
- SIP implementation depended largely on government resources.

Recommendations

- Stress should be laid on SIP as a basis for all reform endeavours and on institutionalizing it.
- Technical appraisal should be made mandatory.
- SIP activities should be properly monitored and followed up.
- The leadership quality of HT should be developed through management training, seminars, study tours etc.
- Stakeholders should be involved in the affairs of schools.
- Teamwork culture should be developed and promoted.
- Local bodies, NGOs, INGOs and CBOs should be motivated to allot funds for education.

- It is necessary to make SIP gender-sensitive. Gender aspects should be included in all the documents and programs directed towards SIP.
- Stress should be laid on resource planning in SIP preparation.
- It is necessary to develop the capacity of the SIP planners.
- Norms and criteria for school evaluation should be prepared.

Meeting Learning Needs of Children of Indigenous Peoples and Linguistic Minorities

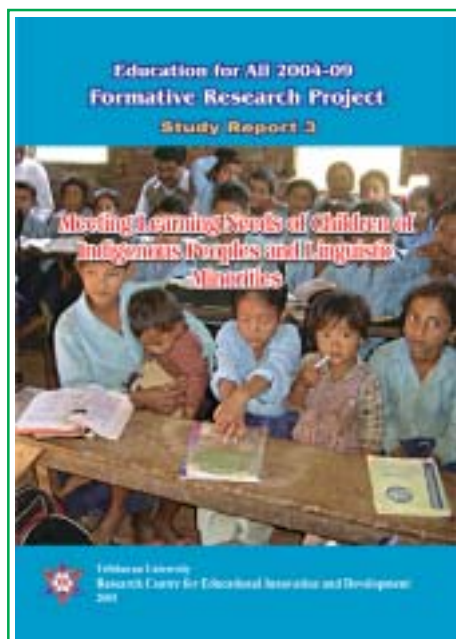
A responsive education system (to meet the learning needs of children of indigenous communities) is the one that includes provisions for use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, the localized curriculum and the classroom process. Hence, a study was carried out on some indigenous people and linguistic minority groups – Bote in Chitwan, Tamang in Rasuwa, and Santhal in Morang.

The objective of the study was to find out the perception of the community people regarding educational provisions and life skills education,

examine responsiveness of the education system to the learning needs of children, assess the existing provisions and analyze their effectiveness, and identify the issues and challenges related to meeting the learning needs of children of indigenous communities.

Major Findings

- Three options had been given with regard to the development of the local curricula: local language, locally relevant vocational subject and locally relevant subject matter. It was found that the schools emphatically opted for vocational subjects.
- Although the CDC guidelines provided an option for the use of the local language in primary grades, the schools were found using either Nepali or English as a subject, not as the local language.
- The study showed that there was a confusion about whether the life skills component was a subject or an approach to the curriculum. CDC has incorporated life skills in the Health Education curriculum. NCED is undertaking teacher preparation in this area.
- Instruction in the mother tongue can be more effective in strengthening students' learning. But this had not been practiced for these reasons: (a) presence of students from multilingual communities, (b) dialectic variations in languages, (c) lack of script in the local language, (d) non-availability of teachers speaking the local language, and (e) lack of motivation on the part of parents.
- It was found that the classroom practices were not child-centered. For the child-centered practice teachers should have receptive behavior, adequate classroom interaction based on learners' pace of learning, attractive learning



atmosphere, safe environment and better school-community relations.

Recommendations

- A thorough study should be made of the practical issues related to the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, and ways to tackle these issues should be identified. It is useful to launch parental awareness campaigns themed on the use of the mother tongue in the classroom instruction.
- Classroom processes as well as teacher preparation need to emphasize behavioral change rather than knowledge accumulation for life skills education.
- While the local curriculum should be closely monitored and consolidated, a more inclusive approach (in the local curriculum) and the frontline approach need to be adopted.
- There should be conceptual clarity about child-centered education. Better strategies should be adopted for effective teaching. Definite factors should be taken into account while using the child-centered approach, e.g. theoretical base, conducive classroom environment and support of the parents.

Disbursement of Block Grants

The Block Grant provision to schools was introduced in 2061/62 as an important strategy under EFA (2004-2009) to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the public primary schools. Under the Block Grant system, the government has introduced a much larger and diversified provision of government grants to schools.

The study on disbursement of block grants was undertaken with the aim



of assessing the issues associated with the disbursement of grants by conducting field survey in three districts and nine schools.

The grants system is not only concerned with providing large chunks of resources to the schools but also with authorizing the school SMCs to take decisions on the use of the grants.

The grants provision is incorporated in the EFA program/budget for each district. The earmarked grants presently include teacher salary grants, textbooks grants, scholarship grants and grants for ECD and Alternative Education (primary level).

The Block grants include administrative grants, salary grant for teachers in the schools run by the local community, educational materials grants and SIP implementation grants.

Performance grants include incentive grants for management transfer and reward grants for achieving a high survival rate at the primary level and high girls' enrolment percentage.

Major Findings

- There was a long delay in the release of funds by the Department of Education to the

District Education Offices and from the District Education Offices to the schools in the year 2061/62. As a result, there was very little time left for using the money for the fiscal year 2061/62.

- There were complaints that the schools were not promptly informed about the release of grants. Schools did receive from DEO neither any information on the breakdown of grants nor any instruction for its use. DEO offices addressed this issue by issuing official letters of disbursement directly or through the resource centers.
- Some of the major grants provided to the schools, e.g. SIP implementation grants and School Materials Grants had not been utilized. Schools cite the delay in grant release, the non-convening of SMC meetings, and the lack of specific programs for the use of money as reasons for this.
- Most of the SMC chairpersons and members were not aware of the release of block grants and the headteachers had not informed the SMCs about the school grants.
- Another aspect was the monitoring of the use of the grants. DEO offices and Resource Centers complained that there were no separate resources on which to carry out the field-level monitoring effectively.

Recommendations

- All concerned agencies and stakeholders including teachers, head teachers and SMC members are required to keep themselves informed about the school grant system and understand its diverse aspects, particularly the 'social audit' criteria of accreditation and responsibilities of different agencies as stated in the Schools Grants Operation Guidelines.

- MOES and the Department of Education and DEOs are required to take steps to ensure that grants provided to the schools are utilized properly and effectively. Certain grant provisions in SGOG need to be re-examined in terms of implementation and cost implications (of various performance grants). DOE should implement programs to build the DEO capacity for administering the grants.
- DEO offices should simplify the process of school requests for grants and of the disbursement of grants within the EFA program/budget frame. Monitoring should be assigned to the resource persons as a priority work.
- DEOs/resource centers should organize school level orientation programs (on the use of the grant funds). The processes of financial audit and social audit should be explained to the schools. School level capacity building activities (strengthening SMCs, school management and financial management) should be taken up as well.
- Schools grants including block grants should aim at achieving the EFA goals, e.g. ensuring the schooling of all children, attaining gender equity, and raising the quality of education. The outputs of the implementation of school grants should be assessed periodically.

Organization of Meetings and Workshops

FRAG Meetings

Seven meetings of the Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG) were held from March 3, 2005 to Sept 19, 2005.



All these meetings were chaired by the chairperson of FRAG Dr. Iswor Prasad Upadhayaya.

In the first two meetings, (March 3 and April 13) discussions were held on issues relating to FRP, progress review of FRP for EFA 2004, research topics for case studies, advertisement for hiring researchers for case studies, longitudinal study on system indicators, revision of the indicators and data collection, and visit of the Norwegian expert.

The third meeting held on April 26 reviewed FRP work plan II and the proposal for case studies.

In the fourth meeting (held on August 8) discussions were held on the action steps developed on the basis of the conclusions drawn by the FRP case studies.

In the fifth and sixth meetings held on September 2 and 4, the actions steps developed were reviewed.

The next meeting held on September 19 prioritized, finalized and recommended the action steps.

Representatives from MOER/Norway and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Nepal participated as observers in some of the meetings for information on the process of implementation of FRP.

Regular Meeting between MOES and FRP-CERID

Three meetings of the officials of the Ministry of Education and Sports and

CERID were held on April 5-2005 July 3-2005 and July 24-2005.

In the first meeting held under the chairmanship of the Executive Director, Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, seven participants took part in the discussion on topics for new areas of research. Discussions were held on research topics for FRP for EFA 2004-05.

In the second meeting held under the chairmanship of the Executive Director, six persons participated in discussion and came up with decisions on submitting the technical progress report. Discussions were also held on auditing. The meeting decided to hold the next meeting on auditing as per the demand of the situation.

The third meeting was attended by five participants, who made a progress review of the first year of implementation of the FRP project and discussed future programs. Discussions were also held on capacity building for the FRP project activities. Under the capacity building program, the need of activities from MOES/DOE down to the grass-roots level was stressed.

Selection Committee Meeting

Three meetings, two on proposal selection and one on the formation of the selection committee, were held on April 21-2005, April 25-2005 and May 6- 2005. Executive Director, Dr. Hridya Ratna Bajracharya, chaired all three meetings.

In the first meeting (April 21) five people took part. They discussed researcher selection criteria and reviewed it. The meeting decided that selection of the researchers would be made on the basis of the selection criteria.

The meeting on proposal selection (April 25) had four participants, who discussed on research topics.

In the meeting of the selection committee held (May 6) seven participants discussed on the revised

system of data collection and the indicators for the longitudinal study on system indicators.

Capacity Building Workshops

Two workshops were held on institutional co-operation and capacity building. The first workshop was organized on July 22 and 23-2005. The second workshop was organized on August 23 and 24 2005.

Fifteen participants took part in the first workshop, which was chaired by Executive Director, Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya. The participants reviewed the draft strategies of capacity building prepared by the Norwegian team. They also identified

areas for programs and activities They stressed the need for developing strategies for the capacity building of the MOE and DOE personnel.

In the workshop held on July 23-2005 fifteen people took part. They reviewed the actions steps recommended by FRP for capacity building. They also selected four areas for capacity building: decentralization, pedagogical process, communication and local capacity building (as per the action steps). Four working teams

were formed to formulate future programs.

The next workshop (August 23 and 24-2005) was chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Sports Mr. Chuman Singh Basnet. Sixteen people participated in the workshop. Strategies for piloting the capacity building program prepared by four groups were presented. Discussions were also held on reports of each group.

Visit of MOES and DOE Officials to Norway

A team of officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports recently visited the Ministry of Education and Research in Norway under the capacity building program of FRP. The nine-member team was led by Director General of the Department of Education Mr. Janardan Nepal. The visit was coordinated by Mr. Diwakar Dhungel, Under Secretary of MOES. The team paid a visit to the Education Directorate, a municipality and some schools in Norway. On the occasion, officials of the two countries exchanged their experiences.

Communication was the main agenda of a week-long visit which started on October 31, 2005.

On the occasion, the role effectiveness of the media and communication was stressed as a factor determining the success of any program. Stress was laid on interactions prior to formulating any plan and on the development of a system information exchange at the implementation level - from the centre to the school.



Some of the conclusions drawn from the visit are as follows:

- Public hearing on major issues
- Entry of information into website
- Bringing out a statistical document of schools
- Introducing a system of monitoring and report writing
- Setting up coordination with Teachers' Unions
- Developing a culture of information sharing and formation of thematic teams in the Ministry
- Setting up a system for monitoring financial activity and preparing time-bound reports on the activity.



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