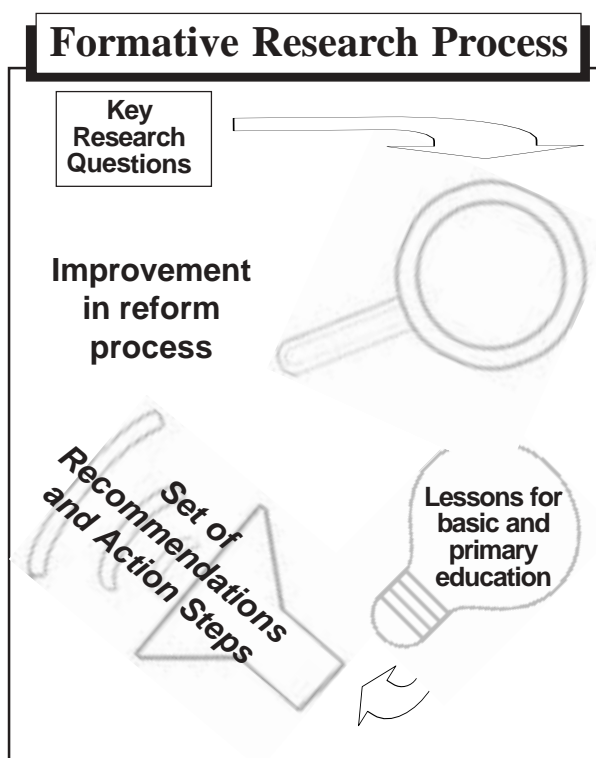


Formative Research Project A Brief Introduction

In the fiscal year 2001/2002 CERID started the Formative Research Project (FRP) to conduct research studies of practical nature that would contribute to the smooth implementation of Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) II. FRP is a technical assistance of Ministry of Education and Research of Norway to the Ministry of Education and Sports of His Majesty's Government, Nepal. The main purpose of FRP is to provide research based strategic information on the policy, planning and implementation of BPEP II to MOES.

The formative research process involves conducting research studies on key research questions generated from stakeholders. The overall working procedure of the Formative Research Project is depicted in the following figure:



The Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG) is an integral part of the project. The responsibility of this group is to reflect upon the findings and suggestions provided by individual research studies and then to recommend concrete action steps to MOES for improvement in the reform process of the basic and primary education sub-sector. In this respect, FRAG finalised action steps pertaining to the areas covered by the five research studies completed under FRP in the first year. The focus of this issue is to disseminate purposes, findings and suggestions of the studies conducted in the first year of FRP.

Research Studies Completed

In the first year of Formative Research Project CERID undertook the following research studies in three main focus areas of BPEP II:

Area	Research
A. Capacity Building	1. Development and Implementation of District Education Plan
	2. Quality and Accuracy of School-Reported Data
B. Enrolment and Retention	3. Access to Education for Disadvantaged Groups
C. Quality of Education	4. Effective Classroom Teaching / Learning Practices
	5. School Effectiveness: A synthesis of Indicators

In addition to these five research studies one review work was also commissioned on stocktaking of the studies undertaken for BPEP II activities.

Major Research Findings and Specific Suggestions

Major findings and specific suggestions of each of the research studies conducted under FRP are presented in this section.

Development and Implementation of the DEP

BPEP II with all the previous experiences in this field and its own experiences of the first two-and-half year started to move towards planned development of the sub-sector in a decentralised perspective. The study aimed at assessing the strengths and limitations of the DEP formulation and its implementation perceived in providing measures to promote decentralized planning in basic and primary education.

The study indicated that DEP had started the bottom-up planning process in education and has been able to initiate steps towards establishing a vision of improvement and development of education in the districts. It also revealed that DEP planning process was adversely affected by the paucity of expertise and so focused on covering mainly the BPEP II components, regardless of priority and specific requirements of the districts. DEP had also been dictated by the resource allocation from the centre. Most of the stockholders were assigned advisory roles, and roles and the responsibilities of local bodies in the preparation and management of the plan were not articulate. This indicated that DEP was developed and programs were implemented in isolation. Moreover, DEP lacked effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms. In fact, DEP was prepared by a selected group of persons, without appropriate contribution from the cross-section of the district populations. It, therefore did not emerge as professional plans reflecting local needs. It resulted in a weak sense of DEP ownership by that community.

The study provided the following specific suggestions:

To increase active participation of the stockholders in the development and implementation of DEP intensive advocacy and social mobilization campaign should be conducted at the district level. Once the local bodies of elected representatives are reinstated as per the provisions of the Local Self Government Act, these

bodies, especially Districts Development Committees (DDCs), Village Development Committees (VDCs), and Municipalities should be involved and made responsible for the formulation and implementation of the educational development plans. Monitoring and sharing of DEP experiences should be locally institutionalized.

Enhancing planning and program development skills of the formulation team should strengthen local planning capacity. In this regard, planning guidelines and formats should also be revised so that they include the methods and process of needs assessment, prioritization and development of educational programs relevant to local situ-

ations. The District Education Office should increasingly assume obtaining the role of providing technical support to DEP by developing a pool of trained personnel and resources.

Ultimately, DEP should be a synthesis of school and village educational plans reflecting both long-term vision and periodic programme targets to be achieved at the district level.

Quality and Accuracy of School-reported Data

This study has explored the range, magnitude and causes of errors in school-reported data, identified



A typical Classroom in Chitwan

the reasons behind them, and developed specific suggestion for necessary improvements.

The study found several inconsistencies in the data available at school and the data provided by the schools to the DEO and DOE. It also pointed out the presence of calculation errors and the missing of data in the forms filled up by schools.

The major reasons behind such problems in school-reported data are found to be (i) complexity in the form including incomplete instruction, (ii) insufficient skills of data providers in filling up the form, (ii) unavailability of data, and (iv) negligence in filling up the form.

The study provided the following specific suggestions:

To minimize the error and improve the quality and accuracy of data it is important to simplify the school information form and add clear guidelines (such as definition of drop-out and process of its computation) to it. Providing hands-on experiences to data managers at school level in calculating indicators and filling up the school information form will certainly help in improving the data quality.



Morning Prayer in one of Sample schools.

Development of a standardized record keeping system at school with particular attention to birth certificate is essential.

Verification of calculated data should be included in the Responsibility of Head Teachers and Resource Persons. Sharing of school data pertaining to students' progress between SMC and parents also helps in verification of data and in reduction of data errors.

Timely availability of data is a critical aspect in the information-based decision system. To reduce the current lag of about two years in publishing the school statistics, the data collection time frame needs strict enforcement.

Access to Education for Special Focus Group

This research was conducted to find out the access to education of the Special Focus Group. The study focuses on identifying the lacuna between the programs designed for the educationally disadvantaged children and their implementation. Information was also collected to identify the motivating and de-motivating factors governing participation of the disadvantaged children in school education.

The study revealed certain gaps in the Educational Incentive Program (EIP) for the Special Focus Group (SFG) children of the Department of Education and the its implementation. Local NGOs/ Clubs were not involved in the incentive distribution process. Moreover, the Incentive Management Committees (IMCs) were not fully informed of the details of the groups to which incentives were distributed. This has jeopardized the monitoring process. In two study districts gaps in the implementation of distribution process of incentive were observed. The good thing is that the gaps were immediately reported to the concerned unit in the DOE by the researcher and the correct process immediately was initiated.

Another gap in implementation was lack of coordination of the incentive program of the government and similar programs of INGOs. Clearly, this lack of coordination led to duplication of activities.

The third important gap was the mismatch between the incentive given and the unique needs of SFG.

The fourth gap identified by the studies was that some of the pockets of educationally disadvantaged groups were still unidentified.

The gap identified in Dalit and primary scholarship program was the presence of a large number of Dalits, which made it difficult for the local authorities to stick to the centrally prescribed guidelines for the distribution of the exact amount of scholarship money.

Awareness programs, school physical facilities, incentives, local teacher/ facilitator, and alternative schooling programs are major factors that motivated disadvantaged groups, individually or in combination, to participate in education. On the other hand, school distance (in certain

remote areas), psycho-social discrimination against SFG, and poor economic conditions are still de-motivating participation of children of educationally disadvantaged groups in education.

Specific suggestions provided by the study to the concerned authorities were as follows:

To make EIP effective extensive awareness-raising activities are required at the district and local levels regarding the SFG and the roles of IMC and local NGOs /Clubs.



Researcher doing FGD in one of Tarai Districts

Coordination is required between the government and NGOs and also within the government and NGOs programs. A regulation regarding program duplication at the local level should be made, specific guidelines are to be developed and regular follow-up should be carried out.

DOE should include the details of educationally disadvantaged groups in their mapping format so that identification of pockets of children of such groups could become easier in the future. Moreover, the central level should delegate authority to DEC/VEC to identify the Dalits in their pockets and districts.

Keeping in view the possibility of various social, cultural and religious factors hindering the participation of hardcore group in education and other measures to address their needs should be identified. Monetary incentive alone doesn't seem to be enough.



A sample Classroom

The alternative schooling program is appropriate particularly in the area where the home-school distance is big. This program may also be useful in many areas where educationally disadvantaged people live. Alternative schooling and the incentive program should go together in such areas.

Persons capable of communicating in local language should be given priority to teach in the alternative /formal schooling program. As they will be teaching the students of early grades of primary education, their academic qualification should not much count.

Effective Classroom Teaching / Learning

The study was conducted to find out the practical use of the curriculum, teacher's guide and textbook in the classroom delivery and measure the extent of the utilization of these materials. It also made a situation analysis of the use of training skill of the teachers in the classroom.

Only a small number of teachers involved students actively in teaching /learning and demonstrated better practices; the classroom practices of majority of primary school teachers were largely textbook-bound.

Varying degrees of consistency was found between the curriculum and curricular materials.

Classroom delivery focused on recall and rote memorization of facts. Observation of classroom practice indicated only limited applications of the skills emphasized in the training.

The study has also mentioned suggestions on the implications of the study.

Teacher's guides used to be provided to schools 8-9 years ago; currently, no complete set of teacher's guides are available in the schools. Therefore, it has become necessary to provide these guides to the teachers. For the immediate purpose they should be distributed free of cost.

Later, a composite handbook for the teacher incorporating teaching guides and other curriculum materials need to be developed and provided to teachers.

It is essential to include availability and use of the curricular materials in the schools as a major supervision and monitoring component.

School Effectiveness in Nepal: Synthesis of Indicators

The primary focus of this study is to assess educational input with reference to basic indicators of school effectiveness. The current study is also an attempt to gain an empirical basis on which to develop a conceptual framework for measuring school effectiveness in our context.

The study found that enrolment in the community

schools is increasing particularly where the Dalits live. It is also found that the under-age enrolment in grade 1 increased drastically in 2001.

Another important finding of the study is that the average class size is inversely related with achievement level; the smaller the class size the higher the achievement level. Another linkage it has reinforced is the positive association of high per student spending with low class size, high student retention and high student achievement.

School's physical conditions have been found positive with respect to student enrolment, retention and achievement.

The study has also mentioned suggestions on the implications of the study.

The study stated that the primary schools should make an inventory for improving physical facilities, prioritizing them as per their need. They should seek community support and public-private partnership in this respect.

The study has also drawn implications regarding the pre-primary section. It has become inevitable for the under-age group

of grade 1 which, in turn, not only leads to improvement in the internal efficiency scenario of the primary education system but also improves effective learning of the smaller children.



A Sample School in Dhankuta

Insistence on a smaller class size in many schools in the Terai region is another important implication of the study.

Stocktaking of the Studies Relevant to BPEP II

This report has put forward the main findings and recommendation of the studies conducted in the area of BPEP II in 1999 and thereafter. The review is expected to be helpful in determining the areas of research that could be conducted under the Formative Research Project.

The study was conducted with the objective of stocktaking of the studies already carried out on areas relevant to BPEP. In the stock-taking exercise, the study also highlighted the major findings, recommendations and issues identified by those studies as well as assessed briefly the quality of study documents. The study also intended to suggest a mechanism for disseminating the findings of the studies conducted by the Department of Education, from the central to the resource centre level.

The study has also pointed out the priority areas for research on eleven different components of BPEP II.

NEWS... ..

Study Visit to Norway

A team of five members from FRP Nepal visited Norway on the invitation of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research from June 8 to 24, 2002. The team was led by Ram Sarobar Dubey- Joint Secretary of MOES. Mr. Hemraj Lekhak-Under Secretary of Monitoring and Evaluation Section of MOES, Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya-Executive Director of CERID, Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa-Coordinator of FRP, and Mr. Balaram Poudel, FRAG member were other members of the team. Professor Kristin Tornes of University College of Molde, who is also the Advisor to FRP and was Chairperson of FRAG in Norway, organised the study trip.

In course of the study visit the FRP team at first visited Oslo where they had a meeting with NORAD on its policy and programmes, BPEP II and Formative Research. The team was also briefed by Mr. Dankert Vedeler, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research, Norway on the Norwegian education system, educational reforms in Norway and Formative Research. The team also visited several research institutions and universities. Mr. Per Olaf Aamodt of NIFU [a research institution similar to CERID] gave a presentation on his experiences in formative research and educational reforms. The institution was involved in formative research in Norway. The team also visited NIBR, NETREED in University of Oslo, and LINS.

Then the team went to Bergen by train. The train route presented beautiful scenes including snow covered mountains. This is a very beautiful coastal city. In Bergen, the team visited Christian



FRP Team from Nepal with Prof. Kristin Tornes and others visiting a school in Norway

Michelson Institute (CMI), an institute dedicated to development studies and Human Rights. The team also visited Institute of Sociology in the University of Bergen and also talked with people involved in International Master's Programme.

From Bergen the study team went to Molde on Cruise. It was a wonderful trip. In Molde, the team visited the Regional Education Office, Romsdal Videregaende Vocational School and University College of Molde. During the tour the team also visited Nettet Community and its local education office and Eikesdal remote school.

On the return trip to Kathmandu the study team also visited the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and UNESCO in Paris. The Director and

his colleagues organised a one-day interaction session at IIEP.

The study visit was really a learning experience for the team. The team members were able to learn about the education system, reform processes in education, and research activities taking place in connection with reform including formative research-all Norwegian. The team had a great exposure to the operation of universities, centres, institutes, and government offices in Norway. The visit to IIEP was also very useful for the team members and for CERID as well in terms of becoming acquainted with recent activities of the Institute and renewing of CERID's relationship with it. CERID is a member of Asian Network of Research and Training Institutions in Asia (ANTRIEP), which was founded with the help of IIEP.

Visits of Norwegian Experts

Prof. Kristin Tornes, Technical Advisor for FRP, had visited Nepal four times in 2001-02. The main purpose of

her visits was assisting CERID to carry out the formative research project that has been assigned to it. In course of her visits she held discussions, meetings and seminars on key issues and research questions. She also made field-visit to see the progress in one of the research studies. She also had formal meetings with MOES and DOE personnel. Her latest visit in December 2002 was mainly concerned with the review of FRP activities including individual

in-depth studies and longitudinal study.



Prof Kristin Tornes discussing after her presentation at CERID



Prof. Aamodt presenting at CERID

Mr. Dankert Vedeler, Joint Secretary in Ministry of Education and Research, Norway had also visited Nepal twice during the year 2001-02. The main purpose of his visits was to finalise annual work plan and budget. He also shared the Norwegian experiences of Formative Research. He also met with the then Minis-

ter of Education and Sports and the Secretary. In his latest visit, he reviewed the progress of FRP.

Prof. Per Olaf Aamodt visited Nepal from September 27, 2002. During his stay in Nepal he made a field-visit to Kavre (Action Research School of CERID, FRP sample). He gave a seminar presentation

to the Donor Group on the role of researchers in Formative Research, in which he recounted his experiences in Norway.. He also talked with the joint secretary on planning future contact with Norwegian researchers and concluded his trip by holding a seminar for Nepalese Researchers.

Dissemination Seminar

A two day dissemination seminar was organized on July 14-15, 2002 at Kathmandu, to discuss on study major findings of five studies completed under FRP. In his welcome speech Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, Executive Director CERID, highlighted the purpose of the seminar and Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa, Co-ordinator of the project, gave briefings on the study reports.

More than 50 people participated in the seminar. The participants were senior officials of MOES and DOE, prominent educational researchers in the country, and the donor community. The participants showed their keen interest in the studies and made important comments. Their comments can be classified into four aspects (a) Philosophical, (b) Methodological, (c) Findings, and (d) Miscellaneous. On the first day of the seminar, the first two aspects were widely discussed.

Mr. Arjun Bhandari and Lava Prasad Tripathi, Joint Secretary of MOES, were the commentators on the first day ses-



Secretary of MOES Mr. Lava Kumar Devkota delivering his comments at the end of the Seminar

sion and Mr. Baikuntha Das Shrestha, and Satya Bahadur Shrestha, both joint secretaries, commented on the second day.

Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa answered the pertinent questions raised by the participants and he also hoped to make the forthcoming longitudinal research more fruitful and realistic by taking lessons from

the present studies.

The seminar ended with the views of Mr. Lava Kumar Devkota, Secretary of MOES, that research findings would be supportive for the successful implementation of BPEP II. Chairperson of the seminar Mr. Ram Sarobar Dubey thanked all the participants for their active participation.

Workshops on Key Research Questions



A participant presenting after a group work session on Key Research Questions at Geta, Dhagadhi

FRP has conducted one resource centre based workshop in each of the five development regions on key research questions. The purpose was to identify key research questions pertaining to BPEP II at the grassroots level. The workshops were organized in Ilam, Kavrepalanchowk, Syangja, Banke, and Kailali districts. In addition, a one day session with the DOES of the Eastern Development Region in Biratnagar was also utilized for this purpose of identifying key research questions.. Findings from those six workshops were discussed at a meeting held in the Department of Education with chiefs of all the units in the DOE, and a list of relevant key research questions was developed. A final meeting in this respect was conveyed at CERID and a list of key research questions that need to be addressed by FRP

in the fiscal year 2002/03 was finalised. Concerned personnel of MOES, DOE and donor communities were present in the meeting.

Seminar on Longitudinal Study

A seminar on longitudinal study of FRP was organized under the chairmanship of the joint secretary on September 24, 2002 at Lalitpur. The participants represented Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), Department of Education (DOE), District Education Offices (DEOs), FRAG and NORAD. In his welcome speech Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, Executive Director of CERID, focused on the process-oriented approach of FRP and integrated approach.

Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa, Co-ordinator FRP, introduced the longitudinal study indicators and potential research topics/key questions. The paper was presented on topics of Formative Research cycle, longitudinal feature of FRP, major areas of



Mr. Hem raj Lekhak, Under Secretary, MOES, at the Workshop on Key Research Questions in Ilam District

MOES for the success of reform process. Mr. Per Olaf Aamodt, FRP researcher, told about his experiences in Norway and expressed his view that there should be proper communication among researchers, advisory groups, MOES and users

searchers should adopt the right model that can support the reform. He suggested researchers to dig out facts and reasons in the research studies. He said that timely reform in implementation can be instrumental to ensuring quality edu-



Welcome address by Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, Executive Director, CERID, at the Seminar on Longitudinal Study

basic and primary education, selected key research questions on research areas, indicators of the study, strategies, sample districts and timeline of the research study.

While speaking on longitudinal aspect of Formative Research Prof. Kristine Tornes, Technical Advisor of FRP, focused on importance of lively discussions among researchers, FRAG members and

groups in the process of Formative Research and its implementation as well. He added that autonomy helps the researchers to come with concrete findings and implication of their studies.

Mr. Chuman Singh Basnet, Director General of DOE, spoke on Formative Research and needs of BPEP. He expressed that the Formative Research needs to go in accordance with the EFA goal. Re-

searchers should adopt the right model that can support the reform. At the end of his speech, he said that Approach, Modality and Process of Formative Research were new to Nepal and hoped Nepal will benefit from the Norwegian experiences.

The second session was chaired by Mr. Satya Bahadur Shrestha, Director of Non-formal Education

Formative Research as Practical Research

A half-day seminar on Formative Research Project was conducted at CERID on December 10, 2002. Forty-five participants from different agencies including MOES, DOE, Faculty of Education, FRAG, CERID and FRP took part in the program.

Prof. Kristin Ternes, Technical Advisor to FRP from the Norwegian side, presented a paper on "Formative Research

as Practical Research". She threw light on the FRP Model, evaluation and implication of the research, the time of the usefulness and effectiveness of the research, FRP methodology, focus and frequency of data collection and reporting cycle.

In the interaction session Prof. Kristin answered the questions of the participants pertaining to the practical nature of the Formative Research Project.

While explaining the completed research activities FRP coordinator Bijaya Kumar Thapa said that the project was embarking into the longitudinal study in the second year. The program ended with the view of Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, Executive Director CERID, about FRP that the basic objective of FRP was to support the successful implementation of BPEP II.

FRAG Meeting

The meeting of FRAG was held under the chairmanship of Dr. Trailokya Nath Uprety on 24th November 2002 at CERID. The aim of the meeting was to finalize the action plans based on FRP findings. Dr. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya welcomed the members and Dr. Bijaya Kumar Thapa explained the status of current activities of FRP. Mr. Chuman Sing Basnet raised some policy questions on the education sector as a whole and pointed out that the Action Steps should contain identification of responsible agency and time frame for actions. At the end, the Committee agreed to forward the corrected version of Action Steps of each of the five research studies to the Planning Division of MOES.



Dr. Trailokya Nath Uprety at the FRAG, Meeting.

Future Plan

FRP conducts in-depth research studies to answer the research questions emerging from stakeholders. In addition, there is another aspect in which all the concerned agencies including MOES, DOE and the donors are interested. They all feel a need for objective information on the progress basic and primary

education in Nepal has achieved since the initiation of BPEP II. In other words, objective research-based data on the performance indicators of BPEP is an area of concern. Therefore, it is felt after the experience of the first year of its implementation that FRP should provide MOES with two distinct kinds of

research-based information on a regular basis—one, based on in-depth qualitative studies and the other, based on system indicators. In this regard, certain communities/locations and schools are selected for both of these longitudinal studies.



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Tripureshwar, G.P.O. Box 2161

Kathmandu (Nepal)

Tel # : 4252919
Fax # : 4261639

e-mail : formative@cerid.org, cerid@mos.com.np
URL : <http://www.cerid.org>