

# EDUCATION & LEARNING

Education remains one of the most important factors in youth life for its power to shape lives in a significant way. Education is also the medium through which they can quench their thirst and realize their potential. Even globally education has been recognized as a priority area since it is so central to the improvement and betterment of the lives of the youth.

Today's Youth, Tomorrow's leaders: Today the youth learn but tomorrow they will either lead or teach. In this sense, education is a "give-and-take" process through which wisdom and knowledge of one generation is transferred to another. Therefore if the present generation is well educated and informed, the future generation will naturally start at an already higher level of education and will be better able to shoulder the responsibilities of leadership. They will lead the society and country into a better, more hopeful tomorrow.

It is against this backdrop that our group have been looking at some of the current realities and issues with regards to education and learning; We mapped out the causes, impact and solution to each issues, among which we have identified three issues as being the most predominant ones:

1. Low quality of education
2. Exam-oriented education system
3. Increases in youth disciplinary issue

## **1. Low quality of education**

In the NYP 2011, policy statements 5 and 6 touch on the need to improve the quality of education in Bhutan. However, the quality of education in Bhutan has remained as it was 5 to 10 years back. Some of the major causes for this has been the vast syllabus which compels teachers to be under pressure to cover the content of the textbook which end up being theory-heavy and less practical. In rural schools, the lack of resources such as lab equipment further exacerbates the problem by turning supposedly practical classes into theoretical sessions. Additionally, the curriculum which has also remained the same with very minor updates, no longer meets the needs of the job market. Aspects of education that targets other youth groups such as ECCD and SEN have teachers that have limited capacity and training.

If the above problems and issues are not resolved, then we will face problems like increase in youth unemployment, poor holistic growth of students (moral values and basic life skill), lack of creative and innovative students who fail to create their own jobs in future and inequity in educational level.

To combat the above challenges, we would like to suggest revision of the syllabus as per requirement of the job market, encourage student-centered learning, use of ICT in schools, encourage recreational learning(dance, music, arts, drama) and more education in media literacy.

## **2. Exam-oriented education system**

Currently, the exam marks overwhelmingly determine the value of youths, while other talents are ignored. The dominance of summative assessment in schools contributes to demotivated and discouraged people from taking interest in genuine learning. Instead it encourages students to memorize with the end of exams in mind, which has negative implications on mental health of students such as anxiety & fear. Such an approach to learning and education fails to produce creative and innovative students in the long run who are able to navigate the challenges of a dynamic, constantly shifting future. As we refer to the NYP 2011, mismatch of the education outcome and employment in Bhutan has been listed as one of the critical issues, with policy statement 1 and 6 put in place to address this. However, the youth unemployment rate has risen in 2018 at 15.7% from 9.2% back in 2011 (Labour Force Survey Report, NSB).

## **3. Increase in youth disciplinary issue**

Some of the causes that contribute to the above issue are dysfunctional families (divorce, busy parents, violence at home), peer pressure and the widening communication gap between parents and youth. If such a trend continues into the future, we are most likely to see an increase in suicidal, juvenile, dropouts, and delinquency cases with an overall poor holistic development of childrens. For this, we would like to suggest the establishment of support systems such as youth-buddy systems and platforms for educators to work with parents in partnership to impart life values and wisdom.

# **National Youth Policy Review**

In the national youth policy (NYP) they have emphasized education as a key respect to livelihood values, life skills and right attitude. They have also made efforts to be inclusive to all kinds of education (general, monastic and non-formal education). Some of the important focus areas highlighted in the background section of the NYP 2011 include:

### **1. Lower literacy level for women particularly in rural areas.**

Examining the context in 2011, the statistics show a negligible ~4% difference in the enrollment in higher secondary schools for boys over girls. This statistics has been inverted in 2018 with a ~5.5% difference in enrollment for girls over boys. Therefore, for higher secondary education, the issue as of 2018 can be assumed to be mitigated. However looking at statistics for tertiary education, the gap has narrowed only a bit; in 2011, the enrollment of men outweigh that of women by a shocking ~40%! This number in 2018 has reduced to ~19%, which is a drastic improvement but still too high nonetheless. With this as our background, we believe that the NYP 2020 should now focus on why this gap exists instead of literacy level.

### **2. Inadequate delivery of life skill within the curriculum.**

We believe that this issue still merits attention, now more than before, since life has become even more complex and sophisticated. As is very close to our experience, in schools classes like value education and health & physical education often get sacrificed for subjects like science and mathematics. This

blatant hierarchy of subjects encourages a value hierarchy and more seriously makes the scope of education and learning really narrow.

### **3. Incidental cost inhibits access to education for disadvantaged youths.**

To tackle this challenge, the past government had come up with Central school policy where all the necessities for basic education was provided for free to all students of central schools. However this policy became subject to scrutiny and criticism for its blanket approach when providing the necessities regardless of people's ability to afford such basic necessities for their children. This naturally led to a drastic increase of the enrollment of students in central schools which put more pressure on government resources. On the contrary, for students from poor family background, they received only bedding (blanket and pillow) as a standard, just like all other students without further regard to their other basic needs.

Generally, the NYP 2011, policy statement 3 states "to provide equal access and support to complete education up-to class 10 for all young people". In light of recent government policy to do away with the class 10 cut-off point, we recommend bringing the grade to 12. In addition, we would like to recommend the government of the day to utilize a equity-based approach and not an equality-based approach for such large investments.

## **Additional recommendations**

In addition to the policy statements already present in the NYP 2011, we would like to recommend drafting some additional statements that emphasize on the following :

1. Providing equitable budget allocation in all corners of the country
2. Educating for holistic and equitable development of youths
3. Building the capacity of ECCD and SEN teachers
4. Give importance to the mounting issue of youth disciplinary cases.

As it relates to the last point, Nazhoen Lamtoen plays an important role in reducing suicidal and crime rates of youth. Their target group constitutes youth from disadvantaged family backgrounds. As of now, it exists only in Thimphu and Paro; We would recommend scaling their efforts and network through partnership with the educational sectors to help out the youths.

## **VISION**

To create enthusiastic, knowledgeable, responsible, skilled and productive youth who are able to meet their emotional, physical and intellectual needs.

### **Group Members**

Sonam choden  
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