'Teacher Motivation Crisis': Reflecting on Teacher Training in Nepal

Paper submitted as the requirement of the course

Principles and Models of Teacher Education

To

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By

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Illustrations

1. Background

1.1. The Country

Nepal boarders the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China in the north and mostly the Indian State of Bihar in the south, relatively less developed parts of the both. With a population of around 28 million, the climatic diversity often coincides with an unparalleled ethno-cultural mosaic reflecting molten cultures of both neighbours. The Nepali state recognizes some 60 indigenous groups besides 'caste groups' – the shadow of which greatly affects social realities including education in the country. Many speak their own language. Nepali is the *lingua franca*. Social indicators also vary greatly across gender and ethnic groups. The country is categorized amongst the least developed in the world. With the value of 0.530, Nepal ranked 145th in the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2006 (UNDP, 2008). Infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest, literacy is among the lowest as we shall see later.

Dating back to some 300 centuries the 'modern' state of Nepal was a *terra-incognita* until 1950. Until then, the country was run by two feudal aristocracies based on a Hindu worldview. Gradually opened up, it is still ruled by the elites where caste and class often intertwine. To this day, some 80 percent of the population lives on subsistence agriculture far from basic conveniences. The available benefits are unevenly distributed particularly between the eastern and the western parts of the country. Administratively, it is divided into five developed regions, 14 zones and 75 districts (see Annex 4: map of Nepal), and those are further divided into 30 plus municipalities and some four thousand village committees. Since 1950 when aristocratic rule of Ranas was abolished, Nepal has undergone three major political changes. First was the establishment of autocratic rule by the king in 1961 that lasted for some 30 years. Second was the transformation of king's absolute rule into constitutional monarchy by a popular movement in 1990. The third change is the Maoist insurgency that cost several thousand lives to the country. It has temporarily subsided with the parliamentarians and rebellions striking a peace deal forcing king out of his throne in 2006.

1.2. Educational scenario of Nepal

Nepal ranks 111th amongst 129 countries with an Education for All Development Index (EDI) [1] value of 0.738. Table 1 presents its rank along with other indicators. A comparison with

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[1] The EFA Development Index (EDI) is a composite using four of the six EFA goals, selected on the basis of data availability: Universal primary education (UPE), Adult literacy, Quality of education and Gender parity. One indicator is used as a proxy measure for each of the four EFA goals, and each

Table 1 EDI and its components (values in parenthesis)

Indicators	Nepal	Belgium
EDI	111 (0.738)	27 (0.979)
Total Primary NER	111 (0.801)	38 (0.975)
Adult Literacy Rate	116 (0.552)	32 (0.990)
Gender Specific EFA Index	113 (0.815)	21 (0.987)
Survival Rate to Grade 5	101 (0.785)	56 (0.964)
EFA=Education for All, EDI=EEA Devevelopment Indicators		
NER= Net Enrolment Ratio		

(UNESCO/GMR, 2009) pp 248-249

Belgium reminds us of the context of stark differences we are discussing about. It is evident that these figures also give an indication of the status of teachers. Although much improved significantly, teacher student ratio (TSR) in 2007 was at 1:34. The objective of getting all the teachers with minimum formal qualification is reported to have met in 2007 (MoES/UNESCO, 2007). Required minimal formal qualification for the primary grade is proposed to upgrade from Grade 10 to 12 (plus pre-service training of 10 months) by 2012. Due to the scope of the paper, I have confined myself to the issues of primary grade teachers. Government often mentions of improving supervision of teachers for the improvement of the quality in education. In this paper I intend to discuss how motivation and social responsibility aspects of teachers can possibly be addressed through teacher education.

1.3. Situation of teachers

Nepal has some 150 thousand school teachers about two thirds of which are employed at primary level (see Table 2). About a third at primary grade teachers is women – rather fairly recent development in its not too long history. Impact of this change is yet to be understood from motivational perspective. In terms of ethnic inclusion it is still a long way to go. It is overwhelmingly dominated by particular group of people. And its still a long way to go before Nepal has a full-fledged cadre of teachers as Table 3 indicates.

Table 2 No of school teachers in Nepal (2003)

	Female	Male	Total	%
Primary	30,542	70,941	101,483	78
Lower Secondary	4,238	21,724	25,962	18
Secondary	1,732	18,500	20,232	14
%	25	75	100	100

those EDI components is assigned equal weight in the overall index in accordance with the principle of considering each goal as being of equal importance. The EDI value for a particular country is thus the arithmetic mean of the observed values for each component. Since these components are all expressed as percentages, the EDI value can vary from 0 to 100% or, when expressed as a ratio, from 0 to 1. The higher the EDI value, the closer the country is to achieving Education for All as a whole. (UNESCO, 2005)

Table 3 Percentage of fully trained teachers in Nepal

	2000	2001	2002	2003
Primary	28.8	21.1	23.8	24.8
Lower Secondary	14.5	11.3	13.4	14.0
Secondary	8.1	7.5	8.3	8.1

As we will discusses later, their self-esteem and social status is low despite the fact that basic benefits are in parallel to government jobs with similar qualification at least in the primary level. Overly allegiance to political parties (the 'party flag carriers' as they are called) and the prominence of the for-profit private school can be said to other reasons behind low morale. Annex 3 gives an account of a teacher in a different context that illustrates his or her working circumstances.

2. The Problem

Quoting government officials the media often report Nepal requiring tens of thousands of teachers if it were to meet the goal of Education for All (EFA) although the number is contested from various quarters for being grossly inaccurate. We are not contesting on the figure at this moment as we wish to concentrate on how if at all, the teachers in the future can be motivated through training, holding morally rather through other mechanisms accountable. It of course, does not mean accountability mechanisms are not necessary. I take motivational input (primarily through training in our case) as steel rods around which accountability of cement is cast. I will make an attempt to identify what kind of training approach it is being taken in Nepal and how possibly this can be addressed through training.

In a village where I used to work in the middle of 1990s, there was a primary school next to our project house. There were two teachers; one of them attended the school at best. Frequently, even both of them were absent. Once, when both of them were absent, one of my colleague motivated children for plantations in school premises and took a class about it. Children were happy. In a couple of days one of them came to know about this when he got back. Lo, we found him uprooting the saplings from school premises and warning my colleague that it was NOT our business! We were very much disappointed but we could not do anything (at least at that time that's what we thought). One has to walk for a whole day and take a bus for few hours' if anybody wanted to complain about him (them) to the authority. I thought he was a stupid guy and it was no point discussing anything to him. For some reason, we happen to speak to each other the next week or so. To my surprise, he

knew quite a lot about teaching methods, theories of Piaget, constructivism and what not! He kept me spell bound with all his child-centric teaching principles. Jokingly, I said 'but they don't seem to tell you that it was for teaching'! He felt a bit awkward but did not say anything. Normally, there are tens of excuses why he cannot teach: starting with the bad government policies to absence of children of 'unaware' parents. From that day on, I kept on thinking about that. I reckon, 'the teachers' motivation crisis' as UNESCO/GMR (2009) has put, is the major issue Nepal's education is facing (Bhattarai, 2006).

After a few years of this incident mentioned above, I had an opportunity to get involved in designing an action-research project on education with the same group of people I used to work with, in another location. Thrust of that program was to increase access of children of that community without significant hardware input. We designed a series of training to the School Management Committees (SMC) and the teachers. We had designed four modules. The first one was almost entirely on the importance of being a teacher and their social responsibility. The next two were on pedagogical aspects and the last one was again on motivational aspects and their social responsibility but mixed with the members of SMCs. We had a positive outcome and I would like to analyse this in the context of our course on teacher education with a view to suggest making changes in the present teachers' training program.

2.1. Teacher training system of Nepal

Until recently, anybody who passed school education could become a teacher. They have to go through a 10 month pre-service training now. Those who are already in teaching but do not have training in teaching undergo a three module in-service training (detail in Box 1) outline curriculum of which is presented in Annex 1. Further, they are subject to a 'teacher licence' examination which so far remains a 'habituating exercise' than of much substance. Students can specialize on education in their last years in schools that somehow does not seem to be given a heed.

The primary teacher training course now address gender and ethnicity differences in the class room (NCED, 2006) – a social component. I asked a couple of the concerned by phone about the detail content of the curriculum particularly under the first two subjects *viz*. Primary Education and Development and Professional Study. They did not recalled exactly but were almost sure that it was not about their role and their own motivation. I am personally also aware of it.

From the perspective of approaches taught in the course (Janssens, 2004), it gives an impression that the training system is primarily dwelling on the second approach i.e. emphasis on observable behaviour. In the principles of teaching, it has definitely taken cognitive approach which is explicit in the Teachers' Education Journal published by the training authority (e.g. the Teachers Education journal). One can imagine there is much less attention on the third approach which emphasizes influence from the environment. The

Text Box 1 An outline of primary teacher training system in Nepal

1   Pre-Service Primary Teacher Training Programme:
This training programme is for those, who are not directly involved in teaching, but aspire to be a teacher in near future. This training is conducted by Private Primary Teacher Training Centres (PPTTCs), affiliated to NCED. There are around 146 such centres at present. This training programme is divided into two semesters:
     a. *First semester (5 months)*
     b. *Second Semester (5 months)*

2   In-Service Primary Teacher Training Programme:
This programme is for those teachers, who are involved in teaching, especially in the public schools. It is divided in to three packages:

     a. *Basic Teacher Training Programme - First Phase (330 Hours)*
     b. *Primary Teacher Training - Second Phase (660 Hours)*
       This package is delivered through distance mode by Distance Education/Open Learning Division)
     c. *Primary Teacher Training -Third Phase (330 Hours)*

Curriculum details in Annex I. Source: (NCED, n.d.)

training can invite disastrous discussions if much attention is paid on the environment: there will be too many complaints for the instructor to handle if it is an in-service training in particular.

It is however; apparent that Reflection is not a part of the training upon which the course (MES) gave much emphasis with advices at much deeper levels of reflection (e.g. (Korthagen & Vasalos, n.d.). This would already make a big difference if questions related to social responsibility of a teacher are posed[2]. An author in Nepal's teachers' magazine

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[2] What a day of absence would mean to the life of a child? What if the school where my children go, do not have teachers? However, it is known that most teachers do not have their children in public schools. Most often teachers from accessible areas go (at least officially) to remote places. Ironically, in India, teachers in even private schools were reported to be absent to a noticeable extent.

seems to agree on the importance of reflection which supports that general level of thoughts are not too far behind:

> *A teacher is one who has to transform students' dreams and desires into the real destination. . . Before we change other [sic] we have to learn how to change ourselves. To do this what we need is reflection. I fully believe that where there is no reflection, there is no (scope of) perfection. (Pandey, 2008)(p187).*

2.2. Factors of teachers' motivation

An electronic scan of literature also indicates that literature on motivation is overwhelmingly about the techniques of motivating children for the teacher than on how to motivate teachers. The reason is clear that most literature originates in rich countries where it does not seem to have much problem with teacher motivation as appears in Nepal's case. Teachers are competitively paid and its one of preferred jobs (appears increasingly women's preference) and commands fairly high status in the society taking experience in Belgium as my window for information. In the countries such as Nepal teaching is the least preferred occupation 'employment of the last resort' as Bennell (2004) puts. Teacher absenteeism was clearly one of major indicative motivational problems in developing countries. A Harvard-World Bank Study in India states as many as 40% of teachers absent in one province average standing at 25%, placing the country the second worst amongst 8 countries included in the study (Kremer, Chaudhury, Rogers, & Muralidharan, 2005). A study indicates it to be around 15% in 2001 in Nepal's case (Benett, 2001).

There are several kinds of absenteeism. Kremer et al (2005) mention 5 kinds:

1. *Officially present, but away on government duty – related to education and/or tasks not connected with education;*
2. *Officially present, but not in the class or in school – typically teachers come in the morning, mark their attendance and leave on personal work / chores;*
3. *Teacher absents herself/himself without information – but routinely leaves an application behind just in case a senior official visits the school. Researchers confirm they have seen a bunch of leave letters without a date in the attendance register;*
4. *The school itself is unofficially shut due to a local festival, extreme weather, agricultural activity (harvest, planting etc).*
5. *Teachers present at school. They are busy filling registers, reading newspapers, knitting or mending, conducting their business on mobile phones and so on.*

However, it should be noted that presence alone does not indicate motivation as the same authors (ibid) underline. I think, the first and the fourth are not problematic as rest of

them are. They are often presented as excuses for absence. None of the types of absences are entirely related to teachers training alone (Text Box 2 offers complications involved with it and a note: the western part in general is worse). First and the second types of absences are crimes that even the education sector cannot address. Hopefully, the type demotivation of 5th, 3rd to certain extent may be addressed through training. This effort is on the assumption that if social workers, Missionary Fathers and Sisters do work in difficult situations, why could the teachers not be trained with proper orientation? This no way should be understood that I am picking on the teachers. In some encounters, the teachers do react to people like me that we are picking on them whereas health staff are not any better. Below I make further attempts to understand the sources of motivation and de-motivation.

With reference to various scholars, Pandey (2008) elaborates sources of teachers motivation: Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Societal. Extrinsic motivation is the will to do something based on encouragement from an outside source – studying hard for good grade is one example. A great deal of human motivation stems from socio-cultural contexts rather than from the individual - this is called societal. You are in a musical environment; you just nod and jump even if you do not know singing and dancing. Intrinsic motivation is anything we do to motivate ourselves without (extra) rewards from an outside source. This is (the latest) the kind of motivation, we are seeking to address here. Other kinds of motivations have to be dealt with from other fronts.

A study carried out in India mentions in-service training as one of the motivating factors amongst many other things:

> *1. High pay scales;*
> *2. Regularity of pay;*
> *3. Having attended an in-service training programme;*
> *4. Existence of PTA or other community-school forums.*
> *5. Teachers belong to the same area as the location of the school.*
> *6. Teachers are from the same community.*
> *7. Non-teaching duties and responsibilities (teachers cite some duties – especially as electoral officials – as enhancing their status in the eyes of the community and also giving them access to political leaders.) ((Ramchandran, Pal, Jain, & Sharma, 2005)*

The study agrees that while the absence these conditions or facilities may be cited as reasons for poor motivation, their presence does not guarantee motivation. I find no 7 particularly problematic as it is expecting the teachers to seeking inspiration for not being teachers.

Because of the contextual similarities, I have taken the same study for understanding factors of de-motivation. Let us see what the teachers have said the reasons for their de-motivation:

1. *High teacher-pupil ratio*
2. *Infrastructure problems*
3. *Erratic disbursement of salaries*
4. *'Forced' to teach children of poor communities and specific social groups who are 'dirty' (reflecting the class bias and social gap between the children and teachers)*
5. *Irregular attendance of children (because of migration or work-related reasons) and illiterate parents, which adds to the work of the teacher.*

Text Box 2 A day in eastern Nepal schools

Visiting primary schools in Eastern Nepal one Monday, we were surprised to find that none of the schools were operating. School after school was closed. It was difficult to find out why, as most of the villagers were out working in the fields. Finally we found a group of parents, and they explained to us that their school had two teachers, in common with most of the schools in the area. One would work on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and the other on Thursdays and Fridays. Both would take a long weekend from Saturday to Monday. A parents' committee had been to the district education office to complain, but were not made to feel welcome, and came away empty handed. Later we questioned the district official, and he agreed that the teachers were expected to teach six days a week, from Sunday to Friday. He admitted sending the parents' group that came to his office away, as they were "troublemakers". If he accepted the parents' complaint he would have to sanction those teachers who were not working as officially expected, which would make him unpopular with his peers. Better children are not taught, than to upset the status quo. Again it is the children who suffer.

(Benett, 2001)

Looking at these factors of de-motivation, I am further convinced that there is no easier way other than addressing them through training. The gap between the teacher and the students can also be devised through the story in Annex 3. Further, there is specific situation that has bearing in teachers' motivation in Nepal. Until 1971, the community was responsible for running schools whether or not they were aided. The government then nationalized all the schools and 'qualified' teachers were appointed. Obviously, community was detached from schools and the government could not provide supervision. Community also used to maintain infrastructure through labour contribution if there was no option. Since, the government took over there was nobody even to bother the teacher. The teacher without any level of monitoring is sure to go astray as has been the case. The government provided the salary but nothing else. Earlier someone in the community looked for the teacher. Both teachers were responsible to the community and the community was responsible to the

teacher. It has much to do with the motivation of teachers in Nepal. Teachers needed much moral support to keep building on high morale. In this background, I wish to propose the alternative training approach that includes motivational component for the teacher.

3. Proposed approach

A quick review of the literature shows that overwhelmingly literature on teacher motivation is concentrated around material input for motivation. I am arguing that there is more than material for motivation. It appears that unacceptably high proportions of teachers working in public school systems in many Low Income Countries (LICs) are poorly motivated due to a combination of low morale and job satisfaction, poor incentives, and inadequate controls and other behavioural sanctions (Bennell, 2004). In situations where affiliation with a political party gives immunity to all kinds of irregularities and even bribing to hold the job in many developing countries (at least I have not encountered such cases in Nepal so far) persists, I do not see much hope other than inspiring a reasonable number of good teachers to take the issue forward. Specifically I am putting forward the logic that it is necessary and possible to cultivate motivation through training. Here, I wish to present an alternative approach to training of teachers in Nepal with reference to the course on teacher education in the course of Master of Educational Studies, the government curricula on teacher training (Annex 2) and the experience on the action research (Annex 3). It should be noted that (at least in my perception) there have been no changes that could be felt when the government raised the salary of teachers. I definitely do not mean that it should not be done. The received wisdom among occupational psychologists is that 'pay on its own does not increase motivation' (Bennell, 2004).

Here, I am putting the idea forward with the view that many motivational factors can be compensated or enhanced by addressing motivational issues in the training (and constant follow up). The ideas do not require signficantly additional expenses. I propose that Scope of a Teacher is presented as the first content of the course. A teacher is not just an employee but an entrepreneur who can create and run a business – the business of educating children for the benefit of humanity. Of course, it is not possible to do so in vain. In the given condition that the government has provided basic salary it is possible to work on this manner. It is a responsibility of a teacher to create condition not just to teach when conditions are created. There is enough material to organize this kind of course that I do not

wish to entertain the matter here due to the limitations of this paper[3]. I already proposed that there is a significant reflection on its role as a change agent. Some of the topic of indicative content I present below:

> What Difference Can I Make?
> Several Metaphors of a Teacher: candle, match stick
> Several praises to a teacher – both by successful and unsuccessful people
> Lives of teachers – who chose the vocation over riches

I propose that in the curriculum presented in Annex I, in the both semesters of pre-service training or in all three phases of in-service training a subject such as 'Becoming a Teacher' be introduced. Or this aspect is included with reasonable emphasis in the current content 'Professional Study' on each phase of in-service training. It may be hard for normal professionals to deliver this training. An inspired education philosopher can be invited to deliver lectures. I consider that such content needs to be delivered at least once in every five years after the training in order to maintain the morale of teachers. I conclude with the following quotes that I hope gives an indication of orientation I have wished to pursue:

> "*A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell, where his influence stops."*
> ~ Henry Brooks Adams (American writer, 1838-1918)

> "*Teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges.*"
> ~ Joyce A. Myers

> "*A courage which looks easy and yet is rare; the courage of a teacher repeating day after day the same lessons - the least rewarded of all forms of courage*"
> ~ Honore de Balzac

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[3] This kind of site can be considered as the type of material I am referring to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpog1_NFd2Q&feature=related although it's not yet available to develop them in Nepali.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Primary teacher-training curriculum:

Primary Teacher Training-Phase I

S.n.	Subject	Hours
1.	Primary Education and Development	45
2.	Professional Study	45
3.	Generic	30
4.	Nepali Language Teaching	30
5.	Mathematics Teaching	30
6.	Environmental Science Teaching	30
7.	Social Studies Teaching	30
8.	English Language Teaching	30
9.	Practice Teaching	50
10.	Examination	10
	Total	330

B. Primary Teacher Training-Phase II

S.n.	Subject	Hours
1.	Primary Education and Development	90
2.	Professional Study	90
3.	Generic	90
4.	Mathematics Teaching	90
5.	English Language Teaching	90
6.	Nepali Language Teaching	70
7.	Environmental Science Teaching	70
8.	Social Studies Teaching	60
9.	Examination	10
	Total	660

C. Primary Teacher Training-Phase III

S.n.	Subject	Hours
1.	Primary Education and Development	10 (+ 35)
2.	Professional Study	10 (+ 35)
3.	Generic	10 (+ 35)
4.	Nepali Language Teaching	15
5.	Social Studies Teaching	15
6.	Mathematics Teaching	20
7.	Environmental Science Teaching	20
8.	English Language Teaching	20
9.	Physical Education Teaching	10
10.	Creative and Expressive Art	20
11.	Practice Teaching	170
12.	Examination	10
	Total	330

Source: (NCED, n.d.)

Annex 2: Relevant sections of 'Education for all Chepangs'[4] Action Research

Major Achievements of the Teachers' Training

After the training, the teachers have been practising child-friendly techniques. Changes such as in teaching style – stopped punishing children, lay-out of the classrooms, making and use of more teaching materials; regular meetings with the parents as well as the warming of teacher-child-parents and friendliness in teachers behaviour is seen. The teachers who knew the Chepang language they are using the language with children. Expressing that they have realized their responsibilities and taking the teaching profession respectfully, they are reported saying "We used to think that Chepangs are not capable of learning genetically, we now realize that all the children are equally capable if proper learning environment is crated". (p. 73)

Education for All Chepangs: Basic Orientation Training to Teachers (Phase I)

Objectives	Contents	Days	Participants
• Arouse the feeling that a teacher can make difference if he/she wants to do so. • Increase sensitivity towards the language and culture of Chepangs. • Introduce 'education-for-all'(EFA) as national program	• Mapping the school catchment • Main issues of Chepangs education as teachers see • Why Chepang should send their children to school? • Nepal's social structure, status of education and Chepangs • Chepangs' struggles for education as felt by Chepangs • Rights to mother tongue education and problems • Cultural diversity and major issues of indigenous peoples' education • EFA: quality education, rights and social structure • Stakeholders of education: who is more important? • What is important for a child? • Violence in schools • NGO-school partnership: experiences, potentials and challenges • My life as a teacher: personal interests and points of convergence with Chepangs	5	38 (15 women, 2 Chepangs)

Source: (CAED/SEACOW/NCA, (2009, in press))

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[4] Chepang is one of 60 indigenous groups with distinct cultural identity and language. They live in a specific location and number over 50 thousand.

Annex 3: The typical teacher

The typical teacher is a Brahman male under 30 years of age who lives at home with seven other people, and speaks Nepali (the national language and only medium of instruction in public schools) at home. He is a farmer as well as a teacher, spending about 20 hours a week on farm and household chores; He has no source income other than his teaching salary and any income which might be made from the farm. Household related duties frequently make it difficult for him to be home in time to listen to early evening broadcasts. Furthermore, the typical teachers spent 19 nights away from home in the last year, mostly on household or school related business.
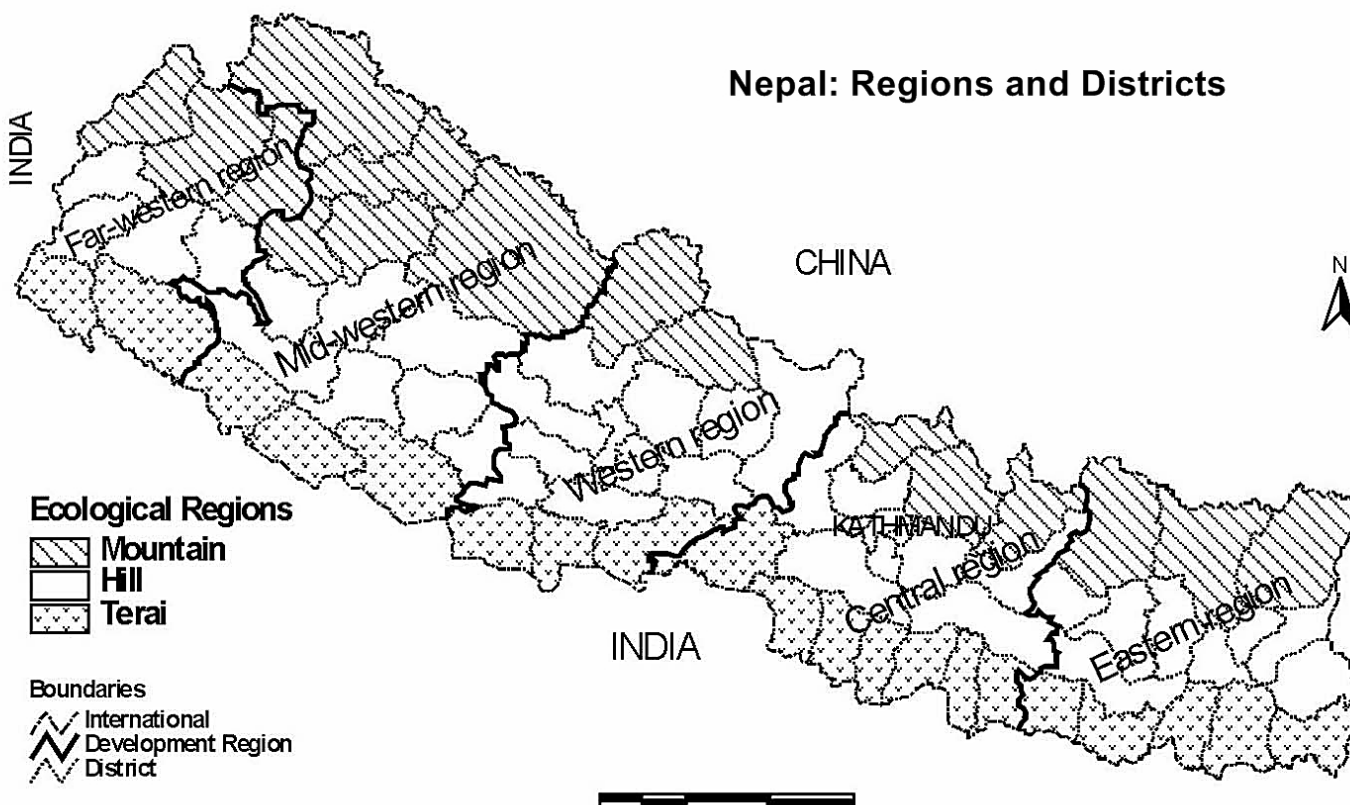
There is less than a 50/50 chance that he owned a radio prior to receiving one from the project, and he must purchase batteries for the radio – for as much as five percent of his salary – since there is no electricity in the village. (The only source of light at home is a simple oil lamp). He particularly enjoys listening to the news and educational programmes. It is likely that he does not have a private room where he can listen to the radio attentively with ease. He has been teaching for nearly firve years, and has taught in at least one other school prior to his present assignment. It takes between 30 and 45 minute to walk to school each day.

Typically the first member of his family to have passes the SLC examination, he began teaching because it was the only job opportunity available in his village (or even in his district), and due to his inability – financially or otherwise – to gain higher academic qualification. His teaching job is a temporary appointment.

He teaches 36 periods of class a week, out of a maximum possible 39. He teaches virtually all of the subjects offered in the primary school. He may well have to teach more than one class at a time during some periods. In administration or extra-curricular activities

(Holmes, Man, & Mayo, 1993)

Annex 4: Map of Nepal

Nepal: Regions and Districts

INDIA

Far-western region

Mid-western region

Western region

CHINA

KATHMANDU

Central region

Eastern region

INDIA

N

Ecological Regions
- Mountain
- Hill
- Terai

Boundaries
- International
- Development Region
- District

Source: Indian Defence Review

Map not to scale