



# CONNECTING CLASSROOMS

Developing effective learning in Nepal:  
Insights into school leadership, teaching  
methods and curriculum



In collaboration with:





# Developing effective learning in Nepal: Insights into school leadership, teaching methods and curriculum

Edited by:  
**Chris Tweedale and Jess Staufenberg**

---

This project is part-funded with UK aid from the British people. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) pursues our national interests and projects the UK as a force for good in the world. We promote the interests of British citizens, safeguard the UK's security, defend our values, reduce poverty and tackle global challenges with our international partners.

# CONTENTS

Foreword .....vi

Foreword.....vii

Introduction ..... 1

## Sponsored research studies

Core skills integration in the Nepalese secondary school curriculum .....5

Core skills for employability ..... 17

International perspectives on global learning ..... 26

The changing role of school leaders:  
What the best school leaders do and how they do it ..... 43

Attributes of successful school leaders ..... 50

## Sponsored case studies

Leading on effective quality assurance in schools ..... 64

The role of school leaders in supporting the professional development  
of teachers ..... 68

School-community relations in developing life skills for students ..... 73

Benefits of international school partnerships for  
teaching and learning ..... 77

Teaching critical thinking and problem solving in the classroom ..... 81

Effective assessment of project-based learning ..... 86

Embedding digital literacy in the classroom ..... 90

Global citizenship and global learning in schools ..... 94

Developing student leadership through student clubs ..... 100

## FOREWORD

I am delighted to be writing this foreword for the British Council publication *Developing effective learning in Nepal : Insights into school leadership, teaching methods and curriculum*. This publication comes at a very pertinent time for Nepal, as the areas covered under the publication have been identified as key areas of development under the national School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016–2023.

The Ministry of Education in Nepal is working on policies that will enable better management and governance of our schools. While the School Management Committees (SMCs) will have stronger roles in the planning and internal management of schools, the head teachers will focus more on pedagogical leadership and teacher professional development leading effective teaching and learning in schools.

This publication outlines what has worked in school leadership in other countries, which will be a good reference for school leaders in our country. It also offers insight into both international and local perspectives on policies and practice in school leadership, teacher professional development, curriculum implementation and integration of core skills. The publication will be very useful for anyone in the education field wishing to be up to date about current trends in the area.

Through the Connecting Classrooms programme, the British Council has been promoting international collaboration, core skills embedded into communicative classroom teaching and capacity development for teachers and school leaders. As part of the programme, many school leaders from Nepal have received the opportunity to travel to the UK and learn from their partner schools. The school leaders from the UK have also travelled to Nepal to learn about our culture and ways of working. These activities are aligned to Nepal's commitment to help achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on quality education. The SSDP also strongly advocates for international co-operation and collaboration to share and replicate international best practice for educational development in the country.

In the coming years the government will be exploring how international learning and collaboration can be embedded into the curriculum and also exploring different ways in which we could streamline the capacity development of our school leaders. We hope to work closely with organisations like the British Council to prepare and build the concepts of instructional leadership in order to promote quality education in our schools.

I hope all the readers can make the best use of this publication. All the best!

**Dr Tulashi Prasad Thapaliya**  
Director General, CEHRD

## FOREWORD

Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning is a flagship programme co-funded by the British Council and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Involving over 30 countries around the world – including four in South Asia – Connecting Classrooms seeks to provide opportunities for school leaders, teachers and students to develop core skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and imagination, and a global outlook through international partnerships and school-based projects. The programme also supports the development of school leaders' skills, helping these individuals to develop their practice in instructional leadership, focusing on the quality of education provision within their institutions.

As a part of this programme in Nepal, we are delighted to be able to publish this volume, which brings together a variety of insights into the realities of schools across the country. The initial chapters provide useful background theory to these key areas of core skills, school leadership and global learning, before these ideas are then illustrated through a series of case studies.

Some education theories might be universal and can easily be adapted into different contexts. However, in today's times of rapid change, one size hardly fits all. Moreover, in culturally diverse countries like Nepal, where one local context can be completely different from the other, a research- and evidence-based approach is needed to find out what works best for our schools. This volume does exactly that. It highlights the need for careful analysis of the context and underlines the importance of high-quality research conducted within a range of contexts to inform the development of all aspects of education systems.

There is undoubtedly a strong commitment to the development of quality education in Nepal. The government – national and local – along with development organisations, administrators, school leaders, teacher educators and associations, teachers, parents, community leaders and the students themselves all play a part in achieving these goals. The role of organisations such as the British Council is to provide platforms and forums for convening these various groups to discuss the issues and challenges they face, as well as to share evidence and learning from the experience of the education system in the UK along with projects we undertake across the world. Publications such as this one contribute to both of these roles.

Here, we bring together insights from Nepal, the UK and a number of other countries – each of which is looking to find ways to continue developing its education system. While countries, cultures and people may all be unique, we all have one thing in common: we all want the best for our young people, for them to lead happy and fulfilled lives within a supportive local, national and global community. There is no doubt that a strong education system is fundamental to this goal.

For the past 60 years and counting, we at the British Council are privileged to have been able to work in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, to achieve Nepal's objectives for quality education. We have been doing this through various English and Education projects, policy dialogue events, exchange visits and research publications. I am hopeful that the evidence in this publication, like the ones in the past, will help strengthen the design and delivery of education programmes in the future.

I would like to sincerely thank the Connecting Classrooms Steering Committee members at the MoEST for their continuous support, the editors and authors for all their work on this important publication, along with the project team members – past and present – who have contributed to its production: Ashim Kharel, Sharda Joshi, Gaurab Sharma and Roshani Thapa. Most importantly, I would like to convey my thanks to all of the educators who commit themselves to improving teaching and learning in Nepal for all of our children.

**Vaishali Pradhan**

Head of English and Education  
British Council Nepal



# INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege to introduce this publication on developing successful schools in Nepal, focused on curriculum, pedagogy and school leadership. The insights and recommendations embedded in these pages reflect a committed endeavour by both practitioners and researchers to drive for better outcomes for Nepali students as the world changes around them. More than ever, digital literacy, critical thought and confidence in both local and international contexts are being touted as crucial capabilities, a call heightened by the context of the global 2020 pandemic. School leavers are being required to adapt to virtual employment practices and find innovative ways to break into difficult labour markets, for which researchers hold they need a high-quality, challenging education which sends them out into the world ready to make their mark.

This publication follows other similar ground-breaking documents published by the British Council, which bring together case studies, research, observations and recommendations for Nepal's educators. In the case of this publication, a call was put out for all with an informative case study to share, resulting in a mix of academics and experienced school leaders and teachers. This is the strength of this publication – the authors of the following chapters understand the situation playing out on the ground and have a first-hand stake in what goes on in Nepalese classrooms. As such, the chapters are not peer-reviewed academic papers but exploratory pieces with insights for school leaders, teachers, policymakers and academics seeking to bring about changes in teaching and learning. As such, these chapters can act as a springboard for further research or those looking for inspiration for pilots and trial initiatives. They can also contribute towards efforts to implement the second half of the Nepal School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023, a document that mentions many of the themes picked up in these pages.

The publication is divided into two main sections. First we have five main chapters covering core skills in the curriculum; employability skills; international perspectives on learning; the changing role of school leaders and attributes of school leaders. Next, we present nine case studies from classrooms in Nepal and Asia, drawing on the authors' findings and with recommendations for the future. The publication can be read both as an inspirational handbook for school leaders wishing to drive improvement for staff and students and as an information source for the interested observer.

As mentioned, the authors present their discoveries at a timely moment for Nepal. In their chapter on core skills integration in the Nepalese secondary school curriculum, Alina Laurent-Olive and Douglas Bourn note that the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), launched by the Department of Education three years ago, encourages Nepalese schools towards a more learner-centred and interactive pedagogy and away from memorisation and text regurgitation. However, they warn of an ongoing disjoint between the proposed aims of the SSDP and the reality in classrooms. The authors present the compelling solution that all initiatives should draw on and properly match up with local and national, as well as international and global, contexts and culture, in order that reform efforts are embedded in a sustainable way. This warning – against a 'West is best' mentality – is repeated skilfully throughout the ensuing sections. In his chapter on schools and employability skills, Khum Pathak notes that local languages, not just English, present

their own employment opportunities, and local practices by which parents earn their living such as agriculture should not be denigrated in schools. As a result, students can emerge as confident Nepalis suited to both local and wider economic markets. In their chapter on international perspectives on global learning, Aamna Pasha and Douglas Bourn look at how a partnership between Nepalese and UK schools can, through video platforms and visits, help to fulfil the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal on education, which includes a commitment to better global citizenship education. At the same time, they warn against partnerships which inadvertently 'exoticise' or 'other' Nepali contexts, and call for a truly equal flow of ideas between partners. In the next chapter, we talk about what best school leaders do and how they do it. Finally, Donnie Adams et al. examine the attributes of those head teachers who are successfully improving schools in Nepal, pointing to a holistic 'students first' – rather than merely exams-oriented – approach, combined with a willingness to share and distribute leadership effectively. Together, these main chapters set the scene for the context, challenges and successes playing out in Nepal's classrooms today.

In our nine case studies, the focus moves to specific initiatives carried out in schools. These case studies use semi-structured interviews with teachers, students, officials and parents in order to draw out recurring themes, while others analyse government documents and reports. In their case study on quality assurance processes in schools, Bhojraj Kafle and Prahlad Aryal examine government audit reports and reveal their potential to drive better student outcomes, if only the findings were disseminated more widely and presented as a tool to support and guide head teachers. Meanwhile the seminal role of the Nepali head teacher and their senior leadership team in creating excellent educational environments is emphasised in several case studies. Gopal Bashyal uncovers a great appetite among teachers for more and better continuous professional development, yet simultaneously an overgenerous view among head teachers themselves about the extent to which they are satiating that appetite. In his case study on how better school–community relations can develop reading skills in students, Indra Mani Rai notes that a supportive head teacher and school management committee can be the critical factor in the long-term survival of parent engagement initiatives. Meanwhile, the potential for classroom teachers to initiate cross-cultural initiatives is explored in Prem Prasad Poudel's case study on international school partnerships. Head teachers and senior leadership teams are often regarded as the main group that can drive better outcomes, but teachers' considerable power to bring about some of those changes for the students sat in front of them should not be overlooked.

Five case studies look specifically at what teachers do in classrooms. Amit Bikram Sijapati uses teacher interviews to understand staff conceptions of 'critical thinking and problem solving' and the challenges they say are facing them when introducing activities to develop these skills in students. In his chapter on assessing project-based learning effectively, Khagendra Gautam outlines a new approach called the 'MicroProject', which teachers struggling to move children immediately on to independent project work can trial as a compromise. Teacher training is examined in Laxman Gnawali's case study on embedding digital literacy in the classroom, with a close look at a Master's course that not only delivers content about digital skills but also requires teachers to use (and thereby improve) their digital skills to complete the course. As ever, hands-on, interactive development of skills in a deep learning environment is repeatedly revealed in these pages as the most effective route for developing students' and teachers' capabilities, rather than tick-box exercises carried out for accountability purposes. In a case

study of a Malaysian school, Donnie Adams et al. look at whether a timetabled subject called 'Global Perspectives' is helping teachers to deliver 'global learning and global citizenship' more effectively for students. Finally, students themselves are the focus of Bharat Sigdel and Hari Bhakta Karki's case study of leadership development in extracurricular clubs at the Nepal Police School. In this final case study, we can imagine the seeds of a future generation of school leaders being sown.

The work put into these chapters is an admirable collaborative achievement. With so much focus on developing people, it ought perhaps to be noted that aside from several (mainly co-authored) pieces, these chapters are predominantly by men, reflecting applications received for the publication. One goal of the Nepali education system, and academia more widely, could therefore be to encourage female talent into positions of influence in the coming years, so that Nepali women, as academics, policymakers or head teachers, can also contribute their insights into how their country's schools could be improved. Excellent girls' education is widely regarded as a key factor in reducing poverty and competing successfully in a globalised world. Of course, if such goals are to be successful, our authors must be closely heeded on their warning that all new strategies must involve proper local ownership and buy-in.

A great appetite, knowledge and passion for high-quality education leaps out from these pages. We thank all the authors for the work and expertise they have put into the following chapters. Our hope is that they will provide rich food for thought for Nepal's education innovators.

**Jess Staufenberg and Chris Tweedale** (editors)



# CORE SKILLS INTEGRATION IN THE NEPALESE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Alina Laurent-Olive and Douglas Bourn

---

## INTRODUCTION

This study will explore how core skills are integrated within the Nepalese secondary school curriculum (grades 6–10), the ways in which four schools in Nepal are including them within their practice and the potential value of concepts such as ‘global skills’ and ‘21st-century skills’ in helping to identify approaches for future educational practice.

Nepalese educational history is steeped in an arguably elitist political agenda. This has taken place against the backdrop of a fight for educational freedoms and rights for the marginalised, cutting across gender, ethnicity, caste, community and even region. Education has always been the axis upon which political movements anchor themselves (Pherali, 2012). For instance, the school management committees introduced in 2001 must have one female member but there are no requirements for certain ethnic groups to be represented. ‘Preventing elite capture and undue politicisation of SMCs is vital for their success’ (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2006). However, there is also great cause for hope.

Now a federal democratic republic with a multi-party system, from 1846 to 1951 Nepal was isolated from the rest of the world under the autocratic Rana administration, in which only the noble elite had access to education (Carney & Rappleye, 2011). The country first opened its doors to development aid in 1953 as a step forward to enhance newly founded

democratic rights, but also experienced political instability for many years to come with two ‘People’s Movements’ and a Maoist insurgency that lasted for a decade from 1996, ending in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006 (World Bank, 2017).

Despite having such a high political party turnover, each successive government has been committed to achieving greater educational rights (Takala, 2007). In 1990, Nepal committed to the World Declaration on Education for All and since has made significant progress by implementing a series of educational reforms to address equity, access and quality in education (ibid.). In 2015, the new and long-awaited Constitution of Nepal declared free primary and secondary education as well as each child having the right to study in their native language.

In part due to progress in access and equity of education, the rapid expansion of enrolment rates has caused strain on the quality of schooling for all age groups (Regmi, 2017) and achieving good learning outcomes remains a critical challenge (Asian Development Bank, 2017). Many of the children who have been in school for four years do not have basic reading and mathematical skills, in what has been termed a ‘learning crisis’ (Winthrop & McGivney, 2014).

Poor-quality education is also evident, since data shows many school leavers who have gone through the educational system still do not have the competencies to improve their

economic or social situation (World Bank, 2005). The evidence indicates a bad rate of return for the economy and as such serious investment in quality education is touted as a solution *ibid.* Without high-quality schooling, Hanushek (2013) asserts it will be difficult to improve a country's economic performance.

According to the Education For All Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2005), a quality education system is one that makes students' cognitive development its main objective, alongside the promotion of responsible citizenship and emotional development. However, teaching and learning in Nepal are too often focused on memorisation and text regurgitation, in which critical thinking, analysis and creativity are not addressed (World Bank, 2017).

In response to this challenge, efforts have been made through the Nepalese School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016–2023 to improve the quality of education at secondary level through the integration of what have been termed 'soft skills', 'life skills' and 'core skills' into the national curriculum framework. This integration of skills also includes changing classroom practice towards a learner-centred and interactive pedagogy. However, in this study, we note skills still appear to have a lower priority than knowledge.

According to the national curriculum, which is in line with the SSDP, the secondary school years (grades 6–10) are focused primarily around the following subjects: the Nepali language, the English language, mathematics, social studies and population education, science and environment, health and physical education, occupation, business and technical studies, a native language, a local subject, Sanskrit or another subject and ethics.

These subjects emphasise a national, cultural

set of values alongside the need to develop skills for the economy. Education is seen as a route to improving a student's way of thinking, behaviour and attitude or values (Basic Secondary School Curriculum of Nepal grades 6–8, 2012). The curriculum also states the importance of the development of a range of skills and abilities, including linguistic, logical, musical, kinaesthetic spatial, interpersonal, natural and spiritual.

The curriculum states its aims as:

- To encourage every person to find their talent and ability to develop their personality
- For every person to uphold national customs, traditions and social values; to create an ideal model citizen for the nation and society
- To produce a skilled and productive citizen for local and national level occupations and employment, as well as international employment
- To socialise a person as well as help society become more unified
- To be more aware of the natural environment and help preserve natural resources
- To produce a skilled workforce familiar with modern technology
- To create citizens who respect human rights, nationalism, democracy and respect people with imaginative thinking while proud to be a Nepali at the same time (Basic Secondary School Curriculum of Nepal grades 6–8, 2012).<sup>1</sup>

What is significant about these aims is the

<sup>1</sup> The references to the Basic Secondary School Curriculum of Nepal grades 6–8, 2012 were translated from Nepalese to English by one of the authors.

emphasis on relating the aims to national value systems and to learn within established norms and customs. But also in evidence is the influence of neoliberal and economically driven thinking with the reference to ‘productive citizens’ and developing a skilled workforce.

Before discussing these aims further, we shall discuss what is meant by ‘core skills’ and the extent to which these are clearly defined within the curriculum and how they relate to broader themes such as ‘21st-century’ and ‘global skills’.

## DEFINING “SKILLS”

Any discussion of skills would usually start with one of the internationally agreed definitions of the term. The international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has done much work in this area, defining skills as primarily about how to apply knowledge to enable someone to carry out the ‘manual, verbal or mental manipulation of data and things’ (OECD, 2017). But both the OECD and other international bodies such as the World Bank also refer to skills as about more than technical abilities and to do with enabling broader societal and personal development.

For example, the World Bank’s World Development Report in 2012 distinguished between entrepreneurship, cognitive, social and technical skills (Bourn, 2018). The OECD’s skills strategy published around a similar time made reference to foundation skills (problem solving, literacy, numeracy, reading), higher-order skills (creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration) and vocational skills (OECD, 2011). Later on, the OECD talked of skills as concerning attitude, outlook and behaviour and including areas such as leadership, initiative and adaptability (OECD, 2017). Policymakers and academics have frequently referred to these kinds of skills as ‘soft skills’ or ‘life skills’. Digital skills have also been increasingly included, covering not only how to use technology in a

work context but their relevance to societies and everyday living (OECD, 2019).

Implicit in some of these debates is the need to frame skills policies within the challenges of living and working in a globalised world. One term that has been used to respond to these challenges has been ‘21st-century skills’. Emerging at the end of the 20th century (Bellanca & Brandy, 2010), the term refers to the need for more than a knowledge and subject-based curriculum in response to a rapidly growing, global, technology-based economy. These 21st-century skills are thought to enable students to better meet new technical demands and develop competencies for a complex world such as problem solving and emotional intelligence. Economic pressures are a key driver for the ‘21st-century skills’ narrative.

The British Council has also put forward a set of ‘core skills’, which it has placed at the heart of its teacher professional development and training programmes, such as its Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme in Nepal. The focus is on developing skills not only for the current world but also the future world, with a view to meeting global challenges and ensuring a fair and just global community (British Council, 2016).

The British Council lists six core skills: critical thinking and problem solving; collaboration and communication; creativity and imagination; citizenship; digital literacy; and student leadership and personal development *ibid.*

Distinctive in the British Council’s definition is the inclusion of citizenship (influenced by the work of Fullan and Langworthy for UNESCO, 2014). As such, these ‘core skills’ move beyond agendas for global economic growth and focus on local and national communities and societies (British Council, 2016). As Skinner, Blum and Bourn (2013) have noted, by developing skills in the light of the contextual economic, social and culture landscape,

themes related to citizenship and global awareness can be applicable and relevant for that nation, community and individual.

There is also the term ‘global skills’. The challenges of globalisation are included in most discussions around 21st-century soft and core skills, but there is rarely an attempt to understand what these global forces mean for the individual and their local context. For any society, particularly one such as Nepal that has only engaged in the wider international community in the last 67 years, there is a need for all learners to have some sense of understanding of what globalisation means to them. How does a learner respond to and deal with the influence of global cultural influences while at the same time retaining their own cultural identity? Bourn, one of the authors of this study, suggests the following ‘global skills’ be developed in students:

- An ability to see the connections between what is happening in your own community and in the communities of people elsewhere in the world
- An ability to understand the impact of global forces on one’s life and the lives of other people, and what this means in terms of a sense of place in the world
- An ability to work with others who may have different viewpoints and perspectives, being prepared to change one’s own opinions as a result of working with others, and seeking cooperative and participatory ways of working (Bourn, 2018).

In this study, we suggest that any assessment of ‘core skills’ in the Nepalese curriculum should consider the extent to which those skills equip students to understand global forces in a way meaningful to them within their own local and national cultural framework.

## CORE SKILLS IN THE NEPALESE CURRICULUM

Within the Nepalese School Sector Development Plan, we can see a clear relationship between skills development and making students ‘ready for the world of work’ (SSDP, 2016–2023). However, there is also evidence of a desire for skills development to improve students’ learning experience. ‘Teaching tends to be too textbook-focused, lecture-oriented, and needs to be strengthened to foster creative thinking and enable core skills’ (SSDP, 2016–2023).

For instance, our analysis of the English language curriculum reveals references to creative and critical thinking, and the ability to communicate and empathise with others in order to promote tolerance, inclusiveness and socio-cultural harmony (Basic Secondary School Curriculum of Nepal grades 6–8, 2012). Reference is made to pedagogical approaches that might support these skills, including student-centred learning and inclusive classroom activities. Similarly in the mathematics curriculum, problem solving and group work are referenced. In the social studies curriculum, references to skills are even more apparent, with students required to learn how to communicate with people from different communities or cultures and respect other views and perspectives. There is also explicit mention of creativity, imagination, co-operation and human rights – all of which match well with ‘core skills’ and ‘global skills’ (Basic Secondary School Curriculum of Nepal grades 6–8, 2012).

Meanwhile, the Nepalese Sector School Development Plan explicitly recommends ‘the promotion of child-friendly, learner-centred interactive pedagogy for active learning and the development of skills, and better-qualified teachers’ (SSDP, 2016–2023).



## CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING CORE SKILLS

The challenge for Nepalese schools is not so much the content of the curriculum documents as the extent to which they are understood and the capacity and expertise to deliver them effectively. There has been a debate about the extent to which these broader approaches towards skills are relevant for lower- and middle-income countries where the first priority has been simply accessing a quality education (Skinner, Blum & Bourn, 2013). However, the authors of this chapter would suggest that a quality education system must be relevant to the needs of learners. Nepal's economy and society is increasingly influenced by global forces, and therefore core skills and global skills are more important for students to develop than ever before.

The main challenge is that Nepal, like many countries, has a strong examinations-based culture within its education system. Secondary school examinations have a major influence on approaches to teaching and learning, prioritising fact recall and academic content. Another major challenge to implementing the skills agenda is the diverse nature of students' social backgrounds, an issue identified by UNESCO more than a decade ago in its Education for All report (UNESCO, 2005). In the past, ruling parties have also implemented a one-language policy of Nepali in what Pherali and Garratt label an 'act of symbolic violence' against minority groups (2013). These authors warn that the concept of identity must be addressed in order to reconcile Nepal's education system with a long legacy of caste-based discrimination. In Nepal there are 125 ethnic or caste groups, and 123 first languages. Although a secular country, Nepal encompasses many religious beliefs, with a myriad of religious customs embedded within those belief systems. Thus, we can say that critical to the successful integration of core skills in Nepal's school curriculum is acknowledging this diverse range of identities and offering a platform for

dialogue and understanding of them within the classroom. Any implementation of core skills that does not understand and integrate the multiple identities within a Nepalese classroom is likely to fall short.

As well as the importance of inclusive dialogue, the integration of core skills brings with it the risk of an isomorphic shift toward 'Western' values and colonisation (Bourn, 2018). It has been suggested that globalisation is an intrusion of Western ideals which all societies must adhere to in order to be included in the modern world, rather than their different identities being acknowledged and accepted (Shields, 2013). The goals of education systems can be caught up in this shift (Dale, 2007). Western influence in Nepal is an increasingly sensitive topic, with ancient customs and values disappearing as the internet, migration, the media and concepts of global citizenship together form what Shields (2013) describes as 'world culture'. World culture theory argues that globalisation is a spread of values, which are seen as implicit global certainties and are advocated by international aid organisations' initiatives and then adopted by countries through national policies *ibid.* – even though they may sit in stark contrast to Nepalese cultural values (Madsen & Carney, 2011). One consequence of this can be partnerships which exoticise foreign places and people in the name of 'multicultural understanding' rather than operate as an equal platform of ideas between the West and East, North and South (Pashby, 2012).

Any school leaders or policymakers looking to embed core skills in the classroom must be acutely aware of this problem, and ensure there is a genuine flow of ideas between both locally embedded and culturally significant skills and values, and globally useful skills and values. Core skills must not be presented to school communities as uncritically 'core', which, after all, means central to the existence of something. Pupils and parents should have ample opportunity to critically engage with the skills curriculum and feel a sense of

ownership, rather than feel it is being ‘done to’ them.

## BRITISH COUNCIL EXAMPLES OF CORE SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

The British Council has run courses on core skills in Nepal since 2016, and two years ago introduced its Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme, funded by the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. In 2019, the British Council wanted additional locally produced resources to use in core skills training and ran a video competition among teachers who had already completed the training. Two of the winning video examples, from the same teacher, are discussed below:

### i) Acids in science: Creative and critical-thinking skills

The video,<sup>2</sup> which is of a grade 8 science class led by Ashok Kumar Rai from Shree Amarjyoti Secondary School in Surkhet, explains how to embed student-centred, group-based learning activities into teaching as a way to develop creative thinking. Teachers are asked to consider ‘what do the students know?’ and ‘what questions do they have about this topic?’ The intention is for the lesson to be more reflective for both teacher and student.

The training booklet states: ‘This is a routine that allows the teacher to understand the level of existing understanding that students have, determine what type of questions they have based on a topic, and formatively assess what students comprehend from the lesson. By beginning with this, students are prompted to think critically and creativity about the topic of acids and bases’ (British Council – Ashok).

In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher in the video says he valued the fact the students talked and wrote about both what they knew and what they wanted to know, as well as their knowledge of acids. In this way, he felt that

self-reflection and critical-thinking skills were being developed as part of the science lesson.

### ii) Rotation of the Earth: Critical-thinking and problem-solving skills

The second video<sup>3</sup> shows a grade 9 science lesson led by the same teacher, this time on the rotation of the Earth. The teacher asks why and how different real-life objects might rotate, getting students to discuss their answers in pairs. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked pupils to write down three sentences that were correct and one that was incorrect from what they had learned. Once more, the teacher says his students were developing critical-thinking skills when dealing with a topic, rather than simply memorising material.

## METHODOLOGY

We conducted a series of semi-structured face-to-face and phone interviews with a representative from the Education Review Office who was responsible for the development of the curriculum, and four school teachers who were involved with the British Council’s International School Award (ISA) programme in which core skills are expected to be a key part of the curriculum.

Parshu Ram Tiwari from the Education Review Office has worked for the Nepal Ministry of Education for more than 20 years and has been in his current post for more than a year. For him, core and soft skills included ‘personal skills, thinking skills, innovation and business skills and communication skills’.

However he suggested these skills, while recognised within the curriculum, were not developed or carried through in the pedagogy of schools across the country:

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X5RTcsOjIRk&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tpZyydG8M8&feature=youtu.be>

*If we ask the teachers what the soft skills are, the teachers will say hard skills are theory and soft skills are practice.*

Another obstacle he pointed to was teacher-centred classrooms. He explained, ‘because of this culture, soft skills have not been integrated into the classroom activity.’

Stewart Pitts, the ISA senior coordinator of Apex Life School in Kathmandu, described how prior to teachers taking British Council training on core skills, rote learning and repeating the textbook in the classroom was common practice among staff. Now they use textbooks more as a reference and let students think critically and conduct their own research too, Pitts said. However:

*Motivating teachers to get them to actually do what you want in progressive education, that is a bit of a challenge; to make people leave their comfort zone. We are still in the very surface when it comes to core skills.*

From Pitts’ perspective, core skills integration in the classroom had begun, but ‘they were still to achieve full integration into all aspects of teaching and learning’. He added that particularly in grades 8–10, the main focus was on examinations. Instead, he suggested students needed to develop an ethical mindset about their futures that could be enabled through developing core skills.

*Students should be prepared in the future to do things for the world not just for themselves [...] In the past we just used to be focused on knowledge-based learning, but today I feel global learning is focused on solving world problems.*

Eebaraj Tiwari from Kalika Manavgyan Secondary School in Butwal, who is the school’s ISA and soft skills coordinator, raised the issue of students’ diverse backgrounds. He said teachers could struggle to relate to students’ specific and unique background, presenting a challenge for inclusivity.

*We have to study their minds and we have to study their psychology and we have to categorise them in different fields, social backgrounds, economic status and then we have to teach them. That’s the problem I have faced. I have faced the problem of inclusion from our sites.*

Tiwari suggested that core skills could be taught in a way that brings in real-life issues from local, cultural contexts as well as international contexts, thereby making the discussion more relevant to students.

Another teacher cited a particularly important advantage of teaching core skills in the classroom. Dhani Ram Sharma, assistant headteacher and previous ISA coordinator from Nepal Rastriya Chandraganga Secondary School in Surkhet, said activities such as group work, discussion in pairs, project work and presentations had helped to address the problem of large class sizes in his school. Rather than simply using memorisation and repetition techniques in an effort to control his class, he could use the core skills programme as a structure to embed a more dynamic, self-reflective classroom environment.

Finally, all interviewees noted that a key barrier to embedding the six core skills in the curriculum was teacher motivation. With the vast majority of teachers untrained, it is too easy for them to revert to traditional instruction methods. Niroj Maharjan, the principal of Annal Jyoti Boarding School, said that although taking part in the British Council core skills training had significantly improved his own teaching methodology, he had found

it very challenging to encourage his fellow teachers to do the same.

*We are improving a lot compared to those last years, but still it is a challenge for us.*

Changing traditional forms of teaching was also difficult because there was a desire to assess the development of skills, but teachers lacked confidence about how to do so. Students in Nepal are assessed through paper-and-pencil-based tests. Given that the framework of education is changing, there is a need to reconsider not only what is tested but how (Griffin, McGaw & Care, 2012). Paper-and-pencil tests don't work in assessing skills development, attitudes and values as they evaluate what is easy to measure, rather than what is vital to measure *ibid.* So school leaders interested in introducing core skills into the classroom must seek a clear framework for assessing them that teachers understand.

This lack of motivation and confidence among teachers about core skills could have various causes. But when considering educational policy implementation, past lessons have taught us that without local stakeholder ownership of programmes, initiatives on paper fail in practice (Joint Evaluation of the School Sector Reform Plan, 2016). Haddad and Demsky recommend a wide-ranging situational analysis and local stakeholder consultation right at the offset of educational planning (1995). Local stakeholders' values and motivations should be considered in order to address any underlying issues that may arise later. This in turn moves away from a top-down, centralised approach to training *ibid.* Such an approach needs to be considered at a central level in the design and implementation of skills development within the School Sector Development Plan in Nepal.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has noted that within the 6–10 grade curriculum in Nepal's schools there is an emphasis on the promotion of national cultural values and an aim to equip learners with the skills to live and work in a global economy. However, from the evidence identified from the interviews with teachers, it is clear various obstacles remain in place for 'core skills' to be integrated into teaching and learning in a way that motivates teachers and communities to get onboard, rather than feeling like an alien set of values imposed from the 'West'.

As this paper has indicated, a key challenge and theme for core skills' development is to incorporate within them an understanding of cultural diversity (Haddad & Demsky, 1995). Wide-ranging cultural situational analysis is needed for new ways of teaching and learning to be successful. A significant aspect of Nepalese culture is the value of community, despite economic developments and the steady growth of individualism (Bista, 1991). There is a strong value put on each person in the community playing a role to the extent that they are interdependent on one another (Pherali & Garratt 2013). School leaders must acknowledge this value of community when implementing core skills into the curriculum. If teachers do not feel that they have participated in the creation of the new pedagogy and school policy, they will not commit to it nor have ownership over it, or have the motivation to carry the plans out. This will defeat successful implementation as well as its sustainability (Haddad & Demsky, 1995). Reforms are not sustainable without domestic ownership (Jones & Lawson, 2000).

It is suggested, therefore, that development as a concept is shifted away from being seen as a neoliberal measurement of economic development measured by gross domestic product, to an expansion of the freedom to able to speak and participate at the table (Sen, 1999). In this way we can steer clear of a mere shift in vocabulary of 'colonialism' to 'development', and instead

we can deconstruct and dethrone legacies of unequal power to properly implement global skills through core skills. This will equip our students with not only a skillset that better prepares them for a globalised world but also a mindset that triumphs over neo-colonial influence, secure in their individual sense of identities and culture (Biccum, 2010).

For these developments to be implemented, all teachers should be encouraged to undergo the British Council's Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning training programme on 'core skills'. But this programme needs to develop in two areas. First the programme needs to give greater consideration to addressing the challenges and even disadvantages of globalisation while living in a culturally diverse society. Second, it needs to encourage critical thinking about the continuing influence of forms of colonialism and neoliberalism. This means learning about the power dynamics between the global North and the global South and challenging a 'West is best' mentality. The core skills curriculum needs to relate to 'real world' experiences for both the teachers and the learners. Only then will issues with motivation and engagement be more readily overcome.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Alina Laurent-Olive** is a postgraduate in Development Education and Global Learning at University College London and has worked in South Asia for the past ten years, including Nepal for the past five years as a teacher, teacher trainer and adviser for the British Council. For her MA, Alina has focused on Nepal and the goals of the SSDP, SDGs, quality of education and global learning.

**Douglas Bourn** is Professor of Development Education London and Co-Director of the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University College London. He is author of *The Theory and Practice of Development Education* (2014), *Understanding Global Skills for 21st Century Professions* (2018) and editor of *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning* (2020). He is also a member of the Programme Advisory Council for the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme.

## REFERENCES

- Andreotti, V. (2014). *Soft versus Critical Global Citizenship Education* in McCloskey, S. (Ed) *Development Education in Policy and Practice*, London, Palgrave, 21–31.
- Asian Development Bank 2013-2017. *Country Poverty Analysis (Detailed) Nepal*, <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cps-nep-2013-2017-pa-detailed.pdf>
- Bellanca, J. and Brandy. R. (eds.) (2010). *21st Century Skills*, Bloomington< Solution Tree Press
- Biccum, A. (2010). *Global Citizenship and the Legacy of Empire*, Abingdon, Routledge
- Bista, D. (1991). *Fatalism and Development: Nepal's Struggle for Modernization*, Patna, India, Orient Longman
- Bourn, D. (2014). *The Theory and Practice of Global Learning* Development Education Research Centre, Research Paper No.11 for the Global Learning Programme, London , IOE/ DERC
- Bourn, D. (2015). *The Theory and Practice of Development Education: A pedagogy for global social justice*, Abingdon, Routledge
- Bourn, D. (2018). *Understanding Global Skills for 21st Century Professions*, London, Palgrave
- British Council (2016). *Unlocking the world*. [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/g264\\_schools\\_core\\_skills\\_tl\\_brochure3\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/g264_schools_core_skills_tl_brochure3_final_web.pdf)
- British Council (2019). *ISA Guidance Manual, Nepal* [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/international\\_school\\_award\\_isa\\_guidance\\_manual\\_2\\_019-english.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/international_school_award_isa_guidance_manual_2_019-english.pdf)
- British Council – Ashok (n.d) *Connecting Classrooms Teaching Topic: Acid and Base Booklet* available at: [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/booklet\\_ashok.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/booklet_ashok.pdf)
- British Council – Lokendra (n.d.) *Connecting Classrooms Teaching Topic: Rotation and Revolution of the Earth booklet*, available at: [https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/booklet\\_lokendra.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/booklet_lokendra.pdf)
- Caddell, M. (2006). *Private Schools as Battlefields: contested visions of learning and livelihood in Nepal*. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* Volume 36, 2006 - Issue 4: The private education sector: towards a reconceptualization, pp. 463–479.
- Carney, S. (2003). *Globalisation, Neo-liberalism and the Limitations of School Effectiveness Research in Developing Countries: The case of Nepal*. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1:1, 87–101
- Carney, S. and Rappleye, J. (2011). *Education reform in Nepal: from modernity to conflict*, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9:1, 1–9
- Dale, R. (2000). *Globalisation and Education: Demonstrating a common world educational culture or locating a globally structured educational agenda?* *Educational Theory*, 50, 427–444
- FCDO and the World Bank (2006). *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal* (Vol. 2): Executive summary (English). Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/745031468324021366/Executive-summary>
- Fullen, M. and Langworthy, M. (2014). *A Rich Steam: How new Pedagogies Find Deep Learning, Leadership and Policy in Schools*, Vol. 15 2016, pp. 231–233
- Griffin, P., McGaw, B. and Care, E. (Eds) (2012). *Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills*, Thousand Oaks, California, Corwin
- Haddad W.D. and Demsky, T. (1995). *Education Policy Planning Process: an applied framework*,

Paris, UNESCO

Hanushek, E.A. (2013). *Economic growth in developing countries: The role of human capital*, Economics of Education Review Volume 37, December 2013, p. 204–212

Joint Evaluation of Nepal's School Sector Reform Plan Programme (2009–16). *Final Report – Draft 02/2016* GFA Consulting Group GmbH in collaboration with CEI / ÖSB / GVG / HDC

Jones, S. and Lawson, A. (2000). *Moving from Projects to Programmatic Aid*, OED working paper series No.5 <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/700141468765312565/Moving-from-projects-to-programmatic-aid>

McCloskey, S. (2014). *Introduction: Transformative Learning in the Age of Neoliberalism* in McCloskey, S. (Ed) *Development education in policy and practice*, London, Palgrave, 1–18

Madsen, U. and Carney, S. (2011). *Education in an age of radical uncertainty: youth and schooling in urban Nepal*. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9:1, 115–133,

Ministry of Education – Nepal (2009). *School Sector Reform Plan 2009–2015*, Nepal. [https://www.moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/SSRP\\_English1.pdf](https://www.moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/SSRP_English1.pdf)

Ministry of Education – Nepal (2016). *School Sector Development Plan 2016-2023*, Nepal. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/nepal-school-sector-development-plan-2016-2023>

OECD (2011). *Towards an OECD Skills Strategy*, Paris, OECD

OECD (2017). *Getting Skills Right*, Paris, OECD

OECD (2019). *Skills Outlook 2019– Thriving in a Digital World*, Paris, OECD

O'Malley, B. (2007). *Education under Attack*, Paris, UNESCO <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186303>

Omar H. El-Sheikh Hasan (2000). *Improving the Quality of Learning: Global Education as a Vehicle for School Reform* Theory Into Practice, Vol. 39, No. 2, Global Education

Pashby, K. (2012). *Questions for Global Citizenship Education in the Context of the 'New Imperialism' For Whom, by Whom?* In Andreotti, V. and de Souza, L.M. (eds.) *Postcolonial Perspectives on Global Citizenship Education*, Abingdon, Routledge, 9–25

Pherali, T. J. (2011). *Education and conflict in Nepal: possibilities for reconstruction*. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 2011, Vol. 9(1), pp. 135–154

Pherali, T.J. (2012). *Schooling in violent situations: The politicization of education in Nepal, before and after the 2006 peace agreement*, Paris, UNESCO IBE.

Pherali, T.J. and Garratt, D. (2013). *Post-Conflict identity crisis in Nepal: Implications for educational reforms*. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 2011, Vol. 9(1), pp.135–154

Regmi, N.P. (2017). *Inclusive Education in Nepal From Theory to Practice*, Dissertation for Doctorate of Philosophy, Ludwig Maximilians University, available at: [http://202.45.147.21:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/700/1/Regmi\\_Narayan%20P.pdf](http://202.45.147.21:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/700/1/Regmi_Narayan%20P.pdf)

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Shields, R. (2013). *Education and International Development. Globalization and International Education*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 9–21.

Skinner, A., Blum, N. and Bourn, D. (2013). *Development Education and Education in*

*International Development Policy: Raising Quality through Critical Pedagogy and Global Skills*, International Development Policy 4.3, 89–103

Takala, T. (2007). *Education Sector Programs in Developing Countries: Socio-political and Cultural Perspectives*. [http://ist-iiiep.iiep-unesco.org/cgi-bin/wwwi32.exe/\[in=epidoc1.in\]/?t2000=025039/\(100\)](http://ist-iiiep.iiep-unesco.org/cgi-bin/wwwi32.exe/[in=epidoc1.in]/?t2000=025039/(100)).

UNESCO (2005). *Education for All Global Monitoring Report Education for All the Quality Imperative*, Paris, UNESCO <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2005/education-all-quality-imperative>

UNESCO (2015). *Education for All National Review Report, Nepal. 2001–2015* available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232769>

Winthrop, R. and McGivney, E. (2014). *Raising the global ambition for girls' education*, Washington DC, The Brookings Institution

World Bank (2017). *Implementation and results report of the School Sector Reform Plan Nepal* <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/794561490279193590/Nepal-School-Sector-Reform-Program-Project>



# CORE SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Khum Raj Pathak

---

## INTRODUCTION

Nepal's education system is under pressure to produce an internationally competitive workforce. Although school attendance has improved (LeVine, 2019) and the literacy rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is now 88.6 per cent (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2020), a third of the population remain illiterate. There is a 'severe lack of skilled labour' (CIA, 2020) and 25 per cent of people remain below the poverty line. Nearly 50 per cent of Nepal's GDP depends upon remittances (Ministry of Finance, 2019), and many donors expect progress in return for their investments (including reports, standardised testing and evidence of employment) and criticise 'weak' educational management (Regmi, 2019). The current demographics of Nepal, with about 49 per cent of the population aged under 24 and about 12 per cent aged over 55, indicate a workforce that is physically powerful, but lacking in experience. Critics warn that desperate young people take low-level jobs abroad rather than investing in long-term training to become specialists or experts.

Employers are now highlighting core skills such as communication, numeracy, ICT, problem solving and co-operation as vital for business in a digitalised global economy. However, in Nepal these have occasionally been interpreted narrowly, with a bias towards the visible and material (for example, technology and numeracy) over 'soft skills'. This imbalance has been challenged (Parlamis & Monnot, 2018) and core skills can now

include non-verbal communication, empathy, compassion, interpersonal and intra-personal skills, collaboration/teamwork, creativity, curiosity, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, risk-taking, leadership, global citizenship, conflict resolution, imagination and initiative (British Council, 2020). I will argue in this chapter that not only are several of these areas neglected in many Nepalese schools but some teaching practices can actively suppress them.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out in the early part of 2020. I used a qualitative, narrative research methodology enabling my participants to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences around the issue of core skills for employability. Spaces for narratives, as Reid and West argue (2014), are 'vital to the health and dynamism of all people in whole cultures' and especially appropriate for the non-empirical evaluation of 'softer' disciplines.

I made contact with 15 teachers and 20 employers via social media and phone interviews over a period of three months, from Nawalparasi East, Nawalparasi West, Kathmandu and Pokhara in Nepal. Of these, five teachers and two employers agreed to be interviewed and feature in this chapter. They were each interviewed two or three times, for a period of 75 minutes in total and asked to reflect upon first the core skills that they believe employees (especially school leavers) should have and second how far the Nepalese

education system facilitates the development of these skills.

## EMPLOYERS

A lack of core skills can profoundly impact upon a company's organisation, management, growth and even health and safety. Interviews with a factory supervisor and a bank manager highlighted a failure of the education system to link training to practice. Younger employees had been educated in theoretical knowledge but lacked the confidence to apply it to the real world. Older, more experienced employees lacked the education, especially in IT, for modern business needs.

## FEAR OF FAILURE

Hari Thapa is a factory supervisor from Nawalparasi who wanted staff to complete paperwork:

*They are worried they will make a mistake so keep asking for help rather than trying to do it themselves ... The staff are fast workers but don't like extra responsibility.*

Instead of building confidence, the prior education of these workers had instilled a fear of failure and punishment. Staff were unaccustomed to studying:

*Many of the women have got their households and families to look after, as well as working ... They can't really take on any more.*

Although 500 schools now offer technical education, most students interviewed from Nawalparasi were focused on going abroad to earn money (even in a low-skilled job), in part because local wages are deemed too low.

Meanwhile, in rural areas some believe young people need 'source force' (Gellner & Snellinger, 2017) – for instance, to be 'in' with a local political leader to get a job in a factory. Having invested considerably in their education, some of those interviewed expressed frustration and a wish for quicker returns, even if that means emigrating.

Meanwhile, mature workers in need of training can feel uncomfortable about the idea of going 'back to school'. Seventy per cent of the population did not complete their secondary education (Teach for Nepal, 2017). There is no rich history of adult education. Despite a huge variety of informal learning opportunities, accredited life-long learning remains a new concept in Nepal and is constrained by limited definitions, such as equating lifelong learning with literacy skills (Regmi, 2019).

To overcome these barriers, the government should champion the concept of continuous professional development, with accessible and affordable short courses to fill the educational gaps of workers. Equally, technical students should gain professional development with a practical, 'hands-on' component, through a temporary period of work experience in an industry setting. The provision of this – both as staff development and as a contribution to the community – should be an ethical obligation of companies and not inhibited by any concern that a better-trained workforce might demand higher wages or improved working conditions.

## PAPER QUALIFICATIONS BUT POOR APPLICATION

Shankar Jaisi manages a bank which trains groups of women to manage and save some money to invest in a small business. Shankar valued strong interpersonal skills and sought staff who could build relationships with clients. But he complained that he seldom met school leavers or graduates with the enthusiasm, motivation or confidence to carry out the work, even though they possessed formal qualifications:

*Education in Nepal is only pieces of paper. Students don't have any future plans ... They can't say 'I will use my knowledge for this project.' They don't feel competent in any field ... even those with a Master's degree end up emigrating to work as a kulli [unskilled worker] abroad.*

Shankar said he wanted to find school leavers with the confidence to say 'I can use my knowledge here' or 'If I do this business, I will make this profit.'

Moreover, he said that in contrast to their formally uneducated parents, many school leavers he had met appeared to lack practical skills and self-sufficiency:

*Students don't have the skill to weave a basket, fix a radio or replace a light bulb. They can't make a living after completing their education. Students should learn core skills in schools so that they can be independent in adult life.*

The study of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, alongside problem solving, could aid both community outreach and the practical application of knowledge. This would require more soft, core skills being embedded into the school and college curriculum and work training programmes. Where these are not available, low-skilled workers and inexperienced students could still begin to bridge the gap between them through continuous professional development.

## **TECHNOLOGY FETISHISM AND DOGMA: A THREAT TO CRITICAL THINKING?**

The government's goal is *Sambridda Nepal, Sukhi Nepali* (A prosperous Nepal, a happy Nepali). Education must be 'Vocational,

Scientific, Useful and Quality', according to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2019.

Chandra Gautam, a vice-principal in Nawalparasi, declared science and maths to be the 'only way forward':

*People who've had a technical education manage to get a job or become self-employed. They are self-sufficient and self-confident, whereas students who studied traditional subjects, such as education and arts subjects, are unemployed. Even Social Studies and Nepali language teachers tell students that maths and science are more important ... And we explain why: we are falling behind and need to improve our economic standards.*

Yet researchers have warned that competition with Asian neighbours (China, India, Malaysia and Singapore) should not necessarily mean shunning humanities and the arts, especially subjects like sociology, history, philosophy and ethics, which foster critical thinking, political transformation and meaningful careers (Nussbaum, 2019). Employability training in Nepal leans heavily upon a 'human capital' model of education (Spring, 2015), prioritising 'use-value' rather than humans and their vocations as ends in themselves. Chandra promotes technical subjects due to the 'reality of the situation'. But as career counsellor Hazel Reid asks:

*What do we mean when we expect people to make 'realistic' choices – realistic on whose terms? And does this ignore or marginalise the concept of career satisfaction? (Reid, 2015)*

Core skills, often termed 'soft skills', enable human flourishing beyond profit-making. Equally, if technical institutions neglect these

skills, they will produce robotic subjects rather than caring and imaginative innovators.

## WORLD CLASS SKILLS: LOCAL APPLICATION

All participants agreed that an awareness of the local economy should guide employability learning so that students can be trained to support local industries and utilise local materials, from basket-weaving to paper-making. Keshav, a secondary school teacher, urged consideration of each area's 'geography, culture and available resources'. Nepali teacher Shanti Neupane explained:

*Nepal is a very diverse country, with hills, mountains, towns, cities and very rural areas. The government needs to know the needs of the local area and plan what kind of skills are required for businesses there.*

Shanti also complained about the local language devaluation at her English-medium private school:

*If students dare to speak Nepali in the playground they are fined 5 rupees per word. How will they speak naturally in Nepali at job interviews?*

It seems unlikely that preventing students from speaking their native language can boost their employability skills for local contexts.

Keshav said that traditional trades remain underfunded:

*The curriculum includes sewing and cutting, bee farming, making handicrafts, agricultural work, fish farming ... but students learn in a classroom without any practice or field*

*work and without stepping outside. No school that I've seen has the instruments ... The government didn't provide a budget for that. Mudho Takyo Tara Lagyo Ghudoma [They aim for the log but hit the knee].*

Keshav added:

*Even if people do gain CTEVT [Council For Technical Education and Vocational Training] qualifications, there are no jobs so they are happy to work abroad as road sweepers. They can never practise their 'practical' education.*

Farmers in Nepal have a high illiteracy rate, yet many have a vast and intricate knowledge of agriculture. However, interviewees reported that non-formal education can be undermined by teachers who occasionally threaten 'Do you want to end up ploughing fields [*halo jotne*]?' Yet there is empathy and teamwork among neighbours and families; problem solving after earthquakes; ingenuity amid crop failure, conflict resolution after wars, folk music on social media – core skills abound in life experiences.

The constitution of Nepal has given local authorities greater control over curriculum development, but the changes are still new and may take time to embed. The replacement of non-formal learning by textbooks which occasionally deride local practices and beliefs (where these can be described as 'superstition' or 'backward practices') can present a threat to the political, cultural and economic independence of some indigenous groups (Shakya, 2010), just as the independence of Nepal as a whole is threatened by global education models which are detached from its geographical needs and cultural traditions.

## EXAM RESULTS VERSUS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The development of core skills for employability in Nepal can also be hampered by a disciplinarian, teacher-centric culture in Nepalese schools. This produces a workforce 'less likely to exhibit characteristics needed to reach management level and beyond – such as risk-taking, innovation, brainstorming, experimentation and speaking truth to power' (Pathak, 2017).

The development of core skills is also stifled by the pressure of four exams a year. Keshav said:

*A student must get A plus grade or B plus grade .... Nobody cares about the skills students are learning ... Schools just compete to increase student numbers and the pass percentage.*

Some teachers are forced to resort to rote-learning, as Shanti explained:

*We usually explain a subject in depth, set some questions then ask students to come up with their own ideas. But after a couple of days, still nothing. The school starts putting pressure on us so I end up writing answers for my students that they just copy and rote-learn.*

Rote-learning for exam success or failure is an inadequate preparation for the challenges of the workplace. Leadership and risk-taking can remain hampered by a fear of punishment for 'wrong' answers. Nevertheless, several school principals we spoke to insisted that their institutions were moving away from traditional punitive teaching styles, which is encouraging.

Naradev Nyaupane is the principal of Bhimsen Secondary School in Devchuli. He described an innovative approach using a mixture of one-to-one counselling, a deeper education

as to the reasoning and ethical justification behind rules, and motivational films songs and short video clips. A team is also assigned to research the reasons for difficult behaviour. Naradev said:

*We talk to the students' friends to try to understand the factors influencing negative behaviour – whether they have personal problems, family difficulties, health or financial worries. Are they being bullied? Are they under pressure? Is there something they are trying to communicate to us?*

Naradev also explained that after counselling, Bhimsen students must sign a written commitment about managing their behaviour. All teachers must attempt to encourage positive behaviour in the student for one month and it is only after this that their parents or guardians are called in for a trilateral meeting with the student present to discuss the best way forward.

This demonstration of respect for and compassion towards students can contribute to them retaining their self-esteem, confidence, trust in adults and ability to communicate honestly. Research into background factors and mitigating circumstances might contribute to a student's welfare and safeguarding. By involving the student in the decision-making process, they are also encouraged to take responsibility and even show some leadership. Counselling them to be self-reflective and to consider the effects of their actions on the wider community can also encourage students to become more ethical and compassionate, especially since they themselves have been treated with compassion.

Counselling is also at the heart of the behaviour management policy adopted by Resham Koirala, principal of Kalika Secondary School in Devchuli. He said:

*We have banned corporal punishment and begin counselling immediately for behaviour issues. Firstly, it is through the Children's Club, then through the Student Counselling Committee and finally through the Discipline Committee.*

The involvement of children in behaviour counselling helps students to consider the impact of their actions upon their peers and reduces feelings of being victimised by adults. Koirala said that a 'commitment document' is also used to give the student the feeling that they are choosing to follow the terms of the school.

While these approaches to discipline will clearly enhance personal development and some core skills, they cannot be effective without a change in the meta-curriculum, particularly the status of learning goals and the pressure upon students to achieve unrealistic targets, which is often the catalyst for poor behaviour.

## CORE TEACHING MATERIALS

Core skills for employability could be embedded into the current curriculum, and textbooks could contain many rich and interesting opportunities for critical thinking.

But communication skills can be hampered by the poor grammar in English-language humanities textbooks. Underfunded translations such as the English version of *Moral Education (Class 8)* contain numerous errors, including missing articles and typos ('*what do you condiser as a people othe good character*', [sic], p.6). Well-intentioned, worthwhile study exercises can be destroyed by mistakes:

*'We want nobody remained hungry in our country.' Think the statement of the fruitseller. (Moral Education, Class 8, 2018, Curriculum Development Centre)*

Incorrect translation can also lead to descriptions which sound morally dubious, such as 'Those who do not start the task are low level human beings.' Students must choose the 'correct' answer, either by ticking the 'right-thinking' statement or by filling in a word missing from the sentence from an obvious choice between two contrasting options, for example:

a. increases by travling.[sic] (Intelligence and wisdom/Greed and laziness) (ibid., p.29)

and:

d. I ..... rules. (i) prefer (ii) do not prefer (ibid., p.34)

This reduction of open-ended debates does little to improve critical thinking. Although this particular textbook is packed with exercises and ideas that encourage reflection upon ethics, it avoids difficult dilemmas. The textbook contains a limited and conventional view of what it means to be a good citizen, excluding any ethical position which might include free thought to the point of dissent or eccentricity, disagreeing with one's family, community or government or challenging social norms. A disciplinarian ethos prevents any meaningful discussion of issues like civil disobedience, alternative lifestyles, utopian thinking or thorny questions about when rules might be broken for the greater good.

Many of the textbooks used in Nepal for teaching social studies are far more progressive. The social studies syllabus has an impressively broad scope, including elements of history, politics, geography and sociology. It rigorously tackles issues such as women's rights (including *chhaupadi* - menstruation huts), political philosophy, children's rights, revolutionary change, trafficking, war, corruption, inequality, environmental awareness and even contains constructive criticism of international interventions and excessive consumerism. It explores globalisation from both positive and negative aspects, hailing international co-operation but

warning against copying ‘bad foreign habits’. Unfortunately, underfunding has meant that proofreading mistakes still pop up, such as:

*What is the main message [sic] of our Martyrs to us? (OCE, Comp. Social Studies 122, p.9)*

Many of the social studies books recommend that children should confront people in their community who engage in ‘harmful behaviours’ such as drinking alcohol, smoking and drug-taking, with one sample question being:

*How to help the bad habits developed drugs user nearest friend to left [sic] the bad habits? Write in short. (ibid., p.4)*

Nevertheless, it is interesting that children in Nepal are taught that their actions can make a difference to society. Great care is taken throughout the Nepali social studies syllabus to include every caste, religion and echelon of society, with discrimination, poverty and inequality issues tackled in a powerful and meaningful way, although LGBTQ+ communities are seldom mentioned.

An attempt is made to strike a balance between preserving traditions and belief and following science and reason. There is considerable room for creative responses and showing leadership in debates and discussions, where teaching methods and the time allocated are conducive to this.

Shanti explained the challenges she faces when trying to hold classroom debates with her students:

*Most of the students are inhibited and take a while to get going. But eventually more students participate – and then we run out of time! We have to sacrifice class discussion all the time for ‘proper’ teaching, visible stuff on paper, to tick all our boxes.*

It is vital for the employability prospects of Nepali students that teaching methods allow for the time, space and respect needed for students to develop soft core skills, especially critical thinking. Moreover, both humanities subjects as a whole and humanities components as additional learning in other subjects should not be abandoned or underfunded due to a bias towards politically neutral subjects like maths, science, IT and literacy. Rather than narrowing, the curriculum should be continually expanding, with ample opportunity for critical thinking, innovation and creativity. This is crucial if students are to develop the skills that Nepalese employers are openly demanding.

## CONCLUSION

The core skills sought by companies in their employees extend beyond scientific and technological aptitude, with independent thinking high up their wishlist. Education funders should see beyond alpha-numeric results tables and support projects demonstrating creativity and innovation, specific courses in core skills plus their incorporation into the curriculum and a re-evaluation of humanities subjects. Funders should support the socially and globally transformative elements of the current syllabus and its brave efforts to tackle corruption, injustice and inequality.

Finally, teachers should no longer ‘present themselves as the “modern”, “developed” citizens in opposition to the more “backward”, locally located parents and students’ (Caddell, 2005). Small-scale business activities offer opportunities for students to practise and

apply their theoretical knowledge. A broader definition of core skills intersects with the existing life skills of Nepali people, breaking down the dichotomies of globalism versus localism, migration versus family and progress versus tradition. The current global health and climate change emergencies may hasten this return to the local and its hidden economic potential.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Khum Raj Pathak** is a Nepali-born maths teacher for children in special educational needs and alternative education settings in the UK. He has examined the barriers to education (MSc, Birkbeck, University of London, 2013), the lifelong effects of corporal punishment in schools (PhD, Canterbury Christ Church University, 2017) and the psychological effects of punitive language (OBP, 2019).

## REFERENCES

- British Council Nepal, *British Council Core Skills and Competencies*: <https://www.britishcouncil.org.np/british-council-core-skills-and-competencies>
- British Council (2015). *Unlocking a World of Potential, Core Skills for Learning, Work and Society*: [https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/core\\_skills\\_brochure\\_unlocking\\_a\\_world\\_of\\_potential.pdf](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/core_skills_brochure_unlocking_a_world_of_potential.pdf)
- Caddell, M. (2005). 'Discipline makes the nation great': *visioning development and the Nepali nation-state through schools*. In V. Benei (ed.), *Manufacturing citizenship: education and nationalism in Europe, South Asia and China*. Routledge research in education. Oxford, UK: Routledge, 76–103.
- CIA, Nepal – Economy (2020). CIA Factbook: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)
- Gellner, D.N. & Snellinger, A. (2017). *Source Force*. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 40:2, 397–399
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020). *Country Report for Nepal*: <https://endcorporalpunishment.org/reports-on-every-state-and-territory/nepal/>
- LeVine, S. (2019). *Getting in, Dropping out, and Staying on: Determinants of Girls' School Attendance in Nepal*. In H. Ullrich (ed.), *The Impact of Education in South Asia*. *Anthropological Studies of Education*. Palgrave Macmillan, Chambers.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020). *Education Policy* [http://moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/Education\\_Policy.pdf](http://moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/Education_Policy.pdf)
- Ministry of Finance (2019). *Economic Survey 2018/19*.



Nepal Law Commission: Children's Act (2018 [2075]) <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/archives/category/documents/prevailing-law/statutes-acts/the-act-relating-to-children-2075-2018>

Nussbaum, M. (2016). *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Office of the Controller of Examinations (2068BS), Comp. Social Studies (122), Prototype Test Papers SLC.

Parlami, J. & Monnot, M.J. (2018). *Getting to the CORE: Putting an End to the Term 'Soft Skills'*. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 28(2), 225–227.

Pathak, K.R. (2017). *How has corporal punishment in Nepalese schools impacted upon learners' lives?* PhD Thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Regmi, K. (2016). *The Status of Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning in Nepal*. In R. Egetenmeyer (ed.), *Adult and Lifelong Learning in Europe and Beyond*, 261–271. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Regmi, K. (2019). *Educational governance in Nepal: weak government, donor partnership and standardised assessment*. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, DOI: 10.1080/03057925.2019.1587704

Reid, H. (2015). *An Introduction to Career Counselling and Coaching*. London: SAGE.

Shakya, D. (2010). *Education, Economic and Cultural Modernisation and the Newars of Nepal*. In D. Kapoor & E. Shizha (eds), *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on Education, Development and Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spring, J. (2015). *Economization of education: Human capital, global corporations, skills-based schooling*. New York: Routledge.

Teach for Nepal. (2017). *Education in crisis*: <https://www.teachfornepal.org/tfn/education-in-crisis/>

Yadav, A.K., Rai, B.K., Niraula S.R., Yadav, A., Bhandari, R. & Shrivastav V. (2019). *Identification of alcohol problem among long route bus drivers and staffs of Dharan, eastern Nepal: Assessing from the CAGE and DSM-IV tools*. *J Family Med Prim Care*. 8(3):853-859. doi:10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc\_301\_17

# INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL LEARNING

Aamna Pasha and Douglas Bourn

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the concept of ‘global learning’ for school leaders and policymakers. It looks particularly at the current debates around the topic and considers the opportunities and challenges for the design and delivery of such initiatives in South Asia. Finally, the chapter considers an international partnership between Nepal and England as a case study for global learning.

## GLOBAL GOALS AND THEIR ROLE IN GLOBAL LEARNING

Global goals, or, as they are more commonly known, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were taken up by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action on core issues such as poverty, climate change, peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs outline action in an area that produces outcomes in another. Approaches to development must therefore have coherence across social, economic and environmental domains.

SDG 4 aims to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ by 2030. The goal consists of ten targets to guide countries along a transformative path to a sustainable education agenda (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018). One of these targets, SDG 4.7, makes explicit reference to learning about the wider world and themes such as human rights, sustainable development, gender

equality and global citizenship. As a result, 4.7 has many implications for the achievement of other SDGs (Marron & Naughton, 2019). This goal also presents us with questions about how ‘quality’ education should be understood.

The indicators for SDG 4.7 are as follows: the extent to which ‘(i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in:

- a) national education policies;
- b) curricula;
- c) teacher education; and
- d) student assessment” (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018).

As such, attempts have been made to integrate these indicators at all levels of teaching and learning. A feature of a number of international initiatives has been the promotion of terms such as ‘global citizenship’ and ‘global learning’. For example, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has remained at the forefront of work around global citizenship education, building on earlier work around peace and human rights education.

Defining these terms is important because they frame how the concept ‘global citizenship’ is understood. For example, the way in which UNESCO and its initiative, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, have defined

global citizenship takes a more skills-based approach as opposed to a values-based approach.

The importance of global learning has also been enhanced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which includes an evaluation of global competence on its Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA). The international charity Oxfam has also focused on ways in which to enhance 'citizenship education' with a global dimension (Appiah, 2015).

Addressing SDG 4.7 and the role of international organisations presents both opportunities and challenges. The themes outlined in 4.7 mirror the definition of global education in the Maastricht declaration, made by the Europe-wide Global Education Congress in 2002, which outlined a global education strategy until 2015. It committed nations to 'education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world, and awakens them to bring about a world of greater justice, equity and human rights for all' (European Strategy Framework, 2002.) Initiatives in North America and Australia also refer to what Bourn and others have called 'adjectival educations' such as global education, citizenship education or development education (Bourn, 2012). The values and principles underpinning conceptions of global citizenship by UNESCO and Oxfam are 'similarly derived from a western-centric school of thought' (Eten, 2020).

Elements of these themes can be seen in a number of education initiatives within South Asia particularly with regard to peace, human rights, gender and sustainability. In their paper *Peace by Piece: Mainstreaming*

*Peace Education in South Asia*, Thapa et al. (2010) describe the challenges and obstacles to including peace education within the curriculum. As the publication notes, teaching peace is not just a matter of 'transmitting accepted knowledge. It emphasises questioning concepts and creating new knowledge from a variety of sources' (ibid.).

These studies emphasise the importance of relating learning to students' own contexts (Bajaj, 2012).<sup>1</sup> The same is true for resources and materials used in teachers' professional development. In the case of the Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE) project in India, it became clear that where professional development incorporated teachers' own experiences, their impact on the quality of teaching was longer lasting (2012).

In the same vein, education for sustainable development in South Asia has traditionally been interpreted as environmental education. There are, however, opportunities for broadening perspectives on education for sustainable development by making connections to the rich cultural traditions and values in the South Asia region about the protection of the social environment and the philosophical beliefs that underpin that (Poudel, 2016).

One body that has successfully broadened perspectives on education for sustainable development in the region has been the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP).<sup>2</sup> This institute, which is linked to UNESCO, has produced an important publication and materials on how to embed education for sustainable development, peace and global citizenship in school textbooks by focusing on specific subjects such as mathematics, science, languages and geography (UNESCO

<sup>1</sup> See also <https://www.ritimo.org/Teaching-peace-Civil-society-peace-education-programmes-in-South-Asia>; <https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/teaching-shared-histories-mutual-understanding-and-peace-south-east-asia>; <https://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/asia-pacific/section1/pdf/Peace%20Education%20Within%20the%20Human%20Rights%20Framework.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mgiep.unesco.org>

MGIEP, 2017). In Nepal, after years of internal conflict and following the Comprehensive Peace Accord in 2006, the Ministry of Education, UNICEF, UNESCO and Save the Children came together to implement a peace education programme (Thapa et al., 2010).

These examples demonstrate that often the driver or funder of global learning initiatives has come from outside of the region, either from international NGOs or bodies such as UNESCO.

Homegrown initiatives are few and far between, rarely large-scale and mostly limited to a particular city, province or region. For example, the NGO Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and Research ran a peace education programme for primary and middle schools in 20 schools in Karachi, Sindh (Ahmed, 2017). Without state support, these initiatives remain limited in their scope and uptake. While international organisations play a critical role in pushing policy and supporting endeavours, questions remain around the ownership of global learning initiatives and whether they align with larger national policy objectives. Without a dynamic, context-specific approach, their potential for adoption will be limited.

## WHAT IS GLOBAL LEARNING?

SDG 4.7 presents a vision of education which empowers learners to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future. In many education systems, global learning, global outlook, global dimensions and global citizenship have emerged at the forefront. This is often rooted in the view that students need to be prepared to live in a globalised world, respond ethically to the challenges presented by such deep interconnections, and take responsibility and advocate for global social justice (Tye, 2014).

These seemingly straightforward motivations lead to significant questions such as: What does it mean to educate for global learning? How can global learning be embedded within

the curriculum? And to some more complex questions: What should we be learning about other cultures and peoples? What does it mean to have a global outlook? What are the possible challenges of teaching for a global outlook? How does learning about the local connect to learning about the global? In order to address some of these broader questions, the subsequent sections will consider more closely what is meant by global learning and the different approaches that inform this field of study.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF GLOBAL LEARNING

Some of the ideas underpinning global learning can be traced back to the interwar period when there was a drive for educating for international understanding. This need for a greater understanding of others and the world we live in lent itself to the development of various fields of study such as development education, global education and global citizenship education (Bourn, 2015; Davies, Evans, & Reid, 2005; Peterson & Warwick, 2015). In Europe, the concept of a global dimension within the curriculum shifted development education from learning about development to learning to recognise the interdependent nature of people's lives and towards making connections between the local and the global. The concept of 'global citizenship' took this further to include an element of advocacy and a sense of shared responsibility. While it is hard to clearly demarcate themes within these fields from each other, their goals are principally aligned to readying students to inherit and respond to the challenges of a complex, interconnected world (Case, 1993; Gaudelli, 2003; Scheunpflug, 2008).

The inclusion of SDG 4.7 provided an important opportunity for the field and contributed to its expansion. Crucially, it provided both recognition and affirmation of the need of education narratives to be broadened. It ensured a wider social perspective and encouraged exploration

beyond the local. This in turn contributed to greater research and practical efforts in relevant areas of teaching and learning.

The term ‘global learning’ itself marks a more recent emphasis on learning, alongside recognising the globalised nature of the world (Bourn, 2015). Scheunpflug (2011) suggests that global learning can be understood as a guiding principle defined ‘by thematic issues such as development, environment, peace and interculturalism; and by competencies that need to be acquired to live in a global society’ (as cited in Bourn, 2015). Brunold (2005) defines global learning as developing students’ understanding of the uncertainty of knowledge, in the process of establishing links between everyday problems, global processes and lines of conflicts. Kahn and Agnew (2017) valuably deconstruct some of the foundational elements of global learning; they regard it as digging deep into the complexity of subject matter, thinking about the world relationally and through plurality and multiplicity and navigating between the general and the particular, undoing binary thinking. For example, an environmental sustainability lesson may consider group, district, national and international impacts, exploring sustainability from different perspectives, understanding world views and how they impact conversations around sustainability. This could lead to conversations exploring students’ own beliefs about sustainability and similar themes.<sup>3</sup>

While approaches towards global education in South Asia remain underdeveloped, there is a need to reimagine the domain particularly in light of the tilt towards market-based competency within national contexts and personal identity formations (Kadiwal & Durrani, 2018; Pasha, 2016). Researchers have highlighted the need for a grassroots approach and the integration of religious ethics with a positive and constructive outlook (Hashmi, 2018).

As suggested earlier, global learning in South Asia would be more relevant to learners if closer links were made to regional and cultural values. An example of this can be seen in Sharma’s study on Value-Creating Global Citizenship Education (2018), where she states that Gandhian perspectives could provide an alternative and more relevant lens for learners to dominant Western values. She states that the aim of global citizenship education should be to:

*... foster planetary citizens who are equipped with the value-creating capacity for social self-actualisation, who possess wisdom derived from knowledge, and have the courage and compassion to perceive the world as a cosmic living entity, while also being able to critically challenge power and structural inequalities at various levels.*

## HOW CAN GLOBAL LEARNING BE UNDERSTOOD?

This paper suggests that global learning needs to be considered as a pedagogical approach. As such, global learning can be interpreted not as new knowledge for the curriculum but as a look at how understanding about the wider world is taught. This means it has applicability for all countries while taking account of specific national and cultural perspectives, including existing challenges to teaching and learning.

Consequently, we would argue there are two fundamental cornerstones to global learning: that of understanding global issues and an emphasis on learning that is multifaceted when exploring global issues. This section explores the key elements of global learning and how these can be understood.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/science-maths-technology/computing-and-ict/systems-computer/systems-thinking-understanding-sustainability/content-section-8>

Bourn's work in *The Theory and Practice of Global Learning* (2014) highlighted a pedagogy for global learning that emerged out of the field of development education. Borrowing from that paper, we propose global learning should include the following elements:

1. a global outlook
2. intercultural understanding
3. ability to engage in open dialogue
4. commitment to learning about global issues.

It is important to note these elements should not be presented in a hierarchy. It would, for example, be difficult to determine if a global outlook is more important than intercultural understanding. Does one come before the other? Can one be developed/inculcated without the other? We suggest that global learning is a fluid process of learning, with flexible starting points, that is applicable to every context, rather than a fixed method with rigid learning outcomes and goals.

The elements that comprise global learning are explored further below.

### 1. Global outlook

Having a global outlook can be understood as the foundation of global learning and is more than just learning about development and global issues. First and foremost it involves recognition of the interconnectedness of the world in which we live today. Links can be made between themes such as poverty and inequality and they should not be treated as abstract topics only relevant to 'others'. Therefore a crucial starting point for teaching global learning is illustrating the interconnected world we live in and the ways in which we are impacted by events outside of our immediate circle. In the geopolitically charged context of Pakistan, for example, this might mean exploring the impact on Pakistan of the US–China trade war.

Bourn (2014) suggests that when the student begins to understand global themes, they are faced with larger questions about

their relationship with the wider world. Consequently, to encourage a global outlook in the classroom, each student's starting point has to be considered according to his or her background, personal experience and belief system. In a culturally and economically complex country like Nepal, this could be in reference to the learner's identity in terms of their mother tongue, religion and societal status. In summary then, encouraging a global outlook can be seen as a journey linking the micro to the macro and continually navigating the space between the two.

### 2. Intercultural understanding

The theme of intercultural understanding links closely to themes such as peace, equality, human rights and respect for diversity. Intercultural understanding can be understood as involving an appreciation and understanding of many aspects of cultures for the purpose of living together peacefully and ethically. Crucially, intercultural understanding must go beyond superficial 'cultural awareness' to explicitly include an appreciation for diversity, an acknowledgement of our commonality, an understanding of multiple identities and the dynamic nature of cultures that are affected and transform as a result of invasion, colonisation or globalisation (WMCGC, 2002; Klien, 2001 as cited in Davies, 2006). The inclusion of intercultural understanding within the curriculum therefore should be broad-based, encompassing people's life experiences in all their dimensions. UNESCO's Education for Intercultural Understanding outlines some of these dimensions: emotional (ways of expressing emotions), intellectual (ways of knowing, traditional knowledge), social (diverse cultures, equity/inequity, human rights, disadvantage, discrimination, experience of social conflict and harmony) (Leo, 2010).

UNESCO provides a good starting point for developing intercultural understanding. 'Changing attitudes and behaviours towards those who are different from ourselves involves much more than raising cognitive

awareness, which we know does not by itself change actions. An understanding of our own culture, a deep exploration of our personal and cultural values ... are also required' (Leo, 2010). Self-awareness and self-improvement, therefore, are crucial components of intercultural understanding and require a willingness to unlearn and relearn. This also means that the processes of teaching and learning intercultural understanding are just as important, if not more so, than the content.

### 3. Ability to engage in open dialogue

All approaches to global learning require engagement with other ways of seeing the world, other perspectives and other people. The most obvious way to discover and engage with difference is through open dialogue. There are a few fundamental characteristics of what comprises a dialogue. First, that it is a two-way communication; second, that it is between consenting individuals; and third, that it is democratic and fair. Kumar (2008) refers to this as 'dialogic' learning and stresses its importance as a way of facilitating understanding. To read about other perspectives or to watch a documentary on other people is not the same kind of learning as engaging in a dialogue. That is because a dialogue is about 'learning from' and 'with' others rather than 'learning about' others (Blackmore, 2016). It involves active participation in the construction of knowledge and meaning rather than adopting the role of a detached observer.

Ability to engage in open dialogue is therefore an essential element of global learning as it moves past the superficial approach of learning 'about' others. Instead, dialogue involves an active participatory approach that further encourages self-reflection and self-awareness. It entails the student contributing rather than 'interviewing' the other, for which they need to actively listen and take part in a co-operative conversation.

### 4. Commitment to learning about global issues

This final dimension of global learning is

crucial because it connects the other parts together. Partaking in an open dialogue, developing intercultural understanding or striving for a global outlook will only go so far as there is a commitment to learning about global issues. This commitment is important because some of the issues under examination may not directly impact the learner or be comprehensible in their context. Furthermore, engaging in global learning involves critically investigating and confronting some of one's own assumptions. A genuine level of commitment needs to be acknowledged by students, school practitioners, policymakers and government agencies. Without stakeholder commitment, global learning will only go so far.

As an example, Thapa et al. (2010) found that almost all South Asian countries recognise the importance of peace education. Paradoxically, however, the report also found that governments ascribe a low priority to the field, possibly because they regard themes such as human rights as too politically charged. Instead, Thapa et al. noted that on a school level, course content or pedagogic tools can actually reinforce ideologies which sharply contrast with peace education. These lessons drive home the importance of a commitment to learning about global issues, since the self-reflection involved can be uncomfortable – bringing to light paradoxes and biases in our ways of knowing. For this reason, there must be both an individual and collective dedication to exploring views about the wider world.

## KEY DEBATES ON GLOBAL LEARNING

There is great variation in the ideological framing of 'global learning' as a concept. In this section, debates around global learning will be considered to help explain why approaches can vary in different contexts. Broadly speaking, these approaches can be categorised into two distinct ways of understanding global learning.

The first is the globally competitive approach,

which focuses on educating students to be globally mobile and compete with others on the international stage. All the references to ‘global’ in Pakistan’s National Education Policy document, for example, are economic in nature and speak of building competitiveness through global knowledge (Pasha, 2016). The underlying rationale of this approach is that globalisation presents massive economic opportunities and challenges; for example, students now compete with those from other countries for the same positions, jobs can be outsourced and fast-paced digitalisation requires the ability to adapt easily to changing trends. Students, as economic citizens, need to be prepared for this new reality in which they will be working.

The second is the social justice approach, regarding the ethical need for students to understand the interconnected and interdependent state of the world, and related outcomes including human rights abuses and climate change (Reynolds et al., 2015). This interpretation of global learning speaks to growing concerns about equity, justice and sustainability, and preparing students to be sensitive about the nature of the human condition. Oxfam’s *Education for Global Citizenship: A guide for schools* (2015) highlights ways in which themes of social justice such as sustainable development can come into the classroom.

However, for both approaches, globalisation is the central tenet.

Many countries in South Asia emphasise the instrumental role of schools in fostering a national identity and developing human resources for economic development (Westbury, 2017). In many of these countries there is growing youth unemployment within a job environment that demands technical skills. South Asia has the largest youth labour force of all continents, yet concerningly an estimated 54 per cent of South Asian youth aged 15 to 24 graduate without the necessary skills to get a decent job in the next decade (Lonie, 2019). Global learning needs to

align with larger educational goals and be directed by the realities presently facing these countries. Therefore, for better acceptance and meaningful integration of global learning into classrooms, we must move beyond the binary approaches of economic development and social justice.

There are parallels in the binary debate around ‘quality education’. The first approach is defined by a focus on the quantitative academic achievement of students. This approach is standards-driven, attainment-based and focused on assessment and examination results. The OECD’s PISA tests in maths, science and reading encourage such an attainment-based approach through its performance indicators, providing comparable data between countries about assessment outcomes.

The second definition of ‘quality education’ is more concerned with qualitative evidence. Under this approach, definitions and discussions of quality in education focus on students’ holistic development; ‘they refer to equity, social justice, human rights, peace education, and advancing values of active, informed and responsible citizenship’ (Zajda, 2014). A UNESCO policy document, *Quality Education* (2014), defined a quality education broadly as one that ‘satisfies basic learning needs’ but more importantly ‘enriches the lives of children’.

UNESCO’s *Education for All: Global Monitoring Report 2005–The Quality Imperative* highlights two main definitions of quality education: ‘learners’ cognitive development and the role of education in “promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development” ‘ (as cited in Zajda, 2014). In SDG 4.7 we can see an emphasis on this second, broader approach to education, shifting the dominant international discourse on education from a tool primarily for enhancing economic growth or academic attainment to the social and humanistic purposes of education. It inherently enriches



the way quality education is defined and approached.

Recently, there have been efforts to align these two approaches to quality education. The OECD's inclusion in 2018 of global competence, described as 'the ability to examine local and global issues, appreciate perspectives and be able to interact with different people and act for collective good'<sup>4</sup> can be understood as an example of one such shift to encourage a broader all-encompassing definition of quality education.

These perspectives and approaches help us not only to understand how global learning is approached and adopted but also to be more largely cognisant of the dominant paradigms in different educational contexts within which global learning is being introduced. Global learning must be understood as a broad field which will necessarily be influenced by the social and political climate of the time and space in which it is constructed. As a result, while an integrated approach to global learning within the classroom is ideal, it will always organically take on different forms.

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND GLOBAL LEARNING

International partnerships have been an important practice in many schools for the past 30 years or so. Their popularity has been significantly enhanced by access to digital technology and the increased mobility of teachers who can now live and work in different regions around the world (Leonard, 2014).

Historically many partnerships had a rather colonial and paternalistic approach, with the UK-based school seeing its role as being to impart and develop new knowledge and skills to schools in the global South (see Bourn & Cara, 2013). However, from around 2000, the UK government through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

encouraged a different approach, seeing partnerships as of mutual learning value, with a global dimension as the underlying approach (Leonard, 2014). The purpose of the partnership is now seen as broadening cultural understanding and developing an international outlook within both schools. This meant a closer relationship with development education and what is now called global learning (Leonard, 2014; Morrison, 2020).

Nepal is one of the most popular countries for international school partnerships. There are several probable reasons for this: Nepal is considered a 'safe' country to visit and therefore an easier choice for international partnerships. English is spoken as a second language, particularly in urban cities like Kathmandu and also for business purposes. A common language allows for more effective communication between partnering schools, students and teachers. Additionally, Nepal holds an exotic charm; as a multiethnic and culturally rich country, it acquires immense appeal as being relatively 'unknown' (Grossman-Thompson & Linder, 2015).

Other research on international partnerships reveals an interest among teachers and policymakers about broadening horizons and seeking new knowledge (Leonard, 2014; Morrison, 2020).

### Case study: Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning

The British Council defines global learning as learning about issues that 'affect and connect us all such as climate change, gender equality, living sustainably'. Global learning therefore 'equips students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to act more thoughtfully, ethically and responsibly as citizens and contributors to society'. This definition closely echoes that of the Global Learning Programme, a UK government-funded programme that ran from 2013 to 2018 to help teachers at all levels of schooling deliver effective teaching and learning about global issues.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisa-2018-global-competence.htm>

The British Council has been running a Connecting Classrooms programme in some form for more than 15 years. It has gone through several iterations, and from 2015 to 2018 defined its main purpose as ‘to help young people to develop the knowledge, skills and values to live and work in a globalised economy and contribute responsibly both locally and globally’. With the emphasis on a global economy, this approach took on a more economic orientation. When the programme was re-envisioned as Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning (CCGL) in 2018, an additional aim of raising awareness of global issues among young people was included. CCGL can therefore be understood as an amalgamation of the two approaches.

A central aspect of the CCGL programme is school partnerships. As the British Council website states, the value of such partnerships is in offering teachers the opportunity to develop face-to-face and virtual partnerships with teachers and schools across the world. Using a range of free resources, including materials based on the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, teachers are encouraged to lead collaborative curriculum projects designed to help young people learn about other cultures and explore global issues. ‘These school partnerships enrich teaching and learning and encourage pupils to act more thoughtfully, ethically and responsibly as citizens and contributors to society’ (British Council, 2020).<sup>5</sup>

There are numerous partnerships between the UK and Nepal’s schools. One example is between a group of ten schools in Northern Ireland with schools in Nepal. A feature of this and other partnerships with Northern Ireland has been that they have run as clusters of schools. The partnerships began by looking at areas of commonality around environmental issues and moved on to gender equality. The partnerships have included reciprocal visits,

and this has been noted by teachers as being of vital importance to make the link real. A feature of the visit from the Nepali teachers to Northern Ireland was training in digital literacy, including applications for education. The training enabled effective follow-up dialogue between the schools via online learning.

According to British Council materials, the impact of this partnership was increased intercultural understanding by both teachers and pupils alongside the development of specific IT skills. One Northern Ireland teacher is reported to have said:

*We have also been communicating with our partners in Nepal using Google Hangouts, using Google Classroom. Our children are more familiar now with using technology. Coding is an area which we are developing.<sup>6</sup>*

Nepali teachers also wished to learn more about teaching and learning in its broadest sense. One teacher is reported to have said:

*I am here to explore – to catch the ideas as how they run their classrooms – what is their major strategy and how they implement that.<sup>7</sup>*

### **Case study: Stevenage–Kathmandu–Pokhara schools partnership**

For this paper, our case study will focus on the partnership between schools in Hertfordshire in England with schools in Kathmandu and Pokhara in Nepal. The origins of this ‘cluster’ collaboration are different from most international school partnerships, which have usually been from personal contacts or direct interest in a particular country.<sup>8</sup> This cluster collaboration from the UK end came from the

<sup>5</sup> <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/about>

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/education-resources/school-teacher/connecting-classrooms-northern-ireland>.

<sup>7</sup> See: <https://nireland.britishcouncil.org/education-resources/school-teacher/connecting-classrooms-northern-ireland>.

<sup>8</sup> We are very grateful for the comments and material from Andrew Christie for this case study.

direct contacts that the lead school had with surrounding schools and support from the local authority.

## METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the two partnership leads in Nepal and in the UK: Babu Kaji Shrestha from Global Action Nepal and Andrew Christie from Leys School in Stevenage. These leads also shared video resources from partner schools, which allowed for observational research to gain a better understanding on how teaching and learning about global issues was taking place. Discussions were also held with representatives from the British Council Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme to ascertain relevant background information on partnerships between Nepal and the UK.

## CONTEXT

Stevenage, the town in Hertfordshire where the UK schools were based, is one of the first ever 'new towns' built near London after the Second World War. It has a population of about 84,000 people, with 84 per cent of the population identifying as white British (Stevenage Borough Council, 2012). Kathmandu, on the other hand, is the largest metropolis of Nepal. The valley, surrounded by the Himalayan mountain range, has a population of 985,000 at present. There is immense ethnic diversity, with the Newars making the largest ethnic group at 30 per cent of the population, followed by the Matwali at 25 per cent, the Khas Brahmins at 20 per cent and the Chettris at 18.5 per cent of the population. Pokhara is the second city of Nepal and often regarded as the tourist capital of the country.

The NGO Global Action Nepal<sup>9</sup> has played an important role in identifying contacts, and through its sister organisation GRLRC has

organised school leadership and core skills training for teachers. Because it has both a Nepalese and a UK arm, Global Action Nepal had a good understanding of both contexts.

One of the senior leaders at Leys Primary and Nursery School in the Stevenage area had already been involved in a Global Learning programme in England. Meanwhile other local schools were interested in developing partnerships with a country most students had little experience of. They approached the British Council, which suggested partnering with schools in Nepal.

Thirteen primary schools in the Stevenage area signed up to the partnership and they secured a CCGL grant in May 2019. The Stevenage teachers travelled to Kathmandu and Pokhara in September 2019, where they got the opportunity to visit their partner school and meet with their fellow Nepali teachers to discuss and agree the specifics of the educational project. A film was made of the trip to promote the benefits of the programme.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the trip, the Stevenage, Kathmandu and Pokhara teachers met on a monthly basis to review progress. Schools communicated and shared student work via Skype, email and letters.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a recommendation for all joint projects between the partner schools involved with CCGL. As such, there were a number of different themes the teachers could focus on with students. One of the main stated goals of Nepalese schools has been to reduce inequalities within and between countries. As a result of this, some of the partnerships chose 'gender equality through citizenship' as a collaborative project. The schools explored how gender roles and expectations influence identity and rights. The aim has been to inspire pupils to question norms in order to bring about great gender equality. This is aligned to Sustainable Development Goal 5, which seeks to achieve

<sup>9</sup> [www.globalactionnepal.org](http://www.globalactionnepal.org)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1sQU18yYKA>

gender equality and to empower all women and girls.

One of the Stevenage teachers said:

*The participating schools are all passionate about providing their students with the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to play an active role in their community, whilst working with others to make our planet more equal, fair and sustainable.*

Students also became involved in development charity Practical Action's challenge to develop solutions to global plastic waste. The challenge can be embedded in the science or design and technology curriculum or be run as a science, technology, engineering and mathematics club or enrichment day. Students had the opportunity to engage with science investigations, enquiry-based learning and product design for a UK or international market.

In addition to the above, partner schools worked together on a wide range of smaller projects, investigating one or more of the SDGs.

The cluster created its own website and posted videos to demonstrate that ideas and stories relating to the SDGs were being shared.<sup>11</sup> Ten short films based on short stories and poems which link to the goals were also produced.<sup>12</sup>

The SDGs have been a valuable frame of reference for the partnership. They have enabled the schools, the teachers and the pupils to see areas of commonality. It moved the partnership away from any sense of paternalism and reproducing cultural stereotypes.

One Stevenage teacher said the goals:

*... increase our students' knowledge and understanding of poverty, sustainability and development issues. It has also helped to shift children beyond a charity mentality to one of social justice; to find meaningful ways to engage actively in issues such as poverty and inequality.*

The lead teacher from the UK said:

*The partnership has developed teachers' understanding of global citizenship by exploring its relevance for their students compared with the views of teachers from overseas. It has also enabled teachers to make relevant and meaningful connections with local and global issues which help pupils to develop an international mindset alongside their awareness of their own local identity.*

For schools from both countries, the partnership has also helped to develop inclusive values, pupil motivation and school–community links.

For the Nepali teachers, the partnership enabled teachers to learn how to develop different styles and approaches to teaching and learning. While the vast majority of teachers are qualified academically, they have not all had professional training on applying their knowledge to the classroom. A chalk and talk culture is deeply rooted within the vast majority of schools. This therefore means that initiatives such as CCGL are of great significance because of the kind of continuous professional development that the partnership supports.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBI29o0cJLugxUmoa72ER1g>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGxodbCxLnbyYVI-qnA38Sm55MGa21bCAg>

Additionally partnerships have, in general, gained traction because of the International School Award, the accreditation scheme that recognises and highlights achievements in introducing an international dimension in schools. Those involved in CCGL can apply for the ISA, which for many schools means an increased profile within the communities they operate. Another explanation for the popularity of international partnerships in Nepal is the interest and motivation in learning English. English is the primary language used for business in the country. Since Nepal's economy is largely dependent on tourism, proficiency in the language allows for communication with foreign tourists. It is considered a language of prestige, allowing for greater social mobility (Shrestha, 2016).

Although at present most of the partnership and ISA schools involved in Nepal are private schools, there is some involvement from state schools. The success of the school-level partnership has now led to a potential town-twinning partnership between Stevenage and Budhanilkantha municipality.

## ISSUES WITH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FOR GLOBAL LEARNING IN SOUTH ASIA

The Nepal–Stevenage partnership raises some important issues that need to be examined in order to understand global learning in South Asia. Foremost it is crucial to recognise that motivations and aims of partnerships may be different for each set of schools. Within the Nepalese context, enthusiasm went beyond the core aim of the programme to broader consequences of the partnerships. For example, the focus on learning English is a spin-off effect of such a partnership that might quickly begin to take centre stage, thereby overshadowing the original purpose of the project. Similarly, the status brought by the International School Award<sup>13</sup> could be more compelling a motive than the actual,

embedded inclusion of an international dimension in the schools.

The lead UK organiser of the partnership also noted the real dangers posed by paternalism and exoticism, particularly with a country such as Nepal which has a very rich culture and has strong economic ties with the UK. For example, videos of the partnership, while containing some observations from teachers about how much they had learned, visually emphasised a rather stylised and traditional Nepalese culture through clothes, dancing and music.<sup>14</sup>

Although the organisers of these partnerships were conscious of these issues, there is always with any link the danger of unequal relationships. As Scheunpflug (2020) has said: how to balance experiences which might lead to paternalism?’

Furthermore, the absence of a mechanism to ensure short-term training leads to ongoing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning could undermine the partnership's impact. The case study suggests that while all the teachers valued the training they had gained through CCGL, it was much more challenging to put the skills and ideas gained into practice within their schools. This was in part due to lack of resources but also resistance from others about rethinking their pedagogical approach. In the absence of long-term evaluation mechanisms or subject monitoring to assess any changes in practice, continuous professional development initiatives can fail to have lasting impacts in teaching and learning.

## GLOBAL LEARNING PEDAGOGY AND PARTNERSHIPS: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

The association between teacher quality and learning outcomes is widely acknowledged. Because global learning emphasises

<sup>13</sup> (<https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/accreditation/international-school-award>)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1sQU18yYKA>

the aspect of 'learning', it is regarded as demanding a shift from traditional 'chalk and talk' methods. Indeed, when implementing global learning in the classroom, teachers play a pivotal multi-layered role of a facilitator, guide and role model (Leo, 2010). Teachers must adopt a learner-focused approach, understand and build on the background and experiences of learners, and do this 'within a supportive teaching and learning environment that models democracy in action and addresses issues that are relevant to the learners' (ibid.).

These are tall orders, particularly in South Asia. The focus of most governments in the region has been on access, enrolment and completion rates, while learning outcomes have often been neglected. Not surprisingly, then, learning outcomes are abysmally low. For example, the World Development Report (2018) established that India had the worst results out of a set of middle- to lower-middle-income countries (Malawi, Iraq, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Nicaragua) for Grade 2 students (aged 7 to 8) who could not perform two-digit subtraction. India was also ranked second worst among 11 countries—Malawi, Uganda, Ghana, Zambia, Yemen, Nepal, Iraq, Morocco, Liberia, Tanzania, Jordan—where a grade two student could not read a single word of a short text. In Pakistan, only three-fifths of Grade 3 students could correctly perform a subtraction. Findings do not improve considerably at the middle school or secondary school level. Meanwhile, in Nepal the evaluation of UNESCO's Education For All programme revealed an absence of mechanisms to monitor classroom environments and progress in student achievement (Cooperation, 2009). Therefore, in countries where teachers are largely untrained and teacher education programmes have not undergone a paradigm shift to include this kind of training, the expectation of a transformative global learning experience may be a distant ambition.

Even with formal training, implementing global learning can be an overwhelming task for

teachers. For instance, in England a study of over 700 teachers found that while most rated education for global citizenship as important, very few were confident of their ability to teach it (Davies et al. in Rapoport, 2010). The schools in Stevenage were led by one particular school with some experience in global learning. This hub-and-spoke model could prove to be an effective way to address the problem of a lack of expertise. Having an expert lead school as the hub, surrounding schools could develop their knowledge and skills from local teachers. This approach could become part of a long-term strategy based on peer-to-peer learning.

Furthermore, there is a need for organisations and local authorities to be involved not only in creating partnerships but also in helping to sustain them. For example the involvement and support of the Mayor of Stevenage, the local borough council and other civic leaders has increased considerably the chances of the programme having a lasting impact on the community. The contribution of organisations and local authorities will also prove critical in pushing policy for global learning within the state school sector so that partnerships such as these are accessible to different student demographics.

For global learning to be transformative, it is important that the learning is 'critical' rather than what Andreotti (2006) refers to as a 'soft' approach. A soft methodology can be understood as one that does not dig beyond the surface. For example, gender equality might be approached as simply an understanding of equal opportunity for all genders. A more critical lens might be to understand the underlying causes of inequality and thereby of injustice; reflect on the attitudes that create and maintain exploitation; consider action beyond support campaigns to analysing one's own position and context and participate in changing assumptions and attitudes.

However, ensuring a critical approach is difficult. The variation in approaches to global

learning, and the lack of a clear definition, makes it challenging to establish benchmarks that are comparable globally or even a checklist of what could constitute global learning and what would not. For example, what comprises an 'adequate' understanding of global issues? Some partners have consequently adopted a transformative orientation, linking to Andreotti's critical approach. Meanwhile others limit themselves to a basic understanding and constrained engagement. For example, international understanding might only involve looking at the cultural symbolic traditions of other countries, such as the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the festivals they celebrate. Cross-cultural connections in such cases involve 'dressing up' students to 'display' them to those in another part of the world. Dialogue between students and a joint construction of knowledge are never truly undertaken.

There is an added danger of exoticism with such an approach, particularly for countries like Nepal. Because Nepal was not subject to Western colonisation and because, before 1951, it followed a policy of strict geopolitical isolationism, the country still retains an exotic attraction (Grossman-Thompson & Linder, 2015). With such countries it is very easy for learning to begin to closely mirror cultural tourism in which one is 'explicitly experiencing an "other" through display of visual and embodied difference' (Grossman-Thompson & Linder, 2015). This, rather than a proper discussion of the dimensions of everyday life, can only work to reproduce differences and mystify understanding of others.

Global learning, while offering immense possibilities, can pose challenges that need to be consciously addressed so as not to discourage teachers and students. It is important that organisations supporting global learning encourage critical approaches and methodologies that are sensitive to the possibilities of what learning ought to accomplish. This approach must be coupled with adequate support for teachers adopting

global learning in the classroom. Without mindful actors implementing global learning, it will fall short in its purpose.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Aamna Pasha** is a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Education, University College London. Her research looks at global education in Pakistan and the construction of global education themes in social studies textbooks. Aamna has experience in both in-service and pre-service teacher education and in designing programmes that develop 21st-century skills for middle school students in Pakistan.

**Douglas Bourn** is Professor of Development Education London and Co-Director of the Development Education Research Centre at the Institute of Education, University College London. He is author of *The Theory and Practice of Development Education* (2014), *Understanding Global Skills for 21st Century Professions* (2018) and editor of *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning* (2020). He is also a member of the Programme Advisory Council for the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Z. S. (2017). Special Report. Peace Education in Pakistan. In *United States Institute of Peace*. Washington DC.
- Andreotti, V. (2006). Soft Versus Critical Global Citizenship Education. *Policy & Practice—A Development Education Review*, (3), 40–51.
- Appiah, K. A. (2015). Education for Global Citizenship: A guide for schools. In *Why Do We Educate? Renewing the Conversation* (Vol. 1). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444307214.ch6>
- Bajaj, M. (2012). *Schooling for Social Change: The rise and impact of human rights education in India*. New York: Continuum International Publishing.
- Blackmore, C. (2016). Towards a pedagogical framework for global citizenship education. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 8(1), 39–56. <https://doi.org/10.18546/IJDEGL.8.1.04>
- Bourn, D. (2012). Development education: From the margins to the mainstream. *The International Journal for Global and Development Education Research*, No. 1, pp. 25–39.
- Bourn, D. (2014). *The Theory and Practice of Global Learning* (Vol. 44). Retrieved from [www.ioe.ac.uk/website/www.ioe.ac.uk/derc](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/website/www.ioe.ac.uk/derc)
- Bourn, D. (2015). *The Theory and Practice of Development Education. A pedagogy for global social justice*. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2013.02.012>
- Bourn, D., & Cara, O. (2013). *School linking—where next? Partnership models between schools in Europe and Africa* (O. Cara & L. C. Development, Eds.). London: Development Education Research Centre, Institute of Education: Link Community Development.
- British Council. (2020). Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning. Retrieved 8 April 2020 from <https://connecting-classrooms.britishcouncil.org/about>
- Brunold, A. O. (2005). Global learning and education for sustainable development. *Higher Education in Europe*, 30(3–4), 295–306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03797720600624815>
- Case, R. (1993). Key elements of a global perspective. *Social Education*, 57(6), 318–325.
- Cooperation, N. A. for D. (2009). Joint evaluation of Nepal's Education for All 2004-2009. Sector Programme: evaluation report 2009. In *Evaluation report; 1/2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.norad.no/en/Tools+and+publications/Publications/Publication+Page?key=125146>
- Davies, I., Evans, M., & Reid, A. (2005). Globalising Citizenship Education? A Critique of 'Global Education' and 'Citizenship Education'. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(1), 66–89. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556020>
- Davies, L. (2006). Global citizenship: Abstraction or framework for action? *Educational Review*, 58(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910500352523>
- Eten, S. (2020). Is Global Citizenship Education Relevant in Sub-Saharan African School Curricula? Options and Challenges for Teaching Global Education through Social Studies Curriculum in Ghana. In D. Bourn (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Global Learning* (pp. 327–341). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- European Strategy Framework (2002). *Europe-wide Global Education Congress*. Maastricht.
- Gaudelli, W. (2003). How Can You Fit a Global. In *World Class: Teaching and Learning in Global Times* (pp. 41–64).
- Grossman-Thompson, B., & Linder, B. (2015). Landscaping Otherness: The Charm of Inequity



in Nepali Tourism. *Verge: Studies in Global Asias*, 1(1), 184–211. <https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.1.1.0184>

Hashmi, A. M. (2018). Education for Global Citizenship in India and Pakistan. *International Education and Research Journal*, 4(5), 28–30.

Kadiwal, L., & Durrani, N. (2018). Youth negotiation of citizenship identities in Pakistan: Implications for global citizenship education in conflict-contexts. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 66(4), 537–558. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071005.2018.1533099>

Kahn, H. E., & Agnew, M. (2017). Global Learning Through Difference: Considerations for Teaching, Learning, and the Internationalization of Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 21(1), 52–64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315315622022>

Kumar, A. (2008). Development Education and Dialogical Learning in the 21st Century. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 1(1), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.18546/IJDEGL.01.1.04>

Leo, J. de. (2010). Education for Intercultural Understanding. *The Journal of Higher Education* (Vol. 18). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1975133>

Leonard, A. (2014). *School linking: Southern perspectives on the south/north educational linking process: from Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Lonie, J. (2019, October 30). More than half of South Asian youth are not on track to have the education and skills necessary for employment in 2030. UNICEF. Retrieved from <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-half-south-asian-youth-are-not-track-have-education-and-skills-necessary>

Marron, R. K., & Naughton, D. (2019). *Characteristics of Target 4.7 and the*

*Importance of its Inclusion to the Sustainable Development Goals*. Retrieved from [www.bridge47.org%0A](http://www.bridge47.org%0A)

Morrison, A. (2020). Global South-North School Linking. In D. Bourn (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Global Learning* (pp. 292–313). London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Overview: Learning to realize education's promise. (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. [https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1\\_ov](https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1_ov)

Pasha, A. (2016). Global citizenship in Pakistan. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 7(1), 33–52. <https://doi.org/10.18546/ijdegl.07.1.03>

Peterson, A., & Warwick, P. (2015). *Global learning and education: Key concepts and effective practice* (P. Warwick, Ed.). London: Routledge.

Poudel, M. (2016). Education for Sustainable Development in South Asia. Retrieved 7 April 2020 from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/education-sustainable-development-south-asia-milan-poudel/>

Rapoport, A. (2010). We cannot teach what we don't know: Indiana teachers talk about global citizenship education. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 5(3), 179–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197910382256>

Reynolds, R., Bradbery, D., Brown, J., Donnelly, D., Ferguson-Patrick, K., Macqueen, S., & Ross, A. (2015). A values-based pedagogical stance: Teaching teachers for global education in Australia. In B. Maguth & J. Hilburn (Eds.), *The State of Global Education. Learning with the world and its people* (pp. 174–187). New York: Routledge.

Scheunpflug, A. (2008). Why global learning and global education? An educational

approach influenced by the perspectives of Immanuel Kant. *Development Education: Debates and Dialogue*, (February), 18–28.

Scheunpflug, A. (2020). Evidence and Efficacy: A Compulsion for Global Education? In D. Bourn (Ed.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning* (pp. 40–51). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sharma, N. (2018). *Value-creating global citizenship education: Engaging Gandhi, Makiguchi, and Ikeda as examples*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shrestha, S. (2016). Role and Status of English and Other Languages in Nepal. *Journal of NELTA*, 21(1–2), 105–112. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v21i1-2.20206>

Stevenage Borough Council. (2012). *Equality & Diversity Information for Stevenage*. Retrieved from [www.stevenage.gov.uk](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk)

Thapa, M., Dhungana, R., Mahalingam, B., & Conilleau, J. (2010). *Peace by piece. Mainstreaming Peace Education in South Asia. Learning and Recommendations from Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203928288.ch6>

Tye, K. A. (2014). Global education: A worldwide movement: An update. *Policy Futures in Education*, 12(7), 855–871. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2014.12.7.855>

UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2018). *Quick Guide to Education Indicators for SDG 4*.

UNESCO MGIEP. (2017). *Textbooks for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002599/259932e.pdf>

Westbury, I. (2017). Rethinking Schooling for the 21st Century. The state of Education for Peace, Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship in Asia. In *Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development* (2nd edn) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203963180>

Zajda, J. (2014). Understanding the quality debate in education. *The Australian College of Educators National Conference*. Adelaide.

# THE CHANGING ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERS: WHAT THE BEST SCHOOL LEADERS DO AND HOW THEY DO IT

Chris Tweedale and Jess Staufenberg

‘School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning’ (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2008).

In these chapters we look at approaches and curriculum developments which can assist teachers looking to prepare students for a globalised world. School leadership is a critical factor in the success of such approaches, and this literature review shall seek to identify what the best school leaders do and how they do it.

Around the world, governments are looking to learn lessons from the best education systems to improve the quality of their school systems. In many countries the primary focus of school leaders remains to act as administrative operational managers, but there has been a shift in the more successful school systems towards school leaders adapting their practice to become instructional, pedagogical and transformative leaders. Over recent decades there has been a worldwide trend for policymakers to reform schools by holding them more publicly to account for improving student performance in state and national tests (Hallinger & Huber, 2012). The rise in perceived importance of the international PISA tests run by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has also led governments to be ever more concerned that young people in their country are achieving outcomes favourably

comparable with their peers elsewhere (Day & Sammons, 2014).

In East, South and South East Asia, research evidence points to important differences in cultural contexts for school leadership. In his book *Developing a knowledge base for educational leadership and management in East Asia*, Hallinger (2011) contends that one of the key difficulties in comparing the school leadership in South Asian school systems to those in Europe and North America is that much of ‘the field of educational leadership and management in East Asia (and other parts of the developing world) relies too heavily upon theory and empirical findings from Western socio-cultural contexts’.

Hillinger goes on to state that effective school-level leadership is essential for implementing reform policies, a belief shared by policymakers and practitioners alike. He argues that:

- leadership at school level makes a difference to the quality of education provided to students, wherever in the world the school is situated
- interpretation and application of core leadership practices are contextual
- strategies should be developed for capacity-building research and development in the region, to include:
  - ◆ reward systems for teachers
  - ◆ professional development opportunities

- ♦ opportunities for collaboration
- ♦ internal/external research support.

Hallinger points to the success of school leadership development programmes introduced in some Asian countries, such as Malaysia. Additionally, many Asian countries have not always prioritised educational leadership in academic institutions, resulting in a paucity of research evidence. As such, it is particularly important that the continent's governments and policymakers commission more research to identify what works in their context rather than relying upon evidence drawn from European and North American school systems. This, Hallinger says, will lead to a more focused improvement agenda.

The core insight of Hallinger's research is that many of the features that impact on the quality of education at school level, including leadership, seem to be applicable to schools across the world, but it is harder to draw firm conclusions about this in Asia than in Europe and North America because there is less evidence on which to base the case effectively.

Hallinger's main point is that one approach to leadership does not fit all contexts. This is supported by William in his article *The research delusion* (2015), in which he points out that 'In education, "what works?" is not really the right question because everything works somewhere and nothing works everywhere. So what's interesting, what's important in education is "under what conditions does this work?"'

We know that school leaders in South East Asia are facing challenges including changing roles and responsibilities in leadership, while also weathering rapid educational reforms. It is therefore important that local context is taken into account in response to the

challenges that inhibit school leadership advancement (Tai Hoi, Lee, Walker & Hallinger, 2016).

At the same time, there has been a global shift towards giving school leaders greater autonomy alongside closer accountability for the standards of students' learning in schools. As such, there is a growing body of evidence that in the most successful school systems, school leaders act as instructional and pedagogical leaders (Greany & Earley, 2017). This is therefore a good place to begin when thinking about effective leadership.

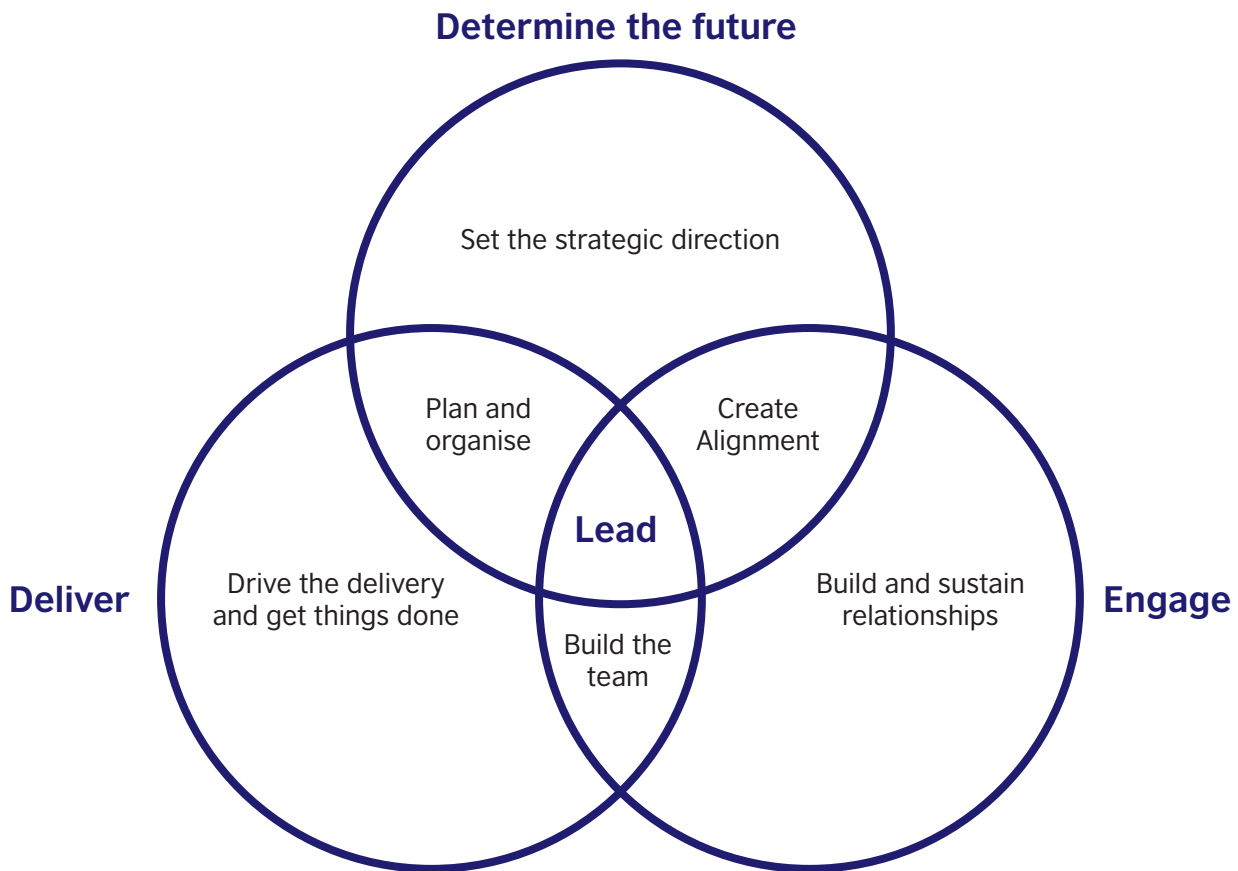
The below review will provide a brief introduction to some of the influential literature from predominantly UK practitioners and academics on school leadership, how notions of leadership have changed and what appears to be most effective for student outcomes.

In his book *Leadership Matters*, Buck (2018) identifies six key areas for leadership action. He argues that school leaders must develop skills across the range of leadership activities to be successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools.

'Leadership starts with you. Your understanding of yourself: the way you tend to behave in certain situations, what you enjoy and are good at and those areas you should probably focus on if you want to improve your effectiveness. But you also need to take time to properly understand your situation: the people and the context you find yourself in.'

Being great in some leadership areas but lacking in skill in others leaves school leaders unable to improve and transform their school.

**Diagram 1**  
**What do the best leaders do?**



Pendleton, Radcliffe and Buck

The best school leaders are rounded individuals who can be effective in each of the aspects of leadership shown in Diagram 1. Someone who can clearly set a strategic direction for a school, or for a group of schools, or for that matter a whole school system, must also be able to communicate well and build effective relationships with colleagues. In addition, leaders must also be capable of ensuring that the plans are implemented on time and within budget. Of course, the best leaders know their strengths and weaknesses and build teams of people

around them to complement their own skills. It is not about a single person's ability to manage everything alone.

Fullan and Kirtman (2019) argue in their book *Coherent School Leadership* that highly effective school leaders must develop seven competencies that 'push change' and 'pull change' to drive coherence in the organisations they are leading. They place these competencies into a 'coherence framework', shown below:

Competencies that PUSH change	Competencies that PULL change
1. Challenges the status quo	2. Creates a commonly owned plan for success
3. Builds trust through clear communications and expectations	4. Focuses on team over self
5. Has a high sense of urgency for change and sustainable results	6. Is committed to continuous improvement of self and the organisation
7. Builds external networks/partnerships	

For a ‘push’ change, a leader acts personally by drawing attention to an issue which then encourages change to happen. For a ‘pull’ change, a leader creates the climate that provides the space for change identified by other members of the team to happen. In other words, ‘push’ change, could be described as the leader driving change while a ‘pull’ change could be one where the leader acts as an enabler of change.

‘Great leaders read situations and people. They build strong relationships and seek feedback from all sources. These attributes give them insight into when to “push” or be assertive and when they need to draw people in’ (Fullan & Kirtman 2019).

Fullan and Kirtman have tested their model in schools in Canada, the US and England and argue that the best school leaders must also lead on teaching and learning. By modelling learning, leaders shape a culture of learning in their schools. This means teachers focus on teaching and learning, developing their roles as coaches and teacher leaders who monitor their impact through collaborative inquiry. The importance of school leaders becoming personally involved in the teaching and learning process has been described by Hattie as ‘instructional leadership’ (2009).

In his book *So Much Reform, So Little Change* (2008), Payne argues that large-scale reform fails unless school leaders are skilled in, and focus on, ‘five fundamentals’. By analysing US schools in urban settings, he suggested that the following key factors establish a high-performing school and school system:

1. Instructional leadership – school leaders take personal responsibility and are directly involved in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their schools and identifying the impact it makes on student achievement.
2. Professional capacity – teachers develop their skills throughout their careers and do not stop learning after their initial training.
3. Establishing a learning climate – the whole school is geared towards enabling students to learn to the best of their ability, with exemplary student behaviour and an environment where students and teachers have high expectations of themselves and their ability to improve their knowledge and skills.
4. Family and community involvement – a clear understanding that learning does not stop at the school gates, with parents playing a big part in helping their children learn and being themselves positively encouraged to become part of the wider school community.
5. Quality of instruction – is high. Teachers work on their skills to improve the quality of lessons delivered across the school.

Together, these five fundamentals allow an environment for learning that enables high standards and high achievement. As Payne says:

*Give them teaching that is determined, energetic and engaging. Hold them to high standards. Expose them to as much as you can most especially to the arts. Root the school in the community and take advantage of the culture the children bring with them ... Above all, no matter where in the social structure children are coming from, act as if their possibilities are boundless.*

In *Imperfect Leadership* (2019), Munby charts his own leadership journey and uses evidence from his time as chief executive at the UK's National College for School Leadership and Education Development Trust to examine school and system leadership in the UK and internationally.

He contends that the role of successful school leaders has changed over the last three decades. Schools across the globe have been given more delegated powers, greater accountability for students' learning outcomes and with that external scrutiny. In the earlier days of these changes, head teachers and school principals were encouraged to be seen as 'super heads' – perfect leaders who could see the future clearly, develop a strategy for change and then deliver it, often leading 'from the front'.

Munby finds that over the decades of political change that he has witnessed, school leaders have seen how important it is to have a clear moral purpose in their role, where they act with authenticity and integrity and are prepared to ask for help. He argues that great leaders recognise that those they are leading have good ideas and so they harness the skills, knowledge and experience of all members of the school community. In so doing:

*Imperfect leaders are learners. If they mess up – and they often do – imperfect leaders learn from their mistakes and try to do it better next time. They worry about getting it wrong (sometimes they worry too much), but they are even more concerned about getting it right tomorrow.*

*Imperfect leaders know their weaknesses so they try to appoint people who are noticeably better at things than they are. They try to ensure that the team has a balance of skills and expertise that no single person can possibly have.*

In *School Leadership and Education System Reform* (2017), editors Earley and Greany develop a similar theme to Munby when they look at future trends of leadership in schools. They argue that greater autonomy for schools has led to the role of school leaders becoming more intensive than in the past. Earley says school leaders 'play key roles in creating and maintaining the conditions and environment where teachers can teach (and learn) effectively and students can learn. Effectively learning-centred leaders empower staff and students to reach their potential. Student outcomes can be improved and not only in relation to attainment.' Instructional leadership, rather than operational management, is a key feature of school leadership now and for the future. The editors contend that the future requires school leaders to work collaboratively across the self-improving school system because of the ever-increasing autonomy that governments are expecting of school leaders.

Munby (2019) and others suggest that as schools have become more autonomous, school leaders have also needed to share or 'distribute' leadership across a greater number of people in the school. They must lead more collaboratively and to do so

need to exhibit moral purpose, integrity and authenticity when working with others.

The literature around school leadership identifies common themes around what the best school leaders do. Most researchers agree that setting the strategic direction is vital, as is the leadership of teaching and learning, building and sustaining relationships, growing capacity to continually improve student outcomes, delivering results across the broader work of the school and engaging students, parents and the wider community in the life of the school.

## EVIDENCED-BASED SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Many of these themes are picked up in a publication focused on Asia by the British Council. In *An investigation into school leadership research in South Asia 2010 to 2016*, Burgess sets out leadership practices in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (2016). The British Council identified five professional practices for good leadership and produced accompanying materials:

1. Creating a strategic direction that is shared across the school community so that all involved understand the direction of travel and have a stake in the future direction of the school
2. Leading teaching and learning, in which school leaders take a personal role in improving the quality of their students' experience by supporting and challenging their teachers to provide increasingly effective lessons
3. Developing and working with others by providing a wide variety of professional development opportunities for staff to work collaboratively with colleagues both within the school and with colleagues in other schools

4. Managing resources to cost effectively make the best use of the money and other resources allocated for the education of students
5. Working in partnership with governance across the school system, where governments play a key role in providing leadership development training, recruiting and retaining good teachers and creating a climate in which schools can work together rather than in competition with each other.

The importance of using evidence to support changes in the way schools are led is an overarching theme in much of the literature around school leadership. We will finish with a final comment from Viviane Robinson, in her introduction to Earley and Greany's *School Leadership and Education System Reform*. Robinson says there must be the 'presence of a set of conditions that research is now suggesting are the building blocks of improvement at scale'. She concludes:

*those conditions include layers of leadership that not only articulate but also relentlessly focus on a compelling educational vision that can engage teachers, students and their families in its pursuit through ambitious efforts to improve teaching and learning, and that can lead and resource the capability-building that is required to achieve the ambition.*



**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Chris Tweedale** is an education leadership consultant for the British Council and managing partner at Tweedale Education Partners. A teacher and head teacher from 1979 until 2003, he was then an education adviser and senior civil servant for the UK government for a decade. After leaving the civil service, he has led three multi-academy trusts in England.

**Jess Staufenberg** is an education journalist. Her investigative work has generated national coverage, and in 2018 she was shortlisted in the British Journalism Awards for specialist media. In 2019 she fronted a BBC documentary on academy trust failures. Jess has written for the *Guardian* and *The Independent* and is currently commissioning Editor at trade newspapers *Schools Week* and *FE Week*.

**REFERENCES**

British Council, School Leadership Training Modules

Buck, A (2018) Leadership Matters3.0 - How leaders at all levels can create great schools. Woodbridge John Catt Educational

Burgess, A (2016) An investigation into school leadership research in south Asia 2010-2016. British Council.

Day, C and Sammons, P (2014) Successful School Leadership. Reading: *Education Development Trust*.

Earley, P and Greany, T (Eds) (2017) School leadership and education system reform. Bloomsbury Academic.

Fullan, M and Kirtman, L (2019) Coherent School Leadership. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Hallinger, P (2011) Developing a knowledge base for educational leadership and management in East Asia. *School Leadership and Management*, 31(4), 305–320.

Hallinger, P & Huber, S (2012) School leadership that makes a difference: International perspectives. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 23(4), 359–367.

Hattie, J (2009) Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement. Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

Leithwood, K, Day, C, Sammons, P, Harris, A, & Hopkins, D (2008) Successful school leadership: What it is and how it influences student learning. National College for School Leadership, Nottingham: DfES

Munby, S (2019) Imperfect Leadership. Carmarthen, Wales: Crown House Publishing.

Payne, C (2008) So Much Reform, So Little Change: The Persistence of Failure in Urban Schools. Harvard, MA: Harvard Educational Press.

Tai Hoi, Lee, T, Walker, AJ, Hallinger, P (2016) South Asian Perspectives – Developing Successful and Effective School Leadership. In P Pashiardi and O Johansson (Eds), *Successful School Leadership: International Perspective*. Bloomsbury Academic.

William, D (2015) The research delusion. *Times Educational Supplement*: London, 10 April 2015

# ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERS

Donnie Adams, Kenny SL Cheah, Alma Harris, Bambang Sumintono and Noni Nadiana Md Yusoff

## INTRODUCTION

Improving low-performing schools remains a major concern and challenge for school systems, states and community stakeholders (Yoon & Barton, 2019). This chapter aims to break down some of the arguments around school leadership and its role in creating the conditions for lasting school improvement and change. The chapter commences with some explanation and contextualisation of the idea of 'turnaround schools' from the academic literature. Then the chapter will provide some background on the Malaysian education system.

Next, we will discuss a case study comprising five low-performing schools in Malaysia that have secured significant improvement. We will focus on illuminating the characteristics and strategies of the school leaders. Finally, the chapter will provide insights into and implications of school turnaround, which may be useful for any attempts at school improvement and system transformation in contexts like Nepal.

## TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Research into turnaround schools has been undertaken in many education systems such as Australia, Canada, England and Sweden (Liu, 2020). However, research in Asia, particularly in developing countries, remains relatively limited. The term 'school turnaround' appears to have an intuitive meaning as there is a lack of agreement regarding its definition

(Stuit, 2012). Thus, 'no single definition of school turnaround exists' (Hochbein & Mahone, 2017).

Turnaround as a process refers to the transformation of low-performing schools into high-performing schools, involving a period of transition from difficulty to stability, as reflected by its higher levels of student performance and academic achievement (Harris & Jones, 2019; Chapman & Muijs, 2013). The term 'turnaround' therefore refers to a strategy towards a goal. It proposes that the school's entire population must have a receptive and optimistic attitude toward changes and ongoing improvement (Liu, 2020).

Recent research has found that turnaround schools tend to have high percentages of students living in poverty (Reyes & Garcia, 2014). These schools must overcome a multitude of challenges such as finance (Liu, 2020), limited resources (Duke & Jacobson, 2011), an unhealthy school culture (Rodríguez, 2008), poor facilities and poor leadership (Harris et al., 2018). Yet, these schools are expected to meet their academic goals or else be sanctioned for failure (Leithwood et al., 2010).

Day (2014) cautions that quick fixes in such schools can only lead to temporary recoveries, and that sustained change will prove harder to achieve. Research suggests there are some consistent strategies on school turnaround which can renew teaching

and learning conditions if practised in low-performing schools. For example, changing teachers' actions, beliefs and perceptions (Fullan, 2010), focusing on teachers' professional development, encouraging parent participation, gaining access to resources (Liu, 2020), forming professional learning communities, building a collaborative school culture (Jacobson, 2011), connecting schools to the community (Pashiardis et al., 2011), innovative curricula and implementing accountability measures (Butler, 2012) have all proven effective. Importantly, the evidence shows all these strategies are strongly influenced by school leadership.

Effective school leadership practices are critical to successful school turnaround (Yoon & Barton, 2019). The starting point for school turnaround is an experienced, stable and responsible principal who serves as an activator for change (Liu, 2020). Steiner et al. (2008) suggested four core competencies of successful turnaround principals: the motivation to achieve end results, the ability to strongly influence others in achieving these results, problem-solving abilities and high confidence in leading.

Moreover, successful turnaround principals are able to articulate their vision clearly (Chapman & Mujs, 2013) and create a sense of collective vision (Jacobson, 2011) among their teachers. Other practices include shared leadership and joint decision making at all levels (Harris & Jones, 2019), the combined use of transformational, instructional and transactional leadership styles (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), coaching for school improvement (King & Bouchard, 2011) and developing high levels of organisational trust (Martin & Samels, 2009). However, studies on the characteristics of turnaround leaders within Asia remain relatively limited and need further exploration.

## MALAYSIA

The Malaysian education system has experienced tremendous transformation since

the country gained its independence in 1957. However, Malaysia has performed significantly lower in international assessments such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) compared to its Asian counterparts such as Singapore or Hong Kong (Harris et al., 2018; Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2013).

One study states the cause of low-performing schools in Malaysia to be insufficient and varying investment (Harris et al., 2018). Many schools in remote areas have limited educational resources and are located in areas of acute disadvantage. In 2010 the Trust Schools programme was introduced, as a private–public partnership school transformation model (based on charter schools in the United States and academies in England) with the aim to produce better student outcomes and improve underperforming state schools' performance over the long term (Harris et al., 2018).

In 2012, the Ministry of Education introduced a major policy called 'Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025' to generate transformation and improvement in Malaysia's education system (Jones et al., 2015). Among the 11 'key shifts' for transformation and change, 'shift 5' concerns the quality of principal leadership. It highlights the strategic intention to equip all schools with high-performing school leaders who are the pivotal players in improving student outcomes.

Then in 2017 the Ministry of Education introduced the Malaysian Education Quality Standard, which is a self-assessment tool to help school leaders identify areas for improvement in their schools (NSTP Team, 2018). The self-assessment tool covers five standards: leadership, organisation management, curriculum and students' affairs management, teaching and learning processes and students' development. School leaders are expected to assess their current school performance and set their key

performance indicators accordingly. In 2018, the Ministry embarked on a more focused and concerted effort to improve failing or struggling schools with the ‘School Leadership Spike’ programme, where 41 outstanding school leaders are placed in underperforming schools (ibid). These school leaders are expected to utilise their skills, expertise and experience to turn around the schools’ low performance.

## METHODOLOGY

In the following case study, three previously low-performing secondary and two primary public schools from Pahang, Selangor and Terengganu in Malaysia are examined. The schools were selected based on their rapid improvement in their reputation, academic ranking and community involvement.

**Table 1:**  
**Demographics of the school principals**

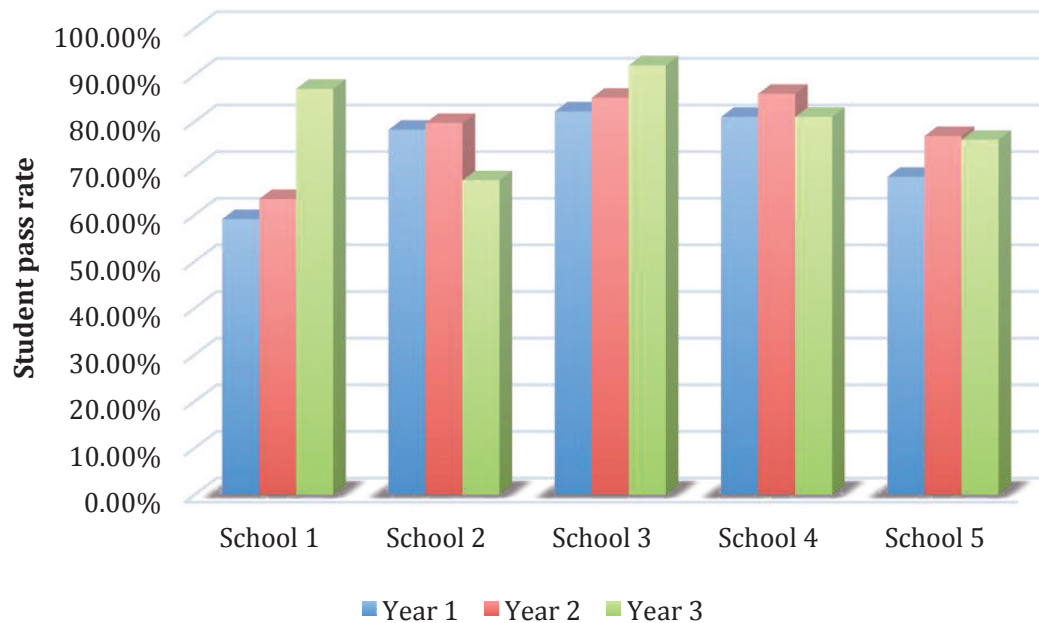
Code	Gender	Type of school	Year of appointment	Experience as a principal
P1 / School 1	Female	Secondary	2012	4 years
P2 / School 2	Female	Primary	2016	5 years
P3 / School 3	Male	Secondary	2016	3 years
P4 / School 4	Female	Secondary	2013	8 years
P5 / School 5	Female	Primary	2016	5 years

The selected schools could be termed ‘turnaround schools’ since they have secured significant improvements in academic attainment for students within the Malaysian school public examinations. These exams are called the *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* (Primary School Evaluation Test) and *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education) for secondary schools over a three-year period. Semi-structured interviews were held with five school principals, with different themes assigned to their comments. Four major themes emerged from the data. Names of schools and principals are being kept anonymous.

Information about the principals is presented in Table 1 below.

## FINDINGS

In this section, we provide the schools' academic attainment data in Malaysia's school public examinations over a three-year period.



It's important to note a change in the *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* (Primary School Evaluation Test) format in 2018 with the introduction of HOTs (higher-order thinking skills). Thus, this lowered the third year academic achievements of both primary schools (see school 2 and school 5).

Similarly, there was also a change in the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education) question format in 2015, again affecting the third year academic achievements of secondary schools (see school 4). Otherwise, we can see that overall the schools achieved improvements in students' academic attainment, particularly in the first two years.

## THEMES

Below are the main themes from the interview data with illustrative quotes. The themes are:

1. changing attitudes and setting expectations
2. leading by example and building trusting relationships

3. empowering teachers to lead
4. creating a conducive school climate.

### 1. Changing attitudes and setting expectations

The principals noted that a clear vision and goal for the school are extremely important, and these should be adapted to the school context. The attitudes of teachers, students and parents were seen as very important. Each of the below quotes is from a principal at each of the improved schools in the graph above.

*I'm very determined and I will not take things as the status quo. I will push boundaries. So, in short, I will look at all possibilities, I do whatever I can to help improve the school. I will not allow teachers to say, 'it is just not possible', 'I can just do this much', No! You can do more. It is not just this much. [P1]*

*When I first joined the school, I opened their horizon. I told everybody in the school that every one of us have potential to improve and become better. I study the environment for three months. Then, I came out with the strategic planning with consent from all my teachers. [P3]*

*I always set a target. I inform my teachers of the target. Where are we now and what we must achieve. We have to set goals and teachers have to understand our mission and vision. [P4]*

*When I first entered the school, my first challenge was the teachers' attitude. I analysed their key performance indicator scores from the last two years and realised they were weak in their pedagogies. So, I wanted to change it. They were in their comfort zone. Teachers were late to school. I introduced the punch card system. They complained. But I was strict. They must follow the mandatory working hours. I told them there are a few things I can be flexible about, not this. [P5]*

One principal said she did a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of her school over the last two years and developed a three-year strategic plan:

*We must have a target. Monthly and yearly target. Short- and long-term goals. [...] We decided the first year must be focused on the teachers. Improving their pedagogy skills and content knowledge. If teachers are of high quality, they can enhance our students' potential and talents. Second year will be on quality student outcomes and the third year will be on improving parents' involvement and engagement. [P5]*

Two principals revealed their middle leaders were reluctant and resistant to change:

*I need to tackle this senior teacher first. They have many followers. Whenever they said something, all the teachers will listen to them diligently. [P3]*

*I remember I actually got rid of some people who were just pillars. I don't care how long they have been holding that post. If they are not doing their job, I will just remove them and replace with another who were willing to work with me. It was tough though. What is important is you do the right thing and you hope when people begin to see change, they will work alongside with you. [P1]*

All the principals spoke about moving staff towards a 'students first' mentality in order to drive higher expectations across the school.

One principal said:

*I would say, the focus will be the student. The students are the soul of the school, the life of the school. So, you must value them, you must see them as important and you must figure out what is lacking, what needs to be done and do the right thing! [P1]*

Two principals made clear the focus should not just be on students' academic performance, but their holistic development in extracurricular activities such as sports:

*I develop the talents in the school. We groom talents from young. Year by year, with the programmes that we plan, we managed to become the champion for district level in many competitions. [P3]*

*We had never achieved much in sports. So, I emphasised our target of competing at national and international level sports competitions. I said we need to create a programme to achieve this. So, last year we won 10 gold medals at state level. [P4]*

The principals all reported being persistent in their planning and monitoring of daily school life. They were determined to see their visions and goals turned into reality.

## **2. Leading by example and building trusting relationships**

The principals all signed up to the notion that leadership approaches should not be top-down. They believed they should lead by example, as much as through direct instructions:

*Don't behave like you are the head, you are right on top and you are unreachable, and you cannot be approachable. You need to come down to their level, walk with them and talk with them, eat with them, move with them, and do things with them! You cannot just tell people what to do when you don't do it yourself and sometimes you even have to dirty your own hands. And so, when people see the principal is doing it, they will also do it. [P1]*

*I believe as a leader I have to give a good example. If you asked them to come early, you must come early too. If you want them to be punctual, you must be punctual too. For example, if we have training for the soccer team, I will join students for warm up. If we have a cross-country competition, I will join their training and run with them. So, the teachers can see that if the principal can do it, they will do it. [P3]*

*We have to be involved with the teachers. Not just give instructions. Then when they have issues, they will come and talk to me. I always emphasise when we are on top, don't forget the people underneath. [P4]*

However, the principals all said they potentially faced conflicts with teachers due to clashing personalities and expectations. Observation was a key tool for these leaders to establish how best to motivate their staff and strengthen their skills as turnaround teachers.

*You see, firstly, you don't know exactly how much people can do because you are new. You are new to the environment and yet at the same time, you cannot waste too much time to find out. So you need to be really observing, you need to keep ears open, your eyes open, you need to talk to people, you need to identify with them and get their response and from there know what kind of heartbeat they have. [P1]*

*First, we must look at how things are being done, whether the teachers have a programme. So, I asked the teachers to continue their programme and I observed how the programme was run and the impact of the programme. We can't just change the programme. It will make the teachers angry. If I see that the programme does not achieve its KPI, then I'll give ideas how to do it. I will coach and mentor the teachers with my senior assistant. [P4]*

*I studied my teachers. I gave them an individual task. From their answer, I identified their strength and weakness. Then, I created a programme called one teacher one niche area. If I see a teacher is weak in one area, I will pair with another who has strength in that area. So, all my teachers are happy. [P5]*

This observation allowed principals to build trust with their teachers. Many of them developed specific strategies around building long-lasting, productive relationships with staff.

*I created four values based on our school name called PORT. P is for positive, O for optimistic, R for responsible and T for talented. I told my teachers I cannot work alone. I need all of them. So, that won the teachers' heart. Then, it was quite easy to move on. [P3]*

*When teachers work on Saturdays, they bring their children along. Some teachers ask for permission to go home early due to a family problem. So, we must give and take. It's important that we to trust our teachers. If we trust them, they'll trust us more. [P4]*

*I emphasise a humanistic approach with my teachers. I build a strong relationship with them. I want to know their families. Their family backgrounds. So, in future if they need to attend to their families during school hours, I can decide better as I know their family background. For example, a sick husband or a child with disability. I won't scold or get upset. Without a strong relationship, I won't know my teachers' heart. [P5]*

Principals reported that through having a more trusting relationship with their school leader, teachers gradually became more proactive about school-wide improvement programmes.

*I always consider my school as a family, and I the head of the family. So, I must make sure my teachers are OK I don't want my teachers to form cliques, with a team A and team B. Teachers must work together and enhance their potential. We do not want to have any misunderstandings and create an uncomfortable working relationship. [P4]*

*For me the teachers are now more open. We are like a family. The teachers are free to come and talk to me whatever problem they have. Discuss any project. And that is the culture. We have a lot of discussions. [P2]*

### 3. Empowering teachers to lead

The principals reported they would allow their teachers to plan, facilitate and evaluate the effectiveness of their own leadership, teaching and learning in the classrooms. As such, principals encouraged staff to feel they were the key to change.

*Together, we can bring about change. Nothing is impossible. We must work together. The principal and teachers. We are the factors of change. And if they don't see change possible, the students and parents would not want to cooperate! [P1]*

An effective technique for driving school improvement was spotting teachers with the capacity to lead others and spread their expertise. By giving these staff more responsibility, principals ensured improvement was led at all levels. The strategy also



established a clearer chain of command and support, rather than concentrating all authority with the principal.

*If you know there are people who can bring about change, embrace them and get them on your side and use them and give them responsibilities which they can manage. And so, if they can manage a certain task, you enlarge their circle of influence, you empower them to do more. [P1]*

*I also asked teachers to become paper examiners for public exams. They will learn a lot when they mark papers. The students will benefit from their expertise. [P3]*

*We have a head of department who we considered as the subject matter expert. They have been teaching that particular subject for more than 15 years. These teachers, they have experience and for those young teachers who need to be guided, I put them together in a group. So, they can share the materials or experience regarding that subject matter. And when they have problems, they know who to consult. [P3]*

One principal shared the importance of consulting with the senior leadership team so that they feel part of the decisions being made.

*I analysed the annual performance of each teacher. Then, I consult my senior assistants on who is fit for certain positions. I hear their opinion. I then called for a meeting with all my senior assistants and heads of department. We talked about each teacher and what portfolios they could hold. So, through discussion, we created a management team. [P4]*

Teachers were also motivated to drive school improvement by, in some cases, being made more accountable for student learning outcomes.

*We created various programmes to improve student performance. So, for each subject, the teacher needs to develop a strategic plan for improvement. The teachers must note down and keep a record [of] what are their students' performance before and after a programme. Teachers will then need to analyse the students' performance and prepare a Gantt chart. [P4]*

All principals held the view that shared leadership enables school-wide improvements. Hence, these principals communicated a sense of appreciation and respect towards teachers, whom they trusted as a team. As a result, they reported that teachers were more willing to change their attitudes and approaches in a way which benefited students.

#### **4. Creating a conducive school climate**

Alongside bringing staff onboard, principals also had to win over parents who appeared unengaged with their children's education. These schools are largely attended by families from low socio-economic settings.

*Economically they are down. And some of them, they become demotivated and they don't see the importance of basic education. Usually, if the parents are like that, the children will have the same problem. [P2]*

*Some of them do work to help their father, part time work. There are cases where instead of coming for extra classes, they would rather help their parents to find money. You know, that kind of thinking. They cannot see the importance of education. So that is another challenge that I face. Quite hard for us to motivate them and change their thinking. Very difficult because it goes back to the family where they come from. [P2]*

Alongside students' low motivation to learn, principals reported that those from difficult backgrounds were behaviourally challenging:

*You know they live in a dense house or flat. So, when my teachers told me that their students have discipline problem, I always tell the teachers, see the students' background. So, when we investigate, we found these students lack attention and love. They have no one to talk to and are neglected. Some of them are even neglected in their basic needs as they don't have enough food. [P2]*

After establishing these issues, principals decided on a strategy of hope and motivation through outreach, care and love. Punishment was not immediately handed out.

*Students come from a low social economic background; everything is lacking. [...] School uniforms were torn. They cannot afford a decent school bag, even stationeries were not available to them. They come in torn shoes and then you cannot just punish them. To me, it is so unfair to punish them for not coming in proper school uniform. You should reach out to them and help them. See*

*what you can do to help them. Plant hope in them. [P1]*

*I build a relationship with my students. I don't portray myself as a principal. I asked my students to call me 'mother'. So now they're close to me. Every morning they will come and greet me. For the weak students, I take initiative to know their family background. I then discuss with my teachers on these students on how best to help them. [P5]*

One principal prioritised visiting students in their home if indicators revealed they were struggling:

*We monitor their attendance. If we see their attendance is poor, my senior assistant and me will go to their houses, including the subject teachers who go to see what the problem is. This makes the student feel that somebody cares and loves them. [P3]*

Alongside an empathetic understanding of their contexts, principals said it was important to nevertheless drive an environment of high expectations and academic achievement.

*During the school assembly, I call a few excellent students to share study tips with the students. We encourage Q&A and students can ask questions. This creates a competitive feeling among them. We also have a lot of student-led motivation and improvement programmes. [P4]*

Due to limited financial resources, principals looked for contributions from the more financially stable parents to support the schools' development. This was especially difficult because of the low socio-economic setting. Principals appealed for donations from private entities, public entities and Parent Teacher Associations to improve their school facilities.

*I start off with the parents first. Reach out to parents. And then I reach out to the people around. The businesspeople around the community. They begin to do whatever they can to help. That was very effective because soon, I had funds rolling in to do many things for the school. [P1]*

In turn, a better school environment encouraged more parents – particularly from more affluent backgrounds – to send their children there. This then increases donations to the school.

*You see when the school is broken, shattered, you will never attract the rich, parents will say 'why should I put my kids right there?' So, you have to change and let them see the success in the school and then rich parents from the nearby vicinity will start placing their kids here. So, what does it mean to have a rich population in the school? Funds will come in. Donations will come in. They will do their part to help. All these factors are linked. [P1]*

Another principal said they introduced a new income-generation strategy at their school:

*I renovated the school field. We rent it to the community there. Everybody loves to play soccer in our field. We have institutions and factories renting our field for their football games or tele-match. So, from there, we get money. [P3]*

These principals engaged parents and other important external stakeholders to provide tangible resources (financial donations, learning materials, etc.) and intangible resources (ideas, technical expertise, etc.), so that the wider community is directly involved and invested in school improvement.

## STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERS

Scholars have tried to examine what successful school leaders do across contexts (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016; Hallinger, 2018; Harris, Jones & Adams, 2016). Certain approaches would seem better suited for school turnaround depending on the circumstances.

From our data, it is clear the principals had different approaches for school transformation. No principal in the study faced exactly the same leadership challenges in the same way. As experienced principals, each had their own philosophies and personal values for guiding their problem solving and decisions.

Nevertheless, we can compile a list of overarching characteristics and strategies these school leaders adopted to successfully bring about school improvement (Table 2). We would encourage other principals to use this knowledge base for driving effective school improvement.

**Table 2:**  
**Five characteristics and strategies of successful school leaders**

Characteristics	Strategies
A clear, inclusive vision for the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe the school climate first</li> <li>Set visions, goals and expectations clearly and be determined to achieve these</li> <li>Show leadership by example, not just by direction</li> <li>Set a long-term strategic plan</li> <li>Be flexible to change according to needs and circumstances</li> <li>Be inspired to see difficult times as an opportunity for positive change</li> <li>Handle conflicts tactfully</li> </ul>
Respectful trust and challenge for staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skilfully change the attitudes of teachers</li> <li>Build trusting relationships</li> <li>Empower teachers with tasks according to their expertise</li> <li>Be truthful and confront teachers where needed</li> <li>Instil collaborative teamwork</li> <li>Cultivate interdependent working environments</li> <li>Have a 'give and take' mindset</li> <li>Drive a 'students first' mentality</li> <li>Appreciate the contributions of teachers</li> </ul>
Attention to processes and structures for the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and change daily school activities</li> <li>Cultivate shared leadership and joint decision making</li> <li>Create a conducive learning climate</li> <li>Spot organisational gaps</li> <li>Paint positive murals and mottos</li> </ul>
Relationship build with external stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proactively approach parents to contribute to school development</li> <li>Network with parents who are more social-economically able to contribute</li> <li>Get funds from community by appeal and writing</li> <li>Work closely with Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)</li> </ul>
High expectations, high support culture for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create healthy competition among students</li> <li>Focus on students' holistic and character development</li> <li>Motivate rather than simply punish students</li> <li>Care and love for students</li> <li>Get to know students' family background</li> </ul>

Although these leadership characteristics and strategies are not automatically generalisable to other schools, the principals were united in their belief that an effective school head is one who constantly looks for improvements. They are persistent in innovating better teaching approaches to improve students' outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

The account of school leaders' strategies for school transformation presented in this chapter are indicative rather than definitive.

The chapter puts into context the challenges faced by school leaders in improving low-performing schools and illuminates their strategies in creating the conditions for lasting improvement and change. Two implications can be drawn for any attempts on school improvement and system transformation in contexts like Nepal.

First, there is growing evidence that schools are moving towards collaborative and distributed attributes of leadership (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2020). Fullan (2009) suggests that school leaders should

not lead as a lone ranger but rather develop and empower other leaders in the school. Then school leaders and their leadership team can together develop an understanding of their school context, particularly their students' socio-economic background and current academic achievement. This allows the school leadership team to detect and manage problems early and to target resources for improvement.

Second, all strategies for successful school leadership must be interpreted in light of the practical constraints (and opportunities) that arise from the leader's context. This requires school leaders to draw upon their craft knowledge; they must understand their system challenges and adapt these strategies to best suit their own context (Adams & Muthiah, 2020).

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Donnie Adams** is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, from where he also obtained his PhD in Educational Leadership. He is a recipient of the University of Malaya's Bright Sparks scholarship and a University of Malaya's Excellence Award 2016.

**Kenny SL Cheah** spent the early years of his career in private secondary schools. He has a Master's in Educational Management and a Ph.D. in the field of Educational Leadership. Currently, he is a senior lecturer in the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Malaya.

**Alma Harris** has held professorial posts at the University of Warwick, Institute of Education at University College London, University of Malaya, the University of Bath and the University of Swansea. Since 2009, she has worked for the World Bank on programmes aimed at supporting schools in Russia. Dr Harris is a past president of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and School Improvement.

**Michelle Jones** is currently Head of Swansea University School of Education and Associate Professor of Leadership and Professional Learning. She has previously held academic positions at the University of Bath, UK, and the University of Malaya, where she was the Deputy Director of the Institute of Educational Leadership. Jones is a Research Fellow of the Hong Kong Institute of Education and a Senior Research Fellow at the National Research University, Moscow Higher School of Economics.

**Bambang Sumintono** worked as a chemistry teacher for seven years in Lombok, Indonesia. He completed his Master's degree in Educational Administration at Flinders University, Australia, in 2001 and doctoral study at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in 2007. Since 2014, he has been a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya.

**Noni Nadiana Md Yusoff** is currently pursuing a Master's of Education at the University of Malaya. She obtained her degree in TESL from University of Exeter. Her current field is leadership for learning and teacher professional development.

## REFERENCES

- Adams, D., & Muthiah, V. (2020). *School Principals And 21st Century Leadership Challenges: A Systematic Literature Review*. *Journal of Nusantara Studies*, 5(1) 189–210.
- Blase, J. (2001). *Empowering teachers: What successful principals do*. Corwin Press.
- Butler, X.C. (2012). *In what ways do principals impact school climate in “turnaround” successful high-poverty middle schools?* Doctoral Dissertation. Available from ProQuest Dissertation and theses database. (UMI No. 3490744).
- Chapman, C., & Mujijs, D. (2013). *Collaborative school turnaround: A study of the impact of school federations on student outcomes*. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 12(3), 200–226.
- Clarke, S., & O’Donoghue, T. (2016). *Educational leadership and context: A rendering of an inseparable relationship*. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 65(2), 167–182.
- Day, C. (2014). *Sustaining the turnaround: What capacity means in practice*. *Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educacion*, 12(5), 9–20.
- Duke, D.L., & Jacobson, M. (2011). *Tackling the toughest turnaround: Low-performing high schools*. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(5), 34–38.
- Fullan, M. (2005). *Turnaround leadership*. *The Educational Forum*. 69(2), 174–181.
- Fullan, M. (2010). *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole System Reform*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Fullan, M. & Scott, G. (2009) *Turnaround Leadership for Higher Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hallinger, P. (2018). *Bringing context out of the shadows of leadership*. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 5–24.
- Harris, A. (2013). *Distributed school leadership: Developing Tomorrow’s Leaders*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, A., Jones, M., & Adams, D. (2016). *Qualified to lead? A comparative, contextual and cultural view of educational policy borrowing*. *Educational Research*, 58(2), 166–178.
- Harris, A., Jones, M., Ismail, N., Adams, D., & Sumintono, B (2018). *Leading turnaround and improvement in low performing schools in Malaysia and Indonesia*. In C. Meyers & M. Darwin (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Leading Low-Performing Schools* (pp.267–287). IAP-Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2019). *Leading Schools in Challenging Circumstances*. In T. Bush, L. Bell, & D. Middlewood (Eds.), *Principles of Educational Leadership & Management*. London: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Hitt, D.H., & Tucker, P.D. (2016). *Systematic review of key leader practices found to influence student achievement: A unified framework*. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(2), 531–569.
- Hochbein, C., and Mahone, A. (2017). *The Failure Fallacy: Examining the rate of school turnaround*. In C.V. Meyers & M.J. Darwin (Eds.), *Enduring myths that inhibit school turnaround*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Jacobson, S. (2011). *Leadership effects on student achievement and sustained school success*. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 25(1), 33–44.
- Jones, M., Adams, D., Hwee Joo, M.T, Muniandy, V., Perera, C.J., & Harris, A. (2015). *Contemporary challenges and changes: principals’ leadership practices in Malaysia*.

Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 35(3), 353–365.

King, M.B. & Bouchard, K. (2011). *The capacity to build organizational capacity in schools*. Journal of Educational Administration, 49(6), 653–669.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited*. School leadership and management, 40(1), 5–22.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Strauss, T. (2010). *Leading school turnaround: How successful leaders transform low-performing schools*. John Wiley & Sons.

Liu, P. (2020). *Understanding turnaround leadership research: Continuity and change (2009–2016)*. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 48(1), 6–24.

Martin, J., & Samels, J.E. (2009). *Turnaround: Leading Stressed Colleges and Universities to Excellence*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press

Ministry of Education. (2013). *Preliminary report: Malaysia education blueprint (2013–2025)*. Malaysian Ministry of Education.

NSTP Team (2018, October 17). *Outstanding headmasters to be placed at 'harapan' schools to boost performance*. New Straits Times, Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/10/422139/outstanding-headmasters-be-placed-harapan-schools-boost-performance>

Pashiardis, P., Savvides, V., Lytra, E., & Angelidou, K. (2011). *Successful school leadership in rural contexts: The case of Cyprus*. Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 39(5), 536–553.

Reyes, A., & Garcia, A. (2014). *Turnaround policy and practice: A case study of turning around a failing school with English-language learners*. The Urban Review, 46(3), 349–371.

Rodríguez, L. (2008). *Teachers know you can do more: Understanding how school cultures of success affect urban high school students*. Educational Policy, 22(5), 758–780.

Steiner, L.M., Hassel, E.A., Hassel, B., & Valsing, E. (2008). *School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success*. Chapel Hill, NC: Public Impact.

Stuit, D. (2012). *Turnaround and closure rates in the charter and district sectors*. Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 17(1–2), 40–54.

White, R. P., Hodgson, P., & Crainer, S. (1996). *The future of leadership: Riding the corporate rapids into the 21st century*. Financial Times Management.

Yoon, I.H., & Barton, A. (2019). *Turnaround leaders' shifting gears in chronos and kairos time*. Journal of Educational Administration, 57(6), 690–707.

# LEADING ON EFFECTIVE QUALITY ASSURANCE IN SCHOOLS

Bhojraj Kafle and Prahlad Aryal

## INTRODUCTION

‘Quality assurance’ has been described as a concept which emerged from attempts to prevent defects from occurring during a process rather than only judging the finished product (Allais, 2009). As such, it often involves accreditation, to demonstrate to everyone else that an organisation takes care to ensure sufficient quality of whatever it makes. One of the key challenges to ‘effective’ quality assurance is ensuring the quality management system in place does not cause organisations, such as schools, to put all their energy into compliance, instead of ‘thinking creatively and consciously about quality’ (ibid.). As such, a flawless quality assurance system is hard to come by.

Nevertheless, in 2010 the Nepal Ministry of Education established the Education Review Office (ERO) to carry out independent performance audits of schools to promote accountability and improve the quality of education (ERO, 2012a; Law Commission, 2019). The Nepal government hires professional organisations, which in turn hire former education personnel, to conduct the audit. The auditors are trained in the use of standardised auditing tools, which comprise 88 quality assurance indicators. These indicators are broadly categorised as: use of investment; effectiveness of processes; and output and outcomes (including scores of students and the satisfaction levels of head teachers). The hired auditors spend at least three days in one school. Generally, the

auditors need to inform the selected school one week before they arrive.

The head teacher also does an internal audit (self-assessment) using the provided tool. The government auditors compare the head teachers’ responses to their indicators. The schools are then marked out of 100 on the performance audit based on their observations and the self-assessment, and the final report is prepared.

The performance audit system does not yet cover all schools; instead, a sample of schools are chosen annually. The government was partly inspired by a theory of trust, semi-trust and distrust, and the performance audit system is based around this model. Each part of the performance audit system exemplifies a different stage of this theory. The school’s own self-evaluation is a form of trust, as the auditors use this information on a trusting basis in their assessment; it also means the schools identify the areas of improvement themselves. Semi-trust is demonstrated by the fact that the publicly available result exerts outside pressure to improve on the school. And distrust is shown in the fact that the audited result is used by the regulating body to enforce the existing standards and regulations on schools.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how and to what extent the audit results are used to improve educational quality in general and teaching and learning activities in particular. Our finding is that schools are not yet using



the model of the performance audit properly to drive system-wide improvement.

## METHODOLOGY

This study reviewed all the published auditor reports for schools; the ERO published 27 reports between 2010 and 2018. All the unpublished data available from the ERO was also examined.

Seven focus group discussions were also conducted with school stakeholders. Each group comprised at least two head teachers, at least one school management committee chair, one representative from the Parent Teacher Association and two staff representatives. Each group also had between five and seven education officials from the district education offices of the Nepalese government. Formal interviews were also held with these officials.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Lower audit scores in community schools

Generally the ERO conducts its quality assurance audit in community schools; however, in 2018 both public and private schools were included in the audit sample.

Table 1 presents the average audit score and audit score variation between the two types of schools.

**Table 1: Audit performance results by school type**

Schools	Average score	Performance difference		
		Minimum score	Maximum score	Score difference
Community schools (n=28)	60.8	33	80	47
Private schools (n=7)	68.7	50	80	30

Source: ERO *Performance audit report of 2018*

The data in the Table 1 shows that the average score of private schools was higher than the public schools (although note the much smaller sample size of private schools). From this small-scale study, the scores would suggest private schools are performing better in the quality assurance audit than the public schools. Another finding is that there is greater variation in scores in public schools, from 33 to 80. Such a significant difference in the performance level of schools indicates an inconsistent capacity within the public education system to produce equal educational opportunities for all students (Metsämuuronen & Kafle, 2013).

### 2. Lack of clarity around roles

Our analysis of the audit reports revealed a lack of clarity around who was responsible for implementing necessary changes, particularly where legal or policy questions were also involved. School leaders and managers were occasionally unclear about educational standards they were expected to meet, as well as about education policy and school operations.

### 3. Lack of minimum working conditions

The audit reports also revealed that many community schools are operating without meeting minimum working conditions, such as a certain number of teachers, toilets, textbooks, play and learning materials (ERO, 2012; ERO, 2015). Without those minimum requirements, schools cannot hope to deliver a quality education. It is essential that the local government authority is made aware the school needs help with meeting these minimum conditions.

### 4. Lack of focus on teaching and learning

The audit reports pointed to a lack of focus among head teachers and teachers about improving their teaching and learning for students, and instead reports them as more concerned about issues such as the state of the school building or classroom. There is evidence in the reports that teachers are teaching on an ad hoc basis without preparation and that lesson plans are rarely

produced (ERO, 2074a B.S.; ERO, 2074b B.S. & ERO, 2075 B.S.). Our interviews with school leaders confirmed this issue; they focused on infrastructure improvements to the school and showed less concern about teaching and learning activities. Individual student attainment, teaching and learning materials, discussion of pedagogy and teacher subject knowledge were rarely mentioned. Shifting schools' focus from infrastructure and administrative issues to teaching and learning is a crucial priority in Nepal.

### 5. Weak dissemination

Our analysis revealed poor processes around sharing the findings of the school quality assurance audit. Both at policy level and at the grassroots level of school leaders, the findings in the report seemed to be only weakly disseminated. As such, key stakeholders such as head teachers and government officials seemed unaware at times about the exact outcome of a performance audit report. This may be due to the reports being published with little feedback or warning on the government's website, where not everyone looked for them or paid them attention.

## CONCLUSION

Although the quality assurance process in Nepal, spearheaded by the ERO, has been successful in identifying some major challenges to quality education in the country, weak dissemination of its findings is hindering its impact in terms of driving school improvement. This situation is made worse by a lack of clarity about who should be responsible for sorting out certain issues; should the local government authority be concerned with a lack of resources at a school, or is that the school's problem to tackle? The reports themselves do not clearly identify who is responsible for the areas they have concerns about. So the reports need to be produced in such a way that a) school

leaders and staff get direct face-to-face feedback about the school's score and the report's findings, b) the local government authority also receives the report's feedback and is expected to act on the findings and provide challenge to the school, c) parents know where to look for the reports, and d) the reports and the auditors who write them encourage a culture of acting on its findings.

Meanwhile, analysis of the reports themselves shows there are serious challenges for Nepal's schools, particularly its community schools. The government would do well to produce an annual report that examines the ERO reports as a whole, pulling out themes and challenges so that it can more closely identify the areas in which schools are struggling. Education policy should then be built out of this close analysis.

These measures taken together would ensure the quality assurance process in Nepal's schools is considerably more effective.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Bhojraj Sharma Kafle** is undersecretary at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. He was previously a school teacher, university teacher and district education officer, and has experience in directing various government education projects.

**Prahlad Aryal** is the director for teacher training at the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development in Nepal. He has previously worked for district and central government agencies including the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Department of Education. He has been a school supervisor and teacher training officer.

## REFERENCES

- Allais, S. (2009). *Quality assurance in education*. Issues in Education Policy Number 5. Centre for Education Policy Development.
- Department of Education New Jersey (DOENJ) (2018). *School Performance Reports*. Retrieved from <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us/SearchForSchool.aspx>
- ERO (2012). *Education Review Office, Operation Guideline, 2012*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2012/2069 B.S.). *A synthesis annual report of ERO, 2011/12*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2013/2071 B.S.). *Performance audit report of schools and institutions 2070/71*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2014/2071 B.S.). *Performance audit report of schools and institutions 2071/72*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2015/2072 B.S.). *Performance audit of schools and institutions: An integrated report 2070/71*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2016/2073 B.S.). *Performance audit report 2072 (Institutions and Schools)*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2016). *Education review office, an introduction*. Sanothimi: ERO.
- ERO (2017/2074a B.S.). *Education Review Office Operation Guide, 2074*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2017/2074b B.S.). *Performance audit report 2073 (Institutions and Schools)*. Bhaktapur: ERO.
- ERO (2018/2075 B.S.). *Annual report of ERO, 2074/75*.
- शैक्षिक गुणस्तर परिक्षण केन्द्रको वार्षिक प्रतिवेदन २०७४/७५ (Bhaktapur: ERO.)
- ERO (2019). *Education Review Office, home page*. Retrieved from <http://www.ero.gov.np/>.
- ERO-New-Zealand (2019). *Publications: Viewing all*. Retrieved from <https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/>.
- Law Commission (2019). *Education Act, 2028 B.S*. Kathmandu: Law Commission.
- Metsämuuronen, J. & Kafle, B. (Eds), (2013). *Where are we now? Results of National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) in Mathematics, Nepali and Social Studies of Grade 8 in the Year 2011*. Unpublished research report. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Education Review Office.
- Ministry of Education (2009). *School sector reform plan 2009–15*. Kathmandu.

# THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERS IN SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

Gopal Prasad Bashyal

## INTRODUCTION

The continuous professional development of teachers in any school will not be of a high quality or sufficient impact if the leadership team does not regard itself as a key supporter and facilitator of that process. The options open to leaders wishing to support continuous professional development are many, with evidence they are turning increasingly towards technology-mediated professional learning and insights from popular thinkers in education (Stevenson et al., 2016). It is evident from the academic literature that school leadership ‘matters in creating a conducive learning environment both for teachers’ and students’ learning’ (Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019). This might include encouraging teachers to participate in training and research, organising in-house workshops and monitoring and supporting teacher performance. National data on the extent to which this is taking place in Nepal is not yet available.

In Nepal, graduates with a Bachelor’s or Master’s in education can apply for a teaching licence from the Teacher Service Commission. Permanent teachers then receive government training in the form of the teachers’ professional development (TPD) course. The training involves ten days of face-to-face workshops about their subject and pedagogy, and five days of school-based projects and

reports they must complete. In total, there are 30 sessions at 1 hour and 30 minutes each (45 hours in total). Teachers are assessed throughout and sit a test on the tenth day, after which they receive certificates which award them 1, 2 or 3 marks that affect their promotion prospects.

The case study below aims to identify whether school leaders are positively influencing teachers’ continuous professional development after this compulsory government training. What do the leaders perceive to be their responsibilities towards their staff with regard to continuous professional development? What sort of teacher development strategies are implemented in their schools? What kinds of professional support do teachers expect from leaders?

## METHODOLOGY

Responses to a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were collected from ten head teachers and 14 teachers, randomly selected from community schools of different regions of Nepal. All the teachers are secondary-level staff teaching English, maths, social studies, Nepali, science and accountancy and have between six and 30 years’ experience. The head teachers have been school leaders for between three and 16 years.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Existing participation in continuous professional development

The teachers were asked to list professional development activities they had participated in over the past 12 months. Three teachers mentioned completing a short online course on child protection. More than half the teachers (57 per cent) said they had not participated in any conferences or webinars. Meanwhile, 29 per cent of the members of the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) reported attending an international conference. Two teachers, in maths and Nepali, had also attended a regional conference.

About one-fifth of teachers reported having experienced peer observation or peer mentoring (21 per cent) but said this was an infrequent occurrence. In a particularly shocking finding, almost all respondents (86 per cent) said their head teacher had never observed their classroom teaching. Similarly, 71 per cent of teachers said they received neither any appraisal nor feedback from their head teacher or colleagues.

However, almost all teachers (93 per cent) have participated in training workshops, and all have undertaken ten days of professional development training offered to all permanent teachers by the Government of Nepal. But only 79 per cent of teachers had prepared and submitted an action research report, which is mandatory for all permanent teachers.

Finally, despite almost a third of teachers (29 per cent) being members of professional networks, they reported little consistent continuous professional development available to them as a result.

### 2. Role of the head teacher in continuous professional development

Ghaleei (2006) has listed the main roles of the head teacher in teachers' professional learning as leading, planning, implementing, providing, facilitating, communicating,

organising and evaluating. However, research carried out for this case study reveals a low level of participation by teachers in any continuous professional development other than taking part in TPD training workshops in Nepal. There could be numerous reasons for this. Gumus (2013) has found that 'teachers who work with more educated principals participate more in professional development activities [...] it seems that having a principal who uses more bureaucratic management behaviours is a significant disadvantage for teachers in terms of participating in professional development activities'. It could be that a lack of professional development strategies in Nepal's schools is a reflection of head teachers seeing themselves more as administrative managers than visionary school leaders committed to pedagogy and improvement.

Nevertheless, both teachers and head teachers reported an expectation that the Nepali head teacher is expected to organise short-term in-house training workshops on topics such as preparing teaching materials, managing parent interactions and organising extracurricular activities. But a large proportion of the teachers also reported head teacher biases against certain members of staff or a lack of communication from them.

For instance, one teacher, Usha, said her head teacher:

*... never provides appraisal and feedback, and doesn't discuss professional development activities during staff meetings. No in-house training is organised in my school and I have no opportunity to take part in the conferences or training, either.*

Shyam shared a similar experience, saying he is kept too busy with school responsibilities to engage with professional development activities, and the head teacher doesn't encourage staff to take part in them.

Nirmala said she had been discouraged from suggesting professional development activities because ‘the head teacher doesn’t like to manage my class in my absence’.

Meanwhile, Rukmani said his head teacher worried about teachers who might challenge him during a professional development exercise.

However, some teachers reported school leaders who were supportive of their continuous professional development. For instance, Hotri said:

*I’m really impressed because he always encourages me to take part in the workshops, training and seminars. I think proper guidance and access can lead towards professional development and to create such an environment, the role of headteacher is vital. I find these qualities in my headteacher.*

Krishna, Eebraj and Amit gave similarly positive feedback. However, it must be noted that none of their schools organised any in-house training. Instead, they were generally encouraged to seek outside opportunities and were encouraged to try different approaches in their teaching.

For instance, Eebraj said:

*The principal is always playing a supportive role in our professional journey. He has given full authority to apply different techniques of teaching and learning. Moreover, we are always getting proper opportunities to use different types of ICT devices in the class to conduct different projects. He is very positive towards all the activities conducted in the school.*

Head teacher Mohan Sapkota said all his staff had received digital skills training:

*We’ve managed ICT training to all teachers and every teacher has got basic operational skills for a computer. I encourage teachers to take part in training or workshops.*

It’s noticeable that Mohan Sapkota has himself received professional development as a head teacher, and was vocally committed to professional development in his staff. He said:

*I studied educational administration at Bachelor level and Education Planning and Management at Master’s level. I also completed one month headteacher leadership capacity building training at the Educational Training Centre. These academic and professional courses and self-learning were the sources of my growth as school leader.*

This same appreciation of continuous professional development opportunities was displayed by head teacher Ghanshyam Pathak, who had been exposed to different kinds of leadership roles:

*I have experience in the professional leadership of teachers as a trade union leader and institutional leadership as a head teacher. I’ve learnt many things out of all these leadership roles. Especially, I learnt to respect those people who want to utilise the opportunities for better performance. I’m guided by the principle of providing equal opportunities to the staff and trying to enrich their professional skills.*

Ghanshyam Pathak, who leads one of the highest-attaining schools in Nepal, also expressed enthusiasm about making training workshops available to staff.

*We manage short-term training facilitated by the subject committee members in school. I also encourage staff to participate in professional development-related programmes and share the responsibilities and innovative ideas among the teachers.*

Another head teacher, Ram Chandra Pokhrel, said that ‘the head teacher must provide a platform for teachers to attend professionally related conferences, workshops, training, etc.’

Overall, 57 per cent of respondents said that their head teacher supported their professional development. This is in contrast with the more favourable view head teachers had of themselves. Overall, 73 per cent of head teachers claimed that they supported continuous professional development of their teachers.

## FURTHER STUDY

Further research could match those teachers with the most supportive head teachers in terms of professional development to outcomes for students (improvement of which should be the ultimate end goal of professional development). The relationship between how well educated and qualified a head teacher is, and how well she or he supports professional development in their staff, also warrants further study.

## CONCLUSION

Our research indicates that teachers clearly regard their head teachers as being able to play a significant role as planners, managers,

communicators, facilitators, inspirers and assessors of continuous professional development. As such, head teachers need to equip themselves with professional, leadership and supervisory skills so that they can make development opportunities available to their staff. Our research also reveals a degree of frustration among about two-fifths of teachers interviewed that head teachers are not making these opportunities consistently available already. Most teachers interviewed currently have very poor participation in professional activities other than the compulsory government training, and a staggering majority have never had their classroom practice observed by a school leader. Some head teachers seem more concerned with administrative duties, while at the same time considering they do enough to support their teachers’ professional development. They themselves may lack ample professional and leadership skills. Therefore, they may hesitate to implement innovative strategies and instead confine themselves to a narrow role. In order for head teachers in Nepal to improve as facilitators of professional development in teachers, they themselves need further training so that they buy into that role and understand the importance of supporting continuous professional development.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Gopal Prasad Bashyal** is an instructor at the Education Training Centre in Palpa, Nepal. He previously taught English in secondary schools for ten years and also taught Bachelor and Master’s level students for 15 years. He has authored several English language training and other education books.

## REFERENCES

Ghaleei, A. (2006). *The principal's role in teacher professional learning*. PhD dissertation. University of Wollongong.

Gumus, S. (2013). *The effects of teacher and school level factors on teachers' participation in professional development activities: role of principal leadership*. *Journal of International Education Research*, 9:4, 373–380. Turkey: Mustafa Kemat University.

Nooruddin, S. & Bhamani, S. (2019). *Engagement of school leadership in teachers' continuous professional development: A case study*. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 6:1, 98.

Stevenson, M., Hedberg, J. G., O'Sullivan, K. & Howe, C. (2016). *Leading learning: the role of school leaders in supporting continuous professional development*. *Professional Development in Education*, 42:5, 818–835



# SCHOOL–COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN DEVELOPING LIFE SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

Indra Mani Rai

---

## INTRODUCTION

Schools can significantly help pupils in developing life skills that are useful in their lived contexts. However, academics have observed that students often learn knowledge and skills in schools that are largely unrelated to what they learn at home and in the community (Koirala, 2003). Although this broadens students' horizons, the schools can become separated from community values, thereby creating difficulty for students – in both grasping new knowledge and skills at school and also taking these back out into the community.

With this in mind, the government of Nepal developed the School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023, partly in response to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all students. The Plan envisions the strengthening of active participation of parents and the community around schools to help support and facilitate children's learning. The government has an Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) which sees communities become involved in students' reading. My research finds that parental and community participation seems weak in the community schools of Nepal due to domestic work burdens. On the other hand, some schools felt that the programme has brought changes in particular contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

The following case study explores the school–community relations in developing life skills for students. The school under study was Seti Basic School in the Kaski district of Nepal, and the case study focuses on the Kopila Tole Reading Group (KTRG) within the school, which involves community engagement. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were held with the head teacher, teacher in charge of the group, a school management committee member and parents.

## READING GROUPS AS A WAY TO LINK COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS

The reading group was formed in 2016 in order to provide a bridge between the school and the community. The group, which was made up of 13 parents from the local village, conducted reading activities with students. They were also invited to Parent Teacher Conferences run by the school, a reading festival and a reading competition. After some training with the school, parents also developed local reading materials.

Currently, the reading group has seven members active in a loose form, with 11 children attending from grades 1–4. Owing to work obligations, parent members have decided to take turns in caring for the children in group reading and learning – which in

turn has strengthened community links as well as links with the school, and reflects a community value of supporting each other with obligations (Hermans & Lederer, 2009).

## FINDINGS

Largely, the parents and the school coordinator of the group were positive about its impact on student learning, parental engagement and improved links with the community. However, there is evidence of limitations regarding the group's potential impact.

One issue was the lack of time among parents, which prevented them from regularly attending. The parent coordinator of the reading group said:

*It is not possible for us to come every day so each one of us has only one turn in a week. They enjoy and become happy studying here. If one reads, another listens. They listen and ask questions. They discuss and present their agreement or disagreements.*

But parents reported feeling supported as a result of the school's clear investment in the group:

*Recently, the school has provided new books as well from the library. The children become happy when they see new books and read one by one.*

The reading group members also reported improved communication and listening skills from this collective engagement. One parent said:

*When we read stories to the kids, they listen carefully and learn. Initially, the kids were not very sharp in study but now there is a remarkable improvement in their reading ability. Unlike past times, children no longer run to play after school, rather they do homeworks regularly. They recite poems and read stories in front of parents.*

The head teacher said that the children from KTRG were smarter in reading than other students – however, this may as much reflect the make-up of the group, in that especially engaged children were attending while less engaged children did not attend. The key point is perhaps that member parents appear to become more invested in the notion of communication and reading skills, since they have felt part of the process that develops these. As such, parents have become invested in developing the life skill of “asking and answering important questions, communicating and working with others in learning, and creating new knowledge” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

One parent revealed how important it is for a handful of influential parents to be committed to the group, in order to persuade the rest of the community of its benefits:

*Because initially, we were overwhelmed by the scepticism regarding the prospect of this study group, it took the initiative and encouragement from initial one or two members who really motivated and convinced us to join the group.*

The same parent said community relations could improve as a result of such groups:

*We have continued the study group because it has done more good than harm. We believe growth of students depends not only on school teachers but also on the caring, concerns and attention from the guardians. To our knowledge, there are no study groups better than ours. Also there is a harmonious interrelation in our local study group compared to that of others.*

However, another parent revealed that commitment to such school–community groups could wane after the initial enthusiasm:

*Unlike the initial days, guardians seldom come to meetings nowadays.*

This problem shows why the role of a dedicated teacher from the school in maintaining parental engagement with the group is critical to such endeavours. Kabita, a Nepali teacher from the same community, plays a key role in bridging the school and the reading group. She conveys the messages of parents back to the school leadership team and also relays school information to the parents.

The head teacher was also supportive of the reading group and regularly encouraged the group members to attend, which was crucial for its ongoing existence. The head teacher said:

*The School Management Committee has decided to continuously support the reading group. Accordingly, we have put a reading competition into our annual plan.*

The fact that a small parental engagement activity had been properly embedded in the school's long-term strategy, ensuring there was a sustained route by which parents could feel involved, gave the group a better chance of maintaining parental engagement.

One of the reasons the school embedded the reading group's activities in its long-term plan was because a school management committee member, named Punam, also attended the group and also conveyed information between the school and parents in the group. The relations between school and the community, and the relations between members of the community meeting in the group, could be called a form of social capital (Hermans & Lederer, 2009) that generated information and provided advantages and support to those involved. Kabita and Punam acted as information channels involved in multiple social groups (school and community) and helped with the flow of different resources (information and books) between those groups. Thus, they were bridging the community and school in a way which helped engage parents and strengthen those links.

## CHALLENGES

From observation, it was clear that only more engaged parents were involved with the reading group. In order to bridge the gap between the school and the entire community, more than a small section of the community needs to be represented at the reading group.

School leaders should identify students who are less engaged in learning at school and need to develop confidence or better behaviour and approach those parents, inviting them to become involved in the reading group.

The group was also at risk of becoming a 'baby sitting' service, rather than a context in which many parents came together and met multiple members of the school staff. Because of domestic chores at home, parents had

clubbed together to decide which individual could take care of students after school. Although this demonstrated an admirable communal spirit between parents, it severed the stronger social links they might build by attending the group together. It also meant school staff members who attended the group only met one parent at a time, rather than multiple parents – again reducing the number of community–school links being developed at any one time.

There was also a tendency for more mothers than fathers to be represented in the reading group. Work would need to be done to try to engage both parents in after-school community groups, since both parents hold authority in the home. If just one has bought into the ideas and skills being taught at school, but not the other, the hard work in engaging only one parent might be wasted.

## CONCLUSION

There remain challenges to the reading group model, particularly around engaging a community of parents in an activity that is not compulsory and takes up valuable time. Such groups also need to be supported financially, so that resources do not become old and so the group feels invested in.

However, the communal networks developed among the parents in the reading group acted as a collective force for continuing to develop reading, listening and communication skills among children. The relations between the school and community reading group were undoubtedly strengthened under the facilitation of the teacher and school management committee member, not least because parents felt actively invited to become involved.

Thus, school leaders wishing to drive school improvement should consider individual and institutional connectivity within and outside the school as an area of focus for their improvement plans.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Indra Mani Rai** is a lecturer in Foundations of Education, Education and Development and Research Methodology at the Central Department of Education in Tribhuvan University, Nepal. He has also worked as a lecturer in Diversity Education, Fundamentals of Sustainable Development and Research Methodology at the School of Education, Kathmandu University.

## REFERENCES

- Government of Nepal (2016). *School sector development plan, 2016–2023*. Kathmandu: Author.
- Hermans, J. & Lederer, T. (2009). *The paradox of social capital: A look through the individual rationality*. Belgium: Louvain School of Management.
- Koirala, B. N. (2003). Managing paradoxes: Education for the sustained future. In B. B. Bhandari & O. Abe (Eds.), *Education for sustainable development in Nepal: Views and visions* (pp. 151–158). Tokyo: Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) and School of Environmental Management and Sustainable Development (SchEMS)/Nepal.
- Trilling, B. & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. USA: Jossey Bass.

# BENEFITS OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Prem Prasad Poudel

---

## INTRODUCTION

This case study will consider the benefits of international school partnerships in enriching teaching and learning in schools in Nepal. For 2018 to 2021, a programme called 'Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning' has been initiated by the British Council to run in a number of Nepalese schools. The purpose of the programme is for teachers and school leaders to share best practice and experience with their peers in the UK, as well as offer professional development support and access to international education policymakers. The programme also aims to educate students about their increasingly interconnected and interdependent world (McLaughlin, 1996; Loveland, et al., 2004). Students are engaged in collaborative projects, with themes including intercultural and global awareness and citizenship, digital technology, community and safety.

The British Council offers the International School Award (ISA) as an accreditation framework for schools to record and evaluate their international work, and as a benchmark for nurturing global citizenship in students in the curriculum. Representatives from the British Council and the Nepal government's Center for Education and Human Resource Development review the programme in participating schools.

The schools examined in this chapter partnered through Skype videoconferencing. Each school appointed an ISA coordinator who was responsible for planning the partnership work, such as joint projects around international themes. The coordinators also nominated some teachers as ISA members, so that joint projects were executed primarily by the ISA member teachers in the respective schools. Students then worked together on projects and discussed themes such as citizenship via Skype.

## METHODOLOGY

In this case study, data was collected from two purposively selected Kathmandu schools with the ISA. School 1 had partnered with two schools, in the UK and in northern India. School 2 had partnered with two schools, both in Pakistan. In-depth qualitative interviews and document analysis were carried out to understand their efforts and engagement in international partnership. For this, five teachers and two programme coordinators were interviewed, and five students from one school and four students from the other school were interviewed, across primary and secondary levels.

## FINDINGS

The following themes emerged from interviews with staff and students:

## 1. Collaboration skills

Students completed projects with global and local themes. The programme coordinator said:

*Our teachers provided them with projects such as exploring the national flags of various countries and drawing them, plastic waste management, exploring junk food use and reporting about its health hazards, etc. in which we saw our students actively engaged and learn collaboratively.*

Students noted the collaborative nature of the work. Two students said:

*We had carried out smaller projects before also, but in this programme the nature of the projects and the process were different. We all had to contribute to the project, and we had to report the evidence of that to our teachers.*

*Unlike other projects that we handled as a part of our regular classroom learning [...] we were working with people from home and abroad in initial project development, discussion, sharing, and even evaluating the projects accomplished by others.*

One of the teachers said students were given their first opportunity to work as part of a team within a common time frame.

*Our students had to solve problems, manage time and tasks with shared responsibility in the project completion.*

Collaborating with students in other countries also necessarily involved collaborating over the use of technology – showing joint

international projects can themselves increase digital skills. One student said:

*We were allowed to use the ICT lab while doing the project and while connecting the students from the school in Pakistan, and had there been no ISA programme, we would not have entered the lab.*

Partnership work with external stakeholders, who may be separated by time, space and cultural barriers, is a context in which students must deploy collaboration and communication skills in order to complete a project. In this way, an international school partnership project can simulate the increasingly global, remote working environment students are likely to encounter in ways otherwise too difficult (and too costly) for most schools to provide.

## 2. Professional development opportunities

Teachers felt the major benefit to them of being involved in the partnerships was their improved digital literacy. One teacher said:

*We learned how best to implement the project work based on our curriculum, and also how to integrate technology in teaching, which was new to us.*

Another said:

*It developed my digital literacy as well, which I think I had to have for my professional development.*

Another teacher indicated that they wished to be involved in the partnership in anticipation of future professional development, including foreign exchange trips:

*The current coordinator of our school has already visited the UK, and other teachers, including me, also expect similar opportunities later by engaging in this programme.*

It is important to note, however, that a number of teachers avoided engaging more directly with the international school partnerships, owing to workload. School leaders wishing a significant proportion of their staff to be involved in such partnerships will need to find strategies to ensure enthusiasm extends beyond a small group of committed teachers.

### 3. Ideas and motivations for teaching and learning

Interviews demonstrated that numerous staff were motivated by the prestige of an international school partnership in a way that made them proud of their own work. One school partnerships coordinator said:

*Our teachers and staff are excited to have got this award. It helps our institutional image, and it's good that our teachers are making changes in their daily teaching.*

Another teacher made clear the project had involved staff across all levels of the school:

*Our non-teaching support staff had also provided us with the logistical support, such as management of stationery and related materials while doing the projects.*

Teachers and students also reported that they learned to embed global themes such as 'solution to pollution' and 'global citizenship' into the curriculum and their projects respectively. Teachers acknowledged, however, that integration was not always

consistently applied. School leaders should perhaps be aware that if ideas are to be plucked from international school partnerships and embedded in teaching and learning, there should be a clear strategy for this rather than leaving it to individual teachers to decide.

### 4. Understanding other cultures

Pupils expressed genuine enthusiasm at learning about new cultures both in South Asia and further afield. One said:

*We learned about Pakistan, the UK and their national birds and animals, including the coat of arms, which we did not know before.*

Several expressed excitement after experiencing a Skype meeting with the students of the same level from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the UK. They thought that increased understanding of cultures outside Nepal was an important skill. One student whose group was partnered with a rural school in South Asia said:

*We helped the students of relatively low-resourced public school to do projects, develop mini-books and mind-maps which made us feel that we could serve for the common benefit.*

This exposure further developed students' confidence in communicating with people from different contexts.

## CONCLUSION

The ISA programme has evidently helped prompt students and staff to think both globally and how this relates to their local context. Interviews reveal that the programme is perceived as deepening students' collaborative, digital and cross-cultural communication skills.

As with all initiatives, there is room for improvement within the ISA programme. For instance, some participants felt that the monitoring mechanisms could be improved and that the feedback sessions from ISA staff could be made more interactive.

Another issue for organisers to keep an eye on is that some institutions may be more focused on documentation than substantial learning, and seek to use the ‘tag’ of ISA as a public relations exercise. Meanwhile, school leaders should ensure all students, rather than just a cohort, are involved in projects like Connecting Classrooms.

However, this is the feedback of two schools out of more than 300 involved in the ISA since 2012, so must be set within the wider context and achievements of ISA schools.

Meanwhile this research demonstrates that participants in international school partnership programmes report improved collaboration skills among students, better professional development opportunities for staff, particularly in the area of digital literacy, new ideas for teaching and learning including curriculum design, and increased intercultural understanding.

As such, with suggested improvements, these international school partnerships have an important role to play in building successful schools.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Prem Prasad Poudel** is a lecturer of English Education at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal. He is a teacher educator and has also worked as a consultant for Save the Children – Nepal, UNESCO and Care Nepal. Prem is currently studying a PhD in Language Education from The Education University of Hong Kong.

### REFERENCES

- Loveland, T., Miyakawa, H., & Hirayama, Y. (2004). *International Collaboration in Secondary Level Education*. *Journal of Technology Studies*, 30(3), 10–19.
- McLaughlin, C., Jr. (1996). *Implications of global change: Technology education's role*. *The Technology Teacher*, 55(5), 14–18.
- Pradhan, V. (2018). *Project NIITE: National Initiative to Improve Teaching in English*. In D. Hayes (Ed.), *English Language Teaching in Nepal: Research, Reflection, and Practice* (267–282). Kathmandu: British Council.



# TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE CLASSROOM

Amit Bikram Sijapati

---

## INTRODUCTION

The American education reformer John Dewey defined the term ‘critical thinking’ as a scientific attitude of mind (Dewey, 1910). Since then, the term has become a buzzword in education and is considered to be a crucial component of ‘21st-century’ learning. The view is that students need the ability to conceptualise, analyse, synthesise and evaluate information. Critical thinking and problem solving (CTPS) has become a significant pedagogical approach in classroom teaching: ‘critical thinking as the intentional application of rational, higher order thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, problem recognition and problem solving, inference, and evaluation’ (Angelo, 1995).

Fullan and Langworthy define critical thinking and problem solving as thinking critically in order to design and manage projects, solve problems and make effective decisions using a variety of digital tools and resources (2013). UNESCO has also provided a broader definition: creativity, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, application skills, reflective thinking and reasoned decision-making (2013). Finally, the British Council definition of CTPS is as follows: ‘Self-directed thinking that produces new and innovative ideas and solves problems. Reflecting critically on learning experiences and processes and making effective decisions’.

Put simply, students who are able to think critically can solve the problem effectively.

Therefore, many educators now believe it is imperative for schools and teachers to design instructional strategies that foster their students’ ability to think critically in order to elevate their competency levels across all subjects.

However, education in Nepal places a heavy emphasis on grade attainment and rote learning. Therefore pedagogy is often more focused on achieving high marks in examinations, which can discourage teachers from applying CTPS in the classroom. This article considers the classroom practice of two schools located in Kathmandu Valley that are focusing on CTPS.

## METHODOLOGY

Two schools in Kathmandu were selected after identifying them through the International School Award (ISA) conducted by British Council. Head teachers of both schools were given a semi-structured survey questionnaire to distribute among teachers carrying out CTPS activities in the school, and in total 12 teachers completed the questionnaire.

## FINDINGS

Questions were asked around, first how the teacher conceived of critical thinking (to check for consistency in teacher understanding), what challenges they were presented with when trying to embed critical thinking in the classroom and what changes teachers felt were needed to improve the

teaching and learning of critical thinking. All teachers were chosen because they had a professed interest in critical thinking and problem solving, and so therefore were already committed to it as a core skill in the classroom.

## TEACHER CONCEPTIONS OF CTPS

Teachers ranged from defining critical thinking and problem solving as everything from independence of thought to the capacity to see alternative viewpoints, to a tool that enables better communication of ideas and improved understanding of a subject.

For instance, teacher Suman Shakya, said ‘critical thinking is an important tool of analysis’, which was echoed by Manisha Ghimire who said it was ‘objective analysis of any issue and things’. In this sense, critical thinking was seen as a method of thinking.

The end purpose of critical thinking was emphasised by other teachers. ‘Critical thinking is formulating one’s own ideas and opinions and coming to a conclusion regardless of superficial understanding,’ said Sharda Maka. Ashna Shakya also emphasised the desired outcome, namely independence of mind:

*Critical thinking is to some extent thinking independently which means formulating your own ideas and opinions and drawing conclusions regardless of other influences.*

Completing school assignments to a higher standard was another outcome of critical thinking highlighted by several teachers. CTPS ‘enhances the students’ language and presentation skills,’ said Bandita Gautam, adding, ‘thinking clearly and systematically can improve the way to express ideas.’ CTPS allowed the student to ‘view the subject matter with a different approach,’

said Keshang Thing. Sabnam Maheshwori said critical thinking allowed pupils to ‘have multiple approaches to a given subject matter’.

Only one teacher, Samjhana Panta, pulled out the purpose of critical thinking as beneficial for the teacher too:

*It allows the teachers to know their [students’] understanding and guide them to what the student wants to learn about that topic.*

School leaders seeking to implement critical thinking in the classroom would do well to carefully outline or co-produce with their staff an agreed definition, purpose and desired outcome of critical thinking beforehand. As such, leaders will ensure staff have a consistent understanding of CTPS as a core skill and what exercises will best enable its delivery in lessons – rather than a dispersed understanding which might result in inconsistent practice.

## TWO CASE STUDIES ON CRITICAL THINKING IN THE CLASSROOM:

### Case study 1: Kathmandu Pragya Kunja School

Kathmandu Pragya Kunja School promotes values- and skill-based ‘deep learning’. Principal Sunita Poudel states ‘our academic plans are designed carefully to prepare young children for secondary and post-secondary education with a focus on ‘4Cs’: communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration’. As such, it is a school with a specific focus on critical thinking.

#### a. Classroom observation summary (teacher Ashish Ghimire, grade 5)

Unlike the usual ‘theatre model’ classroom in Nepal with separate desks, the observed class was made more interactive by joining

desks so that students could discuss with a partner or group when requested. Twenty-one students were placed in groups of four, with one group of five. Ashish, the teacher, was delivering a lesson on significant figures from Nepal's past as part of social studies. Rather than simply delivering a lesson about one of these figures, the class was asked to explore the notion of a 'hero' using examples from media, their own experiences and in society. Students were asked to discuss in groups their notions of being a hero and why and whether people they had named should hold that title. Pupils were given an independent writing task to discuss their thoughts on paper, and then were set homework to critically explore the reputation and perception of a 'hero' using resources including the internet and books.

#### b. Teacher interview

Ashish stated that a critical thinker 'needs to be sceptical and ask as many questions as possible', and to encourage this he has a bag of chocolates in the classroom which he gives to students who ask him rational, critically-minded questions. The purpose is to undo the pupils' inhibitions about appearing to challenge received wisdom. Ashish was also clear the teacher must first assess what the students already know, in order to establish what a more critical mindset might involve, and also to 'get students to engage their own background knowledge, however deep or shallow' (Hannel, 2014).

His concern about wider implementation of CTPS across schools was that 'teachers do not want to try new things'. Ashish said 'some teachers are very egocentric and want to stick to their old patterns and comment negatively on this approach'. He added that these teachers think that if children are not disciplined they will not learn and 'for them being disciplined is being silent in the classroom'. He also said teachers may not wish to be out of their comfort zone.

This viewpoint was backed up by survey questionnaire responses from several other teachers.

Sujana Baba Karki said that challenges to introducing CTPS methods in the classroom include students being seen to argue with teachers, the class becoming noisy and students themselves giving 'egocentric' rather than considered views. Arrogance and intolerance from both some students and staff was cited as a barrier by Sharda Maka.

However, a more frequently cited stumbling block was lack of confidence among students about thinking critically, and a lack of a strong knowledge base with which to have informed and deep discussion. Time constraints in the school day and lack of space for group activities in the classroom were also mentioned.

School leaders need to reassure staff who are implementing CTPS that its methods can be introduced alongside strong behavioural standards, and provide training in how to achieve this. Staff should be reassured that discussion heard in classrooms will not be seen as a sign of a class 'out of control' but they should also be supported in ensuring the class remains focused and calm. Meanwhile it is also clear that strong knowledge is a pre-requisite for engaged critical thinking.

#### Case study 2: Phoenix School

Phoenix School is an independent secondary school that follows the Montessori pedagogy from pre-primary to grade 5 with a 'learner-centred' approach. Principal Srijana Basnet states, 'we endow freedom of speech, movement and choice to our students so that they can express their feelings to teachers in any situation and I think this is the foundation for developing a critical thinking habit among the learners.'

**a. Classroom observation summary (Muna Shrestha, pre-primary coordinator)**

The pre-primary section of Phoenix School was running a vertical age group method where all toddlers and pre-school students were together in one class with three teachers in the classroom. Muna was attending to seven students who were highly engaged in their own activities. Three were doing language activities, two mathematics and one an art and craft project. Shrestha had different lesson plans for all the students that she had prepared the day before. She observed the students and supported them whenever required. If any child asked her about a problem, she always asked them back their own idea first before explaining. When the task was completed, she noted children's individual progress in their record chart.

**b. Teacher interview**

Muna said that to develop critical thinking among children, they first must be 'allowed to do activities like drawing and painting freely, thinking and speaking freely so that they can get divergent ideas'. In this she had been inspired by educationalist Maria Montessori on which the school's teaching is based, who said: 'To stimulate life, leaving it free, however to unfold itself, is the first duty of the educator.'

Muna held the view that students needed to be observed closely, in which observation is 'just seeing things as it is rather than jumping to conclusions to judge the child'. For her, the first step in enabling critical thinking was one in which the teacher was well trained in close observation such that they could perceive when all individual students were in a state of focused concentration. Under these circumstances, critical thinking could take place.

Muna noted a number of challenges to implementing such an approach more widely across schools. She stated that most teachers "do not have enough patience to

observe and their organisation skills are not sufficient'. According to Muna, teachers tended to be focused on completing the classroom activity and if students were not able to do so they then helped the children directly, thereby building dependency.

She stated that she taught students 'to be independent so that they can think critically and solve their problem by themselves'. Note that for Muna, critical thinking fostered independence, but independence was also the crucial context to enable critical thinking to take place.

A reluctance on the part of students to think without the aid of a textbook or teacher was mentioned by several teachers. Samjhana Panta said:

*Students hesitate to speak about their own understanding. They start to scan their coursebook.*

Ashna Sakya labelled the problem a 'drone mentality' among students – brought about by an unvarying daily routine in lessons with little independent learning or querying, resulting in an unengaged mindset. Meena Thapa added: 'Students need to be provided with frequent activities to start to develop critical thinking skills.'

## CONCLUSION

Three key factors in implementing critical thinking successfully in the classroom can be drawn from the observations, interviews and survey questionnaire answers. The first was that teachers with a great passion for their profession were much keener to try new methods of teaching. Without this, all further efforts fell flat.

Second teachers who implemented CTPS successfully would introduce questions at the start of and during the lesson, establishing

existing knowledge and then asking students to reflect on that knowledge critically.

Third the culture of the classroom explicitly made students feel comfortable about asking questions. Likewise there was significant support for teachers from the senior leadership team for their approach.

Education in Nepal is now in a transformative phase. The Curriculum Development Centre has introduced the integrated curriculum for grades 1–3 based on the current National Curriculum Framework. The traditional rote learning- and teacher-centred pedagogical approach is largely condemned within both. However, teachers blame this on the rigid standardised curriculum and parental demand for grade attainment. To introduce CTPS, school leaders would need to tackle these two issues first, before making the case for CTPS in the classroom to staff and families.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Amit Bikram Sijapati** is a teacher educator for primary and secondary school teachers focused on 21st-century pedagogies. He is also a core skills trainer for the Connecting Classrooms through Global Learning programme run by the British Council in Nepal. Amit is currently completing an MPhil in Education Leadership.

## REFERENCES

- Angelo, T. A. (1995). *Beginning the dialogue: Thoughts on promoting critical thinking: Classroom assessment for critical thinking*. *Teaching of Psychology*, 22(1), 6–7.
- Creswell, J. W. & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Fullan, M and Langworthy M (2013) *Towards a New End: New Pedagogies for Deep Learning* On behalf of the global partnership June 2013, Collaborative Impact, Seattle.
- Hannel, G.I (2014). *A pedagogy of questioning*. Phoenix, AZ.
- John Dewey. (1910) “The Analysis of a Complete Act of Thought” Chapter 6 in *How we think*. Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, : 68–78.
- Saul, M. (2019). *Constructivism as a theory for teaching and learning*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/constructivism.html>
- UNESCO (2013) *The Global learning crisis: why every child deserves a quality education*.

# EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Khagendra Gautam

---

## INTRODUCTION

Project-based learning has been defined as a pedagogical strategy that helps prepare students for the 21st century (Bell, 2010). While it facilitates subject knowledge, the idea behind project-based learning is to develop students' critical thinking, evaluation, independent work and social skills, as well as presentation and problem-solving skills. The structure of project-based learning usually involves students working collaboratively in groups to solve a problem, answer a question or tackle a challenge with a clear end product (ibid.). The role of the teacher is not to transmit facts to be remembered but act as a facilitator of meaningful projects where the answer is not readily apparent (Tiong, 2004). In the words of one author, 'a project involves the development of the whole child' (Phillips et al., 1999).

The challenges of delivering project-based learning effectively are also evidenced in academic literature, including a lack of confidence and reluctance among teachers, difficulty with time management and with project assessment (Aldabbus, 2018). Similar challenges were encountered at the school in this case study, leading to a compromise being found between full project-based learning and other pedagogical principles.

The Creative Academy is a community co-educational school in Kirtipur, Kathmandu. After targeted training, teachers designed and assigned three to seven days' project-

based learning to junior students in 2017–18. But the school's internal review revealed that 73 per cent of students had received assistance with their learning project. For instance, for a social studies project, students had to examine the worship rituals of six local temples by observing and interviewing people. On making enquiries, teachers found that many parents had forbidden students to go into temples and instead had helped them to write stories based on their own religious and cultural upbringing. Similarly, students on a science project were required to take photos of five invertebrates – but teachers found the students had taken the images from the internet.

For most of the projects, the school found that either student engagement was low or the anticipated learning was not taking place. Parents remained hesitant about allowing children to interact independently with their classmates after school hours. In response, the school advisory committee devised the MicroProject concept, in which students would complete real-time project tasks during school hours.

MicroProjects are handed out in class time, using a template document with a set of written instructions for the students. Students follow the instructions but work independently to complete the project within their lesson time. All activities that the student does in a MicroProject are tied to real-life learning they can continue outside the classroom. Students must follow the instructions and work out

the answers themselves. This may include completing activities outside of the classroom, in line with the instructions in the template.

Each individual student reflects on three facilitating questions; what was easy/difficult, how was their engagement, and what/which things could have been done differently? This helps students to be critical about their own actions and experiences. The teacher designs the MicroProject template to relate to the learning objectives of the curriculum and it is reviewed by the age-level teacher in charge and by the school's academic lead (myself). The MicroProject should be refined by the teacher so that it can be improved.

Three MicroProject examples are given below:

### 1. Social studies (Grade 6: Social issues)

The teacher collected newspaper cuttings which highlighted different social issues. She provided one cutting each to groups of three students, along with the MicroProject with instructions to research the issue. Students had 40 minutes to explore and enquire about the issue using the internet and books before presenting their findings to the class. Finally, each individual student gave his or her reflections on a project worksheet.

### 2. Science (Grade 4: Flowering plants)

Students in groups of four were asked to identify types of flowering plants found on school premises. Each individual student had a template worksheet outlining the steps they could take to research, observe and explain. By the end of the lesson, each group took a photo of the plant and could explain why it was the correct type. Students were encouraged to continue to identify the plants at home.

### 3. Maths (Grade 2: Addition)

Each student had a budget of one hundred rupees and was taken to the nearby shopping complex. They were required to buy a number of useful items before returning and calculating how much they had spent, what they had remaining and how much they would

need to purchase these items for a bigger number of people.

## METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 37 students and 29 teachers to gather their feedback on the MicroProject.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Teacher feedback

Analysis of the MicroProject pilot shows teachers believe it has the potential to increase students' capacity for independent work, critical thought and self-evaluation.

Rina Shahi said she observed skills developing in students:

*The MicroProject has supported me to develop an analytical perspective in students compared to other learning activities. Students get involved in the task themselves, which enhances the confidence level of the student. It motivates students towards research work.*

Prakash Dhama said project work was more successfully completed at school than at home:

*Students are not loaded with home assignments as project work. For us, MicroProject has been a great help to monitor and evaluate activities of the students in school premises in regular class time.*

One Nepali language teacher, who did not wish to be named, said the strategy is 'effective at introducing a collaborative culture' among students while also engaging 'disruptive kids'.

A science teacher, who also did not wish to be named, said the project worksheets helped students build up their knowledge from simple to complex understanding of a topic through guided research and exploration.

Some teachers acknowledged that at the start of the MicroProject pilot, they were merely setting some class work, rather than a genuine project. One explained he had to learn to let students work on their own:

*Though I made the MicroProject I wasn't satisfied with it. But as I kept on preparing them, I became clearer on its concept and application. Evaluating my own work, the MicroProjects in the past were only an exploration of the lesson itself. My recent MicroProjects are completely different to them. They encourage students to take full responsibility for more learning.*

Of all teachers interviewed, 25 (about 86 per cent) said that they wanted to continue to use the MicroProject in teaching and learning.

School leaders wishing to introduce project-based learning should ensure that all staff receive clear training and guidance on implementing 'project-based learning' which significantly expands learning and develops enquiry and critical thinking skills – rather than just another a written task in lesson time.

## 2. Student feedback

One grade 5 student reported the MicroProject to be a 'fun way of learning'; perhaps more importantly, he inadvertently revealed it prevents him from getting assistance where he shouldn't.

*My other project work was always annoying for my father and sister, as I asked them for help to complete it.*

A grade 3 student said she 'liked worksheet more than textbook problems' because the answer was not immediately clear and required further research and questioning.

*In Microproject, I can work with my friends. I can go outside of my classroom. My parents say I have made improvement on mathematics.*

Of all students interviewed, 100 per cent said that they wanted to continue to use the MicroProject in teaching and learning.

## LIMITATIONS

Observation of teachers and students reveal the MicroProject hasn't been completely delivered to expectations. Observed issues include teachers not having enough time to improve their Microprojects because they had to spend too much time marking homework and tests, and teachers still giving too much support to students with the projects during class.

The impact of the MicroProject on academic attainment needs to be researched further. Meanwhile, the interview feedback was largely positive, but may have been influenced by various factors. More objective analysis of attainment data would be the next step for research.

## CONCLUSION

The MicroProject pilot has blended accepted learning practices in Nepal (classroom-based learning guided by a teacher) with new approaches (a learner centred enquiry-led pedagogy). School leaders interested in introducing project-based learning can be reassured that with clear training and mentoring, teachers can become more comfortable and students' engagement increases through such programmes. Now, the MicroProject pilot is being studied further by Parbat Dhungana and Binod Panta from



Kathmandu University and Nick Hopwood from the University of Technology Sydney. Students learn to work in collaboration, extend and evaluate their own learning and become more adaptable through the MicroProjects. However, there is evidence teachers need to leave students to work out the answers themselves, and students need to understand this is expected of them. Full implementation of the MicroProject demands the whole-hearted support of school leaders, teachers and parents.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Khagendra Gautam** has been a science teacher for 20 years and in 2003 helped to found the Creative Academy in Kirtipur, Nepal, where he is now the academic coordinator. He has a Master's degree in Zoology from the Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University.

## REFERENCES

- Aldabbus, S. (2018). *Project-based learning: Implementation and Challenges*. International Journal of Education, Learning and Development (6)3, 71–79.
- Bell, S. (2010). *Project-based learning for the 21st century: Skills for the future*. The Clearing House, 83(2), 39–43
- Bybee, R. W., Taylor, J. A., Gardner, A., Van Scotter, P., Powell, J. C., Westbrook, A. & Landes, N. (2006). *Report on the BSCS 5E instructional model: Origins, effectiveness, and applications* (Unpublished white paper). Colorado Springs, CO: BSCS.
- Phillips, D., Burwood, S. & Dunford, H. (1999). *Projects with young learners*. Oxford University Press.
- Tiong, H. B. (2004). *Managing Project Work in Schools: Issues and Innovative Practices* (222–235). Singapore: Prentice Hall.

# EMBEDDING DIGITAL LITERACY IN THE CLASSROOM

Laxman Gnawali

## INTRODUCTION

Education stakeholders are making ever stronger cases to argue that a true ‘21st-century’ schooling embeds information and communication technologies (ICT) in the classroom (Anderson, 2010), thereby allowing teaching and learning to be more accessible, more creative, and to increase the digital skills of students. Education policymakers claim that ICT can enhance student achievement and help the learners to compete in a global world (Kozma, 2010).

In Nepal, digital upskilling has now become a key component of national education policies. The School Sector Development Plan 2016–23 specifically mentioned in its intervention strategies that ‘ICT facilities and opportunities will increasingly be made available to enable learners to engage with the rapidly changing technological world’ (Ministry of Education, Nepal, 2016). At the same time, the country’s National Centre of Education Development (NCED) envisioned that teachers would develop digital competency and use it for effective teaching and learning (NCED, 2016).

In effect, these moves reiterated the government’s commitment to making ICT a mandatory subject more than six years ago (Ministry of Education, 2013). Yet a study revealed that these policies had not made a significant difference (Dhakal & Pant, 2016), with Nepalese universities including ICT in teacher training but this delivery not translating into digitally competent teachers.

In 2015, Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University launched a new teacher education Master’s which explicitly introduced ICT training into the course. Overall, the impact of the course in bringing digital literacy to the schools has been noticeable. This case study reports on whether and how the graduates from the Master’s course at Kathmandu University are improving digital literacy in their classrooms.

## METHODOLOGY

The following research questions guided the study.

- How did the teacher trainees gain digital literacy in the training process?
- How are they trying to embed the digital literacy in their classroom teaching?

We telephone-interviewed seven graduates from six different districts, and staff from four faculties who had taught them. The data was transcribed and analysed thematically. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity: F1, F2, etc. for faculty staff, and P1, P2, etc. for graduates. We discuss the results under two broad themes: gaining digital literacy and transferring digital literacy.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Gaining digital literacy

Faculty staff were asked how the course participants acquired ICT skills during the course. Their responses indicated that

graduates gained exposure to ICT in two ways: explicit course components about ICT, and by having to use ICT during their teaching and learning.

One member of faculty staff, F3, said:

*Simple ICT literacy was a big issue in the earlier batches as students arrived with no knowledge even on word processing and emailing.*

F4 pointed out that the participants' learning was enhanced more by the use of ICT as part of the course than the course content specifically dealing with ICT:

*We made it mandatory for students to log into Moodle, a learning management system. Emailing and sending links was also common. Apart from pedagogy, students also used ICT for research.*

He saw the benefits of learning ICT but said there were still challenges in terms of competence:

*They used ICT, but without it, they cannot do anything when it comes to data analysis.*

Meanwhile, graduate trainee teachers' responses confirmed the tutors' opinions. For some, it was the first time they learned to consider that an online resource might not be authentic or trustworthy, while for others it was the start of their basic ICT training.

For instance, P2 confessed to learning the basics of ICT only once he was on the course: 'I learnt how to read online, download and upload assignments.' Meanwhile, P5 'learnt things like using online resources, digitising my resources, downloading materials

for classroom teaching, etc.,' as well as encountering Google Drive and online portals like JSTOR for the first time. For others, their digital knowledge was more advanced and they could move on from an understanding of PowerPoint to discover educational apps, such as the maths app GeoGebra.

The interviews indicate that the starting point for digital skills in trainee teachers could vary from the extremely basic to more advanced. By digitalising the ways in which trainee teachers themselves must submit work and assessments, university teacher education can have a significant impact in embedding digital skills in the teachers who then enter Nepal's classrooms. Perhaps the most important outcome appears to be the graduates' increased confidence. P1 concluded with excitement: 'We learned how to take online exams. I learned using the computer as a whole, typing fast, uploading and downloading through online portals.'

## 2. Transferring digital literacy

Graduates from the Master's course were then asked how they used ICT and digital tools in their classroom while teaching, producing a variety of responses.

Although not all said they had the adequate facilities to use extensive ICT, they had all made use of available digital resources to inform their pedagogy. For instance, graduate P1, who was also a head of school, introduced a number of changes in her classroom, including requiring her students to email assignments; using free online courses to teach prepositions and adjectives; and training her colleagues to use similar digital tools. She was of the view the Master's had made a difference in terms of her feeling able to embed digital literacy in the classroom and also claimed that parents were pleased with the changes.

Another graduate, P2, introduced PowerPoint slides for his daily lessons and also required students to use slides to give presentations: 'They go on field trips and collect data and

present their findings.’ As a school leader he explained the power of leading by example in terms of introducing digital tools, saying: ‘As I am the head, they might be morally obliged to follow what I do.’ P5 also found using new digital technology helped improve student engagement:

*Whenever I use PowerPoint, students see something new going on inside the classroom. This makes it easier for me to hold their attention. This in turn makes it easier for me to teach more.*

Other participants who taught at primary school level, such as P3, began to browse websites for interactive games following the Master’s. The introduction of a smartboard at P3’s school means she plans to use interactive websites more next year – demonstrating that school investment in digital technology is a key part of encouraging teachers to embed it across their lessons.

In Nepal, community schools are considered to be under-resourced and performing badly. For instance, P6 described having access to a projector but said financial constraints prevented the school from having an internet connection. However, P4 works in a community school where ‘all teachers have access to laptops and projectors. When my colleagues have problems, I help.’ It would be worth further exploration to discover how these better technology resources have been made available at this school.

Meanwhile, P4’s Master’s accreditation has given her the authority to be useful to her colleagues around ICT. Similarly, P7 claimed his newly learned ICT skills brought him career opportunities: he became the lead teacher in the British Council’s partner school programme, which makes use of videoconferencing technology, as a result.

But an engaged school does not mean an engaged community. Unlike the parents P1

deals with, P3’s parents are different. She said:

*In school we teach them research and they give presentations. They love what they do. But their parents don’t allow using laptops at home.*

This indicates that while other staff and students may be quick to come onboard with embedding digital learning, parents may need to be directly engaged with to ensure they allow this to continue in the home.

## CONCLUSION

This case study shows that a tailored, authoritative and digitally focused course, such as a Master’s programme, has the potential to embed digital skills in teachers and therefore in classrooms in two ways. It taught trainee teachers ICT-specific knowledge and used ICT and digital tools as a means to teach other aspects of the programme. The latter aspect not only increased their digital technology skills but also gave them an insight into how they could use them as teachers (so in a way was even more useful than the formal teaching of ICT itself). Therefore, many more teacher training courses in Nepal should require that trainees use multiple digital platforms, digital educational tools and must submit their work and communications with faculty staff digitally.

The tentative qualitative data presented here also indicates that ICT in teacher education develops a positive attitude in teachers towards that area. The teachers not only found ICT provided more efficient means of preparing lessons but also were keener to develop students’ skills and interest in digital technologies. Improved classroom management, improved career options and student motivation were other benefits they reported. In some cases, their colleagues benefited by getting help from a recognised Master’s graduate when needed. We can conclude that digital literacy training for

teachers is a crucial way to ensure digital literacy is embedded into the classroom.

The main drawback is cost and time. The Master's costs about £800 per person per year. For this to be rolled out on a national scale, the government would need to find sufficient funding to both enrol trainee teachers and find cover for their lessons. The benefits hinted at here indicate this could be worth serious consideration.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Laxman Gnawali** is Professor of English Education and Head of the Department of Language Education within the School of Education at Kathmandu University. He has previously worked extensively across Nepal as an English teacher. He also serves as the Senior Vice President of the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association.

## REFERENCES

Anderson, J. (2010) *ICT transforming education a regional guide*. Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok

Dhakal, R. & Pant. B (2016) *Assessment of teacher education curricula in Nepal: An ICT perspective*. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. 2(3) www.ijicc.net

Kozma, R. B. (2010). *ICT policies and educational transformation*. Retrieved 10 August 2015 from <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/ICT/pdf/ICTpoliedtran.pdf>.

Ministry of Education (2013). *Information and communication technology (ICT) in education: Master plan 2013-2017*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Author.

Ministry of Education (2016). *School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Author.

National Centre for Educational Development [NCED] (2016) *Teacher Competencies Framework*. Bhaktapur, Nepal: Author

# GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND GLOBAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

Donnie Adams, Kenny S.L. Cheah, Noni Nadiana Md Yusoff and Vicneswary Muthiah

## INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be a ‘global citizen’? A global citizen can be defined by one’s ability to understand the broader world and relate to its purpose and function as a unique individual (Edwards & Gaventa, 2014). Global citizens have also been said to play a proactive role within their own communities and collaborate with others to improve life and living to be more equal, fair and sustainable (Mayo, 2005). As such, they are people with a purpose that is rooted in both local and international contexts (Gaventa & Tandon, 2010). Conceiving of global citizenship allows individuals to be aware of their knowledge of world events, and empower them as learners so that they can assume active roles in facing and resolving global challenges (Merryfield, 2008). Another definition is that they are positive contributors to a more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure world (Tiessen, 2011).

Global learning, on the other hand, has been defined as facilitating educational experiences that allow students to appreciate diverse perspectives, understand the connections they have to the wider world, effectively communicate and collaborate across cultures and countries, and use their disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge to investigate and take action on issues that matter to them and the wider world (Tichnor-Wagner, 2017). The notion of ‘global learning’ has in recent years become a focus of curriculum development in Nepal.

This chapter has three broad sections. The first section presents an overview of global citizenship in education and global learning in schools. The second section discusses a case study of a school in Malaysia that has developed international links and conducted global learning programmes across borders. The final section will focus on what Nepali education policymakers can do to implement global citizenship as a lens for teaching within the curriculum.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Global citizenship education is ‘not just a mere theoretical concept, it is now a practical program implemented in schools’ (Wintersteiner et al., 2015). Wintersteiner et al. say global citizenship education is the delivery of knowledge, competences, values and attitudes that enable learners to work towards a more equitable world for all – in that regard it has a specifically ethical dimension. For instance, global citizenship is a key concept for students to consider when discussing peace and non-violence.

Taking this a step further, Dower (2000) explains global citizenship is prompted by an awareness of the need to exercise global responsibility due to the issues of poverty, environmental degradation, human rights abuses and violence. Subsequently, Schattle (2008) argues that global citizenship emerges in various contexts of political activism or even through study abroad programmes and individuals gaining expanding cultural

horizons. Global citizenship is inextricably linked, then, to globalisation – it is not necessarily a voluntary state, but an inevitable state as different worlds become increasingly linked up.

In 2012, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasised that a purpose of education is to foster global citizenship in order to shape a sustainable future generation. This places a huge onus on schools about the future peace and stability of the planet.

*My new education first initiative aims to give a 'big push' to the global movement for education [...] fostering global citizenship. Education is much more than an entry to the job market. It has the power to shape a sustainable future and a better world. Education policies should promote peace, mutual respect and environmental care.*

Source: Statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 26 September 2012, Global Education First Initiative (GEFI)

With this in mind, UNESCO designated 'global citizenship education' as its pedagogical guideline in 2013.

## GLOBAL LEARNING IN SCHOOLS

The rapid expansion of global learning as an educational goal presents some challenges for teachers. Braskamp (2009) raised the issue of appropriate and effective intervention. As learners need to have a global perspective without going abroad, teachers have to think creatively about how to deliver a lesson in which students can feel, think and act outside of only their local context.

### Case study: An international school in Malaysia

This case study looks at a private international secondary school established in the 1980s

in Kuala Lumpur. The school takes pride in its curriculum, which emphasises critical and creative thinking, appreciation of the sciences, arts and culture, and the promotion of character formation and responsible citizenship. The aim is to provide an all-round education with a strong emphasis on character development.

The school has 1,152 students, with 80 per cent of its student population being Malaysians of all ethnicities, while the rest are students from neighbouring regions such as Korea, Indonesia, Australia, Thailand and China. The majority of their 112 teachers are Malaysian, but there are also international teachers from France, China and Germany. The school runs the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) Cambridge certified curriculum for Year 7 to 11 students.

The school has a dedicated 'Global Perspectives' subject, which is compulsory for students as part of the IGCSE curriculum. Global citizenship education is seen as being embedded within this subject, and as such is a firm concept familiar throughout the school. Introduced in 2014, the subject was designed by Cambridge International to develop students' skills in research, analysis, evaluation, reflection, collaboration and communication. It also aims to strengthen cross-curricular links with core subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and information and communications technology (ICT).

Global Perspectives is taught three times a week, with 40 minutes allocated for each lesson. The subject emphasises the development and application of skills rather than the acquisition of knowledge. Students are assessed via three compulsory components: a written exam, an individual report and a team project, contributing 35 per cent, 30 per cent and 35 per cent of marks respectively (Cambridge International Examinations, 2015; Laycock, 2017).

The written examination requires students to answer four compulsory questions based on a range of sources. The sources present a global issue from a range of perspectives, either personal, national and/or global, which the student must then use in their answer. Meanwhile, the individual report requires students to research a topic of personal, national or global significance, which they choose themselves. For the team project, students need to devise and develop a collaborative research project on a topic, which must allow for the exploration of different cultural perspectives. Students are also required to submit a personal reflective report on their research, contribution and personal learning.

There is no specific Global Perspectives teacher hired to teach the subject. Instead, teachers are required to teach Global Perspectives as a timetabled subject and are provided online training by Cambridge International for a total of 35 hours over six weeks to guide them. Case studies are provided to demonstrate how the curriculum and timetable can be redesigned and cross-subject links strengthened. Teachers can access the Cambridge International website for online training. The book *Complete Global Perspectives for Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level* (Lally, 2016) is used as a reference material for the latest syllabus and in helping teachers prepare for classes.

Teachers play an active role in introducing topics, such as the latest news. Students are required to undertake their own research to prepare for forums and debates with students across classes, and are encouraged to learn to become accepting of different perspectives and to support knowledge sharing.

Students are also encouraged to participate in international educational competitions that create new learning experiences and opportunities for them to understand the diversity of cultures. However, the selection depends on the capabilities and

competencies of students. For example, students have represented the school in the Global Learning Across Borders competition, Oxbridge Genius Mathematics competition, Australian Mathematics competition, and Royal Commonwealth essay competition.

Through the Global Perspectives subject, students have also participated in more than 20 student exchange programmes, as well as the Global Learning Across Borders educational travel programmes and community service programmes across Australia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Korea, the UK, the US, China, Singapore and Japan from 2010 to 2019.

Embedding 'global citizenship' or 'global perspectives' as a clear concept across subjects, with training and resources available for teachers, is a good starting point for school leaders interested in introducing students to international viewpoints and global ethical questions.

## METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants in the study: the vice principal for co-curriculum, two headteachers and five subject teachers in English, ICT and maths were chosen.

Several factors were considered when choosing the participants for this study. First only participants who had a clear understanding of global citizenship education were selected. Second only participants who consented to participate were selected. An open-ended survey with 13 questions was administered. Each of the responses was read thoroughly and provisional themes were assigned. Three major themes emerged from the data.

## FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed under three main themes: rationale for global



citizenship education; teaching style and approach; and instructional challenges and improvement.

### 1. Rationale for global citizenship education

The teachers revealed a consistent and shared rationale for global citizenship education. They said that:

- students need to be exposed to ‘every aspect of culture from different countries’
- students need to gain a ‘wide knowledge of different cultures and environment’
- students can ‘facilitate collaboration and cooperation’ between nations by learning about their cultures
- understanding different cultures helps students to respect those cultures.

All the teachers believed it was necessary to instill certain values, attitudes and behaviours in learners for a culturally rich, peaceful and sustainable society. Their consistency of understanding about global citizenship – and their dedication to its ethical purpose – gave them a clear idea of what they wished to achieve when delivering global citizenship education and what resources and materials they would need.

### 2. Teaching style and approach

A second common theme from the surveys was the teachers’ joint belief that the Global Perspectives subject should be taught in a way that develops ‘21st-century skills’. The following examples were provided:

- Using a learning management system (LMS) which not only delivers global citizenship content but which requires students to access it online, thereby developing their digital and information technology skills – themselves key skills in a global world
- Emphasis given to student-centred learning when discussing global citizenship, in which the teacher is the facilitator, in order to develop independence of thought, critical thinking and self-reflection

- Forums and debates with students across classes to develop communication and listening skills
- Students’ participation in international educational competitions in order to develop resilience, cross-cultural communication and engagement skills.

Embedding a subject focused on global citizenship into the school curriculum had given space for a skills-based pedagogy, which could flexibly move away from textbook-centred approaches, to emerge.

### 3. Instructional challenges and improvement

The teaching of global citizenship education threw up its own set of challenges.

Participants raised numerous issues:

- Challenges in cross-cultural communication when students meet those from different backgrounds
- Lack of moral values and ethics among learners, such that some displayed intolerant or dismissive attitudes which teachers struggled to change
- Preparing lessons which involve global issues, and embedding these into the curriculum through all subjects, could be time-consuming and difficult to deliver in a coherent way. Some participants suggested global citizenship could be delivered through other subjects rather than in a single subject in the school’s curriculum, to cut down on workload and also help to make other subjects less exam-oriented.

Teachers should be supported by senior leadership teams to manage these challenges, which are particularly present in global citizenship lessons, effectively and confidently.

## CONCLUSION

The account of global citizenship education presented in this chapter is a descriptive one. It puts into context what has been described by teachers and illuminates their challenges.

Two implications can be drawn for Nepali education policymakers looking to situate the learning of curricular subjects within the context of global citizenship.

First while global citizenship education is already in place in the form of civic education, peace and human rights in Nepalese social studies curricula and textbooks (Smith, 2015; UNICEF Nepal, 2010), careful attention should be given to incorporating global issues and the development of international viewpoints and cross-cultural understanding in the curriculum. A distinct, dedicated subject can help achieve this goal.

Second capacity-building for teachers teaching global citizenship is essential to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the programme. Teachers need to be exposed to '21st-century approaches', as compared to current traditional methods of relying merely on textbooks or other materials for in-class discussion and student reflections (Smith, 2015). For that, they require further training and more diverse teaching resources. Teachers must not have this requirement to teach global citizenship added on to their workload without clarity about what it means or how they should deliver it, and without sufficient space in their weekly timetable.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Donnie Adams** is a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya with a PhD in Educational Leadership. He is a recipient of the University of Malaya's Bright Sparks scholarship and its Excellence Award 2016.

**Kenny S.L. Cheah** has taught in secondary schools and has a Master's in Educational Management and a PhD in Educational Leadership. Currently, he is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Educational Leadership, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya.

**Noni Nadiana Md Yusoff** is currently studying for a Master's of Education at the University of Malaya. She has a TESOL degree from the University of Exeter. Her current field is leadership for learning and teacher professional development.

**Vicneswary Muthiah** is a senior lecturer at Wesley International School with 25 years' experience in teaching and management. She has a degree in Economics and a Master's in Education (Principalship) from the University of Malaysia. Currently, she is studying for a PhD in Educational Leadership from the University of Malaysia.

## REFERENCES

- Braskamp, L. A. (2009). *Internationalization in higher education: Four issues to consider*. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(6).
- Cambridge International Examinations (2015). *Cambridge IGCSE® Global Perspectives* [Syllabus]. United Kingdom: Cambridge International Examinations.
- Dower, N. (2000). *The idea of global citizenship – a sympathetic assessment*. *Global Society*, 14(4), 553-567.
- Edwards, M. & Gaventa, J. (2014). *Global citizen action*. Routledge.
- Gaventa, J. & Tandon, R. (2010). *Globalizing Citizens: New Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion*. Zed Books.
- Lally, J. (2016). *Complete Global Perspectives for Cambridge IGCSE® and O Level*. Oxford University Press – Children.
- Laycock, K. (2017). *Approaches to Learning and Teaching Global Perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mayo, M. (2005). *Global citizens: Social movements and the challenge of globalization*. Zed Books.
- Merryfield, M. (2008). *Scaffolding social studies for global awareness*. *Social Education*, 72(7), 363–366.
- Schattle, H. (2008). *The practices of global citizenship*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Smith, M. (2015). *Lessons from integrating peace, human rights, and civic education into social studies curricula and textbooks*. Paris: International Institute for Educational Planning.
- Tichnor-Wagner, A. (2017). *Inspiring Glocal Citizens*. *Educational Leadership*, 75(3), 69–73.
- Tiessen, R. (2011). *Global subjects or objects of globalisation? The promotion of global citizenship in organisations offering sport for development and/or peace programmes*. *Third World Quarterly*, 32(3), 571–587.
- UNICEF Nepal (2010) *Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition*. Available at: [http://www.educationandtransition.org/Wpcontent/uploads/2007/04/Nepal\\_EEPCT\\_2010\\_Report.pdf](http://www.educationandtransition.org/Wpcontent/uploads/2007/04/Nepal_EEPCT_2010_Report.pdf) (accessed 15th March 2020).
- Wintersteiner, W., Grobbauer, H., Diendorfer, G. & Reitmair-Juárez, S. (2015). *Global Citizenship Education*. Citizenship Education for Globalizing Societies. UNESCO-Commission.

# DEVELOPING STUDENT LEADERSHIP THROUGH STUDENT CLUBS

Bharat Sigdel and Hari Bhakta Karki

---

## INTRODUCTION

Schools policy in Nepal has increasingly focused on developing what are often termed ‘21st-century skills’. Leadership is consistently cited as a 21st-century skill students need to enter a complex and globalised world. Leadership can be defined as ‘the art of mobilizing and driving others towards the want of trying and struggling for common ideals’ (Kouzes & Posner, 1997). Others have observed that ‘over the past few years, more and more attention has been focused on leadership development’ (Houghton & DiLiello 2010).

Developing leadership skills in students is not a straightforward task. Bickett (2008) recommends that education professionals ‘reflect on the type of leadership that is being fostered at the school’, warning against reproducing, for instance, gender stereotypes. Wallin (2003) warns that much of the academic literature on leadership in education has not adequately researched the involvement of students in decision-making processes. Others remind us that ‘participants may experience leadership differently based on the organisation and its cultural context’ (Logue, Hutchens & Hector, 2005).

Hay and Dempster (2004) claim that leadership is a multifaceted construct involving a range of interrelated skills. Drawing on their own and others’ work, they identified 12 student leadership skills: project planning, reflection, problem solving,

team building, decision making, goal setting, time management, project management resource allocation, effective communication networking, conflict resolution, diversity awareness and self-confidence.

Research has noted that clubs and organisations are spaces in which student leadership can be developed. Student clubs have previously been found to ‘have emerged as an important new kind of institution in Nepal’ (Rajbhandary et al., 2001). The clubs aim to provide students with opportunities to develop leadership and social responsibility.

In this case study, we look at three student clubs set up by one school: the robotics, sports and social clubs. For the robotics club, students meet every Friday for about two hours at the nearby boys’ hostel, to do robotics competitions and exhibitions. For the sports club, the students meet daily for about 2.5 hours, also in the boys’ hostel for football, badminton and tournament competitions. For the social club, students meet three times a term for about 1.5 hours in the social studies department at school. They do role-play games such as Model United Nations and Mock Parliament, and run community awareness and tree-planting campaigns.

The opportunities for leadership across the clubs are numerous, including forming and leading the clubs, planning calendar events, leading discussions, presenting, leading teams and peer-to-peer teaching.

## METHODOLOGY

Our research examined student clubs at the Nepal Police School, Kavrepalanchowk. The school, established in 1984, has 1,653 students: 60 per cent of students are police personnel's children and 40 per cent are from civilian families. The school has been piloting student clubs for four years.

Although the number of clubs has increased, the impact of these clubs on the students has not yet been examined systematically. In this study, we consider whether the student clubs have helped to build leadership skills in students.

We selected 12 students purposively from the three student clubs, with four participants from each club across grades 8, 9 and 10 (14 to 16 years old).

Demographic information, field notes and semi-structured interviews were used. For field notes, a format was prepared and records were kept about students' activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through a set of questions relating to leadership and personal experience, academic performance, club activities and achievement.

## FINDINGS

Three broad themes emerged from our analysis of field notes: increased confidence, communication skills and self-transformation.

### 1. Increased confidence

As a result of their involvement in social club, club members like Riya Chand took part in a 'Model United Nations' activity, in which students engaged in role play as UN delegates and simulated UN committees.

*I was a coward myself but soon after I joined Model United Nations, my confidence increased and led me to achieve the title of best delegate as well as school's extra curricular activities.*

Savya Bikram Shah, in the robotics club, also reported greater confidence in his skills:

*I can do programming logic [...] I had these traits before joining the club too but they really got polished after I joined the robotics club.*

Of the 12 students interviewed, three-quarters said they improved their confidence as a result of their involvement in the clubs.

Academics have closely linked greater confidence to good leadership skills. Axelrod, in her chapter on leadership and self-confidence, states high levels of both general confidence and confidence in a specific task 'are essential for effective leadership', enabling them to influence collaborators (2017).

## 2. COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students indicated both their verbal and written skills had developed through the clubs. The extracts below, from Aadarsh Das in the social club and Shyam Goinjihar, the teacher overseeing extracurricular activities, attest to this:

*My involvement in the Model United Nations developed my public speaking skills and increased my confidence level. (Das)*

*Gami now has a high level of convincing power; he faces the masses casually which displays his self-transformation level in terms of confidence and good leadership. (Goinjihar)*

Similar progress in communication skills was observed in Sonika Dhakal, the school vice-captain, who as a result of involvement in the social club reported improved skills in

speaking to the entire school for the morning assembly.

Of all those interviewed, 83 per cent said they felt their communication skills improved as a result of the clubs.

Strong communication abilities are regularly referred to in academic literature as an essential leadership quality. Parlar et al. (2017), for instance, list six leadership qualities, of which one is communication skills.

### 3. Self-transformation

Sabina Bajagain, a student member of the sports club, said participation in the clubs gave her an improved attitude towards her school studies more generally.

*When I entered the school, I was an average student. I started participating in athletics, badminton; I developed my habit of hard work. (Bajagain)*

The teacher said of another student, Lucky Sah in the robotics club:

*He was almost an unknown fellow. When he joined the club, his interest in the technical field changed immensely. With assistance, he could succeed in many unexpected situations. (Goinjihar)*

Of all those interviewed, three-quarters reported a level of transformation in the student because of the clubs.

Increased confidence, communication skills and a sense of self-directedness or self-transformation can be recognised in themselves as leadership qualities. However, there is evidence to suggest that club involvement also led students to regard themselves directly as more effective leaders.

Analysis of semi-structured interviews showed that the participants talked about increased collaboration, ability to persuade or convince others, a greater sense of responsibility, debating skills and readiness to deal with problems. A participant named Gadai said:

*My involvement in Sports club has brought improvement [...] I have developed ability to deal with different people and control my temper.*

Another participant named Giri, who was in the robotics club, said:

*My logical mind is being enhanced. I have got more confidence to speak to many people and I learned how to deal with people.*

Enhanced knowledge or expertise in a particular area also placed certain students in leadership positions, which they then discovered they enjoyed holding. A participant named Sah said:

*When even the senior students of my school come to me in order to ask queries related to robotics and machineries, I get excited.*

## FURTHER STUDY

Pupils may have been keen to appear positive about the clubs so the activities would continue. In research terms it was difficult, even from semi-structured interviews and fieldwork, to establish whether the extent to which leadership skills were reported as being developed reflected the true extent to which they really were developed. Further research tracking the students' behaviour over a period

of time, using a control group which did not engage in the clubs, could provide further insight.

## CONCLUSION

At the Nepal Police School about 45 per cent of students are enrolled in the clubs. This means more than half of students are not involved, and therefore school leaders should consider ways to encourage students, particularly those who are less confident, into these activities.

Students' involvement in clubs appeared to develop leadership traits in students at least to a degree. Participants reported feeling more confident and better communicators, and provided a space outside the classroom in which to prove themselves in new ways. The impact of the clubs on academic performance, parents' perceptions of the students and longer-term outcomes require further study. However, we can conclude, based on the students' perception and our observation, that engagement in student clubs has the potential to foster leadership skills.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Bharat Sigdel** is the head of the Department of English for the Nepal Police School in Sanga, Kavrepalanchowk. He has also been a school coordinator and vice principal. He is currently studying for an MPhil in English Language Education at Kathmandu University.

**Hari Bhakta Karki** is a social studies teacher and academic coordinator at the Nepal Police School and has previously worked as a teacher educator. He is the MPhil scholar in English Language Education at Kathmandu University.

## REFERENCES

- Applied Educational System (AED). *What are 21<sup>st</sup> century skills?* Retrieved from: [https://www.aeseducation.com/career-readiness/what-are-21<sup>st</sup>-century-skills](https://www.aeseducation.com/career-readiness/what-are-21st-century-skills)
- Axelrod, R. H. (2017). *Leadership and Self-Confidence*. Leadership Today: Practices for Personal and Professional Performance.
- Bickett, J. P. (2008). *A case study of student leadership and service in a Catholic female single-sex high school*. PhD thesis: Loyola Marymount University.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research Methods in Education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hall, S. L., Scott, F., & Borsz, M. (2008). *A constructivist case study examining the leadership development of undergraduate students in campus recreational sports*. *Journal of College Student Development*, 49(2), 125–140.
- Hay, I., & Dempster, N. (2004). *Leadership and learning*. Unpublished paper, Gap State High School, Brisbane.
- Houghton, J. D., & DiLiello, T. C. (2010). *Leadership development: The key to unlocking individual creativity in organizations*. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 31(3), 230–245.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1997). *Envisioning your future: Imagining ideal scenarios*. *The Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 1(14), 57–58.
- Logue, C. T., Hutchens, T. A., & Hector, M. A. (2005). *Student Leadership: A Phenomenological Exploration of Postsecondary Experiences*. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46(4), 393–408.

Parlar, H., Cansoy, R., & Türkoğlu, M. E. (2017). *Leadership Development in Students: Teachers' Opinions Regarding Activities that can be Performed at Schools*, *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 5(2): 217–227.

Rajbhandary, J., Hart, R., & Khatiwada, C. (2001). *Extracts from the children's clubs of Nepal: A democratic experiment*. *PLA Notes*, 42, 23–28.

Wallin, D. (2003). *Student leadership and democratic schools: A case study*. *NASSP Bulletin*, 87(636), 55–78.

What is Model United Nations? *Best Delegate*. 4 November 2007. As retrieved from: <https://bestdelegate.com/what-is-model-united-nations/>

Yin, R. K. (2002). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

## CONNECTING CLASSROOMS THROUGH GLOBAL LEARNING

Connecting Classrooms works with schools around the world to help young people develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make a positive contribution now and in the future. The British Council delivers this programme in partnership with the UK government Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Connecting Classrooms offers a range of free downloadable classroom resources available to all teachers across the world. These resources, based on the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development, have been designed to adapt to any curriculum. They offer creative and engaging ideas to bring knowledge and core skills to life in the classroom and inspire students to take action on global issues. Find out about our global learning resources designed to address topics which are high on the agenda for governments around the world here:

[connectingclassrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources/global-learning-resources](https://connectingclassrooms.britishcouncil.org/resources/global-learning-resources)

Connecting Classrooms offers free online professional development around core skills and international collaboration, helping teachers and school leaders to prepare young people for life and work in a globalised economy. The programme also supports partnerships between schools around the world with schools in the UK to share knowledge, skills and experience with other teachers. More details on how to find a school partner can be found here:

[connectingclassrooms.britishcouncil.org/partner-with-schools/find-partner](https://connectingclassrooms.britishcouncil.org/partner-with-schools/find-partner)





This British Council publication on developing successful schools in Nepal provides on-the-ground insights into curriculum, pedagogy and school leadership. Through case studies from researchers, teachers and practitioners within the country, alongside reviews of the research literature from international academics, the reader comes away with a deeper understanding of the opportunities, challenges and best practice unfolding in the Nepalese school system. The publication opens with a chapter on core skills in the curriculum and moves on to four main chapters covering: employability skills; international perspectives on learning; what works in school leadership and attributes of school leaders. Finally, nine grassroots case studies are presented from classrooms in Nepal and Asia, drawing on the authors' findings and with recommendations for the future. The publication can be read both as an inspirational handbook for school leaders wishing to drive improvement for staff and students, and as an information booklet for the interested observer.

The insights and recommendations embedded in its pages reflect a committed endeavour by both practitioners and researchers to drive for better outcomes for Nepali students. More than ever, digital literacy, critical thought and confidence in both local and international contexts are being touted as crucial capabilities, a call heightened by the context of the global 2020 pandemic. School leavers are being required to adapt to virtual employment practices and find innovative ways to break into difficult labour markets, for which researchers assert they need a high-quality, challenging education which prepares them to make their mark in a rapidly changing world.

**For further information:**

British Council  
Lainchaur, PO Box 640  
Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Tel: 01 4410798  
Fax: 01 4410545  
[www.britishcouncil.org.np](http://www.britishcouncil.org.np)



ISBN- 978-0-86355-978-5

©British Council 2020/C082

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.