

## **DAY 1: Pre Conference (30/12/2011)**

**(The Agenda is attached as Annex 1).**

### **1. Opening Address by Honourable Secretary- The Chairperson**

The Honourable Secretary, Madam Sangay Zam welcomed all the participants, including the student representatives to the conference. Highlighting the theme of the Conference “Consolidating GNH in our Schools”, she said that many good things were happening in our schools because of the “Educating for GNH” initiative and that it was important to build further upon these good practices.

The Honourable Secretary also acknowledged the significant roles played by the schools, teachers and students during the Royal Wedding. She said that the programmes and events conducted to celebrate the Royal Wedding should be documented for future reference, particularly archiving all the good things that were done during the Royal Wedding.

Recalling the achievements of the past one year in the education sector, the Honourable Secretary informed the house that it was a matter of pride and honour to the entire Ministry and country that the Honourable Sherig Lyonpo had received the prestigious GUSI Peace Prize for his contributions to Education. She also congratulated the Principal, staff and parents of Jigme Losel Primary School for being conferred the Wenhui Award for their school feeding programme. Other achievers who had been recognized and won awards were Madam Yeshey Pelmo of Damphu LSS for the UNESCO prize for Education and International Understanding and three Bhutanese students who had also won gold medals in the IGNOU- UNESCO Science Olympiad. She urged the participants to encourage more students to participate in such out of school competitions and told the DEOs to give the required support by sharing information and facilitating their participation.

With regard to the misfortunes in the past one year, Honourable Secretary offered prayers and expressed condolences for the demise of 8 teachers and 46 students in the last one year. The death of the 2 students in Orong HSS was especially tragic as it was due to lack of nutritious diet. SAFED under DSE was requested to look into the feeding program in our schools and to work closely with the Ministry of Health and the CSHP under DYS to ensure that all schools under the feeding program were providing balanced diet to the students. They were further informed to look into the budgetary aspects to be taken up with the MOF.

Speaking on the recent changes within the Ministry, Honourable Secretary informed the house that the erstwhile BBE was now delinked from the Ministry of Education and restructured as the

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Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) with the Sherig Lyonpo as its Chairperson. The main objective of delinking the BCSEA was to provide autonomy to the Council in carrying out its mandate with greater efficiency and credibility.

Welcoming the new director of DRCD and new chiefs under the various Departments, Honourable Secretary also informed the house on the restructuring of the erstwhile CAPSSD as Department of Curriculum Research and Development (DCRD) and the creation of several new divisions under MoE such as the Private Schools Division and the Special Education Needs and Early Childhood Care and Development Division under the Department of School Education, the Comprehensive School Health Division under the Department of Youth and Sports, and the Quality Assurance and Assessment Division (QAAD) under the Department of Adult and Higher Education. Further, the newly selected DEOs were also introduced to the house.

Reflecting on teacher morale, Honourable Secretary said that one of the factors affecting teacher morale was the way HR policies were implemented and how nominations for various opportunities were carried out. Since most of the HR actions such as nominations for trainings, transfers, promotions and performance evaluations were decentralised to the dzongkhags and schools it was important that such actions be taken in a transparent manner. Therefore, any nomination for trainings and other HR actions should be done through the HR Committees as it was done in the Ministry. The HR committee had to be constituted at all levels the Ministry, Dzongkhag and schools as per the Royal Civil Service Rules and Regulations and all HR related matters be they training, promotion, transfers or disciplinary action must be discussed and decided by it. For example, an internal audit carried out on the nomination for board examination duty in some dzongkhags revealed that teachers were not happy with the nominations done by the school head/dzongkhag as the criteria used and procedures followed were not transparent. Therefore, to avoid such situations it was important that all HR actions be done through the HR committee which must be constituted in the schools and dzongkhags if it was not already in existence.

The floor was also informed that the National Youth Policy had been approved by the government, and the Special Education Policy and Early Child Care and Development Policy were being processed for approval while the National Education Policy was in the final stages of drafting. With reference to the components of the Chigphen Rigphel Project which were relevant to the education sector viz. the establishment of computer labs in all secondary schools and training of 7000 teachers, Honourable Secretary said that ICT played a very important role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and advised the schools to utilize the computer labs fully and make use of the expertise of the trained teachers.

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Speaking on the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP, the Honourable Secretary said that there were only one and a half years left for the completion of the 10<sup>th</sup> plan activities and therefore, all the relevant stakeholders must work hard towards achieving the goals of the 10<sup>th</sup> plan. This was especially important with regard to the target for literacy which was 70%, while a recent survey found that we are currently only near 50% literacy. Therefore, efforts must be stepped up to ensure that the targets for not only literacy but all the other objectives were also met as planned.

On access and quality, the Honourable Secretary said while they were doing well with regard to access, there was still a lot to do with regard to quality. Honourable Secretary expressed concern on whether our students passing out of the school system had the adequate knowledge and skills required. If their skills and knowledge did not match their aspirations, it could lead to frustration and disappointment, and eventually unemployment and youth problems. She said that it was our duty to ensure that all our children acquire the required level of knowledge and skills. While there were some things which require a lot of resources, there were also things which could be done without resources, such as ensuring 180 instructional days a year. It was informed that the Ministry could not allow any events to be held in the schools during the academic session except during the winter break. It was also pointed out that the policy regarding the promotion of 90% of students to the next level had been misinterpreted. It was clarified that it did not mean that 90% of the students should be promoted automatically; but that teachers were required to ensure that at least 90% of their students achieved the required level of knowledge and skills to be promoted to the next higher grade.

Honourable Secretary also informed the house that in the recent earthquakes, many of our schools had been damaged and expressed the need to expedite the reconstruction works as many of the affected schools were still operating out of tents.

In conclusion, Honourable Secretary urged the participants to participate in the discussions actively and whole heartedly so as to generate good discussion and a fruitful outcome to the conference.

## **2. Presentation of the resolutions of the 14<sup>th</sup> AEC**

The Chief Planning Officer presented the follow up to the resolutions of the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference. She said that except for the introduction of English curriculum in the NFE which had been delayed, all the resolutions had been followed up and necessary actions taken by the responsible agencies.

**(The follow up to the Resolutions is attached as Annex 2).**

## **3. VIPP Sessions on Educating for GNH, Sherig 2013 Celebrations and School Safety**

Three agenda items viz. **Educating for GNH, Sherig 2013 Celebrations and School Safety** were conducted by the Director General Tshewang Tandin as parallel VIPP sessions with a plenary at the end.

Introducing the topic Sherig Century Celebrations, the Chair explained that the idea of Sherig Century was conceived because Haa Dzongkhag wanted to celebrate 100 years for Ugyen Dorji HSS in a grand way and that inspired the Ministry to celebrate it nationwide instead of confining it to just one school.

With regard to Educating for GNH, the Director General made a brief presentation on the status of the programme.

The following were the outcomes of the VIPP sessions as presented at the plenary:

### **3.1 Educating for GNH**

Challenges facing the Implementation of the Educating for GNH programme:

- Too Broad/lack of focus/lack of clarity on what GNH is and how it can be implemented (e.g. mind training)
- Changing mind set/attitude/ignorance and complacency

#### **STRATEGIES**

- Train all teachers on “Educating for GNH”
- Massive awareness of the programme- best practices must be advocated through media.
- Taking “Educating for GNH” to MSTF, DYT, PTA
- Impact assessment of the overall program after three years- Holistic assessment at the national level.

#### **Best Practices under the Educating for GNH Programme**

- Waste papers made into paper bags and distributed to the shops
- Plastic waste made into decorative items for home and school
- Litchi bottles used as leg covers for steel furniture to reduce screeching sound when moved
- Circle time- sharing of experiences among students (on any personal or non personal matter once a week to build bonds)
- No plastic day/ vegetarian day
- Waste segregation

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- Students empowerment programme- assembly conducted by student captains once a week
- Know your child programme (Gelephug HSS)
- Inclusive education (Gyensa CPS)
- Community participation/ bringing community wisdom into the classroom.
- Rain water harvesting (Motithang HSS)
- Peer helpers programme (Motithang HSS)
- Grooming session-guest speakers every Friday (MHSS)
- No BG vehicle at Druk school
- Doma free campus in Wochu LSS
- Meditation
- Paper recycling (Tashitse HSS) and use of waste paper to make teaching aids
- Adoption of streams
- Sharing of Food
- Police youth partnership programme: help the administration, managing traffic, monitoring friends etc
- Talent hunt
- School support program (needy students who are academically sound are given financial assistance)

#### DISCUSSIONS:

The Chair agreed that the lack of clarity of purpose was itself a big hurdle. If the concept was not clear, the end result could be undesirable. Therefore, there must be clarity among all the proponents and for that all the teachers would be trained by 2012 as planned. To promote the programme, all schools and Dzongkhags were asked to share their best practices.

The Chair also said that the Educating for GNH initiative must be taken seriously if it was to succeed. If GNH was to become a reality than it had to become a way of life and for which it must begin with the education system. That was why it was so important that we remain on its path and believe in it. Due to the lack of clarity and understanding, instead of trying to understand it and infuse it into their lives, many people seemed to take it as a joke and made fun of it. This was very dangerous since these were the same people who were supposed to implement the initiative.

Members pointed out that the main hurdle for implementing the GNH initiative was that the fact that the training had not been given to all the teachers. While the creative and imaginative teachers were doing well even without the training, many of the teachers who were not trained

were complacent and unable to implement the programme successfully. The Chair also emphasized the need to share as leaders how GNH had incorporated into the management, citing examples such as the introduction of the HR Committee and open advertisement of all training opportunities etc.

Participants shared that after the introduction of GNH in the schools, disciplinary problems had been reduced, while Principals had also been made more conscious in their daily conduct. Co-curricular activities had also been aligned with the GNH domains and pillars. The Chair said that while it was good to know the impact and success of the initiative, it was also important to quantify the improvements and successes.

Members suggested that the School Improvement Plan (SIP) could be prepared in consultation with the students for greater ownership.

The house made the following resolutions with regard to this programme:

- *Advocacy programmes to be carried out through various means to enhance awareness and action on the Educating for GNH initiative. (Action: DSE with ICD/Dzongkhags)*
- *The Department of Curriculum Research and Development to infuse elements of Green Schools into the curriculum, in consultation with the schools and Dzongkhags. Schools to also explore ways of infusing the elements of Green Schools in the implementation of the curriculum. (Action: DCRD/Schools)*

### **3.2 School Safety**

Major Concerns and Issues:

- a. Fighting and bullying
- b. Corporal Punishment
- c. Child Abuse by both peers and teachers
- d. Substance abuse
- e. Child trafficking
- f. Natural hazards
- g. Animal encounters
- h. Suicide

### Strategies to ensure school safety

- Identify hazards
- Create awareness
- Fix the problems(re-structure)
- Review and re-design(school buildings) and surroundings
- Counselling
- Incorporation of school safety into School Improvement Plan
- Travelling in groups

### DISCUSSIONS:

The house discussed that student safety was of foremost importance and that the survival of the child and saving of their lives was more critical than anything else. In order to prevent and mitigate potential disasters, at the beginning of each school year, schools could take stock of the possible hazards and dangers and plan strategies and actions to mitigate or avert these risks. Moreover, a good communication network must be established at the beginning of the year and reviewed by mid-year so that potential disasters could be mitigated. In fact, many of these strategies could be implemented immediately and schools should tackle issues regarding safety and security of children without waiting for guidelines of instructions. It was recommended that all schools come up with school safety plans and incorporate them into their school policy and the School Improvement Plan.

***The Conference resolved that all schools should develop relevant school safety strategies and incorporate them into the School Policy. The School Health and Safety Guidelines being developed by the DYS and the strategies developed at the 15<sup>th</sup> AEC to serve as a reference point. (Action: Schools and Dzongkhags)***

### **3.3 Sherig 2013 Celebrations**

Sherig 2013 or Sherig century would be the biggest event for the Ministry of Education. Based on the VIPP discussions, various ideas to celebrate Sherig 2013 were presented, including a pictorial description of how the modern education system had evolved in our country which described the strategic journey of the education system, increase in number students, change in number and type of teachers, evolution in the teaching-learning materials and dress code, change in medium of instruction from Hindi to English, change in technology etc.

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Some of the activities proposed for the celebrations were:

- Skits
- Education Torch rally starting from Haa
- Themes(Journey of education)
- School wise exhibitions on their profile
- Display of photographs of alumni
- Guest speaker(alumni)/living witness
- Photographs of old retired teachers
- Celebrations in school/ cluster/dzongkhag level leading to national level
- Documentary clips of the past
- Archiving of Photographic journey/changing face of the school
- Display old artifacts of the school, e.g scripts etc.
- Exhibition based on various themes
- Cane stick/leather strips/stinging nettle/duster/others disciplinary techniques sticks used in corporal punishment
- School Magazines

The Chair commended the participants for coming up with many new ideas within a very short period of time. She said that those things will be incorporated during National Education Day.

A representative from Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag also took the opportunity of presenting their ideas on how they are going to celebrate Sherig century in their Dzongkhag as follows:

- Publication of magazines and history of the advent of modern education in Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag
- Intra Dzongkhag literary and cultural competitions
- Produce a documentary on the history of modern education in Trashiyangtse featuring interviews of trailblazers and pioneer students focusing on the changes and achievements over the last 100 years.
- Education Centenary Exhibition
- Open air Education Concert

The representative also suggested that the Ministry produce a programme on the challenges faced and the success stories of education in the past and broadcast on the BBS.



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On this front, the Chair informed the house that a taskforce, chaired by the Director General of School Education, had been formed in the head quarters to guide, and coordinate activities conducted at the Dzongkhag level and bring them to the national level.

The Director General briefed the Conference that a taskforce comprising of seven members had been formed and the first meeting held, chaired by the Honourable Minister for Education. He said that the Task Force had brainstormed on ideas for the celebrations and the Ministry had also written to the Dzongkhags asking them to design their own programmes in such a way that all the schools could participate. However, he said that the task force could benefit from more ideas from the AEC. He also said that an announcement had already been made through news papers for an essay competition in two categories:

1. For the general public, the topic was a 300-word essay on how teachers have impacted their lives positively. The essay could include a description of how the particular teacher had shaped the individual’s life, or positively impacted the person. This was to honour and pay tribute to some of our great teachers in the past.
2. For teachers, the topic chosen was a 500-word essay on the topic ‘what teaching means to me?’ The purpose of this essay was to inspire other teachers, and especially potential new teachers. He said that this should help in uplifting the teaching profession and attracting more teachers into the profession.

Director General also said that after the launch of the programme on 2nd May 2012, a series of activities were expected from the Dzongkhags.

The Chair informed the participants not to limit themselves to these ideas that had come up during the Conference, even though they were very good, but to go beyond those even and to email any new ideas to the Director General. She said that not only teachers, but students should also be involved in the celebrations. This, she said would engage our students productively in contributing to the celebrations and at the same time it would provide a learning opportunity for them.

The Haa DEO informed the floor that a taskforce has already been formed in Haa Dzongkhag and some activities had already been initiated for the event. He sought approval for two proposals viz. that the major culmination event in 2013 be held in Haa and that an education museum be constructed in Haa.

The Chair said that proper planning had to be done and an action plan drawn up before a decision on where the culmination event should be held can be taken. The following resolutions were taken:

- *Towards celebrating the historic Sherig Century from 2, May, 2012 to 2, May, 2013, DEOs to be focal persons for coordinating activities at the school/cluster and dzongkhag levels, while the task force chaired by DG, DSE would be responsible for planning and coordinating the activities at the national level. (Action: DSE/Dzongkhags/schools)*
- *An Education Museum to be established in Haa. All Dzongkhags to share any education related artifacts to Haa Dzongkhag to be included in the museum. (Action: DEO, Haa)*

#### **4. Sherig Archive:**

The Chair said that there were many things which schools are doing but were not known and therefore asked the participants/schools to send in their materials for archiving. In order to promote and improve the culture of maintaining good records and developing a good information management system for posterity and future references, the Information and Communication Division (Education media) was entrusted with the responsibility for a centralized archiving system in the Ministry of Education. The division solicited contributions from schools and Departments and Divisions of the Ministry towards the Sherig archive. The Chair said that the success of archiving the wealth of information would depend on the participation and support from the schools and Dzongkhags in providing the required information.

The Conference made the following resolutions with regard to the Sherig Archive:

- *A Sherig Archive to be established in the Ministry of Education to document policies, publications and any events or programmes on education. To this end, Departments/Divisions/Dzongkhags/Schools to record and share all such information and materials to the Information and Communication Division for archiving. (Action: ICD)*
- *Departments, Schools and Dzongkhags to document all information and best practices on Educating for GNH, the Royal Wedding Celebrations and other thematic celebrations and submit to the Information Communication Division for archiving. (Action: Schools/Dzongkhags/Departments/ICD)*

#### **5. HR policies- Presentation on HR policy Implementation Guidelines**

Introducing the presentation, the Chair informed the house that the HR Policy had been approved in principle by the Cabinet.

The Chair of the HR Policy taskforce made the presentation on HR Policies which he said had been presented several times at different at different levels and the most refined version was now being presented to the AEC for comments and endorsement.

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The following components of the HR Policies were presented in detail:

1. Career track
2. Recruitment
3. Professional Development(PD)
4. Performance Management
5. Deployment

Discussion:

The Chair highlighted the importance of the HR Policy, which if approved, would provide enhanced opportunities for our teachers, DEOs and school leaders to grow within the same profession. She said that after incorporation of feedback from the AEC, the Ministry would submit the Policy to RCSC for their approval. On this the Chair expressed her optimism that the proposed policy would be approved since the White paper had already been approved in principle by the government.

On a different note the Chair informed the floor that unlike in the past, No Objection Certificate (NOC) was now given to the teachers who have served at least ten years. This had been done before the enactment of the RCSC Act. She however mentioned that there were different occupational groups as per the RCSC and the opportunities for switching from one group to another needed further clarification.

Speaking on the career tracks, she said that in the past principals and teachers were not allowed to rise beyond a certain level. However, the new proposal would allow them to raise the highest level possible. Having said this, she reiterated that there will be fixed numbers at the executive (ES) level.

In response to the concern raised by one of the participants regarding the usage of many colors in one position on the career track, they were informed that the colors signified a two way path where they could either choose the competitive track or the normal track.

The common concern that ensued from the floor was that the Principal and the Vice Principal were at the same position level as per the new proposal. They said that given the different responsibilities shouldered by the Principal and Vice Principal, they cannot be in the same level. Towards this, it was clarified that as long as they fulfilled the criteria, they could compete for different posts.

Some of the comments were with regard to the position of Principal IV as per the RCSE, which was not featured in the proposal presented and which might affect the Principals currently serving in Principal IV positions.

On this, the house was informed that no one would be worse off by the new proposal. Infact, those Principals who were currently at P4 or at Principal IV level would be gradually upgraded to P3.

A concern was raised by the participant that given the different options viz: Vice Principal II, Principal III and ADEO II, many might opt for the Principal’s post. However, it was clarified that there would be limited slots for the post of Principal thereby ensuring that people opt for the other positions as well.

With regard to the issue that in the past, some of the candidates at P3 who were selected for the Principal’s post were not promoted to the next higher level while some were promoted to P3 from P4 upon their selection, it was clarified that a candidate after having served for two or more years in the same level would be promoted to the next higher level if selected as a Principal. However, this would not apply to candidates who were selected for a position at the same level.

With regard to the query on whether a teacher was required to serve as a Vice Principal in order to apply for a Principal’s position, it was clarified that a teacher would also be eligible to compete for the post of a Primary School Principal without serving as a VP after the adoption of this policy.

*The HR Policy as presented was endorsed by the Conference.*

## **6. Decentralizing the transfer of CPs/PS Principals to the Dzongkhag**

The guidelines for decentralizing the transfer of CPs/PS Principals to the Dzongkhags were presented by the Chief HRO. (**The Guidelines is attached as Annex 3**). He said that this proposal had been submitted by DEOs in the past AECs, and the issue had also been deliberated at length in the Ministry and approved by the 103<sup>rd</sup> HR Committee of the Ministry in keeping with the decentralization policy of the government. The presentation covered the objective of the guidelines, the selection process, placement and procedures, transfer grounds and transfer benefits.

The Chair informed the floor that the transfer of CPS/PS Principals had been decentralized to the Dzongkhags based on the decentralization policy, and explained the importance of fairness and transparency in carrying out deployment and transfers at every level.

The house discussed and agreed on the need for transparency and equity in terms of HR decisions at every level of the system.

**The Conference endorsed the Guidelines for Decentralization of Intra-Dzongkhag Placements and Transfers of Primary and Community Primary School Principals to the Dzongkhags.**

The Conference also resolved that:

- *All HR decisions at every level, such as nomination for training, promotions, transfers, etc. to be made through an HR committee to ensure transparency and equity. (Action: Ministry/Dzongkhags/Schools)*
- *To ensure that ECRs provide quality education, ECR teachers to be given priority for training in multigrade teaching. (Action: DCRD/HRD)*

#### **7. Education Staff Welfare Scheme (ESWS) update**

The ESWS Manager presented an update of the status of the ESWS, including fund disbursements. The Chair reminded that the procedures to claim semso had to be made clear to the beneficiaries and that proper verification prior to the provision of the semso had to be carried out. Moreover the loan recovery had to be made on time and the defaulters should be reported to the relevant authorities for follow up and necessary action.

With regard to the objectives presented, it was clarified that while the presentation had summarized the objectives for the sake of brevity, in reality the objectives would have to be based on the By-Laws of the ESWS.

On the suggestion that the loan amount be increased from the current ceiling of Nu 50,000 per lender, it was clarified that the amounts were based on the principle of allowing maximum number of members to benefit from it. Under the current circumstances, it would be possible to allot only about 185 loans in 2012 at the same loan limit. The house also advised the ESWS Manager to present the comparative statements for the fund status of the ESWS for the last two years as suggested last year. It was recommended that the fund status for each year be presented regardless of whether it had been audited or not.

**Recommendation: The ESWS Manager to share the comparative statements and fund status for 2010 and 2011 at the next AEC and also through the MoE website.**

#### **8. Discussions on Annotated agendas from Dzongkhags**

The house also took the opportunity of discussing the issues raised from the Dzongkhags as follows:

## **Curriculum Issues**

With regard to the curriculum related issues, the following clarifications/recommendations were made:

- The DCRD was working towards enriching the curriculum. Towards this, various writers’ workshops were being carried out involving lecturer and school teachers.
- On the suggestion to do away with Indian History, this needed further discussion in appropriate forums and moreover it was important to study history from outside Bhutan too.
- DCRD however would be updating all the information in the textbooks as required. In fact, the DCRD had just finished updating the social studies curriculum.
- DCRD would also look into the mismatch between the supplied dictionary and the English textbooks, the need to review the EVS curriculum, and the need to update the class 4- 6 Dzongkha text books having numerous grammatical and spelling errors.
- With regard to the HPE curriculum and the difficulty faced by schools in implementing it effectively due to lack of expertise, it was suggested that there should be a focal person in DCRD to look after HPE and especially since the previous focal person had left for further studies, and that in order to ensure sustainability, schools should keep a national counterpart with each JOCV placed in their school so that there could be transfer of skills and capacity building before the expert leaves the school.

The Chair reminded that it was DCRD’s responsibility to ensure that the text books are free of any errors, grammatical, factual or otherwise as curriculum is critical for quality education. She also explained that the DCRD had been without a head for a long time and that might have hampered the work. It was hoped that with the appointment of the new Director, things would now get back on track.

The Chair informed the floor that matters concerning TA/DA which was frequently being brought up in the conference are matters which are beyond the authority of the ministry and that it lies with the Ministry of Finance. She said that at the most, the Ministry could take it up with the Finance Ministry.

With regard to the issue regarding the dress code for PE in schools, it was clarified that the PE uniform could not replace the school uniform at any cost. To this effect, it was resolved that DSE would send out a circular informing that the school uniform should be worn at all times except during games and sports.

With regard to the proposal to reconsider science practical examinations for classes IX and X, it was explained that this was not possible due to budget constraints. However, schools were encouraged to conduct regular practicals to ensure that students acquired adequate knowledge and skills. The house suggested that while it may be difficult to hold practicals regularly and

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adequately, ICT and multi-media could be used to demonstrate how experiments are performed and what the results would look like visually. To support science learning, as other subjects, the Chiphen Rigphel Labs should also be used for this purpose.

- The Conference expressed concern on the poor standard of Math of the supposedly best students discovered when they enrolled in the CST, and the need to therefore have an external feedback system to check whether our students were performing well from relevant agencies like industries and tertiary institutes.
- Some of the participants said that the need for a separate cultural instructor was necessary as the teachers could not take on this role. They said that if it was not possible, at least a proper training should be given to the teachers to take up the role.  
To this, the Chair said that MoHCA has appointed a Dzongkhag Cultural Officer and the school can coordinate with them for any related activities. She said that it will not be sustainable to do everything from the headquarters.
- With regard to the issue of eligibility of B.Ed graduates for GOUI scholarships, it was clarified that that the matter had been taken up with RCSC and from this year onwards, B.Ed graduates were being accepted.
- With regard to the Performance Management System which had been rolled out across the country from 2011, the Chief EMO thanked all the DEOs and ADEOs for successfully carrying out the task as intended.. He said that the PMS was still new but it had started well and was expected to improve with the passage of time. However, he expressed concern that not all Dzongkhags and schools were carrying out the assessment as expected. In order to successfully implement the system, he requested all the DEOs to carry out the assessment sincerely without complacency or bias. He said that the basic idea of PMS was to identify the performance of schools and support the low performing schools. He also acknowledged that the location of the schools was one of the constraints which made it difficult to provide timely support.  
On this, the Chair said that while the PMS was a good tool, the success of the system by and large lies with the DEOs. She said that the assessment and monitoring should be done in an objective manner and urged all the participants to carry out PMS with utmost honesty.
- Some of the members expressed that factors like need, clarity, complexity and practicality needed to be considered while introducing any new system. This was especially pertinent in the case of the PMS as it was next to impossible to cover all the schools twice in a year and especially in the larger Dzongkhags.  
On this, the Chair said that all the relevant stakeholders should work together and move forward. She also said that a clear time frame needs to be given for assessment from the EMSSD.

With regard to the need for increasing stipend in the schools and especially based on the location, the Chair explained that a separate presentation on the school feeding and agriculture programme would be made at the conference. However, she appreciated the concern raised and

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said that it had been realized that the stipend needs to be revised and a proposal had been submitted to the Finance Ministry.

With regard to the proposal to provide helicopter services to drop and pick up teachers from Lunana to enable timely delivery of education services and achievement of minimum number of instructional days, it was explained that this matter needs further discussion and would be taken up with the government.

Overall the Conference made the following resolutions:

- *All primary level schools to be called Primary Schools henceforth irrespective of location. (Action: MoE/Dzongkhag/Schools)*
- *All schools to ensure that school uniform is worn at all times except during games and sports. (Action: Dzongkhag/Schools)*
- *All schools to ensure that a minimum of 180 instructional days is achieved. Towards this, schools to seek approval for holding any non-school related activities on their premises from DSE. In the event that schools lose teaching days because of any non-teaching related programmes, schools in consultation with the Dzongkhags to submit a proposal on how they would make up for the lost days to DSE. (Action: DSE/Schools/Dzongkhags)*
- *Schools to ensure that all students promoted to the next grade have the necessary knowledge and skills appropriate to that grade level. (Action: Schools)*

With regard to the minutes of the Dzongkhag Education Conferences which were sent directly to the PPD, **the members were asked to henceforth:**

- a) Continue sending the minutes to the PPD**
- b) Take all necessary follow up action and resolve issues locally as far as possible**
- c) Write directly to relevant Departments and Divisions for necessary follow up and support**
- d) Follow up directly with these agencies on action taken as requested**

It was also explained that since the DEOs were kept informed of changes and developments in the Ministry either through circulars, letters and having attended the AECs, they should provide clarifications during the DEC itself instead of forwarding all administrative matters and issues to the PPD for inclusion in the AEC and they should also filter the recommendations of the DEC keeping in mind the implications of some of the suggestions.

## **DAY 2: Pre Conference (31/12/2011)**

### **9. Implementation status of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP/11<sup>th</sup> FYP Consultations**



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Introduction:

The Chair explained that the two main objectives of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP were 100% primary net enrollment and to provide access and quality in education. The Chair acknowledged the efforts made by the DEOs and Dzongkhags towards achieving these goals and said that the MoE had signed a Performance Compact with the Prime Minister and also with the Dzongkhags towards achieving these goals. She added that one of the targets in the Performance Compact was to enhance the teachers’ morale to 70% on the happiness index.

The house was informed that the total budget outlay for Education in the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan was approximately Nu 10 billion of which about 2 billion was funded by the GoI. Out of the 2 billion funded by the GOI grant, currently only half the budget had been utilized. With only one and a half years left, it was of utmost urgency that the GOI funded activities be given priority and completed before the end of the plan so that no money goes back to India. Additionally, as the education sector had been given priority in terms of earmarked funding by the GoI, it was also critical that all the activities and funds kept under the reprioritized plan following the MTR be completed well on time.

The Chair also expressed the need to learn from the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP in order to find ways to improve the planning and implementation in the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP.

### **9.1 Presentation by the Chief PPD on the implementation status of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP MTR**

Presenting the implementation status of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP, the Chief Planning Officer reminded the DEOs on the need to update the progress of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP in the Dzongkhags on a regular basis to enable the PPD to submit the progress report to the Prime Minister’s office on time.

With regard to the EFA goals and the school age population, she said that the data had been received from all the Dzongkhags except Thimphu Throm due to the large number of urban children. However, even for the other Dzongkhags which had submitted their data, given the variation in data collection methodology and understanding of the requirements, there were still concerns about data reliability. Therefore, the way forward was to understand proper data collection methods, find the best way of collecting the data, focus on enrolling the out of school children 6-12 years of age using various ways and improve education service delivery and quality of education. It was suggested that the DEOs discuss with each other to find out how each Dzongkhags collected the information and to also keep the enrollment data separate for the monastic and regular schools.

The Chair emphasized that the figures presented indicated that while most Dzongkhags have achieved good progress in terms of access, there was a lot to do in terms of improving the

learning outcomes so that children coming out of the school system attain the required learning outcomes.

**(Presentation attached as annex 4)**

## **9.2 Consolidation of Schools:**

The Chief Planning Officer informed the house that there were many primary schools with less than 100 students. Such schools she said were not sustainable and led to teacher shortages, lack of professional support, and poor quality of education. While some Dzongkhags had already downgraded such unsustainable schools, it was pointed out that there were hurdles such as resistance from the public, increase in boarding costs, need for caregivers, etc which prevented many such schools from being merged, downgraded or closed.

The following issues and concerns were raised:

- a) Resistance from the public with regard to downgrading of schools
- b) The need for additional boarding facilities, caregivers and stipends
- c) Wastage of existing facilities in schools proposed for downgradation
- d) The need for stronger instructions from the Ministry to enable Dzongkhags to push the idea
- e) Quality of education in the downgraded schools
- f) Could lead to drop outs and non enrolment of children affecting EFA
- g) Overcrowding of children in consolidated schools
- h) Impact on DEOs as being ineffective

However, some members welcomed the consolidation plan as it would enable children to have quality wholesome education with the provision of required facilities, and said that the plan should be accompanied by necessary support such as boarding facilities, along with caregivers and stipends.

The Chair informed the house that the Ministry was fully aware of the public resistance, and sought the views and opinions of the members regarding the consolidation of schools.

The majority of the members agreed that while there were challenges and constraints faced in implementation, overall, the consolidation idea would serve to improve the efficiency and sustainability of the education system and would help children in receiving adequate teaching learning resources and facilities.

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Members suggested that perhaps some form of compensation packages could be given such as waving off of the school fees or supply of stationery and other facilities to those affected by the consolidation plan etc.

***Resolution: Since the consolidation plan required time to prepare the public and also to prepare the recipient schools to receive the students, the consolidation plan would be implemented in a phased manner, and with proper planning so that children do not suffer from lack of accommodation or stipends etc.***

In order to resolve the difficulty over the collection of statistics, the Chair suggested all DEOs and ADEOs have a session with the PPD to discuss the modalities of data collection. The Chair also explained that there seemed to be some misconception on the consolidation of schools with some people assuming that it meant that all small schools would be closed and merged with other schools. Rather, the consolidation plan was about rationalizing the use of resources based on the availability of learners. The Chair said that consolidation should be done based on sustainability and the projected enrolment of the schools, and that too gradually and without expecting any directives from the Ministry since it had to be a joint venture.

With regard to the challenges schools and Principals faced in convincing the parents with regard to the downgrading and upgrading of schools, the Director General suggested that schools/Principals prepare the mindset of parents so that they are convinced gradually. The Chief HRO also expressed that consolidation was one of the solutions to the teacher deployment problem as this juncture when the Ministry was faced with teacher shortages.

The Chief Planning Officer further clarified that only the very small and unsustainable schools should be downgraded to ECRs and that too in a planned and phased manner so that there is no impact on the students or the recipient schools. Further, should the ECRs also be too small to be sustainable, the Dzongkhags may consider closing down these schools totally. However, downgrading of schools or closing of schools would not result in demotion or loss of position for Principals since they would simply be transferred to another school where they were required.

The Chair mentioned that there was a need to clarify how to go about collecting data so that there is uniformity and reliability of the data collected. Further, she explained that there was a misconception with regard to the consolidation of schools. The chair explained that consolidation is all about rationalization of the use of resources and stated that for every CPS that we establish close to Nu. 9 million was spent just on the cost of construction and excluding other facilities. As a donor dependent country, we had done very well with regard to the utilization of the funds. However, as we had now graduated from the status of a least developed country to a middle income country, donors were now withdrawing from Bhutan. Therefore, the need to rationalize

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our schools and keep in mind the cost implications of expansion and building new schools. Under no circumstance can we upgrade schools if there are no enough students. DEOs and ADEOs needed to have a clear view of the schools under his/her jurisdiction and also make special provisions for backward communities. Bussing facilities could be explored if consolidation of schools required doing so.

With regard to the quality of education in the ECRs, the Chair clarified that it was due to our own failure in providing the required support. As per the criteria, the parent school Principal was mandated to visit the ECRs for supervision and support once every month.

The PPD also presented an amendment to the current guidelines for the establishment and upgradation of schools in the future. The main changes were:

- a) For the establishment of new schools or ECRs, see whether the target population already had access to school or could be bussed conveniently to a school. Based on the above, new and as per the existing guidelines, new schools or ECRs could be proposed. However, the impact of the proposed ECR or school on existing nearby schools should also be studied.
- b) In case of upgradation, without targeting a specific school immediately, the overall enrolment in the Dzongkhag at the relevant levels should be studied and space requirement projections made. Based on the spaces available, it should then be decided whether the existing schools could be expanded or an additional school should be upgraded, following which criteria such as centrality of location, space for expansion, day population etc should be used to determine which would be the best school to be upgraded.

*The house agreed and endorsed the changes to the guidelines.*

### **9.3 Lessons learned from the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP:**

**(Presentation attached as Annex 5.)**

The Chief PPD shared the lessons learnt from the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP so that things like lack of planning, absence of review on Dzongkhag level implementation, adhoc planning process, lack of ownership and monitoring of the centrally executed construction and lack of Inter-Agency coordination could be averted in the future with proper planning and coordination at various levels.

The Chair reiterated that the main purpose of the DEOs being placed at the Dzongkhag was for education and that had to be given priority. There also seemed to be a lack of communication and understanding within the Dzongkhags. DEOs needed to involve Dasho Dzongdas and orient them on all educational activities. ICT should be used to facilitate the communication between

the head office and the Dzongkhags and even the Head teachers’ Conference at the Dzongkhag could be connected with headquarters through video conferencing.

With regard to the implementation status of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP, the Consolidation of Schools and the preparations for the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP, the house resolved the following:

- *Dzongkhags to plan expansion of school facilities holistically keeping in mind factors such as total enrolment in the dzongkhag, enrolment trends in the schools, school age population and population trends, migration trends, and implementation capacity of dzongkhags and local contractors, etc. (Action: Dzongkhags)*
- *Dzongkhags to rationalize the size and scope of schools in a phased manner with proper planning, monitoring and support. (Action: Dzongkhags)*
- *To ensure the timely completion of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP activities, Dzongkhags to monitor progress on a monthly basis and submit reports to the Ministry of Education. (Action: Dzongkhags)*
- *Principals of parent schools to visit their ECRs monthly to monitor and provide support wherever possible. If not, Principals to visit their ECRs a minimum of four times a year. (Action: Schools/Dzongkhags)*

#### **10. Building partnership in expanding NFE programme for the enhancement of adult literacy**

The Chief of the NFCED informed that the NFE programme was extremely important in promoting adult literacy, attaining GNH and building a knowledge based society and hence requested that the NFE programme be given importance and not forgotten including during the celebrations of the Sherig Century. It was also informed that all NFE Instructors should carry out immediate survey of the non-literate population in their own chiwogs and report to respective parent Principals who should compile the information and forward to the dzongkhags. The Dzongkhags in turn should immediately plan for the enrolment of the non-literate citizens in the NFE programme. The house was further informed that the goal for the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP was to enhance adult literacy rate to 70 %, and that the goal could only be achieved if all the stakeholders worked together towards it.

He also presented the recommendations from the technical review on Adult Literacy conducted for the Annual Education Sector Review on how to revamp the programme which included suggestions such as:

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- the need for adequate financial support for the NFE programme,
- the need to carry out literacy mapping
- the need to strengthen monitoring of the NFE programme by all levels
- the need for NFE instructors to go into the communities to recruit learners
- the need to review the long duration of the NFE courses which could be impacting on the retention of learners.

**Comments:**

Members suggested the following to enhance the NFE programme:

- Meeting of NFE officials with local leaders during the GTs and DTs in order to get their support
- Sharing of success stories and tours to motivate learners, instructors and local leaders
- Provision of statement of marks along with the certificate to encourage the learners
- Provision of workshops and trainings to make the roles and responsibilities of the focal Principals

Addressing the query regarding the ambiguity regarding dress code, accountability and modalities for taking leave in the NFE centres, the Chief of the NFCED explained that all these details had been discussed and finalized in the consultation meetings and briefed during the induction of Principals as well.

The Chair emphasized the need to make working norms clear if there were ambiguities and urged the Principals and Dzongkhags to provide unfaltering support in carrying the NFE programme forward.

The Chair expressed concern that although the literacy target was set at 70%, currently only about 50% had been achieved. Therefore, there was a need to work strategically towards achieving the set target. The Chair also noted the need to address the lack of monitoring which may be affecting the quality and efficiency of the programme. Moreover, awareness programmes should be put in place to educate the public on the importance of the NFE programme.

The Conference made the following resolutions:

- *Separate budget provisions to be kept for NFE programme in the Dzongkhags. (Action: MoE to take up with MoF)*
- *To strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of the NFE programmes. (Action: NFCED/Dzongkhags)*

- *Dzongkhags to identify the non literate persons with the help of the Non Formal Instructors. (Action: NFCED/Dzongkhags)*

## 11. Curriculum Issues

The Department of Curriculum Research and Development presented issues and updates related to the curriculum and its implementation status. The following topics were also presented and discussed:

- Proposal for curriculum support and implementation
- Alternative Formative Assessment
- Status of improving curriculum
  - Curriculum revision
  - New curriculum
  - MSCI mechanism

Some of the challenges that DCRD presented were the inability to complete the monitoring in a day. Monitoring was only possible in the schools which were easily accessible compared to the far flung schools owing to the distance. The floor was also informed that monitoring curriculum implementation is a shared responsibility and that it should not only be left only to the DCRD.

It was also informed that DCRD is at the centre and DEOs must spearhead at the Dzongkhag level to ensure proper implementation. Since dzongkhags cannot monitor all schools, schools were clubbed depending on the location to ensure more coverage. Monitoring was a shared responsibility, and all the leaders, DEOs, Principal and teachers must ensure that it is well planned and implemented.

The monitoring descends from the DCRD to Dzongkhags to the School clusters and to the schools and finally to the individual teachers. The responsibilities at the five different levels and the strategy of MSS tools were also presented. It was also reiterated that improvement of monitoring would enable us to realize the improvement of the curriculum.

Formative Assessment, DCRD said would prepare students for any kind of questions. Infact, the Improved Formative Assessment which was presented during the 5<sup>th</sup> Curriculum board would be piloted in some of the schools. The Improved Formative Assessment was based on research on practices inside and outside Bhutan. The rationale was to provide the best environment for our children to learn and hence the definition for FA has been improved. Marks were not the only indicators of progress and this tool was designed to assess where a child stood. The importance

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of educating our parents that the progress of their child was more important and their marks was also stressed.

Honourable Lyonpo thanked everyone for making adjustments to attend the conference. He said that the discussions had been meaningful and was glad to be able to participate in the session. He emphasized the importance of curriculum and everyone involved in its development. Curriculum, he said, could not be thought of in isolation but needed to draw inspiration from even outside the system. He added that the future intellectual character of the society depends on what is put into the curriculum and how it is taught to the children. Although curriculum was a priority and should have been the first thing to be developed, due to other issues of urgency, it was not possible to do so. He said that he was hopeful that now with a new director supported by a strong team things would change and improve.

The participants made the following comments:

- DCRD should take into consideration the type of teachers needed to implement the new curriculum, especially in primary schools;
- Diversification of subjects, and especially those pertaining to the job market must be considered;
- The speed of the curriculum development should be in line with the changes taking place in the society;
- There was need to train more educationists and to have more EMOs in order to speed up the process and update the information.

The Chair asked DCRD to take note of the points, also informing the house since we are all educators, some of the errors can be corrected at our own level without waiting for DCRD to make all the corrections.

In response to the concern as to whether the FA tools were only for primary levels, DCRD said that they would gradually move towards the higher classes. Regarding the merging of the FA tools with PMS, they said that they would need to have a dialogue within the Ministry.

One of the students asked whether it was good to use guidebooks and which guidebook would be suggested for Physics as he had heard that the Board examination papers were set from one of the guidebooks. The Chair responded that guidebooks were diluted versions of textbooks and other prescribed materials and spoke about Alan Bloom’s book called ‘The Closing of the American Mind’ which talks about the easing of intellectual rigour ultimately resulting in the weakening of the learning tradition. He also referred to the PISA tests in which the American students do not fare all that well. He said Bhutanese students could operate at a very high level of



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intellectual efficiency and advised students not to take recourse to guidebooks. He said that one must study the way one needed to and guidebooks were only a cheapened version of the textbook. He said our teachers were qualified to teach the curriculum and referring to guidebooks would be disrespectful to our teachers.

DCRD added that that BCSEA should not be setting questions from any textbooks or guidebooks in particular as the questions were supposed to be open-ended, and that students should learn skills and values over and above mastering the content of the textbooks.

One of the participants questioned the proper implementation of holistic assessment according to the GNH Trainers’ Manual. He said that in most of the schools, the Character Certificate was filled out Office Assistants and not by the teachers and hence it was not done properly and fairly.

The Director General added that schools had not been able to implement holistic assessment properly and that relevant sections of the Manual would be reviewed. He thanked the participant for raising this issue in this forum.

The Chair also suggested considering a way of assessing the different kinds of work the students did during winter vacation, since there were students doing different jobs like collecting parking fees, helping in orange transportation, working at construction sites or doing different community activities. Since a lot of children do not know what hardship is, he said, perhaps we could assess what the children do that is socially productive as an experience of growing up. This was especially important as work humanizes people and serves as a way of expressing themselves.

DCRD expressed the need to streamline the design and certification of the School Leaving Certificate. In this regard, they requested that relevant feedback should be sent to DCRD so that they could work on updating the SLC.

The Chair reiterated that the curriculum was the main reason for the existence of the Ministry. He said that the curriculum inherited the thoughts of the past and succeeding generations need these foundations. He added that the curriculum was inter-generational and it was necessary to see whether the subjects look back to the tradition and look forward to the future. As educators, it was important to ensure that the curriculum looks back and that it looks forward.

With regard to the DCRD, the Conference made the following resolutions:

- ***The Monitoring and Supporting Curriculum Implementation Mechanism to be further refined and implemented. The MSCIM will also include guidelines, for implementation developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders (DSE/BCSEA). (Action: DCRD)***

- *Department of Curriculum Research and Development to review and elaborate its mandate. (Action:DCRD)*
- *The Department of Curriculum Research and Development to update information on Social Studies, Computer Applications, History, Geography, EVS and Dzongkha, and communicate the revised text to the schools at the earliest. (Action: DCRD)*

## **12. Delinking of the Bhutan Board of Examinations and Competency Based Assessment**

### **12.1 Delinking of BBE**

The Secretary of the newly established Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) said that the erstwhile BBE had been delinked from the Ministry of Education from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011. He said that this was done to ensure independent and quality assessment of the education system, especially since one of the mandates was to monitor the monitors and act as a watch-dog to the school education system in the country. He said that the Council was governed by a board of directors chaired by the Honourable Education Minister.

The BCSEA, which has three divisions and two sections is currently in transition phase and would be fully autonomous by 2013. Right now, the BCSEA is in the process of recruiting additional staff to carry out its increased mandate.

### **12.2 Competency Based Assessment**

Under Charter VII of Performance Compact signed between the Government and the Ministry, the BCSEA was mandated to conduct competency-based testing. Based on this, the following activities have been carried out:

1. Modular Competency-based Assessment (Classes V, VII, IX) Eng/Maths/Dzongkha
2. End-of-year Competency-based Assessment (Classes III, VI, X)

Both activities have been carried out by the BCSEA and the results are being analyzed and the feedback received from the field being incorporated. In future, BCSEA would be further monitoring the competency-based testing in 2012 and exploring its feasibility in other subjects.

To strengthen the security of examinations, BCSEA proposed that Supervising Examiners should stay in the school campus, additional security personnel be arranged by schools and metal detectors may be used.

Discussion

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The Chair emphasized that BCSEA had a critical and important role. He said that the integrity of the examinations should be secured. The floor raised issues related to the difficulty of getting specimens for science practicals, particularly for biology, and confidentiality concerns when the schools collect specimens themselves. Members suggested that BCSEA should send the specimens with the question papers. Other issues included the difficulty in providing booklet form answer-sheets as in the final examinations for students to do their practice.

The Secretary of the BCSEA responded that all the suggestions and feedback provided were appreciated and that these comments and feedback would be further deliberated on at an appropriate forum and necessary action taken. He added that Bhutan had successfully conducted class X Board Examinations for the last 10 years with support from the field. He said that even in a developed country like Singapore, they were not able to conduct class X examinations with their own board and it was done by an external board.

The Chair said that the holiday timings needed to be rethought. He suggested that closing schools earlier and opening them by February 1<sup>st</sup> would benefit the National Education Day celebrations coinciding with the birth anniversary of His Majesty the King. He said that December 17<sup>th</sup> was celebrated by dzongkhags and other agencies and our schools were not actively involved because of examinations, and therefore, there would not be any serious problem with closing the schools a little earlier.

The Chair also expressed his concern over schools declaring holidays on their own and said that neither the Ministry nor the dzongkhags and schools had the right to declare holidays. Frequent movement of teachers and principals during the academic session was also highlighted. While it is important to cooperate with other agencies, the Chair said that our own schools and children should take priority and one should hesitate leaving his or her children unattended. As a developing country, he said, there is added pressure on us to do more. In developed countries, he said, there were 210 or 220 instructional days while we struggled to even achieve the minimum of 180 instructional days. He said adequate intellectual capacity had not been built.

The Chair highlighted the need to review the curriculum including the incorporation of the new initiatives that the Ministry had taken. Emphasizing the elements of Green Schools for Green Bhutan, he said that the other issues would be taken care of if we were successful in our endeavour to nurture Green Schools characterized by all the eight elements.

The Conference made the following resolutions related to examinations:

- ***The security and integrity of all processes and materials related to assessment to be strengthened in consultation with DSE. (Action: BCSEA/DSE)***

- *BCSEA shall review the integrity of the SUPW experience and recommend ways to recognise self initiated personal enrichment work done by students outside their school hours. (Action: BCSEA)*
- *The Education Quality Monitoring Mechanism to be presented in the next AEC. (Action: BCSEA)*
- *Measures to strengthen formative assessment in schools to be instituted. (Action: DCRD)*

### 13. ECCD & SEN

The Chief of the ECCD and SEN made a brief presentation on the newly established ECCD and SEN Division, with the objective of reminding and creating awareness of ECCD and Special Education Needs. The Chief presented the status of Special Education, expounding on the growth of Special Educational Services in the country, and the future plans.

On this, the Honourable Secretary said that the plans were very ambitious when it came to human resources. As such, she said that there was a need to build collaboration with the Colleges of Education. She also reminded that provision of training takes time. However, looking at the figures, she said that it was rather alarming that 21.7% of survey population (2-9 years old) had mild to severe disability according to the draft report of the disability survey. With regard to training, she said that all such needs should be included in the HR master plan and in the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP.

Honourable Lyonpo said that Bhutan had signed the Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities. He said that not only were we signatory to this Convention, but we owed it to our people to reach out to all. He also said that it was a matter of concern that we do not know precisely the extent, nature, and levels of disability in our country today. He said that only by doing a proper study would we be able to mount the necessary interventions to address the challenge.

Honourable Lyonpo said that actually each one of us had some kind of disability, but there were people with severe disabilities. He suggested that each dzongkhag carry out a survey, instead of waiting for the concerned agencies to carry out a national level survey. As they were right in the field with gups, principals and teachers, there was no need to wait for full-scale studies. He said that people were able to count the plants, birds and flowers and it should be possible for us to count our own people. He said that in the 11<sup>th</sup> Plan, we should address this section of the population.

The Chief of the ECCD and SEN Division sensitized the floor on the important components of the ECCD, the current status of the ECCD centres and learners in Bhutan. Strategies for the future action and target groups of the ECCD were also shared. He also informed the floor on the advantages of investing in ECCD.

The Chair said that the ECCD and SEN Division used to be a unit under Programme Division. With the restructuring, she said that it was made into a fully-fledged division. She said that there are NGOs and private providers in early childhood education. The Government would come into the picture where there are no private providers and NGOs. The Government’s role, she said, would be benchmarking and setting standards. She said that we needed to encourage NGOs to set up these centres. She said that it was proven that children who went through such a programme were more successful. However, she said that we need to study where our priorities should lie.

One of the participants requested the establishment of more ECCD centres in remote dzongkhags as there were no private providers. If this is done, he said that children from the remote dzongkhags would reap the same advantage from the programme.

The chair instructed the Chief of ECCD and SEN Division to note the suggestion and added that it was aligned to the Ministry’s approach.

Another participant said that while investment in ECCD and primary school is very important, the investment by the Ministry seems more skewed towards secondary education. He said that we need to invest in primary level.

#### **14. Chiphen Rigphel Update**

An update on the Chiphen Rigphel Project was presented. The Honourable Secretary mentioned that the project as of now was managed by a single person and there were resource constraints. However, she said, ICT was a powerful tool and would transform the education system. She added that since the project was for Nu. 44 million, it was not enough to pay the travel allowance for all teachers, and therefore only DSA was paid to the participants. She expressed her disappointment that there had been a poor response from the teachers in availing themselves of this important training and suggested that perhaps more awareness needed to be created.

*The Conference resolved that all teachers who graduated before 2009 should attend the training on Chiphen Rigphel. (Action: DSE/Dzongkhags/Schools)*

In response to a participant who felt that the Chiphen Rigphel (CR) should be provided in the lower classes too, Madam Secretary said that the next phase of the project would focus on primary schools.

The CR focal person said that computers had been provided to the CPS too.

Another issue that ensued from the floor was regarding the time table for CR exams starting very late and the schools having to adjust with the other exams.

Madam Secretary replied that this will be taken up and the adjustment of time would be discussed.

The Chair informed that this was a project outside of the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP, and involving a huge amount of money. The main purpose of the project was to help in realizing the vision of making Bhutan IT literate, and if our teachers weren't literate in IT, they would not be able to guide our children. On the other hand, if our teachers were literate, our schools would be stronger too. He said that we must not expect only trainings with monetary incentives, but rather demonstrate our interest to learn as educators. He reminded that poverty was not only the lack of food and basic necessities, but there was also intellectual poverty, and that was why, even as a country still struggling with many challenges, the government makes sure that minimum education facilities are provided to all.

#### **15. IGNOU-UNESCO Science Olympiad**

The DSE briefed the floor on the IGNOU- UNESCO science Olympiad, which was a promotional venture for science students. The aims of the program, eligibility for participation, process of registration, and participation and performance of Bhutanese students were also presented.

Madam Secretary informed the house that this was a competition held for students in SAARC countries and it would help our students gain confidence in participating in such competitions. She said that it was also another way of assessing our own standards in science.

#### **16. Class XI Placement**

The Director General of School Education said that all DEOs had been asked to absorb all the students for class 11 placements within their own Dzongkhags, and that the cut off for class XI was decided at around 40% of the total numbers of class ten students. He also said that Samtse Dzongkhag may not be able to accommodate all their class XI students due to the large numbers

of students. He also added that schools performing well might have more admissions pressure than others. However, he reminded the floor to abide by the admission rules and boarding rules

### **DAY 3: Main Conference (01/01/2012)**

#### **17. Opening Ceremony**

##### **17.1 Welcome address:**

On behalf of the education fraternity, the Director General, DSE extended a warm welcome to the Honourable Chief Guest His Excellency Lyonpo Nanda Lal Rai, the Minister for Information and Communications and to all the distinguished guests for gracing the occasion.

##### **17.2 Presentation on the proceedings of the Pre-Conference:**

The Honourable Secretary presented the proceedings of the pre-conference over the last two days as follows:

- a. Theme of the Conference: It was apprised that the theme “Consolidating GNH in our Schools” had been adopted to further strengthen the good practices schools have initiated.
- b. Sherig 2013: Some excellent ideas were generated through brainstorming on how we could celebrate the Sherig Century.
- c. Sherig Archives: presented the importance of instituting a culture of archiving all our developments and information for future reference.
- d. Educating for GNH: The concerns of the participants on the need for greater clarity and awareness of the programme and sharing of the best practices that are happening in our schools were presented as well.
- e. School Safety: Concerns over the increasing risks and safety issues and strategies to ensure safety to our students were reported to the floor.
- f. HR policies: HR policies such as career track, transfers, performance management system pertaining to teachers.
- g. Decentralization of transfers of CPS/PS principals to the Dzongkhags and its modalities and rational were presented.
- h. Implementation status of 10<sup>th</sup> plan, curriculum issues, revamping of NFE monitoring system and the examination system were presented as well.

##### **17.3 State of Education Report:**

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The Chief of EMSSD presented to the floor the detail report of state of education, highlighting the successes, achievements and challenges encountered. (*The full report is attached as Annex 6.*)

#### **17.4 Opening Address by the Honourable Chief Guest**

Wishing the floor a Happy New Year, the Honourable Chief Guest said that it was encouraging to know that so many good things had been carried out or were in the pipeline.

He thanked MoE for making him part of this noble programme and said that he had never stood before such a gathering of people who had guided, moulded and shaped the destiny of our nation. He reminded the participants that their profession was not just a way to earn a livelihood, but far greater than that, it was to educate a nation. He commended the participants for their dedicated and selfless service in educating the future of this country and assured them that their hard work & efforts would not be in vain, but would be seen & felt in the years to come in the form of good & capable leaders and it would be then, that they would take pride and satisfaction to have been part of this great education system and that was also what Tha-dramtse and Ley-Jumdrey to the Tsa-Wa-Sum was all about.

The Honourable Chief Guest also said that as suggested by the theme of the Conference, ‘Consolidating GNH in our Schools’, it was apt and timely that the nurturing and awakening of fundamentals should start from the grass roots, and that was our children.

As Minister for Information & Communications, he said he could see the inter-dependent link between Education & ICT which mutually benefit each other in the realization of a knowledge based society and towards this, he assured MoIC’s full support.

Finally, he urged all the participants to work with renewed vigour and dedication and with a greater sense of purpose for our better future.

#### **17.5 Vote of Thanks**

The Director of the DCRD, on behalf of the Education family and on her own behalf, expressed deep and heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Guest for consenting to attend the opening of our 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference, despite the need to travel a long distance through a rugged terrain. She also expressed her gratitude to all the distinguished guests who had taken the time to grace the occasion. Lastly, she thanked the Honourable Sherig Lyonpo and Aum Secretary for their guidance and support and all the different agencies, including the Sarpang dzongkhag, the Dungkhag, the ADEO, the Principal of the Gelephu LSS, the AFD, the PPD and all others who had worked hard to make the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Education Conference happen.



**18. Presentation of National Youth Policy:**

**19.** The Chief of the Youth Centre presented the National Youth Policy explaining the rationale for the Youth Policy, the national vision for youth and its goals. The presentation included the target group of the youth policy and the eight key areas. The National Youth Policy identifies education, health, employment and training, environment and youth, culture and identity, social environment, recreation and sports, youth participation and empowerment, and youth rights and responsibilities as the critical issues pertaining to the youth. The implementation mechanism and monitoring and evaluation measures were presented as well.

The Chair said that the actual implementation of the Policy and its translation into actions was very important. She also mentioned that the age group of 15-24 years identified as youth was the most vulnerable age-group, and, therefore, there was a need to have programmes to address this age-group. While the Department of Youth and Sports was the coordinating agency, there were other relevant agencies such as media, NGOs, health, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, parents, and civil society organizations that need to be involved in the decision-making process. The Chair stressed the need to put in place programmes that were targeted to guide the youths to develop positively. The issues in the urban areas were more related to substance abuse and youth related crimes while in the rural areas the issues may differ.

**Views on how we can translate the policy into reality:**

Members made the following comments:

- youth policies and programmes should be framed in consultation with the youth
- youth programmes should be expanded to all dzongkhags
- there was a need to identify the root cause of the youth related problems
- location of schools and access to substances could lead to substance abuse
- who should be responsible for monitoring the presence of bars near the schools and whether the monitoring aspect should come in the youth policy
- the need for specialized counselors to provide counseling services to referred youth during winter breaks
- problems of dealing with problematic youth when police do not take action

The Honourable Sherig Lyonpo expressed the dichotomy that on the one hand there was the belief in the preciousness of the youth and at the same time there was the prevailing belief that the future does not hold hope, that we were a lost generation. The challenge was how to replace this irony with hope, and how to resolve the conflict between the pool of hope and the pool of cynicism. He said that the policy document was relevant for all areas and its implementation

must not be made dependent on budget. He said that we needed to localize our activities and solutions and not look for uniform solutions. On the issue of discipline, Honourable Lyonpo said that there must be a certain amount of discipline to be able to function, that one must be firm and fair and exercise moral authority rather than authority with the rod. He expressed the need for innovation and creativity when implementing the policy document and localizing it to the context of the schools.

The Chair explained that at the national level, there was a multi-sectoral steering committee to look at youth related issues. Similarly, there should be similar committees at the dzongkhag level to address youth issues and implement the National Youth Policy.

*The Conference resolved that every Dzongkhag should form a multi-sectoral steering committee chaired by Dasho Dzongdag to formulate a Dzongkhag Youth Action Plan to implement the National Youth Policy at the Dzongkhag level. (Action: DYS/MoE/Dzongkhags)*

## **20. Disaster and Emergencies**

The DSE presented the status reconstruction efforts post the earthquakes of 2009 and 2011. For the post-2009 earthquake, in Trashiyangtse 17 out of 18 reconstruction activities had been completed; in Trashigang 11 out of 18 reconstructions completed and 7 were ongoing; in Lhuentse all the reconstruction activities post-2009 earthquake had been completed and that the works post-2011 earthquake were also almost complete. Similarly, Samdrupjongkhar had completed the reconstruction activities while Pemagatshel dzongkhag had completed only 50% of the reconstruction works.

The Chair commended the progress made in the reconstruction efforts in the earthquake affected areas. The Director General also commended the quick response provided by the dzongkhags and schools in responding to the disasters.

Honourable Sherig Lyonpo said that there had also been an unusual degree of delay largely owing to the complexity of the procedures in securing the funds and sometimes due to the non-availability of materials. However, he emphasized that apart from reconstruction of the schools, what was more important was how we maintained our resources, classrooms and schools to ensure sustained use. He said that undesirable post-earthquake remains were seen in the schools that were not in keeping with the spirit of child-friendly and GNH schools. He urged the DEOs and Principals to use their resources and take immediate actions to create a more conducive learning atmosphere.

Members stressed the need to also consider other disaster risks such as fire, wind, flash-flood etc. and to look at disaster-risk holistically taking into account both the preventive and remedial measures with greater focus on preventive strategies.

On the need to train the new DEOs on disaster management, the Chair asked DSE to take note. The Chair also pointed out that there was a lot of duplication in the activities carried out by the Department of Disaster Management, the Department of Youth and Sports and the Department of School Education. Therefore, DSE was asked to coordinate the training of the relevant officials and the conduct of the activities so that there was no duplication. The Chair also stressed the need to maintain the existing facilities, and said that while disaster preparedness was very important, safety aspects of schools needed to be looked into.

## **21. School Feeding, Nutrition & Safety**

The Chief of the School Feeding and Agriculture division made a presentation on the school feeding programme. **(The presentation is attached as Annex 7).**

The presentation raised the following comments:

- The money collected from the day-feeding students, about Nu.500/ a year, for buying vegetables was not enough if meals were to be provided as per the menu recommended. The Director General clarified that the menu was only a guide and should be seen not as a daily menu but a weekly menu. He also said that discretion should be used in buying vegetables of high nutritional value, and suggested that perhaps schools should tie up with local farmers' groups for the supply of fresh local vegetables.
- The quota of 150 gm of rice was not sufficient
- Electric cookers were not cost-effective
- The need to involve the relevant stakeholders to determine the actual cause of such diseases.

The Chief Planning Officer felt that there were instances of oversight and lack of coordination at the every level (Ministry, Dzongkhag and school) which resulted in the same problems recurring.

Honourable Minister suggested that the School and Feeding Division in conjunction with the Dzongkhag Administration and Public Health work out a dietary timetable as per the nutritional value based on the availability of different vegetables and food crops in the locality. The Ministry would have to ensure adequate budget for school feeding programme.

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The Chair emphasized that the monitoring aspect must be proactive and alert to respond to illnesses and complaints, and that school health coordinator must also be a part of the monitoring team.

With regard to student health, the Director, DYS, reminded the floor to make use of the School Health Handbook made available in the schools. He said that over one hundred thousand copies were being printed and would be distributed to the schools.

The Conference resolved that:

- *The Department of School Education should work together with the Dzongkhag Administrations and the Department of Public Health on an inventory of vegetables and fruit items available in each Dzongkhag based on their nutritional value and circulate it amongst Dzongkhags for implementation with immediate effect. (Action: DSE)*
- *The Ministry of Education should ensure that adequate budget is made available to provide a balanced diet to children in boarding schools. (Action: MoE)*
- *School health to be monitored to ensure that nutrition and health safety aspects are taken care of, including in terms of nutrition, diet, hygiene etc. Towards that relevant mechanisms should be put in place at every level to monitor and support the health and wellbeing of the children in our schools. (Action: DSE/DYS/Dzongkhags/Schools)*

## **22. Endorsement of the Resolutions of the 15<sup>th</sup> AEC**

The draft resolutions of the 15<sup>th</sup> AEC were discussed and endorsed. (The Resolutions are attached as Annex 8).

## **23. Participants’ Reflections**

In conclusion a Reflection on the AEC was presented by one of the participants. He said that the Conference had proven to be a source of knowledge and information and he had learned a lot. He would be sharing what he learned with his colleagues back in school. Summarizing the suggestions of the Conference participants, he requested that the AEC be held for five days in order to allow sufficient time for discussions and that if possible one student from each dzongkhag should be allowed to attend. Appreciating the successful conclusion of the Conference, he said that the continuation of such a forum as the AEC was very important, as apart from policy matters, it was also a platform to build relationship among the members. Lastly, he said that Gelephu was a very good venue for the Conference owing to its favourable climate.

## **24. Closing Remarks by Honourable Sherig Lyonpo**

Honourable Sherig Lyonpo acknowledged with deep gratitude the very kind and thoughtful gesture extended by the Education family, reflecting how the Education Family felt about his receiving the Gusi Peace Prize 2011 for Education right from the time he arrived at Thimphu on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November. With regard to the arrangements made during the AEC to celebrate the Award, he said that it was something totally unexpected but deeply meaningful and much appreciated. He thanked all the participants and the organizers for the sacred statue of *Jampelyang* and the collection of photographs that were presented to him. He thanked Honourable Secretary, all the Directors, all the Division Chiefs and all the people in the headquarters, DEOs, ADEOs, teachers and students including parents, for their support and goodwill that contributed to his receiving the Award and making it very special. He also said that he was grateful to his predecessors and that this award was not an individual recognition but rather it belonged to all in the Ministry. He emphasized that it was the recognition of the country and the image that the country carries. Above all, he said that it was the result of the hard work of all the officials and staff in the Ministry. He said that the Gusi Peace Prize for 2011 had come to Bhutan and for all the people of Bhutan. Thus, he said that it was in that spirit he received the Award.

Honourable Lyonpo expressed his happiness at being able to participate in the Conference from the previous day and congratulated the Chair for steering the deliberations to a very neat conclusion as was acknowledged by one of the participants in his reflection and as seen by Lyonpo himself. He also acknowledged the participants for their active participation and contributions to the quality of discussions and deliberations. Acknowledging all the participants of the Education family from all over Bhutan and from RUB and others, he said that he would like to hope that it was a very meaningful experience for all of them to come to Gelephu to attend the 15<sup>th</sup> AEC.

Honourable Lyonpo said that although there were a lot of good things happening in our schools across the country, what gets highlighted very often was what went wrong, resulting in a lot of negative publicity when there could be so much of positive publicity as well.

Honourable Lyonpo empathized with the multiple roles taken and activities that have to be carried out by our colleagues at the dzongkhag and school levels. He said that unlike in the past, our education sector personnel had been called upon to carry out other responsibilities which often conflict with their primary responsibility. However, he said that they had successfully carried out whatever responsibilities were thrust upon them. He congratulated all the participants for the successful conclusion of the year 2011. He also mentioned that there had been many highlights as mentioned earlier as well as challenges. He congratulated the dzongkhags and

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schools for being able to overcome the challenges brought upon by natural calamities and commended everybody for getting the schools back to normal within a short span. He said that the way responsible dzongkhags and education staff looked after our schools, teachers, students and communities advanced the goal of GNH.

Compared to the year 2010, he liked to believe that 2011 would have been so much better and that Bhutan would have been that much different thanks to the hard work of the all concerned.

On the Royal Wedding, Honourable Lyonpo said that an amazing variety of activities had been organized throughout the country to celebrate the historic occasion – through publications, cultural and artistic expressions, social and community work, volunteerism, sport and games. Those wonderful sentiments and the great generosity of Bhutanese hearts that the occasion evoked would not be limited to the year and the time but would live on in our life and the life of our children beyond the present. He said that it was amazing for the country to be galvanized and to come together as one where our children, teachers and citizens thought their best thoughts, prayed their best prayers, and sang their best songs. Honourable Lyonpo expressed his wish that all our schools, our children, our teachers, and our citizens continue that spirit, those sentiments and those thoughts. He said that for that our participants had been at the heart of it and that our children and our teachers had brought the nation together. Therefore, he requested the participants to take his greetings to all the teachers and students back in the schools. Lastly, he offered his *Tashi Delek* to all the DEOs, ADEOs, principals, teachers and students.

Honourable Lyonpo highlighted some of the challenges like high repetition and dropout rates especially at classes IV and VII, and he urged all to do something urgently about it.

On the 2-3 % of our children still out of school, he said that we had made a commitment to the children of Bhutan and to the future of this country that all children of school going-age would be in school. Some Dzongkhags, Lyonpo said, were still lagging far behind while others were making tremendous efforts. He commended those dzongkhags which were close to achieving universal primary enrollment and congratulated all dzongkhags for making commendable efforts towards achieving universal primary enrollment. He added that it was our responsibility to not only achieve universal enrollment but also to ensure that our children completed basic education as enshrined in the Constitution. He said that there should be no confusion regarding the policy. While it had not come in as a resolution, he said that by 2012, we should not have a single child not attending school. If we were not able to do that, it would be a failure of our system, he said..

Honourable Lyonpo elaborated the need to make concerted efforts to raise teacher morale. He said that many might feel that by giving regular promotions and incentives, teacher morale might be improved, but teaching and a teacher’s job were so delicate and so special that there cannot be

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a material equivalence with any other profession. Honourable Lyonpo said that there were many ways to honour our teachers. He appealed to the DEOs and ADEOs to look after our teachers, and said that while they were already doing much, they must do more. He said that our teachers must feel respected when they attend any public function; they must be offered seats with other guests on public occasions. Honourable Lyonpo said that he often saw our teachers waiting outside as strangers because nobody would notice them. They were always the last ones to be invited in. This he said was not fair - and a nation that does not know how to respect its teachers was deficient in some important respects.

However, Lyonpo also shared his hope to see teachers themselves look at their own image as teachers and said that they should know what teaching means and what teachers owe to the nation, the society, the children in their charge and to their own profession. Lyonpo said that teachers themselves have to realize this, otherwise, there would always be complaints regarding not getting adequate opportunities for studies, not enough incentives and no recognition etc like others.

Honourable Lyonpo said, that when it comes to children, our children come in different shapes and sizes, and with different aims and dreams. He said that by and large, our Bhutanese children are very good, and they want to do something in life, to serve the country and to be useful. He said that we owed it to the children to support those aims and dreams, Honourable Lyonpo said that if the children were going wrong, perhaps, it was an indication that we are not able to provide the kind of leadership and guidance that they deserve. As always, Lyonpo said that as teachers, we teach what we know but more importantly, as teachers and educators, we teach who we are. Therefore, as teachers, he said, what values and principles teachers have and also where they stand in relation to society and their calling were extremely important.

Honourable Lyonpo said that some of the challenges we faced today could be the result of the way we are moving as a country. He said that now that we have largely achieved the immediate things such as the development of basic infrastructure - roads, electricity and hospitals, bridges, and schools, Bhutan is at a stage when we need to think about cultivating the softer, gentler and more humane qualities. Otherwise, he said that the pace of development was so aggressive that it could sweep us away and we would lose the softer and gentler part of our society. If this happened, he said, education could be held accountable. That was why when we talk about the different elements of green schools like social, cultural or moral greenery, among others, we are not talking about some outdated ideas but that we are talking about how to sustain the soul of our society.

Honourable Lyonpo said that all of us had the opportunity to go to schools and colleges and engaged with ideas and philosophy and different kinds of endeavours that human beings have

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made at different times and in different places. He said that we had a very special access to the march of the human mind over the centuries. He added that we can read literature and we love music and we can also respond to the stimuli that fine arts produce. This, he said, is amazing and these all are very important as part of the softer graces of the society. Now, he said, we are having a tough time with young people responding more and more to the more aggressive and powerful influences that could often suck their soul. It is at this time, he said, that we need to provide alternative stimuli and education was a very powerful instrument for the creation of alternative, positive stimuli for the young people to respond to. Therefore, how we organize our schools, how we organize ourselves and what we do as educators is very important.

Honourable Lyonpo said that we have to be mindful of the integrity of learning. He asked what the children were learning, and said that if a child was asked what his or her favourite subject was, we would hardly get a full-sentence answer. He said if the answer was only one word, as it usually was, we would not know much about what the child knows or does not know; nor the way the child constructs a sentence; nor the rise and fall in the tone. We must expect full answers.

Honourable Lyonpo said that it was not only the integrity of learning, but also the integrity of teaching that was important. He said that as a teacher, one ask oneself what my outlook towards the profession, the children, the school and the country are. If we respect who we are, and our profession and the field of expertise, we are going to be far more satisfied as educators. He said that we have been making so much of noise about teaching-learning styles and materials that the expression teaching-learning has become a cliché. We have even stopped putting a hyphen between teaching and learning. However, he said that at the end of the day, it is teaching and learning that is going to build this country.

Honourable Lyonpo also expressed his happiness that one of the important issues discussed was something that would dominate our minds and efforts in the coming year. In 2012, we would start the celebration of Sherig Century which will be very special. He said that although some of our first schools began in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we do not have the proper records. But, since we do have some fairly reliable records of the establishment of after that some of our schools, 2012 will be an appropriate year to keep as an important milestone. Thus he said, between 2012 and 2013, we would be celebrating a very important milestone in the march of this country – it will be our Sherig Century.

Lyonpo said that what Bhutan is today is all because of education. He said that we have built our own institutions and service delivery systems of a modern nation-state and come a long way - all thanks to education. He urged that we should not allow this year to just slip by, but instead we should mark this milestone. He emphasized that wherever we are, we should make sure that we



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do an appropriate job of marking this very important milestone. He said that the Task Force under the chairmanship of the Director General at the central level and others at the regional, dzongkhag and school level should think about how we are going to organize events and activities to mark this very important milestone. The Sherig Century, he said, should be the centre-piece of the coming year, starting on May 2, 2012, coinciding with the auspicious birthday of the father of modern Bhutan, His Majesty the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, and concluding on May 2, 2013.

Honourable Lyonpo said that the theme “Consolidating GNH in Our Schools” was very appropriate as this was an important initiative that we have taken. He said that many years after His Majesty our 4<sup>th</sup> beloved King Jigme Singye Wangchuck articulated the new development paradigm for Bhutan, people were more appreciative of this concept. In fact, the world, which is thirsty for an alternative path to development and hungry for a fresh way to look at success believes that what this small country has done is perhaps the right way to go. He added that we have an added responsibility as the global community expect Bhutan to provide intellectual leadership especially when it comes to advancing GNH. The global family of nations has now endorsed Bhutan’s proposal to make the pursuit of happiness as an important aim of development to promote human well-being. Therefore, he said that it is only natural and desirable that we in Bhutan, which happens to be the birthplace or the cradle of the GNH, do well. The programme of Educating for GNH was introduced to the Bhutanese education system at an appropriate time. While we could have done it earlier, we can make up for lost time. Honourable Lyonpo said that succeeding with Green Schools for Green Bhutan could actually solve some of the problems that our society faces today.

Honourable Lyonpo also spoke about his participation at the UNESCO General Assembly along with Honourable Secretary and other members of the education family. He said that they had occasion to listen to so many Ministers of Education from around the world presenting the state of education in their own countries. However, he said that he didn’t hear very many inspiring stories, and felt that what we are doing here could be an answer to the challenges Education faces today. He said that we first have to make sure that our approach answers the challenges that we ourselves face at home.

Speaking on the youth, Honourable Lyonpo said that we need to have faith in something, faith in our friends, in our parents, in the system and in the goodness of the world. He said that we all need something to rest our restless heart. He said that the young people were restless and needed something that tells them that life is worthwhile. Cultivating and sustaining faith in the goodness of this country is an important responsibility of education. He said that education was built on faith, on the hope the world was becoming better. That is why the child who does not know anything today knows a lot tomorrow and likewise with the passage of time the child learns and

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masters the surrounding. He said that this is the kind of faith that education should create in young people. If young people lost faith in the system, in teachers, leaders and intuition, he cautioned, the society would not be able to sustain itself and it would collapse. While we build classrooms, and schools, and provide food and physical facilities, we also need to build those tender nerves that need protection and empowering. He said that while it looks simple, it is in effect very complex, and, therefore, we need to look at our own role and our own mission from fresh and different angles.

In concluding, Honourable Lyonpo said that he was very glad to be able to work with all his colleagues in the Ministry, and expressed his gratitude to all officials from the Secretary down to support staff. He also thanked all the field staff in the dzongkhags and schools for doing a very good job and keeping our schools up and running. Lyonpo expressed the deep appreciation of the Royal Government to all our development partners especially those supporting Education. He concluded his remarks wishing everyone a successful and satisfying year 2012 ahead.

TASHI DELEK