

Distance Education in Asia and the Pacific:

NEPAL

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THE NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

Being a landlocked country with heterogenous physical and ethnic structures, Nepal is not only handicapped in its economic development but also in following a uniform educational strategy which is suitable for all groups of people and all regional needs.

Nepal has an area of 147, 181 sq. kms. divided for administrative purpose into five Development Regions; fourteen Zones and seventy-five Districts. Topographically, the country can be divided into three major categories: Plain Terai, Hills, and the Himalayas, each representing different climatic characteristics and diversities.

Basically Nepal is a rural-agrarian country with 92% of its population engaged in agriculture. Being one of the least developed countries, Nepal is confronted with a number of socio-economic problems. Judging from the prices of 1989, the annual per capita income of the Nepalese people is about US\$ 160.00. Out of the total population of 19 million, 42.25% live below the poverty line. Geographically, the incidence of poverty is highest in the Hills (50% of the total hill population) followed by the Mountains (44%) and the Terai (34.5%). With regard to the economic activities of the population, it is observed that 82.2% of the rural population are agriculture workers who are either illiterate or poorly literate with no formal schooling. Even in urban areas, the agriculture workers constitute 34.9% of the total urban population.

The underdeveloped human resource base is an issue that restricts development efforts in Nepal. The country has already implemented six Five-Year Plans and one Three-Year Plan. In spite of its thirty-three year long plan, Nepal still remains one of the least developed countries of the world. The development growth rate is hardly more than its population growth rate, forcing its people to live at subsistence levels.

The first Five-Year Plan witnessed the establishment of Tribhuvan University, including the College of Education and the Normal Schools. Similarly the next Five-Year Plans attempted to create a development infrastructure along with increasing production through various means. Development of education was one of the major endeavours of these plans and the increase both in number of schools and enrollment is the remarkable accomplishment of those plans. One of the outstanding features of the sixth plan is that it intended to fulfill the minimum basic needs of the people. Regarding the education sector, many changes in the structure of the education system were made following the recommendations of the Full Term Evaluation. The cycle of primary education was again extended up to the fifth grade. The lower secondary and secondary levels included grades Six to Seven and Eight to Ten respectively. A system of granting a lump sum was introduced to gradually reduce the government's obligation of school financing. A separate trade school scheme, as envisaged in the NESP, was introduced in place of the vocational school. Several innovative educational projects were implemented under this plan. They

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were the Education for Rural Development (Seti) Project, Primary Education Project, Science Education Project, Functional Adult Education Project and Population Education Project. An aim was also made to provide teacher training programmes through radio for 2500 teachers per year.

The seventh plan continued adopting the objectives of the sixth plan. This plan allocated a sum of Rs. 3010.2 million to the education sector out of the total plan outlays of Rs. 29,000 million. Out of the total education outlays, the primary and adult education got 10% whereas the higher education sector received 24.9%. The following table provides the distribution of resources to various educational areas.

TABLE 1: Allocation of Resources in the Education Sector of the Seventh Plan (1985-1990)

AREA	Rs. in Million	Percent
Primary and Adult Education	302.4	10.0
Other Educational Programs	526.0	17.5
Art and Culture	17.0	0.6
Higher Education	750.0	24.9
District Level Projects	1341.6	44.6
Science and Technology	73.2	2.4
TOTAL	3010.2	100.0

Source: National Planning Commission, The Seventh Plan, pp. 126 and 771.

The seventh plan aimed at enrolling 87% of the primary age cohort which required 1000 additional schools and more than 12,000 teachers. In order to upgrade the quality of primary education, the Primary Education Project was initiated in six districts. The Education for Rural Development (Seti) Project implemented in 1980 was also designed to integrate education for rural development in the Far Western Development Region using the Resource Center approach which aims to expand to other regions after completing the experimental stage. The plan also proposed to gradually integrate lower- secondary and secondary grades so that the secondary education level consisted of grades Six to Ten. The plan also aimed at establishing six new trade schools, implementing the Access of Girls and Women to Education project; implementing the Science Education Development Project in twenty-five districts and providing teacher training both through the regular system as well as by radio. The Radio Education Teacher Training Project was to train 6000 teachers during the plan period. In order to reduce the admission pressure on campuses, The Plan also stated that it was necessary to take substantial measures for providing higher education through open media like radio and by correspondence. Similarly, in order to raise the quality of education, the plan also envisaged continuation of school broadcasting and other radio programmes. With regard to higher education, The Plan aimed at improving higher education by strengthening the existing campuses. It was also stated in The Plan that arrangements would be made to impart higher education through the open education system like the radio, publications, tapes and correspondence courses. The Plan classified higher education into the three categories of technical, professional and general. Related institutes as well as faculties were included in those categories according to the nature of the disciplines. By 1987, there were 59,477 students enrolled in higher education of which the Central

Development Region had the highest enrollment (40,018) and the Far-western Development Region had the lowest enrollment (311). This indicates very high disparity in the distribution of higher education.

Currently, there is no national plan in operation in the country. Recently His Majesty's Government has constituted a commission on education for suggesting measures for educational reform in the politically changing context.

In 1977/78, the education sector was given a total of Rs. 277,671,000 as a share of the total HMG budget. This was increased to Rs. 1,628,084,000 in 1987. This constitutes a 486% increase for education in the government budget in a period of ten years. (The World Bank, 1990).

The growth in the economy has been very slow in real terms over the period from 1964 to 1986. The GDP measured in 1984/85 prices has increased at an annual growth rate of 2.75%, with agriculture GDP growing at a rate of 2.11%, and non-agriculture GDP at 3.84%. However, this GDP growth rate hardly exceeds population growth rate of 2.66%, keeping the standard of living virtually unchanged. This slow growth rate has a negative impact on the development of education in Nepal because of the poor economic condition of most of its people. This helps explain the high dropout rates, especially in bad crop years. Currently these drop-out rates are estimated to be 22% after grade One and the repetition rate for grade One was 39% (IEES, 19). These rates are found to be high compared to developing country standards and these rates are even higher for girls. It is clear, therefore, that unless the productivity of the farmers is raised, the attainment of higher GDP in Nepal cannot be realized. Since education helps them raise their productivity in terms of increasing their capacity to adopt and use improved technologies, such as fertilizer as well as hybrids, and to sell the output more profitably, the internal efficiency of the education sector in general and the primary schools in particular has to be raised substantially. This helps them broaden their horizon of knowledge and at the same time makes them receptive to modern technologies.

According to the Census of 1981, the total population of Nepal was 15,022,839 with the growth rate of 2.66 per annum. In the year 2000, the World Bank projected Nepal's population to be 24,329,000. According to the 1981 Census, the cohort aged zero to fourteen years constituted 41.4% whereas the labour force (15-59) came to be 52.9% and elderly people comprising the 60-85 + were 5.7% of the population. In 1990, the zero to fourteen age group was projected to be 41.7% whereas the labour force would be related by 0.4% (52.5) and elderly people would increase slightly. In the year 2000, the child population would decrease by 0.5% whereas elderly people would increase by 0.5%, and the volume of the labour force would remain unchanged.

Although Nepal is a country of multi-ethnicity having several languages and dialects, generally the Nepal language is used by all ethnic communities as the language of communication. This language is also used as a medium of instruction in all public schools. Some private schools use English as the medium of instruction. At the tertiary level, both Nepal and English have been officially permitted to be used as the medium of instruction. In practice, English is preferred for teaching technical subjects whereas Nepal is used for teaching professional and general subjects.

Nepal has a three-tier system of education. Primary education consists of five years of schooling for the six to ten year old cohort and another five years of schooling completes the cycle of secondary education for the eleven to fifteen year old cohort. Higher education

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comprises altogether six years of schooling categorized into three levels. The first two years of education is known as the Proficiency Certificate level and the second two years is called the Bachelor level. Similarly the Master level also consists of two years of education. The age group for higher education is seventeen to twenty-two years. In terms of the structure, Nepal has a system of five plus five plus two plus two plus two years of schooling.

The following are the objectives of different levels of education in Nepal as mentioned in the Seventh Plan. Primary education is to make students literate and develop their habit of becoming healthy. Lower secondary education is to build the character of students, develop the feeling of dignity of labour, stimulate the habit of working and prepare a base for secondary education. Secondary education is to prepare citizens capable of making contributions for all-round development of the country and to impart basic knowledge for obtaining higher education. Higher education is to prepare manpower required for national development and develop those people intellectually and make them capable citizens.

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) is responsible for school level education whereas Tribhuvan University is responsible for technical, professional and general education, while Mahendra Sanskrit University is responsible for classical Sanskrit education. The MOEC has three divisions dealing with planning, educational administration and general administration each headed by one Joint Secretary besides an additional Secretary and a Secretary for the whole Ministry. In addition to these, the Curriculum, Textbooks, Supervision Development Center (CTSDC) deals with school level curriculum, textbooks and supervisory aspects of education. The controller of Examination Office has been made responsible for conducting the School Leaving Certificate Examination given to all students completing ten years of schooling at the national level. Five Regional Directorates established in five regional development centers and seventy-five District Offices of Inspectors (Previously called District Education Officers) have been created for field level educational administration.

The two universities are headed by a Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor besides the Chancellor. There are five technical Institutes and four Faculties responsible for their respective disciplines. Four Research Centers have been created to undertake research activities related to various disciplines.

With the promulgation of the NESP, the National Education Committee (NEC) was created to formulate educational policies and provide the directives when and where needed. This is the apex body in the entire system. Recently a council for technical and vocational education has also been created to develop strategies related to lower level technical and vocational education in the country.

Nepal witnessed a tremendous growth of schools soon after the dawn of democracy in 1951. Since then the number of schools has been increasing rapidly. In 1976, the kingdom had 11,577 schools which increased to 14,416 in 1980 with 5.6% growth rate per annum. In 1990, the number of schools reached 19,049 with 4.2% growth rate. This is promising growth but it still needs to be expanded progressively in order to cope up with the population growth rate (2.66%). Between the years 1976 and 1990, the growth rate at the primary level was 3.7% whereas this increased to 4.5% at the lower secondary level. This growth rate at the secondary level was 10% during the same period. The growth of enrollment at the school level education has been enormous. In 1981, the primary school age cohort was 2,116,000 of which 66% were in the schools. In 1985, this age cohort was estimated to be 2,240,000 with 1.4% growth rate. Out of this, 81% of the children were in

the school that year with 6.9% growth rate per annum. By 2000, the primary age group population has been projected to be 3,283,000 of which 89.2% will be in school.

Similarly, the secondary age cohort (11-15) was 1,543,000 in 1981 of which 20.3% were in school. For the year 2000, this age group has been projected to be 2,809,000 out of which 31.8% is expected to be the enrollment ratio.

Training of teachers at the secondary level has been the responsibility of the Faculty of Education of Tribhuvan University. Although it had conducted primary teacher training programmes for several years, currently it is the responsibility of the MOEC which has been training primary teachers through the basic teacher training programme of 150 hours duration. This Basic Teacher Training Programme has also been imparted through the Radio Teacher Training Project currently run by the MOEC.

By the year 2000, a total of 79,189 primary school teachers will be required in the country with 2.8% growth rate per annum. Similarly, the growth rate at secondary level would have to be 4.3% per year to employ 34,833 teachers for enrolling the only 32% specific age cohort. These projections have been made on the basis of the 1990 data. In 1989, the trained teachers constituted a total of 40.4% in the country (40.0% for primary, 37.0% for lower secondary and 50.0% for secondary levels).

Nepal has three mass-media that could be used for distance education. They are the radio, television and print media. In 1971, the HMG promulgated the communication plan with "Communication for Development" as its central theme having the following objectives:

- To avail active participation of general public in developmental activities.
- To strengthen the national unity of the kingdom.
- To improve the standard of education of the general public.
- To educate children of different levels.
- To expand international understanding.

Although Radio Nepal was formally started in 1950, in 1952 it became part of the public sector. Since 1984, it has been operating the programmes under the management of the Radio Broadcasting Service Development Committee. According to the Seventh Plan, the main policy of Radio Nepal has been to make radio broadcasting easily accessible to all the people of the country. Currently, it is on the air for seventeen hours per day, from 6 A.M. to 11 P.M. through two short wave and one medium wave frequencies. Under the national transmission scheme, Radio Nepal transmits three types of education programmes for ninety minutes a week. These programmes are educational programmes, School Broadcast and Radio Teacher Training.

Nepal Television (NTV) was formally established only in 1985 although it was brought into operation under the communication plan of 1971 with "Communication for Development" as its main theme. Currently the NTV has been covering 23% of the population throughout the country by transmitting its programmes for four and a half hours per day. Of this, thirty minutes are covered by educational programmes produced by Educational Television (ETV) daily. It has established hundreds of community viewing centers (CVCs) at about 300 locations within the coverage areas of the Kathmandu valley, Central and the Eastern Terai.

The postal service has been the oldest and most economical means of mass communication available in Nepal. It was established in the country in 1875 for carrying government documents to a few selected places. It was made public in 1876 and became a

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member of the World Postal Union in 1956. It joined the Asia Pacific Regional Postal Union in 1982. It has established its national network throughout the country using surface mail and air mail. It also provides services like money orders and saving banks in some areas. The Seventh Plan outlined a number of policy guidelines in order to increase the efficiency of the postal services. Some of the major policy guidelines were to improve the quality of postal services in terms of its confidentiality and regularity; to introduce gradual modernization and mechanization; to extend economic services; to introduce improvements in the organizational structure of the existing postal services; and to mobilize people's participation in the development and extension of postal services.

The history of telephone services goes back to the year 1913 in Nepal. Before the implementation of the first Five-Year Plan, a number of steps were taken in the country to expand the trunk and automatic services in the limited areas of the country. During the First Plan Period, the Telecommunication Department was established in 1959. Since then a number of measures were undertaken to expand the facilities and enhance the efficiency of the telecommunication services. The objectives set in the Seventh Plan (1985-90) were

...to expand local telephone exchange and reliable trunk services in different urban and other important parts of the country; to develop and expand telecommunication media to integrate various parts of the kingdom and maintain regional balance.

The plan also stated that appropriate trunk telecommunication media for international trunk system would be steadily developed; local telephone exchange services would be expanded in all five development centers covering all places of national importance; trunk and telephone facilities would be expanded in all district and zonal headquarters; medium and lower technical manpower necessary for the operation would be trained; and inexpensive and appropriate technology would be selected to provide efficient services. The seventh plan aimed to distribute a maximum of 40,920 additional telephone lines in addition to the 27,780 telephone lines available in the country at the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan period.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Distance education has been used in Nepal to support the teacher training activities only. The use of radio, however, was started by the College of Education for promoting adult education activities way back in 1957. With the introduction of the NESP in 1971, it was realized that conventional face-to-face training methods alone would not be able to meet the demand for trained teachers in the country. Until 1970, the College of Education was the only institution responsible for providing teacher training in Nepal. It imparted training to prepare secondary and primary school teachers through a four-year BEd programme. In spite of the tremendous efforts made by the College, the percentage of trained teachers could not be raised substantially in the country. The NESP made teacher training mandatory for obtaining permanent tenure in teaching and also for qualifying to receive salary differentiations. But due to various technical reasons, the Institute of Education (IOE) of Tribhuvan University (T.U.), which incorporates the College of Education, could not meet the training demand of the country. Thus, thought was given to finding some alternative strategies to mitigate the problem. IOE subsequently introduced a new programme called

Teacher Training Through Distance Learning in 1976/77. This programme was designed to upgrade the academic qualifications of under-School Leaving Certificate (SLC) graduates, and train in-service primary school teachers of remote areas. The programme was initiated to reduce the cost of training in-service primary teachers; expedite the training facilities; provide training for the teachers in out-lying areas; and adopt alternative structure and method of teacher training.

Originally, the plan was meant to be implemented in three phases. In the first year, the plan was to cover 150 In-service teachers in three districts followed by 300 in-service teachers in six districts in each successive two year period. For this purpose, IOE prepared the admission test, a distance learning team, the self-learning materials, contact session strategies and graduation requirements. The scheme was in operation for some years but was discontinued after 1980. Thus, the Teacher Training through Distance Learning program had the distinction of being a pioneer in the field of promoting teacher training other than through conventional face-to-face teaching.

In order to implement the strategy, IOE created a unit under its Extension Division and developed a set of model self-learning materials according to the B level curriculum as it is called, which included Teaching Language, Teaching Mathematics, Teaching Social Studies, Teaching Arts, Teaching Health and Physical Education, and Handbook of Student Teaching. Upon completion of the preparation of self-learning materials (SLMs), IOE developed a test based on Arithmetic, Nepali and English languages suitable for the eighth grade level students. The test was revised after examining its validity in two hill areas and was administered for the first phase programme. IOE assigned a team of experts consisting of two to three teachers of various subject areas and sent them to each of the selected districts along with six SLMs and other related instructional materials. The team contacted various interested In-service teachers with the help of District Education Officers (DEOs) and administered the entrance test. Those who passed the test were given a fifteen day orientation training in order to acquaint them with the methods of using SLMs. The scheme provided three months of self-learning period. During this period, the participants were expected to study the SLMs at home while working in the school, and to contact IOE in case of difficulty in understanding SLMs. The scheme also prescribed two months contact session in order to help the participants overcome their difficulties in understanding SLMs. The session was held during the long vacation period at school so that it would not interfere with the school programme. At the end of the session, the participants were given the final semester examination and successful candidates were awarded certificates.

In the first phase only three districts were covered by the programme with an enrollment of 137 out of 150 hoped for candidates. Out of this enrollment, 103 candidates were declared successful. In the second phase, it was extended to six more districts with 308 enrolles. During this phase, SLMs along with a teachers guide for the second semester were also designed and prepared. The successful candidates of the first semester were also enrolled in the second semester training. The entrance test was also revised. Similarly, in the third phase which was implemented in 1978/79, six more districts were included in the training scheme with 330 participants. IOE extended the scheme for the fourth year in four more districts instead of six districts as planned before. The number of participants in the fourth year was 339 although the quota was only for 200. In the fourth year of the programme IOE made necessary arrangements to conduct the second semester training in four districts covering three districts of 1977/78 and one district of 1976/77.

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This programme was discontinued after the fourth session of 1979/80. It would be relevant here to note that this scheme was designed for two semesters. To exert immediate impact on classroom teaching, the first semester was devoted to methodology and the second semester was designed to raise the academic standard of the participants by providing content teaching based on the high school curriculum. Altogether, the programme was operated in nineteen districts but the participants from two districts had the privilege of completing the whole programme. The remaining participants were given the opportunity of completing only one semester. This programme was financed by UNICEF and it received Rs. 300 thousand per annum, from the fund allocated to primary education. The reason for the discontinuation of the programme was the launching of the Radio Teacher Training Project in 1978. The Examination Section of IOE is still taking care of the unsuccessful candidates of the Distance Learning Programme.

The Radio Teacher Training Project (RETTP) was another alternative strategy adopted by HMG in 1978 to further expand the teacher training programme through radio in Nepal. Prior to this, primary school teachers with SLC, which is the minimum formal qualification required, constituted only 63% of the total teachers. As the conventional teacher training programme was restricted for a variety of reasons, including lack of qualified candidates, inadequate incentive structure, severe manpower shortages, high dropout rates and the problem of replacing the teachers working in the rural areas, the use of radio for training purposes was considered a cost-effective and functional strategy to replace, or supplement, the conventional one. As a result of this an agreement was signed between the HMG and USAID in 1977 to undertake a radio education project. In the following year, a five-year technical assistance contract was awarded to Southern Illinois University. The project was designed to develop an institution capable of producing and administering radio-based training programmes. The project was launched in 1978. Initially, it was implemented to train the backlog of untrained teachers working in schools together with the campus-based ten month training course. In this context, it would be relevant to quote the following statement to explain the causes for admitting the under-SLC teachers as a target group of the training:

The choice of under-SLC teachers as RETT's first target group was based on two assumptions: (1) that few new teachers would be added to this group, enabling the entire cohort to be trained within a few years; and (2) that such a delimited undertaking would serve as the 'breaking-in' phase for a radio-based, distance training system whose mandate then could be expanded in directions and on a scale as envisioned in the original project design (Holmes et al, 1990).

In 1981, the HMG dropped the compulsory training requirement for securing tenure, and as a result of this, the number of SLC pass teachers attending the conventional training decreased sharply.

The RETT had two consecutive projects (five and six years) with three programmes for two target groups. Within the eleven year period, the project laid emphasis on training of under-SLC teachers for nine years from 1980 to 1990. This programme ran parallel to the conventional face-to-face teacher training imparted in IOF campuses, with primary and secondary emphasis on pedagogy and course content respectively. With respect to pedagogy, Foundation of Education and Methods of Teaching were the major subjects, along with the concept of Rural Development to enable the teachers to act as change agents in their respective areas. Similarly, course contents included Nepali, Mathematics, Health, Social Studies, Art and Physical Education. This training programme designed for the under-SLC

teachers was discontinued when the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) abolished such training. Within this period, six sessions altogether were run which enrolled a total of 6429 teachers from 72 districts of the country. Out of this, 84% (5371) of the enrollees completed the course, while 54% (3478) passed and received certificates enabling them to receive the training allowance provided by the government.

The RETT II was started in 1984. This second phase was developed as an instructional programme for primary teachers following the recommendations of the RETT I. The evaluation of the first phase indicated the increment of the knowledge of the participants in course contents, without the effect on attitudes or behaviour in the classroom. This necessitated the shifting of focus of the programme from teaching methodology to course content for raising the level of knowledge of the subject matter among the under-SLC teachers. In this context, the Radio Tuition Programme (RTP) evolved in Nepal in 1986.

The RTP covered the high school curriculum. Mathematics, English, Nepali and Science were originally included in the broadcasting program with the two-fold objectives of raising the knowledge of the under-SLC teachers in these subjects and helping them prepare for the SLC examination. Because the educational background of under-SLC teachers was extremely diverse, it was difficult for the programme to develop a standard curriculum which could meet the needs of the participating teachers. Therefore, the RTP produced lessons only in English for broadcasting. Even in this case, it was found that the English competency levels among the under-SLC teachers (14,000 in 1986), were extremely varied, making it difficult to produce a single package suitable to all participating teachers. Despite the difficulties confronted by the RETTP, a reasonably good English-by-radio instructional package was developed for RETTP without identifying the beneficiaries. Thereafter, an entrance test was administered to students in order to evaluate the level of their English competency prior to the second session. It was found that out of 2600 applicants, only 658 were selected for the test, of which only 100 candidates could score above 40%. This necessitated the lowering of the entrance standard from 40% to 32% which enabled 319 teachers to participate. Since this constituted only 12% of the under-SLC teachers of the ten districts, it was again considered too low. Hence, 473 teachers from ten districts were eventually allowed to enroll in the two sessions of one of the courses (Holmes et. al, 1990), and of these, a relatively high number of them (369, or 78%) took the post-test.

In spite of the anomaly between the project goal and the target group, the RETTP made promising efforts in using distance learning an alternative strategy to replace or supplement face-to-face teacher training. Acceptance of the MOEC to use radio-broadcasting for training In-service teachers under the new basic teacher training strategy could be considered as a recognition of its effectiveness. RTP was discontinued following the HMG's policy of not imparting teacher training to any under-SLC teachers.

In 1987, the RETTP was asked to run the Basic Teacher Training (BTT) course through radio while it was still operating the RTP. In 1987, HMG decided to begin a BTT course consisting of a 150 hour training package. Prior to this, primary teacher training programmes implemented by various training agencies, including RETTP, used to be ten months' duration. Since the government was determined to provide basic needs which also included education as one of the components to all the people of the country by 2000 A.D., providing primary education to all the primary age cohort had become the responsibility of the government. This required preparing around 80,000 trained teachers by that date. In

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the meantime it was realized that the training of such a vast number of teachers through face-to-face methods requiring ten months' duration would be difficult. Therefore, the government introduced BTT course as an emergency measure.

The BTT course consists of general education and methods of teaching. The subjects in the methodology section are Nepali, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Health which were also the subjects of RETT, and two additional subjects, English and Science. Some minor subjects like Sanskrit, Art, Physical Education and Moral Education were also included in the programme (Holmes et al, 1990). Currently it takes nine months to complete the course cycle of 150 hours.

RETTP has already produced a total number of 3467 under-SLC trained teachers and 1908 SLC-trained teachers. Altogether, RETTP has prepared a total of 5375 trained teachers in the country starting from 1982/ to 1989/90. Currently, the BTT has an enrollment of 1800 In-service teachers starting from 1982/83 to 1989/90. The following table explains the nature of enrollment and its corresponding graduation rates.

TABLE 2: The Enrollment and Graduates of RETTP from 1981/82 to 1989/90

Year	Enrollment		Graduates	
	Under SLC	SLC	Under SLC	SLC
1981/82	1117	-	-	-
1982/83	1934	-	1103	-
1983/84	1285	-	1164	-
1984/85	1257	-	667	-
1986/87	896	-	553	-
1988/89	-	1590	-	1079
1989/90	-	1760	-	829
TOTAL	6489	3350	3467	1908

Source: Radio Teacher Training Project Office.

Many researchers undertook to assess the functioning of RETTP. A list of research reports is outlined in Appendix I.

Radio broadcasting for schools was started in Nepal in 1962 with the production of nine fifteen-minute general education programmes for students. The College of Education distributed 200 radio sets to teachers. In addition, a fifteen-minute adult education programme was also broadcast in 1963. These were broadcast weekly and continued until 1966. In order to enrich the broadcasting programme, HMG invited some foreign experts from UNESCO and the Colombo Plan to work in Nepal. Similarly UNICEF was requested to provide studio equipment. HMG included school broadcasting programme in its NESP in 1971 following the recommendation of UNESCO's report. At the outset, the Programme was started by the Audio-Visual Division of the Janak Educational Materials Centre in 1971. With the creation of the Radio Unit in the Audio-Visual Division, a weekly Teacher's Programme designed for preparing teachers for the planned school broadcasting series began to go to air.

In 1972, the Radio Unit developed the demonstration school programmes for grade Four in Social Studies and broadcast them on an experimental basis in 1973. For this pur-

pose, eighteen schools located in Kaski, Chitawan and Kavre were given radio sets along with evaluation forms to be filled in by the schools. Results of the evaluation forms were brought out in 1971 after the first forty-one broadcasts. The following were the evaluation results:

Programmes were suitable to students	95.7%
Subject matter was clear	94.3%
Broadcasts were helpful	91.0%
Broadcasts helped children to understand what they didn't in the class	93.5%
Each of the 41 programmes was useful or very useful	100.0%

In 1975, a weekly programme for grades Four and Five in English and Social Studies was introduced respectively and some 500 portable radio sets were distributed to all grades One through Five of seventeen districts of the country. By 1976, 108 programmes were produced by the Radio Unit. These programmes were on: Grade One Nepali (10), Grade Two Nepali (10), Grade Three Nepali (10), Grade Four Social Studies (26), Grade Four English (26), Grade Five Social Studies (26), for a total of 108. All these programmes were transmitted over Radio Nepal at 2 P.M. on a cyclical basis. No new additional programmes were produced until 1978 due to lack of additional air time on Radio Nepal. Some modifications, however, were made during this period.

The Audio-Visual Division became part of the Textbook, Curriculum, Supervision Development Centre (CTSDC) in 1978 and Science programme for grade Four was broadcast on Thursdays. All the broadcast programmes of CTSDC were complementary to regular class-room instruction not leading to any certificate. The programmes were designed to accomplish the following twofold objectives.

- a. to assist teachers in planning and improving teaching/learning process;
- b. to assist students in improving their listening skills and in effectively learning the broadcast materials by means of activity participating in the learning process.

New ERA, a private research centre, conducted an evaluation study of the School Broadcasting Programme for UNICEF and submitted its report in 1979 along with a number of pertinent recommendations.

Currently, the School Broadcasting Programme of CTSDC consists of seven courses. Of these, three programmes are on Social Studies intended for grades One, Two, and Three; Nepali language has three programmes intended also for grades One, Two, and Three, and one programme on English is intended for grade Four. Programmes on both Social Studies and Nepali language are broadcast twice a month whereas the programme on the English language is broadcast twice a week. The programmes are broadcast for fifteen minutes each.

Although the School Broadcasting Programme was initially assisted by UNICEF, UNESCO and Colombo Plan in terms of equipment and expertise, it has not received any external financial support yet. Its equipment is by now quite old and it needs to be replaced if radio broadcasting is to be continued. Currently, it has been allocated an annual budget of approximately \$19,765.00.

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THE LEGAL STATUS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Until now, no legal status has been given to distance education in Nepal. However, the graduates of the BTT course imparted through radio broadcasts receive certificates identical to those awarded by other agencies which use the face-to-face method to teach the same BTT programme.

OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

Aims and Objectives of Distance Education

The Seventh Development Plan (1985-1990) of Nepal included the Radio Education Teacher Training (RETT) programme. It aims to train 6,000 in-service primary school teachers, and proposes the use of distance education through radio and correspondence as a strategy to provide tertiary level education in order to ameliorate enrollment pressure on higher education (NPC, 1985, p.709 and 717). Apart from these statements, there are no officially stated national goals or aims of distance education.

Two institutions offer distance education programmes through Radio Nepal. These are the Radio Education Teacher Training unit offering training programmes to in-service primary school teachers in selected districts, and the Audio-Visual unit of the Curriculum, Textbook, and Supervision Development Centre (CTSDC) offering programmes to primary school students. Both of these units are under the administration of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The main objective of the initial RETT programme was to develop and test a training programme for untrained, rural primary school teachers, which would use the medium of radio reinforced by written self-instructional materials and periodic workshops. In 1987, the scope of the RETT project was increased to design, produce and implement a 150-hour Basic Teacher Training Course for SLC-pass teachers consistent with the overall national policy of providing basic training to all untrained teachers (Holmes, et al, 1990, p. 14). Thus, the main objectives of the current RETT programme is to provide the 150-hour Basic Teacher Training course for in-service primary school teachers in selected districts. The objective of the school radio programme was to supplement the teachers in the class and to teach lessons from the textbook so that they can be easily understood by the students (New ERA, 1979, p. 5). It has remained more or less the same up to the present. Currently, the objectives of the School Broadcasting programme are:

- a) To assist teachers in - planning lessons in an effective manner, improving the teaching and learning process, arousing students' interest in the lesson presented, and recapitulating lessons to consolidate students' learning;
- b) To assist students in - taking active interest and participation in the lesson, understanding the presented lessons effectively, and improving their listening skills (CTSDC, 1987, p.4).

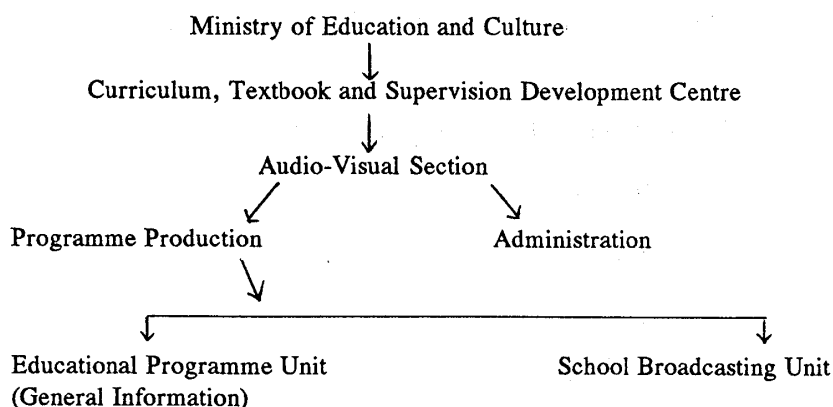
Control, Organizational and Management Structure of Distance Education

Distance education in Nepal is a national establishment, in the sense that it is part of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). It should be noted, however, that there is no national level policy-making board for coordinating the development and consolidation of education programmes in the country. The institutional status of distance education in Nepal is confined either to project status or it is a small section within a traditional establishment (CTSDC).

The RETT programme is currently run under the Primary Education Division of the MOEC. The administrative organization of the RETT project is composed of three different committees, the Policy Committee, Research Committee and Examination Committee, all chaired by the Joint Secretary of the Primary Education Division. They provide guidelines for the execution of the RETT project activities. The Policy Committee finalizes the programme for each fiscal year by fixing the training quota and the number of districts to be covered. The Research Committee decides on the scope and modality of research and evaluation activities. In this connection, the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), a research centre of Tribhuvan University, has been assisting the RETT in the areas of research and evaluation. The Examination Committee sets the policies and selects persons to prepare examination questions. The grading of the examinations is carried out by subject experts assigned by the Examination Committee. The final examinations are prepared, administered, and marked in line with certification requirements.

The School Broadcasting Programme is managed by the Audio-Visual Section of the Curriculum, Textbook and Supervision Development Centre (CTSDC), which is a school level curriculum development wing of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The School Broadcasting Programme is a small, seemingly not so significant, part of the larger complex of curriculum and textbook development activities that are going on in the CTSDC, as can be seen in the diagram.

TABLE 3: Relationship Between the Various Distance Education Providers



The relationship between distance education and non-distance education is nebulous. Although some faculty members of the Faculty of Education (FOE) have been assisting the RETT on an individual basis, there are no official linkages between the FOE and the RETT. The School Broadcasting programme has been operating on its own, except that several educational personnel of other institutions contribute scripts for school broadcasts.

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Financing Distance Education

As the RETT project was started as a joint venture of His Majesty's Government, Nepal, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the sources of financial support for the RETT have been HMG and USAID. Financial resources spent on the establishment and development of the RETT project for the period 1978- 1990 are shown below.

TABLE 4: Expenditures on RETT I (1978-83) & RETT II (1984.90)

Budget Category	RETT I	RETT II	TOTAL
Technical assistance	2,158,869	848,973	3,004,842
Training	222,432	249,139	471,571
Evaluation (external)	0	34,679	34,679
Local support cost (USAID)	353,304	240,310	593,613
Operating cost (HMG)	878,639	442,493	1,321,132
Commodities	2,676,584	544,060	3,220,644
Building construction	109,032	186,762	295,793
Total expenditures (in constant 1988 \$)	\$6,398,860	\$2,543,415	\$8,942,275

Source: Holmes, et al. Training Teachers at a Distance: A Case Study of Nepal's Radio Education Teacher Training Project. December 1990. p.72.

It may be noted that the first phase of the project was about two and a half times more expensive than the second phase. This was mainly due to expenditures on commodities, including the purchase of a short-wave transmitter, and technical assistance in the form of expatriate advisors.

The relative contribution of HMG and USAID to the launching of the RETT project is shown in the table below.

TABLE 5: Expenditure for RETT II Project (1984-1990) by His Majesty's Government and USAID (in US Dollars)

Budget Category	HMG	USAID
Budget assistance	-	794,554
Training	-	233,996
Evaluation (external)	-	32,571
Local support costs	415,598	225,703
Commodities	-	510,992
Building construction	-	175,410
Total (in 1988 \$)	\$415,598 \$442,493	\$1,973,226 \$2,100,921

Source: op. cit, p.70

It may be seen from the above table that an overwhelmingly large proportion of development cost has been borne by USAID (about 83%). Only the operating cost was borne by HMG. The USAID assistance to the RETT project ended in September, 1990. The government allocated budget to the RETT in the current fiscal year (1990/91) is US\$55,035. This amount is 0.12% of the total education budget. The government allocation of budget to the School Broadcasting Programme is US\$19,765, which is about 0.04% of the total education budget. Due to lack of resources, and financial as well as technical expertise, the School Broadcasting Programme is in a state of stagnation, and even deterioration.

Geographical Coverage

The RETT programme has focused on the districts in the areas around Kathmandu. This is because the project personnel wanted to restrict coverage to Radio Nepal's medium-wave reception areas, as well as the MOEC allocation of basic teacher training quota in the specific districts to be covered by RETT.

Instructional System

The radio-based basic teacher training programme administered by the RETT project consists of the 150 hours of instruction which is broken down into 120 hours of radio lesson and 30 hours of practical session. Altogether 480 radio lessons of fifteen-minute duration spread over 240 broadcasts have been produced. The training curricula covered all major subjects taught in primary level, plus Pedagogy, as shown below:

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of lessons</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Pedagogy (Education)	40	10
Teaching Nepali	100	25
Teaching English	80	20
Teaching Mathematics	100	25
Teaching Science	50	12.5
Teaching Health	50	12.5
Teaching Social Studies	50	12.5
Other subjects (Art, Physical Ed.)	10	2.5
Practical session (face-to-face)		30
TOTAL	480	150

The radio lessons are broadcast six days a week for approximately nine months. Teachers are provided with a set of Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs) comprising 1-2 page units corresponding to each of 480 radio lessons.

The RETT project also includes a supporting Resource Teacher System, which provides the opportunity to meet once a month with fellow trainees (on the average 25 teachers in a cluster) and one or more resource teachers (high school subject teachers) to discuss and clarify issues related to training. A final examination is conducted at the end of

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each course. Teachers must pass all of the seven subjects with 50% marks in order to pass the course. Successful teachers are awarded training certificates which entitle them to receive a training allowance (currently Rs. 65 a month) on top of their salaries.

The School Broadcasting Programme is based on textbooks. Each lesson is of fifteen-minutes' duration. The number of lessons broadcast in different subject areas are Nepali I, II, and III; Social Studies I, II, and III; and English IV.

Research Activities in Distance Education

Research activities in distance education are confined to a base-line survey of teachers willing to enroll in RETT; radio reception quality; reactions of participating teachers to the content and quality of programmes; and achievement at the end of the programme.

In addition to annual progress reports, major evaluation studies of the School Broadcasting Programme and Radio Education Teacher Training are carried out.

Enrollment in Distance Education

The current enrollment in RETT is 1800; the current enrollment in CTSDC is 110,440; the number of graduates in RETT is 1800; the number of graduates in CTSDC is 110,440; the total number of RETT graduates is 5375.

International Affiliation and Cooperation

Both RETT and School Broadcasting programmes have not so far obtained membership in any international institution. Both programmes have received foreign assistance. RETT received such assistance first in 1978 from USAID following the agreement between HMG and USAID. Similarly the School Broadcasting Programme received assistance from USAID, UNICEF, UNESCO and Colombo plan in the form of equipment, expertise and studios.

Growth and Expansion

With regard to RETT, the financial provision and face-to-face sessions were decreased whereas distance education programmes and local study centers were expanded. Study material and textbooks, the teaching force, the variety of courses offered and the broadcasts remained stable. With regard to school broadcasting, the financial programme was expanded, whereas audio-visual aids were decreased. Similarly, distance education programmes, study materials and textbooks, the teaching force and broadcasting programmes remained stable. Neither programme plans to expand distance education in the near future, and will maintain the status quo.

It appears that there lacks a clear policy on the part of the government regarding the development of distance education in Nepal, although it has shown some interest in using mass media as an alternative strategy for extending educational opportunity to the people.

Problems and Issues

Distance education in Nepal is gaining popularity both from a governmental perspective and from the participants as well, because: it accommodates those who cannot join the regular programme; it provides an opportunity to in-service teachers to upgrade their academic and professional skills; it reduces the shortage of trained teachers in deficiency areas; it is cost-effective, and the existing media technology can be used for providing learning opportunities to participants, thereby meeting the education components of the Basic Needs Components.

A major factor hindering the distance education programme is lack of a clear policy and the legal status of distance education. Although mention was made in the Sixth Plan of using radio broadcasting for training teachers, specific policy and strategies were not given in the documents. The only legal status has been that the trained teachers of BTT programmes receive the same certificate awarded to other participants of regular BTT programmes. No law or decrees have been issued so far regarding distance education. The lack of a comprehensive organizational structure is also a problem. At present there is a dual unit in the public sector conducting distance education - RETT and School Broadcasting. The facilities available in the RETT can be utilized for the School Broadcasting Programme too. The programme could be much more cost-effective. The existence of two units independent of each other creates a problem of double infrastructures, besides higher financial involvement. These two units should be converted into a National Distance Education Centre.

Lack of adequate technical expertise is another significant issue. The distance education programmes are confronted with a lack of adequately trained technicians which restricts the development of various programmes. For instance, the SIM does not contain self-instructional (programmed instruction) features. RETT has been supported by USAID but the School Broadcasting Programme does not have any such support now. These programmes are hampered by inadequate budgetary provision. Lack of a comprehensive plan and a sound vision or direction means that both the programmes are being run as ad hoc programmes because they do not have any comprehensive plan. The programmes lack sound vision or future direction for distance education. Cultural constraints are a real limitation as well, as Nepal is a country of multi-ethnicity. Different ethnic groups have different beliefs and value systems. Thus one uniform programme may not be suitable for all. The programme has to cater to the interests of different groups and this also restricts the development of distance education. Lack of air time is an issue because at present, all the distance education programmes are broadcast over Radio Nepal. Being a commercial enterprise, Radio Nepal has to sell its time to different clients on a competitive basis. Currently Radio Nepal has allocated thirty minutes per day to RETT programmes and around twenty-three hours to School Broadcasting Programmes. Radio Nepal cannot provide additional air time to distance education activities, and the choice of broadcasting time also depends upon the interest of Radio Nepal. This limited air time and restricted scheduling of the programmes creates a major constraint to the development of distance education in Nepal.

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