



## **EJG INTERACTION WITH EDUCATION MINISTER : PRADIP NEPAL**

By Pushpa Raj Poudel, Program Manager, EJG

Education Journalists' Group organized an interaction program as usual in its central office on Wednesday. Appearing in the formal program for the first time after his appointment, Minister for Education and Sports, Pradip Nepal said that today's education policy should have some relation with daily life. Minister Nepal has been applauded for his rapid decision to appoint the Vice-Chancellors in the four universities which were remaining vacant for more than a year. He expressed his full commitment to bring educational system in the right track in spite of some limitations. He further added that Primary Education should be made free, education should be employment oriented, English language should be introduced from grade one, and the languages recognized by the UNO should also be taught in the country in order to catch opportunities in the international level.

The program was co-moderated by the president and the general secretary of EJG, Mr. Bhup Raj Khadka and Mr. Prakash Silwal respectively.

Minister Nepal answered the questions raised by the journalists as it was his first public program after his appointment as the Minister. Previously he was in the opinion that unless he was able to fill up the vacant posts of the universities, he will not appear in the public program.

EJG had framed out major four issues for the program in order to bring out in the discussion.

### **Issues Raised by EJG**

What is the public commitment of Nepal as a minister of Education and Sports for better change in education?

How will the coalition government, where Maoist has joined with the agenda of Peoples' Education, democratize education sector (Shikshama Lokantrikaran)?

Editor's note: Not one "English" language newspaper carried this story. Shame on you!!!!

### **I'M ALL FOR A SISTER LANGUAGE, BROTHER!!**

By Dr. Nancy J. Baker, Education Advisor

Have the educationist and educators in Nepal really thought through the language problem in Nepal? Do they really want students to start school by learning their "Mother Tongue" along with Nepali? Do we want a curriculum in 16 different languages? Other countries have had to deal with this issue. They ended up with hundreds of languages and attempted to find teachers, or tutors, to perform the task of "teaching" youngsters in their "mother tongue" (native or tribal language).

Students going to school in Nepal don't necessarily begin with a good language base. Having learned in a Mother Language is not a guarantee of good language development. It is romantic and yes, we want children to remember and embrace their heritage, but have educators, or shall we say well-meaning politicians, really given it much thought?

Children are first taught by parents. Parents in remote villages who are themselves often illiterate and do not have good language patterns. Their mother tongue is rudimentary and functional, used every day around the small village. It is the daily talk of village and the work there. It is not conversations about world affairs, fashion, the movies, books, science, complex issues of thought, and matters

that would build a child's sentence structure and vocabulary towards higher levels of school, even secondary school. Village life and its speech patterns and vocabulary would be fairly basic. There is nothing wrong with that, but when a child enters school and is confronted with Newari, Nepali and then, English, he/she has not only one or two or even three entirely new languages to learn but a whole new set of rules for language syntax, structure, etc. etc. for each of those languages. How much of this can be learned in the first year of school... First Grade, and this is assuming that the child is six or seven years of age.

What happens when the child is nine or ten and just brought to school with no previous formal education? This is where the real problem begins for the teachers and the school system. What to do with this child? Right away we know that he/she doesn't fit in. We can't place this child comfortably in a First Level. He is too large. He stands out and this is demeaning. The other children would unintentionally and thoughtlessly make fun of him. Already, some backward school systems are talking about the need of retaining him next year, knowing that the test results and his performance for the year will never get him into Second Grade, let alone into Sixth Grade where he belongs with his peers. What do we do with him? Or her?

Some schools solve this problem when they have a lot of "misplaced students" by forming a **Newcomers Class** where students of varying ages are given crash courses in the dominant language that is being taught in that school. In this case, it would be Nepali. Each child would be tested in all subject areas and would be placed appropriately in math and perhaps science and social science. The emphasis would be teaching them survival Nepali. Survival meaning the basics: reading and writing. The student would be able to produce work at their cognitive or thinking level, but perhaps, lower written and reading level until they could catch up. Some students stay in Newcomer Classes for part of a year or perhaps the entire year depending on their individual progress. Then, they are placed

in age appropriate levels with additional support in the form of tutors or Teacher Assistants. That always depends on the finances of the school. Have the politicians and educators in Nepal thought of that extra cost?

Another support that school districts give to students entering school with no educational background, from the very beginning, is **tutorial**. Tutors are assigned to students and this tutor, individually, or in small groups, work with students, much like the Newcomer Classes, but with more individualized assistance. Paid tutors are another budgetary drain. Some of these tutors are parents, college students, or retired teachers who volunteer their time. Most tutors and teachers are credentialed, but given assistance with these "para-professionals" who are not paid.

What happens in a regular classroom when students do not "make it"? Waiting until the tests is obviously too late for the child. The main thing is that the teacher needs **support services** and more importantly so does the child. The best thing that can happen is that the teacher identifies as soon as possible that the child is not performing at grade level and has a parent conference with the parents, the Head Teacher, and any other school personnel there that might be available to assist the child's progress (for incidence a School Psychologist or Counselor, the School Nurse or a Speech Teacher).

**As a team working together, the professionals and the parents can discuss:**

1. What are the positive skills and characteristics of the child?
2. What problem is the child experiencing at school and/or home?
3. What could be causing these problems?
4. What could the parents do to help?
5. What could the professionals do to help?
6. What are options for the child?

In some schools, this **Student Advisory Committee** met on a regular basis to help students with a wide range of problems which included social, academic, and health problems. It was a problem solving activity which helped the school personnel as much as it

helped students and parents. Working together, they attempt to answer the questions listed above. It was amazing how many problems were solved when we got together to discuss them and it built a very positive relationship with the parents and community. Professionals in the community such as doctors and dentists began donating some of their time because they saw the worth in the health issues that were discussed and how important health was to the performance of students in the classroom. Nepal has a great advantage of having **NGO support** that has not only financial support but many professionals begging to assist families and especially children.

Another support is **summer school**. Rather than retain students and make their predicament worse, students can go to summer school for more in-depth studies to bring their skills up.

Yes, I know I traveled from thinking about too many languages and the language development of students to retention and what can be done for students instead of retaining them, but I think they are hand in hand. My experience in a district with over 50% non-English speakers showed me that much thought has to be taken in a language program. I wonder how much thought has gone into promoting the teaching of Nepal's Mother Languages before Nepali and English:

Do you have qualified teachers in each of these languages at each grade level?

Do you have qualified teachers who can teach each subject at each grade level?

Do you have Support Personnel and teaching materials in each language?

Do you have translators to work with teachers and administrators?

Do you have translators to work with parents about learning issues?

Do you have health workers and psychologists that speak each language?

Do you have test materials in each language?

Do you have the budget to support the change?

And the list goes on and on...

Carpenters have a saying, "measure twice, cut once". Educators need to dream and plan, plan, plan, then do, evaluate, and plan some more... is Nepal ready for 16 languages in its school system?

**Editor's Note:** In reviewing some research, I was surprised at the amount relating to retention of college students and the support that universities were giving to keep students in school. Those of you at the university level or interested in this age level may want to look further into this topic.

## SUMMARY OF ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

APRIL 30-MAY 4

HT=Himalayan Times RN = Rising Nepal KP = Kathmandu Post

April 30

**RN**-The need of technical education was stressed by Professor Ram Mam Sherstha. Curriculum Director Madhyapur Thimi reported dictionaries in math, science, health and physical science were being developed.

**RN**-Strongsten School celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee. This school helps underprivileged Tibetans.

**KP**-Jumping classes can be damaging. The articles told of two students promoted and one demoted in hopping between private and public schools.

**HT**-Mahesh Thapa lost his eye sight from the beating of a teacher Krishna Ghimire last year at Everest English Boarding School. 80 guardians closed the Administration block. The school will cover medical costs.

**HT**-ANNISU-R and NSU student union clashed over scholarships.

**HT**-Computer classes being designed for SLC students pre and post exams.

**HT**-All private schools in Itahari shut by agitating teachers who wanted permanent appointments and reasonable salaries. It affected 35,000

students.

**HT**-Ed. by Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley, "Upper Secondary Education: Should It Be Immersed With MoES?"

"It would be wise if grades 9-10 were merged with HSEB considering grade 12 as an exit point... MoES does things in haste under the pressure of donors/lenders rather than thinking about its effect on the total education system." (Dr. Wagley is an advisor to EJG)

May 1, 2007

**HT**-The Prime Minister appointed three Vice Chancellors: Dr. Madhav Prasati Sharma to TU, Dr. Ramaa Vatar Yadav to Purbanchal and Reader Bidur Poudel to Nepal Sanskrit University. Laba Prasad Tripathy said the remaining position at Pokhara University will be discussed at a meeting in two days.

**HT**-3.9 billion rs was donated by World Bank in a grant for Second Higher Education Projects for research and management incentives.

**RN**-ED. "Technical Education". Education is the key to national development. "Nepal is producing more certificate holders rather than technically skilled and qualified human resources...an overhauling in the entire education system and structure is needed."

May 2, 2007

**RN**-Textbooks were published in 16 different Mother languages announced Haribol Khanal Executive Director of Department of Curriculum Development.

**RN**-Ed. "An Important Step"—"end a row in the academic sector and the published haggling...has come to a close..." strong academic dynamics need to be created in the ailing universities to breathe new life in the moribund education sector."

**RN**-ECAN organizes and Educational Fair May 24-27 at Birenda International Convention Center.

**KP**-New VCs vow reforms: management to normalcy, review curriculum, new semester system, reform libraries, infrastructure, and administration blocks.

May 3, 2007

**HT**-on strike

**RN**-Free education for all in Paile by 2049 BS Upakar Sangh under Education Awareness Programme for 4000 children.

## A TETE WITH PRAKASH SILWAL

BY NANCY BAKER

The General Secretary for EJG is Prakash Silwal who was born in Nuwakot on November 30, 1982. He received his Bachelors and Masters Degrees at Ratna Rajya Laxmi (RR) Campus.

### How do you feel about being the General Secretary of EJG?

This is a very challenging time to be elected. It is when our membership is needing to be built up and financial situation is at a crisis. The financial issues are being addressed and a new plan developed.

### How do you feel you will be able to handle some of these issues?

I am moving with the challenge because it is my duty. The members have elected me and have faith in me. I will work as hard as I can.

### Getting to Know Our General Secretary Better

**Name:** Prakash Silwal

**Wife:** Yashoda Adhikari (married 6 months.)

**Favorite Color:** Blue

**Favorite Food:** Daal Bhat

**Favorite Place:** Pokhara

**Favorite Song:** Rak-ja Krahiko Jawalamukiha

**Favorite Hobby:** Simplicity, Writing poems & essays

**Who he would spend a dinner with besides Yashoda:** Mohan

**Foreign Country to Visit:** America

**Favorite Animal:** Cow (They're honest)

**Family:** Wife, Mother, Father, 2 Sisters, 2 Brothers

**Children:** Not Yet!



**As the General Secretary what are these duties?**

I see improving the position of the secretary in working for a better environment and improvement.

**What do you mean by improvement?**

I will be working on the forums. I will be working to see that the Resource Center is improved and more beautiful. I want to see a more well- equipped Resource Center and to build good relationships with the staff and with the members.

**What are your top two priorities?**

I think that I would like to see the new staff working well together and I would like to see them getting a decent staff.

**As the new Forum Coordinator, what topics do you see being offered in the future?**

I resigned from the National Radio of Nepal where I worked temporarily because it was taken over by Maoists. I have free time to take the position of Forum Coordinator temporarily. I see it as a co-ordination between EJG, our network resources, members, the Ministry, and friends. All can give ideas for forums to me.

Because of your work with the Maoists, do you see them **preventing children from getting into schools?**

Yes, this has caused a lot of conflict and problems

**Would this be a good topic for a forum?**

Yes

**ENGLISH WORKSHOP AVAILABLE**

The fourth workshop will be next Saturday (May 5) and will occur on the transition from Kindergarden to Class One. Important aspects of child development will be examined including practical activities, such as the use of fairy tales in language teaching. The workshop starts at 9.30, the tutor is Halina Rubisz, There will be refreshments at 11 and lunch at 1. The charge is just 300 rps. **This is a good way for journalists to see a different method of instruction and to strengthen your English skills. I understand she is a good language arts instructor.**

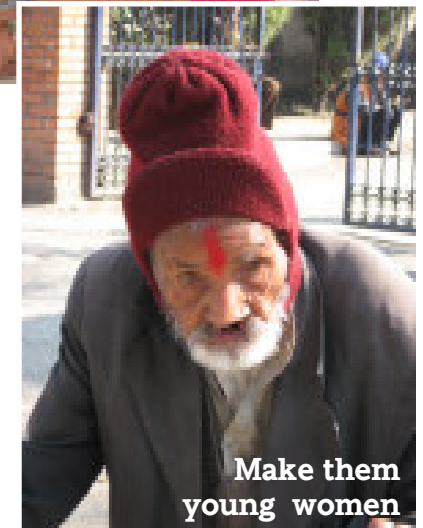


I have heard  
it all before----

**EJG  
CHALLENGE:  
EACH  
MEMBER  
AND  
ADVISOR  
SHOULD  
RECRUIT  
ONE NEW  
MEMBER  
THIS  
YEAR.**



Make them  
politically correct



Make them  
young women

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