



# SHES-RIG PAGES

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**The Biannual Newsletter of Samtse College of Education**



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# **SHES-RIG** PAGES

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## *Editorial team*

Dr. Sonam Rinchen  
Dr. Kinley Seden  
Ms. Tshering Om Tamang  
Dr. Yangdon  
Dr. Tashi Gyeltshen  
Ms. Sangay Lhamo



# Welcome

**Samtse College of Education (SCE) proudly presents the Autumn 2024 edition of SHES-RIG PAGES, our biannual publication.**

Established on May 29, 1968, SCE began its journey as a Teacher Training Institute (TTI) under the visionary leadership of our beloved Late His Majesty Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. This momentous inauguration marked a pivotal chapter in Bhutan's educational development, laying the foundation for the professional preparation of teachers in the country. What began as a modest institution offering a primary teaching certificate programme to just 41 students has since evolved into a premier teacher education institution. Today, SCE stands as a beacon of academic excellence, offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes that continue to shape the future of education in Bhutan.

We invite you to explore this edition of SHES-RIG PAGES and celebrate with us the rich legacy and ongoing achievements of Samtse College of Education. As we usher in another exciting academic year, it brings me great joy to welcome you to this edition of our college newsletter. This publication serves as a reflection of our vibrant community, showcasing the achievements, events, and stories that define who we are as an institution. Our college continues to thrive as a hub of academic excellence, innovation, and inclusivity. Over the past months, we have witnessed accomplishments - from research projects to inspiring community service initiatives and performances in arts and athletics. These milestones underscore the dedication, talent, and spirit of collaboration that unite us all.

This newsletter is more than just an update; it is a celebration of our hard work, perseverance, and creativity. Whether you are a student striving for excellence, a faculty member mentoring the next generation, or an alumnus making waves in the world, your contributions make our college stronger. I encourage you to explore these pages, celebrate our shared successes, and stay engaged with the college community. Together, let us continue to build on our legacy and strive toward even greater heights. Thank you for being a vital part of our journey. I look forward to the incredible achievements that await us in the months ahead. As we reflect on the achievements of the Autumn semester, I am thrilled to share some of the remarkable milestones and moments that define our progress as a vibrant academic community. This newsletter offers a glimpse into our collective efforts and successes, and I invite you to celebrate with us.

This semester, we proudly welcomed 121 new students into our Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme, with 70 students specialising in the science stream and 51 in the arts stream. These aspiring educators are the future torchbearers of knowledge and values, and we are excited to guide them on their transformative journey. In December, our college successfully hosted the 9<sup>th</sup> Bhutan University Sports Federation (BUSF) from December 11–17, 2024. This event brought together athletic talent from colleges across the country, fostering not only competition but also friendship and unity among participants. Our women's volleyball team proudly secured second position, further showcasing the exceptional talent of our students. We also celebrated our students' intellectual achievements when they secured second place in the University Quiz Competition, an event organised by BBS Bhutan as part of the 117<sup>th</sup> National Day celebrations. This recognition is a testament to their dedication and preparation. Additionally, we bade farewell to 21 MEd students who successfully graduated this semester. These graduates are now ready to contribute meaningfully to Bhutan's education system, and we couldn't be prouder of their accomplishments. A significant moment for our institution this year was bidding farewell to our esteemed President, Dr. Rinchen Dorji, who has been transferred to serve as the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Academic and Research at the Office of the Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan. Dr. Dorji's visionary leadership has left an indelible mark on our college, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude and best wishes as he embarks on this new chapter. These milestones are a reflection of the collective effort, resilience, and dedication of our students, faculty, and staff. As we move forward, I encourage each of you to continue contributing to our mission of excellence in education, research, and community engagement. Let us embrace the opportunities that lie ahead and build on the strong foundation we have established.

SHES-RIG PAGES is a special tribute to the most sacred gift and precious legacy Late His Majesty Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck has left for the education system in the country. This newsletter provides a snapshot of the variety of activities the College initiated in the last semester as part of learning and teaching; research and other educational events; student experiences of campus life; and creative literary compositions. We hope you will find this edition of SHES-RIG PAGES interesting and read-worthy. The e-copy of the same can be accessed at [www.sce.edu.bt](http://www.sce.edu.bt)

Sonam Rinchen, PhD  
PRESIDENT

**SHES-RIG  
PAGES**

## A Journey through Bhutanese Culture: Dr. Dorji Thinley's Thought-Provoking Book Talk on The Boneless Tongue



*President of SCE presenting token of appreciation to Dr. Dorji Thinley (Left)*

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, Samtse College of Education had the honour of hosting Dr. Dorji Thinley, the esteemed President of Paro College of Education and a prominent figure in Bhutanese literature, for a compelling book talk on his work, *The Boneless Tongue: A Delightful Compendium of Bhutanese Elegant Poetry, Metaphorical Sayings, and Accumulated Wisdom*. The event was moderated by Miss Tshering Om Tamang and was attended by an enthusiastic audience that included faculty members, students, and teachers from Samtse Higher Secondary School.

The programme commenced with a warm welcome address by Dr Sonam Rinchen, the President of Samtse College of Education. Dr. Dorji Thinley then introduced the second edition of his book, *The Boneless Tongue: A Delightful Compendium of Bhutanese Elegant Poetry, Metaphorical Sayings,*

and *Accumulated Wisdom*, which was released nearly two decades after the first edition in 2005. He candidly shared his ongoing dissatisfaction with the original version, which motivated him to continue refining and expanding the work. Despite these efforts, Dr. Thinley humbly acknowledged that he is only 60 percent satisfied with the second edition.

Throughout the session, Ms Tamang's thoughtful questions facilitated a dynamic and engaging discussion, keeping the audience captivated. Dr. Thinley made the session particularly memorable by sharing his favourite stanza from the book, which reflects on themes of ageing and change, adding a deeply personal touch to the conversation. He also spoke about the challenges he encountered while writing, balancing his demanding schedule with his passion for literature and his commitment to telling untold Bhutanese stories. He emphasised the importance of reading as a fundamental skill for effective writing.

The impact of Dr. Thinley's talk was felt deeply by the attendees. Dorji Wangmo, a B.Ed student, expressed her surprise at how engaging the two-hour session was, noting that it inspired her to explore more works by Bhutanese authors. She found the event enriching and motivating, sparking a newfound appreciation for Bhutanese literature.

Overall, Dr. Dorji Thinley's unwavering dedication to writing and his profound love for storytelling left a lasting impression on all who attended. His presentation highlighted the beauty of Bhutanese literature and the passion required to create meaningful literary works.



## College Welcomes its Future Educators

On July 30, 2024, Samtse College of Education (SCE) warmly welcomed 121 new Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) students for the Autumn Semester. These students have been enrolled in four reintroduced specialised programmes: Mathematics/Physics, Biology/Chemistry, English/History, and English/Geography. During the two-day orientation programme, students received essential guidance and insights into both academic and non-academic aspects, establishing a strong foundation for their four-year academic journey at SCE.

Mr. Ugyen Dorji, the Programme Leader for B.Ed Secondary Science, highlighted the rationale behind the reintroduction of science programmes, emphasising the growing shortage of teachers within the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. According to the Programme Leader, the reintroduction of these programmes offers several advantages, including: Providing quality education to a larger number of Bhutanese students domestically, reducing reliance on foreign institutions; promoting effective teaching pedagogies and instilling Bhutanese values in future educators; and addressing the critical teacher shortage in the country.

Students expressed enthusiasm about the opportunities provided by the programme, sharing their aspirations to acquire skills and knowledge to shape their teaching careers. Ms. Yeshey Peldon, a first-year student in the English/Geography programme, shared her expectations:

I expect that Samtse College of Education will provide me with a comprehensive understanding of teaching methodologies, effective classroom management strategies, and opportunities for practical teaching experience. I look forward to gaining insights into integrating technology into education

and fostering a supportive learning environment for students. Additionally, I hope to enhance my knowledge of both English and Geography through this course, enabling me to teach these subjects creatively and effectively."

Such reflections underscore the inspirational impact of the reintroduced B.Ed programmes, fostering determination and a sense of purpose among students. As SCE continues its mission to nurture future educators, this new intake symbolises the institution's unwavering dedication to excellence in teaching and learning.



*B.Ed English/Geography*



*B.Ed Biology/Chemistry*



*B.Ed Physics/Maths*



*B.Ed English/History*

## Empower, Educate, Advocate: A Dive into Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

A workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) was conducted on October 27, 2024, for 26 members of the Y-Peer Club. The session was facilitated by coordinators Tandin Penjor and Ugyen Zangmo, with the objective of equipping young ambassadors with critical knowledge and skills related to SRHR and gender-based violence (GBV). The workshop also aimed to enhance participants' advocacy and awareness capacities regarding key Y-PEER themes, such as SRHR, GBV, Young Key Population (YKP), life skills, and youth-focused services.

The event adopted an interactive and participatory approach, fostering dialogue and support among participants. It began with self-reflection exercises aimed at exploring personal identity and fostering a deeper understanding of the issues discussed. Role-playing activities were utilised to simulate the harsh realities of GBV, enabling participants to empathise with victims and understand the complexities of these experiences.

Participants were divided into four groups to engage in a series of trust-building activities that

promoted teamwork and collaboration. One of the concluding activities, the Balloon-Powered Cup Passing game, involved passing cups down a line using only balloons, encouraging creativity, coordination, and group effort. Participants reported finding the workshop highly beneficial, expressing that they gained valuable insights and practical skills on SRHR and GBV. The facilitators' use of engaging methods was particularly commended for enhancing understanding and fostering a supportive and dynamic learning environment.



*Participants of the Workshop with the Facilitators*



## Bridging Cultures: Edith Cowan University Students Engage in Exchange at SCE



*Students of ECU with Professors Vicki Banham (Right corner) and Karen Anderson (Third from left)*

On September 22, 2024, a group of twelve undergraduate students from Edith Cowan University (ECU) in Australia embarked on an enriching educational and cultural exchange experience at Samtse College of Education. This initiative, established in 2019 and funded by the New Colombo Plan, aims to provide students with hands-on learning opportunities that deepen their understanding of other's culture through immersion and community engagement in Bhutan.

Under the guidance of Professors Vicki Banham and Karen Anderson, the students engaged in a variety of activities that expanded both their academic knowledge and their appreciation of local culture and community. The ECU students were attached to B.Ed buddies, facilitating a dynamic cultural exchange between the two groups. Through this

interaction, both parties shared their cultures and values, fostering mutual understanding.

The students participated in classes, attended a day-long Dzongkha language session, and engaged in mindful practices, all of which contributed to a holistic learning experience. Their stay at SCE concluded on 5<sup>th</sup> October, after which they travelled to Paro for a brief visit to historical sites and museum. The team departed from Paro on 9<sup>th</sup> October. This programme highlights the commitment to fostering international collaboration and understanding, enriching the educational journey of the participants while promoting cross-cultural exchange and learning.

## From Trash to Treasure: A Creative Journey by SCE Tarayana Club

**O**n September 18, 2024, the SCE Tarayana Club, under the guidance of its advisor, Dr. Kinley Seden, organised a creative and impactful activity that combined fun with purpose. Club members came together to transform recycled plastic bottles and other materials into useful items such as flower vases, decorative flowers, and foot mats. This initiative was designed to promote environmental responsibility while fostering interpersonal skills, teamwork, and compassion among participants.

The collaborative process encouraged members to share ideas and techniques, creating a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere where everyone's contributions

were valued. The crafted items were later sold, with proceeds directed toward supporting disadvantaged individuals in the community. This ensured that the club's efforts had a meaningful and far-reaching impact.

The activity emphasised the importance of community engagement and the power of collective action. By uniting for a common cause, members not only made a positive environmental impact but also cultivated a sense of unity and purpose within the club. The SCE Tarayana Club remains committed to organising similar initiatives in the future, aiming to strengthen teamwork, foster compassion, and make a lasting difference in the community.



*Club members displaying their recycled products*



## Diwali Celebration at the College: A Night of Light, Culture, and Togetherness

**O**n the evening of October 31, the Samtse College community gathered to celebrate Diwali, the Festival of Lights, and to worship Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. The event began at 6 PM in the college dining hall, under the leadership of Mani Kumar Rai, Sanjay Chhetri, and Puja Mongar.

The hall was beautifully adorned with festive decorations, creating an atmosphere of joy and warmth. String lights illuminated the stage, oil lamps cast a soft glow across the room, and a colorful rangoli design made from vibrant powders welcomed attendees at the entrance. The evening commenced with a heartfelt welcome speech emphasising the significance of Diwali, followed by the lighting of butter lamps and the adorning of the goddess Lakshmi's idol.

Musical prayers and devotional performances enriched the atmosphere as participants worshiped the gods and goddesses. The event also featured the traditional chanting of bhailini, prayers for the well-being and prosperity of families. Faculty members expressed their gratitude for the prayers by offering

contributions to the performers, honoring the cultural tradition.

The celebration continued with energetic dances that brought the Lhotsampa culture to life. Attendees enjoyed traditional Diwali treats, including selroti, tea, and sweets, which added to the festive spirit. Tshering Dorji, a first-year student, reflected, "Diwali is indeed a beautiful Hindu festival. However, I did not fully understand its essence until participating in this celebration. I truly enjoyed its significance and learned about its cultural importance."

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks from the organising team, expressing gratitude to everyone who contributed to making the celebration memorable. Later, the team visited the homes of the Lhotsampa community residing on campus to chant Bhailini, further embracing the essence of the festival. The Diwali celebration was a vibrant and unforgettable event that fostered shared experiences, cultural appreciation, and camaraderie among students. It was a lively and colorful testament to the spirit of togetherness and a joyous tribute to the goddess Lakshmi.



*A festive mood in the College dining hall*

## A Weekend of Sportsmanship and Spirit: SCE vs GCBS

On the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of September, Samtse College of Education (SCE) hosted an exciting regional sports meet in collaboration with Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS). Despite challenging weather conditions, both colleges displayed remarkable enthusiasm and sportsmanship throughout the competition.

While GCBS excelled in many of the events, SCE demonstrated incredible determination and spirit. The highlight of the weekend was SCE's girls' volleyball team, which defied the odds to secure a hard-fought victory, bringing immense pride to the college.

Reflecting on the experience, the GCBS captain emphasised the importance of persistence and passion in sports, quoting the legendary Michael Jordan: "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence win championships." This mindset guided their team as they navigated the tournament on SCE's court. The captain acknowledged the challenges posed by the venue and weather but

remained optimistic about their team's performance. Although the overall results did not favour SCE, the resilience and commitment of their players were commendable. The matches highlighted the essence of teamwork and perseverance exhibited by both colleges.

This regional meet not only showcased the athletic talent of both institutions but also reinforced the importance of inter-college competitions in fostering sportsmanship and camaraderie. SCE eagerly looks forward to future events, including their upcoming matches against CST on October 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>.



*A group photo of SCE volleyball team (Girls) with staff escorts at GCBS*



*SCE girls on full swings during their match with GCBS girls*



## Through the Lens of Students: Bhutan Echoes Drukyl's Literature and Arts Festival 2024

Students from Samtse College of Education (SCE) embraced a unique opportunity to delve into literature and culture at the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the Bhutan Echoes Drukyl's Literature and Arts Festival. Held in Thimphu over three days, the festival provided a vibrant platform for artistic expression, literary discussions, and cultural immersion.

The festival, a prominent event in Bhutan's cultural calendar, featured a rich tapestry of activities, including film screenings, panel discussions, literary sessions, art exhibitions, and musical performances. This year's edition was graced by Her Majesty Queen Mother Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the Royal Patron of Bhutan Echoes, who shared her deep love for storytelling and highlighted the importance of taking the festival to an international stage. Her Majesty also engaged in a thought-provoking dialogue on the topic of "Exploring the Mysteries of Rebirth" with Meru Gokhale, a veteran in the publishing industry and founder of 'Editorially'.

For the students of SCE, the festival was an invaluable experience. They attended a variety of sessions and workshops, gaining insights into diverse topics such as "What it Means to be Bhutanese," presented by Dr. Dorji Wangchuk and Phub Dorji, and an exhilarating Flamenco performance by Rebeca Ortega and her team. The sessions at the festival sparked creativity in the students, inspiring them to create their own works. Reshma Rai, deeply moved by one of the session's quotes—"No matter where you go, don't forget to return home"—penned a heartfelt poem reflecting on the experience of leaving Bhutan. The festival also provided students with invaluable opportunities to engage in informal conversations with renowned authors, designers, entrepreneurs, and artists. Bhutanese literary figures such as Kunzang Choden and Chablop Passang Tshering, alongside international authors like Roopa Dai and Binod Chaudhary, who shared

their personal creative journeys, offering invaluable insight and inspiration. Karma Dechen, another student, shared her thoughts on the experience, saying, "Interacting with these authors has inspired me to write more, even if it's just in a daily journal. It's clear that persistence in writing, despite challenges, will eventually pay off."

As the Bhutan Echoes Festival continues to grow in prominence, it remains a cherished tradition for the students of SCE, offering them an annual opportunity to broaden their intellectual and creative horizons. This year's festival further solidified its status as a premier destination for lovers of literature, art, and culture in Bhutan.



*SCE students' encounter with author Kunzang Choden*



## A Whirlwind of Words and Wonder: College Hosted Literary Landscape



*Guman Singh Karki for the role of Adolf Hitler*

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Samtse College of Education transformed into a vibrant stage for a literary showcase organised by the Literary Society Club. This event, featuring a lively lineup of historical and fictional characters, provided students with a platform to express creativity, showcase knowledge, and add a touch of theatre to their learning experience.

The event is part of Samtse College's broader Literary Landscape initiative, an inclusive platform where students can explore and express their literary talents. Through the portrayal of literary personas and characters, students from each class represent key figures or themes from their academic programmes, allowing them to creatively bring to life the rich stories and texts they study. This immersive experience not only showcases their creative abilities but also helps them build a deeper connection to their coursework. By inviting participation from all academic courses, Literary Landscape aims to foster intellectual diversity and inclusivity within the College.

The showcase opened with Choki Gyeltshen's portrayal of Eratosthenes, the Father of Geography,

who guided the audience through ancient maps and the beginnings of cartography. Following him, Guman Singh Karki took on the complex role of Adolf Hitler, evoking deep reflections on history's darker chapters. Yuepel, from the B.Ed IT A programme, embodied computer science pioneer Grace Hopper, highlighting the spirit of innovation in technology. Similarly, Benita Sharma portrayed Linda Liukas, illustrating the imaginative side of coding and proving that programming can be as enchanting as storytelling. Dema Lhamo, as Steve Shirley, and Duptho Wangmo, as Ada Lovelace, celebrated women's contributions to technology and programming, blending humour with historical insight.

Adding a scientific note, Singye Wangchuk portrayed Isaac Newton, cleverly incorporating the laws of motion with light humour. Yeshey Lhaden and Thinley Norbu, as Marie and Pierre Curie, delivered a duet that showcased both talent and chemistry, earning enthusiastic applause. Tshering Tsheyang honoured Maya Angelou with a performance that was both powerful and moving, while Kezang Choden paid tribute to Emily Dickinson, capturing the poetic depth of her verses.

In a lighthearted interlude, the Literary Society Club performed an original piece titled "Bhutanese Hearts - Matchmaking in the Land of Happiness." This humorous narrative, rooted in Bhutanese culture, followed a prince navigating the company of Disney princesses, only to find his true connection





with the event's master of ceremonies, Reshma Rai. The whimsical twist added laughter and warmth, celebrating unexpected connections.

As the evening drew to a close, the top performances were recognised. Yeshey Lhaden and Thinley Norbu's portrayal of Marie and Pierre Curie earned them first place, their compelling chemistry resonating with the audience. Tshering Tsheyang's powerful portrayal of Maya Angelou won her second place, while Duptho Wangmo as Ada Lovelace and Dema Lhamo as Steve Shirley shared third place, each bringing history to life with humour and insight.

Reflecting on the experience, Karma Dechen Tshering, one of the student participants, remarked, "This event wasn't just about performing—it was about embodying the legacy of these figures and feeling connected to their stories. It was truly inspiring to see history come alive on stage."

The literary event at Samtse College of Education was more than a competition; it was a celebration of storytelling, intellectual diversity, and the joy of creative expression. As applause and laughter echoed through the evening, it marked a memorable occasion and set the stage for more literary adventures ahead.



*The winning pair Yeshey Lhaden and Thinley Norbu in action*

## College Hosted 12<sup>th</sup> Faculty-Student Research Convention on 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Education Pedagogy

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, Samtse College of Education (SCE) hosted its 12<sup>th</sup> Faculty-Student Research Convention at the Namgay Khangzang, focusing on the theme, “Teaching, Learning, and Assessment: The Evolving Landscape of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The event brought together faculty and students from SCE, alongside presenters from Samtse Higher Secondary School and MEd students from SCE, fostering rich discussions on contemporary educational practices.

The convention kicked off at 8:40 a.m. with the national anthem, followed by an opening remark from Dr. Kinley Selden, The Dean of Research and Industrial Linkage at SCE. In her opening remark, Dr. Kinley Seden, Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages, emphasised the significance of such seminars, stating that they are not just for generating knowledge but for making an impact. She noted that even small breakthroughs have the potential to shape the future. The President of SCE highlighted the event’s historical significance in bridging faculty research with student engagement.

The convention featured 13 paper presentations and two keynote addresses. Prof. Vicki Banham, the guest of honour, in her keynote address, highlighted the importance of “signature pedagogy,” urging educators to develop distinct teaching approaches that enhance classroom practices.

Presenters explored many topics throughout the day, including transformative pedagogy, assessment strategies, and the use of AI tools in education. The participation of MEd students and presenters from Samtse Higher Secondary School added depth to the discussions, offering valuable insights into modern teaching practices and emphasising the importance of adapting to evolving educational challenges.

The convention concluded with an awards ceremony



*Professor Vicki, delivering her Keynote speech*

recognising outstanding contributions. Ms. Tshering Om Tamang was awarded Best Presenter for her research titled “Exploring the Integration of Gen AI Tools in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment in the Colleges of Royal University of Bhutan: Students’ Perspectives on Potential Benefits and Challenges.” The day ended with a heartfelt vote of thanks from the organisers, expressing appreciation to all who contributed to the event’s success.

This convention not only served as a platform for sharing innovative research but also reinforced the vital role of collaboration among faculty, students, and secondary school educators in shaping the future of education.



*Professor Karen awarding "Best Presenter Award" to Ms. Tshering Om Tamang*



## Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: Researchers Meet in Kathmandu, Nepal

The consortium meeting for the project titled “Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Schools, Building on What Children Value and Aspire to Do and Be,” took place from August 25–30, 2024, at Godavari Village Resort in Kathmandu. Hosted by Kathmandu University School of Arts, this three-year collaborative initiative includes Kathmandu University (Nepal), RDRS Bangladesh, and Samtse College of Education (Bhutan).

The Researchers' Meet marked a pivotal milestone in advancing the project's goals, with Samtse College playing a central role. The project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX).

The primary objective of the meet was to discuss the first phase of the project and to foster collaboration among the three partner countries focused on educational research in Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). The event provided a valuable forum for exchanging ideas and sharing experiences to enhance the implementation of GESI initiatives in educational settings. Highlights of the meeting included sessions dedicated to developing the Scaling and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan, crafting policy briefs and conducting a GESI situational analysis of selected schools across the three participating countries.

The Meet saw the participation of 11 researchers: 5 from Kathmandu University, 3 from RDRS in Bangladesh, and 3 from Samtse College of Education in Bhutan. Karma Gayphel from Samtse College of Education remarked, “Meeting our partners in person was incredibly valuable. It not only strengthened our collaboration but also provided us with a clearer understanding of each other's contexts

and challenges. This face-to-face interaction makes advancing the project much smoother and more effective.”

The meeting highlighted Samtse College of Education's pivotal role in advancing the project's objectives. By fostering a collaborative network and integrating gender equality and social inclusion into educational practices, the event demonstrated the significant contributions of all participating institutions and set the stage for continued progress in the project's implementation.

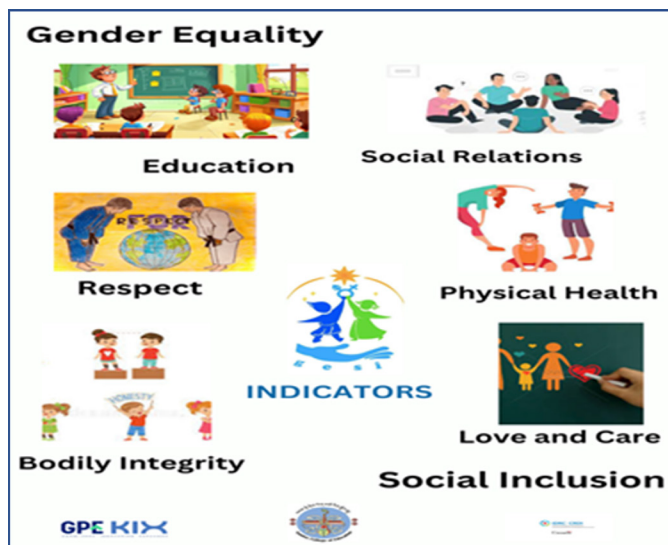


*Participants from different countries*



*Participants from SCE*

## Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Bhutanese Schools: Key Findings and Future Directions



The Drukrig Network of Bhutan Scholars hosted its 51<sup>st</sup> colloquium on October 23, 2024, to present key findings from the ongoing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) project, led by Dr. Kinley Seden and Ms. Sonam Zangmo. The session, titled “Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools: A Situational Analysis Study,” discussed the results of a pilot study conducted in five Bhutanese schools, involving over 100 students and 20 teachers. The study aimed to understand the perceptions of students and teachers on GESI issues. Key findings revealed that both students and teachers prioritised ‘education,’ ‘love and care,’ ‘social relations,’ ‘respect,’ ‘bodily integrity,’ and ‘physical health,’ while awareness of issues such as ‘nutritional well-being’ and ‘mental well-being’ was notably lower.

After the presentation, participants raised several important questions. One participant inquired about the inclusion of central schools and whether physical facilities, like washrooms and classrooms, were assessed for their impact on gender equality and social inclusion. The research team confirmed that central schools were included in the study, and the discussion highlighted the importance of assessing

physical infrastructure, such as washrooms and classrooms, for their impact on gender equality and social inclusion. The team also highlighted that the data collected showed how inadequate sanitation facilities, particularly for girls, can impact gender equality and social inclusion in schools.

Language and competency barriers were also discussed, particularly the challenges younger students face in understanding GESI concepts. To address this, researchers adapted their approach by using local languages such as Dzongkha and Nepali to clarify terms and improve student engagement. The team plans to continue refining the language and questions to better suit the varying comprehension levels of students.

The colloquium also emphasised the need for a more cohesive approach to gender equality and social inclusion across Bhutan’s education system. Dr. Sonam Chuki noted that while the Ministry of Education, health sectors, and civil society organisations are making progress, their efforts are often isolated. There is increasing recognition that the National Gender Equality Policy needs to evolve to include LGBTQIA+ communities, and that gender equality focal points in each ministry are essential for effective policy implementation. Collaboration between schools, government bodies, and civil society was highlighted as crucial for advancing gender equality and social inclusion.

Dr. Karma Phuntsho raised important points about the intersection of religion, spirituality, and identity in relation to gender equality. He questioned whether ‘education’ as an indicator referred to specific gender education or general education and suggested that ‘respect’ might be better seen as an outcome of gender equality efforts. The researchers clarified that ‘education’ refers to general awareness, and literacy is seen as fundamental to promoting gender



equality. They also discussed the role of religion in schools, noting that while Rimdos and Diwali are commonly celebrated in Bhutanese schools, other religious practices may not be as represented.

The researchers concluded by outlining plans for the next phases of the project, which will focus on refining GESI indicators and expanding the research approach. This phase marks the beginning of the

three-year project, aimed at incorporating more comprehensive data and diverse perspectives. The colloquium, attended by over 20 participants from national and international institutions, including representatives from the UK and Australia, underscored the global relevance of the topic and the shared commitment to fostering a more inclusive educational environment.

## Unveiling Progress: KIX Applied Project's GESI Findings Presented Virtually



**O**n September 12, 2024, an online meeting highlighted the progress of the three-year project, “Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Schools, Building on What Children Value and Aspire to Do and Be.” Hosted by the National KIX Coordinator, this virtual session marked the Second Phase of the Stakeholder Meeting series.

The gathering, held via Zoom, was attended by key stakeholders, including National KIX steering committee members, representatives from Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), UNICEF, RENEW, representatives from Druk Gyalpo's Institute (DGI), and Knowledge lead (Southeast Asia), KIX EMAP.

During the meeting, Dr Kinley Seden, the project lead, and Karma Gayphel presented the findings of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) situational analysis. Their presentation provided

valuable insights into the current state of GESI in educational settings across the three participating countries, highlighting key challenges and potential areas for improvement. The findings revealed that both male and female students prioritise ‘Education’, ‘love and care’, and ‘respect’, but showed lower awareness of ‘mental well-being’ and ‘freedom from economic exploitation’. Further, while male students emphasised physical infrastructure, females focused on social and emotional factors, indicating a need for a balanced approach that addresses both areas. Teachers saw ‘participation’ and ‘education’ as well-integrated into the curriculum, but recognised gaps in awareness related to ‘mental well-being’ and ‘nutritional well-being’, underscoring the need for enhanced focus in these areas.

This session emphasised the importance of stakeholder engagement in advancing the project's goals and emphasised the collaborative efforts necessary to enhance gender equality and social inclusion within educational practices. These efforts are an integral part of the ongoing three-year project.



## Advancing Teacher Growth: Webinar Highlights Key Professional Development Needs

The Centre for Innovation in Educational Practice and Research (CIEPR) at Samtse College of Education hosted a webinar on the professional development (PD) needs of secondary school teachers. The event was led by Centre Coordinator Tshering Dorji and Dr. Kinley Seden and attended by 33 participants, including Bhutanese scholars abroad, District Education Officers, school teachers, and faculty members of the college.

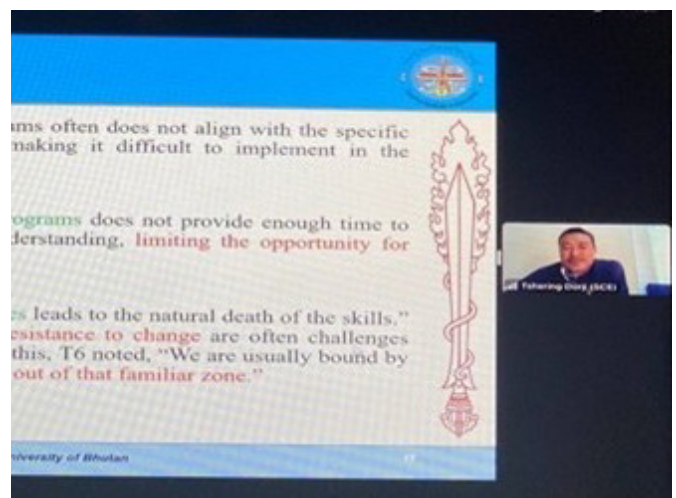
The webinar focused on sharing the findings of a need analysis study aimed at identifying the actual PD needs of secondary school teachers, as well as their perceived benefits and challenges. Key findings emphasised the importance of PD, particularly the need for high-quality PD programmes and effective follow-up and support systems to ensure successful implementation. During the discussion session, participants raised significant points. One participant questioned the exclusion of stakeholders from the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) as research participants, given their role in developing PD programmes for teachers. The research team clarified that the study focused specifically on understanding teachers' PD needs but assured that the report would be shared with the ministry.

Another key discussion centred on the importance of addressing subject-specific PD needs for teachers. The research team acknowledged the criticality of this issue but explained that the study's focus was on four broader areas: instructional field development, scientific field development, personal development, and organisational development. They noted that subject-specific PD could be explored in future studies.

Additionally, a participant observed that PD in its current form often follows a traditional and hierarchical approach, failing to incorporate the

concept of professional learning, which prioritises teachers' active engagement in their agency and growth. This was acknowledged as an area for reflection and improvement. The discussion also emphasised the critical role of school leaders in motivating teachers to pursue professional development (PD) and supporting innovative practices. Dr. Tshewang Rabgay inquired whether the study had captured data related to this aspect. In response, the research team acknowledged that teachers had highlighted the pivotal role of school leaders in fostering motivation and creating an environment conducive to professional growth. The team elaborated that effective leadership plays a significant part in encouraging participation in PD activities, providing necessary resources, and recognising teacher efforts, all of which contribute to the success of PD initiatives.

The webinar concluded with an expression of gratitude to all participants for their time and contributions, reinforcing the importance of the centre's initiative in advancing teacher professional development.





## Excitement and Unity Marked the Opening of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bhutan University Sports Federation Games

The 9<sup>th</sup> Bhutan University Sports Federation (BUSF) Games commenced with a vibrant opening ceremony at Samtse College of Education on December 11, 2024. This marked the beginning of a week-long celebration of sportsmanship and competition among the 10 participating colleges.

The ceremony began at 8 a.m at the college football ground, where participants and spectators gathered in high spirits. DASHO DZONGDAG MINJUR DORJI of Samtse graced the event as the chief guest, receiving a warm welcome from the enthusiastic crowd. In his address, DASHO DZONGDAG highlighted Bhutan's remarkable progress in sports, noting that athletes have grown in confidence and improved their performances on regional and international platforms. He emphasised that the university games embody core values such as resilience, unity, respect, inclusivity, gratitude, joy, and humility.

Following the speeches, a marching parade captivated the audience as students proudly represented their colleges, with banners held high in the morning breeze. A symbolic highlight of the ceremony was the lighting of the BUSF flame, passed in a relay by athletes from each college, celebrating unity and the competitive spirit.



Guest of honour DASHO MINJUR DORJI, lighting the BUSF flame

The Dean of Student Affairs and the chief guest reiterated the importance of sports in education. Dr. Kezang Sherab, Secretary General of BUSF, underscored the holistic value of the games, stating, "These games are an essential part of university education. The lessons students learn on the field—about teamwork, resilience, and leadership—can be more impactful than those learned within the classroom walls."

The sports action kicked off with a thrilling football match between the College of Natural Resources (CNR) and Paro College of Education (PCE). PCE dominated with a 5-2 victory, with standout player Kinley Gyeltshen scoring four goals.

In volleyball, Sherubtse College narrowly defeated Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS) in a thrilling five-set match. Meanwhile, in women's football, Guru Dema and Yangchen Lhamo secured victory for CLCS against Gyelpozhing College with a score of 2-0.

Basketball games added to the excitement, with the boys from CNR triumphed over Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC) with a score of 45-26, while the CNR girls' team edged past GCBS in a close 32-29 match. On the volleyball court, the women's team from Paro College triumphed over the host college, Samtse College of Education (SCE), in straight sets.

The opening day of the BUSF Games was a testament to sportsmanship, teamwork, and friendly competition, leaving athletes and spectators eager for the events ahead. The week-long games will culminate on December 17th, coinciding with Bhutan's National Day, providing a fitting conclusion to this inspiring celebration of unity and athletic excellence.

## New Leaders to Pave the Path to Progress



**D**r. Sonam Rinchen was appointed as the new President of Samtse College of Education. On August 3, he was formally inducted with the ceremonial reception, Zugdrel Phuntshogpa and Khadar offering. Gathered at the ceremony were the venerable Lam Neten of Samtse Dratsang, honourable Dasho Dzongdag, Dasho Drangpoen, sectors heads of Samtse Dzongkhag and well-wishers from various agencies. The occasion also saw taking over of the College management from the previous President, Dr Rinchen Dorji, who was transferred to the Office of the Vice Chancellor in Thimphu as a Pro-Vice Chancellor of Academic and Research.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August, the student councilors and class representatives offered with Tashi Khadhar to the new President of Samtse at the College auditorium during the morning assembly. Following the khadhar offering, the President shared a few words of gratitude and wisdom. Dr. Sonam expressed his gratitude and commitment to advancing the college's mission. "It is an honour to be entrusted with this responsibility. Education is the cornerstone to of our nation's future, and I am dedicated to ensuring that Samtse College of Education continues to excel in nurturing the next generation of educators," he

said. He emphasised the importance of fostering a supportive and innovative learning environment, "Our focus will be on enhancing the quality of education, expanding research opportunities, and ensuring that our students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world," he added.

The faculty and staff of the college expressed their optimism and support for Dr. Sonam's leadership. A senior faculty member, Dr. Kinzang Dorji, noted, "Dr. Sonam's vast experience and sound academic background make him the ideal leader for our college. We are confident that under his guidance, the college will continue to flourish."

Dr. Sonam brings wealth of experience and expertise working as a teacher, head master, faculty member, Dean of Academic Affairs and Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages at Samtse College of Education. Dr. Sonam has a PhD from Queensland University of Technology, Australia, and M. Ed from University of New Brunswick, Canada.

The College also saw the appointment of Dr. Kinley Seden as the new Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages. The College arranged a Khadar ceremony on September 9. As a new Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages, Dr Kinley Seden envisions to elevate research excellence by fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, and impact. She said, "I will aim to strengthen research capabilities, empower faculty and students with essential skills and resources, and build robust local and international networks. She added that her goal is to position the college as a hub for impactful research that addresses societal challenges, aligns with national priorities, and drives academic growth.

Dr Kinley has a PhD from Czech Republic and Hungary, and MA in Economics from Australia.





### Interview with Dr. Deki C. Gyamtso, Alumni, Samtse College of Education

**SHES-RIG PAGES (SP):** Your professional journey has seen you transition from a lecturer to the DAA and later into various esteemed positions. Could you share key milestones and pivotal moments of your career that shaped your growth as an educator and leader?

**DEKI C GYAMTSO (DCG):** I have had the privilege of a fulfilling and transformative professional journey at Samtse College of Education (SCE), marked by significant opportunities, responsibilities, and leadership roles.

Beginning as a lecturer in Geography and Geography Education, I expanded my teaching repertoire to include most of the professional modules offered in the PgDE and B.Ed programmes at the College, such as Teaching Skills, Teaching Strategies, Curriculum Studies, Bhutanese Education System, Education for Development, and Research Methods in Education. I have consistently implemented effective pedagogy and assessment strategies, believing in role-modelling as best practices for students. In 36 years of working, teaching has been one of the most fulfilling and satisfying aspects of my career. Teaching is my foremost passion and the driving force that has kept me committed to the system. Evidence from the student feedback shows that I consistently strived to use the knowledge of learning and assessment practices that bring out the best in the learners and even now, when I meet my former students, they express deep respect and gratitude, sharing how much they appreciate the opportunity to have been taught by me. To me, this is the greatest honour a teacher can receive.

Extensive experience in conceptualising, developing and implementing programmes for Bachelor of Education (Secondary and Primary levels), Postgraduate Diploma in Education, and Postgraduate Certificate nested in a Diploma in Higher Education at RUB, as well as writing modules for areas assigned (Introduction to Research Methods in Education, Teaching Skills and Strategies, Curriculum Theory, University Teaching and Learning, Bhutanese Education System, Education for Development, Geography Education and Geography subject specific modules)

#### Curriculum Development and Leadership

My active involvement in curriculum planning and development has been integral to my professional growth. I made significant contributions in the development and diversification of academic programmes. Being a Programme Leader (1994-2001) and then as Dean of Academic Affairs (2001-2012) presented me with extensive opportunities to coordinate and monitor the development, validation, launch, and review of the B.Ed Secondary and Primary (Pre and In-Service), Postgraduate Diploma in Education, Postgraduate Certificate nested in a Diploma in Higher Education (for RUB/university lecturers) programmes. Others included assisting in refining the new programmes like the Diploma in Library and Information Management and the MEd Science and Maths programmes. Additionally, a rigorous review of the Distance Education Programme aligning it with international best practices.

I focused on holistic curriculum development, drawing on my ability to identify, evaluate, and contextualise

the most effective pedagogical and assessment practices to meet the diverse needs of learners at the college. I consistently worked to enhance the quality assurance processes while maintaining a full teaching load. It is important to note, however, that I had no formal training in programme management and learned through hands-on experience. My guiding mantra, instilled by my parents, has always been to serve with integrity, grow with purpose, and create with passion - principles that I believe have sustained me through both opportunities and challenges.

## **Key Positions and Contributions**

Over my career, I served in various leadership roles, including:

1. 1994-2001: B. Ed Secondary Programme Leader
2. 1996-1998: B. Ed Primary Programme Leader
3. 2004-2008: Distance Teacher Education Programme (DTEP) Coordinator
4. 2008-2012: Centre for University Learning and Teaching (CULT) Coordinator
5. 2001-2006: Assistant Principal (Academic Affairs)
6. 2007-2012: Dean of Academic Affairs

These roles allowed me to make substantial contributions to SCE's academic growth and as commended by the former President of SCE Dr Rinchen Dorji that I had served with a high sense of personal and professional integrity at SCE. I made significant contributions to the overall development of Samtse College of Education especially

## **Expanding Horizons**

From 2014–2016, I broadened my experience at The Royal Academy, Paro, followed by roles at the Office of the Vice Chancellor, RUB (2016–2019) as Managing Editor (BJRD), Higher Education Specialist, Researcher, and short-course designer and Facilitator.

## **Return to Teaching**

In 2020, I returned to Paro College of Education to re-pursue my passion for teaching. Here, I had the opportunity to work with a team of academics to infuse the Four Immeasurables of Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita) and Equanimity (Upekkha) (Tshey Me Zhi), into classroom practices, making it my swan song—a fitting and meaningful culmination of my teaching career. What began as a journey driven by a passion for teaching culminated in a focus on fostering students' well-being.

The other significant task I achieved on getting into the college was the design and launch of the full-time M.Ed Primary Education Programme in Social Studies, English, Maths, and Science. It was an interesting challenges but as programme development is my forte I will say proudly that It was a resounding success being launched in March 2021 the very next after I joined the College – which indeed is a remarkable achievement.

One of the key accomplishments upon joining the college was the design and launch of the full-time M.Ed Primary Education Programme, specialising in Social Studies, English, Maths, and Science. While it came with its fair share of challenges, programme development being my forte, I'm happy to say it was a success. We launched the programme in March 2021,—a milestone I look back on with immense pride, and I am proud to say that it was a resounding success.

My journey has been guided by dedication, consistency, and a commitment to quality, contributing to teaching, leadership, and curriculum development, while fostering excellence in education. In my teaching and leadership



roles, I have had the privilege of:

- Designing, writing, and evaluating undergraduate and postgraduate courses
- Training school teachers and university academics
- Contributing to the development of pedagogical practices and academic excellence.

**SP: Reflecting on your time as a lecturer and as the DAA at Samtse College of Education, formerly known as the National Institute of Education, what are some of your most cherished memories and defining experiences?**

**(DCG):** One of the most cherished and defining moments of my career as a lecturer was, as cliché as it may sound, being in the classroom. I was genuinely excited and enthusiastic about teaching. I dedicated a significant amount of time to planning and preparing my lessons. Without the internet, I relied on books from the library, my personal collection, and any other resources I could find, such as newspapers and magazines. I found the vastness of knowledge incredibly inspiring and was eager to share as much as I could with my students, hoping they would carry it with them as future educators. Writing on the chalkboard, though I wasn't the best at it, was immensely satisfying—using it as a tool for discussion and sharing knowledge. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching all 10 Geography modules to the B.Ed students and two Geography Education modules to the PGCE students. I also taught professional development modules like Teaching Skills, Teaching Strategies, Curriculum Theories, and Education for Development. Despite the heavy teaching load, I never felt burdened, as my youth, enthusiasm, and willingness to teach made it an exciting and fulfilling experience. I particularly remember the hands-on aspects of my teaching—field trips to measure river characteristics for the physical geography module, studying micro-ecosystems on campus, conducting urban and socio-economic projects, and leading micro-teaching sessions using the Sydney Micro Skills framework. Interacting with and supporting students in their learning was undoubtedly the highlight of my teaching. At that time, student numbers were small, and we knew each one by name. It created a close-knit and personalised environment. It was one of the most professionally rewarding times at the college, as we worked cohesively as a team. The team-teaching approach for the Teaching Skills and Strategies modules was particularly effective, with each member complementing one another and working seamlessly together. Even now when I reconnect with colleagues from those days, we all share the same sentiment—that it was truly the best of times. The professionalism and commitment were unparalleled, and it significantly enhanced the college's reputation.

I should share that as the DAA, I must admit that I was initially reluctant to take on such responsibilities, but it was an opportunity that was thrust upon me. I often referred to myself as an 'accidental leader'. Once appointed, I was quickly immersed in the considerable responsibilities that came with the position. However, I am grateful for the timing, as my appointment coincided with a pivotal moment when SCE was transitioning to become part of the Royal University of Bhutan.

As the Dean of Academic Affairs, I played a key role in facilitating Samtse College of Education's successful transition from the Ministry of Education to becoming a member college of the Royal University of Bhutan. I was involved with other academic to develop policies, programmes, and procedures aimed at improving teaching, learning, and assessment within the college. The 'Wheel of Academic Law' became my bedside reading, as I had to be thoroughly conversant with academic rules and regulations. This was a transformative period, during which I navigated the complexities of joining a larger institution and gained valuable exposure and training in academic quality assurance and enhancement, ensuring our practices were aligned with international standards. Being a leader during such crucial times was a privilege, bringing both respect and

recognition. However, it also came with the challenges of dealing with a wide range of academic issues within the college.

**SP: From your perspective, how has Samtse College of Education evolved over the years, from the NIE of your time to the institution it is today?**

**(DCG):** The College has evolved significantly since its early days as the National Institute of Education (NIE). Initially, the college offered only a limited number of programmes and fostered a close-knit, personalised environment with small student numbers. Over time, the college transitioned from the Ministry of Education to becoming a member of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). This transition brought greater academic rigour and alignment with international standards, alongside the introduction of quality assurance processes and new programmes.

A key milestone in recent years is the launch of the full-time M.Ed Programmes, which have significantly expanded the college's academic curriculum. The programmes have become more comprehensive, integrating innovative pedagogical approaches and incorporating technology into teaching and learning practices. Another notable shift is the college's leadership in STEM education, with various initiatives positioning SCE at the forefront of this field in Bhutan. Today, SCE stands as a dynamic institution, offering a diverse range of recognised programmes while maintaining its commitment to quality, community, and personalised teaching.

**SP: What message would you like to convey to Bhutanese youth who aspire to become teachers, particularly in today's dynamic world?**

**(DCG):** To the Bhutanese youth who aspire to become teachers, I want to share that teaching is not just a job—it's a vocation that has the power to transform lives. Throughout my career, I have seen first-hand how education shapes the future, not just for individuals, but for entire communities. In today's dynamic world, as the pace of change quickens, the role of a teacher is more crucial than ever. You will not only be imparting knowledge but also inspiring your students to think critically, adapt to change, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Another important lesson is to teach not only with the head and mind but also with the heart. Today's youth are growing up in an increasingly complex, competitive, and fast-paced world. As a teacher, you must be understanding and empathetic, while also being firm and decisive when needed. Striking this balance will help guide your students through their challenges and equip them with the skills and resilience to navigate the world effectively.

I want the future teachers to embrace the unique challenges that come with teaching. Let your passion drive you to be the best educator you can be, and never stop learning. Keep adapting to new methods and technologies while staying grounded in the rich cultural heritage that defines Bhutan. Be a role model not only for your students academically but also in how you live your values with integrity, honesty, and compassion.

Teaching is a service to society, and every student you guide, encourage, and support is a step toward a brighter future. I can't express enough how rewarding this profession is—your work as a teacher will echo through the generations, shaping a compassionate, progressive Bhutan. And never stop learning .... Take all opportunities to broaden your knowledge and skills.

**SP: Bhutan is rapidly transitioning into a knowledge-based society. Drawing from your extensive experience as an educator and administrator, how should our teaching and learning practices be redesigned to prepare**



## students for the challenges of this evolving society?

(DCG): As Bhutan transitions into a knowledge-based society, the education system must evolve to equip students with the skills and mindsets required to thrive in an increasingly complex and information-driven world. Drawing from my experience, I believe there are several key areas in which teaching and learning practices should be redesigned:

1. **Emphasising Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:** In a knowledge-based society, the ability to think critically and solve problems is paramount. Teachers should encourage students to question, analyse, and evaluate information rather than merely memorising facts. Incorporating more inquiry-based learning, case studies, and real-world problem-solving scenarios will help foster these essential skills.
2. **Incorporating Technology Effectively:** Technology is a driving force in the modern world, and its integration into teaching and learning is essential. Educators should not only use technology as a tool for instruction but also teach students how to use it effectively for research, collaboration, and creation. Digital literacy must be a core component of the curriculum, alongside traditional subjects.
3. **Fostering Lifelong Learning:** In today's rapidly changing world, the ability to continue learning throughout one's life is crucial. Educators should instill in students a growth mindset—helping them understand that learning doesn't stop after graduation. Promoting self-directed learning, curiosity, and adaptability will prepare students for careers that may not yet exist.
4. **Building Soft Skills and Emotional Intelligence:** While technical knowledge is important, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, empathy, and emotional intelligence are equally vital. The teaching approach should move beyond academic learning to encompass these social and emotional competencies, helping students thrive in collaborative and diverse environments.
5. **Linking Learning to Local and Global Contexts:** Education should be contextually relevant, blending global knowledge with Bhutanese values and realities. Students should understand how the skills and knowledge they acquire relate to both local and global challenges, particularly in areas like sustainable development, environmental protection, and social equity, which are essential for Bhutan's future.
6. **Personalised Learning and Flexibility:** Every student has unique strengths, interests, and learning styles. Our teaching methods should move towards a more personalised approach, where students can pursue their interests, learn at their own pace, and develop expertise in areas they are passionate about. This requires flexible curricula and diverse learning pathways to allow for a more individualised educational experience.
7. **Teacher Professional Development:** Teachers themselves must be lifelong learners, continuously updating their knowledge and teaching practices. Providing regular opportunities for professional development, peer collaboration, and exposure to new teaching strategies is critical to ensure educators are prepared to meet the evolving needs of students.

By redesigning teaching and learning practices in these ways, we can better prepare Bhutanese students to succeed in a knowledge-based society, where adaptability, creativity, and a commitment to continuous learning are the keys to success.

**SP: As both a educator and a concerned Bhutanese citizen, what aspects of the current education system do you find most promising, and which ones worry you the most? How do you think Samtse College of Education can address these concerns while leveraging opportunities?**

(DCG): I see both promising developments and areas of concern within the current education system. Here's

my perspective:

Promising developments -

1. Commitment to Quality Education: Bhutan's focus on holistic development, integrating Gross National Happiness (GNH) and emotional well-being, strengthens the education system. It is there in our system; it needs to be harnessed and utilised well.
2. Growth in STEM Education: Increasing emphasis on STEM education positions Bhutan for a knowledge-based economy, with Samtse College of Education playing a key role in preparing future teachers.
3. Integration of Local Values with Global Knowledge: Bhutan's unique curriculum integrates cultural values, environmental stewardship, and ethical leadership, contributing to sustainable development.
4. Increased Access to Higher Education: More Bhutanese are accessing higher education, which is crucial for building an educated and capable workforce.

### **Concerns:**

1. Inadequate Focus on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Excessive emphasis on rote learning and exams limits students' ability to think critically, solve problems, and adapt to global challenges.
2. Limited Teacher Training and Professional Development: Many teachers lack training in modern pedagogical techniques, particularly in student-centred learning, technology integration, and assessment.
3. Educational Inequities Across the Country: Disparities in resources between urban and rural areas affect the quality of education, with remote schools facing challenges in infrastructure, materials, and qualified teachers.
4. Curriculum Relevance and Adaptability: The current curriculum needs to better address global changes, focusing on digital literacy, soft skills, and adaptability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
5. Focus on vocational education - A significant concern is the lack of interest in vocational education and training (VET) in Bhutan. While academic education is emphasised, there is a mismatch between the skills students acquire and those demanded by industries. Strengthening vocational training in sectors like construction, IT, and hospitality would better equip students for the workforce, reduce youth unemployment, and contribute to economic growth. This can be addressed by integrating more practical, skill-based courses and fostering stronger links between schools, industries, and vocational institutions. The VET programmes need a more robust and dynamic curriculum, one that is both relevant and appealing. These programmes should be elevated in prestige and status, recognised as crucial for nation-building by equipping students with practical skills that directly contribute to the country's economic and social development.

### **How Samtse College of Education Can Address These Concerns:**

1. Revamping Teacher Training and Pedagogy: The College can lead in reshaping teacher education by focusing on critical thinking, problem-solving, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. This includes adopting interactive, student-centred methods, integrating technology, and promoting communication and adaptability. Continuous professional development for teachers should be a priority.
2. Curriculum Innovation: The College can drive curriculum innovation by incorporating flexible learning paths and interdisciplinary approaches, while integrating emerging fields like digital literacy and sustainable development. This ensures future educators are equipped to teach relevant skills that align with global trends and local needs.
3. Strengthening Collaboration with Rural Schools: To address educational inequities, the College should build stronger partnerships with rural schools, offering resources, training, and access to technology. This could include distance education, mentorship programmes, and outreach initiatives to empower teachers and



students in remote areas.

4. Strengthening Educational Research and linkages: The College can leverage its leadership role to conduct research on teaching methods, curriculum development, and learning outcomes, informing national policies and improving practices across the country. And also broaden its external linkage with student exchange programmes, academics exchange, etc

5. Leveraging Digital Technologies: As Bhutan transitions to a knowledge-based society, the College can expand digital education offerings, provide training on digital tools, and integrate blended learning models for both students and teachers.

By focusing on teacher training, curriculum innovation, rural outreach, research, and digital integration, Samtse College of Education can help shape a progressive education system that prepares Bhutanese students for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

**SP: With the Royal Kasho on education reform setting the stage for a transformative phase in Bhutan's education system, what advice would you offer to the faculty and students of Samtse College of Education to effectively align with and support these reforms?**

(DCG): 1. Embrace Innovation: Adopt new teaching methods, curricula, and technologies to support the reform's modernization goals. The Kasho emphasizes modernizing the system, and it's important for everyone to contribute to this shift by incorporating innovative, student-centered, digital pedagogy, and inquiry-based approaches in their teaching and learning.

2. Prioritise Holistic Development: Balance academic achievement with emotional, social, and ethical growth, fostering well-rounded individuals. Integrate GNH education values and principles in classroom and whole college practice.

3. Promote Critical Thinking: Focus on developing students' problem-solving, creativity, and analytical skills by integrating them into the curriculum with lots of practical experiences.

4. Enhance Pedagogical Skills: Engage in continuous professional development to stay updated with modern teaching practices and technology integration. Offer them refresher courses to keep abreast of changes as well as share good practices.

5. Encourage Research: Faculty and students should engage in research and reflective practice to improve teaching quality and contribute to educational policies.

6. Support Interdisciplinary Learning: Emphasize practical skills and interdisciplinary approaches, particularly in STEM and vocational training.

7. Foster Collaboration: Build partnerships with rural schools, communities, and other institutions to expand the impact of reforms.

8. Align with National Vision: Contribute to the creation of a knowledge-based society while maintaining Bhutan's unique cultural values.

**SP: As an alumna, what vision do you have for Samtse College of Education in becoming a hub of innovation and excellence in teacher education?**

(DCG): My vision for Samtse College of Education is to become a hub of innovation and excellence in teacher education by:

1. Pioneering Pedagogy: Embrace student-centred, tech-integrated digital pedagogies, and inquiry-based learning to prepare educators.

2. Curriculum Innovation: Develop dynamic curricula that blend global trends with Bhutanese values, focusing on critical skills like digital literacy and critical thinking.
3. Research Excellence: Foster a strong research culture to drive educational advancement and inform national policy.
4. Community Engagement: Strengthen partnerships with schools, communities, and international institutions to share best practices and broaden learning opportunities.
5. Holistic Teacher Development: Focus on emotional intelligence, leadership, and relationship-building alongside academic training.
6. Inclusive Education: Expand access to quality teacher education, particularly in rural areas, through flexible and distance learning options.
7. Sustainability and Global Citizenship: Prioritise sustainability, ethical leadership, and global citizenship in teaching and research.

Dr. Deki C. Gyamtso, PhD, was a dedicated teacher educator who began her career as a Geography lecturer at Samtse College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). She held key academic and administrative roles, including Programme Leader for B.Ed Secondary, B.Ed Primary, Coordinator for Distance Teacher Education Programme and Centre for University Learning and Teaching, Assistant Principal (Academic Affairs), and Dean of Academic Affairs, contributing significantly to the college's academic growth.

To broaden her experience, she served at The Royal Academy in Paro (2014–2016) and later at the Office of the Vice Chancellor, RUB (2016–2019), in various capacities, including Managing Editor of Bhutan Journal of Research Development and Higher Education Specialist, Researcher, Facilitator, and short-course designer. In 2020, she returned to teaching at Paro College of Education, where she continued to shape education through course development, teaching, and training until her retirement in 2024.



## Khenpo Jangsem Tashi on Mind and Happiness

**O**n 19<sup>th</sup> August, venerable Khenpo Jangsem Tashi gave an insightful talk to the faculty members, staff and students of Samtse College of Education in Namgay Khangzang, the College auditorium.

The main essence of his talk was happiness for which the mind is the crux. He emphasised that happiness depends on how one regulates mind. The Khenpo elaborated on various perceptions of happiness, emphasising that one's mind plays a crucial role in determining their well-being. He exemplified that while some seek happiness through self-centred actions, others find joy in altruism. He cautioned against self-serving mind, noting that such actions can lead to societal disarray, including conflicts, social disharmony, and array of misunderstandings. He urged that serving others brings real happiness, underscoring the importance of living ethically and

harmoniously, fostering an environment where humanity thrives without causing harm to one another.

Passang Dem of B. Ed IT D stated, "Before, I was not aware of happiness. After attending the talk, I am enlightened with new knowledge. Now I truly believe that we are the reason of our own happiness.". The Khenpo concluded the talk with the advice to inculcate good thoughts and actions on daily basis. Choki Gyeltshen, the student Councilor from B. Ed 2 thanked the Khenpo for the audience despite his busy schedule.

Khenpo Jangsem Tashi is a learned Buddhist master and author. He has published books and article on Buddhism and happiness, and given talk to school students.



## College BRCS Members at Samtse Annual Moenlam Chenmo

**T**he Bhutan Red Cross Society (BRCS) members of the College took an active part during the five-day Moenlam Chenmo conducted from 7 to 11 November. During the Moenlam Chenmo conducted by Samtse Dzongkhag Administration, 20 BRCS members from the College actively engaged in the community services and voluntarily works. The voluntary works included waste management, serving food and refreshment, and elderly care.

On the last two days, which happened to be weekend, all the 20 volunteer members from the College were actively engaged at the Moenlam Chenmo site

from morning to evening. In addition to the waste management and elderly care, the BRCS volunteers helped the monks with the tshog preparation and Dzongkhag officials with the disassembling the preparations. The Dzongkhag administration and the community appreciated the help rendered by BRCS.

BRCS members' participation at the Moenlam Chenmo was an occasion for the College to render help and to link with the community.



*A group photo of BRCS members with Dasho Dzongda and Lam Neten*



## Where Words Find a Home

In the literature festival I roam  
A festival that treasures literature  
Acknowledging magic of words  
providing home to stories and poems  
As the magic of literature unfolds  
My imagination took flight

At the festival, we gathered as one,  
Meeting authors from places afar.  
We admired the beauty around us,  
And shared stories under the stars.  
New friendships formed, warm and true.

When the festival came to an end,  
Every heart was deeply inspired  
With passion and fire in mind  
My love for literature grew bigger.



**Reshma Rai**  
BEEd English/Geography II

## A Beautiful Night in College

It's a beautiful night, the stars shine bright,  
I've come so far to learn and write.  
A first-year here, with dreams to grow,  
In this new place, so much to know.

In my small room, I cook and eat,  
Rice and eggs—a simple treat.  
The chores pile up, assignments too,  
College life is busy, but fresh and new.

Exams are close, deadlines tight,  
But here I sit beneath the night.  
One day I'll teach, but now I roam,  
Building my dreams, far from home.



**Nima Tshering**  
BEEd English/History I



## The Duality of Love: Sweetness and Torment

Love? What's sweeter than love when you truly feel?  
Love happens unplanned, yet it feels as though we've always longed for it.  
Does Love taste like an orange blossom honey in the spring, sweet and delicate?  
Or does love offer you a bitterness of freshly grown cocoa in the fall, raw and untamed?

People say, love comes in all sorts of tastes.  
People say, it can fill your heart and consume you until you lose yourself in its depths.  
People say, you love and love but sometimes love doesn't love you back.  
People say, love makes you crazy and makes a psycho out of you.  
People say, it can drive you to lie, to kill or even to die if love demands.

For me, love pricked my heart with the sharpness of a tungsten needle and made me bleed.  
Yet, with an ever-welcoming heart, I embraced it fully.  
Nothing ever so sweet yet, so tormenting than love indeed.



**Dorji Tshering**  
BEd English/Geography I

## The Silhouette of You

Don't take me where I don't belong,  
My shifting soul is ablaze.  
Chilling scent stomps through my soul,  
Ugly, tingling laughter haunts me.

Don't take me where I don't belong,  
What if I have forgotten forgiveness?  
What if I can't feel the way I felt before?  
To whom shall my brother seek to play?

Don't take me where I don't belong,  
What should I perceive, my friend?  
Shall I say I am the one losing, and you the victor?  
Even as the fool, my heart, remains open.

I reminisce the day I felt special,

But as dusk came, you flew like a pigeon.  
I wore the same dress to feel you,  
But only the silhouette of you looked at me.

I saw your face printed in my diary,  
I ripped it until the pages were gone.,  
While blurry eyes begged for forgiveness.  
It urged me to walk alone: I nodded.



**Cheki Wangmo**  
BEd IT B

## **Interview with Dr. Rinchen Dorji, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Royal University of Bhutan**



**SHES-RIG PAGES (SP):** Sir, you started your career as a teacher and then progressively moved into different positions such as President, SCE and now as a PVC of RUB. Please tell us about yourself and some of the salient milestones of your professional journey.

**PVC:** I come from a very humble and a big family of nine siblings but lost one of my younger siblings a few years ago. I was raised by a single mother after I lost my stepfather early in life. Though uneducated and without any stable source of livelihood, my mother worked tirelessly with an indomitable spirit and resilience to raise and educate nine children, who are

able to support and sustain themselves and their families today.

Yes, I began my career as a schoolteacher at Rangthangwoong Lower Secondary School (now Tsenkharla Central School) in Trashiyangtse sometime in 1995 after graduating from Sherubtse College in Kanglung with a Bachelor of Arts (English Honours) in June 1995. After the completion of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at the erstwhile National Institute of Education (NIE) in Samtse in July 1996, I taught at Ugyen Dorji High School in Haa for half a year. Then, in the beginning of 1998, I got transferred as a lecturer to the Teacher Training Centre (TTC) Paro, which is now renamed as Paro College of Education under the Royal University of Bhutan. I have served at Paro College of Education as a teacher educator for most of my career wherein I successfully shouldered several leadership responsibilities including the role of Dean of Research and Industrial Linkages. In between, I also worked as a Curriculum Officer for a short stint at my current office at the Office of the Vice Chancellor.

Beginning from September 2018 until August 2024, I have served as the President of Samtse College of Education with a great sense of fulfillment, where each day of my service at the College was personally enriching and professionally satisfying and rewarding. I am currently entrusted with the honour and privilege to look after the Academic and Research affairs of the University in my capacity as the Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic and Research.

I am not sure if the different phases of my professional career are worth calling as milestones but I have absolutely enjoyed every bit of my career so far and I am committed to continuously challenge myself and work together with the colleges of the University and relevant stakeholders to take the academic and research initiatives of the University to greater heights.

**SP:** Unveiling your memories, tell us briefly about your experience as a student of Samtse College of Education, the erstwhile National Institute of Education during your time.

**PVC:** After completing my field attachment at Rangthangwoong Lower Secondary School (Tsenkharla Central School now) under Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag from November 1995 until June 1996, I joined the erstwhile National Institute of Education (NIE) for a year-long Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PgCE). I was a student of this College from July 1996 until July 1997. Things were very different then. There was just a handful of students who could be easily accommodated in the entrance foyer of the main academic building for the morning assembly. For instance, in my cohort of PgCE, we were just 12 of us whereas today, the PgDE programme which is the upgraded PgCE programme in itself hosts more than a hundred students and the College Auditorium is not big enough to accommodate the whole student body for the morning assembly and other college events.

I recall my student life at NIE Samtse quite fondly especially in terms of the professional growth and development I was able to experience as a future teacher. Because I joined the teaching profession with a conviction and belief that I have the necessary traits to become a professional teacher, I was very serious and focused in my learning. The professional experiences gained from the field attachment in the school enabled me to reflect, connect, and analyse the theoretical learning to the field realities thus consolidating the pre-service teacher training into a highly insightful, meaningful, and wholesome experience.

Besides the academic learning, I made every attempt to make the best of my student experience at the Institute through active participation in curricular and non-curricular activities such as the Inter-House Cultural Show Competitions, Games and Sports Tournaments, Club Activities, Tutorials, etc. These activities were pursued by the students those days with so much of positive energy and excitement and in addition to developing life skills such as leadership qualities, team spirit, social and communication skills, cooperation, sense of positive competition, and numerous other values. However, this same level of positive energy and drive for learning is not there in today's students. These activities also provided opportunities to intermingle and build friendships with fellow students from the Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) and Bachelor of Education (BEd), many of which I still cherish and continue to this day as close friends and professional colleagues.

Of all my learning experiences, the experiences at the erstwhile National Institute of Education as part of my pre-service teacher education was the most fulfilling, rewarding, and satisfying. It was through this institute I was able to find a sense of purpose in life as a future teacher and pursued the teaching career with wholehearted passion, positive energy, pride, honour, dignity, dedication, and commitment to the teaching profession.

**SP: Please give a brief description of your experiences as a President of Samtse College of Education.**

**PVC:** The experience and growth I witnessed in my personal and professional self as the President of Samtse College of Education is another memorable milestone that I shall always treasure in my life. I have served as the President of Samtse College of Education from September 2018 until August 2024 and am ever grateful and indebted to the Royal University of Bhutan for the trust and confidence placed on me to shoulder the leadership responsibility at this premier teacher education institution in the country at a critical juncture of its development. I joined the College at a time when the decline in both pre-service and in-service student teachers' enrollment was abysmally low and the future of the College was uncertain.

The stress and pressure of navigating these challenges was unimaginably daunting and the COVID-19 pandemic



outbreak made this more haunting. As the head of the College, I had pursued this matter with relevant stakeholders at my own personal level and in my capacity as the President of the College and also through the continued support of the leadership of the Royal University of Bhutan. Much to the relief of the College, this issue is now resolved and the College has adequate student enrollment and the future of the College assured.

During my 5 years and 11 months of service as the President at the College, I have always served the College with an understanding that leadership is a service instead of considering it as a position of authority and power. I have made every possible effort and attempt to be democratic, inclusive, and collaborative in decision-making and visioning of the long-term development of the College and have been objective and transparent in the day-to-day operations and management of the College. Besides the managerial, administrative, and leadership responsibilities of looking after the overall development of the College, the kind of academic leadership I have succeeded in providing to my fellow faculty members at the College and the close interaction and mentorship I have been able to provide to the student body during my tenure at the College have been most fulfilling and rewarding.

To be the President of a College of Education is not an easy job. It demands uncompromising commitment, loyalty and selflessness to provide the kind of leadership a college of education needs. It is quite daunting, highly stressful, sensitive, and complicated too. Leadership besides the perks and incentives associated to it, is often isolating and a lonely job. While leadership qualities and attributes such as visioning, dynamism, commitment, and selflessness are the sine-quo-non of any effective leadership, these very qualities can also drain you of your own personal health and wellbeing. One needs to be strong and resilient enough to cope with these challenges. In my case, the constant satisfaction that I derived from small achievements and successes at the College, my personal passion and drive for doing my job well, the daily mindfulness practices that I practiced, and the refuge I sought in the spiritual practices have served as a rich source of energy that kept me hopeful and confident with everything I had to handle on a daily basis.

Overall, I would describe my experience as the President of Samtse College of Education as one of the most memorable phases of my professional career that provided me with an opportunity to reflect and analyse on my own leadership and personal attributes to constantly raise my leadership skills and apply those realisations for the positive growth and development of the College.

**SP: How is your current position as the PVC at the Royal University of Bhutan different from being a lecturer and President and how do you make use of the knowledge and skills acquired as a lecturer and president in performing the duties in your current job?**

**PVC:** As someone who has served in this same office in the past and my experience as an academic who had shouldered leadership roles in both academic and research affairs during my tenure as a lecturer at Paro College of Education, and my most recent experience of serving as the President of Samtse College of Education with active involvement in matters related to academic and research quality and standards, I am happy with my current job and find extremely satisfying and fulfilling although it is too early to provide such a judgment.

While the job responsibilities of a lecturer and President of a college is very different from the current position as the Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic and Research of the University, they are also very complementary. My previous experience as a lecturer and President of a college enables me to perform my job of monitoring the quality assurance practices and processes in both academic and research matters in the colleges more

realistically and practically by considering the ground realities that operates at the college instead of forming judgements and drawing conclusions as an outsider.

**SP: Please provide your views of Samtse College of Education as the erstwhile NIE then and today?**

**PVC:** The erstwhile NIE Samtse since its inception as a fledgling Teacher Training Institute (TTI) in May 1968 has served its goal and purpose of feeding the country's education system with Bhutanese national teachers, who are not only sensitive to the Bhutanese cultural values and traditions but who also possessed the required professional competencies and subject matter knowledge to proficiently teach young school children in the school system. Majority of the graduates of this institute have risen to key leadership positions playing an instrumental role in the development of the country's education system and the civil service at large.

This institute as the erstwhile National Institute of Education (NIE), has undoubtedly gone through tremendous growth and development over the past few decades. During my time, NIE Samtse then used to offer only the Bachelor of Education (BEd) and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programmes. The pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes are much more diversified now. In addition to the usual Bachelor of Education programmes, the PGCE programme is upgraded to Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PgDE) and the College today offers several Master of Education (MEd) programmes in most of the secondary school subjects for in-service secondary school teachers. The College also offer the Postgraduate Diploma in Contemplative Counselling Psychology (PgDCCP) that educates and prepares professional counsellors for the country. The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PgCert in HE) specifically designed for the newly recruited academics in the colleges of the University prepares the young academics with the emerging 21st century higher education pedagogical practices.

With the diversification of the programmes and courses offered at the College, the student enrolment has also increased proportionately. The College Auditorium is not big enough to accommodate the students for college activities today, whereas the main entrance foyer of the main academic building used to be big enough to accommodate the whole student body for the morning assembly in the past.

In contrast to the days of NIE Samtse, the College today is staffed fully by Bhutanese teacher educators where more than 30% of the faculty members have PhD qualifications with better research knowledge and greater exposure to global practices of teacher education.

The expansion of infrastructure facilities at the College is very visible. The College today has all the essential infrastructure facilities in place that can support high standards of pre-service and in-service teacher education courses and programmes. Most of the old physical structures have either been demolished completely and replaced with new structures and those that are still strong to serve well are renovated and retrofitted to support new and emerging educational needs. The College has one of the best library facilities in the country; student hostel facilities are more livable and conducive; all academic learning spaces are connected with reliable WIFI connectivity; all work stations have air conditioning facilities; and the College has already initiated works for the building of some new infrastructure facilities such as the indoor multi-purpose sports complex, a prayer hall with Bhutanese architectural design that can accommodate more than 500 people, and numerous other development works. All of these can help in transforming the College into an epicenter for excellence in teacher education thus attracting international pre-service and in-service teacher education students from the region and abroad ultimately contributing to the achievement of the University's internationalisation initiatives and

efforts.

**SP: How do you see the role of Samtse College of Education in the overall development of Bhutan's education system?**

**PVC:** The role of Samtse College of Education in the overall development of Bhutan's education system is huge and enormous. As the only teacher education institute that educates pre-service and in-service teachers for the country's entire secondary school system, and as the only higher education institute that offers counselling courses in the country, the success of the country's education system and the wellbeing of school youths largely depend on the teacher education and counselling curricula developed and offered at the College; learning, teaching, and assessment practices adopted in preparing teachers/counsellors; subject matter knowledge, professional competencies, research practices, and personal attributes of teacher/counselling educators; kind of students enrolled and their passion for teaching; and everything that happens at the College.

The quality and standard of teacher education and preparation at the College is so crucial and instrumental that it can either make or break the country's education system. Teacher education can directly impact educational practices in the mainstream education system. Any good educational practices in teacher education that are crafted intelligently can have a direct positive impact on the larger education system. On the contrary, any teacher education practices that are not well-planned, ill-founded, and misaligned with the practice in the general education system can have a huge damaging effect that it can sabotage the entire education system beyond repair. Thus, the role of Samtse College of Education like any other teacher education institutions is highly complex and at the same time quite sensitive and delicate. A small, tiny mistake in teacher education can result in disastrous and irreparable destruction to the general education system.

Next, the quality of teacher education cannot exceed the quality of teacher educators. They are the bedrock, the backbone, the pillar and the very foundation of a sound and strong education system because what teacher educators do have a direct impact on quality of teachers, which has a subsequent impact on how students learn in school thus determining the quality of education at a national context. Therefore, the need for teacher educators to constantly push and challenge their current boundaries so that their knowledge and professional practices becomes the seed for innovative educational practices thus deconstructing the conventional approach to education.

For instance, at a time when the country has initiated the transformation and reform of the country's education system, Samtse College of Education can take advantage of the situation to critically review the courses and programmes offered at the College so that teacher education practices at the College not only aligns with the national education reform initiatives but it is futuristic, forwarding-looking, and timeless in its application and use. The faculty members who have good knowledge and experience of research and publication can brainstorm to identify topical and pressing issues in the education system and team up with professionals from relevant departments in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) for collaborative research projects to inform new policy formulations and directions for the future of education in the country.

**SP: What is your advice to the Bhutanese youths who aspire to become teachers?**

**PVC:** If you wish and aspire to become a teacher, make sure you have a genuine passion and interest not only for teaching but also for learning. A true teacher can never stop learning and this is a fundamental trait every teacher needs to possess. Study your own strengths and weaknesses. Match these traits against the demands



of teaching because choosing teaching as a career merely out of interest without the essential attributes can be damaging to your own individual self, a child's life, and to the country's education system.

Teaching is very demanding and stressful. Teachers are often required to multitask besides teaching. They are also a parent, caregiver, guide, counsellor, coach, etc. Teachers are also targeted and blamed for many problems associated to youths although there are many other key players that are responsible for guiding and education young children. Therefore, prepare to be strong, resilient, committed, diligent, selfless, determined, focused, disciplined, and resourceful and demonstrate these traits through your actions.

School children spend more time with teachers in school than with their parents or family members. Know how to handle children's emotions and feelings with sensitivity. Model values of compassion, loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity through your conduct and behaviour to make your learners feel safe and comforted in your presence. Emotional wellbeing is key to learning and the more you succeed connecting well with your learners' feelings and emotions, the stronger the learners' sense of belongingness and attachment to you as their teacher and their intrinsic motivation for learning and academic performance.

Embrace the differences the learners bring to the classroom and celebrate diversity. Know and understand that one size fits all approach does not work in teaching. Every individual learner is different and their learning styles are vastly different from one another.

Be prepared to see your learners as your teachers too. Learners can often serve as a source of new learning and new insights for the teachers. Children can sometimes catch you off-guard and add to the teachers' learning through questions and views that are unexpected and brilliantly crafted. Therefore, learn to welcome questions from the learners; appreciate and value the views and opinions they bring to the class.

Last, be brave, bold, and courageous enough to admit your own weaknesses to the students. If you do not know something, do not pretend to know it but instead admit that you do not know and tell them you will find out and share later. Your learners will appreciate your humility because it is human not to know everything in the world. You will never be able to know everything that a teacher needs to know after all.

**SP: Our society is changing and we are becoming a knowledge-based society. From your wide experience as an educator and administrator, how should our teaching learning in the Bhutanese education system be designed to address this fast-changing Bhutanese society.**

**PVC:** This is a difficult question. There is no one fixed magical formula that can be prescribed as a blanket practice that will work well in all settings. The design of learning and teaching practices can depend on the subject matter taught; context and settings of the schools; and the background and class level of the learners/students; and many others.

Our education system has been talking about learning and teaching designs centred around student-centred teaching and wholesome education since the late 1980s and 1990s. More specifically, educational concepts such as activity-based learning, inquiry-based learning, cooperative and collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, problem solving method, project-based learning, etc. have been part of educational discourses and are also implemented in actual practice in the Bhutanese classroom learning and teaching practices.

Recently, instructional pedagogies such as blended learning or ICT-enhanced learning and teaching, flipped classroom, differentiated instruction, universal design for learning (UDL), place-based education, competency-based education, social emotional learning (SEL), constructive alignment, etc. are being mentioned more predominantly by academics and educationists. These are some of the most common and popular instructional methods that are universally applied across all education systems. For Bhutanese schoolteachers, most of these instructional methods are not very new because they learn about them as part of the curricula in the pre-service teacher education courses.

If the teachers in the schools are provided with a more enabling environment in terms of workload that are manageable and can focus more on classroom instruction instead of being asked to multi-task in responsibilities that are non-academic; work environment that is more collaborative and collegial to nurture communities of professional practices; leadership that is dynamic, futuristic, firm and decisive but also humanistic, fair, transparent, objective, inclusive and transformational, teachers will be motivated to experiment and apply innovative and creative instructional practices that can address the needs of the knowledge-based society of the 21st century Bhutan.

**SP: What aspects of the Bhutanese education system concerns you as a parent and a Bhutanese citizen who has a stake in education? What opportunities and challenges do you see for Samtse College of Education in addressing these concerns?**

**PVC:** The unplanned, ad-hoc, frequent, and an epidemic of changes in our education system without letting one single initiative and transformative idea take roots to bring the desired results is concerning and worrying. In this connection, Frank Furedi (2024), a Hungarian-Canadian academic in his book titled “Wasted: Why Education Isn’t Educating” shares that “One of the most striking symptoms of society’s obsession with education is the speed with which new policies are introduced, implemented and then modified or withdrawn. The compulsion to invent new policies and initiatives dominates the educational landscape” (p. 21). Knowing this, it seems this is the practice in many other education systems too but this should not be taken as an excuse for comfort. Otherwise, any piecemeal initiatives and tinkering or cosmetic changes will not be enough to build a world-class education as envisioned by our beloved His Majesty the King.

The other thing that worries and concerns me are the people who join teaching as a means of getting a job but without any serious passion and interest for teaching. There are many such teachers in our system and this trend still continues contributing to the continuity in the breeding of mediocre teachers for a mediocre education system. Many such teachers could still be serving as teachers in the system but without the ability to even inspire a single learner in their career because they fail to find the love and celebrate the beauty and joys of teaching. Instead, they hang on to the job to keep their livelihood and represent the frustrated and disgruntled population of teachers portraying a very poor image of teaching to their learners. This problem could be exacerbated by the present practice of recruiting teachers on contract who do not see any future in the teaching profession. While we need to acknowledge that there could be a few contract teachers who learn to love and enjoy teaching and wish to pursue their career in teaching, there could be many who use this contract teaching as a launchpad for newer opportunities elsewhere. In this process of teaching without passion and interest in teaching and a lack of sense of purpose, many could be doing some irreparable damage to the students’ learning.

The capacity development of teachers via one-shot in-service professional development trainings and workshops

without a proper follow-up to see its actual impact on students' learning in the actual classroom settings still continue to this day. Michael Fullan, a worldwide expert in whole systems change in education in his book on "The New Meaning of Educational Change" (2001) contended that one-shot professional development courses without proper follow-up and plan of action for implementation of the learning acquired through such professional development activities as cost-intensive and unsustainable. This concerns me because this practice is firstly not very cost-effective and secondly, the benefit of such professional development initiatives is rarely felt by the students in their classroom learning.

We talk a great deal about the importance of education and the need to raise the standards and quality of education in the country. We talk about world standard education system but investment often is very local. If we are serious about raising the standards of our education system, raising the salary of teachers and building new infrastructures alone will not work. There has to be a systemic change that supports the realisation of a world-class education system.

There are numerous other things that concerns and worries me – leadership capacity development of schools and local education authorities, lack of ownership and accountability of parents in their children's education, lack of reliable database of teachers and teacher deployment, teacher attrition due to the decline in teacher morale and motivation, collaboration amongst key stakeholders, etc.

**SP: Following the Royal Kasho on education reform, major transformation is taking place in the Bhutanese Education system. What roles can RUB play in this endeavor to materialise the vision of His Majesty the King?**

**PVC:** The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) as one of the biggest higher education institutions in the country has a very important stake in playing a proactive role in the current education reform process to transform Bhutan's standard of education into a world-class education system emulated by the rest of the world as new benchmarks to achieve.

Firstly, the colleges under RUB will need to continue reviewing and redesigning our own academic programmes to align with the emerging needs of the country's economy and national development priorities, focusing on areas such as technology, entrepreneurship, and sustainability and also enhance the employability RUB graduates via emphasis on the development of practical skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and digital literacy for the ever-evolving job market.

As part of the internationalisation efforts, RUB can also pursue its internationalisation efforts more aggressively through strategic branding of the University grounded on the principles of GNH and country's rich cultural heritage and by partnering with universities abroad to bring global best practices to Bhutan in the form of faculty and student exchange programmes, collaborative research projects, and award of joint degrees through memorandum of understandings with reputed universities outside Bhutan.

The colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan also have the opportunity to harness the benefits of technological advancements by investing in ICT infrastructure and promoting advanced digital literacy to prepare students for a future Bhutan driven by technology. The University can also seize the opportunity of introducing hybrid learning models that allow the students to access quality education regardless of their geographical location through online micro credentialled courses, which is what many universities are beginning to adopt increasingly.



The two colleges of education, Samtse and Paro in particular as institutes that provide teacher education programmes for the country's education system can play some critical roles in this reform process to realise the country's vision of building a world-class education system.

For instance, the colleges of education (CoEs) can design and offer cutting-edge teacher education programmes that equip teachers with modern pedagogical skills, ICT integration in learning, teaching, and assessment practices that aligns with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development's (MoESD) iSherig 2 ICT Education Master Plan document, and inclusive education practices.

The Royal University of Bhutan on behalf of the colleges of education can sign an MOU with the MoESD whereby the CoEs can design and provide continuous professional development (CPD) on emerging pedagogical practices for schoolteachers to enhance their subject knowledge and teaching methodologies.

The CoEs can also design research methods professional development for schoolteachers and also provide hand-holding in carrying out ethical and high impact collaborative research projects that yield findings that can influence educational changes and decision-makings in improving the country's education system. The academics from the CoEs with sound knowledge and experience of research could provide focused support in building the capacity of schoolteachers on action research in schools based on varying educational issues such as learning, teaching, and assessment practices, teacher morale and motivation, teacher and students' wellbeing, influence of technology on educational practices, school leadership, parental involvement, impact of policies and regulations on educational practices at school, etc.

The MoESD and RUB can work together to encourage collaborative research projects on some of the most topical and pressing issues in the country's education system such as the increasing teacher attrition rates, school students' mental health and wellbeing, school students' performance in STEM subjects, school leadership, integrating GNH into mainstream education, etc. and provide evidence-based recommendations to policymakers for improving Bhutan's school education system.

To win the respect and confidence of MoESD and relevant authorities for the involvement of the two colleges of education in building a more robust and future-ready education system that nurtures well-rounded, skilled, and responsible citizens, the academics in the two colleges of education will need to demonstrate the professional competence and capacity to play this critical role and make value additions to this important education reform exercise.

*News Research &*

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