

Youth in Bhutan

Education, Employment, Development

Lham Dorji with Sonam Kinga

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Youth in Bhutan
Education, Employment, Development

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NOTE

Youth development should entail the views of young people who can offer a perspective that is unique to them. What they express about their experiences, challenges, expectations and outcomes can bear so much on the policies and programs pertaining to them. This monograph series contains the papers that relied heavily on young people's views, valuing what they have to say about wide-range of problems that our youth are facing today. Organizations and programs can be more cost effective and responsive by ensuring that the problems of young people are heard, recognized and acknowledged with the appropriate actions.

The purpose of this monograph is not to portray youth as helpless victims of circumstances, deranged by contemporary dilemmas and ominous to the society, but to identify problems based on their views and stories. In general, we acknowledge the contributions of Bhutanese youth in the overall development.

This study is funded by Save the Children, Bhutan Program, the organisation that works closely with children, their families and communities to meet the ever changing needs and ensure their positive physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. The Centre acknowledge the financial support of this organization, and offer our wish that this organization would continue to play its positive role in understanding about youth development and broaden the base for youth development opportunities.

Lham Dorji

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Determinants of School-dropout and Non-enrollment: From the Young People's Perspective¹

Lham Dorji*

Introduction

Education scenario was very different in Bhutan before 1960s. Except for a formal monastic education, little was known about modern education system. However, from 1961 to 2004, Bhutan went through a period of tremendous socio-economic change; modern education became crucial for developing human resources to implement new development activities. The government accorded high priority to modern education, the effort of which ensued in establishment of many community and primary schools throughout the country improving the outreach towards education even in the remotest corners. People also began to value modern education more than traditional monastic education with which Bhutan saw an increase in the number of students from less than 400 students during

Note: This report cannot represent the general situation of youth in Bhutan. The focus of this study was on poorer section. It should not be misinterpreted that every youth in the country are subjected to different vulnerabilities; there are many young people who are privileged and are doing well in their lives.

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the late 1960s to around 155, 234 in 2004². The gross primary enrollment rate has increased from an estimate of 0.2 percent in 1961 to 84.2 percent 2003.³ The increase in primary enrollment from 1991 (46,517) to 1998 (78,007) was 7.7% per year, which was more than the projected target of 6% (Ministry of Education, 1999)⁴. Mid-day meals scheme, boarding provision and stationeries provided free of cost have made education attractive. The government aims to achieve cent percent enrollment rate in the lower secondary education (class 8) in 2007, and the higher secondary education (class 10) in 2012 (Vision 2020, 1999).

Notwithstanding these impressive achievements, there is so much to be done to increase enrolment rate and lower the rate of dropouts. Many children still remain un-enrolled; those already enrolled leave schools before completing secondary education in increasing numbers every year, most of them lapse into illiteracy wasting expenditure incurred on them. A large range of factors can be associated with non-enrollment and dropping out. The factors can be grouped into several categories: socio-economic development, school-related, demographic, admission pressure, job competitions, labour situation, perception on education, family-related problems, modern cultural influences, drug addictions and peer pressures. While these different key causes are invariably inter-linked, this study attempt to identify factors related to families and children of the poorer section of the society.

2 Annual Statistical Report 2004, Ministry of Education. This figure includes students, trainees and learners enrolled in 433 schools, 14 institutions and 455 non-formal education centers facilitated by 5,216 teachers.

3 *ibid* MOE, 2004

4 Education Ministry, 'Education For All An Assessment of the Progress'(Online) available from www.2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/buthan/contents.html [accessed in July 2004].

The Framework: Background, Purpose and Methods

Although, Bhutan has made a rapid improvement in education system both in quantitative and qualitative aspects, the gap between the stated goals and achievements is still vast. Improved school enrollment rate does not translate to an absence of 'non-enrollments' and 'dropouts'. Increasing access to education and promoting quality education are important goals that are being persevered but in the process we should not be misled by the notion that rapid expansion of school infrastructure and provision of certain minimal levels of basic school resources such as good buildings, free text-books, adequate teachers and free boarding facilities can suffice these educational goals. Successes aside, other problems like non-enrollment and dropout can deter the attainment of universal literacy, and these needs to be given some attention.

School non-enrollment is still a problem and more often than not the phenomenon of rural section and low-income groups. 64 percent of the schools are located in rural areas but the enrollment in these schools is just 31 percent much below the enrollment rate in urban areas where only 19% of schools are located.⁵ Low enrollment rate in rural areas where more schools are located indicate a serious mismatch between provision of schools and under-utilization of such facilities which can be a drain on limited resources within our school system in the long run.

The issue of school dropout presents fewer problems at present but it can bear significant problems in the long-term. School dropouts are expected to do less well in farms and are bound to have little access to employment. They are more likely to be associated with the social problems of urban centers as most of them would migrate to

⁵ Ministry of Education, 2003.

towns. The concept of dropout varies from a country to another depending on the prescribed level of basic education. In our case, ‘dropouts’ is defined as those students who are once enrolled but have left schools before completing secondary education. In general, those students who could not either enter vocational institutes, college or any other tertiary education system is considered as dropouts. Technically, the efficiency of education system is determined in terms of efficiency indicators, according to which, “the lower the repetition and dropouts rates, and higher the number of promotees and the survival rate, the more efficient is the education system.”⁶

Figure 1: Enrollment and repeaters in 2002-2003, and imputed promotees and dropouts

Class	Enrolment		Repeaters	Promotees	Dropouts	Percentage		
	2002	2003	2003	Imputed	Imputed	Promotee	Repeater	Dropout
PP	15,604.00	15,991.00	1,993.00	13,673.00	62.00	87.62%	12.77%	40%
I	14,828.00	15,569.00	1,896.00	12,551.00	381.00	84.64%	12.79%	2.57%
II	14,526.00	14,313.00	1,762.00	12,238.00	526.00	84.25%	12.13%	3.62%
III	12,947.00	13,616.00	1,378.00	11,149.00	420.00	86.11%	10.64%	3.24%
IV	12,594.00	12,939.00	1,790.00	10,050.00	754.00	79.80%	14.21%	5.99%
V	10,954.00	11,273.00	1,223.00	9,177.00	554.00	83.78%	11.16%	5.06%
VI	9,491.00	10,273.00	1,096.00	7,972.00	423.00	84%	11.55%	4.46%
Sub-total	90,944.00	93,974.00	11,138.00	76,810.00	2,996.00	84.46%	12.25%	3.29%
VII	8,859.00	9,161.00	1,189.00	6,881.00	789.00	77.67%	13.42%	8.91%
VIII	7,129.00	7,185.00	304.00	6,355.00	470.00	89.14%	4.26%	6.59%
Sub-total	15,988.00	16,346.00	1,493.00	13,236.00	1,259.00	82.79%	9.34%	7.87%
IX	6,613.00	7,241.00	886.00	5,209.00	518.00	78.77%	13.40%	7.83%
X	4,810.00	5,296.00	87.00	2,963.00	1,760.00	61.60%	1.81%	36.59%
Sub-total	11,423.00	12,537.00	973.00	8,172.00	2,278.00	71.54%	8.52%	19.94%
Total	118,355.00	122,857.00	13,604.00	98,218.00	6,533.00	82.99%	11.49%	5.52%

Source: Ministry of Education, Annual Statistical Book, 2003

6 Ministry of Education, 2003

In the above figure, out of 1,22,857 students enrolled in school system up to class X in 2003, 2996 left after completing class VI, 1259 after class VIII and 2278 after class X. In total, there were 6533 dropouts, which constitute 5.52 % of total students enrolled in 2003.⁷ The figure also shows that a huge number of students dropped out from class VI which is the standard primary education attainment in our education system. Class VI dropouts are expected to experience unemployment problems than class X dropouts since the former has lesser job opportunities than the latter. We assume that these dropouts are going back to rural farms but most of them migrate to urban hubs and find it difficult to secure steady employment and an adequate income. Some of them become vulnerable and adopt socially deviant behaviours.

Given these implications, identifying the causes of enrollment and dropouts is important to address the need for programs and services to keep these problems at insignificant level. To explore these causes, I have relied on two general questions:

(1) Why are many children not still enrolled in our education system as against the government's stated goals of universal primary education?

(2) Why do many children drop out of schools even when the government provides the education almost free of cost?

With these questions as the basis, this study aims to examine through qualitative and quantitative assessments, the factors that determine non-enrollment and dropout. I have also relied on some more questions to study the issue:

⁷ Ministry of Education, 2003

1. Are the financial means of families a decisive factor in children's chances of entering schools and improving their educational achievements?
2. Are school non-enrollment and dropout related to farm labour need and devaluation of education by the illiterate parents?
3. Does marital disruption of the parents and single-parent family bear impacts on the educational attainment of the children?
4. What types of dropout intervention programmes are effective?

This study is based on the survey of uneducated children and dropouts - the ones who knew the best of what had retained them away from schools or leave schools if they were ever enrolled. Survey interview had been carried out with a random sample of 942 youth in 12 Dzongkhags in July-August 2004. The main focus of interviews was rural youth, though some urban youth were surveyed. The survey questionnaires contained wide range of issues: 1) personal information of youth, 2) their families, 3) education, 4) occupation, 5) problems related to drugs, alcohols, tobacco, (6) and their dreams. Open-ended interviews were mainly focused on the respondents' free narration of their life experiences.

The first part of the survey was carried out in Thimphu – the focus groups were the babysitters and youth employed in automobile workshops to pretest the questionnaires and train the enumerators. Seven enumerators, mostly undergraduates and class XII students were employed for data collection. Eleven more enumerators were employed after the survey in Thimphu. One-day training programme

was organised to familiarize the enumerators with the research purpose, survey and interview methods.

The enumerators visited twelve Dzongkhags, individually and in groups. Each one of them had to visit a minimum of two villages and cover major district towns in Dzongkhags assigned to them, assuming that these towns are the places where school leavers would loiter. The table below gives the geographical coverage of the study.

Figure 2: Geographical coverage of the study

Dzongkhag	No. of Respondents
Bumthang	87
Chukha	57
Haa	54
Mongar	62
Paro	39
Punakha	83
Samtse	49
Tsirang	46
Thimphu	275
Trongsa	53
Wangdiphodrang	112
Zhemgang	25
Total	942

Each enumerator was given a minimum of sixty survey forms and asked to collect narrative information of at least twenty-five youth. Some enumerators were not actually able to complete all the survey forms and the number of respondents varied in different Dzongkhags. However, it was assumed that this would not have influenced the overall objective of the research, as the study was based on the random sampling. The fieldwork took 20 days on average. A researcher from the Centre (CBS) also visited the fields simultaneously to supervise the enumerators. The respondents were

paid the survey fees ranging from Nu. 20 to Nu 100 depending on the quantity and quality of information and the time they had to spend with the enumerators. Such incentive was given mainly to encourage the respondents to cooperate with the enumerators. There were almost an equal number of male and female respondents. The data collected covered a wide range of issues related to youth but only matters pertaining to youth education were used for the study. The personal narratives of the respondents form a separate descriptive report and it was also used to substantiate the survey data.

Two important reasons for Dropouts and Non-enrollment: ‘Low Income’ and ‘Needed at Home’

Both the questionnaire survey and narrative reports showed some relation between the children’s education attainment and their socio-economic upbringing. The findings support the government’s standpoint that “the existing free education policy does not mean that parental costs are non-existent. Besides the beneficiaries contributions to building and maintaining schools, especially community schools, the cost of school uniforms, travel to school, contributions towards the school welfare fund and boarding fees to augment the government stipend, add up to a sum beyond the reach of many farmers with the limited income.”⁸

Research has shown that socio-economic status, most commonly measured by parental education and income, is a powerful predictor of school achievement and dropout behaviour (Byrk & Thum, 1989, Russel W. Rumberger, 2001). Struggle for daily survival constitute the main priority for the subsistence farmers and low-income groups. Direct cost of schooling such as a nominal school fees, contribution to

⁸ According to the Eight Five Year Plan document, Ministry of Planning, September 1996.

school welfare fund, cash, clothes and related items, therefore, adds up to substantial amount to poor families with many children to support. No doubt that increasing numbers of parents are now aware of the long-term benefit of education, short-term education-cost basically determines their decision to not to send their children to schools.

Figure 3: Reasons for Non-enrollment

Reasons for not attending school	Male	Female	Total	%
Parents could not afford schooling expenses	19	25	44	33%
I was needed at home	17	25	42	31%
Parents did not think education worthwhile	7	19	26	19%
I refused to go	2	6	8	6%
Personal health problems	3	3	6	4%
Problems getting school	2	2	4	3%
School far away	1	3	4	3%
Grand Total	51	83	134	100%

In the survey of uneducated youth of rural families (aged 9 to 24), majority of them have attributed their school non-enrollment to parental economic constraints. Out of 134 respondents, 44 of them said '*their parents could not afford their schooling expenses*', 42 said '*I was needed at home*' and 26 replied '*parents did not think school education worthwhile*'. According to human capital theory, parents make choices about how much time and other resources to invest in their children based on their objectives, resources, and constraints, which, in turn, affect their children's taste for their education. (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994). For the poor section in the subsistence sector, both lower incomes and greater need for child labour are important education determinants. The children's education is a burden not only in terms of 'direct schooling cost' but 'indirect cost of losing their children' who contribute to the household economy. In traditional context,

children are considered as useful resources in the family to help parents in household tasks, which are not worthy of adults' involvement. The adage, 'where there is a need for a large stones, there is also a need for small stones [to fill up the gaps]; and where there are adults, there is a need for children to perform minor duties' speaks so much about the important roles that Bhutanese children play in the family affairs.

After completing primary education-the schools being mostly located near villages, access to secondary or post-secondary education becomes difficult for the children of low-income groups as the cost of education tend to rise especially when the children have to leave homes for schools. There were many cases of how the families had to borrow money from their neighbours, sell family property and encourage their children to work as wage labourer in construction projects during vacations as a short run means of meeting the cost of children's education. Whatsoever strategies and informal arrangements the poor families adopt, the cost of education remains the problem, as a result of which many families favour to keep their children at home and provide work in the farms.

I am a student and wish to pursue my education further. But, my parents may not afford the cost of my education as I attend higher grades; they find it hard to bear my school expenses even at the present grade. I am forced to attend school wearing torn clothes and shoes which always humiliates me. This aside, I have to walk a long distance from my home to school and am engaged in household works after school-hours the time when I am suppose to study. I cannot even imagine that my parents have to borrow money for my studies while I find less time to devout on my studies.

My mother is already encouraging me to give up my studies while my father is seeking out some ways to get loan from the BDFC, partly to maintain our dilapidated house and partly to help me go to school. My

family cannot afford to take loan because we have no other means of repaying this debt. That other families are struggling hard to repay their loans make me feel anxious. I am one of the girls who wish to excel in studies, but my family condition will certainly force me to discontinue my education from next year on. I cannot really foresee my future though I have great education aspirations. (*Tandin Zam, Wangdiphodrang*)

About two-third of the Bhutanese depend their livelihood on subsistence farming. One of the recent problems that the farming society began to face was a shortage of farm labour- the outcome of increasing development activities, deterioration of traditional system of labour mobilization, increased mammalian pests and rural-urban migration. Obviously, farmers who are confronted with labour shortage would see their children as extra helping-hands to run the farm activities, rather than send them to schools bearing some additional costs.

I was born to a soldier's family and lived in Thimphu for several years until my father was pensioned. We came back to our village and started a new farm. Not so long after, my father started to drink and my mother broke her leg, which forced me to discontinue my studies, as there were no other members to take up the family responsibility. My sisters had migrated to towns with their spouses long time ago.

I studied up to class V and wish to continue learning in non-formal education programme. It is difficult to attend the NFE classes, as I have to manage the entire household and participate in development activities (*woola*). When I get time, I have to work in construction projects on daily wage-the only source of income for my family with which I buy rice and other household items.

The village life is harsh but I have no other choice. I get disheartened to see my classmates (some of them not better than me in studies) pursuing their studies at any cost. It would be very painful for me to

see them become successful government employees in future, while I remain a humble farmer -the one that I actually did not dream to be. (*Karma Jigme, Age 17, Tshanglajong, Zhemgang*).

In general, Bhutanese parents have started to value education, but many parents are forced to keep their children in farms.

I come from a rural poor family. I studied up to class III but had to leave the school against my own will. My parents were not able to afford the cost of my schooling, and they also wanted me to help them in the farm. They promised me several times that they would send me to school, but it never happened at all. Now, I am willing to be a farmer like my parents. (*Tek Bahadur Gurung, Samtse*)

Children are considered useful to support their parents in farms.

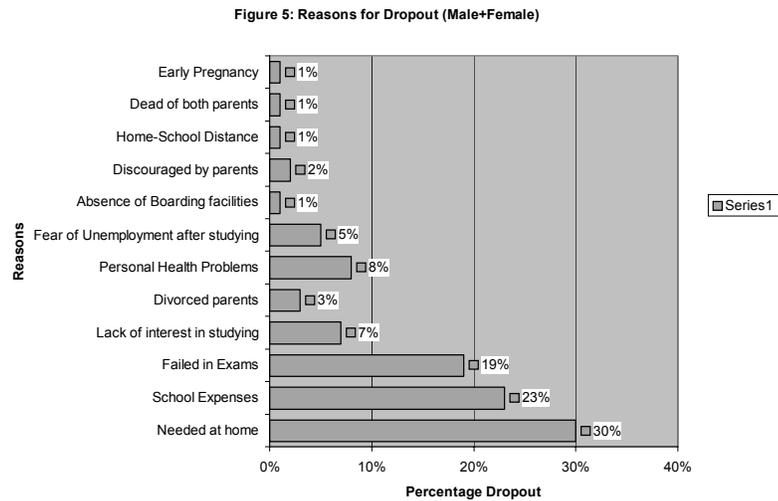
It was my dream to attend school but this dream was never materialized. I cannot blame my parents because it was not that they did not wish me to study; they were just poor farmers. I spent my childhood days looking after cattle having no shoes to wear even when walking in the forest looking for the lost animals. In case if a cow was lost; I would not prefer to go home, fearing that the father would punish me. Some years later, my father had managed to get a good job in Bumthang. He took me to a school, but then I was not given an admission, as I was too old in age for school. (*Tenzin Jamtsho, Bumthang*)

Children of a large number of siblings have lesser chances of attending schools than those who come from smaller families.

I have parents, a good house and enough land. My parents, however, cannot afford to send me to school solely for the reason that they have to raise six children. Sometimes, we find difficult even to sustain

ourselves, forget about going to schools. That my father is an alcoholic makes the family situation worse because he spends his earning (as blacksmith) on drinks. I want to go to school but father says that he cannot afford to buy my uniform and pay school fees because he has many dependents. (Nima, Wangdiphodrang)

Figure 4: Reasons for School Dropout



Source: Survey in 12 Dzongkhags by the Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2004.

In the random survey of 400 dropouts in 12 Dzongkhags, most of them gave ‘*parents could not afford education cost*’ and ‘*needed at home to help parents*’ as two main reasons for leaving schools. There were twelve reasons that they gave as response to an open-ended questions, ‘*why did you discontinue your education at your early age?*’.

Figure 6: Family Category of those respondents who gave the reason 'needed at home'

Family Category	No. of Children	Cu.%
Farmers	99	83%
Low-income civil servants	7	6%
Low-income private workers	5	4%
Wage-laborers	9	8%
Grand Total	120	100%

120 dropouts had responded to the question concerning their family circumstances, out of which 83 percent of them had stated they came from peasant families thus supporting the theory that children of rural farms have higher chance of leaving schools at early ages. The rest of them came from the low-income families also showing that low parental economic status bears negative impacts on children's education.

'Poor Performance in Exams' and 'Lack of Interest in Studying'

Retention of children in schools is a major challenge today. "Currently, only 69 percent of those entering primary school complete the seven years of primary education, 54 percent complete class VIII and 39 percent reach class X. In addition, 12-13 percent students repeat grades every year. This stems in large measure from the inability of the system to provide adequate professional support including deployment of sufficient number of teachers."⁹ The data suggest that lack of interest in studying and poor examination performances are the other reasons often mentioned. According to the efficiency indicators of the Ministry of Education, there were a total of

⁹ Planning Commission, Ninth Plan Document.

13,604 students repeating various grades in 2003 giving a total repetition rate of 11.49 %. It means that the same amount of resources is spent on the same group of students repeatedly, raising the cost of education to the individuals and his families as well as to the school system. Economic conditions of families and the need to work on farms beside studies are some reasons why children feel de-motivated to study, repeat and fail in the end. In general, most children of rural and low-income families are engaged in household duties beside their studies. The actual time these children spend on household- activities vary and are not known, but subjective data given by the respondents show that extra-works affects their interest in studies and are deterrents to school continuation.

I studied in my village school (until class V) that was located one and half hour walk from my home. On top of long home-school distance, I had to spend ample of my study time on household activities. My routinely tasks were to milk the cows and escort them to a nearby forest on my way to school. After school hours, I used to rush back to the forest and drive the cattle back home after which I used to fetch fodders and help my sisters to spin their weaving threads. This hampered my studies that I had to repeat in the same grades for several times.

Later on, my brother working in Thimphu understood my problem, and he brought me to Thimphu to allow me to focus on studies. After five years, my sister-in-law became disgruntled with my prolonged stay though my brother wished me to stay on and pursue higher education under his guidance. I had to leave this family and move to other places. I was lucky that someone (I don't want to give her name) came to help me continue my studies. The sponsor is now paying my school fees and house rent. (*ABCD, 23, Tsimalakha*)

Rich social safety network of extended families helps some children to pursue their studies. Many of them stay with their kin

working in towns thus providing those deprived children with opportunities to study further.

I once studied in a village school. Those were the days when I had difficult times trying to balance work and studies. I was inspired by the poor family situation to study hard, but a routinely tasks at home disturbed my studies. I had to often misinform my teachers deliberately and make excuses to bunk the class and other school activities so that I could attend to the household activities. I grew tired of household works that I even decided to discontinue my studies had not my sister took me to Thimphu to study. I am happy that I can focus more on my studies now. (*Sonam Yangden, 16, Trashigang*)

Individual stories also evince that household income affect children's attitudes towards studies. Some students who lack adequate monetary support from their parents have more tendencies to get disoriented from their studies than others with rich financial means. Petty matters like lack of adequate pocket money, decent dress and other items provide school disincentives, more so, when they are subjected to peer competition to avail such personal needs.

I study in Class VIII and come from a poor single-parent family. Worst of all, that my mother died and father got married again forced me to live with my distant cousin who is still providing me my school expenses. Given his own economic circumstances, he often find it difficult to provide me with what I would like him to. I have to attend the school with worn-out school uniform and meager pocket money which makes me feel inferior. If this continues, I would rather prefer to leave school and work. (*Genpo Lham, 16, Zhemgang*)

Perceived In-utility of Education, another Possible Reason for Dropouts and Non-enrollment

The Royal Government emphasizes so much on preparing students willing to work in farms and labor-oriented occupations.

“[E]ducation must prepare young people for the world of work and instill an acceptance of the dignity of labour. This implies importance to the applied and practical studies that are able to prepare young people for technical and vocational work as well as ‘white collar’ employment, breaking the association that appears to exist in the minds of many young people that manual work and skilled trades are the reserve of the illiterate and a sign of ‘backwardness’¹⁰. But, there is widely held belief among the parents and children that the sole purpose of education is to get ‘white collar’ jobs-the most coveted job is a government job (*zhung yop*), as it means desk works, job security, assurance and authority.

In the past, when there were less educated people, the government jobs were readily available due to which most parents felt encouraged to send their children to schools. It is not the same case now with increase in the number of students and growing job competitions. More and more uneducated parents are losing their commitment to modern education when private returns are relatively low. There is now growing perception among the rural uneducated parents that it is advantageous to employ their children in farms than to spend so much on children’s education only to prepare them neither for farm nor for employment.

In the past, someone with class II or III education was assured an important post in the civil service. Today, it is difficult to get good jobs even if someone is educated. Why should I, therefore, invest so much on my children’s education? I would rather persuade them to take up the farm occupation. To be a farmer is painful, but to remain without a job in the towns, getting addicted to alcohol and drugs can be more painful”. (*Tshering Dorji, farmer, Bumthang*)

10 Vision 2020, Planning Commission, 1999.

There is a rising sentiment among the students that school education offers them little incentives in terms of employment given the growing competitions for better jobs and limited number of vocational institutes. Some of them decide to leave schools to work before competition become even stiffer, and many of them are not willing to work on farms either. This is one of the reasons why many parents have started to express reservation in providing education for their children because they believe that education lures their children from village to towns.

Today's young people are different from our generation. I was willing to take up any manual work but my son, though educated, feels downgraded when he is asked to do a manual works. He wants to work elsewhere and lead a modern and comfortable life.

He hardly stays a week or two in the village during his vacation. He complains that village life is stifling and boring, and spends his holidays with relatives in towns. It gives me a feeling that he will neither get a good job nor work in the farm. I am, therefore, not proud of his education, even if he is studying in class X. I should have retained him at home to help me in the farm rather than invest so much on his education". (*Wangdi, 63, Gomphu*)

Rural youth, both uneducated and dropouts feel that leaving rural communities is necessary to accomplish their economic and social goals and relocation to urban centers is looked at as a sign of success. In general, rural youth have fairly negative perceptions of their communities and exert that rural living has little economic or social opportunities than their urban counterparts. Rural youth with primary or secondary education equate their education with the urban living resulting in large-scale exodus of rural youth to urban centers but the circumstances in urban centers prove unfavourable to them putting themselves at a risk of anti-social behaviours. The youth who return

home after failing to make it in urban centers take with them some negative influences possible enough to discourage their peers from studying.

Youth in our interviews noted a distinctive process of rural-urban migration. In the beginning, they migrate to surrounding areas for a short term to work and earn in construction projects like road, bridges, schools and hospitals. With this exposure, rural youth do not feel any anxiety about moving to larger towns hoping to find more practical opportunities.

I was born to a handicapped mother in a remote village; my father was dead long ago. We did not have a family of our own, but lived with our aunty. With the help of my grandparents, I had an opportunity to study up to class IV until they died. My mother wished me to continue my studies but she was unable to help me. She tried to send me to a monastery to study but my uncle objected this because he wanted me to work in his farms. For more than five years, I had to work as a cowboy and help the family in other farm activities. My uncle was unkind to me throughout my stay with his family. He made my mother and sisters to work hard and treated us like his servants. He would thrash me and keep me hungry when something wrong happened in the family.

I was awaiting a chance to runaway elsewhere and live on my own. One of my friends who had been to some other places to work on wage returned home. I ventured to go with him and work; my ability to read and write gave me enough confidence to travel outside. We went to Surey and worked on the road for some weeks. A petty contractor took me to Trongsa to work on his construction project. This was the first time I had been traveling far from my village. Everything looked different to me; I did not know that the world was different in different places. One of the things that I like about the present job is that no one scolds me. I am on my own and have enough to eat and wear. I bought a mini-tape recorder and want to buy

a watch, good clothes and others. I will go to Thimphu when I earn enough money. I heard Thimphu is much a bigger town. (*Chengala, 20 years, Nyakhar*)

Here is another case, which is common to youth migrating from rural to urban areas.

I was able to attend school only at the age of 12. My parents could not afford the cost of education as they were already burdened with the school expenses for my elder brother. He failed in class III and left the school. My father saw interest in me to study and sent me to school even when I was too old to begin school education. The death of my father forced me to leave school before I could complete primary education.

I grew so weary of village life that, one day, I went to Samdrupjongkhar feigning I wanted to become *gomchen* under the supervision of my uncle. I spent some time with my uncle and studied some religious texts, so unintended, only to move farther to Phuntsholing when chance occurred to me. I was employed as an assistant to a truck driver at a monthly salary of Nu. 1500. I worked with him for ten months and spent five months in automobile workshop. No matter in which line of occupation I worked, I found it difficult to sustain on a meager salary. I decided to move to Trongsa and work as a salesman. I would like to drive my own taxi and move to Thimphu, if everything favours me. (*Phurba Dorji, 19, Trongsa*)

The Impacts of Single-Parenthood on Children's Educational Accomplishments

Bhutan has a rich social network; a strong bond among members of extended families and communities which provides an ideal environment for security and continuity. It provides social and economic safety network for the children of single -parenthood whose parents are dead, divorced, unmarried [illegitimate] or remarried.

Those children, even if they lose their security in their primary homes find social sanctuary in the secondary homes of their kith and kin. There are cases where grandparents, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters serve as the secondary parents and guardians for children of divorced or dead. Despite such social advantage, more and more children cannot attend schools. Although, not much research has been conducted to investigate the relation between family function and children's educational attainment, there are substantial evidences to show that family disruption can culminate into poor educational accomplishments. Children of dead or divorced are more likely to be deprived of basic education or drop out of school in their early ages than those of intact families.

Figure 6: Impacts of Single-parent Families on Children's Education

Impacts	Male	Female	Total
Dropouts	27	20	47
Non-enrollment	10	17	27
Financial problems	27	28	55
Others	11	12	23
Total	48	57	105

Source: The Survey by Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2003

The recent legal measures and policies to curb problems associated with dissolution of marriages have helped many children, but many of them are still affected. In the survey of 105 students who claimed to be the children of single-parent families, 47 of them said they were forced to leave schools, 27 reported non-enrollment and 55 mentioned that they faced financial problems. The survey questionnaires were substantiated by the personal interviews.

I was forced to leave school ten years ago after my parents were divorced. I stayed with my father but the divorce had changed my life forever. Frustrations and regrets of parental divorce coerced me to abuse alcohol and drugs, as these substances provided me some solace. I am unemployed and just loiter in towns. I dream to become a driver. *(Tshewang Thinley, 22, Radhi)*

Divorce turn out to be serious when the stepparents mistreat children.

I am just fourteen years old and live with my father who is a policeman. My mother (whom I still hate) had an illicit relationship with another man and divorced my father. He is now married and has two children from his new wife.

I have to undergo lot of problems in the school. I attend classes without pens and books, forget about good school uniform. My teacher often complains that my parents have not paid the school fees. I attribute all these hardships to my stepmother. My father is henpecked and cannot do anything on his own. In despair, sometime I think of leaving the school. I get some money from my grandparents to buy school uniform and stationery when I visit them during vacation. My biggest worry is whether my father will allow me to pursue higher education. *(PG, 14, Wangdiphodrang)*

Most often, youth of broken families work in low-income occupations.

I work as a waitress in a hotel in Trashigang. My parents were divorced when I was six years old and both are remarried. I lived with my poor mother who tried to send me to school but it was never materialized. My father did not bother about me, and so is he now. I wish if I can enroll in non-formal education programme; I missed the formal education because of disruption in the family. *(Dorji, 14, Yalang)*

That family disruption can bear strong implications on children's education cannot be generalized. It is possible that children of well-to-do families have higher chances of going to school even if there is family disruption.

Summary

It is not easy to understand the underlying causes of school dropouts and non-enrollment, but the determinants mentioned may provide a sound basis for further study of cause of these problems. I have, as mentioned earlier, focused this study on the views given by the groups most affected. The views of other stakeholders like policy makers, educators, parents and teachers would have certainly added a different dimension to this study but they were used in limited way. The result of the research are as summarized:

First, the complex factors can be associated with these problems, but the conclusion we can draw at this stage is that the economic constraints of the families determines the children's access to education. Provision of adequate education resources on the part of government is important, but the direct cost of education is a big determining factor to poor families whose priority is to earn basic livelihoods, and this deserves serious attention. **Second**, irrespective of parental values which complement modern education, rising cost of education coupled with the need for children to work at home [especially at farms] or to enhance their income-earning capacity have substantial negative effect on school continuation. Such deprivation is not intended but forced and is a short-term gain over a long-term loss. **Third**, poor performance in exams and declining interest to study result in school repeaters and leavers whose interest are actually affected by their economic status and involvement in household activities. **Fourth**, most parents have higher expectations from the education that they provide for their children. Education is not simply

the question of literacy; it is more about preparing young people better livelihood. When their expectations are unmatched with what their children can achieve, they begin to think education as worthless investment. Their expectations are further shattered when their children are lured to physically easy-going urban life at the cost of manpower shortage in the farms. In short, economic costs and benefits of education have greater influence over the parental commitments to education. **Fifth**, in addition to affecting their emotional well being and academic aptitudes, marital disruption, especially in the poor families can have negative impacts on the children's education.

What can be done to address these Problems?

The problems of non-enrollment and dropouts can bear negative impacts on weaker section of the society, even if an average school enrollment rate and the number of promotees continue to increase. A myopic view on these problems and a lack of commitment to tackle them in infancy can in the long-run become an obstacle beyond our capacity to redress. Many countries are already experiencing the socio-economic implications of low enrollment and high dropout rate. Such problems have generated a chain of repercussions- from resource drain on the school system, unemployment and drug-related problems to juvenile delinquency. This can be a result of failure on the part of societies to make pre-emptive measures to mitigate the problem in their early stages. The problem stated in this report concerns the poorer section of the society who appears to passively accept the situation. The acceptance of the present situation will lead to educational marginalisation of poorer section of the society. Can we afford it, then?

The highest priority that the government accords to social sector is a living example, and education is at the heart of our development policies. Right to education is fundamental right, and the government

is doing what it can to guarantee this right. Is it enough to just expand education infrastructure in rural areas, or should we look the other way round to find out why rural people cannot fully utilize the free education? There is a need for clearer and fair amount of understanding of these complex issues and more concerted approach to deal with them.

So far, the discussion issue has centered on some key determinants of the problem, and nothing has been discussed about some possible intervening strategies. Based on the above study-result, I would venture to make some of the modest recommendations. However, these recommendations are not to be accepted point-blank; some further studies are needed.

The need for student loan scheme has been raised repeatedly in the Kuenselonline¹¹. I would like to quote one of these comments here:

I think our financial institutions can explore the possibility of providing students loans, or study loans. This may be done for two reasons: First, to help students from poor backgrounds to get in-country educations, and second, to let ambitious students to pursue post-graduates studies or specialized training abroad or in India. I think if the banks and other financial institutions like the RICB and BDFC provide the loan, especially for the first reason stated above, they will give back something to our society and fulfill a public obligation. It'll...business. The rich people may not know that there are so many bright students who have to cut short their studies due to financial constraints. After the students get good employment, they can pay back the loans on monthly installment basis. Dear rich

¹¹ The on line News of the only news paper in Bhutan. This news paper is known as the KUNENSEL. It is published weekly.

financial institutions, consider providing a student loan, if you cannot give the scholarships.¹²

I would like to quote another comment on the same forum.

What about ‘Student Loan System’ or ‘Educational Loan’ instead of materialistic services like ‘vehicle loan’? Aren’t we Bhutanese suppose to move towards Gross National Happiness and detach from the materialistic world? So, in policymaking, decision-making, goals and objectives, how do we take GNH into an account?¹³

Several new schemes are in place:

1. Millennium Education Plan and Education Annuity Plan by the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan (RICB),
2. Education Loan by the National Pension and Provident Fund (NPPF),
3. Scholarship for the poor students by the Youth Development Fund (YDF), and
4. Tarayana Foundation’s Scholarship Programme.

These schemes are beneficial but most of them are new and have not been able to reach a wider section of the society. The RICB’s schemes are related to education, but are more or less associated with the uncertainties and deaths of the parents, only in which case the children receive the premium. These schemes fail to cover the poor section of the society where the direct cost of education remains the main cause of educational deprivation. The people who are not in the

12 Readers’ column, Kuenselonline, 12th March 2004. The Kuenselonline readers’ column is an open net forum, launched by the Kuensel Corporation, Thimphu. The readers can pass their comments on various issues relevant to the Bhutanese society in this forum.

13 Readers Column, Kuenselonline, 29th December 2002.

position to afford the cost of education now cannot really invest for the future uncertainties of their children.

Education Loan Scheme of the NPPF suits the need, but it is more or less targeted to the members of the NPPF, which constitute mainly the civil servants. Farmers and other low-income groups cannot avail this loan. It is interesting to read the comment below, which appeared in the Kunseonline:

As announced in the TV and also in the Kuensel, it is said that the study loans are given to those who are the members of the NPPF and not to the general public. Frankly speaking, I am happy to hear that there is a study loan but unfortunately it is only for the children whose parents are the members of the NPPF. I am one of those children who need such kind of support to continue my education; so I would like to request that the BOB and the BNB to start such schemes, and that the money is to be refunded after the completion of studies with the minimum possible interest¹⁴.

14 This appeared in the Kuenselonline readers' column on 4th January 2004. There have been lots of responses to this comment. Most of the readers considered the study loan as indispensable to many poor students, in order to enhance their opportunities for further studies. One of the readers further commented that, "I am glad Bhutan is finally doing something like this for students. But I just don't understand why they have to be a member of NPPF? I mean there are so many students out there who cannot afford their education after grade XII and I think it is not fair for those students. I am from Bhutan currently studying in Canada and here I heard that students can take up loan from the government for their education, and later when they start working, they pay off their dues. I think Bhutan should do something like this for students because our children are the future citizens".

The YDF's scholarship¹⁵ for the bright and promising students benefits the children of a weaker section, but the number of scholarship is very small. Tarayana Foundation¹⁶ provides grants for students who lack support and care. Grants are in the form of modest expenses towards uniforms, books and stationary. But given its financial limitations, this grant cannot reach wider section of the society.

In view of the above discrepancies, **first**, there is a need to start grant schemes targeted at dropouts from primary and lower secondary education. This will increase enrollment rate and reduce the dropout rate. Since, most of the poorer parents dread the rising cost of education as their children enter higher education, it is worth exploring the possibility of a soft loans system for the children of low income families with a minimal interest and longer period of repayment. The loans and grants can encourage and help young people to continue their studies. Education Ministry can take up the lead role in initiating the study loan system, while the financial institutions can expand and enhance their education loan schemes to a poorer section of the society.

Second, increasing part-time job opportunities during holidays is another alternative. Part-time job opportunities can help the children of low-income families to cope up with the rising cost of education. Many students work on roads, construction projects and others manual

15 YDF gives scholarship for five students every year. These students mainly come from the poor family backgrounds with more aptitude for higher education. The YDF is also responsible for another project, Basic Education Scholarship Programmes, which is funded by the UNGW in Geneva. The UNGW agreed to support the scholarship program by committing a budget of 4.00 CHF per annum for 4 years. 25 children selected in consultation with the Department of Education become beneficiaries through this project. Youth Development Fund was established in 1998 in order to sustain the youth related programmes.

work to earn money to buy school uniform, books and some other school-related items. It is important to make this employment attractive by increasing the wage and improving the work environment. One of the readers in the Kuenselonline commented on the benefits of a part time job for the poor students:

I think three-month winter holiday is good. It might be a long holiday for some whose parents can afford easily the needs of their children. When it comes to some poor children, they spend their holidays working on wage (temporary works). It gives them enough time to earn enough money for their own school expenses, lessening their poor parents to bear the financial burden. On the other hand, it teaches them the practical reality of life and gives them dignity of work. It is practical education for them. It is good for them to work in the field for three months after spending nine months in school learning theoretical things". (Readers Column, 3rd April 2004)

Some might view it as child labour and attach negative connotation to the emerging system of school-going children doing manual works. Working during the vacation cannot be considered as child exploitation, rather it can have pedagogical advantages. Knowledge acquired in the schools can be reinforced by its application in the field.

Third, initiating some private scholarship schemes can help poorer children. Some big business companies can sponsor education of either a handicapped, poor or promising children. There is a need to establish several new non-governmental organizations and foundations which provide grants and soft education loan for the children who do not benefit from the state grants.

Fourth, schools can play a bigger role in enhancing the educational opportunities of children from poor family backgrounds. Through fund raising schemes, schools can help students who are at

the risk of dropping out due to financial constraints. Income generating projects such as handicraft projects, agricultural projects, arts and crafts and several others within the school system must be initiated with the seed money given by the government. Such innovative projects can not only help schools to generate income (which can be effectively used as grants for the poorer students) but also can be used as a part of practical education, to complement theoretical learning to deliver relevant skills to the students.

Fifth, one policy options to reduce the dropouts and non-enrollment on the ground that ‘parents need children at home to work on farms’ is to adapt the school calendar to seasonal demand of farm labour.

Sixth, there is a risk for students of peasant community of losing contact with farm work since the curriculum is mostly theoretical. It prepares them neither for the better jobs nor for the farm works. “[T]he real issue is: should we, in education, aim at filling the mind with knowledge which has direct practical utility, or should we try to give our pupils mental possessions which are good on their own account? It is useful to know that there are twelve inches in a foot, and three feet in a yard, but this knowledge has no intrinsic value; to those who live where the metric system is in no use, it is utterly worthless”(Betrand Russell, Education, 1926,19). We must therefore strive to make education more relevant and attractive to rural farmers. There is a danger of large-scale youth employment as a result of school leavers being not willing to work on the farms and blue collar jobs, unless concerted effort is made to open-up farm-based job opportunities and prepare young people for rural-based employment through school curriculum. There is also need to increase investment in vocational institutes in order to gainfully engage those students who are either constraint by money to enter higher education or who are

not likely to do well academically. More vocational institutes should be distributed evenly across the country given the present in-take capacities of the existing institutes, to control the youth exodus to major urban centers.

Seventh, the Youth Development Fund (YDF) is initiating a pilot project on life-skill programme for school dropouts in Zhemgang. This programme target unemployed school dropouts. Through this program, these youths will be engaged in *zorig chusum*. One alternative of engaging the school dropouts gainfully is to start similar projects in most of the regions.

Eighth, death and divorce of parents affect education of children. Proper identification of children caught up in this social problem, increased investment and provision of boarding facilities to affected students can help reduce their chances of being exposed to hostile atmosphere at homes where step-parents are the source of discouragement. Additional counseling, mentoring and social support services for the children of single or no parents can help the youth-at-risk.

Ninth, the issues of dropouts and non-enrollment have not been central to local governance policy and activities. The GYTs can take some charges of providing skills, motivations and tools for school leavers in their own social and economic contexts. Large-scale out-migration of rural youth will continue, and recognizing this possible migration, strategies through range of government and community programs and services, as well as community strategies to retain them homes by enhancing opportunities for youth to more actively participate in rural economic growth and diversification need to be given some crucial attention at the local levels.

Tenth, it may not be viable for a few organizations to provide programs of better quality outcomes for young people. Collaborations

and partnerships among different stakeholders are crucial to achieve youth development goals and sustainability of efforts. Youth development programs should not be isolated responsibilities of the concerned organizations, but must also engage community voices and actions.

Lastly, further research on the other factors of non-enrollment and dropout must be conducted. The prevention of school dropout and decreasing the non-enrolment as well as increasing farm-related economic enterprises for the school leavers through new policies and measures are the necessity, not a choice.

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Youth and Unemployment in Bhutan¹⁷

Sonam Kinga*

Introduction

Since 1990's, Bhutan began to address socio-economic concerns raised by a twin phenomena of high population growth rate and a large young population. While the growth rate has been successfully brought down to a more stable level, young people constitutes 57% of today's population. In Bhutan's demographic evolution, the presence of a large young population is entirely a new social experience. Owing to short life expectancy as well as high infant mortality rates earlier, the size of youth population was not considerable. A large young population would have been a boon if Bhutanese society was completely agrarian and pastoral as it was before socio-economic development programmes began in 1960's. This would have then provided villages with adequate labour supply on their farms and pastures. However, the fact that this phenomenon takes place when the society has steadily embarked on non-agricultural socio-economic activities presents them as a development challenge. The challenge is of providing 'gainful employment' that would also make them

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responsible citizens and positive forces in the society. Inability to provide gainful employment risks 'unemployment' - an economic phenomenon characteristic of modern industrial economies although in traditional Bhutanese society, it did not mean much.

In rural Bhutan, farm work was and is still labour intensive. Both the young and old found for themselves different occupation at all times. An extra hand was not just an extra mouth to feed, but a resource as well. Prayers were said soliciting *bu-nor*, baby boon and not baby boom. However, the introduction of modern education inevitably diverted young children to school bereaving families of their traditional source of labour supply. Labour deficit families bear the brunt of more work: some lands are left fallow. In the initial years of establishing schools in villages, diversion of labour force in the guise of students, did not reveal immediate imbalance in the co-relationship between population, landholdings and labour exchange system, which is the vital aspect of subsistence agriculture as well as village life. Since children do not come back to villages, the average per capita labour input of farmers has increased but somehow managed to absorb pressures exerted by marginal decrease in labour. Today, we see two indicators that point to the imminent collapse of traditional labour exchange system. One, the decrease in cultivated per capita landholding owing to decrease in household labour supply as well as community labour supply. Second, the decline in tradition of free labour contribution on farms which are affordable only when an optimum number of labour forces is maintained and a minimal labour surplus available. 'There is no continuity on the farms and, more painful, the security of the extended family is lost'.¹⁸

On the other side, diversification of economic activities has taken place. Civil service, which initially employed almost all available

18 Kuensel, (Editorial) November 13, 2003 p.2

educated Bhutanese, now encourages them to seek employment in private and corporate sector. As more children comes out from the schools and education institutes, a sizeable pool today faces the question of employment since the option of going back to farms has not caught their imagination yet. Therefore, the challenge of youth unemployment also subtly reveals the fundamental change Bhutan has been undergoing from a traditional society to a modernizing economy.

Despite diversification and development of the non-agricultural sector of the economy, Bhutanese society and economy is still agricultural. There are three important indices to ascertain this fact. First, the number of people living in rural areas, where agriculture is the dominant economic activity, makes up 79% of the total population. Second, the labour force engaged in agriculture outnumbers those in other sectors of the economy. For example, they constituted approximately 74.9% in 1999. Third, the contribution by agriculture to the national Gross Domestic Product is still the highest although it has been increasingly decreasing over the last decade.

Table 1: Labour Force Distribution in Different Sectors

Sectors	1998 (%)	1999 (%)
Agriculture	76.0	74.9
Mfg. Industry	5.5	4.6
Service	9.4	11.7
Trade and Commerce	5.6	3.9
Transport	1.2	1.1
Others	2.2	3.8

Source: Labour Force Survey, Central Statistical Organization, 2000

The size of the farming community has declined approximately by 20% since modernization began. A decrease of almost 1.1% in a year, i.e from 1998-1999 suggests the sudden and increasing trend of decline in agriculture labour force. By 2000, there were 12,592 people

employed in the manufacturing and mining industry, which is approximately 2% of the population. Some 5,127 people or 0.08% of the population were employed in the private sector by 1999. Simultaneous to the decline of workforce in agriculture, the contribution of agriculture sector to the GDP has also been declining (see Table 3). At the beginning of the Fifth FYP (hereafter FYP) in 1981, the planning Commission reported that 85% of the people accounted for two-third of GDP. It also reported that over 63% was contributed by agriculture and related sectors.

Table 2: Major Sectoral Shares to GDP in 1980 Prices

Sl #	Sectors	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
1	Agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishing	39.1	37.3	37.5	36.5	35.5	34.9	34.5
2	Mining and quarrying	1.2	1.2	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.2
3	Manufacturing	8.4	8.9	9.2	8.6	8.3	8.0	7.1
4	Electricity and gas	9.3	10.8	10.8	10.4	10.2	10.4	9.7
5	Construction	7.7	8.2	7.7	7.8	8.9	10.2	11.4
6	Wholesale & retail trade, restaurants and hotels	6.1	5.9	6.4	6.4	6.2	6.0	6.0
7	Transport, storage and communications	8.7	8.1	8.5	9.2	9.7	9.9	9.8
8	Financing, insurance and real estate	8.8	8.7	8.0	9.4	9.7	8.8	10.3
9	Community, social & personal services (Govt.)	10.6	10.9	10.5	10.6	10.1	10.4	10.1
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: National Accounts Statistics Report, 2001, Central Statistics Organization, Thimphu

The declining share of agriculture sector in the GDP is a cause of serious concern. At least in the ten years beginning 1990, the data indicate that growth has not been very substantial in other sectors as

well. Rural Bhutan is the hub of agriculture and also the bastion of Bhutanese culture and tradition. A declining agricultural output also indicates decline in people actually living in villages. From villages to schools to job searching and finally employment, rural children take a long migratory path. Migration of 'uneducated' villagers to urban centers is increasing. On the other hand, issues of self-reliance, national food security, balanced regional development are stated concerns of our society and government.

In the context of diversification of economic activities, a large youth population no longer comes as a boon to the society. Youths, who would otherwise be engaged in rural farms and on pastures are attending schools or seeking employment after a stint of various levels of education. The expansion of educational facilities over the last few decades saw a proportionate increase in enrolment of students. 'From about 400 students in the early 60's, total enrolment has increased in all levels of formal education and NFE (Non-formal Education) centers to 155,234 by April 2004, reflecting a growth of 5.3% over the previous academic year¹⁹. Increasing enrolment in schools is directly proportional to the depletion of labour supply in villages, which is being gradually exacerbated by an enhancing level of rural-urban migration.

The policies and institutions developed to address the issue of labour and employment considers youth unemployment as their focus. The ability to provide employment to youths however, solves only a larger demographic challenge to a developing economy. The large young population today will one day constitute a large old population owing to increased life expectancy and the success of our health care programs. Traditional old-age security provided by extended family

19 General Statistics 2004, Thimphu: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, p.2

system may not be strongly in place as this youth population ages over the next four and five decades. The success of family planning as well as the growing trend in nucleated small family will not result in a large young population as today. Perhaps, a scientific demographic projection would present us with a scenario of ageing population supported by a far lesser economically active young population. Therefore, the integration of social and economic policy framework to support a large elderly population must become part of youth employment strategies lest this young population becomes an economic liability some decades hence. Countries like Japan face a growing 'gray-hair' population. In a demographic pyramid, the old and elderly constitute the base with the size of economically active population declining towards the peak. Although technology is able to offset demands for goods and services, which otherwise humans have to perform, Japan finds itself increasingly in need of importing foreign labour. In the worst of possible scenarios, any policy failure may require Bhutan decades hence to fall back upon the very policy it is trying to effect today by way of reducing foreign labour. Even as present trends indicate, a prosperous Bhutan reaping fruits of intensive capital investment made today particularly in the hydro-power sector may not find a youth population willing to engage in blue-collar labour.

At the outset, it is important to identify the social and geographic space where the phenomenon of youth unemployment is prevalent. This identification may possibly help understand the real socio-economic and political implications of unemployment should its size explode beyond accepted unemployment rate. From available survey reports of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, it is clear that youth unemployment is not a phenomenon happening evenly across villages and towns. It is more an urban phenomenon. This is an

important observation. It is also a phenomenon largely confined to the 'educated' lot. Youth unemployment is thus an issue confronting young educated people and not the uneducated children of farmers. Hence, unemployment among young Bhutanese attaining different levels of education, and confined to urban areas reveal one negative consequence of our society gradually modernizing.

This paper attempts to present various scenarios of youth unemployment and does not pretend to provide any recommendation. It is divided into three sections. Section I presents the extent of youth unemployment on the basis of supply and demand projections. Section II looks at the nature and extent of the presence of Indian labourers who would be possibly replaced by Bhutanese in an effort to address unemployment. Section III looks at the strategies undertaken by the Royal Government of Bhutan to address unemployment.

Some of the tables used in this study are not available in published books. Therefore, their sources are often not quoted. I have been able to obtain computer print outs of data available with the Department of Immigration and Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. I have also taken the liberty of re-phrasing of table headings although they do not differ in meaning from the original sources.

Section I – The Demand and Supply of Youth in Labour Market

Education and Youth Supply

We begin by assessing the size of youth entering the labour market and then the nature and size of employment available in the market. An important point to note is the fact that the discussion is about the availability of employment opportunities in the markets, not in the villages. Of course, markets do not exclude villages. However, the tendency of exploring market for employment so far, has not been influenced by considering villages as source of employment. At large, they are understood, first and foremost as social and administrative units. The strategies conceived to address short and medium term unemployment issues have also tended to focus on non-agricultural sectors, which in conventional Bhutanese thinking seems to constitute the market. By market, one is compelled at this stage of our development to define by the size and space of non-farming community of civil servants, business community and others. Farming community in villages have largely been self-sufficient social and economic units although their demand for non-traditional goods and services gradually integrate them into the growing modern economy as consumers.

Different educational institutes within the country produce around 4000 students that enter the labour market. The annual students output would increase to almost 14,000 by 2010. In 2001, there were 4700 students including 270 graduates and 1000 students who finished Class XII. The remaining had reached Class X or lower²⁰. They are unable to continue their education for reasons of limited admission capacities in institutes of higher learning. Although

20 Bhutan: Private Sector Survey 2002, p.16

the government has upgraded some schools and built vocational training institutes excluding new higher secondary private schools, the average number of job seekers remains more or less the same. The Labour Force Survey 2002 indicates that by 2010 (only six years hence), 91,000 young people will be seeking jobs. (See Table 3). School leavers from classes VI to XII will number 76,000 while 15,000 will constitute university graduates. In 2020, there would be 267,000 students looking for jobs. By the end of Ninth FYP (2002-2007), more than 50,000 youths will be looking for employment. The bulk of these estimated at 27,200 will be those who have studied anywhere between Class VIII and Class XII. From vocational institutes, another 17,300 will join the hunt albeit with better prospects since they would have acquired certain skills. The remaining would be graduates from Sherubtse College and National Institute of Education in Paro and Samtse as well as those graduating from educational institutes in India and abroad. The end of the ninth plan is less than three years ahead, and the entry point for job seekers is already crowded. By the end of the ninth plan, 20,000 rural migrants will be looking for work and they do not figure in current unemployment solution strategies.

Table 3: Bhutan: Total Work Force - Graduates and Dropouts, 2000-2010

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		Total
	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	E	D	
Class VI	8,714	440	9,012	390	9881	321	10,887	256	11,800	171	12,688	70	13,961	0	15,175	0	16,639	0	17,702	0	18,709	0	
Class VII	7,999	436	8,783	395	9,243	324	10,156	259	11,117	222	12,064	241	13,092	262	14,176	290	15,747	315	17,260	345	18,399	368	3,426
Class VIII	6,430	363	7,054	325	7,885	284	8,594	219	9,731	196	10,826	217	11,761	235	12,764	256	14,101	282	14,349	307	16,819	337	2,983
Class IX	5,506	284	5,994	255	6,667	224	7,546	185	8,326	167	9,466	190	10,541	211	11,465	230	12,444	249	13,736	275	14,962	299	6,204
Class X	3,366	1,615	5,190	2,387	6,044	2,659	6,838	2,872	7,737	3,094	8,517	3,236	9,655	3,476	10,769	3,661	11,739	3,756	12,746	3,823	14,049	3,934	30,656
Class XI	1,226	18	1,312	17	2,149	21	2,672	27	3,229	32	3,887	39	4,450	45	5,238	52	6,058	61	6,840	68	7,684	77	5,777
Class XII	832	657	1,206	953	1,306	1,032	2,136	1,687	2,655	2,097	3,214	2,539	3,875	3,061	4,444	3,511	5,230	4,132	6,050	4,780	6,832	5,397	34,861
Total VI to XII		3,813		4,722		4,865		5,505		5,979		6,532		7,290		8,000		8,795		9,598		10,412	75,511
(Dropouts)																							
Graduates		270		270		270		299		362		1,447		1,855		2,211		2,526		2,844		3,160	15,514
Total Educated		4,083		4,992		5,135		5,804		6,341		7,979		9,145		10,211		11,321		12,442		13,572	91,025
Workforce																							
E - projected enrollment																							
D - projected dropout																							
Degree outside the country is estimated at 125 per annum																							

Source: Bhutan Private Sector Survey, 2002

The bulk of employment seekers in the 9th plan will be Class X and Class XII dropouts. Most of them will be in their late teens. Figures in the above table also indicate that there will be more than 12,000 students who will leave school before Class X. Considering them as part of job seekers complicates the issue. In terms of age, they will be 17 years or less. Although we have no labour laws yet, any suggestion of possibilities of employing children below 18 years may not be received positively considering the fact that Bhutan is signatory to international convention protecting child's rights. This concern is somehow addressed to a certain extent by the fact that the projections for supply of labour in the Ninth FYP have excluded 'dropouts' of Class VI and VII (see Table 4). Another critical point is the fact that the bulk of job seekers will be fairly literate although they have been so far categorized as 'educated' job seekers.

Table 4: Supply Projections: Graduates and School Leavers in Ninth Plan

Sl.#	Source of Labour	Projections
1	Class VIII-XII	27,200
2	Graduates (including teachers from NIEs)	4700
3	Vocational Training Institutes	17,300
	Total	49,200

Source: Department of Labour, MoLHR, 2004

The projected figure of 49,200 job seekers in the Ninth Plan has been expanded to 50,000 for reasons not stated in the source. Dropouts of Class VI and VII are excluded in the projections, which indicates a landmark policy review and decision although it is not known when and why such a decision was taken. Two reasons however appear obvious. The first is that the age at which these dropouts enter the labour market may conflict with provisions of international child protection convention. The other is to discourage them from seeking employment since they cannot compete with

students who have dropped out from higher classes. So, with this level of education, we can assume that students would mostly stay back to work in the villages. Interestingly, the dearth of 'educated' people in villages have resulted in quite a few students who have studied till Class X or below (living in villages) being nominated and even elected *gup* during the 2002 nation-wide election of chairman of Gewog Yargye Tshogchung. This leads us to a critical observation. Except for civil servants working as teachers, health workers and extension agents of the Ministry of Agriculture, the number of people who have received education till Class X and living in villages is almost negligible. Those who are there are mostly on temporary basis, either on holidays or before leaving to find employment in urban areas. Thus, there is a sharp rural-urban divide in terms of literacy and education. This calls for an urgent strategy that includes villages within the framework of market consideration for employment both to high school and college graduates. In order to draw a clearer picture of the supply of labour, let us look at the projected figures of job seekers in 2004 alone.

Table 5: Students Entering the Labour Market in 2004

Sl.#	Level of Education	Job seekers
1	Students Completing Class X in Bhutan	5110
2	Students Completing Class X outside Bhutan	150
3	Students Leaving School before and after Class X	600
4	Students Enrolled in Class XII in 2003 in Bhutan	2813
5	Students Enrolled in Class XII outside Bhutan	50
6	Graduates in Bhutan	128
7	Graduates outside Bhutan	256
	Total	9107

Source: Department of Labour, MoLHR, 2004

Besides the 9107 students, there are an estimated 1,778 students who have not registered with the Department of Employment. Registration is usually done through internet at the website of this Department to enable it assess the volume of job seekers as well as help job seekers with information on available jobs. We can infer three significant facts from this table. First, the projection of job seekers is for students and graduates, not for the uneducated lot. Second, most of the job seekers are students completing Class X and Class XII. Third, the size of job seekers is larger than projected.

The reality presented by Table 4 does not tally with the projections made in Table 3. In the previous one, the projected Class X dropouts within Bhutan, and hence, seeking employment was 3094 against a projected enrolment of 7737 students. The actual enrolment in Class X for 2004 is 5110 within Bhutan. Of course, there will always be certain degree of differences between projections and actual figures. A note appended to the source of this table however, says that 'From the past experience, all the seats in Class XI in private schools, security forces, apprenticeship courses, construction training and special vocational trainings are not filled up. Therefore, the number of school leavers seeking employment is likely to be more'.

Demand in the Labour Market

The available demand in the market for job seekers appear comfortable. However, the demands assume the fact that job seekers have certain level of required skills. This introduces the element of 'mismatch' between available jobs and available job seekers. Both the supply and demand projections also consciously exclude any job seekers who may be uneducated or who may have certain skills and education but fall outside the general categorization as students and graduates.

Table 6: Projections of Demand for Employment in Various Sectors in Ninth FYP

Sl.#	Employment Opportunities	Vacancies
1	Civil Service (including 2,100 teachers)	6,000
2	Armed Forces (including officers)	7,600
	<i>Corporate and Private Sectors</i>	
3	<i>Agro-based Industry</i>	2,318
4	Forest-based industry	2,080
5	Mining and Manufacturing	4,500
6	Construction	7,947
7	Trading	12,382
8	Tourism	593
9	Information Technology	790
10	Other Services	1,600
	Total	45,810

Source: Department of Labour, MoLHR, 2004

These projections are based on three assumptions. 1) All graduates and vocationally skilled will secure gainful employment. 2) Present number of intake into security forces will continue and school leavers will join the security forces, and 3) School leavers, graduates and vocationally skilled will be willing to join the private sector. Rounding off the demand figures at 46,000, the number of job seeker at the end of Ninth FYP is set at 4000 although it could be higher considering those assumptions. At the same time, there could also be many jobs vacant, perhaps in the `trading` sector which shows vacancies for 12,382 jobs. `Trading` is mostly a private sector venture, and many young people do not find private sector attractive for employment. Despite the argument that opportunities in civil service are shrinking, the figures in this table seem to speak otherwise even if teachers are included.

Table 7: Projections of Demand for Employment in Various Sectors in 2004

Sl.#	Employment Opportunities	Vacancies
<i>Demand for Class X Graduates</i>		
1	Absorption into Class XI (30% of students passing Class X) in Government and Private Schools	3,533
2	Students Repeating Classes or Re-sitting for Examination	150
3	Students Leaving to Study in Schools outside Bhutan	200
4	Enrolment in Vocation Training Institutes	433
5	Direct Employment (excluding civil service)	122
6	Security Forces	250
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>4688</i>
<i>Demand for Class XII Graduates</i>		
7	Vocational Training	184
8	Degree Courses in Bhutan	783
9	Degree Courses outside Bhutan	130
10	Students Re-sitting for Examination	121
11	Direct Employment (excluding civil service)	26
12	Armed Forces	25
	<i>Sub-Total</i>	<i>2,270</i>
	Total	6958

Source: Department of Labour, MoLHR, 2004

This table reveals interesting aspects of employment's supply-demand nexus. The fact that admissions in higher classes especially Class XI and undergraduate course is reflected as demand for employment may not be very appropriate. Continuation of education for 30% of students passing their examination is possible since that appears to be the intake capacity of educational institutes. Separation of this lot from actual employment opportunities could better streamline data and projections. For students passing Class X, the vocational institutes offer opportunities for acquiring skills although they as well as students completing Class XII may be directly employed. This table shows the total absence of employment

opportunity for students passing Class X and XII in the civil service. Whether this is a policy decision of the Royal Government is yet to be seen. For quite sometime, employment in the civil service for students with this level of education was generally for secretarial and clerical jobs, administrative, technical and financial support cadres which are increasingly being taken over by graduates who earlier were placed in administrative and financial cadres, not as support cadres.

The National and Youth Unemployment Rate

The difference between supply and demand projections gives us the estimate of potentially unemployed youths. There would be 1,172 unemployed Class X students and 593 Class XII students in 2004. The total of 1765 unemployed youths however, excludes unemployed youths in other categories such as 397 graduates. This figure also excludes 593 Class XII graduates who have not registered with the Department of Employment. On a larger scale, the number of potentially unemployed youth by the end of Ninth FYP is more than 4000 students. Given the increasing unemployment rate, the pool of unemployed could be larger. In 1999, the unemployment rate was 1.4%, 1.9% in 2001 and 2.7% in 2003. The 2001 unemployment rate of 1.9% equaled to 4,500 people from an economically active population of 2,32,203. These unemployment rates are figures at the national level, not of youth alone. Among the youth, it is extremely high. For example, in 2001, unemployment rate among youth between 15-19 years was 8.4%, and 3.4% for youth in the age group 20-24. Therefore, the unemployment rate for youths will be much higher than the national figure. A significant observation of the 2001 Labour Force Survey was that unemployment was comparatively negligible in rural areas. Urban areas reported 4.1% with a staggering 10.9 % in the age group 15-19. At the *dzongkhag* level, Thimphu reported the highest with 30.5%, Chhukha with 11.7% and Sarpang with 10.9%.

Urban areas accounted for 80% of unemployment with females accounting for 63% of urban employment.

Confusing as the figures appear, they can be summarized into four main points. First, the national unemployment rate does not reveal the percentage of youth unemployment, which is much higher. Thus, while the national unemployment rate is not serious, youth unemployment rate is. A serious youth unemployment rate is a serious social issue. Second, unemployment is an aspect of educated section of the population, particularly students and graduates. For example, in 2001, school leavers accounted for 60% of the unemployed. Third, among the educated lot, it is most pronounced in age groups 15-24 with Class X and Class XII graduates accounting for the maximum job seekers. Fourth, unemployment is negligible in rural areas. The fact that the three *dzongkhags* with top unemployment rates have the most populous urban centers (of Thimphu, Phuntsholing and Gelephu) confirms this observation.

Causes of Unemployment

There is a set of reasons given for the prevalence of youth unemployment despite the fact that jobs are actually available. Each reason provides an interesting insight into certain aspects of Bhutanese society and culture.

First, the fact that most job seekers are students completing Class X and Class XII indicate the difficulty of continuing their studies. The available higher secondary schools and degree courses can absorb only a limited number while some self-finance their studies mostly in India. All these students in Bhutan study on full government scholarship. While up-gradation of schools and creation of other institutes such as vocational training centers continue, the average size of job seekers may remain at this level for quite sometime. If most of them were able to complete their undergraduate courses, the number

of job seekers at graduate level would swell. They would have better qualifications although a large graduate population would not be willing to take up on jobs to replace imported Indian labour.

Second, there is the oft-repeated argument about the mismatch between job seekers and employers. This argument is indeed valid. Almost all job seekers have different level of education but no specific skills that equip them for jobs available in the market. Private employers look for skilled workers ready to start work as soon as they are employed. Vocational institutes have been established to provide various vocational skills to these students. But they also have limitations of in-take capacity. However, this demand for skilled workers who are ready for direct employment may neither be fair nor realistic in Bhutan's labour market for sometime. Where can job seekers acquire skills and experience when their very source makes them conditions of application as they appear in Kuensel, the national newspaper and other information outlets? Private employers may need to build the training of young recruits whom they would employ as integral part of their HRD plan. Thus, they can be both skill-providers and skill-consumers.

Third, there is a problem of expectations, which is three fold. One, most job seekers eye white-collar jobs either in the public or private sector. The idea of blue-collar job has been viewed as synonymous to jobs of illiterate farmers. Blue-collar jobs also seem to reflect a certain class hierarchy in view of the job seekers. A positive consequence of establishing vocational training centers was to produce skilled labour undertaking blue-collar job. The first graduates of these institutes have been fielded in the construction industry. Two, expectations of incomes do not match those offered by employers. Expectations, as is the case, are always higher especially if job seekers have to take on blue-collar jobs. The following report of Kuensel's

issue of April 10, 2004 reflects this attitude. `` `I do not mind being a sweeper if the pay is better than what an officer in the civil service earns`, said an 18-year old Tashi Nidup, a Class X student from Gyalpozhing Higher Secondary School, Mongar``. Three, the expectation for jobs in urban centers is stronger. Possibilities of working in remote and rural areas do not appeal very much to young job seekers. Thus, seeking jobs is also seeking for something else. `This is a consequence of the social, cultural and psychological implications of the concepts of urbanization and modernization and the symbolic value attached to those two concepts`.

Fourth, civil service is thought to be the best employer particularly among graduates. In fact, in the early years of modernization, education was understood as instrument of joining the civil service. This notion has gradually changed although graduates are yet to demonstrate strong consideration of private sector as sources of employment. As the Royal Civil Service Commission takes in only a handful of graduates in its administrative and financial cadres, the opportunity is also growing slimmer every year. For example, there were 289 graduates in 2001. A small group of 44 sat for the civil service examination and only 25 were selected. In 2003, 30 graduates were selected from 62 candidates who sat for it. In 2004, 75 appeared the examination and 30 were selected. The Royal Civil Service Commission has selected 616 graduates from 1040 graduates over the last 21 years. A primary reason for not attracting graduates in the private sector is the absence of perks associated with civil service such as foreign travel, pension schemes as well as job security. Out of 268 university graduates in 2000, 85% of the offer for employment came from the private sector. It asked for 58 engineers from the 61 available. Only two took the offer. The rest were looking for employment in the civil service.

During the 2004 graduate orientation programme, the labour and human resources minister announced that- a total of 359 employment and training opportunities are available for the the 495 graduates. However, the government will take in only 134 technical, professional and general graduates in the administrative support cadre. They include 125 in-country training programmes such as postgraduate certificate in financial management (PGCFM – 30 graduates), postgraduate diploma in management (PGDM – 25 graduates), post graduate diploma in legal management (PGDLM – 10 graduates) and post graduate certificate in education (PGCE – 70 graduates). Corporations and the private sector will take 90 graduates.

Fifth, a huge chunk of the labour market is occupied by imported labour from India. Assuming that Bhutanese fills it, unemployment problem viewed in the present context would not really exist. While there are expatriate workers in civil service, financial institutions, corporations and private sector in managerial, administrative or professional capacities, most Indian labourers are engaged in manual jobs that the young job seekers would not take for reasons cited earlier. However, this huge imported labour is a socio-economic reality, and employment of Bhutanese in their stead is one of the most important and logical solutions to unemployment problem. Where formal sector employment is about 60,000 and expatriate labour account for 50%, the compulsions of providing employment to Bhutanese youths make it necessary to replace them in all sectors of the economy. The government has taken policy decisions that Bhutanese must gradually replace imported labour. Without replacing them, any other employment creation strategy would not be able to absorb the growing number of job seekers. Since this area is both the immediate and long-term area of employing Bhutanese youth, here we turn to examine in detail the status quo of Indian labourers.

Section II – Size and Extent of Indian Labour in Bhutan

Introduction

Bhutan is a labour deficit country. Unlike the economy of its South Asian neighbour characterized by surplus labour exported to other countries, Bhutan has to depend on other countries particularly India for its requirement of semi-skilled and unskilled labour especially in construction, mining, agro-based industries and hydro power projects. This traditional dependence on Indian labour and the recent growth of Bhutanese labour have cultural, economic and political implications on Indo-Bhutan relationship.

Small population inhabiting villages that are scattered and remote has led to the development of special kind of labour exchange system among Bhutanese peasants. In fact, the nature and variety of labour exchange arrangements are a cohesive factor in community cooperation and organization. Traditional economy was solely dependent on subsistence agriculture. The compulsion to produce enough from limited resources of land and labour in order to meet requirements not for consumption alone but for other social and religious necessities made peasants rely upon each other and develop arrangements so that the farming needs of every household in the community is completed within the seasonal cycle of plantation and harvest.

Road Workers: First Indian Labourers

The dependence on Indian labour began soon after economic modernization plans began with the assistance of Government of India in 1960-61. The first priority for economic modernization was the establishment of a road network connecting Bhutan to India. In fact, the Public Works Department and Road Transport entrusted with this

responsibility received top priority in budget allocation consecutively for the first three FYPs (1961-76). In the first plan, they received Nu.70.4 million from a total plan budget of Nu.107.2 million, in the second, Nu.82.5 million from a plan budget of Nu.202.2 million and in the third, Nu.84.6 million from a budget of Nu.475.2 million. Works on the first road connecting Phuntsholing near the Indian border in southern Bhutan to Thimphu and Paro began in January 1960. In 15 months, 10, 000 people working at one time constructed 145 kms road.

The road construction project definitely required diversion of Bhutanese labour force from their farms. Two conditions had to be considered in recruiting labourers to work on roads. First, the recruitment should not affect continuity of farm works in villages. Therefore, it was not possible to recruit as many people from any particular area at any given point of time. Second, there should be a steady supply of labour force so that road construction could proceed uninterrupted. The Bhutanese state therefore, devised an indigenous system of labour contribution where able Bhutanese above age 16 (?) were grouped in 6 and later 12 locally known as *drudom* and *chunidom*. From the group, one person went to work for a certain period of time and was then replaced by another member after six months or so. Sometimes, the same person continued to work without being replaced. In that case, the person for whom he was working supplied his provisions.

While these arrangements ensured steady supply of Bhutanese labour force, the lack of experience and skills in road construction as well as technical know-how and equipment brought in Indian laborers and personnel in large numbers. They were mainly recruited from the neighbouring Indian states of Assam and West Bengal. This was a mutually beneficial undertaking. While Indian labourers found

employment on Bhutanese roads, Bhutanese labourers were spared the sole brunt of undertaking the construction works. Thus, the Indian labourers first came to Bhutan to assist in road constructions. An offshoot of the presence of Indian labourers was the growth of the Food Corporation of Bhutan which was initially set up to provide rations to them at cheaper prices. After the constructions were over, almost all the Bhutanese went back to farms. They were not attracted to come and work on roads owing to poor wages. In 1988, the daily wage rate for a road worker was about Nu.11 and about Nu.25 for a building worker. This was not a sufficient incentive for Bhutanese to work on roads. They preferred to work their land. But even if the wages were higher, "the scattered distribution of local population, and the serious [impacts] withdrawal of labour would cause to food production and to the production of export crops would make such a transfer impracticable"²¹. Public road maintenance was entrusted mainly to Project Dantak, undertaken by GREF, an organization of the Indian Border Roads Organization. These two organizations have retained many Indian labourers on Bhutanese roads since then. At any given time, Dantak has today, on average, 2000 Indian labourers working on roads in different parts of Bhutan²². The number of these labourers would have been more if it were not for the establishment of a National Work Force in the later half of 1980s where landless Bhutanese were recruited to work on roads.

21 Samarasinghe, S.W.R (1990). "The Bhutanese Economy in Transition" in Asian Survey, Vol. 30, Issue 6, p.564

22 Rinzin Dorji, Joint Director, Immigration Division, Interview, November 21, 2003. In 2004, there were 3000 of them as reported by the Minister of Labour and Human Resources to the National Assembly.

Indians in Mining, Manufacturing and Agro-based Industries

Along with road constructions, modernization began in other sectors of the economy such as health, education, power, trade and industry, telecommunications, agriculture and forestry. After the Fourth FYP (1976-81), priorities shifted from road construction to these sectors particularly trade and industry. As mining, agro-based and other industries were gradually set up, labour forces moved away from the agriculture sector by various pull and push factors.

Bhutanese labourers working in non-agricultural sectors are a recent phenomenon. In the initial period, Indian labourers were recruited owing to their availability particularly because most of the industries were located in towns bordering India. The number of Indian labourers in most manufacturing and mining industries are significant. For example, in 2003, the Bhutan Carbide and Chemicals Ltd. in Phuntsholing employed 37 Indians of which 22 are in managerial positions including the top post of General Manager. The rest included skilled blue-collar workers such as plumber, foreman and welder. Then there were 78 seasonal workers employed for Calcium Carbide in breaking, packing, staking, loading and unloading of raw materials. Again, there were additional 26 Indians employed on muster roll basis. There were thus 141 Indian labourers employed in that company. In 2002, the Druk Satair Corporation Ltd. employed 311 Indian day workers of which 246 were women in the stone crusher at its dump yard. At the Bhutan Fruit Products Ltd. based in Samtse, the number of day workers differs between peak and off seasons. The approximate number of workers is as follows.

Table 8: Day Workers in Bhutan Fruit Products Ltd.

	Peak Season	Off season
Male	45-50	20-25
Female	130-150	100-110

Moreover, there were eight permanent workers including a chief executive and four managers for different units.

Indian Labourers for Hydro Power Projects

With the construction of major hydropower projects with Indian assistance, which began with Chukha Hydro Power Corporation commissioned in 1986, the number of Indian labourers in Bhutan increased significantly. The construction of Kurichhu Power Project in 1995 employed hundreds of Indians in various capacities. The project encompassed various Indian agencies such as National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd., Water and Power Consultancy Services and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. A total of 13 major agencies and many smaller contractors were employed. Categorized into executives, non-executives, skilled and semi-skilled labourers, the project employed 1354 Indians in 1998, 3048 in 1999, 8024 in 2000, 7355 in 2001, 1418 in 2002 and only 129 in 2003.

The huge number of Indian labourers in 1999, 2000 and 2001 was due to the fact that most agencies were active during these years when construction activities were at their peak. By 2003, only four agencies were operating. Kurichhu Hydro Power was fully commissioned by December 2002. Therefore, most skilled and semi-skilled workers have left.

While there is no data on the number of Indian labourers recruited during the construction of Chhukha Hydro Power Corporation, it must have been much more than Kurichu project

which has an installed capacity of 60 MW compared to Chhukha's 336 MW. However, it employed only 155 Indians in 2003, 89 in 2002 and 68 in 2003. The figure excludes contract employees and muster roll employees who number less than 20.

Table 9: Indian Labourers in Tala Hydro Power Project

Sl. #	Month/Year	Workforce	Increment/Reduction
1	December 2003	12154	
2	January 2004	12363	+209
3	February 2004	13251	+888
4	March 2004	13342	+91
5	April 2004	13299	-43
6	May 2004	12034	-1265
7	June 2004	11076	-958
8	July 2004	11172	+96
9	August 2004	10308	-864

Source: Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, 2004

Indian Labourers in Public Corporations and Civil Service

Education reform has been one of the most important social reforms introduced after 1955. The first king His Majesty Ugyen Wangchuk (reign: 1907-1926) had a mobile court school, a school that moved around as and when the royal court shifted between summer and winter palaces. The second king also set up about 10 schools in the country²³. Some students went to study in India particularly in Kalimpong and Darjeeling. About 7 boys passed their matriculation examination from Calcutta University in 1925²⁴. However, steps to develop formal education system were initiated only after 1955. In

23 Sinha (2001), p.191

24 *ibid.*, p.192

1959, there were only 440 students studying in about 11 primary schools. It took decades before the first generation of Bhutanese educated in modern schools after 1955 entered the civil service. Since there were hardly anyone trained in modern education when socio-economic development programmes began in the 1960's, many Indians were recruited to man administrative and development projects. There were Indian teachers, administrators, accounts personnel, engineers in different sectors. While Bhutanese trained in modern education system in various fields increasingly replaced Indian expatriate workers, there are many of them serving in various capacities in both public corporations and civil service.

In 2002, there were a total of 11499 Indians working in 30 Indian companies undertaking joint ventures in Bhutan. There were also 734 Indians working in 24 different public corporations. Tala Hydroelectric Project Authority employed the highest with 347 persons followed by Chhukha Hydro Power Corporation and Penden Cement Authority. The details of these workers are reflected in the following table.

Table 10: Indians Working in Public Corporations, Bhutan, 2002

Agency	Non-national			Total
	Regular	Contract	Deputation	
Bhutan Agro Industries Ltd.	0	0	0	0
Bank of Bhutan	53	0	0	53
Bhutan Development Finance corporation	0	0	0	0
Bhutan National Bank	0	0	0	0
Bhutan Post	2	4	0	6
Bhutan Telecom	0	2	0	2
Chukha Hydro Power Corporation	97	3	0	100
Druk Air	11	34	0	45
Druk Seed Corporation	0	1	0	1
Food Corporation of Bhutan	2	2	0	4
Forestry Development Corporation	1	5	0	6

Agency	Non-national			
Handicrafts Development Corporation	0	1	0	1
Kuensel Corporation	0	1	0	1
Kurichu Hydro Power Corporation	3	3	19	25
National Pension & Provident Fund	2	1	0	3
Penden Cement Authority Ltd.	48	21	0	69
Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan	4	5	0	9
Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan	1	0	0	1
State Trading Corporation of Bhutan	10	2	0	12
Tala Hydroelectric Project Authority	31	227	89	347
Army Welfare Project	14	2	0	16
Bhutan Broadcasting Service	2	1	0	3
Wood Craft Center		1	0	1
Bhutan Ferro Alloys Ltd.	1	28	0	29
Total	282	344	108	734

In the civil service, there were 871 Indians of which 128 were regular employees and 743 contract employees. Nearly 84% of them were teachers in Bhutanese schools.

Table 11: Indians in Bhutan's Civil Service, 2002

Occupation	Total	Regular	Contract
Engineer	14	12	2
Doctor	14	2	12
Teacher	730	24	706
Officer Manager	14	9	5
Finance Officer	5	3	2
Accountant	24	16	8
Nurse	7	5	2
Technician	4	4	
Electrician	8	8	
Clerk	7	7	
Office Assistant	11	10	1
Mechanic	3	3	
Driver	13	12	1
Welder	1	1	

Machine Operator	3	2	1
Carpenter	3	2	1
Mason	6	5	1
Plumber	2	2	
Cook	1	1	
Cleaner	1		1
Total	871	128	743

Total Indian Labourers

In 2001, the total number of Indians working in different capacities exceeded 69,000 people of which 37,587 were regular employees. About 10,000 to 20,000 non-national daily wage workers who return to their homes every day and 1,900 seasonal workers were granted permits for mining and other work during the winter months in southern Bhutan.

By August 2002, the total regular Indian employees was 35,607 with skilled workers of 15,119 heading the list. In May 2003, the number was down to 32,776. They are of course not concentrated in any one place but spread out in all the *dzongkhag*. They work for government, semi-government, private, international and military organizations.

Table 12: Indian Employees, Dependents, Drivers and Labourers, May 2003

Dzongkhag	ORGANISATIONS										DRIVERS				
	Govt.	Semi	Pvt.	Inter	Army	Govt.	Semi	Pvt.	Inter	Arm	Total				
		Govt.				Govt.			y						
Bumthang	26	0	361	2	0	0		0	0	0	389				
Chukha	180	1001	14163	2	0	19	1	334	0	0	15710				
Dagana	14	0	93	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	107				
Gasa	0	0	42	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42				
Haa	24	1	214	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	240				
Lhuntse	20	0	219	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	239				
Monggar	240	146	450	0	0	2	6	6	0	0	850				
Paro	56	2	1840	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1903				
Pema Gatshel	35	0	74	0	0	0	0	0		0	109				
Punakha	45	0	518	0	0	0	0	1		0	564				
S/Jongkhar	92	4	441	0	7	2	0	1		0	547				
Samtse	0	481	417	0	12	1	4	1		0	986				
Sarpang	05	0	304	0	3	2	0	1		0	415				
Thimphu	78	63	6165	84	65	3	0	13		0	6671				
Trashigang	74	0	292	0	1	2	0	0		0	469				
Trashigangste	2	0	119	0	0	0	0	0		0	141				
Trongsa	5	0	442	0	0	0	0	0		0	467				
Tsirang	1	0	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	110				
Wangdue	1	1	1893	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	1946				
Zhemgang	19	0	308	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	429				
Sub Total	587	1699	28444	93	99	33	21	358	0	0	32334				
CWC											213				
GSI											229				
Grand Total	1587	1699	28444		399	33	21	358	0	0	32776				

Chukha Dzongkhag has the maximum Indian labourers owing to two major power projects, especially Tala Hydroelectric Project and industries located in and around the commercial town of Phuntsholing and Pasakha. A large number of them are also in Thimphu working mostly in private organizations. On average, the number of Indians in any *dzongkhag* is 1617. But this does not hold true for *dzongkhag*

such as Gasa which has a minimum of 42 Indians because, there are no major projects of any kind owing to its remoteness and inaccessibility. In all the *dzongkhag*, number of Indian laborers is highest in private organizations followed by semi-government and governmental organizations.

Indian Labour – Mutually Beneficial

The total reliance of Bhutanese peasants on agriculture before economic modernization began required employment of Indians with various skills after the launching of five year plans. From road workers to teachers, medical personnel, engineers, accountants to administrators, India's labour contribution to Bhutan was invaluable so long as a generation of cadre of trained Bhutanese did not come out of modern educational institutes. With the establishment of industries and hydro power projects, the availability of low cost Indian labourers proved to be of great advantage. Besides their low cost, these labourers are also very stable. The industries located along the border with India in southern Bhutan were able to produce competitive products for sale in the immediate Indian market. There are more Indians working in border towns than in other parts of Bhutan where they are mostly recruited to work in business firms, constructions and auto workshops. Government regulate the entry of Indian labourers into interior Bhutan. The success of Bhutan's education system first saw major replacement of Indians in higher echelons of administration, management and technical expertise. Until recently, almost all Bhutanese with a secondary or tertiary education was employed in the public sector. So even when the workforce was gradually diverted from agriculture sector, they did not move into industrial establishments where Indian labourers continued to work.

The recruitment of Indian labourers to work in Bhutan was mutually beneficial. The growth of Bhutanese economy was a source

of direct employment to the people of neighbouring Indian states. On the other hand, their availability spurred the growth of industries in Bhutan's border towns. Since the domestic market in terms of consumer is relatively small, the Indian market provided ready and closer access to Bhutanese products.

Section III – Strategies Addressing Youth Unemployment

His Majesty the King has commanded that 'at no stage of our development process a situation should arise whereby there is no gainful employment for our educated youth'. Realizing the socio-economic as well as political consequences of a growing population of unemployed youths and presence of Indian labour, the government initiated policy measures to address this concern. In anticipation of possible youth unemployment problem, the Royal Government first established the National Technical Training Authority in 1999 to coordinate efforts to develop technical and vocational skills, skills certification to ensure establishment of standards. The government also established the National Employment Board in 2000, which has now become the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource after briefly operating as the Department of Labour and Employment under the Ministry of Health and Education. Both the government at large and the ministry have initiated measures to address unemployment issues. The scale of apprehension and concern for youth unemployment can be deduced from the fact that the government instructed the then Department of Employment and Labour to form a task force which would churn out a proposal to address the employment of job seekers in the first year of the 9th plan.

Reduction of Indian Labourers

The reduction of large Indian labourers is related to Bhutan's need for continued socio-economic development and the long-term national security besides creation of employment opportunities. According to the Minister of MoLHR, the dependence on imported labour has caused serious problem in the past, particularly in the 1990's. In 1987, there were 113,000 foreign workers. In his report to the National Assembly in July 2004, he said that the expatriate labour

numbered 40,350 then, below the ceiling of 45,000. Among them 29,600 were engaged in the private sector, 2750 in government and public corporations. Dantak and other foreign organizations employed 3000 while there were 5000 illegal workers. Most of these illegal workers were deported after imposing fines. Besides, some 10,000 day workers work in Bhutan on weekdays. The number swells to over 20,000 during market days²⁵. Numerically, the Indian labourers (including day workers) equal 10% of the population and over 20% of the total work force.

The Royal Government decided that from 1994 to 2000, the ceiling of Indian labourers in Bhutan would be 30,000 at any given time. The day workers do not seem to be excluded from this ceiling, which was raised by 15,000 in 2000 in order to enable major power projects like Tala, Kurichhu and Basochhu recruit labourers they require. The ceiling would fall back to 30,000 once the major power projects are completed. The declining trend is already visible as indicated in Table 13. The government decided at one point to reduce Indian labourers by 50% in 2000 and by 75% on December 31, 2001. For example, mining firms would be allowed 75% of the labour requirement for 2001-2002, 50% for 2002-2003 and 25% for 2003-2004. The general ceiling for private dwelling construction is five labourers, 25% of the total workforce required for construction, 25% of the total workforce for mining, but there is no ceiling for the civil service. Besides, an auto workshop would be given four skilled workers, a sawmill, two sawyers, and a furniture workshop, two carpenters.

25 www.kuenselonline.com, July 17, 2004

Table 13: Indian Labourers in 2004

Sl.#	Month/Year	Workforce	Increment/Reduction
1	December 2003	31373	
2	January 2004	31168	-205
3	February 2004	32868	+1700
4	March 2004	33963	+1095
5	April 2004	35043	+1080
6	May 2004	32350	-2693
7	June 2004	31464	-886
8	July 2004	31895	+431
9	August 2004	29991	-1904

Source: Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, 2004

Table 14: Indian Labourers in Different Projects/Industries in August 2004

Sl.#	Projects/Industries	Workforce
1	Govt. Infrastructure Development	17927
2	Pvt. House Construction	3839
3	Wood Industries	204
4	Manufacturing Industries	688
5	IT Services	29
6	Hotel Services	144
7	Trade License Holder	376
8	Government Sector	859
9	Others	5925
	Total	2991

Source: Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, 2004

The government has been able to maintain Indian labour within the ceiling. The size of Indian labour in major hydro-power projects near completion such as the THPA (as indicated in Table:9) are declining. However, more hydro-power projects will be undertaken in the coming years. This may also require expatriate labour.

Employment opportunities can be created only if Bhutanese work instead of imported labour. However, the size of labour requirement for such projects, particularly skilled labour may still require substantial import of labour.

Besides reducing Indian labour, another important measure to create employment opportunities was to close 16 different occupations to foreign workers both in the private and public sectors. Clerical jobs such as office assistants, typists, receptionists, computer and telephone operators and others would be meant only for Bhutanese national.

Replacement of Indian workers implies higher costs for Bhutanese employer and lower productivity. According to the private sector survey, one of the biggest business problems for Bhutanese private firms was the lack of skilled labour. While Bhutanese school graduates are increasingly available, they do not match the skill requirements of the firms. Therefore, it might prove to be disadvantageous in terms of cost for Bhutanese firms not to access the low-cost and highly skilled workers for the time being. But pressures of youth unemployment may require compromises at certain point. Although the Royal Government decided that it would recruit only skilled workers and technicians, and employers are required to employ Bhutanese as counterparts and have them trained. Around 90% of Indian workers recruited for constructions and industries are unskilled.

Job Creation in the Private Sector

Since socio-economic development that started in early 1960's was state sponsored and dependent on foreign aid, the private sector development started rather late. It received priority in the Sixth FYP (1987-1992) when government agencies were corporatized and government equity divested to the private sector. The government has stated that the private sector should take on the responsibility of providing employment to Bhutanese and boost the economy. Some

policy and legislative measures have been taken over the last few years. The reality however, is that this sector is still small and has a long way to go before becoming the engine of economic growth.

A significant move was to earmark 50% of the Nu.3 billion HRD budget of the ninth plan for the private sector. The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, established in 1981, even drew up a list of 2100 slots for studies and trainings ranging from duration of five days to three years. The entire program was designed for sending 1200 people in the government, corporate and private sectors for training overseas, and 5000 within the country. The absence of ready funds however, did not bear significant results. Attempts have been nevertheless made to create jobs in the private sector through an interesting initiative. This initiative, which began in 2002, requires private companies to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at first with the National Employment Board and later with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources to employ national workers. In the absence of a labour law, the MOUs were basically a goodwill agreement between the government and private sector industries to “meet the national objective of generating sufficient gainful employment for Bhutanese nationals and to further economic development in the kingdom”. About 78 companies have signed the MoU and created about 3000 jobs. Kuensel reported in May 2004 that only a handful of companies have actually implemented the agreement, mainly large companies and factories. For example, the Bhutan Beverage Company which agreed to employ 76 Bhutanese actually had 89 of them. In order to monitor the implementation of the MoU, personnel of the Department of Employment started visiting signatory companies in the country.

Many companies which signed the MoU are yet to be established in industrial estate sites identified by the government. Estates are

being developed in places like Pasakha in Chhukha. They will also be developed gradually in Lingmethang, Mongar and Jigmeling in Sarpang. The plan is to establish about 17 new industries in this Ninth Plan which would create jobs for about 2000 people. An important clause of the MoU is the phasing out of expatriate workers by the end of the sixth year of signing the MoU, a time-frame that theoretically would enable employees to acquire required skills. However, with the MoU signed, and companies yet to begin operation, the time-frame taken would be longer.

Information on Employment Opportunities

This is a significant development in terms of making information on jobs and trainings available to job seekers. At the website of MoLHR, job seekers can obtain information on jobs available in the market through structured search in terms of profession, salary expectation, work station etc. Many students access this website. The Ministry has also created space and computer facility albeit a small one in its office premise where some students are always job-searching. The ministry obtains information on jobs and training availability from different public, corporate and private organizations and posts it on its website.

Its long term objective is to set up 'nationwide computer-based job matching service to facilitate the quickest possible approach to job matching and placement'. The Ministry recognizes that regional employment centers called 'Employment Service Centers' need to be established to provide placement and advisory services to both job seekers and employers. ' Each Employment Service Center will offer self-service facilities for job seekers, including access to the Internet, facilities for the preparation of job applications, and access to information on employment and training opportunities'. The website also provides information on interview dates and results for various

employment opportunities. The Ministry published a career and occupational dictionary as well as a directory of education and training institutes in 2004.

Accessing information on the Internet however, is limited only to computer and Internet literate job seekers. While more and more Bhutanese students are becoming computer literate, there are many who depend for information on radio and Television broadcast of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service and publication of vacancy announcement in Kuensel. Information dissemination in forms easily accessible to job seekers of all type will be a major requirement in addressing youth unemployment issues.

Another noteworthy initiative of the Ministry was the organization of annual job fair. Hundreds of job seekers attended the fairs in 2003 and 2004. The purpose of the fair was 'to improve job choices through better information, and provide information on the employment market demand and the types of skills that were available'. The job fair brings possible employees and employers together. In different stalls, the organizations from all sectors provide information on the agency, availability of vacancies, skills requirement and emoluments. About 8000 job seekers attended the first job fair.

Streamlining Recruitment Procedure

The Ministry has other strategies in place or planned to provide employment particularly in the private sector such as training Bhutanese with skills required in the job market and streamlining procedures for recruiting expatriate workers. Earlier, the recruitment of Indian labour was routed through the Department of Immigration. Except for the Royal Civil Service Commission, all employers now apply to the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources. Applications received are put into three categories: restricted, open and closed. A

Labour Recruitment Committee earlier reviewed those in the restricted category. The Ministry directly deals those in the open and closed categories. Open category includes workers for private construction, teachers for high schools, skilled workers for auto workshops, sawyers for saw mills and carpenters for furniture houses. Closed category includes applications for clerical jobs, accountants, light vehicle drivers, tailors, hairdressers, electronic repair technicians etc. In order to encourage private companies to hire Bhutanese workers, the Ministry charge fees for extension of work permits, and make them cover costs of social services provided to expatriate workers. It also intends to introduce a system of registering day workers who come to Bhutan for work and return home across the border.

Vocational Training and Skills Certification

Discussions about mismatch between demands of employer and availability of job seekers stem from the mismatch between skills of job seekers and skills demand by available jobs in the market. Traditional skills of Bhutanese labour are found in agriculture, carpentry, masonry, and arts and crafts. They cater to requirements of the traditional society. Theoretically, the issue of mismatch would not arise if Bhutanese education and economy developed along traditional lines. Today, these skills face lesser demand in industrial and vocational sectors like plumbing, electrical work, brick-laying and road constructions. Thus, the diversification of economic activities has created more demands for new vocational skills in contrast to skills of traditional Bhutanese labour. Bhutan's reliance on imported labour was thus driven more by need for skills in the new industrial and economic sector.

The huge demand for technical graduates by the private and corporate sector has resulted in establishment of vocational training institutes in the country. These vocational training institutes add on to

the ones already existing. The new institutes located in Khuruthang, Samthang, Rangjung, Trashi Yangtse and Thimphu provides course in electrical and automobile engineering, driving and traditional arts and crafts. They have contributed in easing pressure of employment especially for technical expertise. It was estimated that among the jobs available in the Ninth FYP, about 95% of jobs would be for blue-collar and skilled labour. Only 3% would get white-collar jobs. In the private sector, the need is for about 25,000 skilled workers.

Skilled job seekers however need to be assessed and certified in a bid to ensure standards and quality. The Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Authority (BVQA) has been established to monitor the quality of vocational training and skill development. It would also reduce mismatches by offering relevant training to suit the market demands. An important strategic framework is necessary to establish standards against which different vocational skills can be assessed. The Bhutan Vocational Quality Authority of the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources has yet to develop these standards.

Credit Guarantee Scheme

As recommended by the task force, the Ministry of Finance, Bank of Bhutan and the Bhutan National Bank signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2003 to create a credit scheme that would provide guarantee on loans availed by young job seekers as well as share losses. Unlike other loan schemes, this does not require any collateral. In order to promote self-employment, youths can avail up to Nu.300,000 loans for starting small business although applicants must undergo short business management course. This course is conducted by the Small Business Resource Centre (SBRC) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Of the 18 youths that attended such a course, eight have been granted this loan. `Hair dressing, tailoring, photography, boiler-making are seen as possible businesses that could be taken up

by school-leavers after completing the SBRC business management course.

Apprentice Training Programme

In 2000, the government started an Apprentice Training Programme (ATP), which is “an enterprise/industry based training programme under real working conditions where one learns under a relevant supervisor”. Trainees undergo on-the-job training with enterprises in the private sector depending on their interests, aptitude and the demand in the private sector. The training also consists of practical works and a minimum theoretical classes. The list of training programme included heavy machinery operators, auto mechanics, tailors, carpenters, hair dressers, carpet weaving, house electricians and plumbers. After the training, trainees could work in the same enterprise or prepare for self-employment. When the deadline for the first call of applications for this programme expired, there were only 38 Class X passed students although the plan was to take in 300 youths. Though 100 have joined later, 60 quit after a few months. By 2004, three batches totaling 127 class X school leavers have passed out under the ATP programme.

Perhaps, the most significant development in addressing employment issues is the formulation of a labour and employment act to regulate employees who are not civil servants. The Ministry is drafting the act to be submitted to the National Assembly in 2005. It would be based on global principles of employment and labour law in order to establish a fair and equitable relationship between employers and employees.

Conclusion

Some conclusions need to be drawn from observations and analysis of the preceding pages. They do not pretend to recommend

anything other than raise questions on the logic, nature and approach we take to address youth unemployment in Bhutan.

1) First and foremost is the recognition that unemployment in Bhutan is largely a youth unemployment phenomenon. Thus while the dangers of unemployment can be dismissed by considering a manageable national unemployment rate, the dangers of large youth unemployment needs deeper scrutiny besides concentrating on supply and demand aspects.

2) The issue of youth unemployment stems from the success of our education system in imparting education to a growing number of children. Most youth seeking employment complete middle or higher secondary education. It may be pertinent to establish a point of differentiation where someone is considered literate and educated. An educated workforce is an asset while literacy could become a liability. Most job seekers will continue to be students completing Class X and XII, and thus have no tertiary education. Should youth unemployment rate grow, the dangers of frustrating them are quite high. For example, most of the Maoists cadres in Nepal are highly literate youths who received at least junior and high school education during the Panchyat system but became disillusioned at the failure of state to provide employment opportunities.

3) The task force constituted in 2002 observed that `the thumb rule for acceptable unemployment levels internationally is 5%. Therefore, 1.9% unemployment rate is not high nor is it an unhealthy sign, given that some unemployment will always remain`. The wisdom of this thought may require some serious contemplation. The internationally acceptable unemployment rate does not reflect the reality of Bhutanese society and economy that is still agrarian. The bases for determining such rate may differ in modernized and advanced economies as against our traditional economy. Therefore,

explosion of unemployment rate at 5% or more may exert far greater pressure on our small society and economy.

4) Whether employed or unemployed, a large youth population with present level of education when they most enter the labour market will soon result in the development of a working class. Most of them will be selling their skills, knowledge and labour in the market of new economy that will be increasingly characterized by privatization, industrialization and integration in the regional economy. They will not be the owners of means of production. By the law of inheritance, Bhutanese are entitled share of their family properties such as landholdings. However, since landholding in villages are either too small or youths have not gone back to villages, their ownership of any capital or means of production are negligible. Thus, they will constitute the bulk of an emerging working class. Going by current trends, they would constitute the largest social class.

5) As the largest social class, they could gradually become a potential source of influence in society. Whether that influence will be positive or negative will depend upon the circumstances of their work and livelihood. A working class equated with lower income and education levels may not be a healthy presence. For example, the Royal Government recently increased the salary of civil servants by 45% in order to offset pressures of rising cost of living. This increase was acutely felt over the years. The additional revenues generated by increase in tariff of electricity export from Chhukha Hydro Power Cooperation would meet the requirement of additional annual budget of Nu.520 million. This increase in salary has wider ramifications. The foremost is a creation of growing income gap in the society. At present, the private sector, which is seen as the source of employment may not be in position to offer equally attractive remunerations and hence attract youths. Unless income levels in labour market increase

to meet rising cost of living as well as narrow gaps with 16000 civil servants who drive the consumer market, youths and graduates may still try to find a place in the civil service, no matter how competitive it becomes. Income disparities would then also come to reflect disparities of human resources.

6) Youth unemployment is an urban phenomenon. `Urban` in our case may need to be re-defined to constitute elements of both geographic and mental spaces. A Class X graduate living in a rural village with his associations to symbols and values of urban livelihood would still belong to the group of urban unemployed. As the number of unemployment in urban areas increase, the pressure will aggravate since its economy may not be able to absorb all job seekers.

7) The fact that most urban unemployment relates to women points to a sharpening gender disparity. The concept of `gender` that developed in industrial and urban societies was not really applicable in a traditional society like Bhutan. However, as urbanization gains momentum, and aspects of industrial economy such as female unemployment appears, any disparity is not a healthy development. Since no employment strategies are gender-oriented, possibilities are that unemployment of young girls can become a serious social issue.

8) Unless socio-economic conditions centering on expatriate labour improves, it will be difficult to attract unemployed youths to replace them. Numerically, the large number of expatriate labour is comfortable as a possible solution to youth unemployment so long as they are equipped with adequate skills. However, if wages, living conditions, standards of occupational safety and hazards, access to social services, infrastructure and environment of physical labour, and structured framework of working hours, leaves, holidays and incentives are not made attractive, Bhutanese youths may remain

content unemployed and a large number of expatriate labours may be here to stay especially in road and construction sector.

9) A long-term unemployment solution strategy has not been tabled yet. The government and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources has conceived, designed and applied employment strategies that had positive impacts. However, difficult as it is, a long-term employment plan that considers strategies for managing outflow of job seekers from education and training institutes, engaging them after graduation and before employment in social or voluntary activities is a must.

10) In order to diffuse concentration of job seekers at any one place like Thimphu, information outlets for jobs and trainings, application, interview and appointment procedures have to be decentralized. The Employment Service Centers conceived by the MoLHR needs to be established fast while administrative functions of the Royal Civil Service Commission in appointment, transfer etc. has to be carried out in manners and ways whereby job seekers do not necessarily need to come to Thimphu.

11) Finally, the debate on unemployment must be extended to address that of 'uneducated unemployed'. Rural urban-migration is not dwindling. If possible, rural youths would prefer any other jobs that are not as manually demanding as farm work. For example, there are rural youths who have learnt driving to ply taxis. As knowledge and awareness about growing urban lifestyle penetrate rural minds, it would be increasingly difficult to convince them that rural life is simple, healthy and idyllic.

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Juvenile Delinquency as Emerging Youth Problem in Bhutan²⁶

Lham Dorji

This paper assesses juvenile crime in Bhutan using the data obtained from the RBP's convictions and arrests records from 1984 to 2003 and 1998 to 2003 respectively. Not only is there variation in the frequency of crime across districts; there has been a steady increase in crime over time and across age categories. Male adolescents are more likely to commit crime than the females. Among 38 different offences, property theft and burglary constitute the most recurrent crimes. The accumulation of minor property theft and burglary in urban centers point out that new social and environmental factors make such areas conducive to crime. Youth unemployment is one probable reason why many young people resort to deviant behaviors.

Although no substantial research has been carried out on juvenile crime, there is a general perception that the youth-related crime has been on the rise over recent years. That there is no available literature dealing with youth criminality in Bhutan particularly presents a big problem in setting up new crime prevention devices for the 'youth group'. Cumulative involvement of adolescents in a variety of criminal offences already indicates that juvenile delinquency requires our crucial consideration. It is high time to look at this budding social problem from the wider academic perspective in order to trigger further research useful for effective preventive policy measures.

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As the first exploratory study, it attempts to examine juvenile crime from three dimensions. The first section contains an overview of juvenile crime in Bhutan including the distribution of crime across different Dzongkhags²⁷, offence types and yearly trends. The second section looks into a difference in the incidence of crime in rural and urban areas. It is expected that crimes would be more prevalent in large towns and urban hubs. International trend is that crime tends to cluster in some areas where the social, physical and economic environment provides immediate situational context. The contemporary studies on likelihood of crime in a particular area have been attributed to social and structural characteristics of the environment that attracts youth and facilitates their antisocial activities. The circumstances under which crime occurs, from this perspective, is a function of social and structural phenomenon that allows people to translate their criminal inclinations into action (Felson, 1986, 1994, 1998; Teresa C. L., 1999). It is more likely that unguarded adolescents will congregate in areas with large population, and in those places where there are many shops, markets, residents and amusement services than in places where such characteristics are limited. The social, cultural and economic situations in urban areas are more apt for loafers to flock together and commit crime under the influence of each other, the phenomenon of which is termed as 'peer pressure' or influence.

The second objective is to determine the relationship between age and frequency of crime. The incidence of crime is expected to increase from the early to mid-adolescence and peak at late adolescence or early adulthood when the young people experience feelings of autonomy from their parents and take risks on their own. They gain

²⁷ Districts, there are twenty Dzongkhags across the country. Each Dzongkhag has its own police headquarter, under which there are several other sub-police stations.

strength and agility required for certain delinquent acts while the involvement with peers is also likely to increase because of increased opportunity and optimal conditions to depart from parental supervision. Adolescents have more time to socialize than children because children are kept at home and are more closely monitored, and adolescents have more time than adults, who are tied up with family, home, and career responsibilities (Robinson & Godbey, 1997, Lotz, R & Lee, L, 1999). Further more, Montemayor (1983) points out that following puberty's onset, adolescents spend less time, but experience more conflict, with parents. Consequently, adolescents are more interested in forging relationships with peers gaining motive to engage in crime.

Third objective is to evaluate individual employment-crime relationship. Personal backgrounds such as employment and economic status often determine the young people's behaviour and conduct. Juveniles respond to external conditions to construct their self-identities as well as to achieve their sanguinity for better livelihood. According to strain theory, juveniles experience strain when their goals are not accomplished which often lead them to delinquent behavior. We have seen in recent years that a large proportion of young people are faced with limited scope for better employment opportunities than previous generations while at the same time they are subjected to aggravated pressure to earn, consume and express their personality as they make the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Absence of an appropriate outlet to release the pressure results in an increased tendency for the young people to get involved in crime. Merton (1956) hypothesized that one common structural approach suggests that poor employment prospects may have a demoralizing impact that creates an anomic climate with the criminogenic consequences for those both in and out of the labour

force. Further more, in contrast to the situation of unemployment, the availability of opportunities to participate in work may inhibit the power and development of peer subcultures, foster normative expectations of working rather than stealing to obtain pocket money, and mitigate the otherwise difficult transition into the adult world (Allan, E.A & Steffensmeier, D. J. 1989)

In short, this paper is intended to explain the following hypothesis: (1) Urbanization gives rise to higher rate of juvenile delinquency, more so often in the form of theft, burglary and substance abuse, (2) Crime increases with age and peaks at late adolescence when youth gain enough freedom to get out of family supervision and interact more with their peer groups, and (3) Unemployment makes the young people susceptible to deviant behavior in order to overcome their economic problems and stressful state.

SECTION I provides an overview of juvenile crime: Distribution across different Dzongkhags, nature of offences and year-crime distribution. SECTION II gives findings and discussion with special focus on rural-urban crime and age-crime-gender distribution. SECTION III explains juvenile delinquency in Thimphu and examines relationship between employment, underemployment and crime.

Data

The sample was drawn from the Royal Bhutan Police's juvenile crime records for the arrests ²⁸and convictions²⁹, which are virtually the only source of information. The police records presents data in tables showing the names, the year of the arrests and convicts, police

28 Arrest data is available only for Thimphu. It is obtained from the city branch. Arrest data include those who are arrested and charge sheeted but not convicted.

29 Convictions data contains records of those convicted for different crimes all over Bhutan. It covers from the year 1984 to 2003.

jurisdiction, village, Dzongkhag, father's name, nationality and the offence. Over 38 different offences have been recorded. Three different samples are used for the analysis.

Firstly, the convicts' actual sample is 2321 as provided by the RBP. This includes the convictions data from age 7 through 25, from 1975 to mid 2004. It also contains records of non-nationals who have committed crimes within Bhutan. Because there is no consistent data from 1975 to 1983, the period between 1975-1983 was left out. The data for 2004 and non-nationals had to be excluded for two reasons: (1) 2004 data contains information only up to mid-year whereas more convictions are expected before the year ends, and (2) non-nationals (n=381) do not fall under the category of Bhutanese youth. The sample size is therefore 649 for the majority of the analysis. In the convicts' actual sample, 95.84 per cent constitute males and 4.16 per cent females.

Secondly, to examine age-crime distribution and determine the peak crime age, a larger sample (n=1940) is used. This sample constitutes conviction records from 1975 to 2004, age 7 through 25. Non-nationals' conviction count is omitted.

Thirdly, a separate arrest data (n= 514) for age 7 through 18 and from 1998 to 2003 is used to explain crime-unemployment relationship. Since data is available only for Thimphu, the main focus is the juvenile crime in the capital. The arrest sample consists of 88.5 per cent male and 11.5 female.

Descriptive statistics is used for the basic univariate analysis using the SPSS 12.0 for the windows. No advanced statistical functions are used to test the hypothesis. The yearly crime rate for Thimphu is simply calculated based on per thousand population for six years (1998 to 2003) for each specific year. I have assumed the

population size of Thimphu as 50,000 based on the estimate given by Asian Development Bank.

Crime rate in Thimphu is calculated using the formula:

$$CRt=C/P$$

C= Number of offense, P=C/X, where X=10000

Where R=Rate of crime, P=City population per 10000 and C=City Population (50,000)

C gives the number of Population living in the city being studied

X gives the number of crimes being committed in the area for every 100,000 people living in it.

SECTION I

An Overview of Crime as per the Conviction Records

1. *Distribution of Convictions Across the Country*

Table 1 shows the distribution of Juvenile crime in 20 Dzongkhags from 1984 to 2003. Thimphu has typically a high percentage occurrence of crime (32.4 per cent). 67.6 per cent of total convictions took place in 19 other Dzongkhags. Trashigang and Chukha Dzongkhags are few other Dzongkhags with higher crime percentage occurrence. The fact that Thimphu has a higher percentage of convictions recorded shows that urbanization provides a climate for anomic behavior by adolescents.

Table 1: Total Percentage Occurrence of Adolescents Crime (Convictions) Across Different Dzongkhags from 1984 to 2003.*

Dzongkhags	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bumthang	6	.9	.9
Chukha**	59	9.1	10.0
Dagana	14	2.2	12.2
Gasa	1	.2	12.3
Haa	3	.5	12.8
Lhuentse	10	1.5	14.3
Mongar	10	1.5	15.9

* The calculation of the percentage crime occurrence in different Dzongkhags is done by using a simple formula $PCo = \frac{x}{n} \times 100$, where x stands for the number of crime in a particular Dzongkhag and n for the sample population.

** Chukha, Samdrupjongkhar, Samtse and Sarpang are also expected to have higher crime rates if the offenses committed within by non-nationals from the border towns are included. Phuntsholing, Samdrupjonkhar, Samtse and Gelephu are four major border towns. These towns are not only the commercial centers but provide ample opportunities for the youth across the border to commit various criminal activities.

Paro	25	3.9	19.7
Pemagatshel	4	.6	20.3
Punakha	30	4.6	25.0
Samdrupjongkhar**	24	3.7	28.7
Samtse**	45	6.9	35.6
Sarpang**	46	7.1	42.7
Thimphu	210	32.4	75.0
Trashigang	62	9.6	84.6
Trashiyangtse	22	3.4	88.0
Trongsa	12	1.8	89.8
Tsirang	12	1.8	91.7
Wangdue	42	6.5	98.2
Zhemgang	12	1.8	100.0
Total	649	100.0	

Source: Crime Branch, Royal Bhutan Police, Thimphu (2004)

2. Nature of Juvenile Offences across the Country

Table 2 displays the juvenile offences recorded from 1984 to 2003. There are over 37 different offences that are arbitrarily subdivided into four groupings³⁰ (Property, person, public order and others); the property crime is the highest. The four highest crimes are theft=381, burglary=85, drugs=28 and cattle lifting=21.

30 I have tried number of ways to group offenses in the best possible way each offense can fit under each grouping, but because of the fact that there are some offenses, which are completely different in nature, it was difficult to categorized one offense specifically under one grouping. For example, it was difficult to consider if 'Auto accident should be considered property crime or not, because the accident would not have been intentional. So this classification is not based on any standard norm. It is arbitrary in nature.

Table 2: Type of Offenses

	Offence	Frequency	Percent
Property	Burglary	85	13.1
	Cattle Lifting	21	3.24
	Chorten Vandalism	13	2
	Forgery	1	0.15
	Misappropriation	1	0.15
	Robbery	2	0.31
	Smuggling	1	0.15
	Theft	381	58.71
	Lhakhang and Antique Theft	6	0.92
	Counterfeit	1	0.15
	Pick Pocketing	6	0.92
	Theft of Forest Products	2	0.3
	House Breaking	1	0.15
	Dacoity	4	0.62
		525	80.87
Person	Arson	4	0.62
	Assault	18	2.77
	Cheating	6	0.92
	Fire Arms	2	0.31
	Murder	17	2.62
	Hit and Run	1	0.15
	Rape	12	1.85
	Incest	1	0.15
	Poisoning	1	0.15
		62	9.54
Public Order	Absconding	1	0.15
	Mischief	1	0.15
	Elopement	1	0.15
	Impersonation	13	0.62
	Soldier Deserter	4	1.69
		18	2.77
Other Offenses	Drugs	28	4.31
	Fire Accident	4	0.62
	Auto Accident	3	0.46

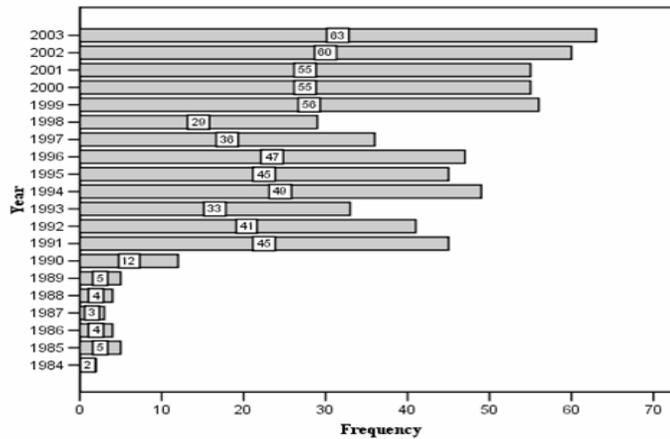
	Attempted Murder	1	0.15
	Attempted Rape	1	0.15
	Civil Case	1	0.15
	Criminal Trespass	1	0.15
	Miscellaneous.	2	0.31
		41	6.3
	Total	649	100

Source: Crime Branch, Royal Bhutan Police, Thimphu (2004)

Year –Crime Distribution

The period from 1984 to 1990 is marked with a very low frequency of crime. However, there is sharp increase in crime after 1991. The figure 1 indicates an increase in crime following 1998. The highest number of crime was recorded in 2003.

Figure 1: Yearly Distribution of Juvenile Crime from 1984 to 2003 based on the Convictions in 20 Dzongkhags



The frequency of crime would have been even higher if the non-nationals and data for 2004 were included. This data covers nation-wide convictions of juveniles aged between 7 and 18. A sharp contrast in 1984's crime and 2003's crime is an indication of rise in

juvenile crime which is one of the distinctive features of socio-economic transformation.

SECTION II

Findings and Discussions

1. Higher Crime Rates in Urban Population*

Comparing the number of convictions recorded with Dzongkhag police headquarters and those of sub-police stations within the same Dzongkhag reveal that more offences took place near the district headquarters than in far-off rural settlements. International statistics demonstrate that the greater the degree of urbanization of a country, the higher the level of criminality (Louise Shelley, 1980). One can make out from the conviction records that highest levels of crime are occurring in regions with higher urbanization.

It is not possible to determine the extent of urbanization, but it is noticeable that some places are more urban than others. On this basis, I have tried to compare the percentage occurrence of crime in a few Dzongkhags with respect to crime in satellite towns. This is done by comparing the conviction records of Dzongkhag police headquarters with those of sub-district police stations.

Table 3: Percentage Comparison of Convictions in Dzongkhag and Sub-Dzongkhag Police Stations (1975-2004)

Police Stations	Percentage
Trashigang Police Station	70.00
Sub-district Police Stations	33.00
DPS >SDPS by 33.00 %	

* This comparison is based on the conviction records of both Dzongkhag headquarter police station and sub-stations under the same Dzongkhag. Records of four Dzongkhags are used. (1) Trashigang Subdistrict police stations: Wamrong, Sakteng, Thrimshing and Nungzor, (2) Samtse subdistrict police stations: Dorokha, Gomtu, Sipsoo and Chengmari, (3) Samdrupjongkhar sub-district police stations: Nganglam, Samdrupcholing and (4) Zhemgang sub-district police stations: Panbang. All those places where sub-district police stations are located can be considered as remote.

<i>Samtse Police Station</i>	55.00
<i>Sub-district Police Stations</i>	45.00
DPS>SDPS by 10.00%	
Samdrupjongkhar Police Station	61.40
<i>Sub-district Police Stations</i>	38.60
DPS>SDPS by 22.80 %	
Zhemgang Police Station	86.60
<i>Sub-district Police Station</i>	13.33
DPS>SDPS by 73.27 %	

Table 2 shows the offences recorded with four Dzongkhag Police Stations (DPS) and Sub-dzongkhag Police Stations (SDPS). The SDPS falls under the respective DPS and are located in satellite towns. More crimes are recorded with the DPS than with the SDPS. It is not possible to calculate crime rates in each town due to non-availability of the population size. However, it is sufficient to conclude that smaller the towns, lower the crime rate. It seems that there exists in larger towns situational environment as well as compulsive circumstances for the young people to manifest antisocial tendencies.

Several factors must be responsible for crime in urban areas. First, larger towns provide adolescents with better chances for criminal activities, especially with the presence of shops, markets and cinema for hangouts. Second, chances to meet their peers are more. Meeting with the people of same social and economic situation thus leads to crime under each other's influence. Third, the towns growing in terms of population, commercial activities and various other opportunities are more likely to attract the deprived, adventurous and lawless from much poorer regions. By and large, rural communities are expected to have lower levels of criminality. This can be attributed to the population structure, traditional patterns of rural life and low level of economic development.

While it is difficult to determine multiple factors causing crime, it is clear that crime in urban areas can be largely attributed to individual situation of deprivation. The young people from the poor families who are migrating to towns seeking social and economic advancement are at the risk of criminal behavior. Self-reported stories of 17 delinquents³¹ in the Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centres (YDRC) in Chukha substantiate this theory. There appear to be two categories of delinquents: (1) some of them manifest delinquency like thefts and larceny to meet their subsistence ends, and (2) others commit crime for nothing more than to enjoy and have fun like their contemporaries from high standing families. When their own social and economic situation means not being able to achieve their objectives, they undertake criminal acts as a mechanism to attain their present ends.

The manner in which the criminal acts were carried out, as described by the delinquents in the YDRC point out that most of the delinquents roam in groups. The first category of delinquents seems to

31 I interviewed 17 juveniles in Youth Rehabilitation Centre. I was particularly interested to learn from them the reason for committing crimes. Most of them accounted almost the similar reasons. (1) Some of them actually went to urban centers looking for social and economic prospects entirely relying their hopes on relatives or friends. Upon reaching the urban areas (mostly in Thimphu) and prolonged stay there, they found themselves increasingly being marginalized or feeling excluded. Social and economic situation turned out to be worse for them that the only option for adjustment was criminal engagements. (2) Many of them belonged to single-parenthood family or family of poor economic backgrounds. These families were not able to afford their education due to which they had to leave schools, and resort to crime as a way of surviving. (3) Most of the crimes were committed in groups, particularly property crime. This is an indication that there is some level of peer influence on each other (4) As accounted by them, some crime seem to have been committed mainly to satiate their consumerist wants and pleasure. Most of them accounted 'to go to Phunetsholing' as a reason for committing crime. For young people, Phunetsholing seem to be better place where there are many amusement facilities but also provide them greater freedom.

operate in organized groups or better termed as peer delinquency. They share not only the criminal techniques but also the loot. One example was a group of boys³² in Thimphu who lived together collecting scrapes during day and operating thefts at night. Apart from living together, they shared stolen money and objects as a sign of intimacy. The above example conforms to the differential association theory which claims that crime and delinquency are learned from people with whom one associates intimately, from an excess of exposure to those who tend to speak of criminal activity in positive terms (Sutherland, 1973; Cressey, 1978; Lotz & Lee, 1999). The second category seems to constitute casual³³ relationship among the members, their main diversion being smoking, roaming and stealing together a moment or two. The third kind is exertion of manipulative³⁴ behavior by experienced delinquents on those who are non-delinquents forcing the latter to commit crime (particularly thefts and burglary) so that the former benefits.

2. Age, Gender and Type of Offenses

There is fairly a good age-crime relationship. While the age crime histogram given below does not provide advanced statistical tests, it indicates that involvement in crime increases with the age. The mean age is 19.79 with standard deviation of 3.58. The median age is 20.00. Negative skewness (-.47) indicates that the median age is

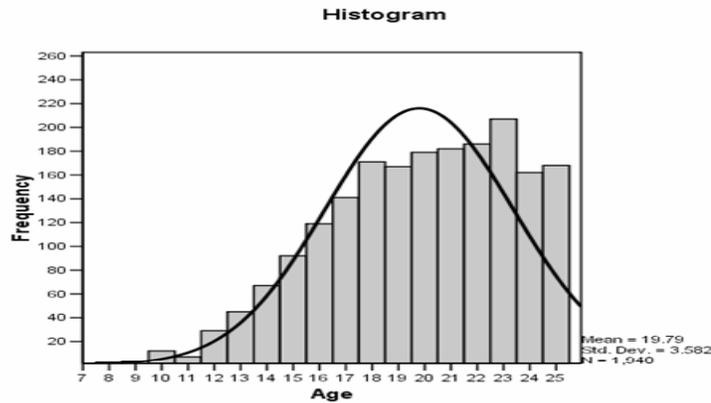
³² These boys are now being rejuvenated in YDRC, Chukha. During my interview with them, four of them reported exactly how they operated thefts together.

³³ A boy in YDRC narrated to me that he learnt to steal through other juveniles who were not so close to him, but often met and committed stealing together.

³⁴ A boy in YDRC described how he was induced to steal near Changzamtog area by his two friends who were known to be experienced delinquents. Another described that he was forced to steal money from a parked car by his elder friend.

towards the left of the peak age, the peak age for the crime being 23. Negative kurtosis value of -0.43 indicates a distribution that is flatter than the normal distribution.

Figure 2: Distribution of Crime across different age (7-25)



The crime is low and almost constant at the age 7 to 11³⁵. However, it increases almost constantly till it peaks at the age of 23 (the median age being 20 which is left towards the peak age as indicated by negative value of skewness). There is decline in crime after 23 years till 25. This is in conformity with the traditional sociological view that crime increases with age till it peaks at early adulthood and then declines. If we are to divide the young people into juveniles (aged 18 and below) and early adulthood (aged 19-25) the crime peaks at 17 years old for the juveniles and 23 for the young adults. Most crime occurs between age 19-23. I would like to interpret

³⁵ For this graph, the sample size used is 1940. This includes the conviction records from 1975 to 2004. In order to determine the peak age of crime, the conviction records above 18 years and below 25 years old are used though this paper specifically deals with the juvenile crime.

the histogram above in this way: the children between 7-11 are not independent in status due to which they are barred from illegitimate activities, after 11 years the juveniles try to establish their self identities through various experiments including crimes to acquire their short-term emotional and material needs, and after 19 till 23 years is an important transition period from adolescent to adulthood, when the youth are likely to leave schools and look for employment or better socio-economic opportunities. It is the period of moral and economic adjustment. Failing to provide legitimate avenues for socio-economic goals thus result in these young people aged between 19 and 23 adopting illegitimate methods.

*Table 4: Age * Sex Crosstabulation*

Age	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
7	0	1	1
8	0	1	1
9	0	3	3
10	0	11	11
11	1	6	7
12	0	29	29
13	3	39	42
14	3	60	63
15	4	82	86
16	6	102	108
17	6	132	138
18	4	156	160
Total	27	622	649

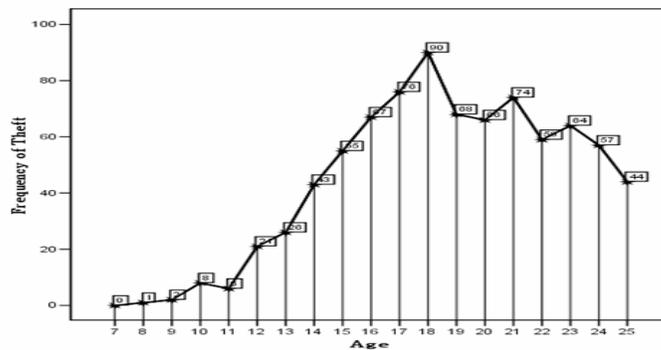
Without having to use elaborate statistics, the available data presented in the table 4 is convincing enough to prove that the females are less likely to show deviant behavior than males. There were 27 female (4.2 per cent) convictions between 1984 to 2003, which is disproportionately lower than 622 male (95.8 per cent) convictions. Interestingly, males seem to indulge in crime much earlier than the females. The females show delinquent behavior between the age 13 and 18. The male-female gap in crime seems to widen with the increase in age. The low level of female offending in relation to male is almost universal. The universal assertion is that that gender gap is more in those societies where the roles and responsibilities of females are much different from those of males. It is difficult to ascertain why females offend less than males. There is also general agreement that females are less subject to pressure on material success than males while at the same time they are less exposed to delinquent peers because of greater social control. Although, it is important to examine

why there is a gender gap in crime, the present paper falls short on data and analysis to go that far.

3. Age –Crime (theft) Distribution

The most significant finding about the criminality of juveniles is that property crimes (80.87 per cent) make up a vast majority of the offenses. The highest crimes are theft and burglary. These crimes are viewed in general as low-yield adequate to fulfill short-term desires to spend and acquire consumer objects. As revealed in figure 3, frequency of theft constantly increases from the age of 7 till it peaks at 18 and then declines till 25 years.

Figure 3: Age-Frequency Relationship, Peak crime (theft) Age



One plausible explanation for why juveniles resort to crime like theft and burglary is explained by Ferchow (1997) according to which the lifestyle of rich, tantalizingly displayed in the media, increasingly serves as the key model for young people, particularly among people whose social situations makes realization of such lifestyles difficult. Yet at the same time, legitimate means of realizing these consumption patterns are not available to disadvantaged groups, including young people afflicted by poverty. Besides lacking material resources, they frequently do not receive good education or vocational training to be

able to make up for the disadvantages of their marginal social position (Pfeiffer, 1998, p. 301). As a result, these young people resort to criminal behavior to mitigate their social and economic shortcomings.

SECTION III

Juvenile Crime in Thimphu

Although comparative studies of juvenile crime in all other major towns are important, the present section focuses mainly on the capital. Thimphu is not only the political hub but also a major commercial and employment centers. Several people migrate to Thimphu for various reasons: from short-term work and business, medical treatment, visit relatives to seek employment and to set up a permanent business. Due to such a large influx of immigrants from other regions, the population of the city has been constantly rising. The change in socio-demographic and economic characteristics is accompanied with several social problems-one being juvenile crime. Most youth, educated and illiterate, dropouts and students migrate to the capital seeking various opportunities. Arrival of opportunity seekers in hundreds and thousands leads to discouraging results because it is not possible to meet the expectations of each of them. Some of them do well but many fail to realize their dreams and aspirations, and finally fall victim to crime.

It does not mean that rural youth who migrate to Thimphu are the sole troublemakers. Children from affluent families are equally, if not more, engaging in crime as well. The fact that their families can afford whatever consumer items they demand seems to tantalize them and finally spoil them. This is what one can term as 'creative destruction'. Formation of gangs, assaults in bars and discos, narcotic substance abuse and rough driving are some of the phenomenon one can claim, is characteristically the phenomenon of urban youth.

Given the data limitations, it is not possible to do in-depth studies on who among the arrested really are from affluent families, though youth from weak socio-economic backgrounds are considered to be

more oriented towards property crime. Considering this fact, I would limit this paper on giving an arbitrary crime rate in Thimphu per 10000 people assuming Thimphu's population roughly at 50,000 to see whether the crime rate is increasing or decreasing.

Table 5: Crime Rate for top Highest Crimes in Thimphu from 1998 to 2003 (based on arrested figure)

Offence	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Assault	3.00	2.2	7.2	2.6	4.0	0.6
Burglary	3.60	3.4	0.4	1.2	0.8	1.0
Drugs	0.80	3.8	5.6	5.4	3.6	0.2
Pickpocketing	1.00	1.4	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2
Theft	8.00	7.0	3.8	9.0	7.2	8.8
Prostitution	0.00	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Yearly Juvenile Crime	17.8	20.6	16.8	19.0	16.4	12.0

Source: City Police Branch, Thimphu

Theft constitutes the highest crime. For example, 2003 recorded the highest rate of theft, which is 8 thefts per 10,000 people. The crime rate for drugs abuse was highest in 2000 (5.6 per 10,000) and 2001 (5.4 per 10,000), but fell down drastically in 2003 (0.2 per 10,000). According to the figure, the overall juvenile crime rate has been going down steadily. The highest was recorded in 1999 (20.6 per 10,000). Within five years, the lowest crime rate is in 2003 (12.0 per 10,000), which in fact is encouraging.

Crime, Juveniles and Unemployment-Underemployment

It would seem illogical to relate unemployment or underemployment with the juvenile crime, because many people expect juveniles to be at homes or schools than in markets seeking employment. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that

increasing numbers of school dropouts and farm youth who are mostly between 15 to 18 years old are migrating to urban areas for employment or short-term work. With this rationale, I would like to examine the relation between juvenile crime and the occupational backgrounds of the offenders. I admit that the offender's employment status would not fully suffice the theory that unemployment or underemployment lead to juvenile crime without considering their family and income. It is not exceptional that laid off children of affluent would not commit crimes or that those who are in schools are not at risk of delinquency. But just because the available data presents the occupational backgrounds of the arrested juveniles, it gives me some sense of logic to examine which group of adolescent actually exhibits criminal tendencies.

Table 5: Juvenile offense in Thimphu from 1998 to 2003

Offense	Frequency	Percent
Adultery	01	0.2
Arson	01	0.2
Assault	98	19.1
Attempted rape	01	0.2
Attempted suicide	07	1.4
Attempted theft Lhakhang	02	0.4
Burglary	52	10.1
C B T	01	0.2
Cheating	01	0.2
Drugs	86	16.7
Elopement	05	1.0
Forgery	01	0.2
Mischief	10	1.9
Pick pocketing	14	2.7
Prostitution	04	0.8
Rape	01	0.2
Rape	04	0.8
Robbery	03	0.6
Theft	220	42.8
Theft of antique	01	0.2
Total	514	100.0

Various offences take place, but the most prevalent crimes constitute theft (42.8 per cent), assault (19.1 per cent), drug abuse (16.7 per cent) and burglary (10.1 per cent). Higher rate of theft is indicative. It means that these juveniles belong to families of low socio-economic profile. A majority of them have reported themselves as jobless (34.7 per cent) though their family status is not known. The fact that they are without work might have been one possible reason for committing crimes. Lack of suitable job and adequate income for sustenance contributes to illegitimate pursuits as an alternative survival tactics. Juveniles who are constantly subjected to material deprivation and are engaged in property crimes are further exposed to

moral pessimism, thereby compelling them to resort to various other crimes such as drugs and violence to console their ill-fated positions. Youth who face a situation of unemployment for prolonged periods are likely to be angry and frustrated with their inability to find productive employment. This frustration may undermine their respect for traditional social values in a society that cannot provide employment to those who desire and need jobs. Such cynicism may contribute to various forms of antisocial behavior such as vandalism, crime, drug use, and alcoholism (Henry L. M, 1983).

As described earlier, poor quality of life is one salient factor for property crime, but it cannot be the exclusive reason. Certain other elements must be driving them into consumerist habits. Such consumerist elements like fashionable clothes, foods, electronics and entertainment facilities must be a source of pressure for them though not easily accessible. It is this pressure that leads them to property crime.

For young adults the choice of legitimate over illegitimate pursuits may be influenced more by the quality of employment than by mere availability (Emilie Andersen Allan & Darrell j. steffensmeier, 1989). The fact that many offenders (26.8 per cent) arrested in Thimphu are working in low-quality jobs proves that the above statement is valid. Most of them are working as laborers, maidservants, auto-workshop handy boys, meat vendors and waiters, which gives them a much lower yield than expected. When returns are low from their marginal employment and living is expensive for them, they make a way out through unlawful means to compensate for the insufficiency.

Table 6: Offence* Occupation Crosstabulation

OFFENSE	OCCUPATION						
	Farmer	Housewife	Jobless	Low Income Job	Monk	Student	Total
	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Adultery	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Arson	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Assault	2	3	55	32	1	35	98
Attempted rape	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Attempted suicide	2	0	0	3	0	2	7
Attempted theft Lhakhang	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Burglary	4	0	8	13	0	7	52
C B T	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cheating	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Drugs	3	1	3	23	2	4	86
Elopement	1	0	1	2	0	1	5
Forgery	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Mischief	1	0	3	0	0	6	10
Pick pocketing	1	1	5	5	0	2	14
Prostitution	0	0	2	2	0	0	4
Rape	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
Received stolen goods PROP	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Robbery	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
Theft	19	3	3	52	5	7	219
Theft of antique	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	35	8	76	138	8	48	514

Data in the table also reveals a large number of students' involvement (28.8 per cent) in criminal activities. Students are more engaged in substance abuse and assault. This explains the operation of several gangs in schools and fights in the nightclubs and bars. It is realistic to assume that students in Thimphu are in a far better position than jobless, low income and rural youth (farmer) groups. The fact

that they are studying in Thimphu shows that their guardians live in Thimphu. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain why students are demonstrating delinquent characteristics. However, I would like to put into note that it is something to take note of and give some crucial attention.

The other major group constitutes rural youth (6.8 per cent) who reported themselves as farmers during arrest. These juveniles seem to have migrated from other regions to Thimphu seeking better work, remuneration and greater independence. At the same time, situation would not have proved favorable to inhibit them in making illegitimate choices. The fact that majority of them were engaged in property crimes substantiate economic deprivation as causal agent for crime. Despite lack of factual evidences, it is observed that many rural youth come to Thimphu to stay with relatives and friends. Most of these juveniles seem to belong to broken homes where their step-parents mal-treat or abuse them constantly. For these children, running away is viewed as an escape from the intolerable home environment. In the process of their stay with their relatives in Thimphu, urban life becomes attractive and comfortable for them than their home communities. Prolonged stay with relatives who are burdened with the rising cost of living often lead to estranged relationship between them. Instead of going back home, they decide to seek jobs not knowing that they came with little training for the urban work-world. When their expectations to stay, earn and lead a good life is not met, criminal activities becomes their option.

Conclusion

Although, lack of population statistics for each Dzongkhag and rural areas obviated the actual calculation of crime rate essential for comparative analysis of rural and urban crime, the analysis proves that there is ample reason to consider lesser crimes in rural areas than in

urban. Traditional societies consist more of homogenous population with similar temperament, values and norms. Due to this, social control over antisocial activities is much effective. Supervision over children by parents and the community is more effective.

Unlike in urban areas where the social gap between the rich and the poor is high, rural populace constitutes people of almost same social and economic standing. Equality in terms of social position and economic prosperity in rural settings does not create much breach between the children, which otherwise can serve as a source of stress for them which is one of the causes of juvenile delinquency. This is not to argue that there is totally no juvenile crime in rural areas. Just as in any other societies, some minor crimes are prevalent even in our traditional societies. Vegetable, fruits and animals thefts are some of the petty thefts common in the villages. These are considered petty because society considers them as nothing seriously unlawful. Even when children commit serious offences, the cases are resolved through compromise between the parents. Most often, local leaders deal with offences instead of reporting them to the police. Rural adolescents are not exposed to consumerist culture as much as their equals in urban areas experience. Simplicity in living styles in rural setting is what makes life relatively free of antisocial characteristics.

Three crimes feature among the juveniles. Property crime such as larceny and burglary are the highest in the record while drug abuse is on the rise. Theft and burglary appear to be carried out for socio-economic adaptation by destitute while it is a channel through which a few individuals satiate their materialistic wants mainly for fun and pleasure. Marginalized adolescents are pressurized to consume, act and live in a similar manner to those of their contemporaries of better status. Because they are deprived, it turns out to be harder for them to compete with the ones who are better off. This results in stress and

strain of wanting to outlive others. One of the options to do it is through illegitimate channels like property crime and to greater extent violent crime.

With regard to drugs, it is ambiguous as to why many youths abuse substances. Is it parental failure to guide and supervise their children? Is it the social situation that encourages or forces them to abuse the substances? Is it the failure on the part of society to make them aware that drugs are abusive and unhealthy? Is it failure on the part of concerned authorities to adequately create the facilities to divert the disoriented for productive engagement? These questions need critical assessments which is outside the capacity of this paper to explain.

Crime peaks at late adolescence. A possible conclusion may be that at this age adolescents attain a certain level of freedom from supervision to express their independence and identity. When legitimate avenues are limited for them to pursue an independent course of life, criminal engagement becomes the necessary choice. It is at this stage that several adolescents of different social milieu such as dropouts, rural youth and even students migrate to urban centers seeking social and economic advancement with a little or no training for whatsoever jobs available. Frustration grows in them when their expectations for better jobs or at least easier livelihood seems remote. The result is that they resort to criminal conduct. There is a good degree of relation between unemployment and crime. Joblessness and low earning (underemployment) are possibly causal agents for adolescents to commit crime. The fact that property crime is highest indicates that delinquency is mainly for economic reasons, which is indirectly an expression of lack of employment for them, or that they are underemployed.

The present study is just a part of what we need to unveil in order to understand the overall situation of juvenile crime. It falls short of several attributes. The entire hypotheses are explained without using advanced statistical tests. Lack of variables like parental background of juveniles, educational attainment and demographic size of various districts presented some difficulties in explaining the proposed hypotheses. Whatsoever it is, I suggest that so much has to be done in this field to get the whole picture of youth crime in Bhutan. I recommend the following specific themes for future research: (1) Crime and children of affluent families, (2) Youth and drugs (3) gender differences in crime (4) Child-parent-school relationship and crime, (5) Crime and socio-economic change, (6) Social control mechanism of crime, (7) Delinquency and dropout, (8) Marriage-divorce and delinquency, (9) Delinquency and peer relationship (10), and alcohol and juveniles.

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Alu-tani (Baby-Sitting) Job in Thimphu- the Alternative Way-out for Rural Youth to Urban Centers³⁶

Lham Dorji

Introduction

The recent years have seen a prominent increase in the employment and business opportunities for women in Thimphu. The growing number of married women has joined the world of work, thus holding simply the partial roles of housewives when compared to non-working women, also leading to modernization of child-rearing practice which is an indication of emerging nuclear family unit. The number of informal domestic babysitters, who are literally known as *alu-tami* is constantly on rise in urban centers. It is not yet determined whether employing young children to look after babies is a positive trend or an issue of social concern. It appears to us that it is a normal outcome of the socio-economic transformation, while it also indicate steady decline in our rich social safety network by which the older generations were relieved from such burden, as older parents and other kin helped them in attending to their children.

One of the main issues pertaining to it is how do we rectify the situation the sitters are exposed to in terms of their wage and work environment, particularly in absence of legislations. The other concern relates to the early phase of child's personality development under the care of untrained sitters. Employing young people as domestic babysitters (also as housemaids in most cases) can offer an alternative

³⁶ I would also like to thank Karma Yangki, Sonam Lhamo, Tshering Lham and Tashi Tshering for helping me with the interviews. I acknowledge the support of all the enumerators. I thank my friends and colleagues Karma Galay, Dorji Penjore, Tashi Choden, Chimi Dem, Kesang Tshering, Samdrup and Wangchen who were really supportive in this research endeavour.

short-term employment opportunity to uneducated rural girls, school dropouts and marginalized children. But, it has also now become one of the channels through which rural youth migrate to urban centers. It is considered positive because it enhances socio-economic opportunities for the destitute, but the other viewpoint maintains that rural-urban exodus of youth through this means put most of them at a disadvantage.

This paper cannot explain the existing divergent views at present, but it looks into various issues related to babysitting in Thimphu. I have tried to examine various aspects such as (1) Dzongkhag of origin of babysitters, age-pattern and gender, (2) reason why young people work as paid domestic sitters (3) income, benefits and income-use pattern among them (4) their attitudes towards this job and their career preferences, and (5) the implications at an individual and general level. Random sample of 80 babysitters in Thimphu were surveyed concerning their work with special attention on their family backgrounds, incomes, reasons for working, nature of works, treatment by their host families and their career options. The survey was conducted from July to October 2004. Our enumerators, who were mostly twelfth-graded students on their vacations were assigned with different survey areas within Thimphu. Allocation of areas for personal interviews was based on where the enumerators lived and their familiarity with the respondents. This has been done considering that it would be much easier to extract personal information from someone the enumerators were acquainted with.

Dzongkhag Distribution

Most of the babysitters under study came from different regions of 18 Dzongkhags.

There was no one from Haa and Gasa Dzongkhags while majority of them (14/80) belonged to Samtse Dzongkhag. Other than providing

general information, table 1 cannot explain the reasons for a higher number of them from Samtse and absence of anyone from Haa and Gasa.

Table 1: Dzongkhag-wise³⁷ Gender Cross-tabulation for the Babysitters

Dzongkhag		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
	Bumthang	1	4	5
	Chukha	1	3	4
	Dagana	0	5	5
	Lhuntse	0	1	1
	Mongar	0	8	8
	Paro	0	4	4
	Pemagatshel	0	5	5
	Punakha	0	5	5
	Samdrupjongkhar	1	4	5
	Samtse	3	11	14
	Sarpang	0	3	3
	Tashiyangtse	0	2	2
	Thimphu	0	3	3
	Trashigang	0	7	7
	Trongsa	1	0	1
	Tsirang	0	3	3
	Wangduephodrang	0	2	2
	Zhemgang	0	3	3
Total		7	73	80

Age and Gender

The individual's age and gender were two important determinants bearing good relationship with this job. The entire sample is virtually constituted of females (91.3 percent). 41.3 per cent of the sample was within the mean age range of 16-20 years at the time of interview with the standard deviation of .807. 32.5 per cent of the sample was under the age range of 11-15 years. Out of seven

³⁷ Village information is excluded for the present purpose.

males, five of them were in the age range of 16-20 years while two were in the age range of 21-25 years. There were only two girls in the age range of 5-10 years.

*Table 2: Age * Gender Cross tabulation of Babysitters*

Age	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
5-10	0	2	2
11-15	0	26	26
16-20	5	28	33
21-25	2	17	19
Total	7	73	80

The higher percentage of females can be due to the nature of the job, which involves looking after babies and some domestic tasks that are by tradition more suited to females. The work involves less physical exertion and requires no training at the moment. While children in the age range 5-10 years are considered too young to handle the task, those in the age range of 21-25 years are considered too qualified. At the late adolescence, most of them are pressed hard to enter another line of occupation or get married and settle down. This explains why most of them were between the age of 11 and 20 years.

Family and Educational Backgrounds

1. Family Background

Simple percentage evaluation of the data reveals that the individual’s social and economic backgrounds determine the likelihood that adolescents would work as domestic sitters. Although, relatively less than those who came from dual-parenthood, 43 per cent of them came from the broken homes and unstable families. I would hypothesize that the family disruption and intolerable situation that

they were subjected to, would have impelled them to take up this occupation as a means of sustaining their own personal ends without having to depend much on their parents. In their self-report account, most of them had described their experience at home as difficult, often having to bear the neglect and mal-treatment by their parent-in-laws. In one of the interviews, a girl reported:

That my father died and mother was re- married to an alcoholic left me with no other choice but to come to Thimphu and work as a babysitter. My mother is innocent and dominated by her husband that she is allowed to pay a little attention to us. As a result, my two younger brothers and a sister have to face lots of difficulties in the family. I had to leave home because my father-in-law treated me badly³⁸.

If it is true that children of single-parent family have higher chance of working as sitters, 57 per cent of the sample in the study still belong to dual-parent households, thereby contradicting the hypothesis. Therefore, one overriding factor can be a poor economic situation in the family where children experience the feelings of vulnerability, and change for better livelihood remains their priority. Illiteracy, low educational qualifications and lack of skills further make them susceptible and fit for no other easier-to-get jobs than just simple babysitting.

³⁸ This is self-reported information during our interviews with Sonam Lhamo (age 15) from Punakha. She is presently working as a babysitter in Hejo. She likes the present occupation because she escaped the difficult situation in a family headed by a man habituated to a heavy drinking.

Table 2: Household and Educational Backgrounds of the babysitters³⁹

Variable	n	%
<i>Parental arrangement</i>		
2 parents household	45	57.0
Single-parent household	31	39.2
No parents	3	3.8
Total n	79	
<i>Parental Occupation</i>		
Farmers	53	71.6
NWF	13	17.6
Private Firms	1	1.4
Civil Servants	7	9.4
Total n	74	
<i>Household Economic Status</i>		
Insufficient food	2	3.5
Inadequate land	17	29.9
Jobless family members	19	33.3
Low income	19	33.3
Total n	74	
<i>Education level</i>		
Uneducated	42	52.2
Primary	28	35.0
Lower secondary	9	11.3
Middle secondary	1	1.3
Total n	80	

In support of the above assumption, the existing data reveals that approximately 71.6 per cent of the sample came from the rural households and 17.6 per cent were the children of National Work Force (NWF). Although, 9.4 per cent of them were the children of

³⁹ Youths were excluded from each sample if the questions being asked were left blank. In the question pertaining to parental arrangement, 79 respondents gave the answer while one was missing. So the sample was based on 79 respondents. Similarly, only 74 of the respondents answered the question on their parental occupation and 74 of them answered the question on household economic status.

public servants, it is possible that these civil servant families were under low-income group. Most of them (n=74) had reported themselves as the children of poor economic backgrounds. Three important reasons for poor family conditions were low family income (33.3 %), jobless members in the family (33.3%) and inadequate land (29.9 %) for cultivation. The higher number of them had come from rural households- an indication of rising trend in rural-urban migration of younger generation who are looking for better socio-economic scope in towns, and who are actually trying to escape certain level of deprivation and hardship associated with rural settings.

2. Educational Background

The individual education levels of adolescents seem to bear significant impact on the choice of employment. The sample shows that lower education levels also had forced them to make such career choice, because they had no other options left. More than half of them (52.2 per cent) were uneducated, 35 per cent are early dropouts and 11.3 per cent have completed primary level education before dropping out. It is universally accepted that being illiterate or possessing low educational qualification limits the choice and goal aspirations. The uneducated and early dropouts in the study were forced to take up this occupation in absence of other choices.

Decision to Work

It is apparent from the data that the peer influence (2.6 per cent) on them was insignificant as most of them were influenced to work as sitters either by their parents and relatives or made the decision on their own. Against 46.1 per cent who were influenced by their parents and relatives, 51.3 per cent reported that they made their own decision to work.

Table 4: Type of People who Influence Youth to work

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Myself	39	51.3
Parents and Relatives	35	46.1
Friends	2	2.6
Total	76	100.0
No answer	4	
Total		80

One principal reason that compelled them to take their own decision was to escape hard life associated with their low socio-economic status and seek better life elsewhere. Their parents would as well consented to their children’s decision as short-term economic strategies.

It is apparent from the personal narratives of these working adolescents that some of their relatives had played their roles in bringing them to Thimphu. Three reasons for their involvement were; firstly, they expected them to help them in baby-sitting and carrying out various household tasks; secondly, with the aim to reduce economic burden on the poor parents; and thirdly, to establish a positive impact of work and earnings on these disadvantaged adolescents. Such initiative was typically characterized by a contractual exchange of the adolescents’ services with payment in the form of money, food, clothes and modest assistance to their parents. Some of the government and private employees were also involved in transferring these children to Thimphu when they visited the rural places on the official purposes. In some cases, the parents had made the decision to send their children away as a temporary strategy to

cope up with their own family situation even if they resented losing their children.

There were different responses to a question on why they have to work as babysitters. Beyond the desire to have a better livelihood, 50 per cent had reported ‘*they want to help their poor parents*’ by sending them some amount of their earnings. 22.9 per cent expressed their intention to become less dependent on their poor families. The reasons given are consistent with the parental motive of reducing the expenses of bringing up an extra child in the family and their expectations of receiving monetary returns from their working child. 8.5 per cent gave the reason that they want to support their siblings while 11.4 per cent attributed it to their personal interest.

Income, Benefits and Salary- use Pattern among the Babysitters

Table 5 gives the monthly earnings of the babysitters in the sample for different age groups as reported by 66 of them.

Table 5: Babysitters’ earning by age

Age Range	Income			Total
	Nu. 200-500	Nu. 600-1000	Nu.1100-1500	
5-10	1.52	1.52	0	3.04
11-15	18.19	16.66	0	34.85
16-20	6.06	25.75	7.58	39.39
21-25	1.52	13.63	7.58	22.72
Total	27.29	57.55	15.16	100

57.55 per cent earn a monthly salary range of Nu. 600 to 1000 while 27.29 per cent earn between Nu. 200-500 and 15.16 per cent between Nu. 1100-1500. Although cash income is less, almost all of them had reported that they receive supplementary benefits of free clothes , foods and working experiences.

The salary-use pattern is not subject to their own discretion-some of the employers send their earnings directly to their parents while others save for their employees. Most of them are directly given their earnings. In the survey of 65 respondents, 44.6 per cent reported that they spend the money to buy clothes for themselves, 43.1 per cent gives their earnings to family while 12.3 per cent put money into savings. Spending not directly related to their own consumption connotes a sense of responsibility over others, particularly their parents and siblings. This is a sign of acquired maturity and sense of responsibility as well as their obligations for the members of their families.

As they mature in age, they are increasingly faced with the dilemma as to continue in the same job or make some career-shift. One notion that prevails among them is that the job is more suited for them in their early adolescents and they want to work in other areas, as they grow older. Response to the question concerning their wish to continue as babysitters or to quit shows that 11.3 percent out of 80 respondents were not sure, 50.0 per cent want to quit and 38.8 per cent want to continue in the same job. In response to the question on the career choice, 11.3 per cent said that they want to work with the government, 20.0 per cent in the private sector, 8.0 per cent want to go back to their farms and 58.0 per cent are not sure of what they want to do.

Overall Implications

Education and employment opportunities for the disadvantaged rural youth becomes more limited particularly when their own socio-economic conditions prevails over them despite the government's effort to bring such facilities and opportunities closer to them. The non-farm jobs are either absent or present in a limited number, while the harsh rural life also discourage them to stay on in their rural

homes. Thus, they are compelled to migrate to towns seeking better opportunities elsewhere, even though they have less preparation for successful entry into the world of work that demands better skills and are highly paid.

The positive aspect of this job is that it offers the marginalized uneducated group to earn and become self-subsistent. In situation that the chance of finding white-collar jobs is uncertain, such casual jobs that require no knowledge and skills, at least for the present, offer some of them with option to meet the immediate socio-economic need though their future livelihoods are obscure.

Self-earning of these children reflects a gradual change from dependent to independent relationship with their parents, often so, resulting in a constructive relationship between parents and children. Some of the poor parents receive a proportion of the child's earnings as an additional income to run the family. There are some good employers who are not only concerned about the benefits of the working child but extend whatever possible help to the child's parents when needed. Some employers even ensure that a large proportion of the sitters' earnings are put into an account maintained in the latter's names. Those sitters who are fortunate to be associated with a well-to-do family both financially and morally are often offered with better chances for moral adjustment such as becoming more responsible persons, committed to work and exposure to new values and aspirations. It is an alternative apprenticeship in childcare and management of household chores, which would prepare them as better mothers in future.

As mentioned earlier, children who come from disrupted families have more chances that they would strive to break away from the troubled families. Many of them happen to work as babysitters, and it was reported by most of them that they receive even better love and

care from their employers than the homes dominated by their parents-in-laws. Being able to find a new home environment where mean treatment from the employers is absent may contribute to their psychological development and enhance positive attitude towards life. This is a creation of home away from home for those unfortunate children- the better home environment during adolescence-adulthood transformation bearing high on their moral development.

No matter there are several highly encouraging impacts on the poor youth, there are several negative implications associated with this job both at general and individual levels. Since the data shows that the majority of sitters (71.6 per cent) come from rural communities, it is reasonable to discuss the problem from the viewpoint of rural youth.

In a predominantly agrarian society, rural youth have to take responsibility and ownership of farms because urban youth will not be willing to join the farms. Even as small a rise in the demand for the domestic babysitters is likely to impact in the overall trend of migration of rural girls to towns on top of the already unabated rise in migration of rural youth and school dropouts seeking non-agriculture related employment. We, including the local leaders have bypassed this issue because it looks like more of an advantage than a social problem at present.

A short-term nature and lack of proper regulation of this job are some of the areas that we should be concerned about. Not many of these young sitters continue in the same job once they attain late adolescence; most of them prefer to join another world of work but their chance of getting other employment remains low. Where would they go when they are not offered with other career options? What should we do to ensure that these marginalized people have employment opportunities? These questions need to be answered if we are to provide them with social and economic security, who otherwise

have higher risk of falling exposed to difficulties associated to a changing socio-economic conditions in urban centers. Apparently, the chances that these children would return to their rural homes after having been exposed to whims and fancies of modern town life are not so high. The children would have by then changed their attitudes towards the philosophies centering the farm work that constitute intensive manual efforts. In other words, the occupational re-adjustment of this group of people in their home communities will be extremely difficult after having lived isolated from the farming -world for several years. Most of these girls may opt for better occupational choices, but lack of educational backgrounds and rising competition in the job market can hinder them, most of them ending up as losers. This will then force them to drift around towns taking on whatever lies close at hands.

The issue of child rights and working age limit cannot be relevant in Bhutanese traditional context at least for sometime because working children are considered as additional family asset rather than violation of their rights to develop both physically and emotionally. From the traditional perspective, children must assume certain roles and responsibilities in the farms if they were to perform better as they grow up. In the traditional Bhutanese farms, children and old people have their own duties to perform to support other productive members run the family. Bhutan is signatory to international convention protecting child's rights. This reflects Bhutan's commitment to children's welfare and the government is already in the process of drafting labour policies and laws. The fact that young children are employed as paid babysitters is an extension of traditional system in which children are considered their childhood days well-spent if they can help their parents by looking after their younger sibs and helping in other farm works.

One of the issues that we need to be concerned about in the long-run is their work environment and rewards. In the absence of proper regulation against this informal phenomenon, it is likely that some employers may show little concern about the welfare of their sitters, but force them to work beyond what these young people can manage to do for a meager pay. It is possible that these children would also get exposed to domestic violence particularly when they fail to fulfill with the personal expectations of their employers. The issue of violence against domestic babysitters once surfaced in the *kuenselonline*⁴⁰ forum where the readers had proposed separate legislation for this job including some uniformity in pay system, strictly abiding by the norm ‘equal pay for equal work’.

There is rising concern among the interest groups that the job is undefined in a way that the babysitters are also required to function as housemaids. Many of them had raised an issue of having had to work as housemaids even though they were employed as babysitters initially. No doubt that numerous tasks would give them multiple skills, but often this make them over-tasked for the same amount of pay and benefits.

The other noteworthy concern that many had expressed is the impacts that these sitters will bear upon the children they are involved in rearing up. The sitters are children themselves and may not be in the position to teach the babies some essential things that their parents can do so. Moreover, that they are untrained is going to have some unknown impacts on the moral and physical growth of the babies. It is

⁴⁰ Kuenselonline forum, topic of discussion: *Baby-sitters and Violence*, 25th March 2004. In this discussion, the author put forward the issue of violence against a babysitter in his neighbourhood. He argues that though the babysitter is gainfully employed, she deserve good family treatment. In support of the argument, several participants raise the concern for the need of legislation governing this occupation. Some points out the amount of work and pay for the sitters need to be regulated.

also possible that some of the babies are being tormented or left on their own to watch televisions or even touch risky home equipments without much concern as soon as their parents leave homes.

Conclusion

The rising demand for babysitters in Thimphu is likely to bear so much on the overall trend of rural-urban migration, but it has failed to capture our attention partly because it operates informally and partly because we fail to look at this issue critically. In this respect, this study attempts to shed some light on this issue so that it becomes a public concern. I have no intention of attaching negative connotation with this job, whatsoever.

In sum, this study of small sample shows that greater source of domestic babysitters is rural farm, where children are deprived of education because of their own socio-economic status and limited income-earning opportunities in the rural areas encourage them to migrate. Since it operates informally, there is every chance that some of these children are exposed to domestic violence and are paid lesser than what they are supposed to get. On the other hand, this job serves as an alternative employment opportunity for uneducated girls, thereby making them more self-dependent. However, since it is a short-term strategy over long-term gratification of personal goals, where and how the sitters would go once they cross the suitable age of babysitting is something that needs to be understood. Until now, several youth-related programmes have focused more on educated youth and dropouts who migrate to urban centers looking for jobs, but none of these programmes have done much to see how the overall situation impacts those non-educated youths who come to towns seeking employment opportunities.

Considering these, one of the best possible ways to curb likely problems associated with this job is to come out with proper and

effective legislation and initiate some programmes to train the babysitters. Day-care centers are scheduled to function, but it is still uncertain whether people will prefer to send their children to them or prefer to keep domestic babysitters and housemaids. If day-care centers encourage the parents to shift their child-rearing pattern, and decide to dismiss the existing babysitters, then where would they actually go?

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