

## **Evaluation of AEP – Adult Education Programme**

### **- *a most significant change***

In May 2005, 21 teachers and the principal of Tibetan Transit School (TTS) completed an 18 months educational programme – Adult Education Programme (AEP) – initiated by The Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution (DCCR) and funded primarily by the Danish Mini-Project Fund.

In connection with the final oral exams in May 2005, I was invited to contribute as external examiner and evaluator by Else Hammerich from DCCR.

As I had not been involved in the project previously and had some experience with evaluation reports from other educational projects in the developing world, I accepted the invitation.

In addition to being the external examiner at the oral exams from May 2-6, 2005, I collected data to support an overall evaluation of the extent to which the project had achieved its goals. This was done both through questionnaires distributed to all teachers at the TTS and through interviews of 4-5 hours with 8 different teachers and a couple of students.

#### **The Exam**

Since the individual written exams in November 2004, seven study groups had during the spring of 2005 worked with their respective projects – within the frame and content of the AEP.

The oral exams were to reflect the content and focus of work in the seven study groups. The headlines of their projects were:

- Visions, reflections, and dilemmas related to the role as Principal at the TTS
- Cooperative learning
- Similarities between Freedom of the mind (in Buddhism) and Democratic Freedom
- How to empower the group of the female teachers and students
- Democracy in the classroom
- Educational tours to promote students' thinking level, their views and awareness, and their experience of realities of life
- Cooperative structures – to promote cooperative learning, build confidence, develop social skills, give equal opportunities and create a democratic atmosphere

The oral exams were conducted in the late afternoon, as was the educational programme, when the TTS teachers had completed the teaching of the approximately 760 students at the Tibetan Transit School. Each project group had at least 1 ½ hour for their exam.

Three of the Danish teachers who have participated in the educational programme have been supervisors for the groups and acted as examiners during the exam.

Most groups began with a short presentation of a didactic theme by each member of the group. These presentations lasted about 30 minutes. Then followed another 30 minutes, where members of the group demonstrated their abilities for collaboration. The examiner and the external examiner asked the group a question or posted a challenge, which the group would then reflect on for 3-4 minutes, before the examiner would ask one or two members to conclude the considerations and suggestions for possible actions on behalf of the group. This process was then repeated with a new question or a new challenge.

In the last half hour was for dialogue and debate based on the reflections and perspectives in the work of the group and the proposals for problem solving.

Four groups – the principal, who constituted his own group, and three of the teacher’s groups - were English speaking. Three of the teacher’s groups communicated in Tibetan – and through an English translator with the examiner and external examiner. It should be added that nearly all the Tibetan-speaking teachers appeared to understand our questions (posed in English) before translation was made. It should also be added that the English-speaking groups during their internal group discussions – in the “second” half hour – all communicated in Tibetan. Only when they addressed us with their conclusions, did they effortlessly switch to English.

After each group had been through an exam of 1 ½ - 2 hours, they were asked to step outside, while we deliberated and agreed as to whether all in the group had passed and on what feedback the group would receive. When we had agreed on this, the group was called upon again. All seven groups – 32 teachers, including the principal – passed their oral exams very convincingly. There were of course many happy smiles upon receiving the information that one had passed. The feedback worked well and resulted in many positive responses from the teachers. At a small ceremony at the school on May 9, each teacher obtained his or hers individual certificate, the principal obtained his, and a certificate for the entire school was posted in the staff room.

### **Interviews and questionnaires**

After the exams, I interviewed 8 of the teachers – 4 of the English-speaking and 4 of the Tibetan-speaking and two students. The objective was to identify what had been the most significant changes and results of the project. Parts of these interviews can be found in SPF International Newsletter no.14.

The content corresponds very closely to the replies the 31 teachers had given in the questionnaires, which were completed after the exams on May 9. The questionnaires were designed in order to provide direct feedback on the objectives of the project. For details, please confer the compiled questionnaires.

If one combines the impressions from the oral exams, the interviews conducted, and the compiled questionnaires, one can only get the picture of an unusually successful project, where the project objectives are more than achieved and where both in terms of the duration of the project and in a cost-efficiency perspective one has obtained remarkably much within the provided funding.

With kind regards

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