

Das Bildungssystem für Tibeter:innen im Exil

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Im Interview mit Tenzin Dorjee vom Departement of Education, Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, wollten wir wissen, wie das Bildungssystem für Tibeter:innen im Exil funktioniert – und werfen einen Blick auf die Zeit vor dem Einmarsch der Chinesen in Tibet bis heute.

Lesen Sie im Folgenden die englischen Antworten im Original:

What was school education like in Tibet until 1959?

Before the Chinese invasion of Tibet, there were hardly any formal schools managed by the Government of Tibet except *Tse Laptra* (official school) and medical school. The *Tse Laptra* was meant for training of young Tibetan children to become civil servants in the government offices. The modern medical college was built as a learning center to produce Tibetan doctors.

His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama at the beginning of 20th century, made a few attempts to develop a modern secular education system. In 1912, four boys were sent to Rugby School in England. In 1923, with the help of a British educationist, the Tibetan government established an English school in Gyantse. A similar English school was later established in Lhasa in 1944. The schools were later closed due to the opposition from traditional conservative groups. Some affluent family send their children to stay in English medium schools in Darjeeling and Kalimpong.

Even though there was no formal school education system in Tibet, great advances were made in the Tibetan script and language during the 7th century. With the establishment of the first monastic institutions in the 8th century, Tibet has produced countless outstanding scholars and literary work. The monastic institutions in Tibet have been providing religious and spiritual education for the monks, nuns and lay individuals for centuries.

How was the school system for Tibetans in exile established after that?

After coming into exile in 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama gave top priority to education and requested the then Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to establish separate schools for Tibetan refugee children. Following which the Department of Education (DoE), was established on 4th October, 1960 to look after the educational affairs of the Tibetan exile community. At the same time, several residential and day schools were established with a twin purpose of providing quality modern education and preservation of Tibetan language and culture at the same time. Due to limited human resources and facilities at that time, Tibetans were left with no alternative but to practice the education system of the host country, India.

As a result of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's repeated advice, based on His Holiness' long-term vision, starting with the Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) schools in 1985, and subsequently by CTSA, THF and STSS schools in exile took a very significant step in gradually converting to medium of instruction from grade 1 to 5 in to Tibetan language. All the Tibetan secondary and senior secondary schools being affiliated with the Central Board of Secondary Education, Delhi and due to several other limitations, the medium of instruction from grade 6 and onward still remains a foreign language, that is, English.

Though the Tibetan schools had to practice the education system of the host country, we were able to include the traditional subjects such as Tibetan language, music and dance, spiritual and philosophy as part of that curriculum. Gradually, we were able to produce Tibetan textbooks, organize teacher-training programs, and in a short time and with limited resources, the Tibetan schools in exile became firmly established and achieved a good amount of success.

What does it look like today? Do you know the number of Tibetan schools outside India?

Beginning in 1960 with the first Tibetan school in Mussoorie with 50 students, the number of Tibetan schools in exile (India, Nepal and Bhutan) gradually increased to 82 schools in 1990. With the growing trend of Tibetans immigrating to the west and other foreign countries, the exile Tibetan population has seen a steep downfall in the Indian subcontinents since late 90s. This has indirectly resulted in the decrease of Tibetan children in the Tibetan schools in exile. Currently, with around 15000+ students and 2000+ staff, there are 62 Tibetan schools in India and Nepal which are managed and run by five different autonomous school administrative bodies.

Though we achieved tremendous success under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the first three decades of coming into exile, a general sense of dissatisfaction and a growing number of new challenges such as preservation of Tibetan language and culture; not having a long-term vision of education system began to surface during the last few decades.

As a long-term measure to overcome these challenges and also required under the directive principles of the article 17 (2) of the Charter for Tibetans in Exile that states *"In order to enhance the imparting of education, an ideal education policy meeting the fundamental requirements of Tibet shall be formulated."*, Basic Education Policy (BEP) for Tibetans in Exile was formulated and was unanimously approved by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile in the year 2004.

The first model school to implement BEP was established in 2005. Except for the Tibetan schools in Nepal and the schools under Central Tibetan Schools Administration, Delhi, all other Tibetan schools in India started implementing BEP from pre-primary to middle school level in a phased manner.

Currently, there are nine Tibetan schools outside India in Nepal under the Snow Lion Foundation. Earlier there were four Tibetan schools in Bhutan but with the declining students' strength all the four schools were closed down.

Does the Tibetan government in exile receive any support from the Indian government?

The Indian government issues Registration Certificate (RC) for the Tibetans to stay in India. The Tibetans in India are provided lands on a long term lease to be used for residential, agricultural, commercial and religious activities. The State governments provide infrastructure facilities and basic amenities like roads, electricity, and drinking water in and around Tibetan settlements.

The Indian government also supports the Tibetan schools under the management of Central Tibetan Schools Administration (CTSA). CTSA is an autonomous school body established by the Government of India for the Tibetan refugee children. Till 2012, CTSA runs 28 Tibetan schools. In 2013, the Government of India decided to handover all the CTSA schools to DoE, CTA in a phased manner. So far 22 schools have been transferred. All such schools receive funding support from the Indian government. There are few other Tibetan schools which also receive grant-in-aid from the government in the form of mid-day meal, textbooks and salary for few teachers.

How is the education system organized for Tibetans in exile?

The Department of Education (DoE) is one of the seven main departments of the Central Tibetan Administration to look after the educational affairs of the Tibetan administration and community in exile. The DoE oversees the Tibetan schools in India and Nepal through five different autonomous school administrative bodies: Central Tibetan Schools Administration (6 schools), Tibetan Children's Villages (15 schools), Tibetan Homes Foundation (4 schools) and Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (28 schools) in India and Snow Lion Foundation (9 schools) in Nepal.

According to the Basic Education Policy (BEP), the Tibetan schools are implementing an education system having traditional Tibetan education as its core and modern education as its essential co-partner. The medium of instruction from the pre-primary level up to Primary level is Tibetan. Efforts are being made to gradually convert the medium of instruction into Tibetan language up to senior school level. The BEP adopts a three-language formula with Tibetan as a primary mother-tongue language. The teaching of second and third languages start from grade 4 and grade 6 respectively.

The BEP considers teachers to be the most important and deciding factor in a child's education, hence a teacher-centered education system is being followed but while in a classroom, student-centered teaching methodology is followed.

The school education comprises of a four-level with 3 years of pre-primary; 5 years primary class; 3 years middle school; and 4 years of secondary school. At the pre-primary level, the Montessori methods of education is being followed.

The BEP gives equal importance to science of valid cognition, art & craft, moral conduct, yoga, along with scholastic subjects of study. The BEP aims to raise individuals endowed with the principles of **Freedom, Altruism, Upholding the heritage, and Innovation**. Efforts are being made to improve the classroom instructions in alignment with the aforementioned principles.

How are the schools outside India funded?

The Tibetan schools in Nepal are registered under the Snow Lion Foundation (SLF) and receive scholarship funds for their children. SLF also manages the funding for the salary and

running expenses of four Tibetan schools. Though the other five schools receive scholarship funding for the children through SLF but running expenses and staff salary are managed from the fees collected from the children and the funding support from different donors. From time to time, the Central Tibetan Administration in India also provides funding support for the Tibetan schools in Nepal through SLF.

How is Tibetan culture integrated in the education system outside India?

Except for Nepal, there are no formal Tibetan schools outside India. The Tibetan communities are spread all over the globe from west in the US and Canada to the east in Japan and Australia. The communities where there are larger Tibetan populations have formed Tibetan Associations, and are registered under the laws of their respective countries. These Tibetan Associations organise many programs for the Tibetans belonging to their association. The **Weekend Tibetan Language and Culture School** is one of the most important programs which aims to preserve and promote Tibetan language and culture, and thereby keeping the Tibetan identity alive. The Tibetan language and culture schools are held on the weekends with an average duration of 3 to 4 hours. Tibetan language, history, culture, religion, dance and music are part of the weekend school program. The Department of Education, CTA drafted and finalized the pre-primary to middle school level curriculum framework for Tibetan Language and Culture Schools. The curriculum framework is being implemented in the weekend Tibetan language and culture schools.

What are the educational opportunities for Tibetans in exile?

All the Tibetan children in exile between the ages of 6 to 16 years have equal educational opportunities in their host countries to attend the schools irrespective of their caste, creed and gender. The Department of Education, CTA and the autonomous school bodies provide funds through sponsorship programs for the poor and destitute children so that they could complete their school education. Best efforts are made to educate students with special needs in regular schools together with other students through an inclusive education approach.

The Department of Education, CTA through its annual scholarship program provides scholarships to around 1000 Tibetan children every year to pursue their higher education in India. In addition, the autonomous bodies like TCV and THF in India and SLF in Nepal also provide higher education scholarships for Tibetan children under their ward.

From time to time, the Department of Education, CTA also makes announcements regarding the further study opportunities available for the Tibetan children outside India. Most importantly, every year through the Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP), US government provides opportunity for 6-7 Tibetans to pursue 2-year Master's Degree programs in the US.

How does education for Tibetans in exile compare to the opportunities in China?

In exile, all the Tibetan children have equal opportunities to pursue their educational career as explained above. The Tibetan children can learn Tibetan language and culture as a part of formal curriculum in the schools. There are also a few Tibetan learning Centres for higher Tibetan studies in India.

In China and Tibet, minority education policy was formulated which focuses on indoctrinating Tibetan people politically in order to win their loyalty towards Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This policy in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is significantly reducing the access of ethnic Tibetans to education in their mother tongue. The government policy, though called “bilingual education,” is in practice leading to the gradual replacement of Tibetan by Chinese as the medium of instruction in primary schools throughout the region. Since the 1960s, Chinese (Mandarin) has been the language of instruction in nearly all the middle and high schools in the TAR. Chinese government regulations control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. They stipulate religious activity must not harm national security.

Even under the above education system, there still exists inequality in receiving education to majority of Tibetans in Tibet as compared to mainland China. The data available from The National Bureau of Statistics, China regarding the Seventh national population census of People's Republic of China, the total population in so-called TAR is 3,648,100 and the percentage for 15 years average education received are 6.75%. The education status of Tibet compared to other parts of China is the lowest. This education status is the result of lack of mutual understanding and discrimination policy implemented in Tibet.

Chinese authorities are using systematic educational strategies of cultivated ambiguity in their public statements while using indirect pressure to push schools, where an increasing number of ethnic Chinese teachers are teaching, to adopt Chinese medium of instruction at the expense of Tibetans, such as allocating increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese teachers who do not speak Tibetan to positions in Tibetan schools. This reduces job opportunity and increased resentment for Tibetan language professionals which is a result of systematic social discrimination against Tibetan language teachers in Tibet.

H.H. the Dalai Lama said in an interview that education system of the future all over the world should put more emphasis on strengthening human powers such as warmth of heart and love. How should this be implemented?

The first principal commitment of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the cultivation of warm-heartedness and human values such as compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline. His Holiness refers to such human values as secular ethics or universal values.

For Tibetan schools in exile, morality has been integral part of the school education informally. The BEP advocates that “morality should not to be taught as a separate subject. Instead it is of vital importance to closely connect it to the central theme of all educational activities and especially all subjects of study to be taught in the classroom.” Every teacher in the school has equal responsibility to impart ethical education to the students and needs to model behaviour. According to our need and culture, excerpts from religious sources on morality; stories and tales on spiritual themes; traditional writings on social or secular ethics; and biographies of ancient and contemporary great personalities are being included in the school textbooks or supplementary readings. Most importantly, second aim of giving education as per BEP is principle of altruism. Altruism forms the basis for morality and ethics.

In recent year, the DoE through its secular ethics mentor conducted orientation program for Tibetan public in settlements, college students, and students and staff in schools. The DoE in collaboration with Emory University and Library of Tibetan Works and Archive has also conducted trainings for the teachers on secular ethics and how it should be incorporated in

the school activities. These participants after returning back to their respective schools conduct follow up secular ethics program for teachers and students in their schools. Besides books on secular ethics are also published and distributed to the schools. Additionally, we have a website (secularethics.net) to know more about secular ethics curriculum framework and training contents.

Now the question is how should this be implemented? This is a difficult question to answer. It depends how important the educators in each country feel about implementing secular ethics in education. There are quite a few curriculum models which educators can adapt according to the need and culture of the community in which it is being implemented, such as SEE Learning of Emory University, Happiness Curriculum for Delhi Schools, Secular Ethics for Higher Education by TISS Mumbai, Universal Ethics Education Curriculum by Ayurgyan, etc. To implement secular ethics in education, it is important to incorporate secular ethics in school and higher education curriculum so that it becomes a part of classroom teaching and textbooks. Accordingly, capacity building trainings should be conducted so that teachers are well trained to incorporate secular ethics in educational activities and programs.

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