CHEESE, INDUSTRIAL DREAMS AND LABOUR MARKET REALITIES

50 YEARS OF SWISS-NEPAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
THE INTEGRATION OF THE ACCUMULATED ASSETS OF THE LAST 50 YEARS UNDER THE ROOF OF A VIRTUAL NEW PROJECT WOULD LEAD TO A SYSTEMIC VET SUPPORT PROGRAMME.

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This study appears in a critical phase of the Nepali history. Migration, democratic expectations, Maoists militance, women empowerment and the emergence of strong ethnic identities challenge the conservative elites who still hang to their privileges and hope to delay or derail the changes initiated by the rhododendrons movement in the spring of 2006. A constituent assembly, the aspiration of three generations of Nepali citizens, could be elected soon and hopefully lay the foundations of a decentralized and inclusive State.

This revolution in the making influences the perception of the past. It questions also the role played by foreign aid in general and by the Swiss cooperation agencies in particular in promoting - or in delaying - the changes that appear now to be a historical necessity.

The analysis of the Swiss promotion of professional skills and vocational training in Nepal over a period of more than fifty years offers a good opportunity to look back, understand and interpret - in a way that consciously reflects the mood of the present time - the role played by the Swiss development agencies in the evolution of the Nepalese society.

**STUDENTS ORIGIN AND THE EXPECTED SOCIAL CHANGES**

A close look at the personal and social characteristics of the individuals attending the vocational training courses conceived and financed by Swiss agencies in three different phases of this long and engaging story offers an interesting illustration of the deep changes occurred in the society and implicitly integrated in the Swiss approach to the promotion of technical skills. The Nepali co-authors draw a lively portrait of the students: Prateek Padhan introduces the shepherds and the peasants that learned to produce cheese by imitating the skills of young Swiss practitioners sent to Nepal; Liladhar Upadhyaya presents the professional itinerary of Tibetan refugees and members of the Sherpas community that learned from Swiss experts to access the world market and to successfully export traditional carpets; CK Lal captures the attitudes and the high professional ambitions of the students attending the Balaju Technical Training Centre while Suresh Acharya and SR Joshi portrait the young women and men that were excluded from formal education in early years and now struggle to acquire skills recognized by the Labour market, in Nepal and abroad.

Those students have very different origins and social profiles. The main beneficiaries of the first programmes promoted by the Swiss in the fifties were members of isolated and marginal high mountain communities – or refugees without status and properties in Nepal. In later years the Nepali elites, favored by the social selection practiced by the public education system, captured most of the training and advancement opportunities offered by an expensive technical education of high professional standards. From the social and ethnical point of view, the system built with enthusiastic Swiss support became even more exclusive when the access to the main public vocational centers was restricted to individuals who had successfully completed ten years of formal education and had passed the corresponding exams. Only in more recent times the majority of the students benefiting from the Swiss initiatives in the area of vocational training have been women and members of disadvantaged groups, i.e. poor people facing social discrimination.

Consciously and unconsciously, in critical moments, the Swiss actors have shifted the social focus of their vocational training initiatives. Each major change in the designation of the beneficiaries has mirrored the contemporary Swiss perception of the social reality of Nepal as well as peculiar ideas about the modalities of its possible reforms and transformation.

The ethnic communities that benefited from training in cheese production or carpet manufacturing and exports were seen in isolation from the broader social context and were supported with the clear intention to protect their livelihoods and their identities in a challenging environment. The Swiss respect for minorities and some degree of self-identification with an independent and opinionated population living in a mountainous setting gave sense to these initiatives.

In the second and longest phase of their action the Swiss agencies strenuously promoted technical education of the highest standard, stressing quality over quantity and accepting to pay elevated costs for the education of each single trainee. Given the very selective nature of the formal education system in Nepal, this approach benefited mainly the high caste urban elites, although students with that social background often saw in vocational training only an interme-diary step in their career and an alternative path to higher education. For a long period of time, until the 1990ies, Swiss actors seem to have ignored this reality and certainly did not discuss it in an extensive and proper way. Today that «social blindness» is almost impossible to understand. Its only explanation is the experts’ faith in a wide trickle down effect, by which the availability of excellent technicians, independently from their social origin, would induce economic activity and generate employment for the large mass of poor people excluded from formal education and public sponsored vocational training.

In the second half of the 1990, the full realization of the exclusive character of the society and of its education system led SDC to progressively abandon the costly and inefficient support to state run institutions, while focusing its attention on the large majority of poor women and men rejected by the public schools and entering the job market or migrating without professional preparation or recognized skills. SDC has progressively recognized the necessity to further social change through targeted interventions and the practice of positive discrimination in favor of disadvantaged groups. This urgency has had significant operational consequences. In particular it has promoted the partnerships with low costs private providers of vocational training for the extension of shorter courses, tailor-made to respond to the needs of students eager to earn a decent living as soon as possible as well as responsive to the demands of the labour market.
The evolution of the Swiss activities in the area of vocational training also reflects the implicit assumptions about the possible economic development of Nepal and the corresponding request of skilled workforce by the labour market that impregnated the Swiss programmes over the years.

The vigorous promotion of cheese production aimed at strengthening the economy of the mountainous zones of the country followed a well known model that had been practiced in Switzerland for centuries. However the market for high value agricultural products like cheese expanded very slowly and for many years the sustainability of the sector was questioned. Today the demand for cheese is high in Nepal and growing fast. The strategic decision of the fifties has been vindicated.

The encouragement of the carpet industry as an export activity was seen by the Swiss as the only economic opportunity available to refugees who could not rely on the internal Labour market or on the local demand for traditional Tibetan products to sustain their livelihood. Also this assessment of the economic opportunities proved right and has had a lasting positive effect on the living conditions of the refugees, on the trade balance of Nepal and on its economic reputation abroad.

High quality technical training was encouraged in Balaju, in Jiri and elsewhere while expecting the emergence in Nepal of a performing industry, a modern and mechanised agriculture as well as an independent, competent and committed civil service, able to lead and sustain the country’s economic development. Almost none of these components of a possible modernisation strategy have really materialised, questioning wisdom and effectiveness of an approach that was consistently pursued over a period of almost 20 years.

Nepal actual development, with the important expansion of the real estate industry, has generated instead a large informal market for manual work and other services requiring specific but simple skills. The steady growth of the Indian economy and the investments boom in the Gulf States has created employment opportunities for unskilled and skilled labour abroad. Indeed for many years now, migration has been the only real opportunity available to the majority of the Nepali youths. When the Swiss agents perceived, with a certain delay, the relevance of these structural changes, they shifted resources and policies toward short term quality training and a system of skill certification open to the large majority of young women and men.
The political environment and the priorities of vocational training

The priorities set by the Swiss agents in the promotion of vocational training and their institutional choices illustrate well the political nature of any development cooperation. On one side, they reveal the influence of the political environment on options and decisions that appear to be of mainly technical or pragmatic nature. On the other side, at least in few instances, they demonstrate the determination to promote political and social reforms – or the passive acceptance of an unjust and stifling order.

The promotion of professional skills and improved livelihoods among people living in the high valley of Nepal represented a choice in favour of communities that had been ignored and even discriminated by the state of Nepal. This preference was politically inarticulate, but reflected a certain degree of identification of the Swiss experts with the destiny of mountain dwellers that were oppressed by feudal elites. By contrast, the support provided by the Swiss government and the Swiss people to the Tibetan refugees had a clear political dimension, although mainly with international undertones. At the height of the cold war, few years after the suppression of the democratic revolution in Hungary, the aid provided to the Tibetan refugees was the conscious expression of a democratic solidarity that went well beyond the feeling of a humanitarian obligation. Moreover, Nepal could be supported as a small state courageously resisting the pressure exercised by a powerful neighbour.

The political passion demonstrated in defense of the Tibetan cause was not matched by similar concerns for democracy and human rights in Nepal. The long phase of support and capacity building provided to the public institutions in charge of vocational training and the unconditional collaboration with an ineffective and elites dominated Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) went hand in hand with three decades of indifference toward the absolute rule of the kings, an authoritarian regime and the progressive forces that struggled to take Nepal forward toward a modern democracy. Indeed, this study illustrates well how during this period the Swiss agents expected that social change and political freedom would be the by-products of a technocratically fostered economic growth.

The democratic movement of 1990 and the successes registered by the Maoists insurgency from 1996 onward progressively questioned the wisdom and the adequacy of the trickle down approach to development and political change. The parallel emergence of a vibrant civil society and the assertiveness of women and other discriminated groups strengthened this trend. SDC was forced by this new environment to critically rethink its priorities and approaches in all areas of its activity and in particular in the domain of technical education and promotion of occupational skills.

The shifts of priorities and resources realised in this domain, in particular the backing of short term courses of good quality through private training providers, reflects the conscious decision to support the discriminated groups with targeted interventions and to reduce the role and the direct responsibility of the civil service, which is still oriented toward the needs of the elites, in the provision of training opportunities.
A RENEWED SWISS PROGRAMME IN SUPPORT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Hopefully the present capitalisation of experiences will foster a conscious and self-critical assessment of the past involvement of Swiss actors in the promotion of vocational training in Nepal, while strengthening the commitment of SDC to engage in this critical domain with renewed determination and a stronger awareness of the social and political dimensions of the endeavour.

The importance of vocational training for an equitable development of the country appears paramount. Urgent and large needs for the promotion of practical skills are dictated by a vibrant demography that brings every year hundreds of thousands of barely educated youths into the labour market. In an economy that is unlikely to accelerate its growth until the present political uncertainties are settled, only better qualified workers can find a job, mainly through self employment or migration. On the medium term, the structural transformation of the economy will require an important transfer of labour from agriculture to the other productive sectors. As a result, even development strategies focused on the promotion of rural development will have to expand vocational training and increase the mobility of the rural population, especially of young men and women who will not have gone through the mandatory ten years of formal education and will lack the School Leaving Certificate. The Gulf States, Malaysia and China are likely to compete with India for the employment of skilled workers of Nepali origin, making of migration, for years to come, the best opportunity for thousands of households and for the country as a whole.

As convincingly shown in this study, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, with its Nepali and international partners, is depository of valuable knowledge and experiences that can be productively engaged in a promotion of vocational training adapted to the current context. The new vocational training policy presently discussed by the Nepali government takes the main lessons of the past into account and may free the private energies that are necessary to provide appropriate training on a large scale. The demands for recognition and support forcefully expressed by discriminated groups in the constitution making process will also favour broad based education initiatives.

Responsibility for the past and present opportunities invite therefore to a new Swiss engagement, conscious of the social and political changes that must lay ahead and of the imperative to consider them fully in any strategic and operational planning. Indeed vocational training reaches the youths that want and demand social changes and inclusion out of necessity and conviction: a Swiss commitment in favour of these forces is politically appropriate and relevant, as part of the general support to the peace process in Nepal.

1] I owe to Ms Genèvieve Federspiel, Deputy Country Director of SDC in Nepal, most of the ideas summarised in this preface. Since 2003 Ms Federspiel has provided inspiration and leadership to the partners of SDC engaged in promoting vocational training in Nepal.

2] This essay reflects my personal views.
BACKGROUND

It is common wisdom that Nepal is the birthplace of Swiss development cooperation. It might be less known that employment and income, labour market insertion and vocational education and training (VET) continuously represented a strong leg of the Swiss cooperation in Nepal from its very inception until recently. This produced an uninterrupted chain of information on projects, approaches, philosophies, attitudes and beliefs of the stakeholders for more than 50 years. The overall project portfolio meandered through the complete range of approaches and concepts in development cooperation. Moreover, today protagonists from all generations of development cooperation are still available for interviews, and this publication can thus build on their first-hand knowledge. This is a quite unique resource base for a capitalisation of experience.

The Swiss cooperation in Nepal in many respects is prototypical for the Swiss development cooperation in general; it even widely influenced and determined its genesis and development. This not only holds true for development cooperation in general, but also for vocational education and training: Concepts and approaches developed and implemented in Nepal continuously spilled over to other countries and projects all over the world.

Understood in a broad sense, VET includes know-how transfer, capacity development, labour market insertion, and lifelong learning. In that respect, vocational education and training and skills development always was and always will be an integral component and a crucial instrument of development cooperation. However, apart from this instrumental function and approach, VET is also to be understood as national system which links the world of education with the world of work.

Thus, the history of Swiss development cooperation is irrevocably interwoven with Nepal, and support to VET is one of the red threads throughout this history.

Though the present publication is about VET and its history in Nepal, it is not a publication for specialists. It features stories and contents for anybody interested in Nepal, in international cooperation, in cheese production, in labour market insertion, in Tibetan carpets, in rural development, in mechanical workshops, in vocational training, in educational systems design, in quality teacher training, in development policy and politics, and, and, and…

SAMPLING OF PROJECTS

As mentioned above, capacity building, know-how transfer, human resource development was and is a cross-cutting instrument of development cooperation. However, the sampling of projects for this publication is limited to those Swiss projects which either envisage a direct impact on employment and/or income generation, or which established sustainable VET delivery organisations and structures. Projects are considered to fall under this category if they,

* make people employable or insert them directly into the labour market,
* contribute to economic growth e.g. through the development and introduction of new products or services,
* contribute to productivity increase of the work force,
* promote the comparative advantages of Nepal,
* develop entrepreneurship,
* contribute to the establishment of sustainable VET delivery structures.

This sampling excludes skills and human resource development measures with a singular character like seminars, short courses, workshops, study tours, fellowships, exposure visits, practice terms, internship periods, etc. for local experts, project staff and staff of partner organisations e.g. in health, agriculture or infrastructure projects.

The resulting project sampling includes namely:

* Dairy development programme and cheese production (1952–64)
* Carpet production under the Tibet campaign (1962–75)
* Mechanical workshop / BYS–Balaju Yantra Shala (1959–90)
* MTC–Mechanical Training Centre / BTTC–Balaju Technical Training Centre (1959–96)
* Co-financing of the ADB Loan for the Establishment of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (1990–96)
* SKILL–Skills Imparted at Local Levels (1992–ongoing)
* F-SKILL–Franchising SKILL (2000–ongoing)
* NSTB–National Skill Testing Board (2000–ongoing)

APPROACH

The study was based on three simple leading questions, namely:

a) What has been done?

b) What has been left behind?

c) What has been achieved?

The Chapter «Mending and Milestones» provides a complete overview on the major projects and programmes on the background of their respective philosophies, and it groups them into project generations. The overview pays special attention to the evolution over time, which is also represented graphically, including conceptual, strategic and philosophical milestones, changes, turning points and ruptures. Short synopses in a standardised format complement the overview and are added to the respective snapshots of the Nepali journalists.

For the elaboration on the question, what the different projects have left behind, the editors contracted Nepalese journalists. The journalists were given the simple task to observe and to record the traces of Swiss VET projects from the perspective of a today’s visitor, instead of having it researched and analysed by either development consultants or vocational education and training specialists. The journalists present their observations and findings in personalised articles.

The editors themselves conducted interviews with stakeholders representing the complete range of project generations, they reviewed the project documentation in the federal archives and relevant literature. This resulted in an essay on the «Swissness» in vocational education and training in Nepal, and in an article on the link between VET and the Labour Market. The Chapter «Back to the Future» makes the daring attempt to valuate 50 years of development cooperation in VET, and to draw possi-
ble conclusions for the future. However, also this valuation is a personal essay and has no ambition to summarise the experience of all stakeholders involved during the last 50 years. Thus, the publication features different types of texts and articles from different authors, each one of them having its own specific style, complexion and language. It encompasses:

* Features on the observations on the remains of Swiss VET project by Nepalese journalists
* Synopses on the sampled projects
* Structured and illustrated overview on all projects
* Personal essays on selected issues

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PUBLICATION**

Learning based on the capitalisation of experiences is the primary purpose of this brochure. It describes the 50 years old history of development cooperation in a specific sector, and it associates historical phenomena with underlying philosophies, principles, concepts and approaches, and with the attitudes of key stakeholders.

Despite its ambition to learn from the history, the publication is neither a scientific nor a historical work. The available resources did neither allow comprehensive desk research in the archives, nor full-fledged field research. However, various scientific research papers, mostly thesis, on the genesis of Swiss development cooperation in general and in Nepal specifically, have been published over the years (Elmer 2006, Möckli 2004, Matzinger 1991, de Dardel 1981, Eggly 1968, Renschler 1966).

The publication is also distinctly different from an evaluation. Depending on the level and interest of the contracting party, an evaluative approach would focus on achievements e.g. as compared to development philosophies, to the political intention of the financer, to strategic objectives of the donor agency, to operational planning of the implementer, to the individual motivations of stakeholders.

As opposed to an evaluative approach, capitalisation and learning has a distinctly different determination, purpose, focus and approach. Capitalisation is based on an open minded curiosity about what has been done, why it has been done, what has changed, what has been left behind, and what is available for further use. Capitalisation does not predetermine the criteria against which findings and achievements are evaluated and rated. Capitalisation is rather a bottom-up approach which observes phenomena, groups them in categories, associates them with other phenomena, places them in conceptual reference frameworks, and searches for assets to build further developments on. The concept of assets is distinctly different from the concept of achievements. Thus, we understand capitalisation literally in the sense that we look for what has been accumulated over the years, and what is available for to-days use, if stakeholders desire to do so.

As a consequence the publication does not judge achievements against whichever criteria, it rather searches for assets or gold nuggets, and it attempts to attribute observed phenomena (be they institutions, organisations, processes, products or persons) to projects, irrespective of whether such phenomena were originally planned outputs and outcomes, or coincidental results.

This approach brings the publication at times in contradiction to the mainstream perception and interpretation of the present operationally responsible stakeholders with their reference framework of to-days philosophies, strategies, approaches, fashions and operational requirements. This holds in particular true as regards the appreciation of the most substantial projects and programmes of the 70ies to the 90ies.

As capitalisation and learning is a broad concept with a long-term time horizon, the brochure might be of limited value for operational decisions at the level of individual projects and the present project portfolio.

The editors are aware that the chosen approach of learning and capitalisation in combination with the essayistic character of the individual articles might lead to an overemphasis of some aspects, whereas others might not have received the attention they might deserve.

The articles express the opinion of the individual authors, not even necessarily of the editors, not to speak about the financers. Both the employment and income division of SDC and Helvetas contributed financially to make this publication possible, but none of the opinions expressed in it commits either SDC or Helvetas officially.
**STRUCTURE AND APPEARANCE**

The brochure is structured as a reader, featuring descriptive, journalistic and essayistic texts. The reader structure is perceived to be adequate for the approach, in particular as regards the conceptual decision to utilize journalists instead of consultants, researches or VET specialists for the local research.

The appearance underlines the character of the publication, in that a non-standard sized format has been chosen, and in that the different types of texts (synopses, journalistic and essayistic articles) appear in different layouts and colours. As to the colour code itself: In the German speaking part of the world this particular type of yellow is known as «Nepalgelb» (Nepalese yellow).

**AUTHORS AND CONTRIBUTORS**

The following Nepali journalists have contributed to this publication:

- Suresh Acharya is editor of nepalnewstoday.com, a Nepalese on-line news portal.
- Saurav Ram Joshi is editor of the TITI Newsletter «Flip Chart» and coordinator at the TITI-Research and Development Department.
- C.K. Lal is columnist and sociologist.
- Govind Mishra is business editor of the Nepalese newspaper «Himalayan Times».
- Naresh Newar is a journalist working for nepalitimes.com and irinnews.org, the UN humanitarian news agency.
- Prateek Pradhan is editor of the «Kathmandu Post».
- Liladhar Upadhyaya is a journalist working at «Rising Nepal».

Daniel Lauchenauer, project coordinator of the AlbVET programme in Albania, researched the traces of TITI in Albania. Jörg Frieden, the outgoing country director of SDC, wrote the foreword. As this publication is not an official SDC publication, his contribution reflects his personal opinion.

The employment and income division of SDC was represented in the steering group by Ruth Huber, the Nepal desk by Peter Sulzer, and Helvetas by Franz Gähwiler.

For this publication the editors conducted interviews both in Switzerland and in Nepal with the following persons: Peter Arbenz, Helvetas, President of Board of Directors and at the time project leader of the Tibet campaign; Alfred Frischknecht, former SATA teamleader and VET specialist; Robert Jenny, former SATA teamleader and executive director of Swisscontact; Peter Küenzi, SATA expert in the Tibet campaign and former head of SDC’s employment and income division; Andres Wiederkehr, SATA expert, Helvetas; Werner Wirz, former SDC country director; Rolf Wilhelm, former SATA teamleader and member of Board of Directors SDC. In Nepal, the following persons have been interviewed: Lek Nath Belbase, private consultant and chairman of the TITI managing board; Dev Bir Basnet, director of a private consultancy firm; Geneviève Federspiel, SDC deputy country director in Nepal; Govinda Gajurel, former principal of a technical school and director in CTEVT and current Executive Director of the Mannmohan Memorial Polytechnic Institute; Urs Hagnauer, SDC and Helvetas expert; Agni Prashad Kafle, former director of JTS and of TITI, former member-secretary of CTEVT; Hari Pradhan, former director in CTEVT; Aslesha Sharma, former master trainer at TITI; Suresh Raj Sharma, first member-secretary of CTEVT, vice-chancellor of Kathmandu University; Tanka Nath Sharma, former principal of a technical school and director in CTEVT. The following persons contributed with valuable articles or written comments: Kathy Schneitter, former deputy country director of SDC in Nepal; Karl Müller, the first SATA expert in the mechanical workshop; Werner Schulthess, FAO delegate to Nepal in the 1950ties.

Matthias Jäger is one of the editors, but as former stakeholder in Nepal and as international consultant specialised in VET systems design also a resource person. As an author he contributed two articles.

Peter Stricker is an international consultant for organisational development and vocational education and training. He acted as editor and coordinated the team, he made two missions to Nepal to work with the journalists, he conducted the interviews with stakeholders, and as author he contributed two essays.

As research assistant of KEK-CDC Consultants Franz Kehl, among others, edits the vocational education and training pages of SDC, www.vetnet.ch. For this brochure he conducted the desk research, and he was in charge of the project synopses and the production.

The editors express their sincere thanks to all those who contributed to make this publication possible. These acknowledgements include many persons who are not explicitly mentioned above.

**PROCESSES AND MILESTONES**

The idea for this publication originated from the personal and professional interest of the editors. SDC’s decision in 2005 – which in the meantime has been modified – to phase out from VET in Nepal after more than fifty years, was not a reason, but an additional impulse to launch the study. However, without resources the publication would not have been possible. After a preliminary concept was accepted by the former KODIS fund, the editors presented a detailed concept and outline to the employment and income division of SDC and to Helvetas. Both organisations granted a substantial contribution, and they also participated in a steering group. KEK-CDC Consultants established a team of editors.

Desk and literature research in the Swiss federal archives was followed by a first mission to Nepal in December 2006 to identify and contract the Nepalese journalists. From January to March 2007 interviews with stakeholders from all project generations were conducted both in Switzerland and in Nepal. In its last meeting in July 2007 the steering group reviewed the concept and the available contents, and gave its basic consent for the production. In addition to the steering group, also the interviewed persons and the cooperation office of SDC in Kathmandu were invited to give their comments and feedbacks on the draft material.
Development cooperation in Nepal not only spreads over a period of more than fifty years, but also over the whole range of development philosophies, each one of them having left behind it’s traces. It also features all typical project generations of their respective time. The entrance into the Swiss development cooperation was characterised by a rather systematic, comprehensive and holistic situation analysis and assessment of the development potential conducted by the Swiss Forward Team, followed by a pragmatic decision to venture into dairy farming and cheese production based on Swiss competences and expertise. Thereafter the development of project concepts and planning was rather a meandering determined by needs generated through own projects, milestone decisions, emerging opportunities, reactions to failures and strong personalities with their vision. This has continued until recently, i.e. until the youngest project generation. This article makes the hazardous attempt to summarise the prevailing development philosophies, the typical project generations, the identification of decisive milestones, and even the meandering of the project portfolio during the past fifty odd years, on a few pages, and to represent it even graphically. The present text has no other ambition than to serve as explanatory note to the graph.

Development cooperation is of course also strongly influenced and determined by the political development in the concerned country itself, and by the political position and the basic approach of the donor agencies. In this respect we refrain to a few hints on the political development, whereas a full analysis of this dimension would exceed the scope of this article and brochure: The political development already influenced the work of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team in the early 50ties, in that the autocratic Rana regime came exactly then under serious pressure. After a short democratic interlude Nepal was an absolute Monarchy with the so-called Panchayat System until 1990. The then King gave in to an unbloody democratic movement and promulgated a new constitution with democratically elected institutions. In the following years Nepal did not manage to install a stable Government. The decade was characterised through frequently changing Prime-Ministers, Ministers and Governments, parties dividing into factions, changing coalitions, politicisation of employment in the public sector down to the operational level e.g. in schools. However, the democratic change enabled the private sector to develop and NGOs to be founded and to become stakeholders and partners in development cooperation. In the mid 90ties a so-called Maoist Movement emerged and increasingly challenged the Government. Subsequently the Nepali society was deeply divided not only by the escalating conflict itself, but also by the question how the official Nepal should deal with the conflict in general and the Maoists in particular, i.e. to which extent this was perceived to be simply a terrorist phenomena which was to be fought with arms, or to which extent it was to be acknowledged to be a political issue which required a political answer. The King – chief of the army and assassinated later in 2001 – was rather moderate and reluctant to deploy the army, whereas his successor is known to be a hardliner. The Monarch seized absolute power in February 2005. From then onwards the situation went from bad to worse until the re-installation of the previous government as caretaker government in 2006 under inclusion of the Maoists. The present situation is still volatile.

Under its different names the Swiss development cooperation from the very beginning took a politically neutral position in that it did not interfere directly in political discussions, and in that it perceived development cooperation to be primarily a technical task. However, at the same time Swiss development cooperation was very political in that it focussed also from the very beginning on remote areas, on refugees, on socially disadvantage groups of the society, on access and inclusion, i.e. on the social aspects of development. In this respect already the focus on hands-on vocational education and training as opposed to the support to higher education was a political statement. However, with the expansion and institutionalisation of vocational education and training and the substantial influx of funds, the sector was increasingly politicised. In recent years the escalating conflict increasingly influenced the programme planning, that «business as usual» was no more an option.

**DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHIES**

Knowingly or unknowingly, purposefully or incidentally, the conceptualisation and design of development projects was always strongly influenced through prevailing development philosophies. Though the official development cooperation, last but not least the Swiss one, consistently pretended to be politically neutral and purely technical, the underlying development philosophies were of course strongly influenced, if not determined, through political
mega-trends and movements in Western countries, and, until the late 80ies, also through the Cold War.

The various development philosophies left behind their traces not only in the overall program portfolio of the Swiss development cooperation, but mostly even in individual projects and programs like in vocational education and training in Nepal.

Roughly simplified, each decade produced its own development philosophy as follows:

- **60ies – Modernisation theories**
- **70ies – Dependency theories**
- **80ies – Structural adjustments**
- **90ies – Neo-liberalism**
- **2000 – MDGs**

However, these generations of development philosophies are neither fully independent from each other, nor are they following each other in chronological order, nor are they clearly demarcated. To a certain extent, the different development philosophies exist side by side, and none of them has disappeared completely. In today’s development agencies probably all of the above philosophies can still be traced and found.

**THE 60IES – MODERNISATION THEORY**

Early efforts towards development cooperation after World War II had a strong political connotation, in that they were influenced by and determined through the emerging Cold War and through the de-colonialisation processes. Conceptually the Marshall-Plan, which was a successful approach for the reconstruction of the economies in Germany and Japan, was the mastermind behind early approaches towards development cooperation, and it lead to concepts which are generally known as modernisation theories.

The modernisation theories are based on social evolutionism theories that state that countries would in principle follow similar political, social and economic development patterns, only at different speeds. Thus, the underdevelopment of poor countries was perceived to be primarily a delay in a natural development process, caused by internal cultural factors. Under such a perspective underdevelopment was not a principal problem, but only a relative one which relates to the speed of development. Modernisation theories were based on the belief that the development process could be speeded up by stimulating those segments of a society with an inherent, but sleeping potential for modernisation. Thus, concepts of social engineering were developed: effective stimulation was believed to happen through advise, know-how transfer, and financial support. Modernisation theories were a direct answer of Western countries to the increasing influence of communist countries in the developing world.

Development cooperation based on modernisation theories took the economies of developed countries as role model and attempted to stimulate, develop and support those elements in the economies of developing countries, which were believed to contribute to the development of a modern economy based on acculturated social values. Resulting development programmes typically focused e.g. on infrastructure, energy and engineering education.

**THE 70IES – DEPENDENCY THEORIES AND THIRD-WORLDISM**

The selection of the appropriate term and title for a next generation of development philosophies is challenging, as they are multifaceted. However, they were in direct and political contradiction to modernisation theories, and they had a common core in explaining underdevelopment politically. This political dispute not only took place in and over development cooperation, but it was at the same time the overarching political dispute in Western countries.

As opposed to modernisation theories, which explained underdevelopment primarily socially and technically as a matter of development speed, dependency theories explained underdevelopment politically and economically on the basis of the inequality of the international terms of trades and the related power structures. In development cooperation, the consensus on a political explanation of underdevelopment lead to an array of different approaches, movements, and accentuations, sometimes pejoratively generalised as third worldism. Names like Paolo Freire and Ivan Illich, various liberation mo-
vemnts in different parts of the developing world, youth revolts in Western countries, civil rights campaigns in the US, anti-apartheid movements in Southern Africa, the emergence of self-reliance models and the like characterise this period and left their traces also in the Nepal program of the Swiss development cooperation.

In development cooperation dependency theories and their dependents lead to a focus on community organisations, empowerment, self-reliance, and to approaches like functional literacy, community motivation, etc.

**THE 80IES - STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS**

Structural adjustment programmes were primarily triggered by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the true sense of the word, they imposed conditionalities on recipient countries to review their respective macroeconomic policies in order to qualify for preferred interest rates. Historically speaking, structural adjustment programs were not an invention of the 80ies, but only then they gained momentum in development cooperation. Structural adjustment programmes are linked to buzzwords like fiscal policy, tax reform, competitive exchange rates, privatisation, liberalisation of the terms of trade, redirection of public spending into primary public services like education, health care and infrastructure. Irrespective of whether countries underwent real structural adjustment programmes, the underlying philosophy also influenced concepts, policies and approaches in other areas and of other development agencies. Structural adjustment programmes were not an issue in bilateral development cooperation. Nevertheless such approaches influenced project and programmes design, in that the establishment, strengthening and expansion of public structures and service delivery systems became prominent also in vocational education and training in Nepal.
THE 90IES – NEO-LIBERALISM

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, neo-liberal concepts with their belief in the superiority of market forces in all walks of life increasingly gained momentum, also in development cooperation and not only at the macroeconomic level, but also at the level of individual projects and programmes. Among others, this paradigm shift was favoured through sobering results of 3 decades development cooperation, a widening poverty gap in many countries, a widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of public delivery systems and institutions, and an increasing frustration on high costs and limited outreach of isolated projects.

In development cooperation under neo-liberal influences the attention was increasingly re-directed from public to private service providers, to the mobilisation of market financing for service provision, to the cooperation with private partners for implementation, and to a shift from traditional partnership arrangements for project implementation to competitive bidding processes.

THE 2000 – MDGs

The proclamation of the MDGs in 2000 by the UN represents a milestone for a new perception of development cooperation. Under the MDGs, poverty became a global concern of mutual interest. As a consequence, the pressure on donor agencies to align their programmes to official priorities of the recipient countries, to harmonise them with other donors, and to develop new cooperation instruments and strategies (programm approaches, basket funding, sector-wide approaches under overall poverty reduction strategies, etc.). As a consequence, some donors re-oriented their approaches, strategies geographical and thematic orientation completely, whereas others rather went for direct impacts at the micro level and reinforced their cooperation with the NGO sector.

Under the influence of the MDGs, but simultaneously also triggered through the escalating conflict in Nepal with the emerging debate on systemic discrimination, poverty alleviation, inclusion of women, ethnic groups, castes, and other disadvantaged segments of the society, substantial quantitative outreach became a guide rail for the re-orientation of the programme portfolio also in vocational education and training.

PROJECT GENERATIONS

Despite all the meandering of the projects through history, despite all the coincidences, despite the influences of strong individuals, despite the somehow organic growth of projects, in that one activity itself (e.g. cheese making) generated the need for a next project (e.g. maintenance of the equipment), the portfolio of Swiss projects in skills development and income generation since the 50ies of the last century can be grouped in four broad project generations or project families. This grouping is based on the main focus of the individual projects, i.e. on what they placed right in the centre of their interest and efforts. The four project generations may be labelled as follows:

- Commodity chains
- Centres of excellence
- Expansion and institutionalisation
- Target group orientation

Though the project generations are not directly linked to and derived from the overall development philosophies as depicted above, the respective influences can nevertheless easily be traced.

COMMODITY CHAINS

Cheese and carpet production are the two big projects of the first generation. Though the two programs had completely different roots, different political justifications, different policy orientations, they still have sufficient similarities in order to group them into one project family.

The cheese production exploited available potential (surplus milk in high altitude dairy farming), relied on Swiss experience, competences and comparative advantages, and it targeted to generate additional income for the rural population. It converted an available raw material into a transportable and marketable product.

Though the carpet project was primarily a humanitarian action in support of the Tibetan refugees, it developed into a highly successful
project and into an economic factor with long lasting effect. The carpet project also exploited available potential, relied on specific Swiss inputs, and targeted income generation of a defined target group. However, the potential was not a surplus production, but rather the Tibetan carpet weaving tradition with the respective skills. And as opposed to cheese production, where the Swiss input primarily targeted the production process itself, the Swiss contribution rather focused on product innovation, marketing, and on the opening of international sales channels. Income generation for the clearly defined target group of the Tibetan refugees was the envisaged impact.

The commonality of these early projects was their focus on the complete commodity or value chain from (in dairy farming) the production of the inputs to (in carpet production) international marketing. Both projects were not training projects, but along the respective value chain different types of skills development (occupational, managerial, marketing, product innovation) were crucial project contributions. Vocational training based on apprenticeship learning and entrepreneurial behaviour were basic working approaches.

Both projects were not primarily established as development projects, but rather like companies, where Swiss stakeholders acted like owner-entrepreneurs; in the carpet business, they were even shareholders. The cheese production was established like a small dairy company with a master craftsman working with his apprentices, teaching them on-the-job, sharing his theoretical knowledge with them, and gradually handing them over responsibilities.

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE
The first mechanical workshop to maintain and produce equipment for the cheese factories and other projects was also established based on the model of a small enterprise with a master craftsman and his apprentices. Thus, in that respect, it could be attributed to the first project generation. However, the split of this workshop into a production company (BYS-Balaju Yantra Shala) and a training unit represented the entry point into the next project generation.

This next generation is characterised by a focus on quality training in non-traditional areas, and by the standardisation and professionalisation of the training processes themselves. On this background the training unit of the mechanical workshop developed into MTC-Mechanical Training Centre (in the 90ies renamed into BTTC-Balaju Technical Training Centre) with formal 3-years curricula-based courses at secondary level. Though with different trades, the JTS-Jiri Technical School copied the organisational model. Under project conditions MTC and JTS developed as rather independent organisations, closely interacting with their respective environment. However, this project generation, also known as centres of excellence, was not a Swiss speciality. Other organisations like GTZ or UMN worked the same way and created their own schools and campuses along similar organisational models, and similar training centres were established in many developing countries.
SCHEMATIC OVERVIEW ON THE PORTFOLIO OF SWISS SUPPORTED TRAINING PROJECTS
EXPANSION AND INSTITUTIONALISATION

In principle, both the MTC and JTS were public institutions, and as such they were reporting to the respective authorities. The MTC even made an odyssey through different institutions, and at one stage it officially belonged to the University system. Though there was no concrete concept or plan for replicating the training centre approach, modelling was always an inherent idea. Expansion and institutionalisation of vocational education and training along the lines of the Swiss Schools became a topic in the 80ies, strongly influenced by the ADB-Asian Development Bank, but also supported and even co-financed by Swiss development cooperation. Those efforts targeted the replication of technical schools in all development zones, the establishment of a national authority in charge of vocational education and training, and the development of central support services like curriculum development, quality assurance, skills testing and certification.

TARGET GROUP FOCUS

In the late 90ies the increasing dissatisfaction with the performance of the public vocational education and training system, in combination with the increasing concern of donor agencies for poverty alleviation, and blended with neo-liberal beliefs in the superiority of market driven systems also in skills development, lead to a re-shuffle of the portfolio and a new generation of vocational education training projects. Their common core is the financing or co-financing of employment oriented short courses for the target population.
MILESTONES AND TURNING POINTS

The portfolio of vocational education and training projects developed more organically than as a result of systematic concept development, planning and decision making processes. Nevertheless, the historian perspective reveals distinct milestones and turning points, which were decisive for the further development.

START WITH INTEGRATED VOCATIONAL LEARNING

In early projects Swiss experts acted as master craftsmen, production chiefs, or even as managers/entrepreneurs themselves. Very much like in small enterprises in Switzerland, the master craftsman not only acted as manager and supervisor, but also as coach of his apprentices. The apprenticeship learning was blended through tailor-made courses and practice periods abroad, be it with occupational and/or with managerial contents.

MILESTONE 1 – CHEESE MAKER

The recruitment of Sepp Dubach was a milestone in development cooperation, in that a non-academic practitioner with a vocational education diploma of a cheese maker became a full-fledged expert and a manager of a cheese factory. This determined the approach and mindset of Swiss support to vocational education and training for decades, if not until to-day.

MILESTONE 2 – MECHANICAL WORKSHOP

The first mechanical workshop was established in 1957 as a service unit for the maintenance of the technical equipment of the cheese factories and other projects, and it even had the vision to produce selected equipment to substitute import. The mechanical workshop was purposefully established as production-cum-training unit.

MILESTONE 3 – SEPARATION OF TRAINING AND PRODUCTION

In 1964 the mechanical workshop was split into an independent production company (BYS-Balaju Yantra Shala) and a training unit (MTC-Mechanical Training Centre). From this point onwards vocational education and training continuously was a specific line of activity in the Swiss project portfolio. The conceptual mastermind behind the further development was no more the organisational model of a small enterprise with its integrated apprenticeship learning, but rather the Swiss perception of what is a profession («Berufe»). The training workshops in big Swiss companies, or the few public training centres became the role model for MTC.

MILESTONE 4 – FOCUS ON TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONS

The creation of the mechanical training centre with its professionalisation of vocational education reinforced the focus on technical occupations. In cheese production the integrated apprenticeship learning remained a project input, and it was never institutionalised as an occupational profile. Food processing continued to be an unattended area in vocational education and training until to-day. The same holds true for the carpet production, which continuously was a separate line of activity without any ambition to institutionalise outside the Tibetan community.

MILESTONE 5 – REPORT FRISCH KNECHT

It was only in 1977, when vocational education and training was for the first time analysed systematically in relation to its relevance for the labour market. This report represents insofar a milestone, in that it opened the perspective of vocational education and training not only being a technical concern within a selected sub-sector, but that vocational education and training at one stage should develop into a National VET System.

MILESTONE 6 – CREATION OF JTS

JTS was created in 1982 as an off-spring of the IHDP-Integrated Hill Development Project in order to train multipliers for rural development (agricultural extension workers, technicians for the construction of rural infrastructure, and primary health care staff). Organisationally, structurally and as regards the training strategy, MTC served as a role model.

Beyond the function within its own specific context, JTS represented insofar a decisive milestone in the project portfolio, in that the Swiss cooperation suddenly emerged as one of the big players in vocational education and training.

MILESTONE 7 – CREATION OF THE CTEVT

The technical school system with centres like MTC and JTS was not the first attempt of Nepal to institutionalise vocational education and training. Under the pressure of a forthcoming ADB project, the Nepali Government became serious about it, restructured vocational education and training, and created the CTEVT-Council for Technical Education and Training. In 1987, the CTEVT was established as national agency for policy formulation, coordination and quality assurance of vocational education and training.

MILESTONE 8 – SDC AS BIG PLAYER IN THE SECTOR

Under an ADB loan Nepal constructed new technical schools based on the models of MTC and JTS, it established the head offices of CTEVT, and it developed the processes and instruments for central services like labour market information, accreditation, curriculum development, certification, skills testing. SDC co-financed the technical assistance component, and a staff development package.

In 1991, SDC established under a bilateral project the TITI-Training Institute for Technical Instruction for the training of instructors, teachers, managers, and other cadre personnel.

As the support to MTC/BTTC and JTS continued as independent projects, this milestone brought SDC in a position to be – in terms of grants – by far the biggest player in the sector.
In the early 90ies Nepal converted the 8+3 system for technical schooling (3 years vocational education after completion of 8 years of primary and lower secondary education) on political reasons into a 10+2 system. This changed the character of vocational education and training drastically, in that from that point onwards it catered to a clientele, which was more interested in the access to higher education than in the labour market relevance of the programmes. At the same time the Nepali vocational education and training system no longer caters to school leavers at the main exit system, i.e. after completion of primary and of lower secondary education.

With assistance from the ADB project, CTEVT adapted the anglo-american concept of competence-based training as a standard in Nepal. Initially this caused considerable irritation for the Swiss projects and stakeholders, which worked on the background and experience of the Swiss apprenticeship system with its practical orientation. This milestone not only changed the Swiss approach towards vocational education and training in Nepal, but, based on training which TITI provided for participants from and in many other countries, it shaped the Swiss approach to cooperation in vocational education and training for the coming years worldwide.

Initially, the SKILL project in 1992 was created as an off-spring of the BTTC project. It relied on its expertise, but it shortened the courses, it went out to the people, and it co-operated with community organisations. It did, what in those days was perceived to be necessary to do, but what the public providers were no more able to. Historically speaking, SKILL was the first step into a new project generation with shorter courses, new partners, and detached from the public delivery system.

The phasing-out of the support projects to BTTC and JTS together with the simultaneous initiation of two new projects without any institutional links (TIE-Training for Employment and F-SKILL-Franchising SKILL) marked the entry point into a complete reshuffle of the program portfolio. This reshuffle is still in process, and it is too close to the presence for being valued under a historical perspective.

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PROJECTS AND MILESTONES

1. DAIRY PROGRAMME
2. MTC
3. MTC
4. BYS
5. TIBET CAMPAIGN

1950 1960 1970
THE INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Here the individual projects are just mentioned without elaborating on them in details. For a close-up on the projects the reader may refer to the respective synopsis and the related articles.

DAIRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (1952/56-1964)
The first ever Swiss project introduced cheese production to Nepal, it established production plants, it contributed to the establishment of a marketing outlet (dairy development cooperation), and it contributed to the qualification of a first generation of cheese producers at different qualification levels.

CARPET PRODUCTION (1963–1975)
Carpet production was not initiated as a development project; it rather emerged as an activity within the humanitarian support program to Tibetan refugees. The Swiss contribution in the carpet business primarily focused on management and marketing (including product innovation). The Swiss were not only managers, but even shareholders in the Carpet Trade Company. Carpet production experienced a tremendous growth; it developed into one of the biggest employers, and into the biggest foreign currency earner. Carpet production reached its peak in the 90ies, but continues after a decline.

MECHANICAL WORKSHOP / BYS-BALA JU YANTRA SHALA (1959–1990)
The first mechanical workshop was established in the backyard of Ekanta Kuna, the then and still now Swiss Office. It was established as production-cum-training workshop, primarily to produce and maintain tools and equipment for cheese production, but also to satisfy the fast growing demand for mechanical works from other projects. The workshop was under the management of a Swiss master craftsman with a strong ambition to train his collaborators and apprentices. The initial mechanical workshop was split into two independent projects and organisations, i.e. into a production plant and a training workshop, namely BYS-Balaju Yantra Shala and MTC-Mechanical Training Centre. Balaju Yantra Shala (Pvt.Ltd.) developed into a company which for many years defined the benchmark for quality production in mechanical works in Nepal.

After its separation from the production workshop, the MTC developed into a professional training centre with three urban trades (general mechanics, plumbing, electro-mechanics). Initially Swiss experts were managing the training centre directly, and as trade heads they trained their counterparts, and they had a direct influence on the training programs, on the teaching and learning material, and on the quality. The trade head also acquired projects, which they implemented together with students, and they designed tailor-made courses for outside customers.

Institutionally, the MTC/BTTC had a diverse history. Initially established as a project without a defined legal status and institutional integration, it was later integrated into the university system. When the Ministry of Education created a department for vocational education, it was transferred there, and ultimately, after the creation of the Council for Technical Education and Training (CTEVT), it was made one of its Technical Schools.

JTS-Jiri Technical School was founded as an off-spring of the IHDP-Integrated Hill Development Project, which required agricultural extension workers, people in a position to manage and supervise the construction of rural infrastructure, and primary health care personnel.

Organisationally JTS followed the model developed by MTC/BTTC. It was also organised in three trades with three expatriate trade heads and a strong influence on the practical part of the training.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPONENT OF AN ADB LOAN (1990-1996)
Under an ADB loan Nepal expanded vocational education and training to all development zones through replicating the models developed by MTC/BTTC and JTS, and it established the head offices of the newly created CTEVT-Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training. SDC co-financed through a grant the technical assistance component and a substantial oversees staff development package.

TITI-TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION (1991–2007)
In parallel to the ADB project, SDC established the TITI-Training Institute for Technical Instruction (originally Technical Instructors Training Institute) as a bilateral project. Organisationally TITI was established in a traditional way with expatriate experts in management and other crucial functions, in particular as regards program design and development.

SKILL-SKILLS IMPARTED AT LOCAL LEVEL (1992-ONGOING)
In the early 90ies Helvetas created the SKILL=»Skill imparted at local level= as an off-spring of BTTC and as a Nepali NGO. SKILL went out to the people and provided employment oriented short courses in cooperation with respective community organisations. SKILL is a typical NGO project working with a direct impact on the target group without substantial ambitions in institutional and financial sustainability.

With different approaches, different instruments, and different financing mechanisms both, TFE-Training for Employment and F-SKILL-Franchising SKILL, were initia-
ted in the late 90ies with private partners as implementing agencies. Within short time a substantial number of unemployed youth, in particular those, belonging to any sort of minority or disadvantaged community was to be reached.

**NSTB-NATIONAL SKILLS TESTING BOARD (2000-ONGOING)**

The support project to the National Skills Testing Board made Skills Testing, which originally was established in the 80ies as independent Authority, but later on integrated into CTEVT, more independent again. With project support the NSTB formulated its policy, made a business plan, developed new profiles, and increased the number of skills tests drastically. The project primarily comprises consultancy services.

**ADDITIONAL PROJECTS**

The Swiss project portfolio in employment generation comprised and comprises a few additional projects which are not specifically referenced in the above list on different reasons: The co-financing of a World Bank project in Engineering Education was a one-time activity and somehow alien in the project portfolio. The Small Business Promotion project was completely re-oriented after the inception phase and discontinued after the first phase, i.e. before it could gain momentum. The presently active ELAM project of Helvetas is rather about rural businesses then about skills development. The contributions to the policy development process continue as individual activities, but not as a project with a distinct profile.
Gyalsten Lama from Cherdung village, ward 7 of Jiri VDC, Dolakha district had his chowri (cross of yak and cattle) sick for a few days. His resources and his influence were not sufficient to enjoy the home-visit of a veterinarian from Jiri bazaar. He still visited Jiri bazaar to persuade unsuccessfully the only veterinarian available at the government's agriculture office. The veterinarian was unwilling to trek for over 3 hours uphill just to examine one chowri. After walking for a day and spending a few hundred rupees he returned to his village with a knowledge that he had to walk down his sick chowri to Jiri bazaar. Gyalsten had no choice but to tie a rope around his chowri’s neck and pull it down the stony steep path from about 3,500 meters to about 1,900 meters, where Jiri bazaar is situated. The chowri was suffering from fever and it could not sustain the exhaustion and heat at the lower altitude. Gyalsten lost his chowri on the second day in Jiri bazaar. The loss of a chowri means a loss of about 20 thousand NPR. Gyalsten decided somberly to discontinue chowri farming and to switch to a husbandry with cows and buffaloes at a lower altitude.

This incident is quite common among many chowri farmers. There are myriad of problems for chowri raisers in the high hills. This true incident explains why Nepal could not become the Switzerland of Asia in milk and milk products despite all the efforts done by Swiss dairy specialists and the Swiss government since the early fifties. The Swiss effort, on the other hand, changed lives of many high-hill people. This story is about how Swiss support and experts changed the face of Nepal’s central and eastern hills by teaching techniques to use milk and milk products, and it explains how the momentum got derailed after Swiss support tapered.

GLORIOUS PAST
It started with the arrival of a Swiss dairy specialist, Werner Schulthess, in 1952 as an FAO consultant to Nepal. At the time Nepal was basking in the glory of its newly achieved democracy. The Rana Oligarchy had been defeated by people’s popular movement in 1950, and then King Tribhuwan was kept as a constitutional monarch. There was an enthusiasm and euphoria in making a new Nepal.

The assignment of Werner Schulthess had been recommended by E. Rauch, a member of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team in 1950/51. Mr Schulthess specific task was to assist in devising means and ways for better utilization of surplus milk in remote mountain areas. Soon he concluded that the only tangible milk surplus was produced by herds of chowris on their summer pastures between 3,000 meters and 4,800 meters. Considering the distance from the chowri farms to the capital, he concluded that only an alp-type hard cheese and butter converted into ghee would withstand the 1-2 weeks transport by porters without impairing product quality.

Mr Schulthess was equipped with the necessary equipment (cheese vat, cheese press, hand tools, hand separator, etc.) to produce cheese. He spent the summer of 1953 at Langtang (Kyangjin Ghyang 3,800 meters and Yalla 4,600 meters) producing cheese and butter and converting butter into ghee. He was really satisfied by the outcome.

Mr Schulthess was quite encouraged by his effort to change the life standard of poor people of Nepal with his technical support. After failing to get support from the Nepali government to start a dairy, he used his first home leave in 1955 to convince the first Swiss NGO working in development cooperation to support the cheese production in Nepal. The orga-
Swiss technical assistance was thought to be provided in areas where Swiss people set off for their daily chores.

In the initial days, cheese production showed more potential than milk pasteurization and supply. The milk collected at the collection center was to be carried by people to the chilling centers and from there it had to be brought to the packaging plant, where 900ml bottles were filled and closed with aluminum foil for distribution to the consumers. Also the bottling idea came from Mr Schulthess. Many planners and bureaucrats were apprehensive about a westerner’s idea to supply milk collected in suburban areas to Kathmanduites in bottles.

The effort started in 1953 from Tusal was replicated in surrounding areas. In 1956 a collection and chilling center was established at Kharipati. In 1956 the central dairy was established at Lainchaur. In 1963 yet another collection and chilling center was established in Bhaktapur. The Dairy Development Corporation (DDC) was established in 1969. By 1979 milk collection, pasteurization, processing and packaging plant increased significantly.

In order to meet the increased requirement of the capital city and also other cities of the country, dairy plants were established at various places: The Biratnagar Milk Supply Scheme (BMSS) in 1973, Hetauda Milk Scheme (HMSS) in the eastern region in 1974, the Kathmandu Milk Supply Scheme (KMSS) in the central region in 1978, and the Pokhara Milk Supply Scheme (PMSS) in the western region in 1980.

In 1981 Milk Producers’ Associations (MPAs) were established under the DDC to increase the participation of farmers in dairy development in an organised way. Later the MPAs were transformed into Milk Producers’ Cooperatives (MPCs). Presently there are about 1’000 MPCs and their annual milk sales have crossed over two million liters.

In the late seventies private entrepreneurs began to establish small processing units in the Kathmandu valley, which has now culminated into more than 200 private dairies of various scales in operation all over the country.

Their market share has increased continually from 33 percent in 1991–92 to 40 percent in 1998–99 (NDDB, 2001).

New Zealand was involved in dairy development from the very beginning, later on also Denmark through DANIDA. Switzerland was only involved in the initial days, but it diverted its support slowly to technical manpower production, agriculture, rural bridges etc. However, the cheese production got the Swiss support until the early seventies.

Milk Flooded...
Could we have some yak cheese for snacks? asked a group of people drinking before dinner at Chandra Lama’s Survechhya Hotel at Charikot bazaar, the district headquarters of Dolakha district.

«Sorry Sir! The real yak cheese is in short supply, I can serve only locally made cow cheese» he replied.

«Well, we won’t need cheese then. Next time when we visit here don’t miss to keep yak cheese for us» said one of the customers.

Everyone who visits this hotel asks for the DDC’s yak cheese, produced at small dairies in the higher altitudes in and around the district. «Personally I prefer yak cheese, though it is slightly costlier than other privately made cow cheese, but it is available only during the season. They cannot meet even the demand of Kathmandu» Lama explained.

According to local shop keepers who used to sell yak cheese in ample amount just few years ago, yak cheese production from the dairies of the high hills has dwindled significantly in the recent years. Interestingly, the productivity of cheese dairies increased immediately after the Swiss experts handed over the management of alpine cheese factories to Nepali managers in 1971. Almost all the dairies in Langtang, Jiri and Ramechhap increased their production. But the surge did not last long.

Mr Schulthess, who had left the country in 1964, came back in 1986 to note that cheese production has increased, but not up to his satisfaction. He was, in fact, disappointed. He was shocked to see that the installations were still exactly the same as 22 years ago, when he had left. He was not pleased with the use of tools. The model installations of cheese vats and of presses manufactured at Balaju Yantra Shala had not been copied.

Tools such as cheese harp, cheese stirrers, cheese scoops, as well as cheese cloth, all of which had been manufactured in Nepal in the sixties, were imported again.

The production had tripled in the period from 1964 to1986, it reached 70 tons per summer season, but it started to decline after having reached the peak in the late eighties. Thodung dairy (plus neighboring Kyama) which produced 32 tons of cheese in 1985, only produced 7 tons in 1995.

«Thodung dairy is not producing more than 5 to 6 tons a season nowadays» says Keshar Jirel, a cheese specialist who was employed at various cheese production centers during the nineties. The same holds true for the Cherdung cheese production center and other places, he explained.

CHERDUNG, A SNAP SHOT The cheese factory at Cherdung overlooks Jiri bazaar from about 700 meters above the valley in the north. The high-hill dairy seems at a stone-throw distance from the bazaar. But 45 degrees uphill climb takes about two hours to reach the spot. «No short cut sir, you have to move straight to the direction of your nose» explained Rudra Sapkota, an Assistant Sub Inspector of Police who escorted the author to the place. He was right, there was not even a well set trail to the factory after the last house of Jiri valley to the north.

Cherdung cheese factory remains closed from October to April, the off-season for cheese production. When the author reached there beginning of March, 2007, a sole soul Chakra Bahadur Khadka, 40, was looking after the office. In the clean and pristine surrounding of the cheese factory Khadka was not fitting well. He resembled more a chowri herder than a public corporation worker. He was initially reluctant to open the locks for the strangers, but when he did, he explained the process of cheese making quite eagerly.

Cherdung is situated at 2600 meters on the north of Jiri bazaar, which got its first cheese storage building in 1960 with Swiss support. Initially it was constructed to store the cheese produced around Dolakha and Ramechhap district. It was developed as a cheese production center only about a decade later. The center which produced up to 18'000 kg cheese and 6'000 kg butter during a season is now down to only 4'000 kg of cheese and about 1'000 kg butter.

Sir, the farmers have started selling their milk to the private dairies. Being the government office, our rate is fixed, but the private dairies are flexible, and they always pay slightly more than our rate» Khadka explained.

The number of staff has also gone down significantly in the recent years. There were 17 people working at the factory in early nineties, which has gone down to only five. The insecurity and fluid political situation also had serious impact on the cheese production at the high hill dairies after 1996, when the Maoist insurgency began. Cherdung dairy became like a free source of food and relaxation for the Maoists moving on the trail.

«Whenever they came this way, they looted as much cheese as they could carry. They sometimes visited 50-60 times in a year for the free supply of cheese, and once they looted over 160 kg prepared cheese at one go» Khadka told sourly.

The Maoist's highhandedness is true for every cheese factory around, respective complaints have been received from many places.
REASONS FOR DECLINE Reason for decline may be cited as follows:

* The social acceptance of cheese in the Nepali society was slow. Nepali people had not tasted cheese before, so it took significant time for their taste buds to accept it. If the demand would have gone up as it did in the eighties already at the time of the Swiss management, more new technologies, innovation, and packaging could have taken place, thus paving the way for Nepali cheese to the international market. Despite the surge in local and international demand for yak cheese in the late nineties, the traditional management of DDC left the factories as they were left by Swiss managers.

* Nepal lacks a chowri policy. The chowri raising farmers always remained ignored and marginalised. The government has no chowri-targeted veterinary and other supports.

* When the alpine cheese factories were established, the national parks were not even conceived. After the government declared the national parks and deployed army to its protection in high hills, the chowri herders lost pastures and also the source of energy to run dairy plants.

* The government’s highhandedness in imposing VAT and other taxes on cheese producers also discouraged the farmers. In the name of taxes, the police and authorities harass cheese transporters at the check posts on the road to Kathmandu, the main market.

* Despite the yak cheese long-lasting quality, good taste and high standard, it remained a localised product without standardisation, branding, high-tech packaging and advertisement.

* After 1996 the political conflict also severely affected the industry. The rebels looted cheese factories dozens of times every year to fulfill the protein needs of their guerillas. The conflict also displaced the youth, creating serious crunch of manpower to work in these dairies.

* The lack of promotional differentiation between the high-quality alpine yak cheese and the cheaper lower-altitude cow and buffalo cheese results in a loss for the DDC, as the market took both products similarly.

NOT SO BLEAK Though the yak cheese production has recently gone down, the people living from this industry have done pretty well. There are many satisfied and cheerful faces. They have improved their economic standard, have paid visits to foreign countries, and are now raising the family with dignity and pride.

The pace with which cheese factories were established and surplus milk of the peasants was exchanged for some cash did change the socio-economic condition of the high hill people. The cash provided them an opportunity to invest in schooling of their kids, and improve their diet. Apart from these indirect benefits, the direct benefit is that almost all the manpower for all 200 private dairies being operated in Nepal at present came from the effort of Swiss government and Swiss experts.

Keshar Jirel is one of the cheerful faces. He was working at SATA as an office assistant. One fine day he was offered a job to become a cheese expert from his Swiss boss. He was sent to Switzerland for 4-month training. After coming back from Switzerland he worked at various cheese production centers at Rasuwa, Ramechhap and Dolakha. He takes pride in recounting that when he was the manager of Cherdung and Rasuwa, he set the record of highest cheese and butter production. Now he has taken retirement from cheese making and has started a ten-room Hotel Jirel Gabilia P. Ltd. He is also actively involved in politics and other social works. «Whatever I’m today is due to my association with Cheese factory and the Swiss people» he takes pride in explaining. «Like me, these factories have paved way for the prosperous future to many youths in Jiri. You go to any private and government cheese factory around the country and the people working in higher level or quality control are from Jiri. The Jiri Multipurpose Project and the cheese factories have changed the life of the people» he said.

Keshar Jirel thinks that Yak Cheese is potentially as important for Nepal as the Mount Everest and Lord Buddha. However, he thinks there has to be a new effort to resurrect the high-hill cheese factories. Otherwise chowri and yak cheese may get forgotten like many other products of Nepal.

INDISPENSABLE SWISS COOPERATION The Swiss cooperation has done much for Nepal’s dairies. Though Nepal still is a net importer of milk and milk products, it learnt to utilise its own milk due to Swiss support. The support in cheese production has been a milestone in the development of the rural economy in Nepal. Not only that, Swiss experts also taught people to consume cheese. Thanks to Swiss cooperation, Nepal now produces over 400’000 kg cheese annually, and still about 200’000 kg is in short supply as per the demand.

It is time for the Nepali government to receive expertise again to formulate chowri policies, to develop mechanisms to settle conflicts between the national parks and chowri herders for pastures, and for the sustainable use of forest products to run dairies.

Nepali people in Rasuwa, Dolakha and Ramechhap have not forgotten the favour done to them by white people known as Swiss. They would definitely rejoice a new cooperation for the intensification of the cheese production, a development which has been stuck somewhere in the middle.
Yangkyi Sherpa, the founder of Yak Carpet Industry, has a successful history as an entrepreneur in the field of Nepalese carpet industry. She, however, faces lots of problems in her daily life and business.

“I don't even sleep during the night; I am always thinking of how I can scale up the productivity of my factory,” said Yangkyi. Yangkyi said that the labour unions put up demands which the factory is unable to meet. More than four groups visit her firm for donations everyday. Political instability in the nation has also hampered her business.

As a descendent of Tibetan expatriates, she got pulled into the carpet business at the age of 18 after undergoing a vocational training conducted by the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA) in 1971. Besides carpet weaving, she also learnt typing and gained basic economic and managerial knowledge under SATA.

Yangkyi had no idea of running a carpet factory. She was just thinking of doing a small job in her own community to support her family. Her maternal uncle Dawa ran a carpet shop at Pulchok. Unfortunately, the only bread earner of her family died two months before she finished her training. The SATA director asked her whether she was interested in business or would go for a job while they met for dinner on the very day she got the certificate after the completion of the training. She told him that she would run the shop opened by her uncle as she had to earn bread for her family. Then she started running the shop.

Meanwhile, her husband, in partnership with a friend, opened a carpet factory named Trans-Himalayan Carpet Industry in the late 1970s. A Belgian approached her family for carpet export and agreed to contribute two trucks of wool to boost the business. But her family denied the offer, as they did not believe in the words of the foreigner. They rather took loans from Nepal-Indosuez Bank (now Nepal Investment Bank), Durbar-marg at a rate of 20 per cent interest. The factory generated employment for more than 200 people in the 1980s and the total turnover and export reached 1'500 square metres per month. Initially, they were just working to repay the debts. However, the business boomed for around 10 years till the late 1980s.

In 1987, her husband established a new carpet factory at a rented house in Dhobighat, Lalitpur, separating from his partner. Again, the factory was established with loans and the proceeds during the first five years went for repayment of the loans. As they introduced new colours and new design in the business, they earned adequately and bought 15 ropanis of land in Bhaisipati VDC of Lalitpur in 1995.

Now, Yangkyi runs her factory at her own house; and she is not in debt anymore. She employs 101 weavers and 22 staff. But her factory produces only about 100 square metres per month which hardly covers the firm's expenses. She says she is in business with the earnings from the past. The absence of a proper market for carpet export has had a negative impact on the overall growth. Her only Belgian buyer started importing from India as he found the carpet at a cheaper price there.

Tashi Tshering who set up Nepal Handloom Carpet Industry after attending SATA training has a different story to tell. He joined the management training organised by SATA when he was 18, studying at the intermediate level at Nepal Commerce Campus in 1972.
At the time he attended the training, the program was run by a Swiss - Peter Kuenzi - and the American peace core volunteer Dick Zavesky. They used to teach them basics in accounting, English and Nepali language as well as in administrative work. But the focus was on the carpet industry.

«We were 22 with seven girls. They organised training with the aim of giving jobs to the trainees in the refugee camps where the manpower was in demand.» After the training some trainees dispersed to different places while some started their business independently. Tashi Tiberin was appointed for Solukhumbu, but he did not go there because his family was reluctant to send him.

«I started a carpet industry independently with the support of my parental property. I invested around NPR 100’000 by selling gold and other valuables of my father and grandfather in 1976. Initially I provided jobs to more than 50 people and later the employees’ number went up to 150. Most of them were Nepalese women.»

Every year he exported carpets of NPR 30 million of worth when the industry was booming in the 1980s. In 2002, he completely stopped the production because so many obstacles surfaced in the business including increasing demands of the workers and bankruptcy of the old buyers in Germany and London. The rumour of child labour also affected the whole-sellers and the foreign buyers. He accepted that there was child labour in the initial stage (1970s) of the carpet industry in Nepal, which is no more the case. He said he wished to return to the business if he finds the situation favourable.

These tales of struggles and ordeals are not exclusive to Yangkyi and Tashi. They are quite common among many Tibetan refugees as well as Nepalese citizens who are involved in the carpet industry. Some have closed down their businesses while others are still struggling for survival amidst lots of problems ranging from political instability to market management. Now, the refugees are dispersed and reduced in numbers as they shifted their exile location to India, Europe and America. Most of them still living in Nepal have left carpet production and are now running other businesses.

**HISTORY OF THE NEPALESE CARPET INDUSTRY**

Carpet industry in Nepal started after the Tibetan refugees began fleeing their country following the Chinese invasion in Tibet in 1959. Around 90'000 Tibetan refugees left their home country and followed the religious as well as political Guru Dalai Lama into exile in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Like in other countries, Nepal provided asylum to the refugees and set up some camps and settlements in different parts of the country, and the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) provided humanitarian relief to them. SATA, under assistance of the Swiss Red Cross, continued assisting the refugees through various programmes that helped transform the major transit camps into settlements.

Tibetans brought their skills in carpet making along with them when they fled and started the business in Nepal to sustain their lives in exiles. SATA, noticing their expertise in carpet weaving, provided some vocational and management training related to carpet weaving and handicraft manufacturing to selected, interested, young and energetic refugees with the aim of sustaining their livelihood. Consequently, SATA under the name of SATA Handicraft Centres transformed the camps into colonies and established handicraft centre – Carpet industries were built up in different refugee settlements – Kathmandu (Jawalakhel), Pokhara (Hyangja) and Solu Kumbu (Chialsa).

The Swiss themselves exported the carpets. The first commercial exports were made to Switzerland and the United States of America. By 1981, tens of thousands of Nepalese were involved in the production and marketing of Tibetan carpets and the export figures went up to 100’000 square metres annually. Germany and the United Kingdom were the leading importers of the Nepalese carpet products.

Introduction of new designs, patterns and colours resulted in the production of demand-oriented and consumer-based products. In the next decade the export surged further and by the 90s’, the annual export volume reached millions of square metres. The carpet industry alone accounted for 65 per cent of the country’s total export. It was estimated that the carpet industry was providing employment to over 300’000 people. However, these indications are estimates and not based on verified data.

Yet, the boom soon turned into bust after the manufacturers failed to maintain the original Tibetan quality. Consequently, the export volume started decreasing from its peak in 1993 to 2.44 million square metres in 1997. The reasons were unhealthy competition, use of sub-standard raw materials and overproduction leading to Dutch auction in the name of exporting carpet. Like adding insult to injury, the issue of child labour came up with some NGOs and their network accusing the carpet industry of massively using child labour. Exporters and manufacturers could not confront the charge effectively, as there indeed was some child labour in the industry. As a result, many foreign importers and Nepalese carpet businessmen went bankrupt overnight. Many carpet factories were closed down.

Today there is an increased awareness of political instability to market management. In Jawalakhel Valley – 135 in Bhaktapur, 140 in Lalitpur and 250 in Kathmandu. Outside the Valley, there is one in Sallery (Solu Kumbu), 3 in He tardaha and 3 in Pokhara.

**JAWALAKHEL HANDICRAFT CENTRE**

Located at about a five minutes’ walking distance south from the «Swiss House» Ekanta Kunsa in Lalitpur you will find Jawalakhel Handicraft Centre - some 200 middle-aged women are busy weaving carpet with different designs and graphics. They are reluctant to respond to visitors, as if they had no concern with the outsiders.

In 1966, the Swiss Team named SATA Handicraft Centres founded four limited companies: the three Handicraft Centres in Jawalakhel, Hyangja and Chialsa and the Carpet Trading Company, a carpet export company. The Swiss gradually handed over the management of the handicraft centre to the refugees, and the carpet business turned commercial. Stalls and showrooms were opened by the private sector in Thamel and Indus Chowk of Kathmandu.

Today the Handicraft Centre itself is running the factory rather with a social focus than as a business, whereas the real business takes place outside in the private sector. SDC’s only remaining assistance is at the policy level, where it participates in the board of directors of refugee run carpet industries in Nepal.
THE SITUATION IN POKHARA

Tsering Yangzom, 51, the only master of Tashi Palkhiel Tibetan Handicraft Centre, located at nine kilometres distance from Lakeside – the tourist hotspot in Pokhara – has been serving as an instructor for the last 33 years. She now earns only NPR 3,700 and she has to support six children. She is in severe economic crisis as she has no alternatives. Many refugees have already left carpet weaving because of the downfall of the industry.

The camp in Hyangja was established in 1965/66 and initially around 600 refugees had been settled in the camp. Now the number has increased to 935. In Hyangja brown and white colour carpets were produced which was a specialty of Hyangja. The other places produced coloured carpets. In the beginning the refugees used to go to the Jawalakhel Handicraft Centre, Lalitpur, for vocational training under SATA on foot because there was no transportation facility. They went in groups and learnt carpet weaving, tailoring, and souvenir making. They used to spend more than six months in Kathmandu. The men became porters for tourists and the women started carpet weaving in their respective camps. They started carpet weaving in black and white, as no colour scheme was introduced in the industry in its initial stage in 1965.

The Handicraft centre provided employment to over 300 people during the 1970s/80s, but it declined when the private sector entered the business. Currently, only seven individuals are involved in carpet weaving and out of them only two are from the refugee community, according to Karma Legshey, chief of the Hyangja settlement.

However, in Pokhara the carpet business never gained a similar momentum like in the Kathmandu valley.

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF THE BUSINESS

These accounts give us an impression that the carpet industry in Nepal reached its peak in the mid 90ies, but went downhill since then. However, though for a smaller number of entrepreneurs and weavers, carpet weaving is still a business.

Sulo Shrestha Shah, an entrepreneur from the Nepalese community, has a successful story in the carpet industry. She entered the carpet business with her German friend Linda setting up Formation Carpet in 1991. Linda managed marketing and designing and returned home after four years teaching Sulo the «know how». She exported her products to Germany and Switzerland. She also got a chance to visit the United States in 1993 through Carpet Association Nepal and came into contact with the American Professor and artist John Kurtz. As her previous German buyer Rosher Comp went bankrupt, Sulo and John conducted a research about the market for carpets in America. Sulos export now totally depends on the American market. While there is low export to European countries, export to America has increased in the recent days. She has around 210 staff including 175 weavers. She produces 300 square metres per month and the price of the carpet per square metre stands at 68-150 US$.

She also agreed that the entire history of the Nepalese carpet industry starts with Tibetan refugees and their exile to Nepal, along with Swiss support. Like Yangkyi, she agreed that different trade unions are putting pressure on the factory owners with demands beyond the limits of the entrepreneurs. However, she holds that the Nepalese carpet industry can compete with the Indian and Chinese in terms of quality, but the government should control the unnecessary intervention in the factory. She notes that political stability in the country is a crucial factor to increase the business.

THE REASONS BEHIND THE SLUMP OF THE NEPALESE CARPET BUSINESS

- The deterioration in quality with the increase in quantity
- Overproduction without considering the market and the consequent over-stocking
- Unfair competition
- Bankruptcy of the foreign importers like German businessmen
- Replacement of the whole-sellers by retailers
- NGO hue and cry of child labour in the Nepalese carpet industry
- Lack of market research
- Lack of proper exposure and advertising policy for promoting the carpet business through international fairs
- Lack of proper laws to regulate the carpet industry according to the WTO standards
- Unfair trade practices since the late 1980s (stagnant wages for the workers for decades, violation of basic human rights and minimum ILO standards)
- Lack of commitment by the industrialists towards social as well as environmental issues which were and are vital to prevent disasters
- Unnecessary demands of labour unions
All the male participants (fifteen) of the Management training organised by SATA for the young Tibetans in early 1960s are engaged in their own carpet business and are in the list of leading carpet manufacturers / exporters from Nepal. Out of seven females, 5 became house-wives of carpet traders contributing their vital role in their family business from behind the scene. Ms Yangkyi Sherpa is the only women who handles the business independently and successfully all by herself. Her company is also among the leading manufacturers and exporters of the country.

From Label STEP point of view, the demands put forward by the labour unions are not unnecessary; few of the points mentioned in the demands are not feasible at the present economic situation of the country.
THE «SWISSNESS» IN SWISS-NEPAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES
THE «SwISSNESS» IN SWISS-NEPAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES
HOW DID SWISS EXPERTS CONVEY SWISS BASIC VALUES?
Swiss development cooperation, especially in its initial period, was strongly influenced by the personalities of Swiss expatriates and experts. The present paper explores the philosophies, the spirit, the beliefs and ideas that guided the main actors in approaching Swiss cooperation in the field. What were the values and attitudes that informed their activities? What were their convictions and implicit theories? What were their assumptions about systemic effects? Which Swiss models influenced and inspired them? Projects and activities always imply certain preconceptions of the world, how it works, and how development can be initiated and promoted. In this article, the programmes of Swiss-Nepali development cooperation in the domain of vocational training are analysed.

Some values and attitudes are documented orally or in writing, others can be reconstructed by retrospectively analysing the methods, the principles, and the project designs. Specific Swiss elements in the behaviour of the Swiss workers on the ground gave the Swiss input a particular character, especially in the area of vocational training. Without such shared attitudes, cooperation among the Swiss would have been difficult. The basic values, largely implicit, showed the individual expatriates how their personal behaviour could contribute to achieving the overall objectives of Swiss development cooperation in Nepal. Moreover, this common base made it possible to recruit suitable cooperators in each domain. Internally, such a shared culture provided the required cohesion, and externally, it contributed to the Swiss image. The Nepalese clearly perceived this common Swiss denominator. The result was the formation of a strong image of Switzerland and the Swiss among the Nepali partners.

**IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS CHEESE…**

Initially, the Swiss project activities in the domain of vocational training were just a side-product of the Swiss-Nepali development cooperation programmes existing at the time. First trainings occurred because skilled workers were needed to implement these projects. The first cheese was manufactured by a Swiss, but with a clear aim to introduce cheese production and the craft of cheese-making in Nepal. This could only be accomplished by training local people. It is exciting to hear the accounts of these first pioneers and to learn what it meant in the early 50ies to leave Switzerland and work as expatriate in an almost completely undeveloped region. How did they approach the task? What was to be done, and what was possible at all?

By 1952, the ideas and proposals of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team developed in 1950/51 had already been buried in lengthy discussions that took place in Bern and at the ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology). An organisation for Swiss development cooperation did not even exist on paper when Werner Schulthess took up his assignment for the FAO and travelled to Nepal.

«I was told by Emil Rauch – a member of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team – that there was an excess of milk production in the Langtang and other high-altitude regions. The Sherpas who lived and produced at these altitudes held herds of chowris, a crossbreed between yaks and Tibetan cows. The chowris grazed in summer on the high pastures above the timberline and produced quantities of milk that could not be consumed locally. They mainly produced butter and the so-called ghee (melted butter) which they exported to Tibet across the open border in the mountains. I went to the Langtang and indeed, milk was produced there in excess. It was a natural idea to turn this milk into matured cheese, a product that was durable and could be transported to the cities for consumption.»

Was chowri milk suitable for cheese-making? Would the cultures imported from Switzerland work as expected? Would the farmers produce sufficient milk, and would they sell it? How would the cheese taste? There were lots of open questions and only one way to find answers: it had to be tried out!

«It was a chain of coincidences. Shortly before departing to Nepal, I visited my former colleagues at the Dairy Technology Laboratory of the ETH Zurich and saw that they were experimenting with starter cultures in order to make them durable via a freeze-drying process. Whether the method would actually work was not yet known. I decided to take a few samples with me to Nepal in try to make cheese with them in a tropical country.

With my own money, I purchased a cheese vat and the required equipment (cheese press, hand tools) which was made for me by an artisan in Patan. A hand-separator was furnished by the Agriculture Department. Upon my arrival in the Langtang, a high valley situated on the border to Tibet at an altitude above 3500 m, I bought milk – again with my own money – and started my trials to manufacture matured cheese. By the summer of 53, we were already producing more than a ton of cheese that met with a huge demand. This initial success had decisive consequences!»

This story about the beginning of the cheese project in Nepal, which still counts as a success of Swiss development cooperation, illustrates some typical characteristics of the early stages
HOW DID SWISS EXPERTS CONVEY SWISS BASIC VALUES?

of Swiss development aid. It is emblematic of the way development was understood and promoted:

* Actions speak louder than words: The beginnings of Swiss development cooperation are characterized by pioneer work! Without the initiative and energy of these first «experts», without their willingness to take risks, their idealism, their extraordinary capabilities and intuition, these aid programmes would not have been possible. Certainly, the simple wish to help people also played a role, but what made the difference was their entrepreneurial spirit, their interest in what was technically feasible, and the resolve to succeed. The first Swiss in the Himalaya were ready to sustain the hardships involved in living in these remote areas and did not shy away from personal risks. But curiosity and a spirit of moving and shaking also played a strong role in their motivation: «We were obsessed with our task,» as W. Schulthess summarizes this early period.

* Modernization as the basic idea: In practice, development cooperation means to transfer know-how acquired in the West to the developing countries. Western scientific knowledge and technical expertise are used to stimulate the economy and to initiate a process of technical and economic development. The cheese project in the Himalaya illustrates in an exemplary way how to implement the famous Point Four of President Truman’s inauguration speech of 1949: «For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people.» This idea was also shared by the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team in its final report: «We know newer methods that were developed and implemented in the Western world and made it possible to change and improve living conditions. We believe that some of these experiences and insights are transferable.» The cheese project contains all the elements mentioned in this report as promoters of development in poor countries: the expertise of a Western specialist, i.e. a dairy technologist; the idea of a new product, in this case matured, storable and transportable cheese; the modern tools and equipment (the local vessels used for milk and milking were unsuitable and caused quick fermentation, which is why the farmers had to be provided with electro-plated containers) and — last but not least — the freeze-dried starter cultures that were a high-tech product just developed by the ETH laboratory.

* Project success means income and profit: It was clear to everyone that success had to mean economic benefit, and that the benefit had to accrue immediately rather than after 5 to 25 years of promotion. In view of current development cooperation, such a strict orientation toward effectiveness had a revolutionary touch. Other reports also indicate that the planning horizon in the early period of Swiss development cooperation was very short. The general view was that it would take only a few years to start or boost development on the basis of a few crucial impulses.

* Plausibility of the approach: Development was defined in terms of economic value, i.e. economic improvement for a target group. In the cheese project, this direct chain of effects was particularly obvious. The farmers earn money with the milk they produce. With this income, they can purchase additional animals and produce more milk. This in turn boosts the business of the breeders. The helpers in the dairies are paid workers, which is unusual in these regions. The transport provides a source of income for the porters. The sales revenue creates jobs and income for many people. This logical chain of effects has done much to popularise the idea of development cooperation in Switzerland, and the slide shows presented by W. Schulthess contributed much to convince many potential members and donors of the necessity to establish the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA).

To all involved parties, the Swiss engagement in the domain of dairy farming and especially cheese production seemed, and still seems, a natural and logical decision. Nepal is a mountainous country that has many similarities with the Swiss alpine areas and it has always been clear that activities should be taken up in a domain where there was already a lot of experience. Moreover, the early success vindicated the pioneers: «The project showed that money could be made with cheese,» says W. Schulthess. It also showed that conclusions by analogy could replace theory. After all, no well-established theory was available at the time. The beginnings of Swiss development cooperation were marked by a pragmatism extensively lived by the pioneers and activists. «We had lots of debates in our circle of Swiss experts, but we had no fundamental theory of development.» This sums up the experience of the experts involved at the time. The projects were not the result of planning processes but of concrete circumstances. An existing project generated a new
DEVELOPMENT BY TRANSFER OF KNOW-HOW VIA VOCATIONAL TRAINING

In 1955, SATA was founded and assumed the responsibility for Swiss development cooperation in Nepal. Even before it had its own funds, cheesemaker Sepp Dubach was hired and sent to Nepal. He worked in cheese production and especially in the training of local dairy workers. Already during his first home leave in 1958, S. Dubach took his Nepali apprentice Gothala Bahadur Thamang, nicknamed Sahila, with him to Switzerland for further training in the cheese factory of S. Dubach’s father in Neuenkirch in the canton of Luzern. Three other Nepalis went to India for undergo training. This sparked the organised vocational training of locals in Swiss-Nepali development cooperation. The construction and operation of a milk-collecting station and additional cheese factories called for more trained cheesemakers, and already in 1957 vocational training became a key activity within the cheese project.

A somewhat similar yet different story is the commercial-administrative training of Tibetan refugees with the aim to professionalise the carpet business and to lay the carpet trade entirely into the hands of the refugees. When Switzerland was entrusted by the ICRC with the responsibility for the Tibetan refugee camps in Nepal in 1963, the question arose how these refugees could economically survive by their own resources. Integration into the Nepali society and economy was out of the question because the Nepali government did not recognise the refugees and limited itself to providing space for the camps. Already in 1960, the wife of W. Schultess had established a small handicraft centre for Tibetans. The idea was to employ refugees in the manufacture of carpets. The Tibetans were familiar with carpet weaving as a traditional craft and already had the know-how. Under the guidance of the Swiss staff, the carpet weaving centre was expanded and a world-wide marketing system was developed. Astonishingly, at least from a current point of view, the aim was from the beginning to succeed in the global carpet market. Consequently, no separate distribution channels via humanitarian and clerical organisations were established. Access to the global carpet trade was sought through Swiss business partners. The project worked well and led to the second big success story of Swiss development cooperation in Nepal. Up into the 90s, the carpet industry flourished and employed not only Tibetan refugees but also thousands of Nepalis. Organised training was conducted repeatedly. A first course was already organised and conducted by Swiss workers in 1964. It was a kind of extra-occupational commercial training for already employed personnel. Fifty-four so-called apprentices were taught in the fields of organisation, human resources, administration, strategies and planning, calculation and English, bookkeeping, marketing, technical production issues and law. There were neither final exams nor certificates, but this seemed unnecessary because the participants were hired by the Tibetan Carpet Trading Company or one of the Handicrafts Centres anyway.

The beginning of the mechanical workshop and the training of apprentices is a well-known story. To meet the growing demand of the projects and programmes for equipment and customized products, the metal workshop at the «Swiss House» Ekanta Kuna in Kathmandu was expanded and became one of the best local workshops. Orders were plentiful, and already in 1957 a workshop manager from Switzerland had to be employed in order to cope with the large inflow of orders. This also paved the way for becoming a training organisation.

The three projects described above necessarily led to the development of vocational training schemes. By the mid-60s, vocational training had been introduced in all projects. This occurred despite the absence of professional instructors or trainers in the Swiss team. Cheese-making was taught by the Swiss cheesemakers, and in 1962, the mountain cheese factories already counted a total of over 16 apprentices.

The Tibetan campaign had its own training programme which was independent of the other Swiss programmes, and from 1957 onward, the workshop at Ekanta Kuna employed a manager and several local apprentices. Still, it was not intended primarily as a training operation but rather as a service organisation for all purposes, especially for the other Swiss programmes.
HOW DID SWISS EXPERTS CONVEY SWISS BASIC VALUES?
In all of these cases, vocational training was not formalised, i.e. there were no recognised curricula, no exams, and no certificates. In the domain of handicraft, training was essentially a hands-on activity, and commercial training was directly associated with the actual work because all trainees were active in carpet production and trading. The target group was limited to project participants and other persons directly involved in the project.

In this phase, the general assumption was that the Swiss experts were capable of transferring their knowledge and abilities to the locals. Whether this was in the form of learning-by-doing in the manufactory or workshop or in the form of systematic in-class training (as in the commercial education for staff of the Tibetan Carpet Trading Company): the Swiss experts were responsible for the training and had to plan and conduct it themselves. During this phase, the self-image of Swiss development cooperation was determined by a number of firm beliefs:

* We are a nation of sons (and daughters) of Pestalozzi, every Swiss is a natural-born teacher and trainer, and teaching is our natural ability. The Swiss were convinced that any trained worker was capable of teaching apprentices and unskilled workers, not only in their own country but also under difficult circumstances, where the language was foreign and the cultural context completely different. Special preparation for this task was deemed unnecessary.

* Vocational education is a key factor for development: The Swiss firmly believed that vocational training was an essential prerequisite for modern business and thus for economic success in general. They knew and appreciated the traditionally high level of the local artisans but were quite certain that economic development could only be promoted through modern professional knowledge and skills.

* Handicraft is noble. Professionally executed handicraft and manual work is held in very high esteem and confers high prestige. The Swiss took this opinion to Nepal where it conflicted with the local attitude, according to which good and particularly long training was just a springboard to get into jobs that require no physical work. In Nepal, manual work is not highly valued, but the Swiss seemed to ignore this — quite to the contrary: they felt that their own appreciation of professional manual work ought to be their key message to the Nepalis!

* Quality above quantity: For the development of the country, high-quality and sound craftsmanship is necessary. Based on this belief, the Swiss viewed training as a relatively long-term endeavour, similar to the Swiss system with its three- to four-year apprenticeships. The Swiss were aware that only a small number of Nepalis could be trained, and their aim was to provide this small number with a very high quality of training. This was predicated on the belief that Switzerland’s success depended not only on the high level, but also on the long duration of vocational training.

* Trust in the capabilities of the Nepalis (and Tibetans): The Swiss were always convinced that the locals were capable of learning the «art» of a profession or a trade or acquiring it from good instructors. There may be a few barriers — such as the exclusion of certain castes from some types of work — but on the whole, the locals would face no obstacles, and most of all, there was simply no other way to bring Nepal onto the path of economic development.

On the basis of these convictions, the Swiss firmly believed that measures to promote vocational training constituted a crucial input. Switzerland with its excellent system of vocational training automatically had the right people and prerequisites for this purpose: this was part of the ideological basis of the Swiss development aid workers.
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION BECOMES THE FOCUS OF THE PROJECTS

With the separation of the Mechanical Training Centre (MTC) as a special unit from the Balaju Yantra Shala (BYS) as a production unit in 1962, vocational training acquired a new status within the Swiss development aid programme in Nepal: it was no longer a complementary element of the programme but became its actual focus. This is also confirmed by the message of the Federal Council in 1961: «(L’aide) pourra notamment prendre la forme d’envoi d’experts, de création ou de participation à la création d’écoles ou d’ateliers d’apprentissage (…)».

And three years later: «Swiss technical aid is not limited to training, but training is its core element. Whenever possible, pure education should be associated with practical training. In development aid projects, where Swiss people work side by side with locals, such practical training is particularly fruitful.»

In the planning and execution of training and education projects, new concepts were needed and different goals had to be pursued. Questions arose that had previously played no role in vocational training:

* The question of educational content: Which professions should be focused upon? Should specialised professionals be trained, as in the West, or should basic curricula with a broad spectrum be introduced?
* The question of educational level: Should training encompass a full course similar to the scope of the three-year apprenticeship in Switzerland, or should lower-level training be offered that was shorter in time and perhaps more specialised, e.g. limited to welding or mechanical skills?
* The question of beneficiaries and target groups: Who should be trained or benefit from such vocational training? Should it be limited to school graduates with a certificate, or should early school leavers also be included? From which social strata or castes should the trainees be recruited? Does it make sense to train apprentices who belong to a higher caste and have no inclination to ever perform manual work at all?

In the dairy development project and in vocational training within the framework of the Tibet campaign, the answers to these questions were more or less obvious. In the development and operation of the MTC and the Jiri Technical School (JTS), however, it was necessary to select contents and job profiles, to determine the duration of the training, and to select applicants. In other words, criteria for enrolment had to be established.

In the development of institutions for vocational training, the Swiss could draw on experience gained in India. The Nettur Technical Training Centre in Kerala, South India, had already begun with the training of apprentices some years earlier: «On 24 November 1959, 19 candidates started their training. Four did not pass the trial period. For the young people who were not used to manual work, the training was hard. Working hours were also unusual. Although schools and offices traditionally never opened before nine or even ten o’clock, work started at half past seven in order to get the trainees used to industrial working conditions.»

The Swiss system played a large role in the planning process: «The philosophy of dual training determined the planning of the project, but in reality, schools were instituted.» The MTC and the JTS were basically planned on the model of Swiss apprenticeship workshops. Because these play an important role in the Swiss mechanical and watch industries, it was assumed that the development of a modern industry was possible through such training centres. This apparently overlooked the fact that apprenticeship workshops are an exception rather than the rule in the Swiss professional education system. The number of apprentices trained in apprenticeship workshops has been, and still is, relatively small compared to the total number of apprentices.

In the early period, the Swiss expatriates acted as trainers and teachers. But as in most projects of this kind, the idea was that local people would gradually take over. Training of the trainers was therefore very important. But while the transition to Nepalese trainers was initiated and implemented step by step, the transfer of the entire school to the state of Nepal met with considerable difficulties. The Nepalese state was for a long time not ready to integrate the schools developed and equipped by the Swiss into its regular system and to finance their operation with state funds.
In this phase, the Swiss engagement was based on the following values, ideas, and convictions:

* Vocational training occurs primarily through practical work under expert guidance and instruction. Acquisition of skills predominantly involves the training of manual abilities, i.e. the skilful handling of materials, tools, and machinery. The Swiss dual-apprenticeship system served as a model for the courses in Nepal as far as the Swiss in Nepal placed great emphasis on practical work.

* Vocational training is also training for life: Discipline, tidiness, punctuality etc. are key values that need to be imparted and that are indispensable. One cannot become a professional worker without assimilating and internalising these values and attitudes. The attitude of the Swiss projects is that developing countries, similar to the industrial countries, need to go through a phase where they build up a workforce characterised by such qualities.

* Vocational training is also general education: Professional training programmes not only confer specific vocational knowledge and skills but also have a more general educational value and thus contribute to the general development of a society. «We support programmes that help people become more independent and self-reliant. (….) Vocational training promotes rational thinking. Professionals are important partners, advisors, and information mediators.»

* Swiss schools as objects of demonstration: In view of the limited effect of Swiss efforts and the very small number of newly built and supported schools, it was clear that the Swiss projects could have only a small impact. However, all our witnesses confirmed that the projects of Swiss development cooperation had the purpose to demonstrate to the Nepalese authorities how to tackle and solve problems. Good schools were supposed to yield excellent results in order to demonstrate in an exemplary manner how good professional training could be achieved. The underlying idea was that the Swiss projects would act as ground-breakers and that the Nepalese state would draw lessons and models for the development of its own regular system from these pilot projects. This deliberate demo effect was not limited to the projects in the domain of vocational training but extended to the other Swiss projects as well. A multiplication effect was always desired, and a broader impact was expected from Nepalese imitation.

* «We bring technology, but we are humanitarian,» and in contrast with other foreigners, do not pursue any commercial objectives. The gain for Switzerland is an immaterial one. This mixture of non-commercial but political and humanitarian interests was summarized by M. Bramer: The Swiss were «motivated by a combination of enlightened self-interest and humanitarian impulses.»

But the extent to which the Swiss engagement was really apolitical, «neutral» and altruistic is still a controversial question.

**SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEPALI VET SYSTEM**

When exactly a policy dialogue was initiated is still unclear. Individual actors maintain that they already conducted regular talks with the higher echelons in the 1970ies that in effect amounted to a policy dialogue. In the same phase, evidence shows that Swiss development cooperation became more professional and factual. Swiss experts arrived in Nepal who approached the problems systematically (market studies, tracer studies, PCM, evaluations) and with expertise. Officially, the Swiss began in the 80ies to discuss and plan the development of a national VET system with the Nepalese partners. Towards the end of the 80ies, the development of a national vocational education system was initiated, and in 1989, the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) was founded. Already in November 1989, Switzerland joined the international project to establish this institution and undersigned an agreement between the Government of Nepal, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the OPEC Fund. The Swiss part consisted mainly in providing consulting services, fellowships and recurrent financing. Project components comprised: CTEVT institutional development, establishment of four new schools, upgrading of Lahan Technical School, skill testing development. Subsequently, Swiss development cooperation focused its support at system level on the training of vocational school teachers and instructors by founding and developing the Training Institute for Technical Instructions (TITI). Swiss experts were particularly involved in the planning and development of the TITI. Werner Lustenberger, former director of the Swiss Federal Institute for Professional Education, provided the crucial study that basically called for the establishment of an institution to train vocational teachers based on the Swiss model. Implementation of the project was entrusted to Swisscontact. With M. Jäger, a trained vocational teacher in the role of responsible project manager, the line of Swiss expatriates with a specifically Swiss background was continued. However, the influence of staff members from the Anglo-Saxon world with its own vocational education culture and the interaction with the specifically Nepalese background gradually removed the TITI from becoming a Nepalese Federal Institute for Professional Education. Today, it is an institution with its own characteristics that differs in key aspects from the Swiss model.

The further development of projects in the 90s, the re-shuffle of the portfolio under the influence of the millennium debate on poverty alleviation and of the escalating conflict, are based on a different rationale. Vocational training programmes still supported by Switzerland (low-skills trainings, short-term courses, scholarships, etc.) are implemented by local organisations. Swiss experts no longer play leading roles in these programmes. The predominant function of Swiss cooperation in vocational education and training consists in funding. The extent to which Swiss ideas about vocational training or other Swiss characteristics still shape the implementation of these projects remains open.
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is also interesting to hear the impressions left by the Swiss on the Nepalese side. The Swiss were clearly perceived as people with firm convictions: «The Swiss truly believe in their own perspective and do not like to see at things from another perspective, thus, the harsh reality of Nepali labour market was not recognised by the Swiss,» say Aslesha and Tanka Nath Sharma. The attitude of the Swiss often forced their partners to acquiesce: «The Swiss tried to impose their own system. Lack of flexibility on the Swiss side forced the Nepali side to accommodate themselves.»

However, despite such certainly justified criticism regarding the Swiss and their way of working, the Nepalese partners tend to see the Swiss experts in a rather positive way. «Besides, the Swiss are very nice people, open, friendly and very sincere.» «They are hardworking and good managers,» says Agni Prashad Kafle, former director of the TITI. «We Nepali felt the will to help low level people and deprived groups.»

«They did a good job! The Swiss programmes were probably the best in VET sector» is the general view. «What the Swiss offered was exactly what we had to learn!» remembers Suresh Raj Sharma, the first secretary of the CTEVT.

In detail, the qualities of the Swiss experts that correspond to the Swiss self-perception in general were not overlooked by the Nepali side: «The Swiss are very practical and look into things very precisely and observe all details,» says Agni Prashad Kafle. And Hari Pradhan, who used to work with CTEVT for over 15 years, opines: «The Swiss understood the problem and were able to react in a proper way.» The opinion of Lekh Nath Belbase, chairman of the TITI managing board, is also widely shared: «Switzerland is a partner whom you can trust.» In the view of many Nepalis, if things often did not turn out the way they were planned, it was not the fault of the Swiss but of the circumstances and of the Nepalis themselves. «The Swiss had goodwill and best experience. The input given by the Swiss was good, even if it was not used properly,» says Suresh Raj Sharma.

Against this backdrop, the Nepalis also regret that the Swiss did not engage more at the system level and in the policy dialogue. The opinion of Suresh Raj Sharma is clear: «The Swiss should have insisted on a good VET policy.» Nevertheless, the image of Switzerland is still intact, and the competence of the Swiss experts is well recognised in Nepal. The Nepalis disapprove of the Swiss withdrawal from their support for the national vocational education system, and they feel that Switzerland thus misses an opportunity to exert influence at the system level and on the policy dialogue.

Despite these criticisms, the Swiss experts and the support from Switzerland left an excellent impression on the Nepali side and are remembered with fondness. As Hari Pradhan told the author: «SDC made landmarks but should go ahead!»
MOTIVES, RATIONALES, IODEOLoGICAL ROOTS OF SWISS DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The question of the motives and rationales of Swiss international development cooperation has been extensively researched. A number of studies focus on this topic in the description of the origins of Swiss development cooperation:

* Already in 1966, Walter Renschler analysed in detail the various motives of development cooperation. In his study on the «philosophical basis» of Swiss development cooperation, he distinguishes political, religious, Christian ethical and Christian missionary as well as commercial and charitable motives.
* Jacques-Simon Eggly investigated press reports detailing the various arguments and motives for the Swiss engagement in the Third World.
* In a doctoral thesis, Albert Matzinger analysed the beginnings of Swiss international development cooperation and the origins of the private and governmental development cooperation agencies.
* Thomas Mückli investigated the origins of the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (SATA) which later became Helvetas. His particular focus is on the sometimes problematic interplay between peace activists and international civil service workers, adherents of the Quaker movement, socialists and social democrats, anti-communists, and representatives of Swiss business in the foundation of the first non-clerical, politically neutral assistance organisation.
* Sara Elmer studied the first steps in Nepal and shows in an impressive way how the most diverse interests and conceptions converged in this first bilateral programme that was decisive for the start of Swiss development cooperation.
* Cooperativism: Before the state becomes active, civil society must take the initiative and prepare the ground for a new field of activity of governmental agencies. In Switzerland, governmental development cooperation began only with the establishment of the Service for Technical Cooperation (1960) and the appointment of a Federal Council delegate for technical cooperation in 1961. Thus, for an entire decade, the planning and implementation of a coordinated, government-financed development cooperation was in the hands of private organisations.
* Political neutrality: Groups and personalities of various political persuasions become active together in a pragmatic way, leave their particular political interests aside, overcome their prejudices, and put themselves in the service of a larger, national aspiration: a sustainable national compromise is formed that actually works in practice!
* Pragmatic development on the basis of a common denominator. The idea of altruistic technical assistance in the developing countries was something that could be supported by all groups. This common goal required no fundamental theory but led to two guiding principles that all participants could agree upon: all development projects had to be based on sound craftsmanship, and they had to be conducted in friendship.
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There are several rationales for this approach:

* It is a long way from the debating circles in church institutions, associations, the ETH and the federal offices to the individual experts in the field, e.g. in the high valleys of the Himalayas. On this long way — until 10 years ago without Internet and E-mail — much is lost, much is reinterpreted, and much is reconstructed on the basis of personal opinion and «adapted» to individual needs. In the case of international cooperation, full accord between theory and actual practice in the field is for the most part an exception. A look at the realities and the actual processes on site may therefore tell us more about the motivations and the self-conception of Swiss development cooperation than an analysis of the debates and controversies about the question of development cooperation.
* Another argument in favour of an «output-based» approach toward the analysis of the philosophical and conceptual bases of project work in development cooperation is the following: The Nepalis have never participated in the debates in Switzerland or the internal discussions within the organisations, but they have lived with the projects and seen what the Swiss were doing and how they were doing it. From their perspective, they can only assess Swiss development cooperation and its local input on the basis of the activities of the Swiss expatriates, the operations and results of the Swiss projects. For this reason, the seven articles written by Nepali journalists about the Swiss-Nepali vocational training projects are a key element of the present publication.
* It is also likely that the actual practice of development cooperation is, on the whole, rather resistant to the ramifications of the debate about correct theories of development and about the most promising approaches to international cooperation. D. Speich therefore prefers to speak of a development culture that has resulted from the programmes and projects in the field. In his study, Speich attempts to investigate and outline the evolution of this kind of development culture that has arisen from the actual work in international cooperation. The present paper pursues the same goal, albeit in a much reduced form.

«DON’T LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY, WATCH WHAT I DO!»

Contrary to the studies mentioned above, the present paper applies a different method. It does not analyse what the first actors in Swiss development cooperation have said and written as politicians, visionaries, or founding fathers, and what was then laid down in preambles, decisions, thesis documents, and guidelines. Rather, it takes a look at what actually happened on the ground, at the activities developed and implemented on site. It builds on these observations and on oral or written accounts by the Swiss experts who acted at the time. On this basis, it reviews the ideas, the implicit or explicit assumptions and approaches in order to reconstruct the Swiss projects and undertakings in the domain of vocational training as they were initiated and implemented in practice, i.e. on the ground.
How did Swiss experts convey Swiss basic values?

01] Custer et al. 1951.
02] Interview with Werner Schulthess, March 2007.
03] «When at Zurich, (...) I had managed to obtain from a research laboratory some freeze-dried or lyophilized mixed starter cultures of thermophilic lactobacilli to meet my potential requirements. At that time lyophilisation of fluid cultures represented the latest advancement in the field of practical applications of this important new tool.» In: Schulthess 1996: 2.
04] ibid.
05] In her study on the origins of the concept of Swiss development cooperation in Nepal, Sara Elmer concludes: «Bei den Entwicklungshelfern im Feld war jedoch ein gewisser Idealismus zur Motivierung unerläslich, egal ob sie beim Bund oder einer privaten Organisation angestellt waren.» In: Elmer 2006: 144.
06] Point Four was presented by US President Truman on 20 January 1949 in his inauguration address: «For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people (...) I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development. Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens. We invite other countries to pool their technological resources in this undertaking. Their contributions will be warmly welcomed.» This should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies whenever practicable. It must be a worldwide effort for the achievement of peace, plenty, and freedom.» http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm (3.9.2007).
08] The same applies to the Tibetan project of the early 60ties: immediate commercial success was an important objective: «Es gab uns ein tolles Gefühl, wenn wir sahen, wie das Geschäft lief. Ich fühlte mich als Manager, nicht als Entwicklungshelfer (aid assistant) oder humanitärer Helfer.» Interview with Peter Künzi, January 2007.
09] Quick initial success was also an element in the first guide lines on project work by the SHAG published in 1961. «Die Projekte müssen der nepalischen Bevölkerung sofortige Hilfe bringen (...)». In: Elmer 2006: 92.
10] See also Elmer 2006: 90.
16] «Manager Training for the Handicrafts Centers. Goals of training: (a) to transfer the accumulated knowledge of the Swiss delegation leaders to the future managers in a very practical way, (b) improvement of the general education, (c) learn to take decisions, (d) improve the contact between the future managers and the Swiss experts to assure future collaboration. (...) Method and tools: (a) quite free form of education, (b) use of blackboard and practical documents, (c) working on daily business: orientation very much on the daily needs and just very few theory.» In: SATA Handicraft Centers: Programm für Manager-Ausbildungskurs im Handicraft Center Kathmandu (Swiss Federal Archives, E 2005, t.511.011, vol. 120).
19] «The Swiss Nepal Forward Team also assumed that the Swiss had a relative advantage with respect to development in mountain regions: «Die alpinen Verhältnisse sind uns bekannt. Wir besitzen im Gebirge Kenntnisse, die uns niemand streitig machen kann.» In: Custer et al. 1951: chapter 5, p.1.
21] «Manager Training for the Handicrafts Centers. Goals of training: (a) to transfer the accumulated knowledge of the Swiss delegation leaders to the future managers in a very practical way, (b) improvement of the general education, (c) learn to take decisions, (d) improve the contact between the future managers and the Swiss experts to assure future collaboration. (...) Method and tools: (a) quite free form of education, (b) use of blackboard and practical documents, (c) working on daily business: orientation very much on the daily needs and just very few theory.» In: SATA Handicraft Centers: Programm für Manager-Ausbildungskurs im Handicraft Center Kathmandu (Swiss Federal Archives, E 2005, t.511.011, vol. 120).
22] «Cheese making is a fine art and requires a balance of skill and technology, theory and appropriate business practice. If those factors are combined a great variety of cheeses can be made from the simplest to the most sophisticated – a product which can offer so many surprises and delights.» Dubach 1992: 32.
27] «Manager Training for the Handicrafts Centers. Goals of training: (a) to transfer the accumulated knowledge of the Swiss delegation leaders to the future managers in a very practical way, (b) improvement of the general education, (c) learn to take decisions, (d) improve the contact between the future managers and the Swiss experts to assure future collaboration. (...) Method and tools: (a) quite free form of education, (b) use of blackboard and practical documents, (c) working on daily business: orientation very much on the daily needs and just very few theory.» In: SATA Handicraft Centers: Programm für Manager-Ausbildungskurs im Handicraft Center Kathmandu (Swiss Federal Archives, E 2005, t.511.011, vol. 120).
künftigen Facharbeiters und Staatsbürgers fördern.»

Lustenberger 1988: 27 et seq.

34) Alfred Frischknecht: 65 et seq.

35) On the demo effect of JTS, see also Elmer 2006: 126.

36) «Musterprojekte, die, wie das landwirtschaftliche Zentrum in Jiri, auch den Regierungsbürozen und den Lokalleuten zeigen können, was möglich ist (…)» In: Wilhelm 1961: 98.


38) Tanka Nath Sharma, former principal of JTS and later staff of CTEVT, and Aslesha Sharma, former trainer at TITI, in an interview in March 2007.

39) Hari Pradhan expressed himself even more pointedly: «SDC should have come in in a more aggressive manner.» He is convinced that «SDC has the power to influence at ministry level.»

40) Hari Pradhan: «SDC is missing an opportunity for policy dialogue and influencing government agencies and structure.»

41) «Die genannten Leitlinien der Aussenpolitik, die auch in der Entwicklungshilfe wegweisend waren, blieben allerdings oft nur Theorie oder Wunschvorstellung und gelangen im «Feld» nicht immer zur Anwendung.»


42) Speich 2006.

53) Rolf Wilhelm, cited in Möckli 2004: 25

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55) Speich 2006.
BACKGROUND The Balaju Industrial District (BID) is located near the north-west rim of Kathmandu valley, just below the verdant hills of Nepalese Royal Family's private forest and summer resort. A popular water park and garden complex is close by. The road to Rasuwa and Nuwakot up north from the capital city passes by the main gate of the industrial estate. The Ring Road, the main artery of the valley, is less than half-a-kilometre away. The accessible but serene location of BID would theoretically be more suitable for research, education and training than for production. Despite the presence of some successful medium and small-scale industries – a modern bakery, the bottlers of Coca Cola and a dairy processing and packaging unit to take just a few examples – BID is still recognised for two of its most prominent establishments: Balaju Yantra Shala (BYS) and Balaju Technical Training Centre (BTTC), both pioneers known for excellence in their areas of operation. The history of BYS and BTTC is intertwined. Both these institutions grew out of a workshop established in the basement of the Swiss House at Ekanta Kuna to produce fittings and accessories required for bilateral projects in Charikot and Kathmandu. That was way back in 1957 AD, when there were few automobiles around, and when the valley was still emerald green. The workshop soon began to take in apprentices and train metalworkers, fitters, blacksmiths and mechanics to meet the growing manpower needs of modern enterprises. A special apprentice unit of BYS established as Mechanical Training Centre (MTC) in 1962 became the forerunner of BTTC.

BTTC is still one of the premier technical training institutes of the country. It produces quality middle-level technicians in the field of electrical, mechanical and sanitation engineering. The centre retained its core competence, i.e. the hands-on approach to teaching and learning. The readiness to put blue overalls, the willingness to lie on the shop floor and the preparedness to work with a variety of different tools are some of the key attributes that separate BTTC graduates from other technicians with comparable formal training at other institutes. This appears like a difference without distinction. After all, all competent technicians have to be comfortable with manual labour. But in the highly stratified society of Nepal, those with superior skills are supposed to issue directives rather than do things themselves. An average BTTC graduate is different in the sense that even though he is quite comfortable with machine drawings and working sketches, he shows little hesitation in operating the lathe or the monkey wrench. That is his strength - he can survive the vagaries of unstable job market in an economy growing too slowly to absorb most fresh entrants. But this is also his weakness in a society, which gives more respect to formal achievements than to actual performance, and in a society, where he wants to get out of his blue overall as soon as possible to become a technical manager or an entrepreneur.

PRESENT PERPLEXITIES The security guard at the main entrance of BID gives the direction of BYS with a mixture of sadness and pride; his demeanour shows that he would like to guide more people to the once-famous workshop than the few who come looking for it now. He is more comfortable in showing the way to BTTC: «The four-storied brick building with blue grille gate straight ahead.» It’s indeed easy to locate. The showpiece architecture of the institute sets it apart from utilitarian structures of warehouses and factories all around. However, once near the campus, the building looks forlorn from outside. The main entrance is unkempt, the front yard looks empty, and windowpanes haven’t apparently been cleaned for quite some time. Exposed bricks of the façade retain their dignity, but white stripes along the sills could do with a fresh coat of paint. Vehicles in the porch too are past their prime; it’s difficult to say whether they are still roadworthy. At a first glance, an unbiased visitor gets at least three negative impressions from the general condition of the premises: The facilities seem to be under-utilised, operations appear to be inadequately funded and the management is apparently gripped with a sense of helplessness. Although with some very credible qualifications and convincing explanations, Mr Diwat Kumar Shrestha, the youthful and energetic Principal of the institution, confirms almost all these impressions.

On the second floor Shrestha has an unpretentious cabin with an overflowing desk, a cushioned sofa for visitors and an electric kettle in the corner. He sits behind a computer and prints out fact-sheets with the dexterity of a person used to feed appropriate information to all kinds of visitors. The appearance of underutilisation of the campus may be due to its spacious premises. The institute trains 24 students for three-year Diploma in Electrical Engineering. This programme is in high demand and runs to full capacity. Two-year duration Junior Technician courses in Electrical, Mechanical and Sanitary Engineering are equally popular; all of them attract more than 35 applicants that are finally selected for rigorous academic and practical training. In addition to these long and medium term courses, the institute runs several short term training programmes with durations varying from one to 12 weeks. These short-term trainings are usually run during term break and other vacations of the main Diploma and Technician Courses. Less than full premises imply that there is ample scope for expansion and diversification of training courses. But there is very little that the management of BTTC can do about it. It has to depend upon CTEVT, a statutory authority that exercises control over all policy decisions related to the centre’s operations including providing grants to meet budget shortfall. The centre spends approximately NPR 10 million (About US$ 140,000) where as it earns only about NPR four million from its own activities. It is said that the one who pays the piper calls the tune, and the shadow of CTEVT hangs thick in every discussion about the condition of the centre.

Radheshyam Shrestha, Diwat’s deputy and Vice Principal of the centre, worries more about the quality of intake, the age of equipment in laboratories and the relevance of courses designed decades ago. He is a product of the same institute that he now serves. He was trained as a mechanic
At the beginning MTC was no more than a production-cum-training workshop. The objectives of the project have changed over time. Nevertheless, the primary are:

- provide hands-on training courses for Nepalese labourers;
- foster private initiative and thus support economic growth;
- produce teaching and working materials of use in the whole country;
- support the development of the Nepalese VET-system.

In the beginning of the project a wider mission, reflecting typical Swiss labour market virtues like discipline, working attitude and professional pride is identifiable. Towards the end of the project it was rather the outreach, the direct labour market relevance, and the accessibility of lower castes, which was of increasing interest.

For three years in late seventies. He has been with the centre ever since and remembers its days of glory when lathes were shiny, fittings were new and trainees from his institute were sought after by established employers. Other teachers gathered around him for a cup of tea in the canteen during mid-day break and noisily in agreement. Demand for computerised consoles for simulation and practice in the laboratory is voiced – it all sounds so high-tech in the laid-back atmosphere – but nobody seems to know the source of funding necessary for upgradation. Even foreign aid will have to be routed through CTEVT with its own preferences and priorities. The nameplate of one Mr Toyama Seiji with the designation «Senior JICA Volunteer» is prominently placed in the administrative wing. Otherwise the management and academic staff do not expect foreign assistance anytime soon. They have been told by the government to become self-reliant. We can become self-reliant if we forget our social responsibility and started operating like a business concern. But if that be so, why would we need to run this centre? Private training institutes operate more profitably in the marketplace,» says Principal Diwath with an edge in his voice.

Students in classrooms are more sanguine. Rajkumar Khatiwada is from a Brahmin family of Dhading, about three hours by public bus from the valley, and has chosen to do the two-year course in sanitation. This is rather surprising, because sanitation is supposed to be a low-caste job and Brahmins from traditional families normally don’t opt for it. His reason for selection was a relatively better prospect of finding a job after completion of the course. Nevertheless, he too wants to pursue further studies and become a manager someday. Arjun Pokharel is from Phyu-than, the cradle of Maosist uprising, and is happy that the government has recognised electrical engineering diploma for admission into graduate courses. He too wants to study further and get ahead in life.

Khimraj Marasini and Gokarna Shrestha are at the centre to upgrade their skills. They are with the engineering corps of the Nepali Army and have been sent by their employer on a four-week refresher course. Compared to fresh entrants to regular programme, they are happier with their lot and content with what they are doing. No wonder, BTTC short duration courses are so popular with government and donor agencies alike.

The growth of Nepali economy has barely kept pace with the population growth rate during the devastating decade (1996-2006) of Maoist insurgency. Employment opportunities in technical fields have shrunk. Yet, BTTC graduates have better chances of finding a job than many others with similar training and skills. In an internal study of its graduates in July 2015, over 70 percent of those surveyed responded that they found their training useful to very useful for the job market. Only 2 percent of the respondents said that they didn’t find their training useful. Nearly four-five of former graduates was found to be gainfully employed. Even though this study lacks the rigour of academic research, its findings are indicative of the overall suitability of courses offered by the centre.

Laudatory references about BTTC graduates are common in general conversations. It is said that not many of them want to join the labour exodus of Nepalese to West Asia or South-East Asia as the compensation packages in these countries are not sufficiently lucrative for them. The few who do opt to go out prefer more attractive destinations in the western hemisphere. Executives of manpower agencies don’t want to admit it on record – they want to maintain that all kinds of workers are lining up to go abroad. But in private, several of them admitted that they didn’t get enough applications from BTTC graduates, presumably because they were easily absorbed by the domestic industry.

In their places of work, the performance of BTTC graduates are valued by their superiors and admired by peers. At parastatal Nepal Telecom – the first and largest telecom service provider of the country – managers avoid being named but show a very high level of satisfaction with BTTC graduates. Other prominent employers – Nepali Army, the Nepal Police, Armed Police Force, Nepal Airlines Corporation, Tilganga Eye Hospital and Janakpur Cigarette Factory to name but a few – confirm (or testify) that graduates are doing well in their careers.

The transition of Mechanical Training Centre into Balaju Technical Training Centre appears to be complete. The Swiss Model of entry into technical profession through apprenticeship-type training has been adapted with
some academic inputs that now give its graduates different choices: they can work, pursue higher studies or set up their own independent units. The centre needs upgrading and modernisation to stay competitive. But overall, there is little to worry about the future stability of this institution. Sadly, the same can’t be said with equal conviction about its parent institution BYS - the workshop that started the apprenticeship tradition. The replica of a suspension bridge graces the entry of BYS. Alongside the scaled model, there is a plaque that commemorates the fact that the premises of the workshop were inaugurated by King Mahendra, an absolute ruler known for his iron fist. It indicates the prominence this workshop had in its days of glory. There was a time when this was the most modern fabricator in the country. Its products were known for their strength, durability and finish. Some cost-conscious customers did raise their eyebrows over premium pricing of BYS, but nobody ever complained about the quality of products and services of this company. It all began to change in 1990 when the unit was fully privatised.

Change of ownership implied three things. The workshop could no longer enjoy preferential treatment for the award of government contracts; now it had to go for competitive bidding in the marketplace. Secondly, it found itself handicapped while competing with upstart units that had benefited from its demonstration effect and were operating with rudimentary facilities and lower overheads. The last factor was to turn out most debilitating: its labour union was highly politicised and there was no way they could be managed to respond to the changing needs of the market. For the first few years post-1990, BYS survived largely due to its reputation for quality and precision built over decades of operation. The downhill trend accelerated about seven years ago and brought this proud institution to its knees. The management has since changed hands. Mahendra Baha- dur Karki, the new Managing Director, is a dynamic man with decades of experience in public service and engineering consultancy. Labour problems have been sorted out through a judicious mix of golden handshake and contract employment procedures. But the crisis is still far from being over. The unit is barely operational with skeleton staff and under utilisation of its capacity. The paradox of hope and despair comes through the tone of two of its prominent employees. Ajay Pradhananga is a young mechanical engineer who hopes to fully utilise still functional infrastructure of the unit to transform it into a competitive enterprise. Rajesh Pradhan has been with BYS for over a quarter of a century; he sees little chance of surviving by competing with me-too copycats that have sprung up all around, most of them run by former employees or BTTC graduates. The umbilical cord that once joined BYS and BTTC appears to have been cut for good.

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Initially BYS was both, an enterprise (manufacturing plant) and a training workshop. The opening of Nepal’s borders its international exchange grew stronger during the 1950ties. Initially, the mechanical workshop established in the backyard of the Swiss Helvetas and NIDC; later BYS (Pvt.) Ltd. acquired a lot of know-how, experts and funding by the government. BYS was not primarily to serve specific target groups; it was rather supposed to fulfil general developmental needs. Though the objectives changed over time, they may be summarised as follows: 

- entrepreneur, finance, technology and market are the four cornerstones of any enterprise, and «education and training» is the cement that holds them all in one piece. These two enterprises with intertwined history can better face the challenges of the future.

It’s impossible to miss the Swiss imprint upon these institutions even after so many years. Quality is valued more than the cost. Time is respected. People value their work and take pride in what they do. The BYS too has an impressive record of past performances to bank upon. It has a long roster of satisfied customers, fairly modern production facilities and a culture of experimentation and innovation. Its main weakness was institutional decay, but now it seems to be in a process of overcoming. Smaller players may appear to be threats for now, but in future, its main challengers will be cheaper alternatives from China and India as easier imports begin to flow into the country. To survive the regional competition and to grow into a centre of excellence in its own right, BYS will have to cash what marketers call Unique Selling Proposition or USP: the ability to fabricate variety of substitutes for hard-to-find machines or difficult-to-replace parts of complex structures and machines at a very short notice. Bridge bearings, ready-to-assemble emergency river crossings and pedestrian viaducts are some civil engineering structures that the workshop can easily adopt for manufacture. It’s encouraging that the enterprise is already in the process of reinventing itself. It will take sometime for results to emerge.

If the symbiosis between BYS and BTTC could somehow be re-established, both will reinforce each other’s competitive advantages in the marketplace. It has been said that entrepreneurship, finance, technology and market are the four cornerstones of any enterprise, and «education and training» is the cement that holds them all in one piece. These two enterprises with intertwined history can better face the challenges of the future. If they decide to use their combined strength for mutual benefit. It’s impossible to miss the Swiss imprint upon these institutions even after so many years. Quality is valued more than the cost. Time is respected. People value their work and take pride in what they do. These attributes have helped them survive a very difficult period of Nepal’s history. It’s difficult to predict the course BYS will take, now that profit has become its sole motive as a fully privatised enterprise. But the whiff of optimism at BTTC is encouraging. It seems all geared to face the challenges of future.
Teachers of BTTC reel off the names of their prominent alumni with almost parental pride. It’s an indication of the times that the graduates in the army and police are respected most for their achievements by the management of the institute. Those employed by aviation industry and INGOs figure next on the list. Successful entrepreneurs are also recognized for their material achievements. However, it takes some coaxing to dig out the names of those MTC or BTTC graduates who chose to chase the rainbow of revolution.

Sadhuram Devkota was trained at BTTC for two years to be an electrician. He was active in politics from his student days. Once the armed insurgency began, he assumed an alias and went underground. Later it was discovered that Prashant, the powerful guerrilla leader of Kathmandu Valley, was none other than Sadhuram. He was picked up by the then Royal Nepali Army with his computer on 4th of November 2004 and taken to an undisclosed location. On December 19, the army declared that the communist revolutionary had hanged himself with his own shoelaces. His unbelievable end went on to prove that the trained electrician was deemed dangerous by royal authorities.

Whereabouts of Milan Kumar Nepali, another electrician and former employee of Nepal Dairy Development Corporation is still unknown. He too is believed to have been picked up by the army at the height of counter-insurgency operations. Padam Bahadur Nakarmi, a trained mechanic, too figures in the list of the ‘disappeared’. He too is believed to have been picked up by the army at the height of counter-insurgency operations. Padam Bahadur Nakarmi, a trained mechanic, too figures in the list of the ‘disappeared’. He too is believed to have been picked up by the army at the height of counter-insurgency operations. Padam Bahadur Nakarmi, a trained mechanic, too figures in the list of the ‘disappeared’. He too is believed to have been picked up by the army at the height of counter-insurgency operations.

This story demonstrates yet again that technology is often value-neutral; it can be used for both creation and destruction with equal ease by people with suitable inclinations and adequate motivation. Entrepreneur Surendra Das Shrestha is recognized for pioneering cost-effective overhead pedestrian bridges. Vikram Pradhan runs a workshop in Patan Industrial Estate and often competes with Balaju Yantra Shala. But Narayan Prasad Shrestha stands apart from doing what he does: he manufactures implements that harness solar energy for everyday use. Solar driers and heaters of his Sun Works Pvt. Ltd. are considered quality products in the market.

Sund Mishra, a MTC/BYS alumnus of mid-seventies in General Mechanics, has carved a niche for himself in a completely different field. He is a Janakpur-based film actor, theatre personality and cultural activist. Remarkably, his day-job is still that of a general mechanic. He works for Janakapur Cigarette Factory where he has risen to be Deputy Manager responsible for printing and packaging. He attributes his achievements to the work ethic he imbibed at his alma mater: no role is small enough to be neglected; a tiny malfunctioning cog can bring even a giant machine to grinding halt. That perhaps should be the epitaph of Swiss association with BYS-BTTC: it instilled a sense of responsibility and perfectionist attitude in an entire generation of competent technicians. Those are values that require supportive environment currently unavailable in the country mainly due to political uncertainties. But once normality returns, these proud institutions will probably capitalise their inherent strengths to emerge once again as socially responsible and economically competitive enterprises of distinction.
ENDURING BYS-BTTC LEGACY: INNOVATION AND DEMONSTRATION EFFECT

Producing competent and confident technicians is all very well, but they touch the lives of common citizens in an indirect manner only. BYS, however, has transformed lives by its innovative products as well.

Steel cupboards were once a novelty in Nepal, imported from abroad by donor agencies and the elite to keep their documents safe from pests that often ate up wooden panels. BYS began to fabricate them in Kathmandu. It no longer does so because every other fabricator in even small towns across Nepal has taken it up. It has saved countless trees and consumers that depend upon steel furniture have almost forgotten that it was BYS that initiated the metal revolution.

Steel and then aluminium door and window frames have a similar story. They were fashioned by BYS and it took time for the trend to pick up. Now there are several fabricators that do the job in a better way and at more competitive prices so much so that facilities of BYS lie idle for the want of orders. More trees saved by innovative products of a pioneering workshop.

Steel cupboards and aluminium window frames are environment-friendly products. They have been immensely useful in saving trees. But if a product were to be singled out to honour BYS, it will undoubtedly be the solar panels that shine from every other middle-class rooftop all over Nepal. It harnesses energy of the sun to heat water in Kathmandu winter, dry apples in Mustang and cook rice in tarai. Solar panels to heat water have become so popular that the government no longer subsidises it. Narayan Prasad Shrestha of Sun Works Pvt. Ltd. estimates that there are at least two hundred fabricators engaged in producing solar panels of all kinds. «I learnt it at BYS and began my business. My former employees opened more workshops. Their employees spread the business around. The process has multiplied with every other employee that learnt to fabricate solar panels at MTC-BYS,» says Shrestha without a hint of rancour adding, «There is enough business for everyone.»

Then there are products of pride. Suspension Bridges fabricated by BYS are proudly mentioned by all its former employees. Shrestha mentions another machine that he thinks has brought glory to BYS – the turbines that whirl at microhydro projects all over the country. BYS displays some machines that it has exported to Bhutan and Malaysia.

It’s the destiny of every pioneer too make way for me-too producers. The only antidote to beat competition is keep inventing, innovating and producing more products for the market. This is the challenge that will test the mettle of the new management of BYS.
Since her childhood, Sita Biswakarma always wanted to be a nurse after she finished her school. But as she grew up she began to realise that her ambition would possibly end in nothing but a dream. Her impoverished parents could not afford to enroll her in a private boarding school for quality education and she was forced to study in a government school where school teachers were mostly absent, there were insufficient books and not enough chairs for every student. It was in her remote village of Gorkha district, 500km west of the capital, where she grew up working in the farm and helping in the domestic chores and she barely had time for her studies.

But Biswakarma worked hard in school. Despite all the odds against her, she managed to finish school but failed in the School Leaving Certificate (SLC), the national school board exams. Filled with despair, Biswakarma, who was then only 17 years old, gave up her dream of becoming a nurse. However, one day, a relative who had come to visit her family told her about the Jiri Technical School (JTS), a rural school run under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), where she could still continue her medical studies and pursue her ambition.

The young teenager immediately packed her bags and traveled for two days all the way to JTS in Jiri Bazaar of the Dolakha district, 200km east of Kathmandu. There she filled in an application and competed for the entrance examinations for the Auxiliary Nurse and Midwifery (ANM) Training and she succeeded in being chosen as one of the 40 students out of the 500 applicants. «I'm so excited. I can hardly wait to complete my course and return to my village to work as a midwife» says 19-year old Biswakarma, who has now barely six months to complete her 18-month long ANM training.

Once Biswakarma has completed her training this will not only prove her strong will but it will also be huge relief to her own rural community; in a remote village like hers health services are so poor due to lack of skilled health personnel. Every year, nearly 6000 women die of pregnancy-related complications due to lack of skilled health personnel trained in safe motherhood practices. Most of the remote health posts are in dire need of trained health personnel and especially ANMs to save lives. Until now, in many cases the Female Health Care Volunteers (FCHVs) are the only frontline health workers working in the rural communities in the remotest parts of the country. Although they are so dedicated to providing health services, they are themselves overburdened with work and lack skills to deal with complicated maternal health cases. This is where the ANMs can play a pivotal role in filling up the huge vacuum in the maternal health care sector, one of top health care priorities for the Nepal government.

«The JTS has made such a huge difference by introducing this course, especially for the youth living in the rural areas as they are more committed and dedicated towards rural health care» explains Ganga Devi Jirel, an ANM working at the Jiri Hospital. Jirel is herself a graduate from JTS whose training and certificate helped her to easily find a job at the Jiri Hospital and before in various health projects run by NGOs.

Besides training in health, JTS has provided practical training to thousands of students in agriculture and construction. A majority of the graduates are now employed in various organisations belonging to the government, NGOs and even private businesses.

FROM A SMALL SCHOOL TO A MULTIPURPOSE TRAINING INSTITUTION In this dusty and beautiful hamlet of Jiri Village, JTS is a source of pride for the local community, composed of especially the Jirels - the indigenous people - and several other migrant ethnic groups including the high caste Brahmins, Newars, Chettris and Sherpas as well as other diverse groups of janjatis who live in harmony with each other.

«Without the Swiss, this place would be dead and poor like many other districts adjoining the capital» says Hari Shrestha, a local lodge owner. He explained that it’s not just the training in cheese producing technology but the 'skilled human production' through the establishment of JTS that makes the Swiss contribution so invaluable and unforgettable. Shrestha is a successful local trader but he says that it’s not always the place - endowed with overwhelming natural beauty and rich forestry - but qualified and professionally trained civilians who make a huge difference in a remote village like Jiri of Dolkha district. «There is no question that JTS is the answer to many of the frustrated youth who were either unsuccessful in academics or too poor to go to Kathmandu for professional training» he adds.

Sprawled over 14.5 hectares of Jiri’s land and forests, the JTS with 55 buildings - established way back in 1982 with the joint cooperation of the Swiss and Nepalese governments - had some predecessor projects before it was known as JTS. In 1963 the then Jiri project started a small school, which at first trained blacksmiths under the direction of a Swiss national for its own purpose. It was followed by a school assistance program with teacher training. A multipurpose high school to equip students with life skills and job oriented training was established in 1967.

In those days the country was under the party-less Panchayat regime led by King Mahendra. The school was also involved in organising training for the Panchayat representatives and local leaders to enhance their skills to lead the public development programmes, in particular as regards the development of rural infrastructure and agriculture.

With financial support of the Swiss government JTS was constructed and established in 1982 as a public school under the Ministry of Education. JTS introduced 3-years training courses for junior technical assistants in agriculture and livestock, for sub overseers in construction and for ANM. The training was open for class 8 graduates.

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The Integrated Hill Development Programme (IHDP) aimed at a comprehensive advancement of the rural environment and its population in a clearly defined geographical area. The Jiri Technical School was not a project component of the IHDP, but it was conceptualised within its mainframe. JTS was expected to supply the necessary rural multipliers for the implementation of the IHDP objectives.

In order to support the national development policies, the Government of Nepal was in need of civil servants, serving at district and sub-district level, and in supporting projects. The respective profiles were clearly identified as:

- Agriculture: Junior Technical Assistants (JTA) in Agriculture and Livestock;
- Construction: Sub-Overseers in Construction;
- Health Sector: Auxiliary Nurse-Midwives (ANM).

Programme rationale: In order to give rural youth access to training, JTS was established as boarding school, offering 3-years fulltime training after completion of class 8 (8+3 System) in three trades. The training included a 1-year on-the-job training period. JTS was expected to serve as role model for vocational education and training in rural areas.

In 1990 the CTEVT changed the 8+3 system into a 10+2 system. At the same time the national development policies with the scheduled employment for graduates from technical schools were given up. JTS lost its rationale and had to re-position itself as a normal technical school under the CTEVT.

Target groups: Originally school leavers after completion of lower secondary education from rural areas were targeted. With the change of the system to 10+2 the clientele for JTS changed accordingly: In Nepal only a minority of about 10% of an age cohort reaches that education level, in rural areas even less.

Impact: Tracer studies on the initial batches under the 8+3 system showed very good results, in that both the employment rates were high, and the satisfaction with the performance of the graduates. The JTS model served as role model for other schools in rural areas (e.g. Jumla Technical School established along the same principles by UMN), and as one of the nucleus for the development of a national vocational education and training system under the CTEVT.

The outreach program, which at a later stage, and in the endeavour to regain the lost rationale, was developed in replacement of the on-the-job training, is a potential role model for NGO type training providers.

JTS still exists and is operated by CTEVT. Today JTS graduates find jobs with different employers, both private and public.

Objectives: Generally speaking, the project aimed at developing human resources to serve as change agents for the development of rural areas. At the same time, JTS was expected to model accessible vocational education and training in rural areas, and to lead participants into employment.

In later project phases the attention of the project was re-directed towards short-term courses with a direct impact on income generation and/or for the improvement of service to communities.

Major activities: Site development and construction (of altogether 55 buildings); supply of full equipment; expatriate consulting services with expatriate co-manager and trade heads for the initial phase; local consultancies; staff training, including substantial overseas training component; curriculum development and teaching materials.

Resources: Consultancies and funds

Implementing agencies: SDC

Particularities: The JTS training portfolio was originally directly defined by the needs of the state as employer. All three profiles lead to Government employment. However, this was not really extraordinary in the Nepal of the 80ies, where in rural areas only Government employment, project employment and subsistence farming existed. What initially was the strength, developed later on into a trap. The framework conditions of the Government with its rigid 10+2 system were not all favourable the necessary reorientation of the profiles and adaptation of the curricula.
Since its establishment, JTS has trained nearly 1,800 students from several hill districts including Dolakha, Sindhupalchowk, Okhaldhunga, Solukhumbu, Ramchhap and Kavrepalanchowk. 22 batches have been trained so far with 587 graduates in agriculture, 578 in construction and 434 in health. A majority of the graduates are employed in various organisations both private and public ones. Over 30 NGOs, mostly based in rural areas, have recruited JTS graduates. In addition, some international NGOs have also employed graduates, especially in the technical and medical sectors. "NGOs often demand our graduates due to their hands on and practical technical training" says Shiva Hari Dhakal, principal of JTS. Since 1990 the trainees, who are aged between 16 and 35 years old, must have passed class 10 in order to qualify for the training. Now the competition for entering to JTS is so high that only the best students get admission. However, the criteria are still exceptional in that applicants coming from low income families, women, low caste and various indigenous ethnic groups are given preference.

"JTS has especially helped to boost the morale of the poor youth who are unable to complete school or cannot afford to opt for higher education" says Prakash Koirala, JTS trainer in construction. This means that those who pass class 10 but fail in the SLC exam still have a chance to pursue their career. Nepal has a high rate of failures in the SLC exam, in which about 60 percent out of an average of 300,000 students appearing for SLC fail every year.

"I hope to have a new life and I am confident that I will succeed" says Shyam Jirel who failed in his SLC exam but was able to get entrance into the construction course. Jirel wants to be construction overseer and hopes to make a living out of it. He is one of the 20 students who joined the construction course this year. "This is so exciting" says 18-year old Jirel as he uses the survey machine which he had never seen before. In another 18 months, he will learn all tricks of the construction trade.

"Our best reward is to watch them graduate, and leave us with their life-skill knowledge" says Parsuram Khanal, instructor in agriculture. He has seen most of his former 300 students getting jobs in various organisations and companies. According to the mail survey conducted by JTS, over 60 percent of the graduates have already been employed in the construction sector, more than 84 percent in health and nearly 58 percent in the agricultural field.

"I can easily compete with students from private medical universities in practical work" says Laxmi Pradhan, an ANM student from Dolakha district. Pradhan was unable to get access to the Kathmandu-based Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, one of the country's top medical universities where competition is tough, especially for students from rural areas who have to compete with those from cities and towns. "The quality of teaching is high at JTS and there is so much emphasis on field visits and practical medical work" adds Pradhan and further explains that she has already gained much expertise in child delivery and in anti natal checkups as well as safe motherhood practices.

Due to practical teaching methods at the JTS, its certificates are well recognised and the graduates are often employed in both government and...
NGO projects based, especially in the rural and suburban areas. But the hiring potential of a JTS graduate is not the same in the capital and other big cities where competition for jobs is very high. «Comparatively, ANM graduates from JTS are in high demand in district hospitals but this may not be the same in cities and towns where they have to compete with the graduates from private universities» said Rudra Marasini, medical officer from the Juri Hospital where several midwife and nurses graduated from JTS are employed. «We are really satisfied with the performance of the JTS graduates and will continue to hire them» said Bishnu Shah from the District Road Support Programme (DRSP), an NGO that works on construction sector in six districts including Kamechhap, Dolkha, Kavre, Okhaldhunga, Sindupalchok and Sindhuli. Shah added that the JTS certificates are useful for employment especially in an organisation like his working at the local level.

One of the challenges is to market the potential in the capital where demand for skilled Nepalese workers is high for overseas employment especially. «There is such a huge potential for JTS graduates for overseas employment but there is a need to market JTS training» says Devi Prasad Ghimire, vice chairman of CTEVT. Through converting JTS into a semi autonomous body not totally dependent on the government, Ghimire sees a chance for JTS to strengthen its market potential. «The competition for employment is now very tough and it is important to have a really effective coordination between JTS and the potential employers» explains Gita Acharya, a health trainer.

Over the past decades the image of JTS has changed. Generally speaking, it is still widely recognised for its contribution towards helping students from rural areas to stand on their own feet by making them capable and feeling confident with their skills. For this reason applications are received from all over the country. JTS is also requested by various NGOs, government agencies and INGOs to up-grade the knowledge and skills of their staff. Though the curriculum has occasionally been updated due to changing technology, many things have remained unchanged at JTS since it was funded and managed by the Swiss. JTS still focuses on only three trades which were introduced form the very beginning on in 1982. The school was handed over to the Nepalese government in 1995. This included also the withdrawal of Swiss funding for maintenance, staff development training and other facilities.

Today, JTS is underfunded and the staff has a low morale. There is a desperate need for maintenance of JTS buildings. Out of a total budget of NPR 6.8 million (nearly US$ 98,000), the government has allocated NPR 100,000 (US$ 1,500) only for maintenance, and there is no budget at all for the maintenance of the equipment and for servicing vehicles. «We need a lot of funding if we are to continue with our quality production» says the JTS principal Dhakal. If the maintenance is not done soon, the place might fall apart in another five years. «The Governments current budget cannot even afford to provide facilities for the staff or buy enough training materials and new equipments» explains Ghimire from CTEVT.

Another serious problem for JTS is the worsening morale among the trainers. Most trainers are government officials and they get the same salary whether they work hard and provide excellent training or not. The retention of qualified staff becomes one of the major challenges for JTS. Staff may be tempted to accept job offers from the private sector or to request their transfer to a government office in the capital. «The Swiss offered training and further education abroad, but all we now get is a basic salary and nothing else» says agriculture trainer Khanal. The trainers are paid NPR 10,000 (US$ 150) a month and NPR 830 (US$ 12) for remote area allowance.

Apart from an attempt to persuade donors to step in again, CTEVTs Ghimire has no other idea or remedy. However, despite the serious hurdles on the way, the JTS team is still committed to impart quality education to their students and it plans to expand its training services to various agencies.

The long term plan of JTS is to transform into a semi autonomous body in order to have full autonomy in utilising its income generated from different projects and programmes.
PLUNGE INTO ANOTHER WORLD

The narrow road was generously potholed and rendered slow by the languid movement of men and women going about their daily chores in the mild winter morning. After the 40 minutes drive out of the heart of Kathmandu, I almost missed the sudden small turn that takes one into the premise of Training Institute for Technical Instruction (TITI), located at Sanothimi, district Bhaktapur. As the guard opened the gates of the institute, I found the world suddenly changing for better. Spring flowers were blooming in the flower beds that lined the driveway to the parking lot. Among the few buildings that I could see spread out among green lawns, I could easily spot the canteen where people sat in the sun drinking tea. I found many small details within the institute that showed continuous care, a not so small matter for a government institute in Nepal. I found clean towels in the bathroom and a flask of coffee/tea standing in the lobby, at least in the administrative building. This first impression of an organised and well-run institution persisted with me in all my later visits to the Institute.

A NEW CULTURE

Before I went in to meet the officials, I took a coffee in the canteen and met some people: Mr Indra Bahadur Gurung, a 37-year old teacher from the eastern part of Nepal, took part in a training of trainers (TOT) course. He told me how suddenly he had become aware of small but key issues as handwriting on the blackboard and the pitch of his voice while teaching. The feedback from his fellow participants on such matters, while he was giving a class, had been an eye-opener. His only worry was, whether he would have sufficient resources to carry on practicing what he has learnt in TITI, like the use of visuals, flip charts, colour chalks on the board, etc.

NO SWISS AND NO FLAWS

I also met Ms Usha Bhanda-ri one of the most senior trainers. She has been working at the Institute since its inception, and she had been part of all its ups and downs. She echoed the common refrain that although TITI will be able to survive without Swiss support, the institute is likely to be hurt in terms of key human resource development, its ability to keep pace with innovation, and maintain itself in a manner that has set the institute apart from other government institutes in Nepal. Such apprehensions on future developments in the face of withdrawal or substantial reduction in Swiss aid were tempered by optimism by Mr Druba Dhungel, executive director of TITI. He said: «In our institute, we have been able to build a capable boat for practicing what he has learnt in TITI, like the use of visuals, flip charts, colour chalks on the board, etc.

who said that setting up of a durable mechanism or institute is of greater value that desultory efforts of goodness.

Similar opinions were also expressed by Mr Suresh Raj Sharma, vice chancellor of Kathmandu University, the original planner, and Mr Lek Nath Belbase, the original chairman. But they also accept the new realities and see chances in a bigger independence which will force greater efforts to find new clienteles and markets, something so important for an institution with the ambition to be the leading centre of excellence on the Nepalese VET landscape.

Today, even a cursory walk through the institute’s premises lends credibility to this claim of being a «Centre of Excellence». Be it the IT section, the library, the classrooms, the canteen or the hostel for trainees; everything stands out among government run institutes in Nepal. Over my extensive interactions with scores of people and experts related to the VET sector in Nepal, some of which had nothing to do with the institute, the most outstanding factor had been their inability to find any substantial flaw with the institute. In the shaping and running as of today, the hand of Swiss care and planning is plainly visible.

THE ROAD TRAVELED

The Training Institute for Technical Instruction was set up in 1991 by an act of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) and supported by the Swiss government through Swisscontact, a Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation. The training institute was established with a mission, to improve the quality of technical education and vocational training in Nepal through ‘training of trainers’. It further aimed, to become a ‘Centre of Excellence’ for technical education and vocation training for trainers and managers in developing countries in Asia.

On both counts, the centre seems to have scored well. Its presence has directly and intrinsically helped to improve the availability and quality of technically trained workforce in Nepal.

It has also earned a special niche for itself internationally by training instructional and managerial people from various countries including India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Albania, Kosovo, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali and Burkina Faso.

Since January 1992 till mid-July 2006 a total of 6’529 persons, including 5’816 males and 1’340 females were trained. Among these have been 218 international customers, including 170 males and 48 females.

The involvement and contribution of Swiss partners to the development and running of TITI is apparent everywhere: in the physical infrastructure of the institution including the main building, in the library, in the information and communication centre, in the recreational area, in the canteen, in the participants’ hostel and in the neatness of the whole campus. Virtually all programmes being taught have been developed with Swiss support. But most important, the core group of trainers and managers of the institute, consisting of more than 20 people, have been nurtured from a very early stage onwards by international experts and managers.

It is this availability of high quality manpower that could guarantee the institute’s sustainability and future growth, and it’s up to those people...
to either take the challenge or to complain about abandonment and apathy of donors and authorities. For Nepal, the institute has provided a crucial supply of capable planners, managers, trainers for various projects and programmes. It has also greatly contributed to curriculum development, and to various programmes and high quality technical teaching material. The 19 technical institutes being currently run under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) are the centre's primary clients. But today there are also 237 private technical training institutes in Nepal affiliated to CTEVT. The training institute has helped many of these institutes pedagogically, manually and in providing them with instructional modules and material. It has contributed to raise the bar and to define the benchmark in the sector as regards quality of trainers and quality training.

**AT A CROSSROADS** Today TITI is at the crossroads. It has met its primary objective to meet the demand for quality trainers for CTEVT run schools and the VET sector in general. Now it faces the challenges in the form of its orientation as an institute, of its ability to function more independently, to generate greater financial resources, and to maintain itself on the quality course it has been traveling so far. The emerging domestic economic realities in Nepal, with greater emphasis on private industry as an engine of growth, must now get reflected in its future course. The institute should possibly look beyond CTEVT for serving both its own and the national interest. For this to happen, it would need greater independence. Currently, it enjoys a semi-autonomous status under the CTEVT with substantial managerial freedom, the greatest perhaps out of all the public institutes in Nepal. In order to become financially more independent, market oriented and able to maintain the high standards that have been achieved with the help of Swiss involvement and guidance, it needs to become even more autonomous.

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**INTERNATIONAL EXPERTISE FOR MANAGEMENT, COURSE DEVELOPMENT AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT.**

In vocational education and training quality has mainly two dimensions, i.e. relevance and delivery quality. The overall objective of TITI is to make a substantial contribution to the quality of learning in vocational education and training in Nepal. Thus, the baseline data would be available to conduct a proper impact assessment.

**OBJECTIVES** The TITI has developed into a resource base for instructors training and curriculum development primarily for Swiss supported projects and programmes all over the world. Participants from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Albania, Kosovo, Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali and Burkina Faso have attended TITI training in Nepal, and trainers from TITI have provided training in various countries. In its early days TITI has conducted a baseline study on the quality of training delivery in Nepal. Thus, the major project activities included the establishment and equipment of the complete campus, the development of the training approach, the resource base and the training programs, and a substantial input into staff development (training of trainers).

**PROGRAMME RATIONALE** The TITI was established as a national institute to meet both the pre- and the in-service training needs of technical and vocational teachers, instructors and trainers, curriculum developers and of training managers.

**TARGET GROUPS** The teaching, instructing and managerial staff of the technical school system under CTEVT represent the primary clientele of TITI, that of other training providers, both from the public and private sector, the secondary one. TITI opened up to any fee paying customers.

**IMPACT** Over the years more than 4,000 participants have attended various TITI training. The majority thereof, i.e. more than 3,000, were trained in various aspects of basic and advanced instructional skills, in curriculum development, as DACUM facilitators and in training management. About 1,000 instructors have completed individualised occupational skills training in the occupational fields of agriculture, health, construction, mechanics, electrical applications and tourism.

**OBJECTIVES** In vocational education and training quality has mainly two dimensions, i.e. relevance and delivery quality. The overall objective of TITI is to make a substantial contribution to the quality of learning in vocational education and training in Nepal.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES** The major project activities included the establishment and equipment of the complete campus, the development of the training approach, the resource base and the training programs, and a substantial input into staff development (training of trainers).

**IMPLEMENTING AGENCY** Swisscontact-Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation on behalf of SDC in cooperation with CTEVT on behalf of the Government of Nepal.

**PARTICULARITIES** TITI has developed a fully modularised approach to instructors training, which is based on a unique resource base, the so-called Skills Cards–Skills Files System. On this basis TITI has provided services to many fee-paying customers in Nepal and overseas.

1) Comment of the editor: Let’s hope that this impression may persist beyond the duration of the Swiss support project.

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**FACILITIES AT THE TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION**

Located at Sanothimi of Bhaktapur district, the institute is housed in a modern complex. The premises consist of:

- Classrooms with modern teaching aids and facilities
- Learning resource centre, library and AV lab
- Technology lab-cum-demonstration workshop
- Multipurpose hall
- Office and administrative facilities
- Science lab
- Meeting rooms
- Hostels for participants
- Canteen
- Play ground and sports facilities

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**TITI** in the late 80ies/early 90ies Nepal ventured into expansion and institutionalisation of vocational education and training, and into the establishment of a Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) as national institution responsible for policy formulation, coordination and delivery of support services. The establishment of CTEVT was supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with co-financing from SDC. Originally teachers training and the establishment of a respective national institute was one of the components of the ADB package, but later on it was decided to establish the TITI under a bilateral project agreement and with direct financing from SDC.
Uday Raj Aryal, director, SOS national training centre (mothers and councilors), Banepa, Kavre

Uday Raj Aryal’s life has undergone a considerable change since his association with TITI. From being an unassuming science teacher and a vice-principal in Itahari, he today has become the head of a sprawling SOS National Training Centre for mothers and councilors in Banepa, close to Kathmandu in Nepal. Having participated in courses like instructional supervision, project management, and training of trainers (TOT), Aryal now runs an institute which is responsible for training the «mothers» in all seven SOS villages in Nepal and for quality assurance. These «mothers» are not only caretakers, but also housekeepers, protectors, breadgivers and emotional rocks to scores of orphan children, for many of whom they are the only and real tie to society.

Aryal worked in close cooperation with the training institute in 2003 to set up its own institute. Now it teaches a group of 20 mothers in areas like cooking, healthcare, hygiene etc for about seven to 10 days whenever such need arises. The mothers also get refresher courses every two years. This institute also trains other childcare takers for institutions like Balmandir, Maitighar, Savin, Sanghrilla orphanage etc.

Talking about his experience and association with TITI, Aryal says: «I am indebted to it at the level of ideas, above all. Also the contribution of the trainers and the help in the preparation of courses and instructional material has been invaluable. Simply spoken, without its help this place wouldn’t have been possible.» He also appreciates the contribution to his own personal development.

Shakuntala Thamjong, Principal, Tansen Nursing Campus, Palpa

Shakuntala Thamjong has been principal of Tansen Nursing Campus, Palpa, since its inception in 1999 as a joint project of CTEVT and the United Mission of Nepal (UMN). Shakuntala Thamjong herself has been trained in the ‘leadership and management training’ for 15 months in TITI, and she employs 14 full time training staff on her campus. All of them have been trained at the training institute as well. Altogether, 17 people from her institute have been trained there. But unfortunately, some dropped out and went abroad as soon as they got the trainings which enhanced their abilities and skills.

Talking about the impact of training institutes she says: «The training has improved my focus, imparted a larger view on the profession and my area of work». In skills like report writing and making presentations, in skills associated with finances and marketing and also in entrepreneurial skills like how to communicate effectively or how to get approvals, it made considerable contributions. As regards the staff, it helped them to become organised, it boosted their confidence, it improved their instructional skills, and they can use resources like skill cards and others.
Alqi Mustafaj, Section Head of the National VET Agency Albania, has definitely developed into one of the pillars of the Albanian Vocational Education and Training System. At the same time he is a big supporter of the TITI in Nepal. How does this come? Alqi was the first Albanian to attend a DACUM Facilitators Course at TITI, maybe he was the first Albanian ever to visit Nepal! First of all he was impressed by the hospitality of the Nepalese people, which reminded him very much of the similar tradition in his own country, but second also by the high professional standard of the institute.

In Nepal Alqi was trained and certified in developing DACUM charts. DACUM has become the de facto standard in curricula development in Albania. Later on, Nepali trainers came to Albania to run Courses, and Alqi himself and other Albanian colleagues attended other trainings in Nepal. This has obviously influenced the Albanian system quite heavily. Alqi states: «To be honest, the main source of know how for all our work regarding DACUM Charts, curriculum development and the training of teachers and instructors have been the Skill Cards of TITI.» He assures that basically all VET curricula in Albania are nowadays developed according to TITI procedures and standards, and that most other donors active in the field of VET use the pool of experts (DACUM facilitators, curriculum developers and train-the-trainers) having been trained at the TITI. The introduction of the Vocational Matura Exams the Ministry of Labour relied on those persons, who attended the TITI training in assessment and certification.

Despite Alqi’s positive appreciation of the Nepalese institute and its influence to Albania, I managed to worm some critical comments out of him: Sometimes he felt a little bit irritated by something he attributes to the Asian culture. He perceived TITI to be quite inflexible and sticking obstinately to the rules and procedures in place without being sufficiently open for new ideas and approaches. «For Nepal and surroundings that might still be working, but in Albania we are close to Western Europe and we have to be more flexible and open», he observes.

Notwithstanding these critics and besides talking about people and approaches, also a number of publications cannot hide their affinity with TITI: A series of booklets on teachers training is in the process of being published, two of them have already been printed. Though TITI is not explicitly referenced, any insider easily recognizes the relationship when spotting the layout. The TITI VET Glossary was translated into Albanian and published, and also quite a number of Skill Cards have already been translated. For illustration: On his way to a meeting, a colleague of mine observed a secretary of the EU CARDS VET Project translating a TITI Skill Card. She did it on behalf of an international consultant running a TOT course in Albania, who himself doesn’t even have any direct and personal links to TITI.

The former ISDO (Increase Skills Development Opportunities) Project of SDC/Swisscontact in Albania developed all its modular short courses in different trades based on the TITI approaches. These courses are accredited by the Employment Service of the Ministry of Labour, and they are, among others, also implemented by private providers, whose staff was again trained according to TITI guidelines and material.
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
It is generally recognised today that opening access to sources of income for graduates is a primary function of vocational education. The quality and success of vocational education is therefore measured, among other things, by the extent to which the training contributes to the improvement of employability. The principle of gearing the training programmes toward the respective labour market is also laid down in international agreements for the promotion of vocational education and in the recommendations published by UNESCO and ILO. Vocational education and projects to develop the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector should therefore be planned and implemented from this perspective. The present paper discusses how this principle has affected the Swiss VET programmes in Nepal.

**EARLY LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION**

In the early days of Swiss development cooperation in Nepal, i.e. in the 1950s, it was difficult if not impossible to obtain well-founded, systematic information on the Nepali labor market. By far the largest part of the population worked in the agricultural sector on the basis of self-sufficiency. Additionally, there existed a well-established handicrafts sector, but this sector was unable to develop a public labour market because jobs were distributed and inherited within the castes and the families. In such an economy, where wage labour is not organised in a framework of institutionalised employment relationships and actual labour contracts are virtually unknown, salaried jobs were predominantly offered by the state. In this situation, terms such as level of occupation and unemployment rate hardly make sense.

In addition, key statistical information to assess the labour market and its trends were not available in the 1950s. There were no data on demographic trends and structures, and figures on the number of students and graduates did not exist. This lack of reliable information made it impossible to analyse employment in any serious way. As a result, systematic descriptions of the employment situation at the national level were not available before 1970. We found the term unemployment for the first time in 1969 in a document and only in the context of an undesirable trend in vocational education: too many university graduates in the arts and social sciences were produced while there appeared a significant shortage in the domain of engineering.
What exists since 1956 are the Nepali development plans, which include estimates of the need for skilled manpower to implement them. This information was provided by the state administration, i.e., it was merely an estimate regarding the required number of civil servants. The plans clearly mention the lack of trained personnel: «(...) the most crucial problem in confronting us in our attempt to achieve, within a few years, significant gains in economic and social development, is the lack of trained personnel – technical and administrative.» The first plan already offers an estimate of the required number of newly trained professionals at the lower and higher levels. These estimates or «requirements in newly trained personnel» are continued in the subsequent three development plans. The plans repeatedly mention the connection between vocational training and the availability of skilled manpower on one hand, and successful economic development on the other hand: «One of the main difficulties in carrying out development projects in the past few years has been the shortage of trained technicians.» The IBRD also noted the lack of skilled manpower in Nepal at the time: «The great requirement for training in Nepal is for middle-level technicians. This is illustrated by the ratio of professionals to technicians. In Nepal there are about 2 to 3 doctors for each trained nurse and there are 2 civil engineers for 3 trained overseers.»

The Swiss already attempted to analyse the employment situation and the labour market in the 1950ies. For example, the BIGA (former Swiss State Secretary for Economy) noted in a report of 1957 that the supply of industrial workers in Nepal was very limited. For the first Swiss projects in Nepal, i.e., the dairy development project, the Tibet campaign and the development of the technical workshop in the Swiss House Ekanta Kuna, systematic analyses of the national labour market were of little importance. The skilled workers trained in and for these projects were small in number, and the job offering was almost entirely under the control of the projects themselves. Analyses of the employment situation were therefore not relevant – neither for the planning of the trainings nor for their positioning, e.g., by certification, which was probably not attempted precisely for these reasons.

**THE LABOUR MARKET IN VIEW OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

The first observations regarding the national labour market or the national employment situation appear only in the fourth national development plan for the years 1970-1975: «According to the latest estimate, the number of persons of working age, i.e., between 15-59 years, is estimated to reach 6,072,000. In the absence of any survey on employment, it is difficult to ascertain the total unemployed population in the country. (...) In the field of trained manpower, those who have received technical training have not been found to be unemployed. However, surveys and studies have indicated that persons having non technical or arts subjects are finding it increasingly difficult to find suitable employment.»

From the beginning, the development plans also mention that development was generally impossible without vocational training, and they point out where training is most needed: «With some exceptions, it may be said, that present planning calls for training of lower grade technicians within Nepal, while upper grade technicians and administratives receive their training abroad.» Hence, it has been clear since the mid-50ies that the vocational training of professionals had a high priority and that such trainings should be offered and conducted in Nepal rather than abroad.

In addition to estimates on the need for skilled manpower, the plans also contain rudimentary ideas about the development of the vocational education system. Activities to promote vocational training are already described in the first plan. The plans usually assume that the largest part of the need for upper-grade education can be satisfied by training abroad and that only lower-grade training needs to be conducted in Nepal itself. This involved both the promotion of schools for vocational education and the planning of ad-hoc training and on-the-job training. In the subsequent years, the plans mention the establishment of 16 multi-purpose schools which also offer vocational courses. The plans of this period provided little information and data to guide the Swiss activities. Nevertheless, they were of some value from the perspective of the Swiss experts. The experts could refer to the plans when they negotiated with governmental agencies. In particular, the policy contained in the plans provided the Swiss with convincing arguments to justify the Swiss initiatives.

In the case of the Jiri Technical School (JTS), however, there was full accordance between the national development plan and the Swiss vocational training project with respect to the trainings offered. The three professions taught at this school coincided perfectly with the job profiles for which the national development plans stated a very large need in the mountain area: junior technical assistants in agriculture, sub-overseers in construction and auxiliary nurse-midwives in the health sector. The public sector needed a large number of skilled workers in these domains for the implementation of its own programmes. This accordance was certainly one of the reasons why the government approved this school project within only 6 months and why similar schools were established later with the help of other donors. But the orientation of the training programmes toward the needs of the administration and the development plans also turned into a trap: When these plans were later abandoned and no longer implemented, it became difficult for the schools to develop and introduce new labour market relevant training programmes.

**DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

Beginning in the 1960s, the Swiss programmes moved toward establishing formal vocational trainings and training centres. The new trainings aimed primarily at school graduates, and their objective was to prepare young people for employment, i.e., to give them an opportunity to find jobs and income. In this phase, the goal was no longer to train skilled workers for own projects and programmes but rather for the economic development of Nepal. This raised the question of the situation on the labour market. Was there any demand at all, and if so, what was the nature of the demand? What professional competences were required and how would the demand develop in the short and medium term? The continuously rising need
for products from the project’s small metal-workshop shop in the basement of the Swiss house Enkanta Kuna made it clear that there was certainly a market for everyday metal products and customised metal products for all kinds of purposes. A legendary story is the manufacture of the first boarding stairway for the Kathmandu airport and the manufacture of the high metal fences to protect the royal gardens and palaces in the capital. The Swiss also observed that many metal-working companies were being founded in Nepal. Believing that a metal-working industry was essential to the further economic development of Nepal, the Swiss promoted the training of metal workers by establishing the BYS metal-working plant with an integrated training scheme. As regards the interaction with the Nepali labour market, the Swiss initially expressed themselves very cautiously. They were aware that an orientation toward a labour market that was not yet developed and practically inexistent was somewhat problematic. As a result, they did not state employability as a primary training objective but set other, apparently more realistic goals such as their own project requirements: «In 1960 the BYS vocational education trained students primarily for its own use. These people should later find some work at government institutions or international organisations.» This was stated even more vaguely in a later report: «The training should therefore not generate skilled labour for an inexistent industry but rather prepare the trainees for useful and constructive activities under the given circumstances.» Nevertheless, there were ideas for the expansion of the training programme. In 1967, a course in electrical engineering was introduced, and this was followed by a course in sanitary installation in 1972.

In 1974, the stated objectives still avoid directly referring to the labour market and the employability of the graduates: «The main aim of training in Balaju Campus is to produce practically skilled technicians for workshop and maintenance and production works. (...) Justification of aims and methods is provided by the needs of the country for skilled oriented manpower. B.C.’s training methods stem from deliberate efforts to overcome office oriented education which, in this context, would be a drawback for industrial development.» In 1974, production and training were separated by disconnecting the Mechanical Training Centre (MTC, later BTTC = Balaju Technical Training Centre) from the production unit BYS. Three years later, the study «Training Manpower for Industry in Nepal» by Alfred Frischknecht appeared. This was the first systematic analysis of manpower requirements in the history of the vocational training programmes within the scope of Swiss development cooperation in Nepal. Frischknecht visited 36 plants in Nepal and asked them about their needs for trained workers. The results of the study clearly show that a metal-working industry was developing and there was a demand for skilled workers. In 1984 these findings were confirmed by other studies showing the increasing demand of the Nepali industry for skilled workforce. While this underpinned the position on which the Swiss projects were based, the Swiss were increasingly confronted with the problem that the documented manpower requirements did not coincide with the type of skilled workers trained at the MTC/BTTC: Nepalis who have completed a highly qualified and, by Nepali standards, extremely long education at a specialised school have no intention at all to perform manual wage labour in the workshop of an employer. Thus, the MTC / BTTC was never able to really meet the documented need for skilled manpower. Whereas a tracer study conducted in the early 80ies proved that 65% of MTC / BTTC graduates are working (...) at the level that they
were trained for,” the situation in the 90ies is different: Most graduates of the MTC / BTTC either found jobs in international projects or in government agencies or went into business by establishing their own companies. In December 2006, when the author of this article was visiting the BTTC, the students cared little about finding a job after graduation but were much more interested in having their diploma recognised as an entry ticket for university studies.

In the 1980s, the objectives still do not refer to the labour market but to the economic development and the industrialisation of the country. «The main objective of this training centre is to produce skilled technical manpower to serve the factories, industries, projects, companies and organisations in Nepal and not for any specialised academic education to confirm for higher university education.» In a similar vein, the objectives of the official project document for the fourth project phase of 1985-87 state: «The trainees should, at the end, be able to work for the government, for the private industry or become independent worker.» The emphasis of these objectives is not on employability but on the training level and/or the job profile of the graduates. Only from 1990 onward, the project gradually takes into account the requirements of the labour market. In the project document for the phase from 1991-1995, one of the objectives is a better orientation of the training toward the labour market: «The project purpose is to strengthen the capability of MTC as a Senior Technical School to conduct technical and vocational training by adjusting the programme to the needs of the labour market. The ultimate aim is to produce basic and middle level skilled technical manpower for the industrial growth of the country.» Only an information sheet on the project written in 1993 mentions training for the labour market as the primary and first goal of the MTC. In the project’s 30-year long history, this direct orientation toward the needs of the labour market marks the first time that the principle to bring people into employment is clearly implemented as a primary goal.

Although the Swiss projects up to 1990 rarely mentioned direct relationships between vocational training and the labour market, such a connection was possible at the level of the policy dialogue and the support of system development, at least to the extent that the Swiss-supported CTEVT maintained regular contacts with representatives of the Ministry of Labour or «labour market responsible».

**REALIGNMENT IN THE 1990s**

Already in the course of the 1980s, the Swiss initiated a double strategy: in addition to the relatively long training courses at the vocational schools, Helvetas began to organise shorter vocational trainings (SKILL) with a duration of only a few weeks or months whose purpose was to help the trainees obtain jobs and income. These trainings were not aimed at school graduates but primarily at people who already had some work experience in the respective trade. The unsatisfactory situation at the MTC / BTTC – for many years the most important vocational training project in the Swiss cooperation programme with Nepal – could not be remedied by realignment within the project itself. The reduction of the training to 2 years after 1992 did not yield the desired result, i.e. the formation of blue-collar workers. Nepalis who graduate from a highly sophisticated vocational course at such a prestigious institution as the MTC / BTTC do not usually intend to perform manual work but want to advance their professional career, i.e. acquire a higher social status than that of a craftsman, whose prestige in the Nepali society is generally low. It became clear that the idea of developing skilled manpower could not be realised by means of such a highly qualified training course. In addition, a training that was open only to young people who had graduated from ten years of school education was not a feasible way to develop a skilled workforce. In view of these insights, the focusing of the Swiss programmes on directly employment-oriented trainings was a logical consequence. As a result, the projects implemented since the 1990s in the domain of vocational training addressed those groups in Nepali society that already worked as craftsmen or could be qualified for such a type of work through a brief specialised training course. Integration into the labour market thus became the main aim of these programmes, whose activities now also included job placement as well as advice to the participants on the labour market, on employment opportunities, on job application etc. The direct orientation of these projects toward the improvement of trainee employability is a recognised principle that also has an effect on the funding of the trainings: the newer projects financially support the vocational training courses in a result-based way, i.e. the full amount is paid only if the graduates actually go on to work in the trade that corresponds to their training.

The database on the labour market in Nepal is still rather inaccurate, and there are problems with the collection of data in several areas, e.g. the number of overseas workers: estimates on Nepali employees working abroad are difficult to make because the border to India, where most Nepalis seek jobs, is not controlled (green border). A useful basis for planning the employment and training programmes today is the Nepali Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme. The current orientation of Swiss programmes such as TiE and F-SKILL toward the improvement of the trainees’ employability on the national or overseas labour markets appears to be the logical response to the demand for greater labour market relevance of vocational training measures. On the other hand, these programmes are detached from the national VET system. They may be regarded more as labour market insertion measures, i.e. programmes to integrate job seekers, rather than as vocational training projects.

The Nepalis are well aware of the ongoing development and the significance of the national and international labour market, and this has led to a learning process. Agni Prashad Kafle describes this development as follows: «Nepal people used to think that school certificates were entry-tickets for government jobs. Therefore, they did not understand the value of non-formal vocational trainings. Today they are taught by the market: New trainings are developed and lots of new training providers are created. One of the driving forces behind this process is the significant difference in payments for skilled and unskilled labour force in the overseas labour market.»
01] UNESCO 1989, Article 3: «The Contracting States agree to provide and develop technical and vocational education programmes that take account of (...) employment opportunities and development prospects at the national, regional and local levels; (…)».

See also UNESCO and ILO 2002, paragraph 21 on functions of technical and vocational education and training.

02] «The problem of unemployment has never been studied in these countries, and, in the circumstances, it is scarcely a matter of urgency.» In: BIGA 1957: 16.

03] «Of the total number of students enrolled in higher education in 1967/68, almost half were arts students with very poor prospects of finding suitable employment.» In: IBRD / International Development Association 1969: 30.

04] Nepali Development Plans are global economic and social government programmes of five years duration. These plans exist until today.

05] HMGN 1956: 76.

06] ibid. 76-79.


10] «A fourth important obstacle to industrialisation is the small supply of industrial labour.» BIGA 1957: 16.

11] «Trainings were developed according to felt needs.» In: Interiew with Govinda Gajurel, Executive Director Manmohan Memorial Polytechnic.


14] «All of the above training programmes will be accorded exceptionally high priority in order that skilled manpower at all requisite levels may become available for the carrying out of our national programme of development.» In: HMGN 1956: 79.

15] «Two types of training will be conducted within the country for lower grade technicians needed for the implementation of programmes (…).» In: HMGN 1956: 78.

16] «The first type of training will be through an Engineering School at Kathmandu, (…). The second will be in-service training for which junior-grade personnel will be attached, with appropriate teaching and working supervision, to field units engaged in carrying out development projects.» In: HMGN 1956: 79.


18] Information provided by Alfred Frischknecht, former Nepal Country Director.

19] Interview with Suresh Raj Sharma, Vice Chancellor Kathmandu University, on March 22.


26] MTC 1984: 36 et seq.

27] «In Switzerland engineers work like workers, here in Nepal they are only managers, the mason can do better than them.» Interview with Govinda Gajurel, Executive Director Manmohan Memorial Polytechnic, in March 2007.

28] «The harsh reality of labour market was not recognised by the Swiss.» Tanka Nath Sharma in March 2007; «VET introduced by the Swiss was not always compatible to the context. These trainings were too sophisticated and could not be used later on.» Dev Bir Basnyet, Managing Director Alliance Nepal.


34] Information provided by Suresh Raj Sharma.

35] «The Swiss taught us to appreciate blue-collar jobs. In practice the question arose: Shall I also dig like them?» Interview with Govinda Gajurel in March 2007.

36] «Never organise a training for only training’s sake but get it linked with labour market!» Dev Bir Basnet.

37] Information provided by Geneviève Federspiel, deputy head of the Swiss Cooperation Office, Kathmandu, Nepal.
BLESSING IN DISGUISE One skill test and life has not been the same anymore for this lady. The twinkle in her eyes as she talks of her achievement kind of tells it all. «It was sort of a blessing in disguise for me» shares Son Kumari Chaudhary, referring to the first skill test she undertook three years ago under the National Skill Testing Board (NSTB). «I was told that certification of one's skill would be beneficial, but I never thought that things could turn out this nice» Son smiles when sharing her views.

This lady, who has had a modest upbringing in the Tharu hinterlands in the mid-western region of the country, had no ambitious career plans. Motivated by the prospects thrown up by the Level 1 Junior Technical Assistant (JTA) skill certification, she's now appearing for the Level 2 skill test at Bheri Technical School in Lalmatiya, Dang district. «After I acquired the skill certificate, an NGO working in our locality offered me a job. However, prior to this, they were by far non-committal even when I told them that I needed this job and I possessed the required skills» she recalls. So it's no surprise that she's taking up the Level 2 skill test. The dedication is evident when looking at the applicants digging, cutting or sprucing as required by the tests.

The sprawling test centre area with its calm and quiet look and the well-grown mango grove, provide an apt setting for the skill test. It is as if participants were performing in real life situation, not really disturbed by
The project is designed to scale up NSTB's skill testing services rapidly and substantially. Many workers in Nepal have no qualification certificate due to their informal way of learning. Non-academic skilled workers who gained their skills in an informal way (non-formal training) may have different needs and requirements than those who have formal qualifications. NSTB has developed music and dance skill standards, but nobody has taken the test yet.

In Nepal, skill testing dates back to the mid-1980s, when a statutory Skill Testing Authority (STA) was established. With the emergence of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) in 1989, the skill testing services were integrated into the CTEVT administration and thus lost independence. The idea of Skill Testing underwent an international revival in the wake of the discussion on competency-based training. Within this context, a multitude of organisations and the concept of a so-called National Vocational Qualifications Frameworks emerged.

Many workers in Nepal have no qualification certificate due to their informal way of learning. Increasing international labour migration, rising quality demands on the national labour market and the emergence of National Vocational Qualifications Frameworks created the need for a good working national skill testing system.

The system of occupational classifications, skill testing and certification was introduced in Nepal in 1982 by the Skills Testing Authority (STA), a statutory body instituted by the Government of Nepal. The initiative was launched with the technical support from the Asia Pacific Skill Development Program (APSDEP) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, in 1989, after the constitution of the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), STA was absorbed and downgraded to a directorate of the CTEVT. This not only lost its autonomy and glory, it also remained low-profile. One government official quips: «Skills Testing was never as autonomous as when it was STA.»

On the initiative of the Swiss Development Co-operation (SDC), the dynamics was changed in 2000, and the National Skill Testing Board finally evolved as an independent apex body for skill testing and certification in the country. SDC has given the nearly defunct skill testing system a new lease of life. Currently, the onus of certification is solely vested with NSTB in order to assess and classify occupations that exist in the economy, develop Occupational Skill Standards (OSS), conduct skill tests and certify successful candidates. But, one official at CTEVT emphatically said in an interview: «All these higgledy-piggledy acts of the incumbent governments in the last decade infused chaos at NSTB until the skill testing system underwent a revival in 2000 with the Swiss initiative.» Another NSTB official added, «Although we have long cherished independence from CTEVT, we are still dependent upon it: it exerts control over all our policy decisions including providing grants to meet our budget shortfall.» He was witty when he said, «We are under a guardianship, but still have not regained lost freedom.» Anyhow, NSTB centre is happy with the office premise, facilities and skill testing venue that still belong to CTEVT, but many perceive that CTEVT does not want to lose over NSTB. The main argument for NSTB's autonomy from CTEVT was to improve overall performance of NSTB both in quantity and quality.
DEMAND AND SUPPLY The labour absorption of the government and private sector in Nepal is less than 50,000 annually. Alternatively, statistics suggests that NSTB has been performing skill tests on an average of about 500 people per year (1984-2005), whereas private institutes are estimated to impart training and skill tests to about 30,000-50,000 people in the same period. In terms of sheer testing volume NSTB had tested about 2,000 persons during the fiscal year 2004/2005. These figures need to be seen against an estimated strength of Nepal’s labour force of some 12 million, and an annual figure of new entrants into the labour force of roughly 500,000. Likewise, according to the Foreign Employment Association (FEA) every year about 200,000 Nepalese join overseas labour market, mainly the Gulf countries, Malaysia and South Korea to name a few.

Though the concept of skills testing made an emphatic entry in the European countries in the 70s and 80s, it is just ambling along in Nepal when we see the figures. The general education system usually provides only theoretical knowledge and for this reason skill testing could become more attractive amongst traditional craftspeople, occupational groups, informally and/or non-formally trained people and semi-skilled workforce in the country, as well as for those who are eyeing overseas jobs. But, the practice is that most of Nepalese workforces try to find employment without formal skill training or testing due to various compulsions.

In the last 21 years or so, only a limited number of people have done skill testing at NSTB (and erstwhile STS). In these circumstances NSTB officials, referring to statistics available till 2005, could only state that skill testing so far has been asked by 16,272 individuals – 14,502 men and 1,770 women. And amongst those who appeared for the test, 9,287 passed and acquired the National Skill Certificates (NSC). On an average that makes 442 recipients per year.

COST AND QUALITY FACTORS The government, apart from salary and benefits to the staff, provided NPR 800,000 (equivalent to US$ 11,111) to NSTB for the current fiscal year 2006/07. The amount was meant for conducting overall activities of the NSTB. Even in layman’s terms, considering the mammoth responsibility of producing skilled human resources by alternative means, the budgetary allocation is but peanuts.

The skill tests in building-electrician, tailoring/garment, agricultural JTA, Livestock JTA and light vehicle service mechanic are the most sought after tests by individual candidates who bear testing costs of about USD 50 to 200 on their own. Whereas, the tests for construction brick layer/mason, scaffold (tabular), industrial-electrician, solar technician and ophthalmic assistant are popular amongst the institutionally sponsored candidates. At NSTB centre in Sanothimi applicants from the Nepal Army had just completed their Construction Brick Layer/Mason test at the nearby testing venue. One of the candidates explained in anonymity that the prospective candidate needs to come up with necessary raw materials. Otherwise he has to pay the costs of testing materials such as sand, cement and bricks to NSTB, which comes around to US$ 100 to 250.

The case is clearly highlighted when instructors at the Sunsari centre shared that the number of applicants went down due to the recent hike of the testing fee. According to the instructors at the centre the women simply seem to voice: “What if we fail the test? The money will go down the drain. Besides, even without the certification, we have the skill and are living a life anyway. So what’s the urgency?”

One evaluator for refrigeration and air conditioning Satish Gorkhali opined that it will be better to give a crash course to those who don’t have prior theoretical knowledge on the subject to be tested. “This is thought to help them understand the basic principles and the technical terminology used in the profession. We sometimes take viva voice tests to know their level of understandings,” says Gorkhali. But, it’s a relief to find out that the pass-out rate in skill tests was almost 57 percent, which is higher than the average school graduation results under the general education system. Undoubtedly, the hallmark of NSTB tests lies in the quality, not in the quantity.
THE KNEE-JERKS  The organisational structure of CTEVT has some bearing with NSTB because NSTB has to get a mandate or endorsement from CTEVT, where political whims have many a times overshadowed the main goals. Certainly much remains to be done in skill testing. It is of utmost importance to make skill testing available also in more remote and rural areas and to all segments of the society. Different approaches are possible, among them installing test centres in out-flanked rural areas, introducing mobile test centres and loans for the poor. But difficult terrain, sometimes inaccessibility and financial constraints have dampened the prospects.

Apart from such unique and pressing concerns, one common issue associated with the testing system is publicity - the daunting needs to educate and reach out to the potential candidates. One can empathise with the NSTB director Nakarmi, when he explains why it is not overtly possible to place multiple newspaper advertisements or take up alternative communication tools. Each advertisement published by NSTB in national dailies would at least cost somewhere around forty to sixty thousand rupees (equivalent to US$ 555-833). Thus, a probable and obvious way out would be to build an effective network amongst the stakeholders, consider a participatory approach, devise cheap but effective communication tools, and maybe disseminate news and information through the local mass media to the extent possible. Local NGOs and VDCs (Village Development Committees) can be a useful medium for dissemination of information. Since much of the target group hail from the lower income bracket of the society, the cost levied works out far too expensive. Apart from cases where the fee structure in itself has proven to be too expensive for the target group, the need to bear the costs of raw materials for the testing is in many instances a hurdle too high to pass.

If a testing system like in China, South Korea and Switzerland can be promoted in Nepal, NSTB could attract more people to test their skills. If made a pre-requisite for establishment of enterprises or going-in for overseas employment, NSTB skill test certificates could also help NSTB establish its brand name. This has been practiced in Nepal in cases of lawyers (Judicial Council), tour operators (Ministry of Tourism and Culture), entrepreneurs in alternative energy (Alternative Energy Promotion Centre) and ophthalmic (Nepal Eye Sight Association) sectors.

Nepal’s Skill Testing System does not pursue to become a binding, legally prescribed system. Should there be provisions for students of vocational and technical training institutes to take part in NSTB skill tests compulsorily, it would promote skill testing and certification in a better way. In practice, there are still some admission requirements at NSTB (in terms of previous training and minimum work experience) which should be given up by decision of the NSTB, the sooner the better. The other hindering factor is a lack of research and statistics. NSTB does not possess follow-up details or career history of those individuals who acquired a NSTB skill certificate.
CROWD AT THE AIRPORT  Recently I got the opportunity to travel abroad for attending a workshop. At the airport I was surprised to see such a huge crowd, many having a «tika» on their foreheads, a garland around their necks, and wearing the same caps with the label of an overseas employment agency.

«Where are you going to?» I asked the person standing next to me waiting for the security check.

«I am going to Qatar for the first time… For work!» Dinesh Chaudhary from Saptari district, the Southern part of Nepal excitedly said. «I do not know what the next step is …in the airport… and then there in Qatar… I am doing what is being told and what is being done by the group» he added fearfully.

«What kind of work are you going to do in Qatar?»

«Construction work»

«How much is the salary?»

«800 Riyal (about200 US$) per month at the beginning…»

«How do you know about this opportunity?»

«Friends… I had to sell some of my land and take some loan to pay the agency… I hope it will be regained after a few years of work abroad and that I can provide a better life for my family».

Nowadays these are common scenes at Kathmandu airport. Mr LP Sanwa Limbu, President of the Nepal Association of Foreign Employment Agencies, confirms this impression. According to him, on average 500 persons per day leave Nepal for overseas employment with or without skills. Mr Limbu estimates the yearly demand for migrant workers to be about 40'000 persons. Accordingly, he identifies an acute need of infusing industrial culture and professional values to the potential migrant workers. Persons coming from rural and form urban places of Nepal, cannot imagine the industrial scenario and difficulties one has to face in overseas employment. «Graduates from the Global Polytechnic Institute have a clear idea about overseas employment, and the certificates of the Skills Testing Board have a value in overseas employment» Mr Limbu added. The Global Polytechnic Institute is a training provider of F-SKILL; it focuses on training for overseas employment in particular. Official records from the Ministry of Labour & Social Welfare show 178'000 of skilled and unskilled people migrating each year. The value and volume of remittance earned by the migrated labour force has supported the country’s conflict-hit fragile economy.

TRAINING LIFE  In Bharatpur, at a four hours drive from Kathmandu, a private institution named «Training Centre Nepal», a training provider of F-SKILL, is located. The training centre has rented six rooms for training and administration in a small two-storied building, which is separated from abutting buildings only through simple bamboo poles. A group from Dolpa, a district still lacking electricity on most of its territory, participates in an electrical house-wiring training. Most of the participants use electrical appliances for the first time. Some of the participants were practicing wiring on wooden boards on the floor outside the building, while others were practicing the same task inside a small room equipped with a few desks, which apparently represents the workshop of the institute. The training consists mostly of hands-on practice. The small classroom (approx. 3m x 4.25m) comprises a white board, a few benches and a wall pasted with technical and safety visuals. The room is often occupied by 15-20 students. The F-SKILL «fact sheet» hanging on the classroom’s wall displays information about the training objectives, training costs per person, facilities to be provided, criteria for participant selection etc.

The fact sheet mentions the costs for the house-wiring training to amount to NPR 10’000 per person for 6 weeks. The costs include training materials, handouts, manuals, and a set of tools (worth NPR 1’000) the participants receive after completion of the course. The course is fully sponsored by F-SKILL; there is no course fee.

«It is hard for us to remember all the new terminologies and to understand the theories. It is good to know the safety measures at the very beginning of the training» says Nari Chandra Budha of Tripura Village-5, Dolpa. However, numerous practical exercises made him feel confident in installing basic electrical accessories. Rup Lal Sarki, who was selected in dalit’s (disadvantaged group) quota, had difficulties with instructional materials having different symbols and accessories which he never saw before.

Mukunda Bohara and Phurpa Lama, the trainers of electrical trade in the Training Centre Nepal, are both BTTC graduates. All trainers were trained in instructional skills provided by F-SKILL. Phurpa Lama, one of the trainers of the Training Centre Nepal, also conducts mobile house wiring training in Sukranagar Village, 25km away from Bharatpur. Participants come from nearby villages. They had to walk 2-3 hours to reach the Village Development Committee office, the venue for the training. Having the opportunity to attend free training, getting free lunch during the whole training period, and getting some working tools at the end is sufficiently motivating for them to accept the inconveniences.

Ms Manisha Nalbo, Managing Director of Global Polytechnic Institute, has been working over a decade instructing workforce for overseas employment. In her institute about a hundred trainees practice construction related skills like masonry, carpentry and plumbing under the same roof, just separated by 3-4 feet high wall. People don’t seem to bother about the noise produced by others. One group of trainees practices scaffolding in the limited outside space available. Some employers from abroad observe the training and interview participants. Along with skills training, participants get information about foreign employment, and they experience interviews.

Kumar Dangol and Dipendra Kumar, trainers at the Global Polytechnic Institute say: «Site visits, on-the-job training, psychological support, and the opportunity to observe and experience interviews with overseas staff, make the participants confident and mentally ready for going abroad». Skilled labourers with a certificate of 8 weeks training are said to earn about 700-800 Riyal (about 200-250 US$) per month.

The BTTC graduate Gaj Raj Shrestha, 54, is one of the active trainers of the Global Polytechnic Institute. He was involved in various training programmes like plumbing, masonry, welding etc. His face glows while
Chasing Employers: On-the-Job Training

All training programmes supported by the TfE project allocate a compulsory share of 33% of the total training time for on-the-job training (OJT). OJT represents a hands-on experience in a real work setting. It prepares the trainees for the world of work. This requirement is considered as being most conducive for ensuring placement of trainees after training.

The training providers have to build up contacts with possible employers already in the planning phase of a training programme, not just in the last weeks before the end.

Mr Dharma Pandey, OJT provider and employer, from Forward Nepal, an NGO at Morang district, mentioned that the value of a certificate provided by training providers or even by the skill testing board is difficult to define. He prefers to offer jobs on the basis of the performance shown in the OJT and/or the competence and confidence shown during the selection process.
FROM TRAINEES TO EMPLOYERS

Birendranagar and Khurkhure in the Chitwan district have witnessed changes in the way of living of the local community triggered off skills training like hair cutting, bicycle repairing, house wiring, mushroom cultivation etc. supported by Swiss projects. Nowadays many hair cutting salons run by ladies can be seen in the villages of Chitwan district. In the Nepali context, this would have been unthinkable a few years back, as the society would not have accepted hair cutting ladies.

Thirty years old Ms Jamuna Gurung of Padampur village, Tandi, about 180 km away from Kathmandu, was selected amongst hundreds of applicants for hair cutting training sponsored by F-SKILL. «I was selected probably because of my poor economic background, because of being a drop-out of school, and because of my willingness to open my own business,» she says. Her dream of running her own business came true after receiving a three months training in hair cutting and beautician and when getting a loan provided by the local community based organization. «Small Farmer’s Cooperatives» of Khurkhure village, Birendranagar, Chitwan. Now, she earns more than NPR 7’000 (about 100 US$) per month.

Shamikchha Lama, Sushma Gurung and Pooja Gurung work together in their own hair cutting salon in Bharatpur height, about 150km away from Kathmandu. They opened the salon after receiving hair cutting and beautician training. But they say: «Though the training was good, the skills imparted were not sufficient to run a salon smoothly.»

It looks as if women are breaking the male’s traditional domination in beauty parlours. 24 women have started their salons at different places in the district of Nawalparasi. According to them, 13 such salons were already established along the 25 kilometres stretch of Bardaghat-Sunwal road section of the East-West Highway, while one at a time has been opened in Parasi Bazaar and Gogipurani simultaneously. Kanchha Ram Khattu of Bhaktapur district got the information about SKILL Nepal training from a friend. He got the opportunity to learn house wiring and motor rewinding. He was a helper and night guard of a nearby office at that time, so he had to work day and night during the training period. Now he has a small workshop in the village, and he earns a sufficient and satisfactory amount. He says: «People from SKILL Nepal and related officials used to visit my place frequently to see the success and at the same time follow-up the training.» He would like to attend further training in industrial wiring.

Ms Radhika Maaka was interested in electronics due to her husband’s profession. Now, after having attended SKILL’s electronics training of 4 months duration in 2004, she handles a electronics workshop including a shop at Bhaktapur. While her husband repairs colour TVs, mobile sets, VCD players, video cassette recorders and other sophisticated electronics accessories, she repairs radios, black & white TVs and other small electronic devices. She received a screwdriver, a soldering iron, and a multi-meter free of cost after completion of the training. Nevertheless, Radhika Maaka expressed her dissatisfaction with the selection of trainees. According to her, the socially biased selection was one of the reasons that made graduates not being involved in the related field of training. «Out of 12 participants in my batch, hardly any work in a related field» she says.

Rajesh Chaudhary of Gainakot, Nawalparasi District, was an unemployable young man with responsibilities for three children. He participated in a two-month basic electrical house wiring training organised by Sahara Samaj. During the practical sessions of the training he was able to make relations to community members. This helped him to get a house wiring job soon after he completed the training. First he worked as an assistant for an established electrician to enhance his technical skills. There he became confident to work independently. Some years later he opened an electrical shop and supplied electrical materials for his clients as well. Now, he even employs his fellow trainees in house wiring jobs.

SWISS IMPACT

Mr Devi Prasad Dahal, TIE Project Manager, describes the full training cycle approach from pre-training to post-training activities as unique for his project. Moreover, TIE prepared the Yellow Pages of Training Providers, giving information on 354 public and private training providers all over the country. Together with SDC, the project prepared a publication entitled «Vocational Pathways», which should contribute to change the mindset of policy makers.

Mr Bansi Rana, Team Leader of F-SKILL and also founder of SKILL Nepal, says: «The base of success of F-SKILL is the employment and the payment modalities. Training providers receive the final payment only after participants are gainfully employed. Under this modality, payment is made on three instalments, 50% after training, 15% after reviewing the employability status of the participants after 3 months, and 35% after another employment review after 6 months. The key concept of SKILL Nepal is to go to where the trainees are. SKILL does not require participants to come to a centre, SKILL carries training to remote areas.»
SKILL (Skill and Know-how Imparted at Local Level), a non-governmental non-profit organisation was established in 1992 in close collaboration with Helvetas. SKILL has adopted a mobile model providing a practical kind of vocational training based on local needs and demands to the less educated and disadvantaged youth, creating self-employment opportunities in rural and urban settings, benefiting them as well as their service recipients. The courses are conducted in three training modes - subsidised, cost recovery and «franchising». Nearly 85% of the people trained by SKILL are involved in gainful employment.

In late 1996, Helvetas explored the possibilities of initiating the Rural Enterprise and Employment Development (REED) Programme located in Nepalgunj of mid-western region. This programme was planned to focus on the micro-enterprise sector, the strengthening of rural-urban linkages, and on bringing economic dynamism in small towns and district headquarters. But due to resource constraints the programme could not be materialized. However, in March 2001, based on a market analysis, Helvetas launched Elam, an informal sector enterprise development and employment promotion programme (a streamlined version of REED) in Birgunj municipality and its periphery. Elam has three programme components, namely Growth Enterprise Development (GED), Start Your Own Business (SYOB) and Women Self Help Group Promotion (SHGs). Elam is providing Counseling, Coaching and Consulting (CCC) services in the areas of business planning, working capital management, balance sheet preparation, costing, pricing and marketing, account and record keeping, linkage to credit, cost reduction, product display and decoration, product development and market testing, market development and market linkages, clean and tidy workplace, internal saving generation etc. Later on, Elam was replicated in Dhangadhi, Kailali as Elam Plus in 2005.

In January 2000, SDC’s Training for Employment (TfE) Project (implemented by a private consultancy firm) has emerged to strengthen training providers, information networks, linkages and institutional capacities for quality training delivery.

F-SKILL (Franchising-SKILL) started in 2003 as a project implemented by Helvetas and funded by SDC, promoting and financing employment oriented technical and vocational mobile training (similar to SKILL’s mobile training model) through a network of partner organisations throughout the country. In order to ensure that training participants are actually at work after completion of training, a specific financing mechanism has been introduced. Under this mechanism, F-SKILL provides payment to partners only after participants are gainfully employed. Additional incentives are given to training providers prioritising special needs groups. In the meantime F-SKILL has been registered as a private company F-SKILL Pvt. Ltd. licenced for a mobile vocational training approach. It builds on previous experience by Helvetas, SKILL and SDC with mobile training. The brand name includes training packages and procedures which are franchised to entrepreneurs throughout the country.
BACK TO THE FUTURE
A general appreciation of 50 years support to vocational education and training in Nepal can only be essayistic and personal. I have a background in VET policy formulation, systems development and service delivery for 30 years both in Switzerland and overseas. In the 90ies I was project manager in Nepal itself. Upon my return I conceptualised, designed, planned, backstopped and evaluated training and systems development projects as international consultant. Among others I also returned regularly to Nepal, and as editor of a website I am familiar with most Swiss vocational education and training projects. Elaborations on success stories, nuggets, missed opportunities, mismatches and (cultural) misunderstandings are not more than personal perceptions, but, considering my background and experience, also not less. In principle the general appreciation will lead to the hypothesis that the accumulation of the assets produced during the last 50 years under the roof of a virtual new project would lead to a modern, complex, comprehensive, systemic programme approach.

**GOLD NUGGETS**

The history of vocational education and training in Nepal is rich of gold nuggets. However, sometimes they are not easily visible, they are well hidden in the sand and gravel, and sometimes they are not found at the places where donors, implementers, and evaluators would have expected them to be.

**SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS**

A visitor to Nepal is likely to find the first trace of the oldest Swiss project already on the breakfast table of his hotel. The Swiss alp type cheese introduced in the 50ies is still produced and marketed, and our visitor is also most likely to be able to buy a Tibetan carpet next to the hotel. Thus, in terms of sustainability and generation of employment and income, the cheese and carpet production belong to the success stories of Swiss development cooperation. At times, in the 90ies, carpet production even developed into a major economic factor, competing with tourism for the first place as foreign currency earner.

**INNOVATOR AND INCUBATOR**

The MTC/BTTC, which in July 2007 was renamed into Balaju School of Engineering and Technology (BSET) continues to offer training, both long-term programmes and tailor-made courses financed by various customers, mainly donors and other projects, among others the TYE-Training for Employment Project of SDC. However, delivering training is what a training provider is expected to do, thus this is not yet a nugget. At times, MTC/BTTC was even criticised to produce in quantitative terms little output at high costs. If MTC/BTTC is only perceived as training provider with the function to train job entrants, there might even be some point in that criticism. However, our visitor to Nepal now strolls through the city and discovers solar water heaters on virtually each and every house in the Kathmandu valley. He doesn't wonder for long, where all these water heaters may be produced, as he detects one road-side workshop after the other specialised in producing and installing solar water heaters. Apart from providing training, the MTC/BTTC fulfilled a crucial, yet neglected and never systematically evaluated and assessed economic function as product developer and innovator, business incubator, multiplier, and benchmark setter for quality production and product quality. However, some of this credit may also go to the BYS.

As an organisation MTC made an odyssey through the institutions. First it was a project and an integral component of a company, then it became a part of the university system, thereafter the Ministry of Education exercised direct control, before it was integrated into the CTVET-Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training. MTC/BTTC survived, and some people say, it functioned not because of its respective mother organisations, but despite of them. The survival of MTC/BTTC as a quality organisation can possibly be more attributed to all these other functions than to the provision of training for job entrants. The Pulchowk Campus, a sister institution established by GTZ, lost on the same odyssey its identity. Last but not least, the MTC/BTTC project also gave birth to the SKILL project, another multiplier, which later on developed into the F-SKILL project.

**ROLE MODEL FOR RURAL MULTIPLIER TRAINING**

The Jiri Technical School (JTS) started with courses at the secondary level under an 8+3 system, and with a clear link to Government employment. In the initial stages this produced directly positive results, in that the graduates were readily absorbed in employment and developed a blue-collar attitude. However, after changes in the Government employment policy and the simultaneous switch from the 8+3 to a 10+2 system, the JTS lost its focus, its «raison d’être», and it slipped into a serious crisis. The adaptation and flexibilisation of the courses and in particular the introduction of an outreach programme, under which students went together with their teachers for longer stays into villages, where they worked directly on projects and provided services, is an innovative approach, which theoretically still can serve as role model for training in rural areas. However, the outreach training might work under NGO conditions or under a training provider with a high degree of autonomy better under limiting Government conditions.

**INFRASTRUCTURE AND INSTITUTIONS**

Despite the expansion and institutionalisation phase of the co-financed ADB project also produced some white elephants, it nevertheless left behind a decentralised infrastructure of reasonably well equipped training providers. It also left behind CTEVT as an organisation, and it developed and introduced key support processes like occupational analysis, curriculum development, accreditation and certification, skills testing, etc. The approaches, processes and instruments themselves are in line with international good practices and standards. The Swiss support qualified a sufficient number of people sufficiently to theoretically and professionally implement and manage a vocational education and training system. Thus, the Nepalese VET System has all necessary pre-requisites to perform. If it doesn’t do it adequately, this is not a technical or professional issue any more, but rather linked to attitudes, politics, cultural barriers – it is primarily a governance problem.
INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE BASE
Nepal might just be the first leg of our visitors travel around the world. He might continue to Vietnam, Sri Lanka, later on to West Africa and he might make station in the Balkans. In all these countries he will find traces of TITI, he might e.g. observe a secretary of an international project translating a Skill Card received from TITI into the local language. TITI served as resource base for Swiss skill development projects all over the world; it determined curriculum development and teacher training approaches and standards for Swiss development cooperation. And with the Skills Cards System, TITI has a knowledge management concept, approach and system of outstanding quality. Through a personal career, the TITI approach even found its way into the newly established Centre for Didactics in Higher Education at the Pedagogical University of Zurich.

LABOUR MARKET INSERTION
The post-project value of the latest project generation with substantial direct financing of training delivery is naturally more difficult to assess at this point in time. The rigid focus on employability and labour market insertion, and the development of programmes for school leavers at the major exit points from the education system might develop in such assets. However, under a perspective not limiting VET to its social insertion function, training of job seekers might not be the complete wisdom, as the training of potential job creators and other multipliers remains an equally important systems purpose of vocational education and training and lifelong learning.
**MISSED OPPORTUNITIES**

Elaborating on missed opportunities is considerably more delicate than searching for diamonds. Identifying missed opportunities might be misunderstood as the arrogance of a late coming know-it-all, as criticism of the then actors. However, it is only the historical perspective which can spot potentially missed opportunities. Missed opportunities are spotted on the background of nowadays knowledge and experience, it is not an analysis of decision making in the then historical context.

**FOOD PROCESSING**

Werner Schulthess, the first ever Swiss development worker in charge of cheese production, privately reviewed those projects in 1996, i.e. 32 years after the Swiss support to the sector discontinued. He already then noted some missed opportunities.¹ The first generation of cheese makers was trained systematically through a project-based apprenticeship scheme, whereas the following generations were trained only occasionally and through scattered NGO programmes from other donors. The cheese project was at the origin of the mechanical workshop, which later on developed into the MTC/BTTC, but in its own field, i.e. in food processing, no systematisation, professionalisation and institutionalisation of training took place. Such training might comprise initial training for apprentices, but also specialised training as regards various aspects of dairy technology, and managerial and entrepreneurial training. Cheese production in Nepal until to-day lives from the assets left behind by the Swiss, in that still the same mountain cheese factories produce the same range of products. The sector lacks product development and innovation, geographical expansion, diversification to different altitudes, and the like. The route from the focus on the production chain into systematisation and professionalisation of vocational education and training as support to the innovation capacity of the sector would theoretically have been open, but it was not taken for whichever reason.

The focus of vocational education and training on mechanical and other technical occupations developed into a pattern of Swiss development cooperation all over the world, and it is only recently, i.e. 50 years later, that some projects in other parts of the world have started to re-enter food processing as promising occupational area for self-employment, income generation and under equity considerations.

**VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND LIFE SKILLS**

Once upon a time the carpet industry employed thousands of carpet weavers, many of them women and children, many of them with little or no education. Under a narrow skills training perspective, carpet weaving is a low skills occupation, and the necessary occupational skills are easily imparted by the companies themselves as and when required. However, theoretically there might have been ample scope to enter cooperation with carpet producers less for occupational skills training, but rather for life skills like basic education, functional literacy and the like: The so-called «Fortschulungsschulen» of the 19th century in Switzerland, i.e. general, civic and health education in Sunday morning and/or evening classes for completers of compulsory education working on family farms and not participating in apprenticeship training, could have served as a role model. Those «Fortschulungsschulen» were one of the historical roots ultimately contributing to the development of the dual Swiss VET System.

**LEARNING FROM THE CARPET PROJECT**

The carpet project was always perceived to be a special case. There was hardly any spilling over of lessons learnt on its success factors to other projects. Under a training perspective, the carpet project built on traditional skills of Tibetans, but it didn't hesitate to go for product innovation, and to adapt it to the taste of Western customers. This success factor was in clear contradiction to the prevailing development philosophy of those days, where projects and training should focus on modernisation and on the introduction of new products, whereas they should leave alone the traditional crafts and production chains.
COOPERATIVE LEARNING MODELS
After the first mechanical workshop was split into a production and a training unit, the two entities went their own way and developed into two completely independent organisations without any further cooperation, not even for practice periods. This happened despite the selection of trades in the MTC/BTTC was aligned with the profile of BYS. At times in the 90ies, when BYS was a well reputed, successful company with high quality standards, BYS did not recruit its staff from BTTC graduates, because they were perceived to not have the appropriate working attitude, and to demand too high salaries. In MTC/BTTC the Swiss VET system only served as role model for quality and the heavy emphasis on workplace-based learning, but not as regards the cooperation with the private sector for training delivery, steering and co-financing. Under a historical perspective this might be perceived as a missed chance for the development of a locally adapted cooperative learning model in cooperation with the private sector.

The debate on the participation of the private sector in vocational education and training and cooperative learning models has re-entered the international debate on vocational education and training strongly, but no more with the ambition to transfer or copy-paste existing dual systems.

INADEQUATE TARGETING
The decision to change the 8+3 system into a 10+2 system in the early 90ies was politically motivated, but it had an impact which still makes the VET system suffer from major deficiencies. With the 10+2 system the entrance qualification into vocational education and training was raised to a level which only a minority of little above 10% of an age cohort ever reaches. Thus, the public system has no offer in its portfolio for school leavers at the major exit points from the education system, i.e. after completion of primary or lower secondary education. Job entrants’ training for school leavers represents the core business of any VET system. The lack thereof represents a serious systems deficiency. From a to-days perspective, the flexibilisation and diversification of the course portfolio to serve school leavers at different qualification levels would have been a better option. Participants in the 10+2 system perceive vocational education rather as a second chance for access to higher education, than as an entrance into the labour market. This system change is a crucial turning point, in that it made the VET system more exclusive, less labour market oriented, and it paved the way to further «brahmanisation» of VET. However, this is not a legacy of the autocratic system, but one of the early decisions under democratic rules.
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE TO VALUATE
50 YEARS COOPERATION IN
VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN NEPAL
CHARITY AND DEVELOPMENT
In Nepal the common area of conflict between tradition and innovation is aggravated through the caste system. As elaborated by Dor Bahadur Bista, a Nepali anthropologist, the caste system has a fatalistic component, which is in genuine contradiction to development. Among others, the caste system may result in a paternal dependency which legitimates the dependent not only to receive, but even to demand assistance in the sense of: «You are rich and I am poor, therefore you are obliged to support me, and then you will also feel better». Thus, charity is not just something at the discretion of individuals, but it becomes an obligation in the Nepali society. This deeply rooted cultural concept of charity penetrates the expectations towards donors and their projects. Donor financed projects targeting directly disadvantaged groups of the society are widely perceived to be charity rooted in the obligation of rich countries to help Nepal. Thus, the expectations in a development impact of socially legitimated donor projects, in the function of projects as change agents, remain small. Also the idea that Switzerland one day might leave Nepal as donor agency on completion of its mission to facilitate development is quite an alien concept for many Nepali, because charity is a never ending need. Charity is expected to help the beneficiaries to survive, but it is not really expected to make a real social and/or economic impact and change. Projects financing and/or subsidising training for selected target groups directly, are possible most vulnerable to this trap.

CULTURAL CONNOTATION OF TRAINING
Not only development cooperation in general, but more specifically the perception of education and training is also strongly determined culturally. Dor Bahadur Bista writes: «Education is not perceived as a means of acquiring skills that can be used productively to secure economic prosperity but it is seen as an end in itself which once achieved signifies higher status, and in association with which the privileges of status are expected automatically... To become educated is to be effectively removed from the workforce. Within such an atmosphere a genuinely productive professional workforce can never be developed and professional activities must continue to be performed by the untrained. (...) Because, traditionally, education was designed solely for the high cast and highly placed people, the newly educated people tend to equate themselves with these classes. That is why we have so many educated people who do not want to work. Education has made them socially equal with prosperous people. The educated consider themselves purer and of higher status than those who are uneducated and who perform physical work.»

STATUS AND OCCUPATIONS
In Nepal many occupations are linked to specific groups or castes, whereas other castes are not expected to perform certain tasks. However, due to their reputation and quality, MTC/BTTC programmes also attract students from high caste families. In plumbing e.g. such a student might follow the complete curriculum, he might perform well, he might pass the final examination with good marks, he might even have participated in projects for the installation of bathrooms in new buildings but as soon as it comes to the repair of a used toilet, he might culturally not be allowed to touch it.

JOB SEEKERS OR JOB CREATORS
The MTC/BTTC programmes were designed by Swiss crafts- and master craftsmen. They were designed as programmes for job entrants, using the respective Swiss apprenticeship programmes as role model and benchmark for quality. Participation in such programmes requires a general education background which compares somehow to the completion of lower secondary education in Switzerland. However, in the Nepali context, where only a minority of little above 10 percent of an age cohort reaches the educational level which qualifies for entrance in such programmes, the society expects the programmes to prepare for the first supervisory level, not for manual work. Thus, there was a continuous structural mismatch between the programme design and the related expectations of the Swiss experts, and the expectations of the students and their environment. As indicated above, MTC/BTTC performed in reality not only as training provider, but equally as incubator, product innovator, and multiplier. Evaluations and tracer studies limited their attention to the labour market function of BTTC, and they neglected its economic function, and its performance as development engine.

NEPALI INSTITUTION VS. INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE BASE
A similar mismatch between the expectations of the financer and the real function of the institution, though at a different level, is observable for TITI. The donor intended to establish TITI as Nepali institution, serving the Nepali system to improve instructional quality. However, as observed by the final evaluation, the Nepali system failed to link employment in the public system and/or accreditation of private training providers to quality standards of teaching and instructing staff. Under the given circumstances, TITI chose a fully modularised approach to programme design, and it developed into the Swiss international resource base for curriculum development and instructors training. While MTC/BTTC was criticised for its inadequate labour market function, TITI was criticised for excess quality at too high costs, and for its limited contribution to direct poverty alleviation, whereas its invalu- able function as international resource base for training, skills development and private sector promotion projects worldwide escaped the attention of both the financer, the implementer and the evaluators.

»
Training providers with their courses represent the core of such a comprehensive system. However, training providers are not isolated organisations, they rather act within the framework of specific rules and institutions (e.g., the educational structure, labour market services, legislation, national bodies, financing mechanisms, etc.), and they benefit from support services (e.g., instructors training, curriculum development, accreditation, examination, skills testing and certification, etc.). Furthermore, the system is determined through stakeholders (e.g., ministries, the private sector, business associations), and through international trends, good practices and reference frameworks.

Systemically speaking, there is no such thing like a right or wrong training, a right or wrong target group, there is only different training serving different purposes and different target groups, financed from different sources. Systemically speaking, both public and private providers, formal and non-formal training, short and long courses, training for job seekers and job creators are necessary to perform the overall systems functions.

A systemic analysis of the 50 years’ history of Swiss support to vocational education and training leads to the daring conclusion that the Swiss support to vocational education and training over time switched from one systems component to another, but that there was – again systemically speaking – not always a sufficiently clear understanding among the stakeholders about what they were doing and why they were doing it; about the systemic purpose of their respective interventions: The right training might have been offered to the wrong target group, the right target group might have received the wrong training, the institutionalisation might have been the right thing to do but at the wrong point in time and with the wrong partners, the right support services might have been offered to organisations which were not sufficiently ready to absorb them, and sometimes the right outcome was simply measured against the wrong purpose and with the wrong indicators. Among others, the meandering of the projects through the history can also be explained systemically, in that the sustainability of individual projects, be they organisations and training providers like MTC/BTTC, JTS or TITI, or be they individual training products like short courses for specific target groups, always urge for the availability of other systems components (e.g., teacher training, curriculum development, skills testing, etc.). However, the switch from supporting one systems component to another one was usually accompanied by an implicit or explicit criticism of the previous approach, whereas a systemic perception would rather reveal the complementarities of the individual projects, approaches, institutions, organisa-
tions, services and training products. This non-systemic perception of vocational education and training and its systems purposes still persists in the present debate on VET, and it is also reflected through the project portfolio.

**THE POLITICAL DIMENSION**

Politically the request of the Nepali Government for Swiss support is to be seen on the background of the independence of India in 1947 and the British withdrawal from the sub-continent. The autocratic Rana regime lost external resources and came under increasing pressure for reforms. In 1950, during the presence of the Swiss-Nepal Forward Team itself, a revolution installed the sovereignty of the crown with strong diplomatic support from India, and in alliance with supporters of the also newly created Nepali Congress. On this background the question on the political function of the Swiss support and cooperation accompanied development cooperation from its very first steps. However, the belief in modernisation theories, the expected fast success through the stimulation of potential «change agents» in the society, the know-how transfer, the focus on rural areas with its generally rather disadvantaged population, and the belief that development stimulation would be an activity with a time horizon of a few years only (thereafter investors would come and boost development), gave more than a sufficient justification.

In 1959 a new constitution brought for the first time popular elections with a landslide victory of the Nepali Congress. However, already in 1960 King Mahendra seized the power again and abolished the constitution in 1962. Until 1972 under King Mahendra, thereafter under his son King Birendra, Nepal was an absolute monarchy until 1990. Yet, the party-less system was confirmed through a popular referendum in 1980, and in the 80ies the political system was slightly liberalised through (officially party-less) elections to the National Assembly. Though politically the development was not democratic, in the 70ies and 80ies King Birendra focused on economic development, including the development of rural areas. These rural development programmes lead directly to the creation of JTS in 1982. On this background the context for development was generally perceived to be rather favourable despite the shortcomings in the democratic process. Moreover the reinforcement of the focus of the Swiss programmes on rural areas, on the development of the rural infrastructure, economy and society, the empowerment of people, the creation of village and user organisations, the direct cooperation with the rural population at grassroots' level (the majority of the Swiss experts lived in rural areas) was perceived to be not only a sufficiently strong, but even a very strong social and political legitimation of the then development cooperation. In his milestone report of 1977, Alfred Frischknecht denominates the capacity development through vocational training even as really revolutionary contribution towards the development and social transformation of the Nepali society.

In 1990 a movement comprising the complete spectrum of democratic parties brought the absolute monarchy to an end, King Birendra gave way to a new constitution with a constitutional monarchy. This development was of course welcomed by the donor community including the Swiss organisations. In vocational education and training the institutionalisation and massive expansion, including the establishment of the TITI, coincided exactly with the democratic change. In Nepal both the political attention, public budgets as counterpart budgets, but also people tend to follow projects more than in most other countries. Thus, the ADB project with its massive construction and procurement and with the substantial (overseas) fellowship programme financed by SDC both attracted the attention of politics and of elite people eager to work under the newly established CTEVT. Politically the creation of CTEVT gave vocational education a boost, more recognition, and more independence from education. However, internally and towards individual schools the development was quite opposite, in that the grip of CTEVT on the schools was much tighter than before, and CTEVT introduced a highly centralised system. Staff working for JTS or MTC/BTTC with a career prospect within their respective institutions, suddenly became employees of a centralised CTEVT. This re-directed their loyaty and career prospect, but they also became vulnerable to arbitrary transfers. In the 90ies working in rural schools increasingly became a punishment for political «misbehaviour». Ironically, all the major deficiencies and systemic mistakes of the present public vocational education and training system (relative autonomy at the level of CTEVT in combination with rigid centralisation for schools, introduction of the 10+2 system as backside entry into higher education, discouragement of the blue-collar attitude of the participants, vacuum as regards the offer for school leavers at the main exit points from the education system, loss of the labour market orientation of the main programmes, unflexible course portfolio, decreasing status of rural training, and, last but not least, the gradual politicisation and «brahmanisation» of the sector) happened after the democratic change and under the ever changing different governments: After 1990 politically motivated transfers of staff after each government change reached lower and lower levels.

On this background the escalating conflict in the late 90ies and the early years of the present century met an institution which already was «on the ropes» and completely unable to adapt its offer to the changing economic and social needs in the country.

Politically speaking, in vocational education and training the root causes for systems deficiencies and non-performance are much more conceptual and governance problems developed under the democratic rule, than the legacy of the autocratic system. May be, the conceptual capacities on the Swiss side to not only conduct a policy dialogue, but to facilitate and backstop a real policy development process, and the capacities to coordinate such a considerable programme with four substantial projects implemented by four different organisations, were stressed to the limit. Such challenges in combination with the lack of a systemic understanding of VET probably also exceeded the traditional Swiss approach to vocational education and training with hands-on practitioners.
GENERAL APPRECIATION

As regards training quality, hands-on training, course contents which make an impact in the market, and the pragmatic approach to course development through practitioners, the Swiss interventions in vocational education and training were always guided by the role model of Swiss apprenticeship training. In this respect the Swiss contributions defined benchmarks. This continued until the 90ies. TITI was the last project having been conceptualised based on the role model of the Swiss Federal Institute for Professional Education, and implemented primarily by practitioners as per the role model for expatriates defined in the 50ies.

The Technical Assistance (TA) Team to support the establishment of the CTEVT took up its assignment in the 90ies simultaneously with TITI and in parallel to the still continuing support projects to BTTC and JTS. Though the TA Team was financed from Swiss sources, it was recruited internationally. Conceptually the TA Team introduced the Anglo-Saxon terminology (which in the meantime has become international standard) and approach to systems development, it introduced a systematic approach to curriculum development, and it introduced the competency-based approach to training. This lead to quite some arguments and disputes between the competency-based approach and the traditional Swiss apprenticeship system. However, historically speaking, it was the first time that the Swiss VET Cooperation was forced into the international debate on VET systems development, and it was also the first time that the traditional Swiss approach to vocational education and training reached its limits: Systemically and historically speaking, the dual Swiss vocational education and training system was a rather unsystematic puzzle of organically grown parts, steered in a highly decentralised way mostly by practitioners. Thus, in those days, Switzerland had hardly any expertise to facilitate and coordinate professionally comprehensive policy and systems development processes. In Switzerland this changed only with the new federal law in 2002 (that became operative in 2004), which was heavily influenced by the international debate and European processes.

And now, what is the end of the story? The present project generation focuses on employability and labour market insertion of school leavers at the main exit points from the education system. It qualifies job seekers and thus performs one of the core functions of skills development systems. However, under a systemic and under a development perspective it neglects the question, who will do capacity building of the potential job creators, the multipliers, the change agents, the performers, the potential development engines.

Under a systemic perception none of the interventions of the past was wrong in principle, in contrary, all of them added a relevant components to the overall system.

A virtual new project really capitalising the experiences of 50 years cooperation in vocational education and training would take the apprenticeship and capacity building approach of the early projects, the non-hesitation to exploit and further develop traditional skills and to adapt products rigorously to market needs, the quality benchmarks and the product innovation of BYS, the economic development engine and incubator function of the MTC/BTTC, the rural service provision and multiplier function of the early JTS and its outreach programme, the courage to venture into real substantial projects of the 90ies, the quality service approach and the internationally reputed resource base of the TITI, the systems definitions and international terminology contributed by the TA team of the ADB project, the vocational pathways concept, the flexibilisation of the course portfolio to meet both labour market and social needs, and the rigorous focus on labour market insertion of the latest project generation. Instead of designing individual projects, such a virtual new programme would accommodate all these components under the roof of a systemically designed complex and comprehensive programme, and it would strictly target governance and systems performance instead of focusing on isolated project outputs.

3] Ibid. 6.
4] Ibid. 128.
5] SDC 2007, TITI.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Anno Domini (Christian year counting)</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>ANN</td>
<td>Auxiliary Nurse-Midwife</td>
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<td>APSDEP</td>
<td>Asian and Pacific Skill Development Programme</td>
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<td>AV</td>
<td>Audio-Visual</td>
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<td>BAR</td>
<td>Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv</td>
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<td>BAWI</td>
<td>Bundesaft für Aussenwirtschaft, Switzerland (today seco)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BID</td>
<td>Balaju Industrial District</td>
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<td>BSET</td>
<td>Balaju School of Engineering and Technology (formerly BTTC)</td>
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<td>BTTC</td>
<td>Balaju Technical Training Centre (formerly MTC)</td>
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<td>BYS</td>
<td>Balaju Yantra Shala</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAD/CAM</td>
<td>Computer Aided Design/Computer Aided Manufacturing</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organisation</td>
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<td>CTC</td>
<td>Carpet Trading Company</td>
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<td>CTEVT</td>
<td>Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT is a national VET agency responsible for policy formulation, coordination and quality assurance.)</td>
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<td>DACUM</td>
<td>Develop A Curriculum (Standardized method for developing a training curriculum. See also <a href="http://www.dacum.org">www.dacum.org</a>)</td>
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<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>DDC</td>
<td>Dairy Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>DEH</td>
<td>Direktion für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Humanitäre Hilfe (forerunner of SDC)</td>
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<td>DRZ</td>
<td>Dienst für technische Zusammenarbeit (forerunner of SDC)</td>
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<td>DRSP</td>
<td>District Road Support Programme</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations</td>
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<td>FCHV</td>
<td>Female Health Care Volunteer</td>
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<td>FEA</td>
<td>Nepalese Foreign Employment Association</td>
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<td>F-SKILL</td>
<td>Franchising-SKILL</td>
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<td>FTI</td>
<td>Federal Technical Institute</td>
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<td>GED</td>
<td>Growth Enterprise Development</td>
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<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (State-owned organisation implementing public German development cooperation as well as private development projects)</td>
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<td>HMGN</td>
<td>His Majesty's Government of Nepal</td>
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<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Committee of the Red Cross</td>
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<td>IED</td>
<td>Improvised Explosive Device</td>
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<td>IHDP</td>
<td>Integrated Hill Development Project</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTA</td>
<td>Junior Technical Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTS</td>
<td>Jiri Technical School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPAs</td>
<td>Milk Producers' Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPCs</td>
<td>Milk Producers' Cooperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTC</td>
<td>Mechanical Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDDB</td>
<td>National Dairy Development Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIDC</td>
<td>Nepal Industrial Development Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. N.</td>
<td>Nomen nominandum / Nomen nescio (replacement character for an unknown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPR</td>
<td>Nepal Rupies (Nepalese Currency, 1 USD ≈ 72 NPR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Skill Certificates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSTB</td>
<td>National Skill Testing Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSS</td>
<td>Occupational Skill Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OJT</td>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATA</td>
<td>Swiss Association for Technical Assistance (including Helvetas and SDC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC</td>
<td>Swiss Development Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAG</td>
<td>Schweizerisches Hilfswerk für Aussereuropäische Gebiete (today Helvetas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>School Leafling Certificate (rewarded after the successful termination of the 10th class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRC</td>
<td>Swiss Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STA</td>
<td>Skills Testing Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SYOB</td>
<td>Start Your Own Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEVT</td>
<td>Technical Education and Vocational Training (sometimes also referred to as TVET and VET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIE</td>
<td>Training for Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TITI</td>
<td>Technical Instructors Training Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training (sometimes also referred to as TVET and VET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMN</td>
<td>United Missions to Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>Unique Selling Proposition (What makes a business unique and thus successful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCD</td>
<td>Video Compact Disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee (Element of Decentralised Governance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training (sometimes also referred to as TVET or TEVT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. D.</td>
<td>Without date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>