

Field Activities by Jyoti Ghimire

Day 1: 03/01/2021

The main objective of the visit was to get to know the action school and the locality in general. It was the first day of my fieldwork. I had imagined reaching school early and participating in the assembly as well. But, it took some time to pick everyone up in the vehicles and also to climb the difficult road uphill. We went to the Dhulikhel Hospital Outreach Center first and had lunch there. It was on a hilltop at a place called Kakre. I learned that other researchers used to stay at the hospital when they had to stay overnight. We reached Shree Janahit Secondary School at around 1 pm. We stayed for some time at the school and then returned back.

Day 2: 06/01/2021

The objective of the visit was to explore how to move further with the study and talk to Mangal Sir, my co-researcher. I was also looking forward to meeting with the teachers and the students after the gap of nine months due to the pandemic. The school was running in a full fledge, but without any tiffin break in between. Sita Ma'am shared about the experiences of alternative teaching during the pandemic. It had transitioned from no action, to going into communities to teach, to students coming to school to collect homeworks, to students being called alternatively according to their roll numbers and to all students attending school at once. She shared her concern about student's engagement and retention.

Day 3: 10/01/2021

The main objective of the visit was to get to know the feeder school that was assigned to us. Amir Sir and I were assigned to Shree Dapcha Secondary School. Binita Ma'am went along with us to drop us to the staff room. We reached the school at

1:20 pm, much later than I had expected. On the way to the staff room, I was shocked to look at the state of the school grounds. Apparently due to the ongoing construction of the school buildings, there was not any clear space on the grounds, and there was a big hole almost at the edge of the ground. I got to know that it was lunchtime and the teachers were all in the staff room, about to have lunch. We had just eaten lunch on the way to Dapcha and when we were offered to eat, it was a bit awkward, as we could not accept. We were introduced to the teachers and I was able to talk to some teachers afterwards. The teachers shared that the lack of proper classrooms was hindering the enrollment and attendance of the students. The overall energy of the school really left me drained that day.

Day 4: 11/01/2021

The main objective of the day was to get to know the teachers and get familiar with the school environment. I went along with the whole team of the researchers. This time, we reached the school early at about 10:05 am. I was able to witness the school assembly. Some teachers were absent on the day and all of us went to different classes to cover the classes. I went to a few classes with Tashi Ma'am and we did introductions with gestures. It was silly and fun and some students could tell my name on later visits as well. I also sat in a class where Amir Sir hosted a game of bingo using English words. I felt that all of us being there was causing a sort of saturation, and we could not observe the actual school environment. I made a mental note to avoid visiting in large groups from the next time.

Day 5: 17/01/2021

The objective of this day was to learn the logistics of visiting independently, build rapport with the school family and observe the teaching-learning process. Tashi

ma'am was visiting along with me. We reached the Banepa buspark at around 7:45 and found the bus to Dapcha was already full. I learnt about the route, the timings and the bus owner who also owned a local hotel at the last bus stop, Tallo Hatiya. Talking to some locals in the bus, I got to know that Janahit School's area was known as Dharmashala as well as Khanal Thok. On reaching the school, we met the head teacher. I used the word "observe" while asking her permission to visit the classes and instantly regretted it when she took me to a class and asked me to give feedback to the teacher. I made a mental note to never use that word again. I realized that "resource" was viewed as something which needs to be brought from "outside the community". The Social teacher had communicated that the school will be ordering some tracing paper. The Nepali teacher was trying to use student's examples while teaching but was able to engage only a few students. The number of students was very low upto grade 5. I made a plan to talk to students from grade 6 and 7 on the next day. We went to the hospital at Kakre to stay for the night.

Day 6: 18/01/2021

The objective of the day was to interact with the grade 6 and 7 students on the problems they see around them. We left for school after eating the morning meal. It was a hard climb with a full stomach and the hot sun. Soaked in sweat, we reached the school at the end of the first period. It was already 11 and the last bus for the day would leave at 12 from the Tallo Hatiya. We had to take the last bus to attend an important lecture at the university at 4:30 that day. We communicated this with the head teacher and she understood our situation. I felt guilty. On the way back, we reflected among ourselves. I felt like the day was wasted, as I could not interact with the students as planned. We decided that on our next stay at the Kakre hospital, we would leave in the early morning without having any meal.

Day 7: 24/01/2021

The objective of the day was to interact with the teachers and the students of Grade 6 and 7 and explore the need of contextualization through problem solving or any other method. I was worried about which direction to turn to and whom to work with but the prospect of interacting with the students made me hopeful. We reached the school around 10 am. From a poster in the staff room which I had not noticed before, I got to know that 62.9% of students belonged to indigenous groups: Tamang, Newar, etc. This indicated the richness of the students as well as the community in terms of culture, language and local knowledge. I talked to the headteacher regarding the past and current engagement of the teachers with the researchers from the university. Also, I inquired about the teacher's cultural background and the locality they lived in. As some teachers were not present, I was able to interact with the students from grade 6 and 7 for a period each. In grade 7, to get the idea of their residences, we drew a map on the floor with student clusters. In grade 6, the students reflected on what would enhance their learning inside the classroom. I got an idea of how they saw their surroundings.

Day 8: 07/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to interact with Social and Nepali teachers at the action school and to get to know the teachers better at the feeder school. At Janahit, I discussed with three teachers about the challenges they faced while teaching. Two Nepali teachers shared about students' lack of engagement in Nepali classes and more specifically that they had no urge for free creation (*rachana*). I talked to Mangal Sir and he shared that activities like, acting out the dialogues from the lessons helped to catch their attention. He showed interest in exploring ways to increase students' engagement. I shared about the FIDS framework with him, and discussed if engaging students in problem solving could enhance their language

skills.

At Dapcha School, I talked to the teachers, listed out the name of the teachers, what they teach and where they live , for familiarity and also for seeing if the idea of problem solving through clusters could be feasible at the school. Achyut Sir and Pashupati Sir talked about the problems in our education system with the example of the Occupation subject.

Day 9: 08/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to learn more about the feeder school environment and how I could work together with the teachers. I found out that the number of students was quite low overall. I was able to sit in some classes with the permission of the teachers. There was some multigrade teaching going on in lower grades, some students were learning outside as well. I interacted with Nita Miss about the challenges at school and she shared that the attendance was very bad. She felt it was due to the state of the school infrastructure and negligence of the parents. Actually, the state of the classrooms was pretty bad, it was cold and small and dark and dangerous (with edges of zinc plates exposed at the windows). I felt bad for the teachers and students. On inquiring about practical activities while teaching, she shared that they don't usually conduct practicals and they do not have materials and even if they did make the materials, there was no space to keep it safe.

Day 10: 14/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to further explore the needs and opportunities in contextualizing Nepali language teaching and learning with Mangal Sir. I talked to Mangal Sir about the lessons in Grade 6 and 7 Nepali books, which lesson he was teaching and how we could incorporate problem solving in the remaining lessons.

We discussed some problems that the students might identify while working in the FIDS framework. For Grade 6, we had an idea about linking *Batabaran ko Rakshya* and *Pradhanadhyapak lai Nibedan* to conduct an awareness and plantation programme in the community. We planned to introduce the first step of the FIDS framework, “Feel” to Grade 6 students in my next visit.

Day 11: 15/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to introduce the first step of the FIDS Framework to Grade 6 students in the Nepali class with Mangal Sir. I sat in Nepali Class in Grade 7 and facilitated a reflection exercise in Grade 6. The students were asked to close their eyes and visualize them making their way to school from their respective homes. This was an extension of the previous activity in which they thought about what things/factors in their classroom are aiding and hampering their studies. Students visualized the things that bother them en route to school, individually, shared it in their groups and prepared a visual of what the problem looks like in their respective groups. The common themes were: dusty roads, slipping on the rainy days, deforestation and plastic wastes on the road. Our planning for the week was that he would ask the students to vote for a single problem in the groups (Feel Stage) and brainstorm for all the possible solutions for the single problem (Imagine Stage) during the week.

Day 12: 21/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to meet and discuss on moving forward with Mangal Sir. I sat in the Nepali period in Grade 7. While teaching "Sat Dine Sabha", Mangal Sir used examples of "Guthi" in the Newari community and asked a Newar student to explain how a guthi works. While talking about students' engagement in his class that day, he shared that, "Those not speaking in the class are mostly from

the Tamang community.." And the biggest number of our students is from the Tamang community. How can we build a space where everyone shares and contributes? It can be whatever the student feels or what he/she sees/knows in the cultural/social surrounding? We decided to try out the idea of a wall magazine to increase mutual learning and engagement.

Day 13: 22/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to collect students' response to the Feel and Imaging stages' thinking process conducted by Mangal Sir and to plan further activities in the design thinking process. Looking at the responses collected by Mangal Sir, I realized that his understanding of our plan differed from mine. The students had listed all the problems and suggested one solution each for all the problems. It was a general response and not the narrowed down focus that was desired in the process. We decided to define the problem in detail first (what?where?how?why?affects whom?), then ask them to brainstorm the solutions for the properly defined problem. On reflection, I felt that I could have gone with the flow, to move from where the students had got to, rather than planning to backtrack and follow the process properly. But, I wonder if we would get somewhere in that manner.

Day 14: 28/02/2021

The main objective of the day was to discuss the wall magazine with the students and to prepare an initial model of the wall magazine. Grade 6 students discussed in groups: and prepared : What type of board do they imagine? (via Drawing), Materials that can be used (in writing) and What would be the best place to place it?(in writing) They also prepared an initial wall magazine by pasting two chart papers together. We thought that we needed an actual board, because it would be better to

document their creations in their respective record files; it was also their learning ; when pasted with glue, it was not possible to do so without tearing the papers. Mangal Sir and I sat and planned how to involve students in the chapter: Swabhimani Mukh through wall magazine. I found the necessity to question the students about the resource use and to set the norms as well.

Day 15: 01/03/2021

The main objective of the day was to plan around with the changed context due to the pandemic. The final exams were preponed and the teachers were focused on completing as much of the course as possible. I discussed how to move forward with Mangal Sir. We thought that we could plan for the next year; on how to incorporate lesson-wise contextualized learning through the teaching process, projects and activities for Grade 6. We prepared drafts for the first three chapters of Grade 6. We also talked about continuing the design thinking process with the same students though they would reach Grade 7 next year and complete the cycle with implementation of the solutions as well.

Day 16: 07/03/2021

The main objective of the day was to prepare a second edition of the wall magazine on an actual board and to pass on the thread, hanging clips, papers and colors for continuation of presenting students' work as wall magazine as well as the wall hangings. We prepared a second version of the wall magazine. After discussing the best place and how to take care of it, the students placed it by the canteen's wall. Also, the students had suggested that they would need to take turns to see to it that no one touches/ messes with the content pieces. The students were very excited when seniors and juniors came to look at it. Mangal Sir and I sat and planned on bringing out the students' knowledge through the wall magazine for two more chapters of

Grade 6: Yudhistir ko Parikshya and Luis Pasteur. We were concerned about how to include everyone's work. Mangal Sir suggested that we could collect and paste their submissions group wise.

Day 17: 14/07/2021

The objective of the day was to talk with the teachers to figure out how we could move forward when students were not allowed to come to school. I was visiting Janahit after a three month's gap. Tina Ma'am, the head teacher, suggested that I explore my involvement in the school garden. I could not talk to Mangal Sir properly as there was a meeting. I asked him if he still had the papers from the wall magazine from the last time. He said he would show it to me next time.

A meeting where Binod sir was collecting updates on what was happening in the alternative teaching-learning process. The teachers shared that the students were being taught through messenger groups and they would soon start teaching via the CUG sims.

Day 18: 08/08/2021

The objective of the day was to talk with Mangal Sir and explore how we can move forward.

We reached early, at about 9:15 at Sanjaya Sir's place. I sat down with Sanjaya Sir and shared my confusion. He shared that the fish pond was already dug. He suggested that I read about integrated farming, and plan with Mangal Sir. At school, I met with Mangal Sir, he was busy distributing CUG sim and taking classes. We talked about connecting pig cum fish farming with language learning. He shared that he was interested in that. A meeting on School Garden Management with SMC stakeholders and teachers started at 3:30. The head teacher was not present. I empathize with the teachers when they were accused of being dormant. It was

decided that a committee needed to be formed. A seven-membered committee was formed on the following Friday.

Day 19: 15/08/2021

The objective of the day was to talk with Mangal Sir, learn about his prior knowledge on pig farming, and to encourage him to write reflections on that. We reached school before 10. The teachers got busy taking classes. In the school's computer lab, Tashi and I looked at research and related resources on the internet. We waited for the teachers to complete their classes via phone. We were asked to wait till 1 by the headteacher, but the calls were not completed even when it was already 2:30. I requested some time with Mangal Sir and we sat and talked about his prior knowledge on pig farming. I also shared my idea: how we could document what he knows, what he learnt in visits and what is the actual experience. There was a meeting at the school soon afterwards; on setting the vision of the school; what would they want the students to turn out to be like on graduating from Janahit. It was quite intense.

Day 20: 22/08/2021

The objective of the day was to identify and collect required information for the cost estimation of pig and fish farming. I talked to Prashant Sir, Mangal Sir and Ramchandra Sir and jotted down the details of the amount and rates of raw materials and human resources required. There was some information on rates and quantity required (especially regarding the livestock) yet to be collected by all of us; it was not known yet. We also went to visit a nearby fish pond at a local's home at Barbot with Ramchandra Sir. He had a pond with raised walls and was keeping catfish. He shared that they grow fast, and do not need not much care. Ramchandra Sir suggested that we should also keep catfish in the school's pond. There was no reflection from

Mangal sir. Also, the process of cost estimation was really challenging for me, I worried a lot about things such as; what if the teachers are telling me increased prices and amount required.

Day 21: 14/09/2021

The main objective of the day was to visit an agricultural farm in Kuntabesi and learn about fish farming, mushroom farming and pig farming. The schedule was not timely, as planned. We reached Kuntabesi quite later than it was planned, at 11:10. We visited a farm close to the side of the main road; Mandan Agricultural Foundation. The contact person could not be present, we were shown around and briefed by a staff of the farm. He shared information about fish ponds, feeds, etc. We also visited a nearby “proposed model” school; Mahakali Secondary School at Chainpur, which was about 40 minutes uphill from the main town of Kuntabesi. The school team shared their good practices and the overall journey to the current state. We could not visit another agricultural farm due to lack of time and we could not also conduct any type of reflections. On our part, it turned out that we had also missed to gather proper information on mushroom farms, there were none in the vicinity.

Day 22: 26/09/2029

The objective of the day was to gather reflection on the farm visit, to discuss and make action points with the pig farming and the fish farming team and to interact with students regarding their existing knowledge and perspective on pig farming and fish farming. In their free period, I interacted with the students from grade 6 and 7 and conducted group discussions regarding what they know about pig and fish farming. I collected written reflections from Tina Ma'am, that the teachers had submitted as per her request. There was a discussion with the teachers from the pig

farming and fish farming team on our next steps. We concluded that a visit to the Central Fisheries Promotion and Conservation Center at Balaju was necessary to proceed further. Furthermore, a drawing competition was planned with Tashi, Binod Sir and Tina Ma'am.

Day 23: 29/09/2021

The main objective of the day was to connect the fish farming team with the experts at Central Fisheries Promotion and Conservation Center to gain a better clarity on our concerns and action plans. Surya Sir had communicated that he was coming to Kathmandu on weekdays for his personal reason. So, we planned a trip to the government fisheries office. We were able to talk to an official, who listened to our concerns and cleared some of our misconceptions.

Day 24: 03/10/2021

The main objective of the day was to discuss the criteria of judging the winners/involved in judging the drawings, to handover the prizes for the School's drawing Competition to the school, to follow up on action plans, construction updates and plans before Dashain and in between Dashain and Tihar. We discussed with the ECA team on the matters of the prize distribution. The head teacher suggested that we join a meeting with the garden committee to officially gain approval for starting the construction by delegating the responsibilities to the respective teams.

Day 25: 06/10/2021

The main objective of the day was to participate in a meeting with the teachers and the school garden committee for approval of handing over the financial and overall responsibilities to the garden teams. Also, the prize distribution had been kept for

the last day of the school before dashain, which was on the day. Sanjay Sir and I were requested to distribute the prize to the winners of the drawing competition in the morning assembly. The meeting was held, but we did not come to any new conclusion, I felt.

Day 26: 18/11/2021

The main objective of the day was to learn about mushroom farming and hydroponics with the mushroom and hydroponics teams. We visited a mushroom farmer at Nala, Banepa and hydroponics site at Tokha, Kathmandu. This time, we were closer to our schedule than the last time. We left for the hydroponics site at around 12:30 but it took more time than estimated to reach there. It took almost 3 hours. And we could not fit in a time to eat in between. Hunger and the long journey had drained all of us. The teachers were sharing that we could have searched for sites that were situated closer together. At the end of the day, the teachers were excited about mushroom farming but a bit skeptical about growing plants using hydroponics.

Day 27: 21/11/2021

The main objective of the day was to follow up on the progress on the field and clear up any financial and logistical issues in the presence of Roshani Maam and Mandira Maam. We reached Janahit around 12 and met with the head teacher and the accountant of the school. In the presence of authorities from both the university and the school side, we were able to communicate on matters like; expenses of employing a family to look after the school garden will have to be on a shared basis, claiming the expenses on garden management separately, our contract is actually only upto December so the construction must be speeded up and so on. I was also able to participate in the Gender Workshop that incorporated the use of sports materials in teaching and learning as well.

Day 28: 28/11/2021

The main objective of the day was to follow up the construction in the field. Also, I needed to bring the letters for mushroom farming and truss construction and submit it to the university. I visited the construction site with Surya Sir, Ram Sir and Mangal Sir in their free periods. We were able to roughly plan the steps ahead. The official from the fisheries department had visited the site and had suggested keeping about 50 fishes in the pond. The teachers were a bit discouraged by the prospect and wanted to increase the area of the pond. I understood their concern and told them that I would communicate it with the university.

Day 29: 05/12/2021

The main objective of the day was to prepare a detailed construction plan, and the new estimates if necessary. I was a bit surprised to see that the pond was already dug with only a day's work left to complete it. I called Roshani Ma'am from the school and shared about the pond. She suggested that I prepare the new estimates and the university would look into it. So, I prepared an estimate for the new dimensions of the fish pond along with the stone wall (there was no confusion about the stone wall, it was agreed that this is a good preventive measure against possible landslide). Also, a day-to-day plan of the construction was agreed upon and all these were submitted to the university on the next day.

Day 30: 05/12/2021

The main objective of the day was to talk about how to move further, after the concern shared from the university regarding the sustainability of the projects. On reaching the school, I noticed that the concerned teachers were not as interested and were discouraged by the gap created due to the matter of funding and sustainability.

I discussed the matter with the head teacher as well as the teachers on how to move forward. The head teacher shared that they would be having a meeting to discuss how to ensure to continue the projects efficiently after the researchers leave after completing their studies. We sat down and made some changes in the construction plan. Also, I had to pass on some documents and request letters and receipts from the school. That took a considerable amount of time, but was thankfully completed on time.