

Presented to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
Unit for Asia and Oceania (ASA-10)



CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR TEVT (SOFT SKILLS) DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL SECTOR REFORM PLAN IN NEPAL

February 2015

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction	6
1.1. Policy Framework.....	7
1.2. Finnish Support to Education Sector in Nepal	8
2. TSSP TEVT Soft Skills Project	9
2.1. Objectives of the TSSP	9
2.2. Purpose of the mid-term review.....	11
3. Findings	13
3.1. Relevance	13
3.1.1. Soft Skills	13
3.1.2. Policy Relevance.....	17
3.1.3. Relevance of selected strategies.....	18
4.1. Effectiveness	19
4.1.1. Curriculum development (Component 1).....	19
4.1.2. Curriculum Development, Capacity Development and Assessment Tools.....	19
4.1.3. Guidelines for counselling.....	20
4.1.4. Assessment of the Outcomes	20
4.2. Capacity development (Component 2).....	23
4.2.1. Piloting and CBSS Focused Training	24
4.2.2. Action Learning Group (ALG)	26
4.2.3. Guidelines and tools.....	28
4.2.4. National Young Professionals	29
4.2.5. Assessment of Outcomes.....	29
4.3. Piloting of the revised curriculum in 14 districts and schools	32
4.4. Efficiency	33
4.5. Sustainability.....	35
5. Crosscutting Issues.....	37
6. Conclusions and Recommendations	38
7. Future Scenarios	46

Annex 1 Terms of Reference

Annex 2 Districts and Schools visited

Annex 3 Balance Sheet

Annex 4 Student Questionnaire

Annex 5 Persons consulted

Annex 6 Documents consulted

Annex 7 Contents and objectives of the Module 4

Abbreviations	
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALG	Action Learning Group
AR	Action Research
ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
CBSS	Competence Based and Soft Skills (Focused)
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
DEO	District Education Office
DOE	Department of Education
ETC	Education Training Centre
FPs	Focal Persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
IP	Intensive Piloting
LRC	Lead Resource Centre
MFA	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTR	Mid Term Review
NCDE	National Council for Curriculum Development and Evaluation
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NYP	National Young Professional
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
OBT	Occupation, Business and Technology Education
RP	Resource Persons
SMC	School Management Committee
SS	Soft Skills
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TA	Technical Assistance
TSSP	The TVET Soft Skills Project
TEVT	Technical Education and Vocational Training ¹
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
TL	Team Leader

¹ MOE suggested to use TVET consistent to TVET Policy 2012.

Executive Summary

A Mid Term Review of the TEVT (Soft Skills) project was carried out to assess the performance of the project and to provide guidance for the remaining implementation period of time. The MTR was carried out during period November 2014 to January 2015. This report presents the findings and recommendations.

The MTR Team reveals that focused attention to Soft Skills in the education system in Nepal is highly relevant. It can improve both quality and relevance of education. Soft Skills and Employability skills are also an explicit objective of SRRP.

TA is provided to the grade 9 and 10 Curriculum Reform process, piloting and related teacher training. The Curriculum for the six core subjects is developed and approved; assessment is being developed. Four out of eight teacher modules have been delivered.

Relevant strategies have been chosen. However, the parallel focus on curriculum development and Soft Skills piloting in schools in a situation where Curriculum was not available has weakened the project logic. Also the extension plan to expand the piloting to a larger number of schools is not feasible as the Curriculum is not yet published. The Team considers that subject specific training would have been more efficient as it would have allowed better transfer of skills to practise.

Most of the planned activities have been delivered even though with a delay compared to the original plan due to the delays at the start-up. However, the project has been able to catch up. The project is likely to achieve its objective regarding Curriculum development (Component 1) but it is likely that the Component 2 will not achieve its planned objective. Implementation of Component 3 has not yet started.

It is likely that with some extra time this Component is able to deliver the expected outcomes. However, more emphasis should be put on quality of the deliverables (e.g. text book writers' training, writer's guide) and extensive efforts are needed to launch the Soft Skills concept in accordance with the principles set in the SSRP. All stakeholders consider that employability skills are crucial particularly for 9-10 grade students. The MTR also considers that the objective of addressing gender and disadvantaged is not sufficiently addressed in project planning, implementation and monitoring.

The MTR developed a set of recommendations which are presented in this report. They are highlighted below:

- Clarify soft skills concept in accordance with the SRRP.
- Redesign component 3 and focus on dissemination
- Improve coordination and cooperation.
- No-cost extension.
- Ensure that gender and disadvantaged are addressed.
- Focus on quality. For instance, ensure that Text Book Writers are familiar with the SS concept and that gender and disadvantaged are addressed in the Text Book writers training and text books.

- Evaluate the Training Programme and analyse which part or sessions would be relevant for integration in the NCED trainings.

Based on the findings of the MTR identified the following areas for the future Finnish TA support: Support implementation of the new 9 – 10 grades Curricula with subject-specific training; support implementation of the 6 – 9 curricula, and at policy level; support development of guidance and counselling systems (feasibility study, legal framework) and support to students with special educational needs.

1. Introduction

Many educators and labor market researchers point out the importance of continuously developing skills beyond traditional academic skills and those required for a specific job. They identify employability skills that enable individuals to prove their value to an organization as the key to job survival and progression. The dual challenges of competing in a world market and rapid technological advancements have also necessitated a redesign of the education system to a place which will equip the students with necessary academic skills and job-specific skills but also with adaptive blend of technical and human relations ability.

As a response to the changing needs in the modern labor market and the society as a whole, the education systems have increasingly started to increase soft skills, Life Skills and non-formal skills into the general and TVET curricula. The **School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015 (SSRP)** and its Extension Plan (2014/15-2015/16) in Nepal also emphasize *employable skills* (also referred as “employability” skills) as key to enabling people to become an active part in the society and secure their livelihoods. To establish this, both hard skills (technical and vocational skills) and soft skills are needed. According to the SSRP, technical and vocational skills (hard skills) have a clear understanding, whereas soft skills are a relative new concept and refer to skills that do not lead to an independent output by themselves but enable and increase the output of other skills (such as analytical skills, punctuality, planning, mediation, reasoning, etc., see (SSRP Extension Plan 2014/15-2015/16, p. 23.)

There is a need for enhanced Soft Skills education in Nepal, because for instance, the results of the learning outcome assessments (see for instance Metsämuuronen and Kafle 2013) show that while progress has been made in reading and mathematics, grade 8 students in Nepal are comparatively poor in the ability to solve problems, to analyze, deduce logic, generalize, justify and argument a view point, and to transfer learning from one context to another. This study also found that bullying in Nepalese schools is a common phenomenon which also puts the Soft Skills such as communication, problem solving, and inter-personal skills in a new perspective. Furthermore, the youth unemployment rate and the increasing number of people migrating overseas call for better relevance of education and skills which will enable the Nepalese youth to find a place in society and in the labour market.

As part of its contribution to the SSRP implementation Finland has provided Technical Assistance (TA) to the integration of Soft Skills in the curriculum development and to piloting of the practical and vocationally oriented skills curricula in general education. The purpose of the TA is to support the MoE in implementing the “TEVT Soft Skills” component of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP).

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) has commissioned a team of Experts to conduct a Mid Term Review (MTR) of the TSSP support. The purpose of the MTR is to provide an independent analysis with regard to the validity of the project’s overall objective, purpose, outputs and activities and identify options for the Finnish Government’s future engagement in supporting soft skills in Nepal. The MTR was carried out during period of November 2014 and January 2015 by a team of two International Experts (Team Leader Raisa Venäläinen and Young Professional Heidi Heikkinen) and a National Expert (Saroj Devkota). Home Office coordination was provided by FCG International Ltd.

This MTR Report presents the key findings and recommendations. A draft report was submitted to the MFA and MOE in January 2015 and based on the feedback, the report was finalized.

1.1. Policy Framework

The education sector in Nepal is currently guided by a seven year strategic plan, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP 2009 – 2015; SSRP Extension Plan 2014-2016). It is the main strategy and instrument for the development of effective and comprehensive education system in Nepal. The SSRP finances both recurrent and development expenditures for the school education (grades 1-12). Key strategic interventions in the SSRP are Early Childhood Education and Development; Basic and Secondary Education; Literacy and Lifelong Learning; Technical Education and Vocational Training; Teacher Professional Development; Capacity Development; Monitoring and Evaluation; Aid Management and TA Coordination. The SSRP is financed by Government of Nepal, nine pooled development partners and five non-pooled partners.² The SSRP aims to expand access and equity, improve quality and relevance, and strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school system.

The SSRP spells out the need to include vocational orientation across basic education (grades 1-8), and aims to orient the students towards work and employability. It places special emphasis on vocational preparation at the secondary level (grades 9–12) by introducing soft skills associated occupational programs. In line with the SSRP provision, the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed a *draft action plan for the piloting of Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT) soft skills* in school education in 2010.

A comprehensive “*Nepal TVET and Skills Development National Policy*” was formulated in 2007 and revised in 2012. It focuses on expansion, inclusion, integration, relevance and sustained funding to respond to market demand. In order to make social upliftment and poverty reduction, TVET, especially skills training is an important means to prepare citizens to be able to contribute to socio-economic development. If this can be translated into practice, the contribution of TVET in the development of the nation will be meaningful. In addition the main goal of TVET is to produce human resources capable of competing in the national and international level by properly adjusting knowledge and skills. The policy has adopted the measure in five areas: massive expansion of training opportunities, inclusion of an access for all citizens who need training, firm integration of various training modes and pathways, enhanced relevance of courses and competencies and sustained funding and mechanism. The thirteenth three years interim plan (2013/14-2015/16) has made vision of massive expansion of TVET for development of the skill workforce and creating employment opportunities.

“*A National Plan of Action for Youth Employment 2010–18*” has been prepared with support from ILO to address various youth issues and identify activities and possible outputs. A Labour Market Information and Analysis System will be supported by ILO to allow better linkages between market developments and training institutions that will facilitate young people’s choices to invest in a particular career path.

² Pooled partners: Asian Development Bank, World Bank, UNICEF, GPE, Australian Aid, Denmark, DFID, Finland and Norway; Non-Pooled partners: UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, JICA and USAID (SSRP 2009 – 2014)

Within the framework of the SSRP MOE introduces a vocational stream in secondary education and incorporates TVET soft skills as orientation into the curriculum in primary and secondary education³. The introduction of TVET in secondary schools, including soft skills, is done on a pilot basis with subsequent integration into school education. The MOE defines these skills as *Soft Skills* and integrates them into the general education curriculum as an orientation to technical and vocational skills. They are intended to be taught throughout the system (basic and secondary education). Soft skills focus on career preparation and orientation programs into world of work after comprehensive education. They also include enterprise education on higher level and integrating life skills at the basic level.

In line with the SSRP, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) envisages two essential soft skills-related TVET components that are emphasized in the school curricula. These two components are (1) integration of life skills or life supporting skills in school curricula, (2) integration of knowledge, skill and values connecting education with the world of work. Both of these components have strong focus on thinking skills, communication skills, social skills and self-management skills which are essential dimensions of soft skills and are expected to be developed during occupational orientation and occupational preparation schemes of school level education. The soft skills will be part of the curricula for developing employability skills from grade 6 up to secondary level (CDC, 2006).

In accordance with the principles mentioned above, the Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Center (CDC) has added new subject "*Occupation, Business and Technology Education (OBT)*" in the curriculum for grades 6-8. All the schools are implementing this subject in grades 6 and 7. Only few schools have introduced it in grade 8 on pilot basis, rest of the schools will introduce it in grade 8 from coming academic year (April 2015). Contents of these courses are: Professional Education, Career Education, Employment, Training and Education, Employment Related Information, Basic Business Skills, Trade and Marketing Management, Vegetable Farming, Fruits Farming, Dry Vegetable Fruits and Foods, Floriculture and Medicinal Plants Farming, Animal Husbandry, Sculpture Arts, Clay Work, Sewing and Knitting, Local Technology and Modern Technology. At the end of each topic teachers are instructed to evaluate the student on different aspects, such as team work, discussion, reports from educational tour, student participation and presentation, practical skills etc. The MTR Team considers that these are not exactly soft skills, rather it is pre-vocational subject.

1.2. Finnish Support to Education Sector in Nepal

Finland has been supporting Education Sector in Nepal since 1999. Overall, the Finnish contribution to the SSRP during 2009-2014 is a total of sixteen (16) million euros. Finland is one of the development partners with WB, ADB, DFID, Denmark, Norway, AusAid, EU and UNICEF of the joint financing arrangement supporting the implementation of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP). Seven (7) million

³ School system School education in Nepal comprise schools from grades one to twelve, basic education running from grades one to eight, and secondary from nine to twelve. Furthermore and in addition to general line up to higher secondary level in grades 11-12, the vocational education stream will begin at grade 9 and have three routes: (i) two years Technical Secondary Level after grade 8, (ii) four years Technical Higher Secondary Level after grade 8, and (iii) three years Technical Higher Secondary Level after grade 10 for those who enter from general secondary level.

euros have been allocated for the SSRP extension plan (2014-2016). Finland has also provided 1.5 million euros in 2010 from a private donor (“weight loss programme”) to support the vocational training for non-formal education and literacy programme participants under SSRP. In addition, Finland is providing the 1.6 million euros in Technical Assistance (TA) support for the piloting of TEVT Soft Skills in general education (2012-2015). The purpose of the TA is to support the MoE in implementing the “TEVT Soft Skills” component of the SSRP, which is operationalized in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP) and the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB). The project document (PD) for the TA was developed based on the TEVT Soft Skills Guidelines and the ASIP/AWPB 2010/11.

The preparation of the TSSP support was a long process. An identification paper for “*Technical Assistance for TVET (Soft Skills) Development in School Sector Reform Plan in Nepal*” (TSSP) support was formulated in 2009. The Project Document was designed in November 2011. The preparation for implementation started in September 2012 when the International Technical Coordinator/Advisor (ITCA) arrived in Nepal. Due to relocation of MOE from Kesharmahal to Singhadurbar and the delays incurred with this, the preparation of an Inception Report started in January 2013 and it was approved by the Project Steering Committee in May 2013. This is the time when the implementation of the TA support actually started. Meanwhile there has been some consultation and capacity development with the Finnish National Board of Education. So, as a matter of fact, the project has been implemented only 18 months at the time of the MTR.

Project Timeline

TIME	ACTIVITY
August 2009	School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP)
September 2009	Identification Mission → <i>Identification Report</i>
June 2010	National Consultation on TEVT-Soft Skills
November 2011	Project Design Mission → <i>Project Document</i>
January 2012	Modifications (NTA, 10 NYPs) (Letter dated 12.1.2012)
January 2012	Appraisal Mission → <i>Appraisal Report</i>
September 2012	Project launch; International Technical Coordinator/ Advisor in Nepal
April 2013	Selection of Pilot Schools
May 2013	<i>Inception Report</i> approved
December 2014	MTR
August 2015	End of Project; Official closing date August 2015 ⁴

2. TSSP TEVT Soft Skills Project

2.1. Objectives of the TSSP

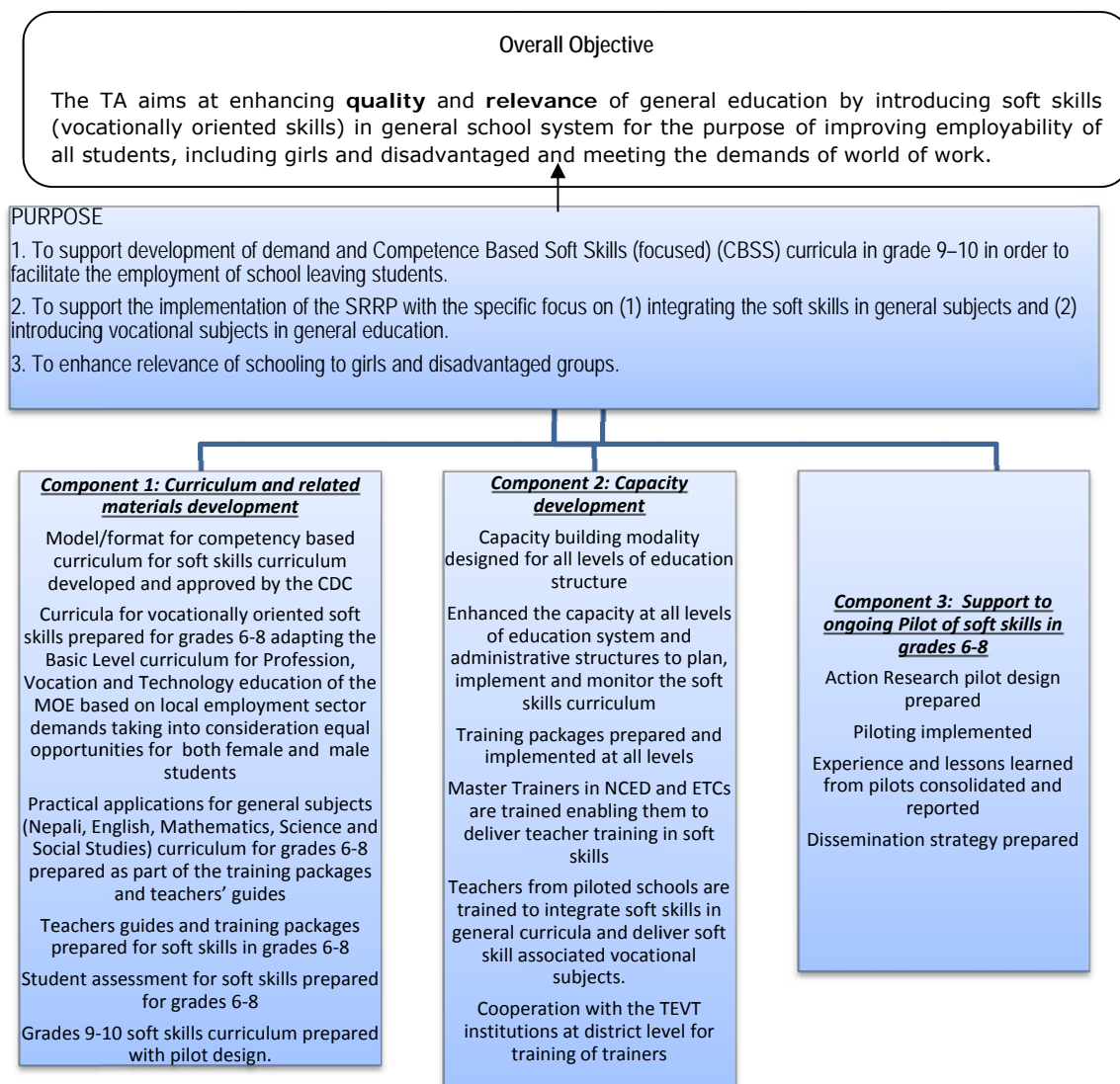
The purpose of the Technical Assistance is to support the Ministry of Education in implementing the TEVT (Soft Skills) component of the SSRP that is operationalized through Annual Strategic Implementation Plans (ASIP) and Annual Work Plan & Budget (AWPB). The Inception Report specifies the three key areas of support as follows:

⁴ In the agreement, it mentioned y the years (2012-2015) but the action plan approved in inception report is until 3rd quarter of 2015 meaning end of September 2015.

1. Competence-Based Soft Skills -curriculum development (Component 1)
2. Intensive Piloting (IP) and capacity building in IP schools (Component 2) and
3. Support to piloting of the revised curriculum in 14 districts and schools (Component 3)

The overall objective and specific objectives set to the project as well as components are presented in a Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 TSSP Objectives and key deliverables



2.2. Purpose of the mid-term review

The overall objective of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) is to provide an independent analysis on the status of implementation level with regard to the continued validity of the project's overall objective, purpose, outputs and activities. In the MTR report, the team shall justify and propose possible **changes and revisions in the approach, objectives, organization and management systems, activities and expected results of the project when necessary**. The specific issues to be addressed are related to relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability, aid effectiveness and cross-cutting objectives. The specific MTR questions are presented in the Terms of Reference (ToR) which is annexed in this report (Annex 1).

Methodology

The ***School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP 2009 – 2016)*** forms the overall framework for the MTR. It is the main reference against which the performance and achievements of the project is assessed. Stakeholders at different levels, including MOE Officials at central and district level, teachers, technical assistants and students at 9 – 10th grades as well as some parents and School management Committee members were consulted. Semi-structured interviews were held on certain topics

The MTR was carried out during November 2014 – January 2015. After the kick-off meeting in the MFA, the Team conducted an initial document analysis and prepared an Inception Report (Work Plan). A list of key MOE officers and stakeholders was drawn up, following initial consultation with MFA and TSSP Team. The document analyses included sector strategy documents, project related documents and other relevant documentation.

Sampling: When selecting the proposed areas (districts and schools) to be included in the mid-term review the MTR Team thrived to fulfill the following criteria; to select districts (and schools) that would match with the baseline study done earlier on classroom teaching practices to be able to use that study as the baseline and make a comparative study on certain aspects related to soft skills (Singh et al. 2010). It was also important to include all different geographical locations into the review as far as possible (Terai; areas both closer and further away from Kathmandu and hilly areas, not to forget remote areas, such as the Far-Western region). Both *Intensive piloting districts* (Component 2) as well as *Cluster support districts/schools* (Component 3) were included in the study.

There were five main methods of data collection: semi structured interviews, focus group discussion, document analysis, questionnaire and observation. Document analysis included relevant documentation on the Education Sector Development in Nepal. A list of documents consulted is annexed (Annex 6) in this report.

Interviews and focus groups

Semi structured interviews were conducted at national, district and school levels (see Annex 5 for a list of persons consulted). Checklists were developed for interviews with different categories of stakeholders such as school principals, teachers, parents and DEO officials. The consultants interviewed/spoke with over 100 individuals. They included stakeholders in the government education system at national, district and school levels, other stakeholders and TSSP Team members.

constraints that hampered the consultants. Chief among these was the unavailability of the 9-10 curriculum document. It was not possible to study it because following the CDC publication and dissemination policy it is not published (nor brought to the district or school level) yet.

3. Findings

3.1. Relevance

This MTR looks at the relevance of the TA support from different perspectives; policy relevance, relevance with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries, and relevance of the implementation strategies and activities as a reference to assess the continued validity of the project's overall objective, purpose, outputs and activities as indicated in the Terms of Reference (ToR). The curriculum is not addressed in this review because it is not yet published.

The Project Document (November 2011) proposes the project to focus on grades 6 -10. However, at the time when the project implementation started, the revision of the grades 6 to 8 curriculum was at its final stage and the stakeholders considered that it was too late to contribute to the on-going revision process. It is reported (Inception Report 2013) that there was a general agreement to focus on grade 9 and 10, which would allow the TA to get involved at the very early stage of the review process. It was also agreed that shifting the focus towards this level would make it possible to “shape a plan for piloting at an early stage of the curriculum review process. Getting involved at early stage would also optimize the use of experience gained from piloting at school and district level”. (Quotation from the Inception Report 2013, page 13). However, this did not happen because the Curriculum was being developed and thus the linkage between piloting and curriculum development remained weak.

The MTR considers that the parallel focus on curriculum development and piloting in intensive Pilot (IP) schools (Component 2) has weakened the project logic. For instance, because there was no curriculum available, teacher training targeted to Pilot school teachers has been more generic than subject-specific, while the latter would have enabled better transfer of new approaches into practices in the classrooms. On the other hand, however, it is noted that this kind of generic orientation to Soft Skills is needed, as it is rather a new concept in the education system in Nepal. Nevertheless, the MTR Team questions whether an eight –modular training is needed for those generic purposes or could it be delivered in a more condensed manner. Subject-specific training was requested by the teachers who were interviewed.

3.1.1. Soft Skills

The SSRP Extension Plan 2014-15/15-16 links Soft Skills to *vocationally oriented soft skills*. They are mentioned as priority areas both at Vocational Training and Secondary education subsectors. However, the scope of the project has changed and it focuses on General Education.

According to the SSRP, the goal of the “Vocational Training and Soft Skills” is to equip students with *employability* skills, which will assist and accelerate their *transition from school to work* and help them explore a variety of *career opportunities* that are available inside Nepal as well as in the neighboring

countries and in the global market”. The specific objective is to “establish a vocational stream and *enhance soft skills across the curriculum in secondary education*”. The priority areas to be addressed include development and piloting of a framework to integrate the skills in compulsory subjects in grades 6 – 10 and integration of soft skills components in Teacher Professional Development (TPD) modules for all grades. The SSRP further defines “expansion of soft skills program in grades 6-10 and intensive piloting of soft skills enhancement of teaching in 24 schools across 10 districts” as key result for period 2014 – 2016.

The SSRP further stipulates, that Secondary Education aims to meet the national development needs by “producing *competent and skilled human resources* and to provide a *sound foundation for tertiary education*”. Improving access, equity, *quality and relevance of secondary education* are the specific goals of the SSRP. Integration of soft skills in the curriculum and Teacher Professional Development (TDP) modules is among the priority areas in the secondary education subsector and one of the key results is that “soft skills enhanced curriculum is developed for grades 6–10 and grade 9 -10 curriculum is piloted with relevant TPD in 24 schools”.

The SSRP presents the Soft Skills in Secondary Education and Technical Education, but does not introduce measures for “life skills” or “non-formal” skills at early childhood or basic education level. According to child centered INGOs e.g. UNICEF, World Vision, Plan) building the foundational life skills would ideally begin already during the early childhood education so that afterwards development of essential life skills, and later the applied life skills (ages 12-18) would build on this foundation.

Because the concept of Soft Skills and the competence-based approach is new in Nepal, the TA project has developed a framework on Soft Skills to be used for instance by the Curriculum Developers. The TSSP Team informed that this framework (see below, Table 1) has been officially adopted and approved by the National Curriculum Development and Evaluation Council and it was used as a framework for the SS Curriculum Development. For employability skills no definition exists, though they are an explicit objective of the SRRP and a part of this SS framework. Similarly, no definition was found for the Competence-based curriculum, but the MTR Team was told that it is presented in the Curriculum. The only definition the MTR found for soft skills is presented in the Teacher Training Manual “Module 4” which is developed in accordance with the new Curriculum⁵.

Soft Skills

Soft skills are intra- and inter-personal socio-emotional skills, essential for personal development, social participation and workplace success.”

Source: Training Manual.

Action Learning Group training module 4. Soft Skills teaching and learning activities. Linking teaching and employment. Prepared by the TSSP Team. June 2014

⁵ The Curriculum was not available for the MTR Team, thus secondary references are used.

This framework titled “*Soft Skills Table for Grade 9 – 10 Curriculum*” introduces the Soft Skills groups, soft skills, soft skills’ elements, learning outcomes expressed in knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as assessment methods and tools.

Table 1 “Soft Skills Table for Grade 9 – 10 Curriculum”

Cooperation skills	Interpersonal skills Intercultural skills Cultural skills/ ethics
Personal skills	Responsibility and commitment Self-Esteem Integrity/ Honesty Self-Management
Thinking skills	Information management skills Learning skills Creative thinking skills
Innovation and business skills	Innovation skills Basic Electronic Communication Critical thinking and problem solving Diverse communication and collaboration
TEVT/TSSP Project 2014	

The analysis of the table shows that the skills included in the framework do not directly relate to vocationally oriented skills or “employability”, which is defined as the explicit objective of the SSRP. The MTR however, found that there are some topics and sessions under the Module 4 of the training package developed for teachers under Component 2. However, the analysis of this training package shows that this approach (see annex 7) is very generic. The purpose of this session is “to develop skills on planning and carrying out competence-based soft skills lesson plans with an employment focus” and the activities included brainstorming ideas for employment-related teaching and learning activities in the 6 subjects and sharing good examples/ideas already developed. It is understood that implementing this module in an effective way without the Curriculum is not possible.⁶

What is the difference between life skills, non-formal skills, soft skills and employability skills?

Life Skills

There are many different understandings of *life skills* but no definition is universally accepted. For instance the International Bureau of Education (IBE, UNESCO) derives its understanding from four pillars of learning - learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together - and defines life skills as personal management and social skills which are necessary for adequate functioning on an

⁶ Training Manual . Action Learning Group training module 4. Soft Skills teaching and learning activities. Linking teaching and employment. Prepared by the TSSP Team. June 2014.

independent basis⁷. UNICEF, in turn, has defined life skills as psychosocial and interpersonal skills⁸. The World Health Organization's (WHO 1999) Department of Mental Health has produced this definition of life skills: "Life skills education is designed to facilitate the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way; it contributes to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems, and the protection of human rights". The OECD defines life skills as key competencies which contribute to an overall successful life and a well-functioning society, and which are instrumental to meeting important challenges in a wide spectrum of relevant contexts, and finally, and they are relevant to all individuals. These key competencies are: a) functioning in socially heterogeneous groups, b) acting autonomously and c) using tools interactively.

Soft Skills

When it comes to *Soft Skills* several references are found. Basically they do not differ much from the definition of Life Skills though more focus is on interpersonal and *personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces* that make someone a good employee and compatible to work with (training material of Career Services of Davenport University, US).

Employability Skills

The SSRP explicitly refers to employability skills that are "*skills that are a key to enabling people to become an active part in the society and secure their livelihoods.*" However, a definition of employability skills in the Nepalese context is not yet developed. Employment related skills are part of the Soft Skills framework.

There is no universal definition of employability skills. However, an analysis of "Labor market training programmes"⁹ which are organized by for instance the Finnish Labour authorities shows that employability skills are introduced through the following topics¹⁰: "Analyzing local employment market, Invisible jobs, Identifying own strengths and interests, Preparing for a job application (including CV), Contacting employers, Job interview, Employment legislation, Salary, Employment contract, etc.)". There are several training programmes developed with the support of the European Social Fund (ESF) targeted to promote employability of youth, immigrants, persons with disabilities or other population which face problems in getting a job. In those programmes, this training is usually accompanied with individual counselling and guidance.

The US Department of Labor is using a definition of a synthesis of definitions on "employability skills" as they have evolved over time:

"Employability skills are transferable core skill groups that represent essential functional and enabling knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by the 21st century workplace. They are necessary for career success at all levels of employment and for all levels of education. The US Department of Labour reveals that employability skills do not relate only to primarily entry-level employment, but the competencies

⁷ See: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/DocServices/Thesaurus/00003739.htm>.

⁸ See: <http://www.unicef.org...me/lifeskills/whatwhy/skills.html>).

⁹ In Finnish: Työvoimapolitiittinen koulutus, Työnhakukoulutus

¹⁰ see for instance TRADES-diploma 2001, Labour market trainings organized by EDUPOLI.

are needed at all rungs of the career ladder and all levels of education and that thinking about employability skills only as "soft skills" such as teamwork and interpersonal skills is too narrow, when they are only one of the broad competency groups needed in modern labour market. ¹¹ Also in Europe, there is an increasing interest to promote employability skills. It is for instance one of the core issues for the European Key Competencies for All (KC4All) -network, which has developed an online employability toolkit in accordance with the European Key competencies. This material and toolkit is available at: <http://www.keycompetences.eu/wordpress/>.

The MTR Team reveals that the concepts of Soft Skills, employability skills and 'vocationally oriented employability skills' (as defined in the Project Document) should be clarified. Currently "employability skills" are part of the Soft Skills framework but not explicitly addressed by the project so far (The training module 4 included some elements, see Annex 7). A Nepalese definition for those concepts needs to be developed, also taking into consideration for instance the differences between regions in terms of employment and employability. In grades 9 – 10 the focus should be on employability skills and ensuring that students have sufficient knowledge about future opportunities in the employment market and further studies.

3.1.2. Policy Relevance

Supporting introduction of Soft Skills in the Nepalese curriculum and education system is highly relevant. The TA support is closely linked to the key strategic areas of the SSRP and it contributes to the realization of its objectives. However, with reference to the concept analyses presented above, the MTR Team considers that the approach of the TA has focused more on methodologies of teaching social skills rather than "employability" skills which are specifically emphasized in the SSRP. Many stakeholders also emphasized that employability skills (as defined above) are very important skills for the grade 9 – 10 students while Soft Skills should be a crosscutting issue of all education. Employability skills are particularly relevant in the context where youth employment is high.

The MTR implemented a questionnaire to nearly 300 students. The responses from these 9 – 10 grade students show that there is a need for "vocationally oriented soft skills" ¹² and counseling.

Student Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nearly all students (88 %) want to continue their education after schooling but they feel that they do not receive sufficient advice regarding further education or skills which would help them to find a job. Very few are willing to go to the job market at this stage. - Regarding the field of further education only about 50% of the students responded that they are getting advice. - More than half of the students (66 %) replied that they receive counseling in their school. - Majority (84 %) of the respondent students feel they are not supplied with proper skills in school which could help them to find a job.
Source: MTR Student Questionnaire 2014

¹¹ ED445236 2000-10-00 Employability Skills: An Update. ERIC Digest No. 220. Page 3 of 8

¹² This concept is used in the original project documentation and SRRP.

In IP schools, both the responses of the boys and girls are not very much different: 60 % of the girls and 62 % of the boys indicated that there is no counselling in their school. Regarding the field of further education, only about 60% responded that they are getting advice. 84% of the girls and 83 % of the boys feel that they are not getting proper skill training which could have helped them to find the job. Regarding the questions for future; 91 % of the girls and 67 % of the boys responded that they are willing to continue their education after SLC, compared to non-cluster schools where all girls and all of the boys indicated that they wish to continue their education after SLC.

Similar responses were received in non-IP schools (cluster schools which were visited): 73 % of the girls and 69 % of the boys replied that they are not getting counselling in their school. 100% of the girls and 85 % of the boys replied that they are not getting proper skill training which could have helped them to find good job. An interesting finding (though with a rather small population) is that in non-IP schools 53 % of the girls and 92 % of the boys replied that they are getting advice in the field of further education.

3.1.3. Relevance of selected strategies

The team also studied whether relevant strategies were chosen to achieve the intended objectives of the TA support. These strategies include curriculum development, piloting, teacher training and school and district level support provided by National Young Professionals (NYP).

TA support to curriculum development process has been relevant and it has produced added value and fastened the Curriculum Development process. Now the Curriculum for the six core subjects is ready and approved. The assessment systems are being developed and after this work is completed, piloting/ implementation can start.

As indicated above (section 3.1.) the piloting could not fulfill its purpose as there was no curriculum to pilot. Thus the piloting turned to be more like an orientation or general methodological training. On the other hand, at the same time there is a cadre of teachers teaching at grades 6-8 who have already started to teach a new curriculum (which generally does not introduce SS), with a new subject "Occupation, Business and Technology" (OBT), and who have not receive any training similar to grade 9-10 teachers. The MTR team and many stakeholders argue that it would have been more effective to focus on training of those teachers and later on to subject-specific SS training for 9 – 10 grade teachers. The MTR Team also learned that there is a need to develop instructional material for the new subject of "Occupation, Business and Technology".

The MTR also considers that the strategy of locating the Pilot schools all around the country does not support the purpose of piloting (even if the curriculum was available), which also requires close monitoring and follow-up. Experience shows that, piloting should include opportunities for horizontal learning and networking between the schools and thus accumulating knowledge and experiences. Pilots also need some resources. Also, in order to map out lessons learned and successful practices pilots should also be accompanied by a close and systematic follow-up.

The scattered location of pilot schools has also affected the regularity of the support provided by the National Young Professionals. In this regard, some NYPs reported about logistical problems and problems in addressing more senior teachers. All stakeholders (DEO and DEO TSSP focal point; principals

and teachers from each school visited) were systematically asked specific questions on the quality, quantity and regularity of the support they've received from the project. After compiling all the interviews, it shows that there has been variation between the districts on the quantity and quality of support they have received. While there are success stories in a few districts, also the NYPs themselves pointed out logistical problems (distance to schools, lack of budget).

The opinions regarding the strategy of engaging National Young Professionals are mixed. As indicated above, while some districts are happy with the inputs of the NYPs, there are also districts and schools which have not benefitted much from the NYP inputs. It is evident that the Project has focus on ensuring same quality and frequency of support to all pilots. Nearly all stakeholders noted that more attention should have been given to integrate and embed project in the existing structures and that existing systems (ETCs and LCTs) should have been more utilized for instance in the training activities. This has been addressed now and the DEOs, ETCs and LTCs are more engaged in project activities. Last but not least, this strategy of using NYPs has appeared to be unsustainable because there are no plans to finance their work after the project comes to its end.

The parents who were interviewed find the SS very important and they want the school to provide the students with a broad range of skills which would help them in finding their place in society. The parents also pointed out that the school should be able to respond to the changing needs of the society. For instance it was regularly mentioned that agricultural skills (which accounts 74 per cent of total employment in Nepal, ILO 2013) does not consist only of knowing about the crops, but it also requires a broad range of skills from marketing to financial analysis of profit and loss which also require innovative thinking.

4.1. Effectiveness

In this section we discuss the achievements per component.

4.1.1. Curriculum development (Component 1)

CBSS Curriculum Development (revision) and Capacity Enhancement component focuses on CBSS enhancement of 6 core subjects in the 9 - 10 curriculum. The following are the deliverables of this Component (Inception Report 2012): CBSS enhanced curriculum for general stream; capacity development for CBSS curriculum development (revision) in CDC; development of assessment tools for CBSS curriculum; Development of guidelines for using Action Research in CBSS curriculum development (revision); and development of guidelines for counseling.

4.1.2. Curriculum Development, Capacity Development and Assessment Tools

TA has been provided by a Curriculum Development Specialist and a Local Expert. A curriculum framework was developed and subject committees for the 6 core subjects (English, Health, Population and Environment Science (HPE), Mathematics, Nepali, Science and Social Studies) were established. Curriculum development process was supported by providing tools, orientation and training to the CDC staff and the Subject Committee members who were responsible for the development of the CBSS curriculum for grades 9 – 10. Because the concept of Soft Skills and Competence-based Curriculum are new in Nepal, the Curriculum Expert developed a concept paper on Soft Skills and master list of soft

skills (see Chapter 3.1.1.) and information on competence based curriculum. The MTR Team was informed that the Assessment tools are being developed.

According to the data received from the TSSP, a total number of 103 persons have participated in the Curriculum development process for the six subjects (male 87, female 16). The proportion of female participants is 15 %. At this point, it is noted that the number of participants disaggregated by gender is not commonly presented in the Annual Reports, but data on “frequency of meetings” and “number of person days participated” was available.

Table 2 Subject Committee Members

SN	Subjects 9/10	Participant Members	Female	Male	Frequencies of meetings	Total person days
1	English	15	3	12	15	225
2	Nepali	15	2	13	15	225
3	Maths	13	1	12	11	143
4	Science	10	2	8	9	90
5	Social studies	17	3	14	13	221
6	Health Population and Environment	9	3	6	9	81
7	All Subjects	24	2	22	2	48
	Total	103	16	87	74	1033

Source TSSP January 2015

4.1.3. Guidelines for counselling

According to the project plan and the Semi Annual Report (February 2014) the TSSP project plans to develop a simple low cost counselling model to be piloted in the IP schools. So far this activity has not taken place.

The MTR considers that this activity could be revisited for the following reasons: Firstly, piloting alone without a clear purpose and broader framework is not purposeful. Secondly, the project duration is too short to initiate, develop and evaluate a new model. Thirdly, it is questionable whether it is relevant to introduce the Pilot schools with extra tasks as they are already busy with training and SS implementation. Because the MTR Team recognizes the importance of guidance and counselling, it suggests a more strategic approach, for instance firstly analyzing the concept within the Nepalese system and then developing innovative means on how it could be integrated in the new curricula. Also a legal/ policy framework would be needed to ensure that guidance and counselling is embedded in the education system of Nepal. This could be an area for further Finnish TA support.

4.1.4. Assessment of the Outcomes

In this Component, majority of the planned outputs have been delivered. Competence-Based Curricula for CBSS core curricula for grades 9-10 has been developed in a relatively short time and it is already

approved by the the National Curriculum Development and Evaluation Council, chaired by the Minister in July 2014. It is a major achievement. Meanwhile, development of assessment tools and the recruitment of Text Book writers are in process.

The TL had an opportunity to interview some of the CDC staff members, some of them participated in the curriculum development process. This interview confirmed that there is still a need to clarify the concept of SS. The CDC staff should also be exposed to SS implementation practices in other countries and at least with the Intensive Piloting Schools. The CDC also needs a system on how to institutionalize the lessons learned and capacity as many staff members who have been engaged in the curriculum development process and trainings have already been transferred to other posts. The team also noted that there has been limited interaction between the curriculum developers, pilot schools and teacher training activity which is implemented under the Component 2 of the project.

The CDC pointed out that there is a need for TA also in the future but the modalities for provision such support should be revised. For instance, it was mentioned that there might be a need to build the capacity of the CDC in development of a differentiated curriculum or text books for students with special educational needs. However, it was noted that the current modality of TA support with piloting has not worked well and due to the fact that the Curriculum was not available these two components have not been well connected. It was also pointed out that this kind of “hybrid” approach of TA support accompanied with piloting should be well planned and resourced.

The interviews in schools and district offices show that consultation and participation of the teachers in the curriculum development process has been limited. As a matter of fact, the MTR Team found that very few DEO staff, school principals and teachers were aware that such curriculum has been developed. Experience in other countries show that the more the users of curriculum are informed and involved in the design of the curriculum, the more they have ownership and motivation to use it. For instance, many different forms of stakeholder consultations such as meetings, debates and internet platforms were utilized in the process of development of the new curriculum which will be introduced next year in Finland. It is understood that the resources were limited, and did not allow paying different groups of people to come to discussion forums, but the project and CDC could have used for instance Pilot schools and a touch-base to get first hand opinions and experience.

Because the Curriculum is not yet published, it is not possible to give any comments on its contents. Instead, the MTR reviewed the draft “*Guide to Text Book Writers*” which is developed by the TSSP team and some training materials. Below we present some observations and comments for the further development of the guide.

The guide stipulates that “in a CBSS environment the teaching process is student-centered, aimed at developing different types of skills and competencies, including soft skills and that this should be stimulated by different learning methods”. It also notes that text books are one of the several resources, supplemented with other materials, and that the materials support solving problems in groups, doing investigations, writing essays, having debates and making presentations. However, it does not elaborate *what it means that the text book is **one** of the reference materials*. The MTR Team considers that the Guide is more for the authors who write **traditional** text books (which may be available for teachers only) and basing textbook writing on an assumption that teachers develop and

find alternative resources is too ambitious. In the interviews, the teachers commonly mentioned that they have very little resources to develop their own materials even though they would like to do it.

The definition of the Competence-based Soft Skills approach should be clarified to the text book writers. It is much more than stipulated in the Text-book Writers' guide "an approach where the textbook is replaced by teaching and learning resources" (Quotation for the Guide, page 3). Furthermore, the guide should make a reference to SSRP and elaborate what the vocationally oriented soft skills or *employability* skills mean. As explained above, this is important particularly when upper grades such as 9-10 grades are concerned.

The guide is very ambitious. The text book writers are expected to consult with teachers "to make the texts and concepts fit the level of the students and their interests". However, the critical element of familiarizing with the curriculum of the lower grades is not mentioned or required. This should be the foundation for the 9–10 curriculums so that the learning could be constructed on previously acquired knowledge and skills. Furthermore, the text book writers are expected to take into account the regional differences in Nepal as well as students with different abilities, including the less academic students. This is a real challenge and requires significant expertise from the authors.

The MTR also notes that no reference is made to the Intensive Piloting Schools who should by now have first-hand experience on teaching and learning of Soft Skills. Maybe the ALGs or active teachers in pilot schools could be engaged in the Text Book development?

The MTR believes that the textbooks are one of the most powerful vehicles to address gender equity in school education. In this regard, Nepal has done well. The Gender Audit which was conducted in 2012 revealed that the textbooks used in Nepal's schools are generally free from gender bias and they avoid gender stereotypes (DFID 2012). This should be maintained in the new books. At this point it is also important to mention that "differentiation" (i.e. introducing assignments of different difficulty level, adaptations of learning objectives, methods and assessments, classroom management) is an effective means to facilitate learning of all students, even the ones with learning difficulties and students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Text Book authors should be exposed to some concrete models and practices how this can be done.

Experiences from other countries suggest that successful launching of a curriculum requires that the (i) users and final beneficiaries are consulted at the early stage and their perceptions and expectations are taken into account in defining the new concepts; (ii) the development process is a participatory and integrates concrete examples and experiences; (iii) the capacity of the users of the curriculum are developed and they are assisted in implementation of the new curriculum and that (iv) a sound M&E system is in place to provide feedback to the curriculum developers and decision makers. If piloting is applied, the selection of pilots is critical. This will be discussed more in detail in the next chapter.

Why Text Book count?

The importance of high quality textbooks is studied in the Policy Paper “Why Textbooks count” developed by Tim Oates in 2014¹³.

Oates argues that high quality textbooks have both played a role in system improvement in key jurisdictions and play a continuing role in stimulating and supporting high quality teaching and learning.

Textbooks provide structure to lessons and to pupil progression. For instance, in Shanghai which performed well in PISA studies, the textbooks are written and edited by expert authors, and constantly are supplemented by ‘adjustments’ from teacher-research groups (such as Action Learning groups in Nepal). These teacher-research groups exist across the school system. Competitions are held, whereby ‘top’ adjustments are routinely fed through into the texts.

Oates identifies some important assets of the approach:

- The complexity of lesson preparation is greatly reduced. Teachers can focus on refining and polishing lessons, rather than originating novel materials which focus on high level of differentiation within learner groups.
- Teacher collaboration and sharing of material is enhanced.
- Textbooks are dependable and respected, since they are based on developed theory, are authored by specialists and refined through active research. The ‘writing frames’ and design elements of the texts are tightly focused on key concepts. Both practice and text embody and reinforce shared beliefs and assumptions regarding ability and conceptual development.
- The texts encourage effective conceptual progression through the subject, convey clearly ideas about standards, and posit a unitary expectation of outcome – which all children in a group will come to a working understanding of the specific concept and/or operation being studied.

Oates Tim. 2014. Why Textbooks count. A Policy Paper. November 2014.

<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/181744-why-textbooks-count-tim-oates.pdf>

4.2. Capacity development (Component 2)

Competence-Based Soft Skills (CBSS) training has been built in several steps. TEVT Soft Skills Project experts have trained the National Young Professionals (NYPs) and the focal persons District Education Officers (DEOs) and ETC and LCT Trainers, who, in turn, have delivered the training to the Pilot Schools in the Intensive Piloting districts. A condensed training targeted to the Cluster schools has been developed. According to the progress report, an approximate number of 400 persons have been trained in CBSS.

This component has been redefined and re-focused from the original scenario¹⁴. The original Project Documents builds on an assumption that piloting will be done in 100 schools in clusters of schools in a few districts. However, during the Inception Phase a different approach was adopted to school selection choosing pilot schools from 71 districts and a decision was made to do intensive piloting in 10 clusters of 2- 4 districts. Intensive Piloting district will be given support based on component 2 and the others based on Component 3. The Intensive Piloting Districts are: Jhapa, Morang, Dhanusa, Kavre, Rupandehi, Baglung, Argakhachi, Surkhet, Kailali and Dadeldhura).

The planned component deliverables are as follows:

¹³

¹⁴ A substantial refocus was made in June 2014 and July 2014 (ref. Steering Committee).

- Road Map for intensive piloting and capacity building;
- CBSS focused teacher training program;
- Capacity development in NCED for CBSS training program development and implementation;
- Capacity development in IP schools for CBSS focused teaching;
- Enhanced community involvement in school governance;
- Development of support and monitoring structures for CBSS curriculum implementation; enhancing institutional capacity for curriculum implementation; as well as
- Documentation and sharing.

The district level implementation of the project started during the third quarter of 2013. National Young Professionals (NYPs) were recruited to provide support to the IPs and to coordinate the district level activities. The NYPs have different background and work experience; some of them have worked as teachers or principals. Currently the number of NYPs has reduced from planned ten to six, which eventually affects to the regularity of the support provided to the Pilot schools. Focal persons were assigned in all intensive piloting districts, these FPs are officers in the District Education Offices. Action Learning Groups (ALGs) have been formed in each of the IP schools.

A Roadmap for intensive piloting and capacity building in the 10 IP districts was drawn up in agreement with the DOE, the ETCs and the LRCs. The summary of the roadmap is presented below:

Roadmap for Intensive Piloting and Capacity Building	
Phase	Output
Development	8 module IP training plan and training materials
Training	Training of CBSS teams in training module; CBSS teams deliver training at ALGs
Piloting	ALGs meet minimum once a month Testing CBSS teaching and learning activities Support Action Research process with teachers
M&E	Monitor process; collect best experiences
NCED Training Packages	CBSS training packages CBSS material development

Below we present the key elements of this Component 2.

4.2.1. Piloting and CBSS Focused Training

Pilot schools were selected in early April 2013. Soon after they were selected, the Focal Points were nominated. As soon as the NYPs were in place and after the first Module of their training was completed, training of teaching staff started.

A CBSS focused teachers' training program was prepared by the project and it is approved by the NCED. The training is delivered following the cascade model: The TSSP staff trains the NYPs and other resource persons, who, in turn deliver the training in Pilot Schools. The eight themes (modules) of the training and status of the implementation are presented in the table below. Half of the training modules (4 modules out of 8) have been delivered. The fifth module has been approved and material is being developed.

Training Modules, number of participants and status				
	Module (training package)	Training of Trainers ToT	Female % in ToT	Status
1	Introduction program	Oct 2013 34 participants (9 NYPs, 8 FPs, 10 RPs, 7 DEOs)	12 %	Implemented in all IP districts; 150 teachers
2	How to do competence based teaching and learning	Feb 2014 8 participants (only NYPs)	37 %	Implemented in all IP districts Q1-2/2014; 150 teachers
3	How to do action Research	March – April 2014 17 participants (7NYPs, 9FPs, 1RPs)	18%	Implemented Q2/2014; except Kailali 150 teachers
4	Developing soft skills teaching and learning activities	June 17 participants (7NYPs, 7FPs, 8RPs)	14%	Completed
5	Contextual teaching and learning	Planned October 2015		planned Q4/2014 Approved, material is being developed
6	Assessment practices	Planned January 2015		planned Q1/2015
7	Local Resources in school activities and counseling	Planned March 2015		planned Q2/2015
8	Best practices	planned June 2015		planned Q3/2015

The percentage of female participants varies by training module from 12 to 37 percent. It is noted that the reports do not present data on participants by district or category (teacher, DEO etc.) of by gender.

The feedback from the trainings varied. Some participants were satisfied with the training but in the schools visited the MTR Team also heard criticism that the training did not provide enough concrete information on the concept of Soft Skills and on how to apply them in teaching¹⁵. A notion was also made in several occasions that Soft Skills should not be introduced as a separate training but it should be integrated in all trainings delivered by the NCED. The interviewees also considered the trainings too short (1-2 to 3 days during which all the first modules were taught). Also, feedback was given that subject-specific approach would have provided a better foundation for actual implementation in the classrooms.

For the principals and teachers/ALGs the biggest benefit from the trainings was the model for a lesson plan/information on how to make a lesson plan. Other benefits were; how to start a lesson by discussion and how to do group work. Some teachers found the teacher's self-reflection tool beneficial because it helped them to see gaps in their teaching. One teacher pointed out: *"Earlier we (teachers) thought we know everything. Now we noticed we also have many weaknesses in our teaching."* In some

¹⁵ This information is directly a compilation from the teachers' and principals' interviews.

of the interviews teachers mentioned: *“Earlier it was only one way process of teaching (from teacher to students), now it is more two way teaching-learning process (between the teacher and students).”*

The MTR also reviewed some training materials (Training Manual of Component 4). This review shows that interactive and active methods are applied in training of teachers but (at least in this material) the competence-based approach remains vague. For instance the training manual did not clearly spell out the objective of the module and how its achievement will be measured. In this module (see annex 7) there are two sessions related to “employability”, but it remains open how they are linked with the broader Soft Skills concept and context. As indicated earlier in this report, the MTR Team considers that an eight module package is rather broad and could be condensed (as it has already been done regarding the four first modules with a view of training the Cluster schools).

The current problems of integrating soft skills in class rooms are closely interlinked with the time management issues, motivational issues and lack of incentives. Although teachers are aware of different, more student-centered methods, practical issues such as lack of basic materials hamper for example doing the group works. Teachers stated that if they need any materials, they would have to buy everything themselves. Classes being as big as 90+ pupils, this is not possible for them. However, there are many strategies that can be employed to promote group activities without any extra materials which should be identified, recorded and disseminated.

The Field mission found that there is variance on how many modules have been delivered to teachers in different districts (from two modules to four modules) and on how much time was used per module. In one school IP teachers/ALG leader and ALG members said only a general introduction on modules 1-2 was given in 2 days seminar. NYP/DEO focal person stated that 4 modules have been introduced. Furthermore, most of the schools visited had not received other support, capacity building or contact on behalf of TSSP apart from the first training on modules 1 to 4 (number of modules depending on district). The TSSP needs to ensure that all training activities are of same standard. Engaging experienced trainers for instance from the ETCs to work with/alongside the NYPs for the remaining period of time could be a feasible strategy. The Annual Report 2014 introduced this modality. It is already applied.

Finally, The Joint Consultative Meeting (JCM, December 2014) agreed that Soft Skills modules shall be integrated in the NCED training by August 2015. If there is a plan to use the current training programme developed by the TSSP team as a bench-mark, it should be critically analyzed and evaluated so that relevant modules/ topics can be identified and further elaborated.

4.2.2. Action Learning Group (ALG)

The TSSP Project has introduced school-based Action Learning Groups (ALGs) to support teachers’ learning and transfer of new skills and approaches into practice. ALG consists of teachers working in the same pilot school. They are supposed to meet on a regular basis in monthly or quarterly meetings that are guided by a facilitator (sometimes National Young Professional) providing a thematic input. Each meeting has a different theme in reference to Soft Skills, e.g. lesson planning and Soft Skills, presented by the group facilitator. Ideally, as planned, in ALG meeting the facilitator will conduct classroom observation and give feedback to teachers taking their development plans into consideration in the process. Observations, feedback and ideas are further shared in the next ALG meeting with the others, thus creating a platform that supports sharing and learning. The goal for participants is to develop

themselves as reflective practitioners and to seek new and effective ways to improve their professional practices. The ALG offers a peer support network and opportunities for improved professional dialogue.

Action learning groups & ALG facilitators (one of the teachers or a principal) have been assigned in the 24 intensive piloting schools. According to the project’s annual report ALG follow-up meetings have been conducted in half of the 24 piloting schools and in 7 out of 10 districts. Classroom observation (by NYP) was said to be conducted in 9 out of 10 IP districts, but the number of schools/classes was not mentioned in the report. Classroom support was provided in 11/24 schools in 7 out of 10 IP districts. All schools visited had ALGs but roughly half of them had not had meetings during past months¹⁶.

According to the data from TSSP Team (dated 9.12.2014) there are a total number of 496 teachers in the Action Learning Groups (ALGs). Male teachers constitute 90 % (448 persons) of this group and only one in ten participants (10 %; 55 persons) are female. This represents the general distribution of teachers by gender in Nepal. The distribution of participants by district is presented below.

Table 4 Members of Action Learning groups by Gender

	Male	Female	Total	% Female in ALGs	% Female in district
Jhapa	44	2	46	4 %	4 %
Morang	15	8	23	35 %	7 %
Dhanusha	70	4	74	5 %	10 %
Kavre	64	12	76	16 %	16 %
Rupandehi	31	8	39	21 %	14 %
Argakhanchi	47	3	50	6 %	7 %
Bagling	32	2	27	7 %	9 %
Surkhet	82	4	86	5 %	5 %
KAilali	63	12	75	16 %	15 %
Dadeldura	0	0	0	0 %	21 %
	448	55	496		

The MTR Team discussed with ALGs during school visits. Generally, the teachers feel that ALG is a platform for professional sharing but it depends greatly on the activeness and skills of the facilitator. However, some teachers said that it is like an ordinary staff meeting and that in some schools there are teachers who do not actively participate. Thus, it does not meet its purpose. Also having meetings after the school day, on teachers’ free time, is seen as a demotivating factor. Some ALGs complained that they need same incentives than the teachers who participate in learning activities outside their station. To these teachers the TL noted that generally, participation in a professional development activity is not remunerated as it is part of the teachers’ duties but that there are examples in other countries where the ALGs are remunerated as a group with a small grant which can be used for school supplies and instructional aids.

¹⁶ This may also be due to other reasons beyond the control of the project, e.g. due to severe floodings in many districts, schools were closed or not accessible during the autumn of 2014. However, this information should be reported by the NYPs and furthermore in the project reports.

A critical question is how to get teachers motivated in the ALG activities and how to maintain their motivation. The unanimous view of the teachers is that it can be sustained only if it is regulated. There were also suggestions to include ALG in the induction programme of new teachers. Maybe incorporating ALGs in the Action Research Guidelines which are being developed by the NCED could be an option to institutionalize these groups?

There were suggestions from the teachers to have two ALG groups; one for lower classes and one for higher classes and interaction and sharing organized between the two groups. Another, even more feasible suggestion was to have subject-specific ALGs which would allow sharing of specific subject-related experiences. A suggestion was to organize an exchange program for all ALG facilitators of IP Schools.

Both the teachers and the principals asked for better introduction on the SS project/demanded SS training also to principals, so that they could support their teachers. In the schools visited, principals were not neglecting/opposing the SS, but felt did not have the capacity/enough information to be able to support teachers (TSSP had not trained principals on SSs).

4.2.3. Guidelines and tools

The teachers in Pilot Schools have been provided some instruments such as “Teacher Self Reflection tool” and “Professional development self-analysis” to support their learning through self-evaluation. In general, the teachers who were interviewed found these instruments useful and they have opened new perspectives for them to assess their own work. The Teachers also noted that the instrument is interesting indeed, but the real benefit comes only if the teachers are given advice on how to improve their performance in areas where they consider that they do not perform well. Many teachers also pointed out that it might be difficult to introduce those instruments to “less-motivated” teachers unless they are compulsory and part of the obligatory Action Research. It was also shared by some teachers that, due to varying level/quality of the support from NYP, it is not enough for them to receive a copy of these tools, if they are not properly taught how to use the tools.

It remained how the self-assessment tools are linked with the instruments used by the DEO or NCED and how they are linked with the monitoring instruments which are being developed by the TSSP Team. One also has to remember that self-evaluation is one of the most difficult states of art and it requires clear concepts on the competencies and standards against which the performance could be assessed.

In addition to trainings, teachers are in dire need of materials (curriculum guide, curriculum itself but also teaching materials). Teachers of IP districts give varying statements on whether they have seen the materials/tools produced by the TSSP. Some teachers have been given one paper/copy of the lesson plan framework in the training. In some districts the main trainer of ETC had not seen the materials created for teachers, nor the modules created by TSSP. One of the first and most important activities is to ensure that the ETCs (and LRCs) are capacitated in SS and that all IPs have materials available.

The TL analyzed some of the materials developed by the project team, including the lesson plan format and the monitoring instrument. It was noted that time planning is included in the lesson plan format (but not in the classroom observation instrument). Time management is essential to ensure that sufficient time reserved for student activities and it is also an effective mean to move away from the

teacher-centered lessons. There are some standardized instruments (Classroom Observations on Instructional Time Use) which could be studied and adapted for this purpose. It is also pointed out that the monitoring instruments should be of good quality and that they should be developed in collaboration with the stakeholders who would be using them in the future.

4.2.4. National Young Professionals

The TSSP project planned to employ 10 National Young Professionals to support the piloting at districts and school level. Currently there are six out of nine NYPs remaining in the project. Few of the NYPs had background in education sector.

The MTR Team had a meeting with NYPs to discuss their work and challenges. The NYPs told that they have received support from the DEOs which have provided them with office space. They also noted that they did not have clear ToR¹⁷. Some NYPs also reported that as young professionals it has been challenging to work with senior teachers and some teachers have been reluctant to work with them. This was also confirmed by teachers who would have appreciated support from a more senior and experienced expert. It is also evident that the logistics and distance of the schools have affected the work of the NYPs. This issue is related to the TSSP project design; as a TA project, the budget did not allow the local costs to be covered.

When asked how the NYPs would design the project, if it was designed now, all emphasized that a bottom-up approach based on a proper needs assessment at all levels should be the basis for the intervention. The NYPs also pointed out that a strong mechanism for support and monitoring should be agreed at the early stage of the implementation. They also noted that so far the issue of how to address marginalized children, children with learning difficulties and additional educational needs has not been addressed in trainings but it can now be included in the observation form and self-reflection tool. All NYPs consider that the continuation of the ALGs is in a risk after the project comes to its end, unless a new modality is introduced, where ALGs are institutionalised and continuously supported by the ETCs and LRCs and school management.

The MTR Team learned that so far none of the schools visited had involved the community and local entrepreneurs/private sector with a purpose to create link to local job markets. According to the Work Plan 2014, this is to be introduced in later training modules, already planned. However, the Team considers that this should have been one of the earlier activities so that the project duration and piloting could have been intensively used for building good cooperation.

4.2.5. Assessment of Outcomes

Teachers apply new methodologies and skills. This can be verified by the results of the students' questionnaire. Student's in the IP and cluster schools were asked whether they have observed any change in classroom practices such as group discussion or group work. The responses both in IP schools and cluster schools show that there is a change in the teaching methodology and that a variety of methods are applied. Whether it is a result of this project or not, it is quite positive.

¹⁷ The TSSP Team confirmed that there was a ToR from the beginning of their employment, and that all NYPs were given new roles and responsibilities at the September 2014 coordination meeting, following Steering Committee decision

Students responses

- 74 % of the students indicated that there is a change in the teaching process.
- 66 % replied that team work is introduced in the class room teaching.
- 79 % replied that there is group discussion during the class room teaching.

Some respondents agree that the project has initiated a “sharing culture” within the pilot schools and that the approach of linking capacity building with activities in the classrooms together with ALGs could be an effective way of professional development and learning. The respondents consider that factors that make this successful are the monitoring of work and motivation, which are also critical for the sustainability. It is also important to orient and engage the school administration in the process at early stage. While the respondents confirmed that a sharing culture has been generated within some of the pilot schools, opportunities to bring the Pilot schools together to learn from each other should also be promoted.

National Young Professionals

The overall picture about the effectiveness and results of the work of the NYPs is mixed. After comparing the interviews with the parents/school management committee members, principals and teachers, DEO and ETC staff the MTR Team concludes that the implementation level of TSSP also between the IP districts visited varied quite a lot. Some IP schools were not visited/had not been contacted by the project after the first modules training while in some districts the government institutions including DEO, sub-ETC, Resource Center and schools were aware of the project and project components and they were cooperating well with the NYP. In some districts the NYP's work and support are appreciated by education officials and teachers and school principals. The MTR Team reveals that these NYPs have a strong background in education and also experience as a trainer.

The Field missions reveal that the project implementation is very much dependent on the capacity and personality of the individual NYP. The modality has been changed from June 2014, and according to Steering Committee decision the NYPs don't have this central role anymore. Instead, the ETCs will be more engaged in providing support and monitoring of the pilot school activities.

Some schools were very happy for the support given by the NYP while some doubted the efforts and impacts. It is also evident that the distance between the IP schools influences the work of the NYP. Some of the schools are located 100 km from the other schools (Terai) or in the hilly area it can take 4 hours one way to reach the IP schools, which makes it difficult for the NYP to address them in a similar manner and frequency. Also the fact that some NYPs do not have background in education and do not have or have limited experience as a trainer has influenced the quality of work. It is also recognized that while the training focuses on general pedagogy, the participants are subject teachers (or TEVT) and linking the lessons learned and knowledge with the subject specific issues remains a challenge because NYP is not an expert in every subject. Condensed training was provided to the NYPs plus focal persons. All NYPs have received previous training in all parts of the condensed training before. This was the last training activity of the NYPs, from module 5 and onwards training will be conducted by experienced ETC trainers. Please take this into account also (as described in the Annual Report 2014.)

There was also a notion from NYPs that they feel they have not received training on how to conduct the condensed training, that they only received the training materials and model lessons via email. This is not sufficient and without first training the lead trainers (NYPs) properly, the project cannot guarantee that all NYPs are able to deliver teacher training of same standard to teachers.

There has been weak communication/cooperation between the project and local level stakeholders (schools, district) and most interviewed stakeholders saw that NYP is the only contact between them and the project. This might of course make communication more simple and easy, but the negative side of this was that some stakeholders saw TSSP as “one man’s (NYP’s) project that is not connected to district level/DEO” in any way. The district level coordination teams are not very active and/or do not involve all the projected members in their meetings. In some schools no meetings were ever held between ALGs and DCTs, nor between DEO and NYP. Quite many teachers and principals were not aware that there is (or should be) a focal point in the DEO for TSSP/SS. In many cases there had not been any visits from the DEO focal points to schools in the name of TSSP as they expressed they are too busy in other administrative tasks. The MTR considers that this is the time to arrange a coordination meeting in each district where Pilot schools exist to discuss the remaining implementation period, phasing over and next steps.

In the course of the implementation, cooperation with the NCED has improved. The TSSP Team meets regularly with the NCED and the NCED has already integrated a session on SS in every training they deliver. However, it was reported by the NCED that based on their sessions, the concept of SS still needs clarification and that more work is needed to integrate it into all training programmes. With regards to dissemination, the project should support the NCED and also engage CDC and other relevant MOE departments to develop a dissemination plan. The NCED has good ideas of using media. In the interviews, an idea of arranging a mobile Road Show where MOE staff and TSSP Team would travel across the country was discussed.

Engaging local community and business is directly linked to employability and written as one of the tasks of the project, and the MTR team sees it as one very cost-efficient ways to diversify school teaching. The curriculum could include e.g. short practice periods in different local businesses- which practice has been part of the curriculum in Finland for decades and is also used in some schools in Nepal where the students are engaged in community activities. The mission also learned about innovative approaches which had been introduced by South-Korean colleagues: Students were given a seed money of 50 rupia and they were asked to double it through enterpreneuring. Students developed a wide variety of business from hair dressing to selling tea were initiated by students. This is an example of “good practice”.

The level of understanding soft skills/involvement of DEO in the project activities is quite low. Although there was still a lot of confusion on soft skills among the teachers and principals, the staff in schools was more aware on soft skills than staff in the DEOs. Some DEOs felt they have been neglected and that the project was brought directly to school level, without acknowledging them. Unless the district level is taken onboard in this project, it is not prominent to start widening the project as the sustainability is not guaranteed without properly negotiating and involving all the local stakeholders, including the district level.

There were some suggestions from the teachers that SS should be focused at earlier grades and that the focus on grades 9 – 10 should be on vocational counseling. Thus all the teachers including teachers of lower classes should be given the training. This comment corresponds very well with the programming and conceptualization of child-/youth-centered INGOs. Foundational life skills are needed first, then proceeding to applied life skills.

Experience from other countries also show, that selection of Pilots is crucial. *First*, a group of voluntary and skillful schools would be needed. They need some resources. *Second*, all staff in the school should be provided with guidance and assessed in identification of good practices. *Third*, pilot's process should be analyzed by themselves and by external monitoring and lessons learned/ good practices shared publicly e.g. in social media as well. Finally, the most effective learning outcomes often come along with the freedom that is granted: freedom for trial and error; freedom to manage and share; and freedom to test various methods. Proper dissemination plan is developed and it will engage the pilots to the extent possible. For instance, in its latest curricular reform, Finland utilized 10 university training schools as an accelerating core of the network to train the locals as curriculum development facilitators.

4.3. Piloting of the revised curriculum in 14 districts and schools

Major changes have been made during the Inception Phase to this component. It has been redefined to support CBSS Piloting in the 14 districts and schools not targeted under Component 2 (Intensive Piloting). The original plan was to provide support to the piloting the CBSS curriculum and as an integrated part of this, priority would be given to the CBSS teacher training. The planned deliverables for this Component are:

- Development of district level education sector profiles
- Defining pilot support areas (PSA) for each of the IP Districts;
- Develop and implement plans for piloting CBSS curriculum in pilot schools
- Provide support to the CBSS curriculum piloting in schools.

The Component 3 targets 29 additional schools (cluster schools). According to the project's annual report 2014 school profiles have been completed in cluster areas and TSSP project has been introduced to 5 districts. CBSS facilitators in 9 districts have been selected and that first set of ALG training has been carried out in a few districts. There has been discussion on the implementation challenges which are obvious; the Cluster schools are located far from each other and it is evident that the reduced number of NYPs cannot take care of an increased number of schools. If the implementation of this component continues as planned, alternative model of servicing the 29 schools should be developed.

The experiences gained from the IP schools are supposed to be replicated in the Cluster schools but it is evident that there is not much to replicate rather than the first modules of the training programme (which are already transferred into a condensed mode). Increasing the number of schools has turned out to be a major logistic challenge for the NYPs. Including schools in other districts has been found not to be cost inefficient and also not appropriate for piloting. Hence, an alternative way to involve the 29 schools into the further dissemination and piloting has to be considered, so as to ensure more

widespread dissemination of the project results to other districts that have not been involved in the piloting phase yet. They would not serve the purpose of curriculum piloting at this stage.

The interviews in the school of the Cluster districts (Baijanath HSS, Kanchanpur) show that the concept of soft skills is not known and that there is no knowledge about the TSSP project and the forthcoming curriculum at least in these districts. Teachers and the principal had not received orientation or training on soft skills. At least in this district there had been no activities on CBSS yet.

The MTR believes that the remaining period of project time is not sufficient to carry out the activities in a successful manner. It is questionable whether the project is able to provide support for the Cluster districts in the remaining time, considering that there are many needs still in the Intensive piloting schools and districts. It is not realistic that the NYPs (which are six in number) can provide support to an increased number of schools and whether the DEOs and ETCs can release such a number of staff which could support the increased number of schools. Secondly, it should be carefully analyzed whether expansion of Pilots is relevant and purposeful in a situation where there is no Curriculum to be piloted yet and it is likely that there would be no time to get feedback from the schools.

Instead, the MTR suggest focusing on quality and development and analysis of training modules which could be later incorporated in the NCED trainings. Because some expectations may have been raised among the Cluster schools, they could be the primary audience for the Road Shows or other dissemination activities. The TSSP together with CDC and NCED could “pilot” innovative ways of dissemination such as Road Shows in the district and also others and collect feedback for the development of a National dissemination plan. “Road Shows” are mobile awareness raising activities lead by the TSSP Team and organized in collaboration with local actors (Pilot schools, district officers, ETCs). Road show could include a half a day session targeted to education professionals, where good practices are introduced through videos, demonstrations and practical examples. Local media should be engaged.

4.4. Efficiency

The budget frame for the TA is 1,6 million euro. Disbursement rate per item as per December 2014 is shown in Table below. The total disbursement by end of 2014 has been 67 % and disbursement for reimbursable is nearly 50 %.

Table 5 Budget and disbursement

Item	budgeted €	disbursed €	balance €	disbursement rate %
TA Fees	1,137,550	832,451	305,099	73 %
Capital Equipment	20,000	15,365	4,635	77 %
Transport for TA	34,000	31,857	2,143	94 %
Reimbursable cost	382,950	189,536	193,414	49 %
Contingency	25,500			
	1,600,000	1,080,713	493,787	67 %

The use of TA is presented below. The table shows that there is sufficient allocation for TA input to carry out the project activities.

Table 6 Use of Technical Assistance

TSSP Staff	Total Used Days	Allocation Days	Remaining Days
CTA (Chief Technical Adviser)	506	662	156
IYP (International Young Professional)	420	588	168
ISTA1 International Short Term Technical Advisor ; Curriculum Development	112	105	-7*
ISTA 2&3 Teacher Education	184	231	47
NTA National Technical Advisor	347	630	283
NTO	276	630	354
NYP National Young Professional 1 – 10	2673	6720	4047
NSTA 1 National Short Term Technical Advisor (8 month) + (6 months)	181	294	113
NSTA National Short Term Technical Advisor 2 & 3 (16 month)	271	336	65
NSTA National Short Term Technical Advisor 4 (3 month)	15	63	48
NSTA National Short Term Technical Advisor unallocated (2.5 months)	11	94	84
*ISTA1 continued as CTA			

With regards to the efficiency of the selected strategies, the MTR Team believes that it would have been more efficient if the Pilot schools were located closer to each other. Regarding cost efficiency, the MTR Team urges the TSSP Team to calculate the Unit costs. At this point it was not possible as the Team heard a complaint that there were differences in teacher allowance policies; The teachers complained that if they attended a training arranged in schools they did not receive same allowance than teacher attending trainings in the ETCs.

It is also likely that the planned introduction of 56 new pilot schools (including 56 new schools added in August 2014, which makes totally 80 pilot schools) is not an efficient and effective strategy and it should be reconsidered from the project's objective perspective.

Project Management

A Steering Committee guides the overall implementation of the project. The daily work is guided by an informal Management Committee which meets according to the needs. The Management Committee is chaired by the Joint Secretary of Planning Division of MoE and the members are the Under Secretary FACs, the CTA and NTA. It was reported (AR 2014) that there is a need to strengthen the day to day management and since then the Education Counselor from the Embassy of Finland has participated in the meetings

Monitoring and Evaluation

A Results Framework has been developed to track the performance of the TSSP. Anyhow, all the items in the project's Results framework are activities of the project, not actual indicators which would measure the outcomes of these activities. On the other hand it must also be noted that TSSP is not a traditional project, and that traditional approach for tracking for instance impact may not apply. However, because this is a piloting project, focus should be on tracking the effectiveness and efficiency of the pilots so that they could be further disseminated. This should now be the priority.

The MTR Team also noted that some indicators presented in the LogFrame are not relevant for the TA support or do not meet the criteria of a good quality indicator. For instance, it is arguable whether an indicator "Decreased dropout rate for girls and disadvantaged children" is a relevant indicator for the TA support. Similarly, the project could have sought measures to track "improved CDC staff capacity", now it can be measured only at input level (training to a certain number of CDC staff has been provided, number of training days). The same applies with indicator (2.4.b) of "Develop capacity for Action Research". It is also utmost important to develop a monitoring framework for the piloting, so that it serves its purpose as providing lessons learned and good practices. This monitoring system is now being developed and implemented.

The TA support is implemented as an independent project with a specific project management structure (Joint Steering Committee), but it is well embedded in the education sector development and SSRP and indeed, it implements realization of one of the core objectives of this plan. The development of SS is also recognized by the Joint Consultative Meeting (December 2014) which agreed that Soft Skills training modules will be incorporated in the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) training program by the August 2015 JQM.

4.5. Sustainability

All stakeholders expressed their concerns regarding the sustainability of the project activities particularly in component two and pointed out that the only way to institutionalize the SS is to embed it in the existing structures. In practical terms, this means capacitating all level stakeholders in CDC, NCED, ETCs and schools. Secondly, the system how the ALGs can be maintained and more established needs to be established at school and district level.

The DEOs, ETCs, LRCs and experienced teachers who are now engaged in the project to support the should be provided with all available support and at the same time work needs to be done to ensure that necessary activities are embedded in the existing structures and mechanisms. With regards to the ALG, it would be good to analyse the enabling factors and build the sustainability on those. Engaging and educating principals to support teachers/ ALGs is critical.

TA input to Curriculum Development can produce sustainable results once the curriculum is disseminated. As indicated earlier in this report focus should be put on quality of work and to ensuring that the curriculum and textbooks are in line with the SRRP principles and that particularly the employability skills are addressed when grades 9 and 10 are concerned.

The Joint Review Mission agreed that by August 2015 Soft Skills training modules should be incorporated in the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) training programs (JCM Aide Memoire 16-19.12.2014). This will secure sustainability of the soft skills -focused training. However, the MTR notes that the time schedule is very tight if the aim is to build on the experiences gained. It is also obvious that only general programmes can be introduced as the curriculum is not yet published. The MTR suggests that the training programme should be evaluated as soonest and lessons learned incorporated in the new programmes.

The original result of the component three was to develop a dissemination plan for the MoE to implement. The MTR considers that this is a feasible plan particularly when taking into account the challenges the implementation of Component 3 faces. Focusing on clarification of the SS concept and dissemination could have more sustainable impacts.

All in all, it is suggested to the TSSP Team to develop a sustainability strategy which would identify means on how the achievements so far (e.g. increased interest and awareness on SS) and necessary activities (such as ALGs can be sustained). Also phasing over to the local institutions or communities should start by ensuring that they have sufficient capacity to continue through local organizations.

5. Crosscutting Issues

The document analysis and interviews show that little progress has been made towards the project objective of “enhancing relevance of schooling to girls and disadvantaged groups”. This theme is not tackled in the trainings, it is not addressed in the training materials or guidebooks developed by the TSSP Team and finally, even the project reports lack gender disaggregated data though this data exists. For instance, there is no gender disaggregated data available on ALGs. It is also noted that project preparation did not include gender analysis or analysis of disadvantaged groups and their specific needs with regards to relevance of education and SS. The MTR also found that the gender and inclusion units were not familiar with the project.

The project has, however, introduced some measures to promote equity. For instance, in the NYP selection, women and persons from ethnic minorities received additional points. In the ALGs the representation of women is equal compared to the proportion of women teachers in secondary education, which is reported to be 10 %.

In the interviews, some teachers saw girls don’t need any special support because they are in any case more active in school than boys and they did not acknowledge the underlying culture where even the very hardworking or talented girls tend to end schooling earlier than boys due to marriage and child bearing. Parents and SMC members expressed there has been improvement in the girls’ education (and that the gap between girls and boys has decreased), but when asked are there any girls from the nearby communities that would have continued their studies, the answer was “no”. Some parents anyhow saw there would be great demand in the job markets for trained nurses for example.

From the gender equity perspective, it is important that the SS curriculum encourages both male and female students from all social backgrounds to move away from gender-biased provision and structures. (For instance, it is reported that 100 per cent of Nursing Diploma students are women, while conversely 100 per cent of Mechanical Engineering Diploma students are men). The MTR also considers that one of the priorities is to ensure that the Text Book writers’ training address gender issues and the disadvantaged. According to the Gender Audit, which as conducted in 2012, the Nepalese textbooks were free of gender bias. This should continue.

Soft Skills are also crucial for gender empowerment. The Gender Audit Report (2012) pointed out the relevance of education from a gender perspective: How can Nepal’s education sector and its institutions transform Nepal’s schools into places of equal opportunities and outcomes for girl and boy students? How can the nation’s schools be transformed into places where girls as well as boys learn to the best of their ability, are inspired and empowered? (Gender Audit 2012).

A gender analysis of school curricula commissioned by the DOE’s Curriculum Development Centre (Ghimire-Niraula, 2004) contains a comprehensive list of recommendations which remain valid today as guidelines for curriculum developers. They cover generic issues such as eliminating masculine bias and the use of gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive language. This list is attached in this report.

Other disadvantaged groups

Nepal is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country with many ethnic and caste groups. The Department of Education's Flash Report 2011/12 also indicates that, of total enrolment, children with a disability account for 1.1 percent in primary, 0.8 percent in lower secondary and 0.6 percent in secondary schools. So far, the project has not addressed these groups though the Text Book Writers Guide mentions that different needs should be taken into account and identification of students with special educational needs is mentioned in one of the teacher training modules. But this is not sufficient. The textbooks and trainings should educate teachers on how to address those needs so that everybody can develop their potential to the fullest.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

In this section we summarize the key findings and conclusions and present recommendations for the remaining period of project time.

Firstly, the MTR reveals that focused attention to Soft Skills in the education system in Nepal is highly relevant. Though they have already been part of education, the focused approach will support the teachers to pay more attention to this. Introduction of soft skills can also have a positive impact to *quality* of education as more student-centered activities and methodologies are introduced. Focusing on employability will also increase the *relevance* of the education from individual students as well as from the whole society's perspective.

The project has provided TA to the introduction of soft skills in the 9 – 10 curricula and it has generated platforms at school level for experience change between teachers. The trainings have introduced some new instructional methodologies which the teachers have taken into use. The importance of the soft skills is recognized at all levels.

The MTR considers that curriculum development and teacher training are feasible strategies to introduce soft skills. Also, introduction of a new curriculum supported by piloting and related training is a common strategy to introduce new curriculum. However, in this project the logic of using pilots was "limping" because there was no curriculum to pilot. Thus the approach of teacher training was more on generic pedagogical issues and concepts rather than real piloting. Also scattering pilots around the country did not fully serve the purposes of piloting. Experience from other projects has shown that piloting is most successful when it is done in manageable number of schools.

There is still unclarity of the Soft Skills concept at all levels. Also the concept of competence-based approach is not well known among the stakeholders. The respondents also pointed out particularly at grades 9 – 10 the focus should be on employability skills and vocational counselling and that soft skills should be a crosscutting issue of all education system. The MTR also considers that the objective of addressing gender and disadvantaged is not sufficiently addressed in project planning, implementation and monitoring. These expectations of soft skills associated with TEVT require linkages between training providers and employers at the local level.

The MTR reveals that **Component 1** is on track and most of the planned activities have been completed within a rather short period of time. It is likely that with some extra time this Component is able to deliver the expected outcomes. However, more emphasis should be put on quality of the deliverables (e.g. text book writers' training, writer's guide) and extensive efforts are needed to launch the Soft Skills concept in accordance with the principles set in the SSRP. It would also be necessary to focus more on the employability skills particularly when grades 9 – 10 are in concern. The MTR also reveals that initiating a new activity of counselling pilot at this stage of the project is not advisable or should at least be linked with broader framework for developing counselling.

The **Component 2** has tried to get on track and it has delivered some modest achievements. For instance the new modality of engaging ETCs in training of Trainers, redefining the role of NYPs, plans to increase monitoring and evaluation in the districts are important initiatives which will improve the quality of work and ensure achievement of the objectives. However, it is questionable whether the remaining period of time is sufficient to carry out the activities in a quality manner and what would be the feasible outcome of this Component 2, in the given situation where the purpose of the Pilots as mechanisms to develop good practices and to provide feedback to the curriculum design does not apply. Implementation of **Component 3** has not yet started.

The project has started to work more closely with the NCED and also cooperation with DEOs has been established. There are several issues that need to be addressed urgently: *Firstly*, mechanisms to ensure that all IPs continue receiving support and those good practices are recorded for the purposes of dissemination. Alternative strategies e.g. for engaging ETCs effectively are needed particularly for districts where there is no NYP at present. All in all, it is advised to support and strengthen the DEO and ETC staff engagement to work in the Pilot Districts and with the NYPs. This would firstly, fill in the gap and secondly, serve as project phasing out process to the education authorities. A concrete example where they the DEOs and ETCs could contribute is the development of the monitoring tools. *Secondly*, sustainability strategy needs to be developed in collaboration with the teachers and principals and other education staff to ensure that the work of ALGs will continue. A sustainability strategy should be developed and its development should start by identifying enabling factors and problems encountered. The lessons learned could be shared later with other schools. *Thirdly*, because the project is coming to its end, it is necessary to start recording the good practices not only in the IPs but also in other schools.

With regards to training, the MTR suggests to evaluate the current training program. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess which parts/ topics of the training could be adapted to the NCED training as indicated in the Aide Memoire. The Team also considers that an eight modular training might be too broad and that it could be more effective and efficient to compile it in fewer modules as it is already done with the condensed training. Also, the module of engaging local communities and entrepreneurs should be carried out as soonest so that the project duration could be utilized to strengthen the partnership (e.g. the local entrepreneurs and community members could be engaged to through participation/ presence in dissemination activities, horizontal experience exchange). The trainings should be designed in results (competence) –based manner, that is, defining what competencies the teachers are expected to acquire in the training and how these competencies will be evaluated (either by external evaluator/ performance assessment or through self-evaluation). Now the training programme seems to be more content or concept-based than competence-based.

The MTR Team considers that the strategy of engaging new cluster schools is not feasible and would not bring significant added value to the project as there is still much work to do to clarify the concept and develop appropriate training modules for the NCED and first and foremost, expanding the piloting would entail that some good practices and lessons learned from the Intensive Pilots are collected and analysed. It also remains unclear how the support to these new cluster schools would be arranged as the contact of NYPs is going to end in August 2015.

Therefore the MTR Team considers that the Component 3 should be redesigned and focused on dissemination. The importance of dissemination was also emphasized MoE Officials. If expectations have already been raised in the planned cluster schools, they could be among the primary target audience of the dissemination activities or organizers of the “Road Show” activities. Thus as a first step the TSSP together with CDC, NCED and some pilot district/ school representatives should develop a dissemination plan with a monitoring framework. An external expert with experience in dissemination and/or marketing) could be hired to help in this activity if there is funding available. This plan should also address the issue of gender and disadvantaged and also disseminate good practices and lessons learned from Intensive Pilot Schools. This would pave the way for the implementation of the new curriculum. Thus, the Component 2 should focus on supporting the Pilot schools and in identification and recording good practices.

The proposed integration of soft skills and associated occupational skills in school curricula requires long-term commitment from the government through clear and supportive legislation, regulations and policies to facilitate occupational orientation in secondary and higher secondary education. In this context, a holistic approach should be adopted that combines market survey, training needs assessment, selection of the appropriate trainees, delivery of quality training linked to local demand of skilled workers. Career guidance and post-training support services should also be given in the schools.

The summary conclusions and recommendations are presented in the Table below:

1 General Recommendations

1.1. CLARIFY SOFT SKILLS CONCEPT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SRRP

Soft skills are not understood unambiguously and there is confusion over the concept. There is no definition for employability skills. Further clarification is needed in Soft Skills, Employability and Competence-based curriculum (CBSS) and policy regarding soft skill as crosscutting or separate subject (as it seems to be in in grade 6-8).

Recommendation 1:

- The DEO should set up a Task force with broad range of representation to define the key concepts and then disseminate them nationwide. Engage local employers and business world in defining the soft skills.
- Develop a comprehensive framework / Road Map for Soft Skills covering all grades. Focus “employability” particularly at higher grades.
- A comprehensive Road Map to launch the concepts should be developed by the MOE/DEO in collaboration with the TSSP project.
- As soon as the 9 – 10 grade Curriculum is available, The CDC, together with TTSP Team and NCED should start developing a subject-specific SS training for the six core areas.
- The TSSP Team should ensure that the CDC, NCED staff and other relevant partners (e.g. Text Book writers) have an opportunity to see good practices in the classrooms through visits or using video clips etc.

1.2. REDESIGN COMPONENT 3 AND FOCUS ON DISSEMINATION

The MOE senior officials pointed out that dissemination and mainstreaming of the concept of Soft Skills is the priority. Development of a dissemination plan was the original result of the project.

Recommendation 2 : Redesign the Component 3 with focus on results-based dissemination

Action:

- Develop with the stakeholders a comprehensive dissemination plan with clear targets, and monitoring systems and gradual implementation.
- Employ innovative ways such as media, Road Shows, etc. Use experiences from Pilot schools in dissemination.
- If necessary, hire a TA with experience in dissemination and marketing to do the background analysis and support the plan preparation.
- The implementation of this plan should start during the project (as a replacement of Component 3). If expectations have been raised in the planned cluster schools, they could be among the priority target audience or locations of the Road Shows so that they would be kept on board.

1.3. STRENGTHEN COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

There has been limited coordination and cooperation with the existing structures and local stakeholders (NCED, District Education Offices) though it has started to improve.

Recommendation 3: Ensure that DOE, NCED and CDC are engaged and responsible for planning and implementation of the teacher training, dissemination and monitoring activities.

Action:

- Review the action plans with the NCED (including the NCED comprehensive capacity Development plan) and make necessary modifications.
- Continue training / orientation targeted to ETCs as they provide training to teachers and education officials; Lead Resource Centers/ Centers provide professional support to schools and teachers. Develop an orientation to DeOs and school Principals (part of dissemination strategy?)
- Support NCED in integrating Soft Skills in all training delivered by the NCED. The Team learned that NCED has included a session on Soft Skills in every training they conduct. Take the key officials to the district to see the good practices.
- Engage NCED / ETCs in planning, execution and monitoring of training activities.
- Organize meetings in each piloting districts to review the progress so far and to develop a detailed action plan with the key stakeholders.

1.4. NO-COST EXTENSION

The implementation of the TVET/TSSP support started with eight months delay. Though the project has been able to catch up, the MTR believes that the remaining period of project implementation time is not sufficient to carry out the activities in a successful manner. It is also important to focus more on quality of work and results which would help the MoE in its future work. The budget analysis shows that (3,5 months) no-cost extension would be possible and this has also been confirmed by the CTA.

Recommendation 4:

- It is suggested to have a no cost extension till end of 2015 with suggested changes (recommendation 1.2.).
- A revised action plan with tangible results and monitoring systems should be developed by the TSSP Team by beginning of March 2015 for the Steering Committee approval.
- It is suggested to scale down or cancel some activities such as (counselling pilot, see recommendation 11) and redesign the Component 3.

1.5. ENSURE THAT GENDER AND DISADVANTAGED ARE ADDRESSED

Gender and disadvantaged have not been explicitly addressed in project activities though it is one of the project objectives

Recommendation 5: Ensure that issues related to gender and disadvantaged are incorporated in all project activities and monitoring systems

- When developing the dissemination and training programmes, ensure that gender and

disadvantaged are taken on board.

- Revisit the Text Book Writers Guide from gender perspective. Ensure that Gender and Disadvantaged are addressed in the Text Book Writer's training in an appropriate manner.
- Identify good practices which empower girls and disseminate them.
- Explore whether a specific study would be needed to analyze the SS and employability from gender perspective.
- Ensure that all monitoring data is disaggregated by gender.

1.6. REVISE THE M&E FRAMEWORK (ENSURE THAT IT MATCHES WITH THE PROPOSED CHANGES)

The Results framework / LogFrame is not update. Some of the indicators are not relevant. For instance; it is arguable whether an indicator "Decreased dropout rate for girls and disadvantaged children" is a feasible indicator for the TA project.

Recommendation 6:

- Revise the Project LogFrame and its indicators. Though, there is limited time for the project implementation, it is necessary to ensure that by the end of the project relevant (input, output and outcome) indicators are tracked. Particularly, the indicators for Component 2 need to be revisited and specified and indicators for Component 3 designed if it will be redesigned.
- Use reports more on management tools. (e.g. to track gender)

1.7. ANALYSE THE FESAIBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ALGs

It is evident that some of the inputs and activities (such as support from the NYPs) will not continue after the project comes to its end. However ALGs have appeared to be a good approach.

Recommendation 7

- Together with the Pilot schools the TSSP Team should analyze the work of the ALGs and identify enabling factors and hindering factors. Develop a sustainability strategy on how to maintain the activities and further disseminate the strategy of ALGs as means for school-based professional development.
- Seek local resources to support the work of ALGs.

1.8. CHANGE THE NAME OF THE PROJECT

The official name of the Project "TEVT Soft Skills" is confusing and many respondents in the districts thought that the MTR is about the TVET soft skills

Recommendation 8:

- Change the name of the Project, drop TEVT.

2 COMPONENT 1

2.1. Recommendation 9:

Ensure that Text Book Writers are familiar with the SS concept and that gender and disadvantaged are addressed in the Text Book writers training and text books.

- Revise the Writer's guide and introduce competence-based approach and SS in the spirit of SRRP. This should be done in collaboration with other stakeholders.
- Ensure that Gender and disadvantaged are addressed appropriately in the writers' guide. Consult Inclusion and Gender Units/Equity Sections of DOE.
- The TSSP should provide good quality of training of text book writers, with clear clarification of competence-based approach, Soft skills and employability skills.
- The TSSP could focus on developing "employability"-related material.
- The TSSP should ensure that the text book writers who will be selected will have been exposed to the practical implementation of SS e.g. in Pilot schools. The Text Book writers who will be selected should be encouraged to engage teachers (or ALGs from pilot schools) in writing or reviewing textbooks. Collaboration with employers should also be encouraged.

2.2.

Recommendation 10:

- CDC should initiate the piloting with the principles presented in this report: They should be close to each other; they should be motivated to make trial and error; principals should be engaged; ALG could be a way to share lessons learned. .
- Focus on development of feasible modules on employability for grades 9 -10

2.3.

According to the project plan and the Semi Annual Report (February 2014) the TSSP project plans to develop a simple low cost counselling model to be piloted in the IP schools. So far this activity has not taken place. The MTR considers that this is a stand-alone activity which is not clearly linked with the TA objectives or anchored with SSRP and that there is insufficient time to plan and carry out the Counselling pilot. If there are funds, a feasibility study could be an option as a basis for possible future Finnish support in this sphere (See Section 7 below).

Recommendation 11:

- To revisit or cancel this activity and if funds are available, replace it with a feasibility study (e.g. during this TSSP project) and/ or development of a broader policy level framework (future Finnish Support).

3 COMPONENT 2

FOCUS ON QUALITY

The feedback from the trainings varied. Some participants were satisfied with the training but the MTR Team also heard criticism that the training did not provide enough concrete information on the concept of Soft Skills and on how to apply them in teaching. A notion was also made in several occasions that Soft Skills should not be introduced as a separate training but it should be integrated in all trainings delivered by the NCED. Subject-specific approach would have provided a better foundation for actual implementation in the classrooms. Some ETC staff members did not have received training materials.

Recommendation 12:

- The TSSP needs to ensure that all training activities are of same standard. Engaging experienced trainers for instance from the ETCs to work with/alongside the NYPs for the remaining period of time could be a feasible strategy.
- The TSSP should ensure that all stakeholders have access to training materials.
- The TSSP Team should field and meet with the district level actors and plan with them for implementation and future plans.

3.1. The Team also considers that an eight modular training might be too broad particularly as it is still generic, not subject-specific training. Also, the module of engaging local communities and entrepreneurs should be carried out as soonest so that the project duration could be utilized to strengthen the partnership (e.g. the local entrepreneurs and community members could be engaged to through participation/ presence in dissemination activities, horizontal experience exchange). Similarly, delivering the Module 8 ('Good Practices) may be too late for the dissemination purposes. At least the criteria and mechanisms to identify those practices should be developed as soonest.. Also, the trainings should be designed in results (competence) –based manner, that is, defining what competencies the teachers are expected to acquire in the training and how these competencies will be evaluated (either by external evaluator/ performance assessment or through self-evaluation).

Recommendation 13: Evaluate the CBSS Training programme as a basis for development the programmes to NCED

- The NCED together with the TSSP Team should analyse what elements of the current training programme are relevant for instance to further develop and integrate in the NCED provision. It would be advisable to use an external evaluation with an experience of Nepalese teacher training.
- Based on the evaluation, the TSSP together with NCED develop or revise specific modules on SS which can be integrated in NCED teacher training programmes as indicated in the Aide Memoire of the JSC. The DEO could establish a Task Force to address this issue with the lead of NCED.
- Restructure the training programme so that Module 7 and 8 Local Resources in school activities and counseling, and Best Practices) are implemented as soonest as they are crucial for the dissemination and sustainability .

3.2. See recommendation 3.1. above.

Recommendation 14.: Recording and sharing of good practices should start now.

- Train NYPs and Pilot schools and ETCs to identify and record good practices.
- The criteria for good practice could be developed in collaboration with teachers, ETC staff and District staff.
- Identification should not be the last module of the training but all IPs and ALGs should start identifying and recording them with the help of the NYPs so that they can be used in dissemination activities.

- 3.3. There has been weak communication/cooperation between the project and local level stakeholders (schools, district) and most interviewed stakeholders saw that NYP is the only contact between them and the project.

Recommendation 15:

- The TSSP Team to arrange a coordination meeting in each district where Pilot schools exist to discuss the remaining implementation period, phasing over and next steps.

- 3.4. The effectiveness and sustainability of an ALG depends greatly on the activeness and skills of the facilitator. A critical question is also how to get teachers motivated in the ALG activities and how to maintain their motivation. In the schools visited, principals were not neglecting/opposing the SS, but felt did not have the capacity/enough information to be able to support teachers (TSSP had not trained principals on SSs). It is evident that ALGs will not sustain on voluntary basis unless they are regulated.

Recommendation 16:

- The TSSP Team should ensure that school heads are engaged and that they have sufficient capacities to support the ALGs.

7. Future Scenarios

There is still a need to support introduction of Soft Skills in Nepalese education system. The meeting of the MoE Senior Officials revealed that the priority is now on dissemination and clarification of the concept. A suggestion was also made that Finland could focus on how to bridge the TEVT and General education. However, for Finland as a small donor it is more feasible to focus on one specific sector. Also the need for counselling and further development of employability skills was mentioned among the priorities.

Dissemination and support to implementation of the New Curricula

With regards to the further engagement of Finnish TA in the education sector, it was verified for instance by the CDC that TA is needed but that the modality of provision should be revised. If it includes piloting, this piloting should be well resourced. Also, to get the best out of piloting, the approach should include (i) setting up clear targets to piloting, (ii) setting up selection criteria for pilot schools, (iii) careful selection of pilot schools and (iv) development of M&E measures at the early stage of the planning so that lessons learned and good practices can be captured, and (v) developing a plan how the piloting experiences will be utilized and lessons learned disseminated.

If the project would be continued, the continuation should be based on a consistent and logical project theory, clear design of the project, including a monitoring system (LFA or another) with results based indicators to the project. Through regular project monitoring the project and donors would be able to track the actual impact all the way to the final beneficiaries.

Strengthening the Soft Skills Curricula

The MTR reveals that in order to get soft skills into practice they should be integrated in the subject specific curricula and teachers should be trained accordingly. This could be one area for future Finnish support. Also, the Future Finnish support could be targeted to review 6 – 8 curriculum from soft skills perspective and for development of material e.g. for the new subject.

The Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Center (CDC) has added new subject "*Occupation, Business and Technology Education*" in the curriculum for grades 6-8. All the schools are implementing this subject in grades 6 and 7. Only few schools have introduced it in grade 8 on pilot basis, rest of the schools will introduce it in grade 8 from coming academic year (April 2015). So far, the teachers have not received training on this new subject and they do not have relevant material and skills to address the new topics. Supporting the effective implementation of this Subject could be a feasible option for the further TA support. It would also enable linking the curriculum 9 – 10 with the earlier developed curriculum and development of strategies and materials for the new curriculum.

Special Educational Needs

In the discussion with the MOE officials it was observed that students with special needs have not been sufficiently addressed in the curriculum development process. However, in every school visited, the teachers pointed out that they do not have skills on how to support those students. Therefore, the area of how Soft Skills could be integrated to supporting students with special educational needs and disadvantaged in the SRRP framework could be one focus area to be explored further.

The MTR found that there is a need to build the capacity of the CDC in development of a differentiated curriculum or text books for students with special educational needs. This would mean of developing measures for adapting the learning objectives, learning contents, methodologies and assessments. Experience shows that differentiation is not for the benefit of students with special educational needs only but in general it helps all students.

Regional Approach

In accordance with the Country Strategy, Finland could explore opportunities for a regional approach for instance in supporting the curriculum implementation in remote and rural areas.

Development of Guidance and Counselling

Finally, there is no counseling system in school education of MOE and vocational education of CTEVT except if anything done by any teacher beyond his/her TOR in technical schools. Vocational counseling neither exists neither in MOE system nor in CTEVT system. While the recommendation above is to scale

down the counselling pilot during this current project because there is limited time for this and it would need a broader well-designed framework, the MTR suggests to the MOE to start working on this in a more strategic manner, for instance firstly analyzing the concept within the Nepalese system and then developing. Also a legal/ policy framework would be needed to ensure that guidance and counselling is embedded in the education system of Nepal. This might be an area for future Finnish TA support.