

The Journey of ‘Sayapatri Society’

Sayapatri Society has moved from a neighborhood club of volunteers to an organization with thematic expertise on higher secondary education and civic activists who can stand at difficult times.

When Sayapatri Society was first established by a group of enthusiastic volunteers, it was out of their desire to contribute in the local development of their village in Syangja – a district in the western part of Nepal. Over the years, some of the members moved on following their different career paths while some new ones joined in envisioning change. The persistence of the ones who stood by, those involved in teaching in particular, was the major factor for the organization’s growth and its renewed focus to work on education.

At a time when school education up to class 10 was the major area of interest for almost everyone including the government, donors and non-governmental organizations, Sayapatri identified the issues and challenges of higher secondary education (classes 11 and 12) as an important area of work based on their own observation.

From 2011, Alliance for Social Dialogue/Open Society Foundations has supported Sayapatri Society on their idea to study the challenges and opportunities of Higher Secondary Education (HSE)-an issue rarely debated and low on the list of priorities for many organizations (both national and international). This was a first systematic endeavor for the organization and it began its first formal engagement in the education sector.

With the objective of understanding and discovering the issues of HSE, Sayapatri focused its work on schools of Syangja and Kaski districts. Initially, with its activities focused mainly on consultations and discussions, Sayapatri was engaged with everyday problems of the school management, head-teachers, teachers and

students. With the eagerness to address these problems, Sayapatri began to work as a change agent. In order to move beyond these realities and connect everyday concerns to broader policy concerns, ASD encouraged Sayapatri to look into sustainable solutions. Following this, Sayapatri consolidated the issues related to the integration of HSE within the framework of Secondary Education, allotment and management of teachers particularly for higher secondary level and standardized examination system through collection and documentation of case studies from across the country. Most importantly, while other stakeholders chose to neglect, Sayapatri persevered through policy dialogue with Higher Secondary Education Board and Ministry of Education and has been able to highlight these concerns.

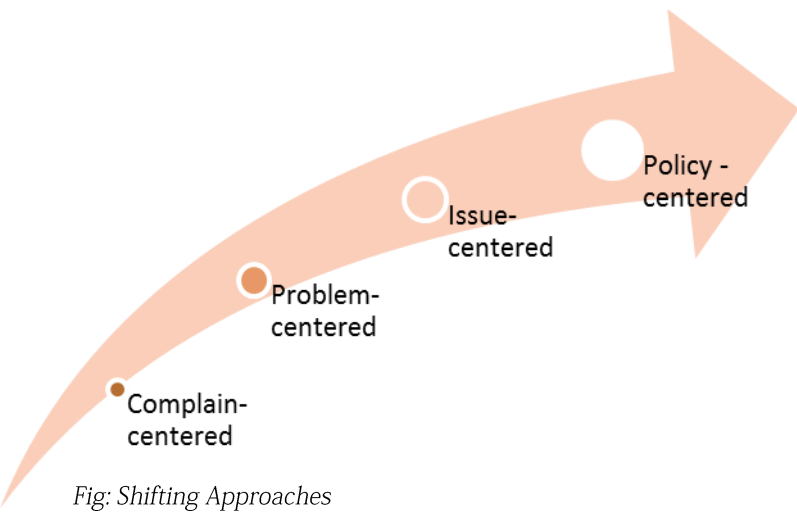


Fig: Shifting Approaches

Apart from continuing to work on a thematic issue, Sayapatri has been able to stand up, raise concerns and lead actions on issues pertaining to adhering to democratic principles, respect for values of human rights and opposing violence. The leadership quality of the organization was well-evident during the second Constituent Assembly election in Nepal (19 November 2013) where as a member of the ASD election network, it coordinated with the election observation organizations/observers and led campaigns for clean conduct in the western region of Nepal. In this way, the organization that was once a group of aspiring volunteers has become a symbol of change-agent with the government agencies and other civil society organizations acknowledging and recognizing its work and its contribution in inspiring change.

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Sayapatri Society was initially registered as Parajuli Youth Family which subsequently was renamed to Sayapatri Youth Club and then Sayapatri Society, in Syangja- a district in Western part of Nepal.

Over the years, Sayapatri has traversed through four different stages and is currently in a 'policy centered approach'. From the complain-centered approach, where the organization complained about the lack of effective management, it shifted to a problem-centered approach looking at the concerns of higher secondary education as a structural problem. Gradually, collecting the experiences from different regions across the country, it applied the approach of consolidating the problems into an issue-centered approach and then finally shifted to a policy-focused approach linking the issues within higher secondary education with the larger context of education policy in the country.

In the course of three years, Sayapatri has developed itself as a dedicated, committed and credible organization in the region. From identifying, discussing and raising individual concerns, it has progressed to articulating policy concerns on the issue of higher secondary education in Nepal. The shift from explaining problems to exploring and presenting avenues for solutions is a remarkable achievement for Sayapatri. With its ability to objectively view the situation and put in the effort to look for possible solutions to the identified issues, Sayapatri has found a niche for itself. As a result of this, District Education Office and regional office of Higher Secondary Education Board has begun to engage and consult with the organization regularly on matters related to management of HSE issues at the local level.

