

Megan Sadler Report August – November 2022

I have been a primary school teacher for 4 years and have had experience mainly within key stage two in schools in Essex, UK and I recently volunteered in Gorkha within several different schools. This was my first trip to a developing country on my own having been to an African country with my family when I was 17.

When I first arrived in Nepal nothing could have prepared me for how I felt, everything was different and I was amazed by how people lived their lives within the country. Getting to Gorkha was relatively easy with the help of the GDS guidance document together with the people who worked in my hostel. I walked to the bus station the day before departure to book my ticket and everyone was very helpful when directing me to the right bus. I was surprised by how cramped it was on the bus and by the quality of the roads in Nepal as this was my first experience in this region of Asia.

Homestay and arrival

When I arrived in Gorkha I was greeted by some amazing people who made me feel so at home and welcome. My homestay was fantastic, and I really enjoyed living at Lila's house. She made me feel very safe and all her family were very welcoming. They asked me many questions about how I like things such as food etc. This was really nice and meant we got to know each other better. In Nepal they eat mainly one dish which is rice, dhal and vegetable curry. They eat this twice a day every day! This took some time getting used to as I wasn't used to eating curry for breakfast. Nepali people also treat guests very well and always wanted me to eat more than I could. This meant I had to make sure Lila knew I was not hungry anymore. It helped when I learnt some Nepali words to explain how I felt.



Gorkha is a lovely place, and everyone knows everyone, this means many people talk to you in the street and want to know many things about you. I was shocked by how many people wanted to get photos with me and wanted me to be in TikTok videos. I soon got used to it but when I felt uncomfortable I was able to say no and people were not pushy about it.

I lived on a road with many members of the GDHEDS charity, this gave Gorkha a real community feel and I enjoyed seeing and talking to people in the street. If you have any problems they jumped to sort it out. I wasn't very well for a number of days and Lila and Sarita helped no end to make sure I was well again. This made them feel like family.

School

I worked in two main schools, the Manukama school which was a private school and the Bal Mandir Shree secondary school which was a government run school. I started first in the Bal Mandir school and was shocked to find that the school week is 6 days but later realised it was because in Nepal schools tend to get quite a few random days off and they usually take you by surprise.

I worked closely with Sarita who is the secretary for the charity in Gorkha. She was so helpful and any worries or queries I had she had no problem helping with. She also worked within the Bal Mandir school and therefore was always around to reassure and help. When I first arrived it took time to get used to the new school and how things were done and considering how I might

best utilise my skills but it helped when discussing with Sarita. This was really important to set the right ground rules. One of the English teachers welcomed me into his class and he was keen to learn and share ideas with me so we worked together to develop his English teaching within the classroom. Working with the children was very rewarding and it was amazing to see how they changed and became more confident communicating with me throughout the time of my stay. The children at the beginning were very shy and didn't feel confident talking to me in English, but this is also the way of the curriculum as it is still very wrote. What was important was getting the children talking within the classroom no matter what language they were speaking. It also helped that they had a go at teaching me some Nepali, which they found hilarious.



When I worked in the private school this was very different to the government school and at times I did feel uncomfortable with the discipline. When this happened, I was confident enough to speak up about my feelings and then a discussion was had with the schools about this and also mentioned to GDS in UK and GDHEDS in Gorkha. These are always important things to bring up and all of the committee want your help and input.

I took some classes on my own but most of the time I was in a classroom with other teachers, this was very important to me as working with the teachers will help develop the delivery of the curriculum and confidence of the teachers. Some of the teachers were shy and didn't want me to be in the classrooms which I understood so I focused on the teachers who were happy to talk to me, this made it a fun partnership within the classroom. Team teaching lessons was a really good way to show different ways of learning and helped with the development of use of both languages in the classroom. This is a good time to show small tricks such as partner talk and group activities.

In general little to no planning is completed by teachers in Nepal as they all work from workbooks. This can mean that teachers usually aren't sure until they are in the class what they will be teaching. This can then cause a loss of confidence and children to be waiting for the lesson to start. I found this a good opportunity to talk to the teachers about the expectations in planning for teachers in other countries. We also spoke about looking at the workbooks in the free period that each teacher gets a day, this would be a good time for the teachers to prepare for their next lessons.

Curriculum

The Nepali system is designed differently from the UK system. Primary teachers have a certain subject that they teach, and they move around to different classes. This was unexpected as I was used to having one class for a whole year. Schools have children from pre-school all the way to the end of secondary and this meant that I ended up working with the children in the secondary school as well.

Teachers have workbooks that are provided by the government and are written by the government. Similar to how our schools would follow schemes, the Nepali teachers use these to create their lessons. From what I noticed the teachers aren't pushed to think about their lessons and many turn up to class and just complete the next page of the book. This meant the children lost interest quite quickly. I focused on showing the teachers ways to keep the children engaged using collaborative learning, for example group work and questioning.

Lots of learning and teaching takes place in English which can mean that the children can be worried about answering questions in class because they are embarrassed when talking in English. This can also mean that teachers tend to ask closed questions in English and the children can easily just answer yes and no. I showed and provided alternative questions that the teachers could ask. I made it clear to the teachers that the children should be able to answer questions in their mother tongue and this could then be translated. This would help with development of their language and provide confidence in answering questions in class.



Teacher training

I was asked to take part in a teacher training seminar where I gave a talk alongside other trainers which was an amazing opportunity for me professionally. This was the first teacher training seminar to take place for three years. It was two days long and over 30 teachers were in attendance. The charity committee in Nepal were very helpful when we talked about what my talk should be about and as it was near the end of my trip I was able to draw on all my experiences and what I had seen in class.

I decided to focus on collaborative learning basing my ideas on three main skills that can be easily applied in the classroom using minimal resources. These were: think, pair, share, mind mapping and using images to create a story. The seminar was completed in a workshop fashion as this gave the teachers the ability to see how it would be used in a lesson and to have a go themselves and gave them some ideas on how to develop their own practice. They were able to complete the tasks and see and discuss how they would use the ideas within their own practice. Many of the teachers said they found this useful and were very grateful to receive more training. During the teacher training I was able to work with other trainers and also watch their seminars and help out. This was a great opportunity for the teachers to discuss concerns and worries with other trainers and also for me to see how other trainers delivered their talks. Following this teacher training session there has I believe been more organised and my slides have been used within the presentation.