

Youth and Community Engagement

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Young population forms a big chunk of the Bhutanese community. As we settle in a new country, the future of our community rests on the conduct and initiatives of this young generation. They are the guidance to the older generation in language, navigation, culture and finances. This young population has partly experienced the traumatic refugee life and they have seen the free and joyful Australian life. Learning from the past and using the present as opportunity to grow and prosper in the future is the most challenging task they must shoulder.

Young people from our community not only have the opportunities to grow and expand here in Australia but also shoulder the responsibility to give continuity to our culture, identity and communal harmony. They carry our legacy, spirit and values to generations to come. The future of who we are completely depend on the course of action, schooling, community engagement and intergenerational relations these young people adopt.

What they adopt, then depend on what we impart to them. We are in a critical stage to decide whether we want our newer generation to carry on with our legacy, culture and social values or let them choose these fundamental social characteristics from others as they grow up. The onus lies with the community leaders, elders and intellectuals.

Special focus must be given to ensure this young generation gets attention, build resilience, empower themselves with strong will power to serve the community and the country while ensuring they inherit culture, social values and acceptable and valuable traditions that we lived through.

There is also a large groups of community members in the 40s or 50s with enormous skills but not recognised. The association shall work to find means that would help recognise the skills they have.

As we faces these challenges, there is definite need for us to start working on developing database that will give us the exact idea of the

situation in hand and develop ideas and programs appropriate to the needs.

Our actions must ensure the younger generation is socially valuable, economically strong and culturally resilient.

1. Employment opportunities

Unemployment is one of the major challenges for our younger generation. Though this is not concentrated only in our community, growing number of young people without work in our community is a concerning agenda. The market offers ample opportunities but younger population is finding it difficult to connect their interest with the industry.

General observations show, younger generation are hesitant to continuing their higher education. Failure by a friend to find good job despite having university education discourages one to pursue higher education. As a result, more young people have opted to earning than higher education. The population of young people opting to start working at the tender age to get some pocket money is encouraging school dropout.

The association shall ensure and encourage the young people attend school education and continue with university education. Alternatively, if university education is not the first choice for some young people, association shall design programs to make sure these young people pursue vocational education. Vocational education is the best option for young people not interested in university full time to improve their skills and update on latest legal requirements for works.

While association shall encourage everyone to pursue higher education, it shall also encourage the young people to enter the employment market early to gain essential qualities and skills requisite to gain better employment opportunities. This shall address the difficulties young people facing to find suitable employment opportunities despite having educational qualification. The young people must understand that Australian work culture not only demands educational qualification for a good job but also the work experiences.

Skilled individuals also have hard to link with the industry they dream of. The association shall work to link the skilled and qualified individuals with employment opportunities.

Beside young unemployment, our community members in 40s and 50s have faced high unemployment. The primary reason for this being traditional work skills they acquired not recognised in Australia. These people need fresher courses on workmanship and vocational

trainings to rejuvenate the tremendous work skills they possess and convert into Australian work standards.

The association shall invest in connecting these existing work skills, vocations and industry making it compliance with the Australian regulations and opening doors for opportunities to our community members.

As part of the seeking employment opportunities for our community members, the association shall seek support from individuals and organisations to provide mentorship that enhances the changes of gainful employment.

2. Socio-cultural connections

The young generation engage and intermingle with the wider Australian community. This is very important to the intellectual, social and mental growth of these young people. That gives them fantastic opportunity to learn about others, make bigger fraternity and learn to live in harmony in the highly diverse social environment. But, concurrently, it poses concern of them losing connection with their own language, culture and community. We have already started seeing many young people failing to read, write and speak our language, have distanced from our cultural festivals and remain ignorant to our social values.

The association shall design program for young people to learn and retain our cultural and linguistic identity. They include Nepali language classes, social gathering, interaction between older and younger generation, cultural festivals and such others. Such programs shall focus on strengthening the ever-widening generation gap too. Closer relationship between elderlies and young generation not only glues the widening generational gap but also provides avenues for the young people to learn about our cultures, social values and family traditions.

The association shall, while encouraging the young people to engage and learn other cultures, provide opportunities to have closer connection and deeper relations with our own cultures and social values.

3. Community engagement

We value volunteerism and it is immensely ingrained into our values and practice. While the term 'volunteerism' might have become more vocal, it was integral part of our social life. We regard this as our family or social responsibility. We have been the living proof that we volunteer for all our community activities and social causes, for generations.

Volunteerism gives space for young people and adults to engage in community activities, build relationship, promote unity and enhance cooperation. This is the primary platform that provides avenues for young people to brighten their working skills.

Young people must have opportunity to engage more in the community activities and projects. This not only empowers them, it gives them a window to look opportunities that best suits them. Volunteering is very important and crucial part of the Australian life. Providing space for young people to volunteer in community will pave way for their job opportunities, social connection, community harmony and personal development.

Engaging young in community activities is sharpening their skills and talents and open doors for employment opportunities.

We have also encountered with young people who have pushed themselves inside doors and have become completely isolated from the community. Community engagement will give them exposure and help them socialise.

4. Educational and extra curriculum support

We are facing a completely new way of learning. While transitioning from our oriental teaching traditions to the western teaching techniques, we are traveling in a confusing state of mind. While we have not been able to forget the way we learnt, it's quite challenging to grasp the new teaching techniques.

Our young people too have abrupt shift in the way they learn. From the traditional book rot culture to technology-dominated method of teaching, this shift is a big jump for young people to adopt. The transition is not smooth. Until they get used to with the new techniques, they need support, mentor and additional help to ensure they adjust to the new way of learning and above all they get practically what they are intended to.

The young people also need support in their extra curricular activities such as sports, language, cultural learning. While schools and teachers traditionally provide support for all curricular and extra curricular activities within school hours, additional support that community, family and individuals provide in their curricular and extra curricular activities outside school hours greatly enhances the learning capability of the young people. Such support are part of encouragement and motivation for young people to pursue learning.

The association shall invest to find alternatives within the community to support these young and adult to achieve their dreams and

aspirations. Such alternative programs could be nationally connected or segregated to address the local needs.

5. Peer education

Peer education is the most effective means. Young people learn from their friends of same age much quicker than their seniors. Influences in learning from same age group is more effective, quicker and economic. To engage young people in fruitful activities, we must include young people in the mentoring role, leadership role. Community must run peer education program to ensure all young people from our community get equal treatment, get level playing field to learn and implement their knowledge.

The young people have marched into leadership role in many state level organisations and community activities. This is a positive progress towards holistic development for young people. This must continue.

The association shall encourage young people to pair up with community seniors in the leadership role and taking important community responsibilities. The plans are to ultimately transfer the leadership and community responsibilities to these young, dynamic and competent leaders.

6. Building entrepreneurship

Building entrepreneurship is crucial. We anticipate social, economic and political leadership from our younger generation. The anticipation must be practical – given them space and opportunity to build that entrepreneurship. While we give importance to access gainful employment, it is more important to build in us the qualities and skills required in a strident entrepreneur.

The association shall find means to promote entrepreneur capabilities and self-employment among the young generation and other qualified community members.

Community members in 40s and 50s who have enormous skills, not recognised in Australia, would have high potential to run their own business and generate employment for others. Association shall invest to build entrepreneurship in them and provide guidance in developing entrepreneur skills in them.