CURRICULUM CHANGE AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES:
An Analysis of the Implementation of the
Post-1986 Curriculum Change in Bhutanese Schools

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DEDICATION

And what is teaching? Ah! There you have the worst paid and the best rewarded of all vocations. Dare not enter it unless you love it. For the vast majority of men [and women] for whom it has no promise of wealth or fame but they to whom it is dear for its own sake are among the nobility of mankind. I sing the praise of unknown teacher ... (Henry van Dyke (1852-1933).

FOR

TEACHERS IN BHUTAN.
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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to assess how teachers in Bhutan interpreted and implemented the post-1986 curriculum in the schools and within the given conditions in which they work.

The development of modern or secular education in Bhutan has formally been operating for about forty years. Within this short period, the progress made has been remarkable. The system, however, has been grappling with a constant search for quality while at the same time struggling to cope with a burgeoning student population. Notwithstanding this dual challenge, an innovative curriculum at the lower primary level, the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) was introduced in the late 1980s. It required teachers to adapt to a new set of materials and a new approach to teaching that was oriented towards child-centred learning. For teachers who had been generally operating in a traditional teacher-talk and examination dominated system, which was oriented to a more traditional lecture method of teaching, the NAPE and its commensurate teaching method created a tension. This tension was further aggravated by lack of support and pressure from the central agencies.

This study concluded that in the implementation phase of the NAPE, teachers in the lower primary schools (PP-III) were able to confront the challenges. However, as they moved from lower to upper primary levels, they retained the more traditional teaching methods. Teachers’ low educational attainment and lack of adequate training combined with a lack of appropriate material and the shortage of teachers were the main factors responsible for the tensions that pervaded the system in the post-1986 period.

The findings in the study have significant implications for the system operators and policy makers in Bhutan. In broad terms, the challenge they face is to re-assess the relevance of the NAPE curriculum in a way that better takes into account the capacity of the system to implement it. Such revision must take into account the resource levels in schools and the capabilities of the teaching cadre as a whole. Both of these factors ultimately depend upon the strength of the national economy that can support the priorities that the government presently gives to education. One reality in the twenty-first century, that rings loud in the ears, is that further change is inevitable for which education in Bhutan must be prepared. Another daunting challenge that confronts the education system is in developing its capacity to embrace the change more effectively.
GLOSSARY OF BHUTANESE TERMS

Chettrum = Units of money, same as cents (in US and AUS. Dollars)
Druk Gyalpo = The King of Bhutan
Dzongkhag = Small administrative region or the district
Dzongkha = The Bhutanese National Language
Dzongkha Lopoen = Bhutanese Language Teacher
Guru Padma Sambhava = The 8th century Indian Saint and Tantric Master well known in the Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhism
Kuensel = Bhutan’s National Newspaper (weekly)
Lyonpo = Minister
Ngadroen = The Key to Classical Bhutanese Language
Ngultrum = Bhutanese Money (One Ngultrum is worth about 2.2 US cents
Sumtag = Basic Grammar in Bhutanese Language
Gyalse Laglen = The Buddhist precepts explained in verse, used as literature in high schools
Tshogdu Chhenmo = The National Assembly of Bhutan
ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUSAID</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBE</td>
<td>Bhutan Board of Examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPSS</td>
<td>Curriculum and Professional Support Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDD</td>
<td>Curriculum Development Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTDD</td>
<td>Curriculum and Textbook Development Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>Dzongkhag (District) Education Officer (or Officer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRT</td>
<td>Dzongkhag Resource Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Education Department/Education Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECR</td>
<td>Extended Classroom (village schools as an extended branch of a primary school in the late 1980s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMSS</td>
<td>Education Monitoring and Support Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVS</td>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GT</td>
<td>Guru Training (basic teaching course for primary teachers in North Bengal State of India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSE</td>
<td>Indian Council of Secondary Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSET</td>
<td>In-service Education for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCE</td>
<td>Indian Secondary Certificate Examination (earlier Senior Cambridge Examination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPE</td>
<td>New Approach to Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBIP</td>
<td>National Based In-service Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NU</td>
<td>Ngultrum (Bhutanese money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NIE</td>
<td>The National Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGCE</td>
<td>Postgraduate Certificate in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
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</table>
PRESET = Pre-service Education for Teachers
PT = Physical Training
PTC = Primary Teacher Certificate Course.
QPGI = Quarterly Policy Guidelines and Instructions
RC = Resource Centre (for teachers).
RCSC = Royal Civil Service Commission
REO = Regional Education Office (Officer)
RTI = Royal Technical Institute
SDC = Swiss Development Cooperation
SBIP = School Based In-service Programme
TEU = Teacher Education Unit
TTC = Teacher Training College
TTI = Teacher Training Institute
UNCDF = United Nations Commission for Development Fund
UNESCO = United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF = United Nations International Children’s Educational Fund
VSO/VSA = Voluntary Service Overseas / Abroad
WUSC = World University Service of Canada
YGCS = Youth Guidance and Counselling Section
ZEO = Zonal Education Office (Officer)