CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Government of Bhutan places high priority on youth as the future hope for the country. The level of knowledge and skills they attained while at school, the values they hold, the loyalty, commitment and dedication they exhibit, and the contributions they would be able to make to the country’s social and economic development, are indicators of their ability to take such a responsibility. Education has, therefore, consistently provided an essential service to the children as a means to acquire these qualities.

Schooling in Bhutan is not compulsory, but the Royal Government encourages and provides free education to all school aged children at the primary and secondary levels. This facility is also extended to the selected ones at tertiary level, including vocational and professional training. Common people in our country now recognize education as a means to give their children better chances in life and therefore generally send their children to schools whereas in the 1960s they had to be persuaded and even conscripted. In its desire to provide education services to all the children, and in fulfilling the people’s desire for education, the Royal Government has expanded the education facilities from about 11 primary schools in 1961 to 343 in 1999. This has obviously resulted in an escalation of cost of schooling against its limited resources.

However, one of the main concerns has always been the quality of education provided to children. It has been pointed out that the school students and those who graduated from the schools generally over the last decade or more lacked the necessary skills, work ethics, values and attitudes necessary to be responsible and productive citizens (ED, 1992, 1996, 1998).

In August 1997, the Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS) was directed by the Honourable Minister for Health and Education, to initiate an “analytical study of the school curriculum”. It was also pointed out that the education system in Bhutan had adopted a new curriculum, and a concurrently new approach to teaching in our schools in the last ten years or so. For many children the change in curriculum and teaching methods would have raised new hopes for a quality education. Yet, there is a
lack of desired quality in our youth. It was, therefore, essential to see whether these shortfalls were linked with the curriculum content and/or the teaching methods in the classrooms (7th CAPSS Board Meeting, 1997).

Part of the instruction was to constitute a Task Force consisting of education officials and coordinated by the CAPSS of the Education Division. The objectives of the committee were:
(a) to assess whether the curriculum is consonant with the learning needs of our children or not;
(b) to look at the way teachers understand and implement the contents in schools; and
(c) to make recommendations for future course of directions.
(See Appendix I).

As a student pursuing a Doctoral degree in Education (Ed.D) at the University of New England and as a member of the Task Force, it was considered that the new assignment and the research requirements of the university would complement each other.

From a personal perspective

I thought that a brief account of my personal experiences, as reminiscent of the system before the 1980s, would have some bearing on the thesis in two ways. First, there would be descriptions in the text that would have no references to literature but which were events that I had experienced, as well as observed, in the different capacities that I have worked. The second influence would be that some materials would seem rather preemptive to the conclusion in the thesis. But these were the results of my interactions with colleagues in the field as well as concerns that have already affected me in some way.

I was admitted, straight from cattle herding, to the primary school at the local district headquarters, which was a good one-day's walk from my village. This began in 1961, with many boys from other parts of the district. It was also the first time we knew there was such a thing called “school”. Our first lesson started from some symbolic pictures, each of which had a name. We memorised the names, as our teacher called out each of them and recalled them in subsequent tests. I could recall these learning experiences clearly when, many years later, we were discussing Vygotsky's concept of language learning attached to any symbols which he called "non sensical" (in Dorji, 1984). Later I came to know that these were alphabets, the "key tools" to knowledge. Gradually we were able to read our Geography textbooks that said something about 'Canterbury Lambs' in New Zealand, the 'Trojan Wars in Greece' in the History textbook, the 'Wise Man of Gotham in England' in our English books.
Much of my education in the primary school went on in the same fashion as it had started. We had read and memorised most of the subjects and wrote examinations. Half way through grade V, I had accepted, in spite of my teachers' advice, the Government's offer of a training course in horticulture, in Thimphu, with Nu.80 a month (c US$2 at 1999 exchange rate). Three years later I left the job and reported back to the Education Department with a request to give me another chance to continue my schooling. Instead, the Director, Mr Bose, on deputation from Bengal, India, sent me to the newly opened Teacher Training Institute (TTI), in a small southern border town some 260 kilometres south of Thimphu. I managed to report to the Institute travelling in trucks, jeeps, and trains (part of the journey was through India), for the first time on my own, at about 16 years of age.

On my first morning assembly at the Institute, the Principal, another Bengali gentleman, spoke loudly, clearly and slowly. But I could not get a clue of what he was saying. I was saddened and very worried. I was already three months late and mid term examination was just another month away. I collected all lecture notes from my friends and copied them and sat down to memorise them. When the results were declared, I noticed a remark written against my name - "remarkable improvement". I have always remembered this. I admired the way our lecturers were able to dictate the ideas and texts without looking at the books. It was a struggle to note down everything they said. There was no textbook, except for Dzongkha and English and the few library books were beyond our comprehension.

It was a two-year course in the teaching of subjects like English, History, Geography, Math and Science. We also learnt more Dzongkha but only to improve our skills in the language. We had some practices in the local primary school. We made formal lesson plans, besides many other components of the training program. I was appointed as a teacher in 1970 in a primary school in a place I had never heard of before. It took me about a week to arrive at the school, by trucks, trains, and on foot.

Teaching in the primary school was both interesting and demanding. The Headmaster gave me Mathematics in class V. After the first day lesson I went and begged the Headmaster to give me any other subject but Math. He accepted, understandingly. There were about 20 to 25 students in each of the classes. I had to go to four different classes each day. I could read every student's notes and keep a mental note of their progress. We had no system of record keeping of individual students. A year later in 1971, the new Director of Education, Mr R.S. James, also from India, circulated a letter by which we were required to maintain "cumulative records" of all the pupils. We discussed the contents of the letter. We were able to comply with the instruction as far
as keeping the records of all the tests that we conducted. No inquiries followed the letter. It was left to the teachers either to do or not to do.

I did not prepare detailed lesson plans everyday for my classes, but I certainly looked through what I was going to teach every day and organised a few things before the class began. Once I took a flower to the class, just like one of my teachers did in my school days, and showed my class the different parts of it with names. My class seemed to like this, because they went out to look for the same flowers and learnt the names that I gave them. Somehow, I never repeated it again. I learnt that a Dr Maria Montessori in Europe had once introduced wonderful ways of teaching small children through games and activities called "play way method". But we liked the lecturing style because it fitted well inside the allotted period and did not require much planning. Especially when I came upon a text that I found difficult to comprehend, I lectured. At least I tried not to read from the textbook and explain each and every word. I had used many examples from students' daily lives to construct sentences in English and used their context to illustrate some concepts. Sometimes there were parts that I could not understand too well myself, and left them untaught.

At that time, I was also giving myself a hard time reading and studying. I subscribed to three good magazines that my friends recommended from India; I listened to the "BBC English by Radio" regularly, took dictation and learnt grammar. I bought a book called "Good English" (author cannot be recalled) and various other novels. I enrolled myself as a private candidate for a class X examination with the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. My Headmaster helped me through the struggles, especially in Math, and I passed this examination four years later in 1974.

After this I was awarded a Government scholarship and went to Punjab University in India for an undergraduate course in July 1975. While in Punjab I was invited by the local Rotary Club to speak about my country to its members. I realised how little I knew about the History and Geography of my own country. Dumbstruck and ashamed, I wished I could disappear like the rainbows back in my village. The hosts were, however, kind enough to thank me at least, for trying.

I returned home four years later to teach in a junior high school. A few years later I was awarded a UNESCO fellowship to do a Masters Course at the University of London Institute of Education (ULIE) in the United Kingdom. Back in Bhutan I was then transferred to my old Institute, which had already been upgraded to the National Institute of Education (NIE) with the introduction of B.Ed programme. It was a privilege to be on the teaching staff in NIE. We had re-designed the courses at the NIE.
with assistance from professors and senior lecturers from the ULIE and implemented them ourselves. Teaching for the B.Ed. became a big challenge for me.

Four years later in 1989, I was called to the Education Head Office in Thimphu and entrusted with the task of developing syllabuses and textbooks in Social Studies, History and Geography from class VI to class X. With no experience of any kind before, apart from working on the B.Ed. syllabus for NIE, I began with this daunting task. I had a very challenging task to produce textbooks that my colleagues and I deemed appropriate for our schools. I had visited schools, talked to teachers, teacher educators and government officers about the type of materials that would be more useful and acceptable. In 1991, I had the additional responsibility of overseeing the whole curriculum development at the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD).

With the help of a hard working and dedicated team of colleagues, who were also teachers like myself, we were able to change the syllabuses, textbooks and develop manuals for teachers up to class VIII by 1994, except in Math and Sciences. History and Geography on Bhutan were introduced up to class X amongst other things. In the same year I was privileged to become the second Director of NIE, a position that I held for the next three years.

But I continued as a chairperson of the Social Studies Subject Committee, which was initiated in 1993 along with the committees of Maths, Science, English and Dzongkha. This was a part of the restructuring of CTDD into the Curriculum and Professional Support Services (CAPSS) because of the support that it needed to provide to teachers in terms of the curriculum changes. Since the Director of the CAPSS was appointed as the Principal of Sherubtse in 1997, the only university college in Bhutan affiliated to Delhi University, I was called back to CAPSS. It was in this resumed capacity that I had joined the Task Force to review the curriculum in the country and at a time when I was working on the proposal for my thesis. The first was a part of my job and the second was another opportunity to train myself further in the job. It turned out to be a good coincidence - doing a degree course focussed on my work and fulfilling a duty related to the work that I had been directly involved with for almost ten years. That is why this thesis has a great significance for me personally and professionally.

With this brief personal reminiscence in the background, I dare now to begin the most challenging task in my life, the research, to revisit the story of the education system in my country, beyond my personal experiences and through the eyes of the teachers.
Relevance of curriculum

When the modern system of education began in 1961 as a nation-wide program, we did not have many materials of our own to start with except for those in Dzongkha (the national language of Bhutan). So the learning materials used in our schools were a replica of those used by the missionary schools in the state of West Bengal in India. For example, in the primary schools, the English grammar text had characters like Smith and Johnson for proper nouns. In Geography the contents included anecdotes such as 'how Canterbury Lambs from New Zealand were shipped to England' and 'Tom went to market in London' describing the social life of the English people. But it was problem when it came to understanding our own life, just as I felt in the Rotary Club in India. There was a serious concern about the relevance of content for students in Bhutan.

Since the mid 1980s, school curricula have started to be written in Bhutan's context. By 1995, all areas of study at the primary level were transformed into local context, although still using English as the principal language of instruction. This change in the content also required teachers to change their teaching from lectures to activity method. But again the question arises whether the new curricula prepared the students for their work as adults in terms of skills, values and attitudes.

Values and the issues of youth

In 1993, His Majesty the King had said that, in spite of great efforts in providing education, most of our students exhibit very poor discipline and work ethics (in an audience). The King commented that our public entrepreneurs still preferred giving jobs to non-Bhutanese while our own youth were left unemployed. This expressed disappointment was prompted by the very poor participation from parents in the education and upbringing of the children both at the school and at home. This was again repeated in a rather emotional tone in November 1998 in Thimphu (Audience with His Majesty, 1998). Furthermore, it was pointed out, that parents were pampering the children. Such a way of bringing up children would result in the degeneration of the children resulting in a “large pool of educated and semi-educated generation who would be basically disgruntled all their lives” (ED, May, 1993:4).

The other concern that the Royal Government has always tried to address is the future possibility of an educated but unemployed population (ED, 1992). Although Bhutan at present faces a shortage of skilled workers, such a problem was likely to be short lived. At the present rate of growth in population and school enrolment, Bhutan would soon be flooded with youths who have completed schooling, and yet cannot be gainfully employed (7th CAPSS Board Meeting). Such a situation will obviously have
tremendous implications for the social harmony and economic development of the country.

**Escalating cost of education**

In a royal decree in 1996, His Majesty the King had stated that the cost of education was escalating disproportionately to the growth in national revenue. Hence dependence on donor agencies was increasing. In keeping with the policy of pursuing national self reliance, it was necessary to seek alternative solutions.

A survey on the financing of schooling estimated that one student in a primary school would cost Nu 1,703, and a junior high school student would cost Nu 2,763, while a high school student would cost Nu 4,876 during 1994 (Bray, 1995:40).

“Putting all levels (of education) together, total costs are projected (at 1994 prices) to rise from Nu 224.9 million in 1994 to Nu 472.6 million in 2000. The budget will more than double within six years. On the other hand, the annual (cumulative) increase in the budget between 1995 and 2004 would be 12.7 percent” (Bray, 1995:40).

While the increase in cost was understandably part of the growth and development of the system, the efficiency with which resources were put to use was the cause of the main concern. Every single Chettrum (cent) must be spent wisely and effectively was implied. Further than this, however, cost analysis was beyond the scope of this research.

**Quality of teaching**

This thesis, and in keeping with the directives given to undertake the review mentioned earlier, is concerned with the quality teaching as much as it is concerned with the quality of the content.

Both content and teaching in our schools have constantly been the foci of debates and informal discussions. Prior to 1985 we were worried about the relevance of content. Then our discussions were diverted to teaching, saying that the teachers rarely apply creative and innovative skills in their classroom teaching. Once the teachers complete the pre-service training courses, they leave aside the skills and strategies learnt at the training college and resort to the easy teacher centred lecturing (NIE, 1997). The National Education Policy of 1984 mentioned that a change in the curriculum content, which was more relevant to the Bhutanese context, was highly desirable. Consequent upon this, the new curriculum\(^1\) at the lower primary school began its first pilot testing in 1986. In this new curriculum, it was necessary that the method of teaching was child-centred and activity based, involving children in the progress of the lesson (Education

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\(^1\) The new curriculum came to be called NAPE later in 1986 because of the new method of teaching required.
Division, 1984). A review of education in primary schools (1993) revealed that there were many things our teachers needed to improve upon, such as, better teaching methods, continuous assessment, management of time and resources, and use of the assessment results to improve their teaching (Harley, 1993).

Many of our teachers had started working before 1981 and a lot of them had qualifications below class X. It was also obvious from our experiences that a majority of these teachers had not had the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications after their initial schooling and training. The Harley report in 1993 questioned whether these teachers were able to abandon their old method of teaching of lecturing and adopt the new approach to teaching. This research looks at what teachers think of the new curriculum and the extent to which they adopted the new method of teaching.

Assessment and evaluation

Education in Bhutan has been mainly influenced by the general trend in South Asia where entrance into higher education institutes or professional training is based on the face value of the examination results. As such, teaching has generally been geared towards preparing students for examinations. Over several years of discussions some decisions had been made to reduce the undue importance given to examinations in Bhutan. Teachers are encouraged to assess the day to day performance of students and use the results as a basis for deciding their promotion to the next higher class.

However, the practice of assessing students’ work is more easily said than done. It involves careful reading of students’ work and maintaining records of student performance and progress constantly. Continuous assessment has been introduced in primary schools since 1986 and in secondary schools from 1993 onwards. The research was directed at finding out the way it was being practised.

Supply of teaching materials

Supply of teaching and learning materials at the right time and in adequate quantity makes a difference in teaching. Many of our schools are located in far-flung remote areas across difficult terrain. Once on their way, books, stationery and many other things have to pass along difficult paths.

The longevity of the textbooks supplied and the way the students handled them have also been questioned at various meetings of the CAPSS. Sometimes, the suppliers failed to deliver the consignments in time, causing more delay in further distribution. This problem may affect the way students learn in schools.

Physical facilities at the schools and administration

From 1986 onwards, almost all the schools were headed by our national teachers. The Education Division had praise for the dedication and hard work shown by them.
However, most of these head teachers were selected directly from the classrooms and had very little experience in the management of schools and other complex matters that are pervasive in human organisations. There were few opportunities for head teachers.

Officials of the Education Division have also been critical about the maintenance of physical facilities and the proper utilisation of available resources in the schools. Besides the day to day administration of the schools, the head teachers have specifically been reminded of the academic responsibility in their respective schools, that is, having to teach certain minimum lessons every week and playing a leadership role in instructional matters (ED, 1991, 1992, 1995).

THE RESEARCH PROBLEMS

One of the advantages of small countries, like Bhutan, is that it is “relatively easy to identify and diagnose problems” (Bray, 1996:16). As Bray observes, some of the problems to be discussed in greater depth are those identified by visiting officials and observations made in the reports (eg. Inspectors’ reports, 1997; and Primary Education Review, 1993). Study of these comments and problems mentioned in these documents are necessary to understand the real situation and complement the experience of Education Division Officials. This section makes a reference to some pertinent comments.

In a survey on the non-enrolment, dropouts and repetitions in primary schools (ED & UNICEF, 1990) the following concerns were raised:

1. there was almost a uniformly high rate of class repetition in all grades beginning with PP up to class VI;
2. there were a large number of unqualified and untrained primary teachers teaching in schools throughout the country;
3. children taught by trained teachers did no better than those taught by untrained teachers;
4. performances of children in the tool subjects like the English and Math as well as the Dzongkha were the weakest;
5. there was no standardised pattern of assessment and evaluation till the common examinations at the end of class VI. Each teacher from grades PP to VI assessed and evaluated his/her students according to his/her own methods; and
6. teachers often crammed the teachings to cover the syllabus, irrespective of whether or not students had grasped the lessons (ED, 1990:31-35).

In 1993, His Majesty the King had said that given the literary background of most of our parents, the Education Division needed to consider taking the responsibility of
providing value and moral education to the children. This was also reiterated in 1998 (audience records).

In response to His Majesty’s comments, the education officers gathered for a week in December 1993 at Phuentsholing. They also produced a long list of problems that required urgent attention. These are summarised in seven points below:

1. inadequate professional support for teachers;
2. resource constraints in schools;
3. lack of adequate community participation;
4. lack of clear long term objectives and strategies for curriculum;
5. overemphasis on examinations;
6. shortage of teachers and unrealistic expectations; and
7. rapid growth of education system (ED, March 1994:2).

From other curriculum documents and the various reports submitted by inspectors, CAPSS compiled and submitted an overview of the pertinent problems at the 7th CAPSS Board meeting held at the National Institute of Education, Samtse in August 1997. A summary of these problems is reproduced below:

1. the standard of education is poor;
2. there is a lack of values and moral education in the system;
3. students’ attitudes towards the Bhutanese way of life is low;
4. many teachers do not practise the skills of teaching in the classrooms;
5. the NAPE approach to teaching may not be appropriate to our situations;
6. many of our head teachers lack the skills of instructional leadership; and
7. our education system does not support the ideas of wholesome education (7th CAPSS Board meeting, 1997).

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

On studying the issues and problems mentioned in the preceding sections of this chapter it was felt that the following will be the main areas of focus for review and for the present study.

1. How did the teachers interpret the new curriculum in terms of clarity of content and relevance to children’s learning needs and their social and cultural context?
2. What issues and problems did the teachers encounter while teaching in the school?
3. How did teachers assess and evaluate the performance of their students?
4. How did teachers find the way they were prepared for the implementation of curriculum through pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes?

5. What did teachers think about the management and leadership in their schools and the facilities provided to them?

6. What kind of support and encouragement did the teachers receive from the Education Department, Dzongkhag Education Offices and from parents?

These form the six key questions in the research matrix appended herewith. Several related sub-questions are structured to obtain more information in each of the six areas.

**STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This chapter only provided an overview of the issues and problems sufficient to identify the research areas. The greater details of these issues will emerge in the subsequent chapters. A brief account of what I had witnessed, first as a student and then as a primary school teacher and an educational administrator in the development of education system in my country, in the last 40 years or so has been narrated. It has assisted in the understanding of my professional engagement and also as a case study of changes over this period.

Chapter Two provides some details on the historical development of education in Bhutan from 1961 including the innovations in curriculum and teaching between 1986 and 1998. Although the chapter had been organised by events, the chronological sequence is maintained within each major event. The purpose of the second chapter is to provide a full picture of the context in which this study has been carried out.

Chapter Three looks at relevant literature from two sources. One type of literature is derived from Bhutanese sources where there is an abundance of written documents but in a rather scattered form. This chapter has provided an opportunity to consolidate these documents and extract the important points they contain. The second type of literature came from international sources. This chapter also developed a conceptual framework based on Beeby’s (1966) *Stages of Educational Development* and Fullan’s (1991) ideas on the *change process*. Using the conceptual framework, the curriculum change and implementation as they appeared in the Bhutanese literature have been analyzed, particularly the innovation, which was introduced from 1986 onwards.

Chapter Four develops the methodology of the research. But it begins by exploring some philosophical assumptions based on the theory of knowledge propounded by Habermas, which has been explained and critiqued by Grundy (1987) at great length. The methodology then follows from the theory of knowledge that is informed by a
constructivist approach. The chapter then goes on to describe the mode of developing the instruments, collecting the data and the analysis of the data.

With the data analysed, Chapter Five presents the results.

The most crucial part of the research comes in Chapter Six where the various information is synthesised in order to derive meaning from the data. Chapter Six makes use of the literature and the discussions from Chapters Two and Three in its synthesis.

In Chapter Seven, attempts have been made to draw some conclusions and implications for the future course of direction with reference to the third objective given in this chapter earlier. Implications for the curriculum development and policy, for teacher education and implementation of the curriculum and teacher preparation have been given, since these three areas are the basis of the whole of school education in Bhutan. The conceptual framework and the methodology are also critiqued separately in this chapter followed by some implications for future research work.
CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Modern education in Bhutan has a relatively short history and the people who are managing the system have still lesser years of experience. They have received their primary education in Bhutan and their secondary and, in some cases, tertiary education in other countries, mainly India. Within this short time, it has been said that Bhutan has made admirable progress (eg. Bray & Packer, 1993). One of the purposes of this study, as mentioned in Chapter One, is to look at this ‘progress’ more closely. For this purpose, an understanding of the background is essential and this chapter intends to do just this.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the context for the research. It sets out to give a brief background of how the western model of education had been introduced in Bhutan and its purposes since 1961. Then it will look at the development and the changes that were introduced in the system between 1986 and 1998 with special reference to the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE). It is on the innovation, NAPE and the new curriculum in secondary schools, that this study will be focussing its energy, as the principal task from Chapter Three onwards. It must be clarified at this stage, that the historical account is provided mainly as background information to give a complete picture of the system. The contents are organised by themes; events under each of the themes will be described in chronological order. As such, one theme will be described from early years to the recent time before going on to another theme. Most of the materials used in this chapter have been derived from a number of small papers produced by the Education Department over the years such as the policy papers, five year plan documents, statistics and quarterly policy guidelines and instructions.

Country background

Bhutan is a small landlocked Kingdom tucked in the south-eastern slopes of the Great Himalayan region. With a surface area of 46,500 square kilometres, and a population of about 600,000, it would seem a comfortable place in terms of the density of population, but there is only about 10 percent of the total area that can be used for settlement and agriculture on a sustainable basis. The geographical terrain of Bhutan is a complex knot of mountains, hills, spurs and valleys. Most settlements are, therefore, confined to deep, low valleys and gentle slopes (see the map of Bhutan in Appendix II).

Transportation had been one of the greatest hurdles in the past for people to travel and trade. In the course of the recent economic development, motor roads connecting all the major parts of the Kingdom have replaced the traditional mule tracks. Telecommunication is well spread across the country. However, in many places where schools are located, the age-old difficulties of using the old mule tracks still continue and transporting the necessary items to schools is still a problem.

Historically, Bhutan is an ancient country with no background of colonial rule by any powers in the past, a cherished pride of the nation today. Nonetheless, renowned scholars and saints from India and Tibet, who visited Bhutan, have had a great deal of influence on the social and cultural development. The visit of the omniscient saint and teacher, Padma Sambhava, from India in the 8th century AD and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal from Tibet, amongst others, were of greatest significance. The cultural heritage of Bhutan today owes its existence to these saints to a great extent. In the wake of the 19th century, a man called Jigme Namgyal whose power of vision, military and administrative skills had saved Bhutan from a possible cessation to British India and rescued the country from an internal turmoil. He had created a strong foundation for Bhutan to pave its way for a continued stability and progress. His son Ugyen Wangchuk, who had exhibited his leadership capability equalled only by his late father, was then unanimously elected as hereditary monarch of Bhutan in 1907. At present, his great grandson, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, holds the Golden Throne of Bhutan. Having achieved unprecedented progress the Kingdom is poised to march into the 21st century to confront more daunting challenges ahead. One of the greatest contributions of the present monarch is the provision of free health and education service to the people. The next section looks at how the western model of education had developed in Bhutan.
Emergence of western model of schooling

The first school that ever taught any foreign subject and foreign language appeared in 1914 in Haa, a small district in North Western Bhutan. It was a one-teacher school (the number of students is not on record). During the next thirty-six years a number of primary schools had been opened in various parts of the Kingdom, so in 1959 there were about 11 such small schools. The main areas of learning in these schools were limited to literacy and numeracy such as the classical version of *Dzongkha* (the national language of Bhutan), English and Math. But the standards in these schools were very poor (ED, 1976).

Hasrat (1984) wrote that modern education came to Bhutan rather abruptly in 1961, but this was the beginning when education was completely funded by the Royal Government as a part of the first national plan.

The planned development programmes, first launched in 1961 for a five-year cycle, set Bhutan on the path of modernisation. This meant that the people of Bhutan also needed the skills and knowledge to be able to participate fully in the new developmental process. Our children needed to be educated in schools that taught the skills, language and technology appropriate for this new economic development culture. So, in 1961, the Royal Government opened 18 more schools and enrolled about 450 students and employed 90 teachers. The Education Department was established and functioned in the present Rinpung Primary School in Paro as its main office headed by Dasho Dawa Tshering as its first Director (*Lyonpo* Dawa Tshering later became our first Foreign Minister in 1972).

This is how a new “secular education” (Collister & Etherton, 1991) based on the western model has begun to develop in Bhutan, beside the traditional monastic education system. The monastic education system has a strong foothold in the culture, as it began from as early as 8th century AD and continues to this day.

According to a retired civil servant, Mr. Gyamtsho (interviewed in 1995, at Samtse), an education office was established, following the initiatives of the third *Druk Gyalpo* (King of Bhutan), in Paro around 1957. He was the first officer in charge preparing for a country-wide programme for schooling. During that initial period, many of the small primary school graduates from the previous schools were sent to Kalimpong in India, to get the basic training in teaching, then called Guru Training (GT). The GT teachers were then posted in various *dzongkhags* to select and prepare for the new schools, to receive the
stationery dispatched from Phuentsholing (a border town in the South), and to recruit students from villages. The preparation for this great event had been in place for several years before 1961. Mr Gyamtsho mentioned that for the first two years or so, many of the new primary schools had only one or two teachers. The teacher taught all subjects, including Dzongkha. In 1962, many additional teachers were recruited from India. Nowadays expatriate teachers are mostly employed for secondary schools.

The first school established in Haa in 1914, taught English and Hindi besides basic Math and Dzongkha until about 1962. The main aim was to teach basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Later, English became the medium of instruction as many of the founding fathers of modern education were themselves educated in English medium schools in India and, more importantly, English was a widely spoken language. Raising the living standards of the people had always been in the heart of our third monarch, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, who is appropriately known as the Father of Modern Bhutan. His initiatives, among others, began with the establishment of the Tshogdu Chhenmo (the National Assembly) in 1952, and the planned economic development program in 1961, which also made it possible for schooling in Bhutan.

Since then, modern schooling in Bhutan has received a consistently high priority from the government. Its object was also simple as the following words indicate:

In the process of educational development, the primary need is to prepare the type of educated manpower required for the all development [programmes] of our country (ED, 1976:1).

Education has thus become a national priority. It has only one, but simple and achievable objective to start with.

**The expansion of schools and EFA**

As mentioned in Chapter One, the demand for education from the people was increasing year by year. From a situation in the 1960s when the government had to conscript children from large families, we have witnessed during the last two decades of 1980s and 1990s, a shortage of space in the classrooms even though the number of schools has increased many times. A survey in 1990 showed that 913 children in schools from class PP to VI across the country were under-aged (ED & UNICEF, 1990). Although the statutory age of
admission into pre-primary (PP) class is six plus, many parents seemed too eager to send their children to school. The local pressure was increasing on education.

In addition to these local pressures, enthusiastic support, as well as pressure, from the international agencies, mainly the UNICEF, was also helping to expand the education facilities to help enrol more children in schools. UNICEF was one of the main agencies that initiated the World Education Conference in Jomtien in 1990, which endorsed an agreement among the participating governments to declare a target of Education for All (EFA) by year 2000. Bhutan was a party to this agreement.

In the post Jomtien assessment, it was found that more children had reached schools than before, including Bhutan. Now after the Dakar end of decade review in April 2000, UNICEF puts the message more emphatically ‘EFA, No Excuses’ (UNE Internet, 2000).

UNICEF has also been one of the principal supporters of primary education in Bhutan, especially in its attempt to keep up with the Jomtien agreement. The challenge has been enthusiastically accepted by the Royal Government of Bhutan as one of its major thrusts for the 1990s.

The increase in enrolment at the primary level has been, therefore, quite rapid, particularly during the 1990s. But the desire for education did not stop at that level, thus the pressure on the limited space in the secondary schools has also been mounting. The number of junior high schools (class VII -VIII) has doubled from 22 in 1996 to 44 in 1998, and high schools (class IX -XII) also increased from 8 to 18 in the same period. With the present growth rate of population estimated at 3 percent per annum and a broad based population pyramid, this process is likely to continue for quite some time. It is envisaged that at the end of the 8th Five Year Plan (1997-2002) there will be 11 or more junior high and 7 more high schools.

During the course of the 1980s and 1990s, while some changes in the school curricula were being introduced, the infrastructure has also expanded enormously. The annual enrolment in schools has been observed to be around 6 to 8 percent per annum. The gross enrolment had already reached 85 percent in 1998 (ED, 1998). Moreover, the basic education level has also been raised from class VI to VIII (ED. November 1997). This implies that the pressure will be equally on classes VII and above as well.
From Tables 2.1, and 2.2, in 1991 the average number of children to a school was 206 while in 1998 this increased to 311, an increase of 44 percent. There was one teacher for every 22 students in 1991, whereas this increased to 35 in 1998. The ratio in the last column is somewhat clouded by the inclusion of institutes where the teacher-student ratio is quite low. In schools the ratio would be even higher, particularly those in the urban centres where the number of children tend to be many times higher. The normal class strength is around 40 to 45, but sometimes it can be more than 50 children.

Table 2.1 also shows that within just eight years, the enrolment of students has almost doubled from about 52,000 in 1991 to more than 100,000 in 1998. At the same time there was a mere increase of 500 teachers, that is, only about a 20 percent increase. This increase in class size is likely to affect the quality of teaching in the classroom, especially the teacher pupil interaction and teachers attention to the weaker students. Already, in 1998 the statistics showed that primary school enrolment had 98 percent capacity, while junior high and high schools were as high as 124 percent and 178 percent respectively (ED, 1999:9).

Table 2.1. An overview of the expansion of education infrastructure in Bhutan (after ED, 1981-98)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of schools and institutions</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Teacher-pupil ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>1:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>12,093</td>
<td>1:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>24,057</td>
<td>1:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>2,337</td>
<td>52,108</td>
<td>1:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>2,845</td>
<td>100,198</td>
<td>1:35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 2.2. Growth of schools and institutes by type after ED, 1981-98**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community schools *</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior high schools</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High schools</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private schools</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training institutes</td>
<td>nil</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>147</strong></td>
<td><strong>259</strong></td>
<td><strong>322</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**  *Community schools first began with the concept of extended classroom (ECR) with a primary school as its parent school that supplied the teacher and the materials.*

Until all school age children are accommodated in the system, the demand for education will continue to rise, and the number of schools will grow likewise. On the other hand, the proportionate increase in the number of teachers may continue to be low as the trend indicates. In any case the expansion will have enormous resource implications for the system and for the Government. As this is one of the main difficulties in our system, a brief account on costing may be appropriate at this juncture.

Many older Bhutanese people will recall that in the 1960s and before, parents would beg the government officials to allow their children to stay out of schools. They either needed the extra hand on the farms or did not see much purpose in sending their children to school, as some of these children were later admitted to monasteries. It took but a short time for them to see what education could do their children, when some began to support their parents with extra amenities from the salaries they earned, as well as the social status they acquired.

This is how, within a span of under 40 years, we are able to have more than 80 percent of our school aged children in the classrooms that have steadily extended to the remotest villages across the country. As mentioned above, this is likely to lead to a major problem, that is, school graduates drifting to towns anticipating commensurate work and a
comfortable and easy life, which will be hard to find. One of the immediate problems confronting the country is the rising cost, which is described briefly below.

**The rising cost of education**

In keeping with its commitment, the government has maintained the policy of free education, despite the fact that there has been an exponential growth both in the expansion and the consequent leaps in expenditure. In the 1960s and 1970s, free education in three of the six boarding central schools (they later became high schools) - Yangchenphu, Sherubtse, Punakha, Samtse, Sarpang and Paro also meant government support for day to day items like toiletries, stationery and textbooks, not to mention boarding infrastructure.

In 1976, the Education Department proposed that an annual nominal fee of NU 50 and NU 25 for students in boarding junior high and primary schools respectively be charged while a fee of NU 1 be charged to all students. The reason given was to encourage people’s participation in the development of education (ED, 1976:12). The reverse happened. Today, about 30 percent of the students, who are in boarding schools far away from their parents, and those in schools located in areas where food security is low, are given either stipends or food and free boarding (ED, 1998). Students at the training institutes are also paid stipends to support their living expenditure.

Tables 2.3 (a) and (b) give a comparative cost of part of the expenditure made for each school. The expenditure shown in Tables 2.3(a) and (b) does not include the salaries paid to the teachers. One can easily find the magnitude of financial burden on the Government by multiplying these figures by the number of schools shown in Figure 2.1. This table, however, does not contain all the items. For example the salaries paid to the teaching and non-teaching staff, the textbooks that each individual student is given, and the construction of new schools every year could not be reproduced owing to lack of information. But, together, they prove a huge impost on the government budget.

In terms of the budgetary share, education has always received substantial support especially from the second plan onwards, which is shown in Figure 2.1. The burgeoning student population has led to building more schools, employing more teachers, and incurring more expenditure on purchase of books, equipment and stationery. Furthermore, the attempted improvement in the quality of education requiring frequent in-service
education for an average of 1000 teachers a year, adding about 2-3 million Ngultrums every year to the enormous cost (Laird, et al, 1999, pp.42-45).

**Table 2.3(a) Annual budget for the 7th Five-Year Plan (1991/2 to 96/7, after ED, 1992)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of expenses</th>
<th>Community school</th>
<th>Primary school</th>
<th>Jr. high school</th>
<th>High school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-curricular activities</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td>31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional learning materials</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(library, consumable science items, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of properties</td>
<td></td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45,000*</td>
<td>45,000*</td>
<td>50,000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Figure applies to schools with boarding facilities.

**Table 2.3(b) Annual budget in Ngultrum for the 8th Five-Year Plan (1996/7 to 2002/3, after ED, 1996)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of expenses</th>
<th>Community school</th>
<th>Primary school</th>
<th>Jr. high school</th>
<th>High school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-curricular activities</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional learning materials</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(library, consumable science items, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of properties</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100,000*</td>
<td>150,000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Figure applies to schools with boarding facilities.
It should be mentioned that during the Seventh Plan period the community schools were put along with the primary schools, whereas during the Eighth Plan separate provision has been kept. The past trend was that the budget actually spent was usually more than the budget estimated in the planning documents.

With the rapid expansion in the education sector and the limited resources, a sense of urgency has developed to work rigorously towards sustaining the system that has been created. The overarching concern is to make the present system more cost effective (ED, 1997).

During the Eighth Plan periods, soft loans and grants for education from the World Bank alone amounts to thirteen million dollars (US) of which about seventy percent goes to physical expansion and the rest is incurred in teacher development programmes (ED, 1997). Besides, several bilateral and multinational agencies are supporting education in Bhutan to build more schools (e.g. UNCDF, WB, UNICEF, India) and further teacher education programmes (e.g. CIDA, UNICEF, AUSAID, SDC, UNESCO and the Government of India).

The structure of the education system given below is the fruit born out of the continuous sponsorship of education by government.

Figure 2.1. Increase in the budget provision for education during the successive five year planned periods (Education Statistics, 1981-98)
THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

When the 11 schools began their full academic teaching in 1961, the Director of Education was in direct control of the academic and administrative details of all schools. The director was responsible to the Secretary General of the Development Wing in Thimphu. A small number of the senior teachers were appointed as inspectors who visited the schools in different parts of the Kingdom and submitted reports to the director (interview with Mr. Gyamtsho, the first officer in charge of education in 1957-60).

The office was shifted from Paro to Thimphu in 1975, and Dasho Nado Rinchen was appointed the Officer on Special Duty to the department and about three years later became the third Bhutanese and the eighth Director of Education (five had been hired from India previously).

As proposed in the 1976 policy paper, the Education Department in Thimphu was supported by two regional education offices (REO) established in Trashigang and Sarpang (the third in Punakha or Trongsa did not materialise). The major responsibilities of the REOs included the “implementation of all educational policies and for proper administrative control of all teaching staff” (ED, 1976:3).

Each REO was assisted by a small group of inspectors to supervise the performance in the schools (the few inspectors within the headquarters were engaged in supervising school constructions). Apart from this, a “technical cell” was also established within the headquarters to oversee the “curriculum design, standardisation of equipment, extent of practical and theoretical training at the two technical institutes at Kharbandi and at Deothang” (ED, 1976).

In 1987, following a decision to divide the administrative system of the government into four zones, the Education Department wound up the Regional Offices and established four Zonal Education Offices (ZEO) in Chukha, Tsirang, Gelephu and Yonphula. Although the ZEOs were equipped with a limited number of inspectors, the inspectors at the headquarters abandoned the supervision of construction and resumed their normal duties of inspecting the schools in both academic and administrative aspects. About the same time, management in the schools across the country, many of which were hitherto headed by our Indian expatriates, were taken over by local Bhutanese teachers.
In 1993, the government decided to change the nomenclature of the departments to divisions in all the ministries. Education Department thus became Education Division and all the divisions within it became sections. But the responsibilities of the Division and those of the sections within it were increasing year after year. The main sections that have more connection with this study such as the CAPSS, Teacher Education Unit (TEU), Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE), Education Monitoring and Supervision Section and Youth Guidance and Counselling Section (YGCS) are described briefly below. An organisational chart showing the present structure of the Education Division is given in Appendix III.

**The Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS)**

The 1976 policy paper mentioned a committee for developing syllabuses and textbooks in various subject areas. But this did not materialise at that time due to lack of expertise.

In 1986, the Education Department, under the leadership of the Director of Education, Dasho Jigme Thinley, opened the Curriculum Development Division (CDD). Later on in 1989 it became CTDD with the addition of “textbook” indicating an additional responsibility of producing and recommending textbooks for schools. This division looked after the development of syllabuses, teacher’s manuals, textbooks, and the orientation of teachers to the changing syllabuses, which will be discussed in the next section.

In 1993, the then Minister for Social Services (Health, Education and Housing) decreed the formation of a Board for the Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS), which was to meet twice a year and to make all the major policy and planning decisions of this section. In the decree the Minister, Lyonpo Tashi Tobgyal (late) directed the CAPSS to form a subject committee each for Dzongkha, English, Math, Science and Social Studies. These committees are still functioning. The committees, chaired by senior educators, mainly former teachers, and/or those who are still teaching, are responsible for studying the syllabuses and textbooks in their respective areas and making proposals for change or improvement to the Board. Apart from one person from CAPSS for each subject area to act as coordinator, the members of the committee are selected for a three-year term from amongst the teachers. This was intended to allow more teachers to participate in curriculum related activities and to provide practical advice.
Teacher Education Unit (TEU)

Considering the importance of providing continued training for in-service teachers, a Teacher Education Unit (TEU) was established at the National Institute of Education (NIE) in Samtse in 1988. Apart from the pre-service teacher training, the NIE was expected to initiate and coordinate in-service programmes for teachers pertaining to NAPE and other areas as deemed necessary. To support the TEU a committee consisting of teacher educators, inspectors, selected heads of schools and curriculum officers was constituted under the chairmanship of the Director of Education. The committee focussed generally on the in-service programmes to be organised on a yearly basis and other issues related to pre-service teacher education. However, owing to the long distance, the unit was transferred to Thimphu under the Personnel Section of the Education Division. Apart from continuation of its mandated agenda, it has also made two additional contributions to teacher development. These are:

1. initiating a distance education programme for teachers from December 1995. Through this provision, primary teachers would be able to do B.Ed. courses under a mixed mode. That is, they would continue to work in schools, study and attend residential school in NIE for a period of four weeks each year (ED, November, 1995), and

2. making a provision for teachers to do higher level examinations while still at work, from 1998 onwards (ED, November 1997).

A weekly radio programme called “Education Calling Teachers” is broadcast both in Dzongkha and English in order to communicate pertinent issues regarding policy, curriculum and teaching to the teachers through radio. This programme began in June 1997. The opinion survey by CAPSS showed that it has been very useful and informative. The provision for higher level examination and the radio programme just started when this study began. It is too early to include the impact this would have made on the teachers in the study. The TEU pre-service (termed PRESET) and in-service teacher education (INSET) has increasingly depended upon CAPSS officers’ leadership during the 1990s.

Pre-service teacher training

It should be remembered that from the very beginning, the teacher was considered to be central to the success of education development. The Teacher Training Institute (TTI) at Samtse was, in fact, the second training institute established in the Kingdom after the
technical school at Kharbandi, which started in 1963. Within a few years (in 1975), the Teacher Training College (TTC) in Paro, also for pre-service teacher education, had been established. The teachers who had undergone Guru Training courses were still continuing at the primary level along with TTC and TTI graduates. The students from the 1960s had now joined them at the primary level too after completing the diploma in teaching course at the TTI.

It was not until about mid 1970s that our Bhutanese trained teachers started to teach in the secondary schools. It was mostly our Indian counterparts who taught the secondary levels. The 1980s saw a small increase in the Bhutanese teaching in secondary schools.

Established in 1968, the Teachers’ Training Institute (TTI) in Samtse produced 20 to 30 primary teachers annually on completion of the two year Diploma Certificate in teaching that it was offering. Candidates for the diploma course varied in their educational qualifications from as low as Class VI up to Class XI.

In 1975 TTC was established at Paro and offered a Diploma Course for the lower primary level. The same problem of under-qualified candidates prevailed. In spite of the 40 or so teachers graduating every year, the number of schools continued to rise and recruitment of outside teachers was inevitable. Around 1986 the TTC course began to cater more for the general primary teachers instead of specialist teachers in lower primary levels to rectify the shortage of teachers in the growing number of schools around the country. From 1986, NIE and TTC followed a common curriculum for the two-year Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) course.

Besides the trained teachers from the TTCs, untrained teachers were also employed in order to fill the gap of teacher requirement. However, in 1986, the Department of Education, endorsing the advice of senior trained teachers, adopted a policy that no untrained teachers should be employed in schools. Although this decision has not been fully implemented, two tests were conducted to identify under-qualified teachers. Those who failed to pass the test had to leave the job, but those who succeeded in the test were given some training and retained.

Attempts have been made to encourage high school graduates to join teaching. By a Royal Decree in 1987, it was declared that since teachers were the most important custodians of our children the teaching profession should be given adequate support. A cadre system was introduced for teachers in which the lowest pay grade for a teacher began at 10 and could
go up to grade 3 (equivalent to a director’s grade in the civil service cadre), while it started from 16 or so in the past and remained almost at this level. Within a period of 3 to 6 years, a teacher would get promoted to the next higher grade if he/she deserved. At the same time, improvement was being introduced into the teacher training programme, which is described below.

In 1983, the TTI was upgraded to the National Institute of Education and at the same time a three-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) course for class XII was introduced. The first batch of 18 B.Ed candidates graduated in the summer of 1986. Then in 1990, a one-year course in Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) for university graduates was introduced. In 1993, the B.Ed course at the NIE, which previously catered to secondary teachers, was modified to accommodate those who wished to teach at the primary level. So the course became B.Ed (secondary) and B.Ed (primary).

**In-service teacher training**

Prior to 1985, in-service was very rare and the teachers continued to teach with whatever initial training they received. Some were never trained. Stagnation in the teaching service was one of the main reasons that potentially good candidates diverted their interests to other jobs. Then after 1982, the Education Department decided that even at the risk of suffering from teacher shortage it would not take those without a class X certificate for teacher training.

The consecutive five-year plans have consistently maintained the following priority related to teachers, for example:

> Increase the number of national teachers as well as enhance their quality and competence in order to ensure improvements in the learning and teaching processes (ED, March 1991);

And, from the beginning of the 1990s, as a strategy it has continued to:

> Organize national workshops and short courses on specific subject areas and pedagogy to keep all teachers abreast of educational developments in and outside the country. Dzongkha, Science and Mathematics, multi-grade teaching, school administration and pastoral care, as well as career counseling will also be incorporated into these training programs (ED, July 1991:3,21).
Beginning with first issue in 1988, most of the Quarterly Policy Guidelines and Instructions (QPGIs) contain a list of national based in-service program (NBIPs) for teachers during the winter vacations and an accompanying note emphasising the participation of teachers. One issue clarifies the purpose of the school based in-service courses and their relationship to NBIPs in the following words:

The ultimate objective of such in-service programs should be to make every participating teacher to be able to provide maximum multiplier effects in our endeavours to bring the overall improvements in our education. To this end, they are directed to use the School Based In-service Program (SBIP), about which necessary instructions have been already issued through the earlier QPGIs, both as an avenue and a vehicle to meet the objectives (ED May 1994:5).

From 1989-90 onwards a series of national based in-service courses had been held for around 900 to 1200 teachers a year. Although most of the courses were related to curricular change or the new textbooks and handbooks, they have also addressed teaching skills and strategies in an attempt to give our teachers some improved methods of teaching.

Some of the courses required the participants to prepare a plan of action for implementing the skills when they returned to their respective schools. But the 1992 review recommended that there was a need to revise in-service and pre-service programs for teachers, including the functioning of the Teacher Education Unit (ED 1993). In 1998, a study on the In-service Education for Teachers (INSET) was commissioned, which has since been completed. This study points out that between 1995 and 1999, a total of NU 20 million (US$5 million) has been spent for the INSET (Laird, Maxwell & Tenzin, 1999). Other initiatives have been taken by the Government to ensure that the existing teachers work more effectively and that more able men and women join teaching as the following section will show.

**Teacher centred policy**

In spite of the support and recognition, not much attention was given to our teachers. In a recent document the Education Division says,

Aspects of human need and individual aspirations were often swept aside with administrative rulings to serve the collective goals, and it is time to address these (human) needs and channel more of our available resources towards the improvement of status and lives of our teachers (ED, November 1997:16).
In October 1990, the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) announced that “national service” and the “RCSC selection examinations” would not be mandatory for university graduates joining the teaching cadre. The teacher candidates were immediately appointed as teachers and then sent to schools, following a month-long induction course, for a period of six months in order to gain some experiences for themselves. During the one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) that these candidates are required to do, after six months in school they are paid their regular teacher salary in addition to stipends as student teachers at the NIE.

Subsequent to the pronouncement of the teacher centred policy, every effort is being made to enhance the living conditions and the qualifications of teachers. In July 1998, teachers were given a special “teaching allowance” to augment their personal income. In October 1998, three months after the announcement, the applications from the university graduates for the PGCE course had soared to a record 300 percent compared to any of the previous nine years. It is hoped that many of our promising young men and women will look forward to joining the teaching cadre and uplift the quality of learning in our classrooms.

While the policy will definitely place the teachers in a much better position in terms of financial benefits, it must be noted that this decision has enormous financial implications for the government. With the "carrot", however, comes the reciprocal task of improving the performances in their classrooms. Each teacher becomes morally and ethically responsible for enriching learning in the classroom. This indeed needs to be accompanied by the improvement in the academic and professional qualification of the teachers, particularly for the primary school teachers. Opportunities for doing so are open to the teachers. For example, those who did not complete Class X now sit for the same examinations and those who had completed Class X can sit for Class XII examinations.

Inspection and supervision

With the emergence of modern schooling also came the concept of inspection. School inspection had started from as early as 1961, mainly by senior teachers who had taught in the 1950s. This was another part of the system that was borrowed from the Indian system of schooling. Inspection was carried out more as a check on the teachers' performances than giving support to teachers, who might have needed professional help. They visited classrooms and asked questions of students.
Although inspectors were selected from among the experienced teachers, some of them were also appointed directly after leaving secondary schools and had no experiences in teaching, nor did they have any professional training. The beginning of change in the curriculum (mid-1980s) also saw an end to the inspectors’ role as supervisors in the building construction. Their attention was required in the academic area.

In 1997, the idea of inspection was altered and even the nomenclature was changed to Education Monitoring and Supervision Section (EMSS) and the staff are known as Education Monitoring Officers (EMO). Their main responsibilities included, among other things, (a) looking at the plans and programmes of the schools against a standard framework (of an effective school), and (b) discussing programs and achievements with schools (EMSS, 1997).

However, the deployment of staff at the EMSS could not keep up with the ever-increasing number of schools in recent years. They are now only able to visit a school once in three years. An alternative step is presently being experimented with, that is, by engaging selected principals and teacher educators as focal persons who visit some schools on behalf of the EMSS. These focal persons are to visit a certain number of schools during the academic session, carry out the supervision activities and then submit reports to the Education Division through the EMSS. As the focal persons were usually heads of schools and institutes, doubts about the practicality of this idea were raised at several meetings, yet it went ahead as planned, for testing. Laird et al (1999) doubt that this arrangement was the best alternative because of the job responsibilities of the principals.

BHUTAN BOARD OF EXAMINATION (BBE)

In principle, the functions of the Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE) started from 1972 onwards when the first common examination for primary school at class V was started by Education Department. But it officially came into existence as BBE from 1982. The following section describes the history of examinations in our country from 1961, and the events that had occurred in examination and evaluation such as, the public examination, the joint examination at class X, rethinking the examination at class VI, and internal assessment.
The public examination system

Written examinations had also come with the introduction of western schooling to determine selection of students for higher classes. Some schools that had started a little earlier than 1961 were ready with some students for the class X examination. Trashigang Junior High School has a record of holding the first Bhutan class X examination for 22 students in 1968. Unfortunately, the certificate was not formally recognised in India, where most Bhutanese students went for higher studies. Five of these students, however, were accepted and later completed their undergraduate degree under the Australian Government Scholarship in Western Australia in various fields (as told by Mr. Pema Thinley, current Director of Education and a candidate of the first class X examination).

Then the high school examination was given to the Indian Council of Secondary Education (ICSE) and the Indian Senior Cambridge Examination (ISCE) Boards in Delhi for the classes X and XII examinations respectively. This arrangement started in 1970 enabling students from Bhutanese schools to study in India.

At the same time, the primary schools were expanding across the country in numbers as well as vertically, making the selection even more necessary than before. In 1972, the Education Department introduced the All Bhutan Class V Common Examinations, and three years later for class VIII in 1975. From 1982 the responsibility was taken completely by the Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE). The BBE conducted Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations and Lower Secondary School Certificate Examinations, for class VI and VIII, respectively (ED.1998). Initially the weighting was 100 percent on written examinations.

The joint examinations at class X

Following an agreement with the Indian Council of Secondary Examination (ICSE) in 1993, BBE and ICSE conducted and certified the first class X joint examinations in 1996 in Dzongkha, English and Social Studies (ED, May, 1993).

Rethinking the Class VI examination

"Following the introduction of NAPE in 1986, the value of the external examinations, particularly at the Class VI level, had been questioned" (Hughes, 1998). Class VI examination had been debated for quite some time. Firstly, there have been some
expressed reservations about the value of examinations at this stage. Secondly, many primary schools have been established in remote villages of the country where children faced difficulties in getting to the examination centres. Thirdly, the basic education level has now shifted from Class VI to VIII and it no longer remained a stage of selection for further education. However, the merit of the examination was not only selection, as mentioned above, but it also enabled the Department to gauge the standard of all primary schools. A study commissioned to study the impact of the examination at this level recommended that examinations at class VI should be maintained until an alternative strategy was in place (Hughes, 1998).

The entire efforts described so far in the development of learning materials, training teachers, the process of assessment and evaluation are aimed at providing a quality education to our children. However, youth related problems such as drug abuse, alcoholism and hooliganism have raised some concern among the senior citizens. So, additional efforts for guiding the youth have also been initiated, which culminated in the establishment of another section in the Education Division.

**Youth guidance and counselling**

The Royal Government of Bhutan has always expressed concerns about the education and welfare of our youth (ED, 1991, 1996). One of the challenges that the concept of Gross National Happiness implies is the provision of the type of education that will help all youths to be gainfully employed and lead a socially and economically contented life. During one of the regular visits to schools and institutes His Majesty the King had told the students what he has always been saying, “the future of the nation lies in the hands of our younger generations” (Kuensel, Vol.4, No.17, May 1989). While stressing the need for youth to take active interests in the plans and policies of the government, it was added that,

> Every Bhutanese citizen has an important role to play in promoting and safeguarding the interests of our nation. It is not mandatory that all (the youth) should join government service, for they can also contribute effectively towards fulfilling our national goals and aspirations by excelling in other vocations, as businessmen, farmers, artisans, scholars, etc. (ED, Sept, 1989).

The main reason for stressing the quality of teachers, as mentioned above, emanates from being concerned about the future of the youth. In 1993, the Government expressed regrets at the lack of skills and work ethics among senior students and urged the senior teachers to do something. The Government issued a directive in 1996, stressing the need for a comprehensive and sustainable programme to help the youth. The Youth Guidance and
Counselling Section (YGCS) in Education Division was then created to specifically initiate and coordinate youth related programmes.

In November 1998, a Royal Decree was issued regarding the youth programmes. The Decree particularly pointed out that time was lost in not doing enough to help the youths, particularly numerous reports indicating young people were involved in violence, drug abuse and hooliganism. It also pointed out that youth programmes should not only be appealing and beneficial to them, but also sustainable. The Royal Government declared the establishment of a Youth Trust Fund and the Government contributed US$1 million (NU 41 million). The interest earned from this Trust would be used to support the programmes that are presently carried out and some good programmes would need to be developed in the future (Royal Decree on Youth, 1998).

**Dzongkhag Education Office (DEO)**

Following a political move to emphasise the people’s participation in the process of planning developmental activities since 1981, the Education Division encouraged the teachers’ participation in the policy decisions related to curriculum and school management. The Education Division then began handing over the management of the schools to the dzongkhags. But little was achieved in this area (ED, 1989 & 1997).

One of the consequences of this move at the beginning of 5th Five-Year Plan (1981), was that the post of District Education Officer (DEO) was created and appointed at the dzongkhag headquarters. The main responsibilities included supervising the schools’ academic work and providing assistance in administrative matters but experience has revealed that it was mainly the latter that was attended to. Most of these officers belong to the product of the 1960s who have had class VI to VIII general education and two-year training at the TTI. Few of them were able to attend some training in other countries, but hardly advanced themselves in general education. All primary schools were given to the Dzongkhags to be locally managed and supervised by the DEOs. Except for the supply of learning materials, curriculum development and supply of teachers and appointment of head teachers, all short term management decisions are now the responsibility of the respective dzongkhags.

From 1991 onwards the Education Division organised annual seminars and conferences for the DEOs and the heads of schools every alternative year. From 1997, this turned into the Annual Education Conference. Teachers discuss the issues in their individual schools and
the head teachers take them to the DEO, who coordinates the *Dzongkhag* level conference among the local school heads. Teachers and heads selected at the *dzongkhag* then attend the national level conference in Thimphu.

The main purpose of the conference is to give the teachers an opportunity to share their views, make the proposals they deem appropriate for educational development, critique the education policies and programmes. It also gives them an opportunity to participate in the policy decision.

The Education Division had also decided that policy matters were not reaching the schools which were supposed to implement them. So a series of policy guidelines and instructions began circulating to the schools regularly.

**Policy guidelines and instructions**

From the last quarter of 1988, under the directives of the government, the Education Department started issuing an official journal called the Quarterly Policy Guidelines and Instructions (QPGIs) which, in effect, were circulated twice a year to all schools and institutes. Pertinent issues related to administration, curriculum change, examination, and teacher in-service programmes and personnel matters were given in the journals. Generally the QPGI documents informed the schools and institutes about the progress made during the previous quarter and the detailed instructions to be followed in the following quarter. Presently only one issue of the guideline is circulated at the end of the year. But these documents have been one of the most useful sources of information for teachers for over a decade now.

**The structure of the school system**

When the primary schools in the early 1960s promoted their students to higher grades year after year, those at the district headquarters became the junior high schools. They also admitted students from other primary schools in the district. But the primary section in these schools did not get separated from junior high. Even when some of them later became central schools (up to class X), the primary section continued as before. That is why all schools in the 1970s had primary sections irrespective of whether they were junior or high schools. Few of them were called Public School and offered scholarship to students from all over the country for secondary education, while still continuing with primary section (see Appendix IV a). There have been some changes in the number of years that children spend in primary schools and entry qualification for different courses after primary.
as well as secondary levels and training institutes. Although some high schools had only secondary classes, the distinction between primary and junior high still remained in practice as in the 1970s. After primary school, those who wished to get into jobs were enrolled in technical schools after class V and X and a commercial institute which in fact was providing training for office secretaries. Even in the teacher training colleges, class V and VIII graduates were enrolled, although class X were accepted more easily.

At the time of writing, the school structure has a clearer distinction between different levels, although some junior high schools also have primary level classes. Job opportunities are available only after completion of class VIII. Moreover, the children leaving after class VIII are also becoming younger, particularly those who entered the PP class by raising their age (see Appendix IVb).

The school curriculum

A brief background to the curriculum development in the periods prior to 1986 is described before going into specific curriculum. Later, primary and secondary curriculum will be described separately and include, in chronological order, the curriculum change at both levels.

According to Mr Gyamstho (interviewed in 1995), the contents of the syllabus of the early years were simple, consisting of basic skills in reading, writing and calculation. There were only four subjects – Dzongkha, English, Hindi and Arithmetic. In 1976, the Education Department developed a draft policy paper on education. The paper referred to the quality and relevance of curriculum from a cultural point of view. The emphasis, however, began on the teaching of practical science as indicated in the following words:

> We must build our education system on local foundations take what is good and useful from other systems and mould the whole into a system which is truly Bhutanese (ED, 1976:1).

The paper suggested that Science should be the major emphasis, particularly in Agriculture, Forestry and Animal Husbandry, and the content should be reviewed from time to time. It also stated the main aims and objectives of education, which follow a little later in this chapter. But this paper was not circulated and thus was accessible only to a few officers within the Education Department. However, a handbook each for agriculture and health for growth were developed and distributed for use in classes IV to VI. Additional land was given to many schools for students to learn to grow vegetables. The Department also
distributed seeds. These changes were the first signs of Bhutanisation of the primary curriculum.

The Education Department returned to this paper again in 1984 and redeveloped it into a more comprehensive policy. This policy paper is a key to the visionary thinking of the government of the day and the people involved in the task who were mainly the senior education officials and some senior teachers. Apart from proposing a restructuring of the organisation, the paper also critiqued the curriculum being practised at that time and then outlined what needed to be done.

On the existing curriculum the 1984 paper stated that:

1. the emphasis was on learning of facts by memorisation;
2. teaching was dominated by the method in which children were passive listeners and the recipients of knowledge from ‘out there’;
3. interaction between the teacher and the pupils was limited to teachers asking closed questions and pupils answering in chorus;
4. there was a lack of rapport between the teacher and pupils; teachers were not aware of the learning difficulties faced by the students;
5. written examinations at the end of terms determined the child’s promotion to the next higher class; and
6. the learning materials used were grossly irrelevant and abstract to the learners (ED, 1984).

This paper was in fact the basis for the curriculum innovation, which became the New Approach to Primary Education later. The aspirations for a growing system cannot be expressed any better than in the following words:

As many of the children will leave school at the end of the primary stage, the curriculum should be designed to be a terminal and useful package of skills for those who will be leaving, as well as a preparation for those who will be going on to secondary (ED, 1984).

The following proposals were then made, presumably to overcome the six main problems described above.
(a) Design a curriculum relevant to Bhutanese children based on their learning needs.

(b) Develop teaching methodology which would emphasise learning by doing and creativity.

(c) Introduce the subjects of agriculture, culture and traditions, arts and crafts, health and hygiene, in addition to the conventional subjects (ED, 1984).

The 1984 paper was not published for wide circulation, but it provided a broad framework for the developments and changes made by system administrators during the subsequent period. With the establishment of the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD) in its headquarters in 1986 as a technical unit, the Education Department set to transform the ideas contained in the 1984 Education Policy into practical learning experiences. The introduction of the Environmental Studies and other changes in the curriculum described in the later sections are a follow up of this policy.

**The aims of education**

The 1976 draft paper mentioned that the main purpose of school education was to enhance human resource development for the newly emerging economic development activities. The 1984 policy paper also refers to broad goals as preparation of men and women for the human resource needs of the various development projects being established and increasing in numbers year after year. The aims contained in both papers are condensed into the following.

1. To prepare students to take a mature, responsible, loyal and intelligent role in the changing society and be committed to the service of the golden throne, the people and the country.

2. Provide adequate knowledge and skills to the young citizens for them to be able to utilise and sustain the country’s rich natural, cultural and spiritual heritage for themselves as well for the benefit of future generations.

3. To provide basic literacy and other technological skills to the students to be able to participate responsibly in the process of national development programmes with full use of individual potential and relevant technology.
4. To provide adequate basis of content so that competent students will be able to continue their higher education.

5. To provide information about the countries and people from other parts of the world for a good understanding of the land and culture of other lands and promote a harmony between Bhutan and the world (from ED, 1976 & 1984).

To achieve these aims, six guiding principles were identified from official plan documents and the two papers referred to above. These are -

1. Development should be directed to improve the quality of people’s lives. A basic minimum of nine years education is regarded as being essential to achieve this.

2. Development of human resources is a pre-requisite to national development. Hence, selected students must be also prepared for secondary, tertiary and technical education.

3. Preservation and promotion of the country’s rich natural and cultural heritage is required. Education must therefore avoid the alienation of the educated from the traditional beliefs and practices of the general public (ED Plan Document, 1997).

4. Contents of curriculum must be closely related to the Bhutanese context.

5. Provisions must be made to give opportunities for development of individual talents and interests.

6. Teacher education and the method of teaching must be given adequate attention so that they result in good learning in the school (from ED, 1976 & 1984).

The above aims are very broad and potentially ambiguous and do not mention specific objectives for any level of schooling. In the wake of the 1980s, the Government raised a question: “what would the students be able to do as they leave primary school?” This question prompted a test in basic literacy activities (mentioned above) and as a result the following objectives for the primary education emerged. But these are still far from being specific, so they can be called general objectives for schools.

In academic work students passing out from the primary schools (Class VI) should be able to:
(a) Read and understand from information sources such as Kuensel, common notifications and signs, posters of various nature, simple instructions, simple manuals and pamphlets both Dzongkha and English;

(b) Write simple letters in Dzongkha and English;

(c) Understand spoken Dzongkha and English and express fluently in both the languages;

(d) Use basic mathematical skills in the daily business of life; and

(e) Exhibit general knowledge of science, health and hygiene and social studies, particularly of Bhutan (ED, 1991).

At the post primary level, the objectives are more demanding and academically oriented. The human resource requirement for the growing administrative and scientific fields is still the main component in this sector. The beneficiaries of this level of education will either be absorbed in various modern sector vocations or go for further studies. During the secondary education stage (VII-XII) the students will build upon the base laid in the primary schools and establish the beginnings of a systematic knowledge of science, language, mathematics, social studies and computer science. Most important of all, character formation and values education will be an important component of curriculum at this level (ED, 1991) and this is consistent with the concerns expressed, and noted above, about youth development.

In response to one of the recommendations of the primary education review in 1992, the Education Division published a paper titled, the “Purpose of School Education in Bhutan” in 1996. This paper included three broad educational goals and several objectives within the goals. The broad goals consist of:

(a) values relating to education and learning,

(b) values relating to self and others, and

(c) values relating to civic responsibilities.

These goals reorganise the previous aims into broad areas relating to academic and personal development. Towards these goals, the curriculum content is divided into eight learning areas (see Appendix V). Each of the eight learning areas are given separately within a uniform framework of rationale, aims, learning experiences, and learning outcomes
One may notice the aims and objectives expressed at two levels - one at the broad level which requires a longer time lag and the other at different levels of schools that should be achieved at the end of primary and secondary school levels. From this, schools are required to specify their objectives at the classroom teaching and subject levels.

**The language of instruction**

Bhutan has Dzongkha as its national language, but there are many other languages spoken in different parts of the Kingdom. However, from the start of modern schooling, and for good reasons too, English was partly adopted as the principal language of instruction. The main reasons were the founding fathers of modern education were themselves products of English medium schools in India and more importantly it was a widely used language in the world and the “key to all higher education and training” (ED, 1976:10). This was necessary because Bhutan needed to maintain links with other countries through a lingua franca (Bray and Packer, 1993) for economic and educational needs. However, the difficulty of maintaining a foreign language as an instructional tool was high. The 1988 review of the New Approach to Primary Education project pointed out that the use of English as a language of instruction was one of the major handicaps for primary school teachers in Bhutan (Harley, 1988), because as an acquired language, English was not an easy tool to use in the classrooms for many of our teachers.

Dzongkha has been taught as a first language in schools, but there were no other subjects that were taught through in this language. In the early 1960s, the Dzongkha syllabus was less specific in that it contained a few topics. So the Dzongkha teachers elaborated on this and developed some very good standard materials including a series of common prayer for spiritual development, Sumtag and Ngagdoen for language development, Gyelse Laglen and mythological work for literature. Some teachers even included calligraphy, mask dances and paintings in their syllabus. Standards in Dzongkha also varied from school to school, depending on the quality of the teacher. Dzongkha remains in primary and secondary schools, but EVS is now also taught in Dzongkha.

**THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

In this research the terms “curriculum” and “syllabuses” are used interchangeably. During the first twenty-five years of modern secular education (1961-1985) the syllabuses were adopted from the English medium schools in India. The syllabuses mainly contained the list of topics from the accompanying textbooks. There was little mention about objectives
and the evaluation system. Questions for the terminal examinations were set from the textbooks. Additionally, a number of extra curricular activities were carried out with more rigour and regularity, as most students would recall, including football, physical training (PT) and drills, singing, dancing, calligraphy in Dzongkha, painting, boxing and several indoor games. Schools were equipped with all the items.

From 1986 onwards, the new Bhutanised syllabuses were designed within a general framework of objectives, contents, suggested strategies for teaching, and assessment including distribution of weighting for different topics. Although the curriculum was still structured it offered the teachers strategies, which were suggestive rather than prescriptive. The responsibility of designing the syllabuses in this manner was with the CAPSS which was called, until 1993, the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD).

In some areas like the EVS and Social Studies, manuals were developed in order to reduce over-dependence on textbooks. The manuals were more suggestive than prescriptive, giving examples of certain lessons based on topics in the textbooks while teachers were advised to develop other lessons at their own levels. For example, in English, teachers could select topics from the manuals and design activities that ensured the children practicing some vocabularies in structuring sentences in the classrooms. The use of locally available materials as teaching aids was very important for such lessons. Lessons in the EVS made use of local building materials as teaching aids and through which they learnt the technical processes involved in making houses. These were obviously outside the dictates of textbooks.

Because agriculture is the basis of our economy in Bhutan and the farms are of small sizes, the importance and dignity of working with hands also became a part of activities in schools (ED, 1976 & 1984). At the same time the desire was to help them learn to practice improved farming. Arts and crafts, as part of the co-curricular activities, were also encouraged with a view to developing aesthetic qualities as well as learning traditional skills. A wide variety of arts and crafts had been traditionally well established, but unfortunately these were hardly taught to the children in modern schools, except in some club activities. Development of values such as positive attitudes and work related skills that have significance in the students’ lives were also envisaged to be part of school education (ED, 1984 and Choden 1990). Such changes place high demands on the teachers’ capacities.
The environmental studies (EVS)

1985 was a watershed in the history of education in Bhutan. Keeping the 1984 policy paper as the main guideline, several teacher educators from NIE, Samtse, TTC, Paro and officials from the Education Department consisting of Bhutanese, Indians and overseas volunteers had developed a new curriculum plan for primary classes PP to VI.

Under the direction of the Education Department, the group (mentioned above) prepared a detailed curriculum plan to introduce a new subject called Environmental Studies (EVS in lieu of Social Studies and Science), and Dzongkha, English and Math. The aim and process of teaching EVS can be best explained in the following words:

EVS was to draw on the rich store of the cultural tradition and local wisdom. The emphasis would shift from teaching to learning; and at any one time, children could be working on different activities such as looking up reference books, model making, devising charts or recording field work observations (Collister & Etherton, 1991:19).

The new EVS was thus a clear challenge to traditional teaching practices. Following this, a total of about 321 teachers from 13 primary schools were assembled at the Royal Technical Institute (RTI), Kharbandi, in December 1985, to attend a workshop for an orientation to the new EVS syllabus and teaching. Thus, the EVS began its first trial test in the academic year of 1986, replacing the Social Studies and Science in pre-primary (age 6) level.

The new curriculum for the primary level was based on the belief that young children learn better from primary sources around them. The contents in Dzongkha, English and Math were also adjusted to suit this new way of learning. For instance, a science lesson began its study on plants from those the children saw, felt and smelled in their environment rather than plants that were found only being described in textbooks. Measuring skills were learnt by measuring the benches, desks, windows, etc. This concurrently taught them the names of the things in English as well as some basic Math. They were no longer vague symbols but concepts more in congruent with the learner’s everyday life, the developmental stages of children and their learning ability. Children were no longer listening to teacher talk. They were engaged in measuring, feeling and learning in the process. These events led to the foundation of a project called the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE).
NEW APPROACH TO PRIMARY EDUCATION (NAPE)

The need for a new and relevant curriculum for Bhutanese children spelt out in 1976 and 1984 policy documents was at last realised in some testable form. The contribution of foreign volunteers particularly in the pedagogical aspect was commendable. The content of the EVS and English was considered relevant to the needs of Bhutanese children, as it particularly contained the history and culture of Bhutan (Choden 1990:3-4). The challenges of this new curriculum was that learning materials based on the syllabuses had to be produced. Teachers’ manuals were developed to help teachers. Teachers were therefore required to make adequate plans for their lessons to give enough work to children. There were no textbooks for EVS, Dzongkha and English except for Math. Readers in Dzongkha and English were developed to improve reading skills and children read them at their own pace rather than making everyone read the same text in a given period.

In order to manage the new programme, the Education Department constituted the Curriculum Development Division (CDD). Its main responsibilities were to provide support, advice and coordinate the programme (Choden, 1990). As the new programme consisted of two main components – new set of contents and new methods of teaching - the Department decided to make it into a project and at the same time gave an appropriate name, the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE). It was to be a primary education system whereby the new changes in the curriculum content were derived from “the rich store of the cultural tradition and local wisdom [and] the emphasis would shift from teaching to learning” (Collister & Etherton, 1991: 19). The initial visit to schools by the advisory team found that NAPE had started to “lay a good foundation to the new curriculum” (Choden, 1990).

Two conferences in 1986 and 1987 perceived that there were problems related to teacher shortage, teaching methods and physical resources. It was recommended that teacher support and training were vital and resource teachers should be appointed from among experienced teachers. It was also said that the new curriculum should be reviewed with assistance from consultants, and “there should be a plan for preparing resource materials, teachers and supplies should be efficient especially in NAPE schools” (Choden, 1990:10).

In 1988, a review was conducted with assistance from UNICEF (Harley, 1988). The report applauded the efforts made in a very short time since NAPE began and the secular education itself, which had only begun less than three decades previously. It, however,
cautioned that professional support for teachers, better construction of school buildings and supply of quality materials (the list included 22 expendable items and 59 non-expendable items) were very important and should be well coordinated and enhanced (Choden, 1990:15-23).

The essential role of the new (primary education) program was to act,

> As a catalyst in freeing the primary schools from the deadening effects of the 19th century teaching methods described as traditional, and its influence in (the development of) a Bhutanese system of primary education in its own right (Choden, 1990:16).

There was, thus, a fundamental shift in the pedagogical practices in order to implement the new curricula and this shift was clearly toward current western thinking.

**From teacher centred to child centred teaching**

The new teaching approach was based on the following principles (Choden, 1990):

1. children's creative talents are better explored than allowing them to memorise facts;
2. children learn better by doing or actively participating in the lesson development;
3. the immediate environment provides the most reliable sources of learning for young children; and
4. children's physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth are enhanced through play-way method, interaction with teachers and among themselves (Choden, 1990).

Hence, teaching methods at the primary level following the introduction of the NAPE were generally expected to be child centred, activity based and learning by doing. As such, the teaching methods were a shift from:

(a) an emphasis on rote learning to activity based learning and learning by doing, leading to understanding;

(b) a teacher dominated classroom to the one in which children actively participated in the lesson development; and
Those involved in the development of the EVS also believed the shift in the teaching would require a fundamental change of attitude on the part of the teachers who were ultimately responsible in implementing the new teaching method in the classroom (Collister & Etherton, 1991:19).

From the 13 pilot schools in 1986, horizontal expansion covered 26 schools in 1987, and 80 schools in 1988 until all community and primary schools had adopted the new content and the new teaching method up to class III by 1993. Other subjects like the English, Dzongkha and Mathematics began to replicate the EVS approach to teaching about the same time. As has been mentioned above, during this time the new syllabuses were written, guidebook for teachers were developed and English readers for children were published.

Manuals were prepared for teachers as guidelines and contained suggestive ideas for planning lessons, organising groups, group work and other aspects of children's work that could be assessed. For example, teaching the children about a particular crop or a flower, the teacher had the prerogative to select topics and plan activities using their knowledge of the local environment according to the seasons in which the particular crop or the flower was available. A teacher could change the order of the lessons according to their local needs.

By 1993, it was observed that almost all primary schools were brought under the NAPE project, from PP to class III (ED, 1994:6). At the first CAPSS Board meeting at NIE, Samtse, in 1993, it was resolved that NAPE as an acronym for the purpose of all future references should be dropped. However, all the progressive elements of NAPE should be continued as features of the general primary education system in Bhutan. One of the main efforts in the NAPE project was to encourage the class teacher system. The following section provides some rationale for this proposal.

**Class teacher system**

The NAPE curriculum incorporated the learning of language, math, society, culture, economy, people, and natural environment even though its primary focus was on science and social studies. In preparing plans, a teacher was to organize the topics into a *topic web*.
indicating the interconnectedness of the various subjects and to the life outside the classroom. For this reason it was expected that a class teacher system would do better justice, both to the children and to the curriculum, than subject specialist teachers if he/she was fully in charge of the class for all the four learning areas (EVS, Math and the two languages). The Education Department had explained that,

A study carried out by [the] Education Department proved beyond doubt that a class teacher system is far better for the purpose of providing necessary (besides basic learning) social and psychological care of the children (ED, April, 1990:10).

Moreover,

The pastoral care and other social development responsibilities inherent in the class teacher system is a particularly important aspect of primary education, which is not compatible with the subject teacher system (Choden, 1990:4).

So it was suggested that a one-class teacher would be encouraged. The merit was that the teacher who taught English would know what vocabularies were learnt by the pupils and so the same could be used in Social Studies or Sciences to reinforce learning. It was also expected that these connections were reflected in the teacher’s lesson plans to reinforce learning. As the teacher was to remain with the class for longer period it was envisaged that a good rapport would develop between the teacher and the pupils. Since the Dzongkha taught at the primary level emphasised language skills, it was also thought appropriate that the same teacher taught this language. The concept of subject teacher system thus evolved into a class teacher system for lower primary classes since the late 1980s, but the subject teacher system after Class III largely remains to the present day.

**Continuous assessment**

From 1991 onwards, schools conducted an oral examination for 10 percent of marks in Dzongkha and English. In 1993, 20 percent weighting was given for internal assessment including oral tests. In 1994, this weighting was increased to 50 percent for class VI while it remained the same for class VIII (Hughes, 1998). The emphasis here is clearly on small tests leading to summative assessment.

As part of the new curriculum, particularly NAPE, assessment of the student performance was an important component of the day-to-day teaching and learning processes. In the
lower primary classes, for example, evaluation was to be based on the assessment of six project works per year per student with a focus on the child’s ability to plan, gather and use the information and communicate the works appropriately (Collister & Etherton, 1991:19-20). Continuous assessment was thus built into the syllabus requirement. Continuous assessment was considered a source of information for the teacher about the learning ability of each pupil in the classroom and in the area the child needs most help. It was also formative in nature. Progress made by students during the course of the academic session can also provide valuable information when deciding upon the amount of learning gained by the students.

In addition to the test results, schools can also make use of the records of assessment maintained by the teachers to determine the student promotion to the higher class. As mentioned in the first part of this section, Bhutan has a strong tradition of examination throughout the school system. In Bhutan, continuous assessment is used interchangeably with internal assessment that schools carry out, that may include small written tests or examinations. This writer and other colleagues have observed, and repeatedly discussed in meetings, that the internal evaluation system in most schools in classes V, VII and IX are a replication of the public examinations.

It is also observed that many schools tend to substitute summative written tests for formative assessment of students’ performance and progress made on a daily basis. The Education Division has even reminded the schools that “internal markings by the schools are generally very high” and were “based on term tests and end of year examinations rather than on formative basis” (ED, May, 1995:10).

**The Dzongkhag Resource Teacher (DRT)**

One of the features of the early years of NAPE was teacher support. Teachers from the schools that were included in the project in increasing numbers every year were given training on the use of the materials and the new methods of teaching in two to three-week workshops in winter. In response to the first NAPE conference, resource teachers were also appointed in the schools largely consisting of the foreign volunteers from Britain, Ireland, Canada and New Zealand who were already working in the country on two-year contracts and who were familiar with techniques required by the NAPE. The criteria for the resource teachers were that they be qualified and experienced (Collister & Etherton, 1991). They were required to train Bhutanese counterparts in schools where they were working. Later these teachers were placed in the district headquarters from where they began to cover
several schools in the district. Thus emerged the concept of Dzongkhag Resource Teacher (DRT). This support, of course, was slowly reduced for two reasons. Firstly, the education system in Bhutan could not continue to be too dependent on the expatriates and hence needed to be left to work on their own. Second, due to rapid vertical expansion of the system, the secondary level became the priority area for volunteer teachers, as they were mostly qualified. The position of resource teacher in the schools was assumed by head teachers who were then selected from amongst the best classroom teachers for this purpose, but they were reminded of this responsibility several times (ED, 1989:7, 1991 and 1993), which explains that there were some difficulties in doing so.

In summary, the salient features of the new primary education curriculum are well expressed in the following words:

The fundamental tenets of the new curriculum were that it should consist of syllabi relevant to the needs of Bhutan, stressing the history and culture of the Kingdom, aiming to turn out mature students ready and willing to play an adult role in the growth and development of the country. New curricula were to be based around a class teacher system, with children taking active part in their lessons, using the local environment of school, district and country as basis for learning (ED, 1993).

Having come thus far, it was only natural that the process of change that had started would continue into the secondary schools. The students of primary school must find a continuity of the contents they have learnt and the methods used for teaching them. Without continuity, they would find it difficult to adjust. Already, the government had a strong desire to make education relevant to our cultural and social context (Education Policy, 1976, 1884). So the task of Bhutanising the curriculum up to class X had also begun from 1989 onwards.

**THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Following the introduction of changes in the primary schools, some syllabuses for secondary schools had adopted approaches similar to that intended for primary levels. For example, Biology for classes VI and VII was activity-based requiring teachers to help students find answers from sources other than the textbooks. Geography for Classes VI to X included activities that required group discussions, field observations, keeping records, analysing and discussing and presenting the final outcome to the whole class. The decision made in 1994, mentioned earlier, on the extension of learner-centred teaching and a
corresponding curriculum to the secondary level was in fact already being pre-empted in the syllabuses for secondary level.

The new curriculum and the shift in teaching methodology were also adopted beyond class III. The EVS approach then branched out into Social Studies and Science, again in classes IV and V. This development came to be known as vertical expansion of the new program. Bhutan-oriented Economics, Geography and History syllabuses and textbooks were introduced up to Class X between 1990 and 1997. Thus, as declared in 1994, the NAPE approach was extended vertical to the secondary level also (ED, 1994).

Bhutanisation of the curriculum meant re-writing the contents in some of the subjects in the Bhutanese context. Unlike the primary level, in higher classes of junior and secondary levels the Bhutanisation was only partial. It has been estimated that fifty percent of the content was still continued to be selected from general literature with a global perspective. Apart from learning about their own country, learning about the neighbouring countries and the world are also considered essential.

The textbooks for classes VII to X were first sent to schools as provisional. The teachers were asked to use them for a year or so and then were called to a workshop to complete the changes for a final edition. By this time, of course, there were workshops organised to orient the teachers to implement the new syllabus and textbooks. A list of new syllabuses and corresponding workshops for teachers is given in a separate list attached to this thesis (see Appendix VI).

**Diversification of the curriculum**

In recent years, the Royal Government has also taken seriously the common concerns expressed worldwide such as population growth, environmental and health hazards and global environmental sustenance (RGOB, 1990). Although our country has not yet confronted these problems at a scale that many developing countries have, it has been the desire of the government to ensure that such problems are prevented when there is still time. In May 1990, the Royal Government of Bhutan, in collaboration with the UNDP, organized an inter-departmental workshop on “Environment and Sustainable Development” in Paro. The participants, who were representatives of various government departments, recognised the significant role of the natural environment and the impact that a rapid growth of population and overuse of the resources would have on the future development prospects of Bhutan. They then went on to pledge their efforts to create an awareness of
this fact to all the citizens for the sake of this and the future generations (Royal Government of Bhutan, 1990).

Subsequent to this workshop, sustainability has been adopted as a guiding principle for the many development project activities. The Department of Education, also a participant at the workshop, decided that the school curriculum should address the issues discussed. So, selected population and environment related themes became part of the Social Studies curricula from 1992 onwards, teaching the children about the relationship between family size and family health, population and the resources available, health hazards related to population growth.

In 1994, a study of Class V and VI students in some selected schools was conducted, three years after the population and environmental education studies were introduced in schools on the knowledge, attitude and belief of the students. It showed that awareness of the problems related to population and environment was high. The same study was repeated for Class IX and X in 1998 with the hope of capturing the same students from the earlier study. The result was more positive than the earlier study (ED, 1998).

Three new programmes that began in schools on a trial basis from 1999 were the vocational component to the regular curriculum, the comprehensive school health program and the physical education program. Because these do not fall within the time that the review is focussing, their mention will remain in this manner and make no reference in the subsequent sections, unless such a reference helps clarify other issues.

How relevant the curriculum is and how best the children learn will depend on the type of experiences they have with the teacher in the school. So teachers play a pivotal role in the process of education. We now move to the kind of teaching methods used and how the teachers are prepared.

Teaching at the secondary levels

Mention was made in the beginning of this chapter, that a smaller number of GT graduates were appointed to run the initial schools and that there were Indian counterparts who also took charge of a school as a single teacher in the early years. Teachers from the South of India were usually qualified beyond class XII. No study has been done, but experiences show that this group of teachers were doing better in higher classes compared to other Bhutanese and Indian teachers who had either just completed class X, or were close to it.
One suspects that teaching methods in all the secondary schools were generally rote learning and memorisation as the trend has been followed from the beginning and no drastic change has yet been introduced in this level. Teachers made very little use of teaching aids to help pupils understand the lessons. The learning of language, for example, was strictly based on grammatical rules.

Although some goals were written in the policy papers, the papers were not disseminated to schools. It is suspected that teachers were not very clear about the goals of education. The teachers taught the complete table of contents from textbooks listed in the syllabus, and then assessed the mastery of the content by setting fact-recalling questions. Apart from having to write occasional essays on some objects, students were required to produce very little written work to improve their writing skills. Able students often memorised the whole book in order to compete with peers. Success in the examination implied that this form of learning was generally good, though in direct contrast with the more child-centred methods required in the NAPE and in subsequent developments.

**RESOURCE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT**

Resource Center (RC) is the most recently introduced feature in the Bhutanese education system. It is a place for teachers to learn and enhance their professional development and located in a school, which is central and easily accessible from a number of other schools known as 'cluster schools'. Six to ten schools become members of a Resource Centre and contribute to and benefit from the programmes. With necessary equipment and learning materials for teachers, the Centre maintains a separate room for teachers to meet and interact when necessary.

Teachers from the RC and cluster schools meet at the beginning of each academic session and draw up plans for the kind of school based in-service programmes (SBIP) they need to focus on during the year. They are required to maintain an inventory of skills and expertise of teachers, who can contribute to the programmes. The teachers with some special skills will resource the school based in-service programmes (SBIP) or RC based in-service programmes. A teacher who attends a programme will then try the skills or ideas in the classrooms along with his/her colleagues and report back to the RC. One of the teachers at the host school is the RC coordinator who collects and compiles these reports for further sharing (CAPSS, 1998). It is a process of promoting their professional development using the resources within the clusters. But it is also possible to invite experts from other RCs or from a training institute (CAPSS, 1998).
These are initial ideas being tried out during 1998 and 2000. Experiences from the present five resource centres will become the basis for the development of many resource centres in future. What is still required to be done is for the Education Department to consider providing the support to the RC in terms of guidance, learning materials, and professional contribution. Any kind of experiences will be useful for the expansion of this concept for developing teachers and improving teaching in our schools.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has covered the historical development using major themes of events in the growth of our education system and thus provided a contextual background of the study. It tried to narrate what Bhutan has been able to achieve in education for children in the last four decades. It also showed that our education system has been dealing with two major challenges simultaneously. The first major challenge was the physical expansion of schools. This resulted in an increasing number of schools but the student enrolment rose more rapidly than the number of schools.

The other challenge was to bring a qualitative improvement in the education program in general and a relevant curriculum content in particular. The endeavour in making the content relevant to Bhutan was accompanied by a change in the pedagogical practices of teachers almost simultaneously. This had begun with the introduction of NAPE in the primary schools and a catalytic improvement in the secondary schools as a part of our search in quality of education. It could be of interest to look back and critique the development so far, so that what happens in the coming years will ensure that mistakes, if any, could be avoided in future plans. This will be the main purpose of the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing literature on two main themes. The first focuses on selected theoretical constructs that have been chosen for their usefulness in understanding the process of curriculum change in developing countries and the management of that change. The second focuses on the nature and implications of the curriculum change in Bhutan, particularly the NAPE. The main characteristics of this new curriculum have already been described in general terms in Chapter Two (see above p.44-46).

There are two aspects of the NAPE and the new curriculum that are important for discussions in this study, viz. (a) its nature, including content and pedagogy, and (b) the way it has been implemented. This somewhat daunting task can be made easier by using some intellectual tools drawn from the literature on theories of educational change in other countries, where the richness of the change literature is admirably vast.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The nature of the curriculum can be best discussed using an analytical framework based upon Beeby's (1966) work. C.E. Beeby was an experienced educationist from New Zealand, but it was his subsequent experiences, as a consultant to some developing countries for UNESCO, that influenced his thinking most. The insights he had gained into the nature of education in both rich and poor countries, had encouraged him to propose his theoretical framework in his book *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries*. Beeby argues that his ideas were “nothing more than a first rough-and-ready framework” (Beeby, 1966:51-2) and continued to maintain this stand (Beeby, 1980a & 1988). Subsequently his framework was judged by others to be useful for gauging the "management of innovations" (Guthrie, 1980:413). This has since been used in a number of studies, for example, Bowles (1969), Castle, (1972), Arnold (1973), Griffith (1975), Dakin (1976) (in Guthrie, 1980, who largely critiqued the work). More recently, Hameed (1988) used Beeby in the analysis of primary education in the Maldives while Hermann
(1995) applied the stages of change to analyse the teaching of English as a second language in the Cook Islands in New Zealand. Beeby’s experiences were mostly in the ex-colonial countries that had at least seen how the western education system worked before gaining their independence. In contrast, modern education was introduced in Bhutan about forty years ago without such experiences to draw upon. In spite of this, as indicated, some major systemic changes have been undertaken in recent years, and Beeby’s framework is considered useful as an analytical tool in understanding those changes and their implications.

**BEEBY’S HYPOTHESIS**

Beeby presented the theory of stages as giving a starting point for thinking. At the Radford Memorial Lecture in Australia in 1987, he argued that the framework was designed as a guideline at a time when many newly independent countries were confronted with new challenges in education of which even those in the developed world had no idea (Beeby, 1988).

In the context of this study, Beeby’s thesis is proposed as a framework for understanding the development of the Bhutanese education system in broad terms and whether there has been progress in the way it was intended. It should be pointed out at this stage that Beeby originally proposed four stages of educational development through which a system would progress. The first, called the Stage of “Dame School” is not included here, as its characteristics did not fit within the purview of the present study. Part of Beeby’s “hypothesis” is given in Table 3.1 below. Stages II, III and IV will be discussed in turn.

**The Stage of Formalism**

As the name suggests, the Stage of Formalism is a highly organized form of schooling where syllabuses are rigid and teaching depends mainly on one textbook for each subject (Beeby, 1966). Teachers at this stage are rather poorly qualified and yet have some form of training. As such, any deviation, let alone experimentation, from the official syllabus is not encouraged or even contemplated. In a school system, which is oriented to formalism, teachers’ lecturing and writing notes on the board dominates teaching, while students listen passively and transcribe the notes from the chalkboard. These notes are then memorised for examination. There is also a high degree of dependency on textbook knowledge. As external examination is highly important within this orientation, teaching and learning in the classroom is invariably aimed at preparing pupils for examinations. Inspection of both
teachers’ and pupils’ work is also important in the stage of *formalism*. Collectively, the rigid syllabuses, the external examinations and inspection are all aimed at ensuring that the teachers keep the focus of their work on the contents that have been set in the syllabuses and textbooks.

### Table 3.1 Stages of Educational Development (after Beeby, 1966:72 & 1980a).

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II. Formalism</td>
<td>Ill-educated, Trained</td>
<td>Highly organized; symbols with limited meaning; rigid syllabus; emphasis on 3R’s; rigid methods- ‘one best way’; one textbook’ external examinations; inspection stressed; discipline tight and external; memorising heavily stressed; emotional life largely ignored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Transition</td>
<td>Better-educated, trained</td>
<td>Roughly same goals as stage II, but more efficiently achieved; more emphasis on meaning, but it is still rather ‘thin’ and formal; syllabus and textbooks less restrictive, but teacher hesitate to use greater freedom; final leaving examination often restricts experimentation; little in classroom to cater for emotional and creative life of child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Meaning</td>
<td>Well-educated, well trained</td>
<td>Meaning and understanding stressed; variety of content and method to cater for individual differences; problem solving plays an increasing part; pupils’ own active thinking and judgement, and the control of language appropriate to this developed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The characteristics in the Stage of Meaning were taken from a later text in which Beeby (1980a) had admitted that the earlier characteristics were too strongly influenced by progressive concepts.

Under the Stage of Formalism, syllabuses are highly structured and objective bound and their development is essentially a top down process. The syllabuses are restrictive and the emphasis is on achieving reading, writing and arithmetic, while teaching occurs under tight discipline. Whether or not the meaning of the content is understood is less important than memorising it and reproducing it. According to Kemmis, Cole and Sugget (1983), within such a regime there is usually a rigid compartmentalisation between subjects that are taught within strict routine periods. The teacher’s job is mainly to transmit book knowledge while the student’s job is to remember what is taught.

Beeby argues that despite its limitations, such a controlling system is essential at this early stage of a system’s development because the quality of the teaching cadre is not yet
The educational levels of many of the teachers tend to be low and their training, if any, is also often meagre. Teachers at this stage often tend to teach materials that are near the limits of their own understanding, which engenders what Beeby calls low inner security. “Inner security” is the degree of confidence in handling the contents of the subject matter by a teacher. A syllabus that is flexible and requires activity and inquiry-based learning by students requires teachers whose education and training have nurtured a high inner security in them. Such a curriculum is likely to threaten most of the teachers, with the exception of few born ones, when a system is operating beyond the Stage of Formalism (Beeby, 1966:60). Teachers, at this stage, therefore need much support and direction from the centre until they improve, for example through continued in-service training programmes, and have gained more confidence. The materials required at this stage are basic, such as a chalkboard in the front of the class, benches and desks arranged in perfect order to face the chalkboard and the teacher’s table (Beeby, 1966:62). This is the image of the neo-classical classroom scenario in which the students are considered little more than empty vessels to be filled with knowledge (Kemmis, et al, 1983).

The Stage of Transition

The Stage of Transition is not vastly different from the Stage of Formalism. Most teachers will have at least partly or fully completed secondary education and have undergone some training in pedagogy. There will be some teachers capable of a more meaning-making pedagogy at the Stage of Meaning, while there will still be many restricted to formal methods. Higher qualified teachers are likely to exhibit more confidence and self-esteem, because the gap between what they know and what their pupils know is wider. This allows them to venture into some kind of interaction with the students (Beeby, 1966:63-4). Owing to the higher attainment of school education and better training at this stage more teachers will feel secure. Because of the new confidence, their teaching style begins to change from a purely lecturing type to allowing some questions from the pupils. Hence, this stage is known as the “Transition”.

The curriculum includes some supplementary reading materials to encourage the children to see things beyond the textbook though in a limited way. Yet, in many ways, some features like narrow teaching, rigid syllabus, examination and inspection still persist. Only a few born teachers, or those affected greatly by in-service programmes, may try to experiment beyond the normal terms, where possible. In general, both curriculum contents
and the way these are taught are not very different from the previous stage. Good teachers change while mediocre teachers remain static (Beeby, 1966:64).

**The Stage of Meaning**

At the fourth stage, *meaning* and, therefore, *understanding*, play the dominant role in classroom learning. Memorising is less important, and individual attention by the teacher helps the learners. At this stage, the curriculum content is wider and encourages the use of a range of methods and experimentation. The syllabuses are not as rigid and allow some experimentation, problem solving and creativity. The importance of external examinations is reduced and understanding is encouraged, rather than memorising and internal testing, often with a strongly formative emphasis which will remain important. Professional support for teachers, rather than inspection, is stressed.

Syllabuses under the Stage of Meaning are less structured by central agencies, and they are more process-oriented. In many western countries school based curriculum development is encouraged with some general guidelines from the centre (eg. Skilbeck, 1974) in this stage. Problem solving is an important part of learning, so learning by doing is encouraged. Cognitive skills like application of knowledge, analysis of information and their evaluation are stressed. The textbook is not binding but used as a basis for exploring more information that links learning with the world outside the classroom. Talents such as creative thinking and aesthetic appreciation are encouraged. Use of readers, fieldwork, extended writing and research oriented activities become part of the learning in school. In all respects the emphasis is upon knowledge that is meaningful to the pupils, hence the label - *Stage of Meaning* (Beeby, 1966:65-6). As the learners understand the concepts and ideas, memorisation becomes less important. The curriculum widens in scope to include a range of areas to choose from, according to students’ interests. The purpose of education in such an orientation advocates *preparation for life* rather than *preparation for work* (Kemmis, et al, 1983: 9).

Examination either disappears or at least reduces in importance (Beeby, 1966: 67-8). Assessment is based on evidence of students’ performance in extended work, and other related activities. Teacher development and school improvement is a natural part of the school activity and thus inspection will change from regulation and inquisition into professional support and cooperation. However, an education system that decides to adopt a curriculum of this nature, according to Beeby, requires better and more spacious
buildings, more materials and equipment and a lower teacher-pupil ratio to facilitate individual guidance and attention, compared to those found at the Stage of Formalism.

Within the Stage of Meaning, the teacher is more a leader and facilitator who organizes learning opportunities. He/she possesses recognized knowledge that is well above the level being taught and is more interested in how the students learn. Teacher's inner security is high. Ideally, there is mutual love and respect between the teacher and the students. Tight discipline is unnecessary as students exercise self control within the social and cultural framework.

The Stage of Meaning is, therefore, geared towards providing a quality education (Beeby, 1966). For Beeby, “quality education” is reflected by a positive “change in classroom” and the “flow of students through the system”. He explains the two changes in the following words:

Qualitative change in the classroom is one that alters the manner or the content of teaching or of learning. ... Qualitative change in the flow of students covers changes in the ease with which children enter the system, manage to remain in it, find schools and courses suited to their needs, move purposefully through it, and then fit into work and adult society when they leave school (Beeby, 1980b: 455).

This, of course, impinges on the quality of teachers and materials available for use as mentioned earlier. According to Beeby, it is possible for an education system to pass through a stage at a faster pace. But it could not “leapfrog a stage”, say from formalism to the stage of meaning, because of two factors: (a) the level of general education of the teachers, and (b) the amount of training they have received (Beeby, 1966:69). These two factors will be returned to later in this chapter for further discussion on teacher quality. Twenty years later, Beeby (1988:3) reiterated that one stage "with its special characteristics, is a necessary prelude to the one that follows". For the moment, it suffices to say that the development of the quality of teachers can determine how quickly the stages can be worked through. A curriculum that requires a transition from the stage of formalism through to that of meaning would require supporting the teachers to improve their inner security. Looking at Indonesia’s attempt to expand the school system and improve quality almost simultaneously in the early 1970s, Beeby had realised that human and material factors are closely interlinked and as such cannot be treated, even intellectually, as separate units (Beeby, 1980b: 462). This interconnectedness was observed in Indonesia, where a sudden rise in its wealth (from oil), enabled that country to provide an enormous increase in
its fund for education for the purposes of expansion, development of new materials and train teachers. Beeby noted the following problems.

They were the problems of bringing about, almost simultaneously, changes in the skills, habits, attitudes and purposes of the teaching profession at every level from classroom in a distance province to the Ministry in Jakarta” (Beeby, 1980b: 464-5).

He goes on to say that where shortage of resources of all kinds “obscure human ones” in other systems, but in the case of Indonesia, human component has had its own impact (Beeby, 1980b: 463). Failure to recognise the interconnectedness of the two components, according to Beeby, may be the reason behind the “sad history of many national campaigns to improve the quality of education over the past twenty years” (Beeby, 1980b: 463). Another reason is the attempt to compress into a decade the change that has taken generations to complete through trial and error, and slow absorption of new ideas and attitudes rather than overall planning (Beeby, 1980b: 463) in an affluent country. In Indonesia, primary teachers found it difficult to make use of the textbooks written, usually by those who were teaching at the higher level, and who had no idea of the real conditions in the primary classrooms. The other problem observed was that the books were not tested in the actual classroom situations, but the teachers were shown how to use them in workshops.

This overview, of how the nature of the curriculum changes along with system development, is useful when I turn to thinking about the growth and development of the education system in Bhutan. Regarding the human component, it is important to stress that Beeby’s (1966) hypothesis of change from formalism to one of meaning cannot be successfully achieved until the quality of the teaching force has improved sufficiently to be able to work differently in the classroom. Beeby emphasised this reality in 1980, and again eight years later, he said:

If teachers fail to understand or believe in an educational innovation, they have the capacity for doing the same old things under a new name (Beeby, 1988:6).

Beeby argues that teachers have to be ready to understand the changes and feel secure with them. Only then can the controlling mechanism of detailed syllabuses, external examination and inspection be allowed to become less important. Although the material component emerged in his later thoughts, the most important component that was consistent in Beeby’s thesis was the teacher. As such, this component should be discussed further because the quality of teacher is also one of the key issues of this study.
BEEBY AND THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS

Beeby (1966) provided a simple diagram to illustrate the nature of the teachers in general as shown in Figure 3.1. The line ABC represents the quality of teachers available at a given time in an education system. This could also represent the teaching force that is currently teaching in Bhutan. The less educated and relatively poorly trained teachers fall between A and B. Better educated and trained teachers could be placed from B to C and the best of them may be somewhere near C.

![Diagram of teacher quality distribution](image)

**Figure 3.1. Distribution of teacher quality along the stages of education (after Beeby, 1966:72).**

In Figure 3.1, the horizontal \((t \text{ years})\) represent a period during which teachers may or may not improve their knowledge and skills depending upon opportunities, their willingness and capacity to do so through various channels such as distance education and in-service programmes. Towards the end of the period \(t\) (it could be many years), one may find that the quality of teachers had improved but, by and large, the same range of variation in their ability is likely to remain. To show this development, the lines PQR had shifted downward making the angles BAP and CBQ somewhat acute. Beeby calls this the *angle of reform*. This means that some teachers could have advanced in their profession so much that they were now functioning near to or at the stage of *meaning* while the others had also made improvement from the lower part of *formalism* to almost the top of it. If the quality of teachers had changed even more, this line would shift further down thereby making the angle CBQ more acute (if this took the same \(t\) years).
Although Figure 3.1 provides a clear picture of how teacher quality can be shifted from lower to the upper stage through time, it does not show how teachers might be distributed at different stages. Figure 3.2 is prepared to show the distribution of teachers along the formalism and meaning continuum at different times.

![Graph showing distribution of teachers at different stages of educational development](image)

**Figure 3.2. A hypothetical diagram showing distribution of teachers at different stages of educational development (after Beeby, 1966).**

Curve 2 shows a hypothetical distribution of teachers during the stage of transition. By description at the Stage of Formalism, teachers will be distributed as shown by Curve 1 while at the Stage of Meaning they will be distributed according to Curve 3. The third curve is an alternative representation of Beeby's concept of *angle of reform*.

The key point is that at no stage is it likely that the teaching cadre will be uniform in its capacity to implement change. This is only theory, as Beeby put it, because in reality, teacher improvement does not occur as easily as this or even as stylised in this way. For example, even if there was the required support and further training the improvements would not have affected all teachers alike.

An apparent shift can also be superficially seen in the classroom by the display of some colourful teaching aids in the classroom and some pretence to interactive learning. But on the inside there may be little change in the way the teachers practised. In this case, the points at PQR (Figure 3.1 above) are like the edge of a rubber band fixed to pins on a board without a firm hold. The pins are likely to collapse soon and the rubber band returns to positions where by the *angle of reform* remains at 90 degree. On the other hand, it is also
possible that less formal methods of teaching in the lower grades of primary schools can work very well. It is argued that this could be a basis from where a gradual advance towards a Stage of Meaning can be achieved with enough support and pressure (Beeby, 1966:75-6) which complement each other. Pressure without support can lead to superficial change, like the Chinese saying “the ingredients are different, but the soup is the same” (Cuban, 1988:434).

The literature suggests that educational qualification and training of teachers is crucial in a change situation where the new curriculum content requires teachers to adopt a more child-centred teaching. A brief review of teacher qualification in the Bhutanese system is now appropriate.

I agree with Beeby (1966, 1980) that an unattractive curriculum project can be turned into a brilliant learning experience for students if teachers have the necessary qualifications. Teachers’ work will make the difference in the success or failure of an educational innovation. They would then be morally, intellectually and emotionally involved in the programme and a successful transition from formalism to meaning would be possible.

**Teachers’ attitudes**

In addition to the education and professional qualifications, willingness to advance to a level beyond that which he/she is actually teaching would also be determinant of any shift in teaching from formalism to meaning (Beeby, 1966:66-7).

Although Beeby (1966) noted that teachers worked in isolation, Hargreaves (1994) argued that this isolation was in physical terms. Psychologically, according to Hargreaves, what teachers did in their classroom can be influenced by the general outlooks and orientations of the other teachers with whom they are presently working and those they had worked with in the past. This implied that a good culture in a school and indeed in a system could influence the way a teacher exhibited his/her attitudes, values, and cooperation.

A World Bank study on teacher development, in other developing countries, notes that effective schools are reflected in teachers’ comfort in “trying new ideas, low teacher absenteeism and tardiness” (Craig, Kraft & Plessis, 1998:13) and in their willingness to plan and resolve school issues together. Craig, et al, (1998: 13) go on to say that in “classrooms where teachers lack general subject mastery and confidence in their ability to teach, the development of positive teacher attitudes is often hindered”. Their general level
of education also affects teachers' attitude. In the context of Bhutan, it would take continuous interactions and good leadership for an individual teacher to reshape his/her ways of doing things over a long period of time. The influence of the head teacher's leadership in Bhutanese schools, as an important contributing factor to improving teachers' work, was revealed in Thinley's (1999) case study of three schools.

It may be summarized that willingness to share and learn from colleagues, is related to how a school is managed as much as it is related to their own qualifications. The development of an education system from formalism to meaning, as it were, inevitably leads to a complex process of change. The focus of the next section is a theoretical perspective of such as process.

THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

For the purpose of understanding the process of change, the work of Michael Fullan is used. Fullan is an experienced researcher and consultant in the field of educational change, and has written extensively (eg. Fullan, 1991, 1999) on the subject based on studies in North America that can, in many ways, be helpful in discussing the situation being examined in this study. Fullan stressed that "change is a process and not an event" and as a process it takes an evolutionary course to be effective. This means that generally change takes a long time to institutionalise, if at all.

Although Fullan began writing about ten years later than Beeby, and has continued to refine his writings (eg. Fullan, 1991 & 1999) there is consonance in their mutual conviction that the single most important variable in achieving educational change is not the policy (or syllabus), but it is the people who have to interpret and implement that policy - the teachers. Fullan recognises that,

> By far, the main problem in teaching is not how to get rid of the deadwood, but rather to motivate good teachers throughout their careers (Fullan, 1991:143).

Beeby has argued that a new syllabus which a teacher has to implement needs to match with his/her capabilities to handle it with reasonably high inner security. According to Fullan (1991), teachers respond to a new syllabus with the question of balance between reward and cost uppermost in their minds. Teachers want to know:

(a) whether the change will be really worth the efforts they make;

(b) how clear is the change in terms of what the (teachers) will have to do;
(c) how will the new curriculum affect them in terms of time, energy, skills, competency, sense of excitement; and

(d) how rewarding will the new experience be in terms of interaction with colleagues and in terms of learning new skills (Fullan, 1991:127-8).

If there is little or no meaning of the new programme in teachers’ minds in the terms listed above, then it will not achieve much change. Already, Beeby has cautioned that in such a case, "new methods will simply be launched from the centre with enthusiasm", imagining that they have been universally adapted at the periphery. But, in most classrooms, they may have been partly or wholly ignored, misunderstood, or recast in the “garb of stale practice” Beeby (1966:39).

Based on a number of research efforts on teachers in North America, Fullan proposed that reforms in education include three dimensions of change that involve teachers’ learning. These are the use of new materials, new methods of teaching and altering their beliefs and trust in the change. He further suggests that major reforms that do not include these dimensions of change are normally not significant (Fullan, 1991:38).

Fullan refers to Marris’s (1975) study and notes the differences of perceptions between those who initiate changes, especially from top, and those who implement the change. I quote Marris here as this has special significance in the context of the argument at this point.
No one can resolve the crisis of reintegration on behalf another. Every attempt to pre-empt conflict, argument, protest by rational planning, can only be abortive: however reasonable the proposed changes, the process of implementing them must still allow the impulse of rejection to play itself out. When those who have power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purposes, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysis and debate. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conception (quoted in Fullan, 1991:31).

Teachers’ perceptions have to reach the same level of enlightenment as that of the reformer, which requires time and opportunity to debate and practice at some length. Even if there was time and opportunity to do so, the perception will not be homogeneous among all teachers because of individuality (especially in education and training) and the different classrooms and school contexts. This heterogeneity in the personal perceptions and understanding of the situation, including the change and the context, reflects the subjective realities of the teachers. The subjectivity of the teachers, in turn, will depend upon where they are located on Beeby’s formalism - meaning continuum.

Similarly, whether the teachers have adopted the use of the new materials and the new teaching methods will also depend upon how much support has been provided to teachers to assimilate the new practice that the reform demands, as Marris suggests (Fullan, 1991:36-43). Unless adequate support and opportunities are given for teachers to understand the innovations in depth, change will take place superficially while on the inside there is very little change occurring. This is said to result in what is called the false clarity (Fullan, 1991:32-38). This is similar to Beeby’s notion of stale practices in the name of change. For Fullan the central issue of change is in appreciating and acting upon the knowledge of the subjective realities of the teachers.

What is really essential in teaching is to address aspects of students’ subjective realities. This might mean assisting them by connecting with the teachers’ own ideas with the making and using of new materials such as teaching aids, showing them how to use different teaching techniques such as grouping technique, activity methods and classroom management. It implies that there has to be a continued and sustained programme until both teachers and initiators are fully satisfied that teachers have understood and internalised the change and can implement it. The time lag will tend to be longer depending upon the complexity of change. Pre-service as well as in-service teacher education agencies need to
appreciate their roles in supporting the process of change (Fullan, 1991), but they must first assimilate the meaning of change themselves.

For the purpose of carrying the discussions on the process of change further, three interactive factors are considered below. These are (a) characteristics of change, (b) local characteristics and (c) external factors.

(a) Characteristics of change

Fullan’s overall thesis is that there are certain characteristics of any change in teachers’ minds that will enhance implementation. Characteristics of change in curriculum must be preceded by a careful examination of needs and priorities. Fullan (1991:68-9) writes that changes that address the perceived needs of teachers were implemented more successfully. But complex change often has multiple agenda from which prioritising becomes necessary. Clarity of objectives, and the means available to facilitate the change is, therefore, important to assist teachers in prioritisation. Even if the need has been felt that certain parts of the curriculum should be changed, when the change is implemented, teachers must be very clear about “what they must do differently” (Fullan, 1991:70). Fullan says that most often teachers do not fully understand the features of the new innovation. This lack of, and differences in, understanding because of teacher’s idiosyncratic subjective realities as explained above, becomes a major problem in the change process. Policies, purposes and the rationale of a new curriculum often are not sufficiently explicit about implementation, especially if it is complex. Lack of understanding leads to oversimplified interpretation of the change, which is another manifestation of false clarity (Fullan, 1991:70), meaning that the new idea is not very different from what they had been previously doing.

The extent of the effectiveness of change depends upon the complexity of the change process. According to Fullan, simple changes may be easier to carry out but they also achieve less. The more complex changes are the more demand they make, but the reward is also greater if well managed (p.71). Larger the scope and personal demand, the greater the chance of success, “little ventured, nothing gained” (Berman, 1980, in Fullan, 1991:71).

“To say that the importance of the quality of change is self evident is to underestimate how initiation decisions are made” (Fullan, 1991:72). Quality projects require sufficient time to pay attention to every detail that facilitates the development of adequate materials and providing training for teachers. Teachers need to understand fully what is involved to be able to translate the new objectives effectively in the classrooms. This need will be more
pronounced in the case of teachers whose educational qualification is low and who have only had some kind of initial training and very little in-service opportunities afterwards.

Another of the characteristics of change is practicality. People do not accomplish changes by being told or simply shown what to do. According to Hargreaves (1994:12), the ethics of practicality is to ask whether a new method of teaching “fits the context, whether it suits the persons, whether it is in tune with their purposes, and whether it helps or harms their interests”. A new curriculum and new method of teaching must therefore address these issues of practicality. Any change that requires teachers to adopt new practices and materials will too often be wasted effort, because it fails the practicality test.

At this point, it needs to be emphasised that the more positive are the teachers’ perceptions of the four characteristics of change (needs, clarity, complexity, and quality / practicality) the greater the chances of it being successfully implemented. Good changes call for hard work by the initiators and the implementing agents but this must be complemented by adequate support in terms of preparation and supply of materials and training of teachers through regular programmes such as the in-service education for teachers (INSET).

(b) Local characteristics

At a wider level, the relationship between the schools and the designers of the changed curriculum will also be vital, Fullan argues. In order to promote better understanding and to avoid false clarity, effective communication is most important. Fullan (1991:199) says, “the effective district administrator is one who constantly works at communication, because … frequent interaction is ‘the key to implementation’”.

At the school level, the role of head teachers is crucial in developing a collaborative culture to make change succeed in the western context. Head teachers, being closest to the teachers and to the classrooms are in the best position to monitor and engage in interpersonal communication with the teachers in times of needs. But it is also important that head teachers are themselves clear about the characteristics of change. Heads of schools who tend to function primarily as administrators are less effective in making change work than those who work with teachers on problem-solving (Fullan, 1991:32).

Mention has been made earlier that teachers are most likely to be located at different points on the continuum of stages. In relation to the success of change, teachers who are located at the stage of meaning can be effective change agents because of their higher inner
security. As innovative change involves learning to do something new, the efficacy of change will depend to some extent upon whether the teachers work in isolation or work as a team. This implies that a collaborative culture in schools has a greater role to play (Hargreaves, 1994), at least in western literature.

The next component of local characteristics is the school culture. According to Firestone and Corbett (1987) “planned change has become a matter of both motivating from without and orchestrating from within” (in Fullan, 1991:73). In Rosenholtz’s (1989, in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991:44) study, the moving (or learning enriched) schools are those that had found a collaborative culture where teachers analyse, evaluate and experiment in concert with colleagues. It is pointed out that

For Rosenholtz, the most important effect of teachers collaboration is its impact on the uncertainty of the job, which, when faced alone, can otherwise so undermine a teacher’s sense of confidence (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991: 45).

The impact of uncertainty is likely to be more if the change requires teachers to adopt new materials and teaching about which they have understood very little. Change requires a collaborative work culture among teachers, as each of them can become sources of information and encouragement for learning the new ways. Collaboration may require professional maturity of teachers and may well be taken for granted in a mature system such as Canada and the US, where teachers are highly qualified, their inner security is high and their performance is highly competitive. In a growing system such as the one in Bhutan, where there is no sense of competition among the teachers, such a culture may be too early to expect. Nevertheless, such a healthy atmosphere between district officer, head teachers and teachers is highly desirable, but there is yet another factor that plays a vital role in making change work better, and perhaps more helpful than “collaborative culture” which is the external factor.

(c) External factors

The third set of factors that influence implementation of changes puts the schools “in the context of the broader society” (Fullan, 1991:78). In Bhutan, the external factors refer to the Ministry of Health and Education, the Department of Education and its divisions such as BBE, CAPSS and EMSS which are directly responsible for implementation of curricular
programmes. Fullan argues that the relationship between these divisions and the schools is a vital force in the process of change.

These divisions, under the auspices of the Ministry and the Education Division, interpret the government policies and directives as well as public opinions and international concerns into the form of curriculum materials and instructions for schools. In Fullan’s views, how well these interpretations are conveyed to the teachers in schools is the crucially important factor in determining whether change is effective or not.

According to Fullan, the policy makers stand on one side and the teachers on the other side and are often ignorant of each other’s subjective world. Hence “the quality of relationship across this gulf is crucial to supporting change when there is agreement, and to reconciling when there is conflict” (Fullan, 1991:79).

The relationship that Fullan refers to is that of processual rather than episodic interaction. Episodic, according to him, is paper work in the form of reports, requests (and official letters and circulars), while processual relationship is more people work. People work promotes interpersonal communications, reduces ambivalence and helps to solve problems. Limited interpersonal interactions between the two different worlds can result in misinterpretation, misunderstanding, disillusionment and false clarity. Assistance or stimulation from external agents mentioned above and sharing of the know-how among all the players can influence the change process and should be a “major goal” of change, argues Fullan (1991:80). However, Fullan reminds us (referring to Miles’ study, 1987) that the quality of ideas and suggestions (or even materials) from the external agents can be often not good or a packaged solution, which do not always work (Fullan, 1991:225). He goes on to suggest that while external consultants are at work, development of expertise of people in the situation, who may ensure an ongoing relationship is more vital (p.226).

The theoretical frameworks proposed by Beeby and Fullan, selected aspects of which are outlined briefly above, are the main intellectual tools that underpin the data collection and analysis of this study. They are used in the following sections of this chapter to interpret the existing policy documents and reports as they related to the new curriculum. In order to
appreciate the nature of the curriculum change that the Bhutanese system has undergone since 1986 it is necessary to first examine the essential features of the pre-1986 curriculum documents.

THE PRE-1986 CURRICULUM

Drawing mainly upon Beeby’s framework and the context (Chapter Two), this analysis is based on a discussion of the (i) syllabuses, (ii) teaching methods and (iii) assessment and examination.

(i) The syllabus and contents

As mentioned in Chapter Two (see p.70), the aim of school education was mainly to prepare children with adequate skills and knowledge required to participate as productive citizens. Documents giving details of the syllabuses before 1986 are scarce. From the interview with Mr. Gyamtsho (see p.16), it was revealed that the syllabus before 1961 was very simple and consisted of three subjects, that is, Dzongkha, English and Arithmetic and students learnt the basic skills in reading, writing and simple accounting. The first National Education Policy (1976) stated that, in addition, emphasis in the syllabus “shall be given to the teaching of Science” (see p.35).

Regarding the contents of learning at this time, (1960s –1970s) it has been said that,

The existing curriculum at all levels was grossly inadequate in the use of the local environment especially in the teaching and learning of History and Geography of Bhutan (Choden, 1990:5);

The foreign imported curriculum did not reflect Bhutanese culture and environment; too many subjects and the stilted nature of the curriculum, and subject based at all levels; and the use of Indian textbooks, the content of which was largely designed for Indian pupils (Collister & Etherton, 1991:15-6).

[During the 1960s until the mid-1980s, the] “syllabus was based on a list of textbooks, which were prescribed by the Education Department” (Thinley, 1999:11).

The three quotes above, point out that our syllabuses and textbooks were “foreign”, and “stilted” in nature and thus largely irrelevant. The syllabuses, therefore, had close affinity with the characteristics described in the stage of formalism. First, syllabuses were tight and
consisted of list of textbooks, which were prescribed as the source of knowledge. Second, the contents were not Bhutanese-based but borrowed from India, which explain that the students were learning contents not related to their life. This indicates learning of symbols that make little or no sense to the learners. Third, the emphasis was on reading, writing and arithmetic.

(ii) Teaching methods

It was also mentioned that before NAPE had started, “learning was mostly by rote” and “classroom methods were dominated by chalk and talk limiting children’s self-expression” (Choden (1990:5). Collister & Etherton (1991:15) say “the methods of rote learning [were] transferred, in part, from monastic school”, which did not fit with the learning requirements of the modern system. This was made worse by the use of “English as a medium of instruction,” mainly taught by expatriate teachers (Thinley, 1999:11). Some children apparently expressed that the old method was not interesting because “they have to study all the time” and “they do not have any activities, any experiments or any enjoyment” or “have to study unknown things before they have seen them” (Harley, 1993:33).

In Bhutanese classrooms, teaching was characterized by a rigid method of rote learning, again an indicator of formalism. Children were taught by chalk and talk method, and to memorize contents to pass examinations. There was one single method of learning.

(iii) Assessment and examination

“In the former times, all Bhutanese students sat for the Indian examinations and followed Indian Syllabi” (Bray, 1996:18). In Bhutan it was also a means of selection dictated by a lack of space in the secondary schools. During primary to secondary schooling, students had to do as many as four public examinations (Thinley, 1999:12, see also above p.30). As such, examinations loomed large in the system (Collister & Etherton, 1991).

Again, the above evidence suggests that rote learning was how students prepared for examinations. The emotional life of the pupils was not considered, which is a purely formalistic approach as described by Beeby.
In summary, the pre-1986 curriculum was far removed from the needs of the Bhutanese children and organised in rigid syllabuses. Teaching was generally by chalk and talk. The system was also characterised by tightly organised examinations aimed at certification and selection. In short, the system was organised and operating essentially at the *Stage of Formalism*. For these very reasons, the 1984 Education Policy was initiated, which became the basis of the innovations analysed in the next section.

**THE POST-1986 CURRICULUM**

The origin of NAPE can be traced to a 1984 draft national plan (policy) for education. This document expressed dissatisfaction with the dominant methods of rote learning and the dependence on Indian textbooks and curricula (Bray, 1996:18).

Back in 1976, when the Education Department made its first attempt to develop a National Education Policy, it had thought of a “system of education which is truly Bhutanese” (see above p.35). This desire was materialised a decade later, when in 1986, the new curriculum was introduced.

This section analyses the new curriculum initiatives of the post-1986 period, using essentially the Beeby (1966) framework. In the post-1986 curriculum, teacher qualification became an important component mainly because of their capacity to manage the change. So this section begins with (i) teacher capacity and then followed by (ii) syllabuses and contents, (iii) teaching methods, and (iv) assessment and examinations, as in the previous section.

(i) **Teacher capacity**

The Primary Education Review Team has pointed out that “for many years, Bhutan has had to rely heavily on expatriate teachers, mainly Indian teachers to teach upper primary and secondary students” (Harley, 1993:34). These non-Bhutanese teachers, who in 1992 consisted of 31 percent of the total teaching cadre in the country, were mainly teaching upper primary classes, the team observed.

Although teachers trained at the Teachers’ Training Institute (TTI) in Bhutan had started to join teaching from 1970 onwards, their educational attainment varied from VI to VIII before attending the two-year Diploma Course. Graduates from the Teacher Training
College (TTC) at Paro were also not different from those of the TTI. The Primary Education Review Team also noted that although excellent initiatives undertaken by the institutes gave reasons to be optimistic, the impact would take a longer time. Moreover, teacher educators also needed opportunities to upgrade their qualifications (Harley, 1993:38).

Figure 3.3 shows position of teachers in Bhutan in 1998. More teachers have completed class X and two-year primary teacher certificate course. About ten percent are under class X, but had undergone some training. With reference to Beeby’s idea, these teachers would have low inner security. So as teachers their knowledge and exposure would be near the limit of what they were required to teach. Figure 3.3 shows the teachers with higher educational qualifications and the number of those with professional training. This again points to lower inner security and limited capacity to effectively work at the Stage of Meaning.

![Figure 3.3. Distribution of teachers by qualification in Bhutan (adopted from Education Statistics, 1998)](image)

**Key:** X, XII = class X, XII; PTC= Pry. Teachers’ Course; B.Ed = Bachelor of Education; BA/BSc = Graduates in Arts and Science; MA/MSc = Masters in Arts and Science.

Generally speaking it may be assumed that low qualification denotes low efficiency while high qualification denotes high efficiency. However, there will be some teachers in the lower cohort, who can definitely perform with greater efficiency and qualify to be placed at the *Stage of Meaning*, particularly in teaching the lower classes. At the same time it is also
possible that the performance of some of those in the higher cohort may be oriented to formalism, although their inner security is high.

In-service programmes could enhance the capacity of teachers. However, the review team noted that only a small number of schools carried out the SBIP with the help of DRTs and the impact was also minimal. Moreover, the team found that “many teachers of primary classes were passively hostile to any plans to critically consider professional issues and expressed no interest in SBIP” (Harley, 1993:43, emphasis added). In addition to the low qualification of teachers in primary schools and the no interest group in the upper primary levels, there was a short supply of teachers. In order to mitigate the shortage, schools were given temporary untrained teachers who were nothing better than “baby sitting” the children and hence providing poor quality of teaching (Harley, 1993:47).

(ii) The syllabuses/contents

The NAPE syllabus is relevant to our needs, stressing the history and culture of the Kingdom (Choden, 1990:4). As mentioned in Chapter Two (see above p. 42), Environmental Studies (EVS) were the first steps taken in this direction and later the acronym NAPE was adopted.

NAPE [lays] emphasis [on] creativity rather than memory and ... helps to promote a spirit of enquiry and adoption of the scientific methods amongst teachers and students. The EVS (as a subject) takes [a] much wider area of learning. It is based on Bhutan and especially children's own experiences and environment (Choden, 1990:18-9).

It has been said that the content for EVS draws on the rich store of the cultural tradition and local wisdom. It aims at developing in children (a) self-confidence, (b) creative thought and (c) reasoning and problem-solving abilities (Collister & Etherton, 1991).

The contents in the EVS syllabus are oriented more towards what Beeby calls the Stage of Meaning than to the Formalism of the pre-1986 period. This is because there is variety of content as it encourages creative thought. It also encourages the application of cognitive skills like analysis and evaluation as the focus is on problem-solving rather than rote learning.
(iii) Teaching methods

It was intended that children would be “working in different activities, looking up for text materials, model making, devising charts or recording field work observations” (Collister and Etherton, 1991:19). Teachers were trained and encouraged to use locally available materials (Choden, 1990:20). This was an apparent attempt to enable the children to derive some meaning of the symbols and words (especially in English) learnt.

During a formal review of the Primary Curriculum, which included schools that had used NAPE curriculum and those that had not yet adopted NAPE, it was observed that

There was great evidence of children’s active participation in learning. Classrooms were used as functional teacher areas; simple materials and equipment were effectively used, and in general, reasonable teaching strategies were employed (Harley, 1993:25).

After reading the notes written by students on their preference of old and new methods, the review team found that in “the new curriculum, students could understand the things by doing so many experiments and activities” (Harley, 1993:33). The 1993 review team also reported that “many teachers spend many hours preparing pictures and sight words which are normally found displayed in the classroom” (Harley, 1993:25).

The above information shows that the fundamental features of teaching in NAPE, where it was done well, have affinity with the Stage of Meaning, where understanding was stressed, pupils were actively participating in the lessons in problem-solving using creative thinking.

An important feature in the NAPE is the class teacher system, which was not used in the pre-1986 system. In the class-teacher system, one teacher teaches the same class throughout the year and the teacher feels more responsible for his/her class. The idea is that this helps the teacher to give special attention to each child and encourages slow learners to improve.

The pastoral care and other social development responsibilities inherent in the class teacher system is a particularly important aspect of primary education, which is not compatible with the subject teacher system (Choden, 1990:4).

The class teacher system was especially important to EVS, as it required teachers to focus on the whole curriculum instead of compartmentalised subjects (Bray, 1996:19). This has appeared as an important feature in the NAPE, and its affinity with the theory lies in its
merits to develop better relationship between teachers and pupils facilitating individual guidance.

(iv) Assessment and examination

Under the NAPE programme a continuous assessment technique was developed in all the subjects, which does not require “young children to undergo formal examinations, but based on their daily performance” (Choden, 1990:19). Promotion of children from class PP through to III was to be automatic there being no examinations at this stage. Its adoption was expected to result in fewer children failing and repeating classes (Choden, 1990:3). This made the examination, at least in the lower classes, less important, which was consistent with Beeby’s Stage of Meaning or at least the Stage of Transition.

Assessment of students in NAPE consisted of 30 percent on-going, 30 percent mid-term tests and 40 percent end-of-year tests as stipulated by CTDD (later CAPSS) guidelines (Harley, 1993:29). From 1994 onwards, the marks for internal assessment were increased from 30 percent to 50 percent (ED, May 1994). This gradual shift in weighting of assessment, particularly for class VI indicated the reduction of the importance of examination at the primary level, so in general, assessment and examination in the post-1986 period has moved away from a strongly formal emphasis.

In brief, the post-1986 curriculum, particularly the NAPE at the primary level, was vastly different from the pre-1986 one in terms of the contents and teaching methods. Its demand on the teachers was also very different from the previous period. A further comparison of the two periods is discussed below.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO PERIODS

An analysis of the pre-1986 curriculum and the post-1986 innovations suggests that there has been an apparent shift in emphasis between the two periods. In the former curriculum the content was foreign, which is geared towards passing the examinations, that dominated the classroom teaching and led to rote learning. These characteristics of the curriculum are consistent with a system at the Stage of Formalism.

In the post-1986 curriculum, teaching was to be child-centred where students are engaged in activities, exploring the library and the surrounding environment for first hand information. The focus is on understanding and problem-solving. Rote learning for
examination is apparently reduced as students are judged by their ability to perform on a
day-to-day basis rather than mastery of content. These are more consistent with the *Stage of Meaning* than *Formalism*.

It is interesting that the 1984 Policy has been able to trigger a dramatic change both in
terms of the content as well as the intended pedagogical practice in the classrooms. Having
understood the pre-1986 curriculum as formalistic and irrelevant for Bhutan, it is also
important to note that the teachers had been operating that way for the previous two to three
decades. The rigid syllabuses and teacher-talk method is simple and requires less efforts
and skill in planning as all the information is available in the textbooks that can be read out
or transcribed.

One suspects, therefore, that the post-1986 curriculum would prove to be more demanding
on the teachers. The post-1986 curriculum requires them to plan, organise materials and
the learning activities before the class. It also requires teachers to give individual guidance
to help each individual student learn and also to be able to assess his/her performance while
at work. Although Chapters Five to Seven will address this issue in more detail, it will be
useful to get some preliminary insights into the implementation of the new curriculum.
This is the focus of the next section where commentaries upon NAPE form the basis of
discussion.

**INSIGHTS INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAPE**

The post-1986 curriculum innovation was quite complex in nature as it incorporated new
contents, and new practices in pedagogy including a new mode of assessment. The
preliminary impressions gained from the insights into the programme implementation will
be useful for discussions in the later chapters. Since this section draws upon the process
with which the post-1986 curriculum was implemented, the same format is used – (i)
syllabuses/contents, (ii) teaching methods and (iii) assessment and examination.

(i) **Syllabuses/contents**

During the field visits in 1992, the Primary Education Review team recorded a variety of
comments from teachers, which are summarised below (Harley, 1993:32-3):

- the curriculum is overcrowded;
• grammar is not even taught through the indirect method (grammar was discouraged when NAPE was introduced);

• children are weak in spelling (emphasis was on oral communication);

• math tables are completely neglected/tables are not taught – use of objects all the time/NAPE children are very poor in Math;

• too many oral activities in manuals/sight words, reading and making sentences are all oral/with NAPE there is more stress on talking and less emphasis on writing;

• some EVS activities are not relevant, for example, bus timetables, ignorance of market in remote areas;

• conflict between English and EVS – they are not complementary; and

• restrictiveness of sight words/vocabulary.

These comments reflect the kind of difficulty in practicality, as well as individual differences in using the materials developed for schools in teachers’ minds. Yet, the report also says,

The most significant result is that the positive views expressed across the entire spectrum of the school visits heavily emphasized on better learning by children (Harley, 1993:28).

But the team also pointed out that teachers were simply “regurgitating cliché”, that is they were reiterating the rhetoric of the implementation of NAPE. They echo the priorities and meanings given in the policy rather than providing a professional judgement on the practicality of the materials. This could imply that teachers were not reflecting enough on the materials given to them in terms of practicality, which is likely to result in false clarity and superficial change as Beeby says. It is also possible that critical reaction to the new curriculum required a greater depth of understanding, which was lacking in the teachers. Nonetheless, the team also noted that there was much conviction among the teachers that the new syllabus was a good change.

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The practical difficulty in the use of English as the medium of instruction was pointed out by some as affecting the way teachers used the syllabuses. At the primary level, the 1993 review team made the following points.

English [as a medium of instruction] has made the teacher’s job very difficult. Not only is a teacher expected to know his subject matter; he should also be able to teach it in English, [which] also adversely affects children’s participation in the lesson (quoted in Harley, 1993:26).

According to Collister and Etherton (1991:20), teaching of language should have been the first to improve. The Primary Education Review Team, alluded to above, also noted that English needed a major reassessment in terms of the practicality of teaching methods and curriculum at the primary level if there is to be improvement in the language at higher grades (Harley, 1993:26).

At the secondary level, a high school teacher pointed out the difficulty in teaching a short story titled “The Needle” as it is based on Jewish culture and contains vocabularies from Hebrew, which the teacher herself had difficulty understanding (Dyenka, 1999). Another teacher found in her study that almost all teachers in Bhutan are faced with problems when it comes to teaching (or using) English (Zangmo, 1999). Quite recently, Dorji’s (2000) study revealed that students’ poor performance in English was attributed to teachers’ inefficiency in English.

As the comments and observations on NAPE indicate, there has been a shift in the focus of the curriculum from formalism to meaning. The new curriculum was, therefore, likely to pose enough difficulties for teachers, as they had to learn about it and implement the change in English, which is already pointed out as a complicating factor to the change process in Bhutan.

(ii) Teaching methods

The 1993 Primary Education Review Team observed that “in general, NAPE in class PP to III is operating effectively and with enthusiasm from teachers and learners alike as a unique nationwide system of basic education” (Harley, 1993:25). The team observed that in every classroom there was evidence that children were actively participating in learning (p.25).

Statements from teachers interviewed by the review team informed the members that:
The NAPE materials provided by CTDD are stimulating and the manuals are being more 'teacher friendly'/ lesson planning helps teachers/ manuals are very helpful (Harley, 1993:29).

To sum up, teachers’ choices of schools and frequent transfer of teachers between schools have resulted in their changing schools more frequently than is desirable. This has had an adverse effect on their interests and commitment, as they no longer feel attached to a school. In the upper primary classes, generally, teaching was consistently focussed on textbook learning, employing very limited and unimaginative teaching strategies.

There was an overwhelming sameness about teaching in the upper primary grades. The focus was consistently on the textbook learning, employing very limited and unimaginative teaching strategies. ...The principal techniques used were: teacher talk, teacher writing on the chalkboard, children being asked to answer specific questions, children transcribing from their textbooks or from the chalkboard. Most of the time children sat listening to the teacher or writing in their notebooks. In some cases teachers taught the books, not the students (Harley, 1993:26).

These events observed in the classrooms underscore how difficult it was for the teachers in the real classroom adopting the new curriculum and the new pedagogy it required.

Not surprisingly, in the 1988 review of the NAPE, the report said that from grade IV onwards the practice reverts to traditional methods of teaching (Harley, 1988:21). This and the low educational qualifications indicated an example of low inner security among the teachers. It could be, as Collistor and Etherton (1991) and Rinchen (2000) wrote, that lack of adequate resource materials was also affecting the practice of teaching as intended. At grade IV teachers generally thought that NAPE was not preparing children enough to cope with the standards of the upper primary level and that it ruins the discipline in the school (Harley, 1993:8). In particular, the reference to “standards” shows that from the upper primary schools, examination would have been once again the major concern for teachers.

The Primary Education Review Team observes that the effective implementation of the NAPE was constrained by shortage of Bhutanese teachers trained in NAPE. During 1991-1992, this shortage was estimated to be “in the vicinity of 275 teachers” (Harley, 1993:47), which led to the “recruitment of Indian expatriates who had not been trained in NAPE methods” (Harley, 1993:47). According to Bray (1996) this shortage was exacerbated by the expansion of the schools system to cope with growing demands.
What the review team noticed was an illustration of most teachers’ inappropriate subjective realities regarding their role when it says the “NAPE was grossly interpreted as a method” (Harley, 1993:25). The team said that teaching methods and classroom organisation were all part of the basic behaviour of a teacher in the classroom. It goes on to say “getting the teacher away from the front of the class to move around and work with groups of children requires attitudinal and behavioural change” (Harley, 1993:25). According to the report, changing teacher behaviour from the formalistic method of teaching would be difficult and a complex process.

On the differences between the teaching at NAPE classes and the secondary classes, Bray (1996) says, that having been introduced at the “bottom” of the system (PP-III) it had remained distanced from the examination related demands made at the top. He goes on to suggest that, if this was to extend to higher classes in future then “the bottom levels will have further protection” (Bray, 1996:23). He implies that if the higher classes that are more concerned with examinations adopt the student-centred teaching then the practice in the lower levels is likely to continue the present achievement. Without this, it can be said, there is a possibility that examination will have adverse effects on child-centred teaching.

This possibility becomes stronger when the Primary Education Review indicates that on the issue of class-teacher system many teachers favoured subject teaching, as most of them had low educational attainment varying between class V (the older groups) and X. The review team also observed that child-centred teaching could be hampered when “the number of students is over 36” in a class, although it was noted that at the time, teachers were making effort (Harley, 1993:25). At present, teachers in Bhutan with low levels of personal education, might be expected to have low inner security, especially if young and inexperienced, and so have considerable difficulty in implementing the NAPE philosophy and practices.

To sum up, NAPE was being implemented in the lower primary classes with some success, but its implementation in the upper primary classes was subject to examination. The generally low qualification of teachers was further worsened by the shortage of teachers. In short, the post-1986 curriculum was implemented in about the same way as the pre-1986 period.
(iii) Assessment and examination

It has been suggested that the effect of complex change, like the NAPE was said to be, must be doubted in a country like Bhutan “where primary teachers generally have a lower general level of professional, reading and educational attainment and where examinations tend to loom larger” (Collister & Etherton, 1991:19; Bray, 1996). This is consistent with Beeby.

In the Primary Education Review report (Harley, 1993), assessment was mentioned in two groups – those used by subject teachers and those used by class-teachers. Subject teachers tended to use assessment mainly in the form of mid-year and end-of-year examinations. Sometimes they conducted monthly tests but records of these were not often maintained, so they were not used in the final assessment. The class-teachers used 30 percent marks for the continuous assessment, 30 percent for the mid-year tests and 40 percent for the end-of-year examinations, as per the guidelines given by the CAPSS. The continuous assessment included a combination of oral (for the language) and written activities (Harley, 1993:29).

The report went on to say that many teachers were setting small tests at the end of each block (the academic session is divided into six blocks of about 5 weeks each). But, the report points out, there was little use made of the daily and weekly monitoring strategies to keep track of every student’s basic skills (Harley, 1993:29), that is, using these data formatively. In a random survey of 418 students in class IX and 190 students XI in a high school regarding private tutoring (that is while the students were in class VIII and X respectively) CAPSS confirmed that private tutoring was common in classes preparing for public examinations. This generally took place after the mid-term examinations. An average of 80 percent of the daily lessons in both classes were somehow connected with examinations (CAPSS, 1998). Private tutoring by teachers is similar to what Beeby (1980b) has described about teachers in Indonesia who were engaged in extra jobs thereby getting little time to prepare and reflect on their lessons.

A recent observation submitted to the Education Department by CAPSS and BBE drives home another point on the question of clarity.

The continuous assessment as practiced in our schools varies according to the individual understanding of the concept, often bringing about confusion rather than improving the assessment (ED, November 1997).

It implies that although continuous assessment is still in use, the variation described in the 1993 report still continues among our teachers.
Rinchen’s (2000:150) recent study found community school (generally lower primary level) teachers perceived continuous assessment differently from junior high school teachers. He also found that although the intentions of continuous assessment were to give feedback to students, the system and the teachers, there was evidence that teachers perceived it more as “summative assessment” (Rinchen, 2000: 161). Chewang’s (1999) study also indicated that lack of resource materials was a hindrance in conducting continuous assessment.

The consultant for the 1988 NAPE review had recommended that 1989 be a period of consolidation for the NAPE project for further in-service programmes for head teachers and the district education officers and training of as many teachers as possible both at home and in foreign countries (Harley 1988:28). Apparently, Collister (1989) had indicated the presence of “political forces of conservatism” (in Bray, 1995:21) against the change of pedagogy encouraged by NAPE. Bray notes that the forces for expansion proved stronger than either the professional desire for consolidation or the political forces of conservatism. He goes on to say that more schools were added in 1989 to those operating the NAPE curriculum and a plan was drawn to introduce the new curriculum in 174 schools in 1990. In addition, the “authorities also considered vertical expansion, that is to class VI” (Bray, 1996:21).

In summary, the first NAPE review report said that it was “successful to quite an extraordinary degree” (Harley, 1988:1). But it was also indicated that the pace of change was posing difficulties for teachers. Yet, extension of the change into more schools continued. The concern about the use of English and the teachers’ own qualifications created some doubts in the minds of the reviewers. The teachers’ difficulties in changing behaviour in the classroom is an example that their subjective worlds are different from that of the centre who promoted the changes. It is also possible that the external agencies like the CAPSS and EMSS have underestimated the importance of their role in supporting teachers to learn about, and implement the new practice.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter began with the discussion of the theoretical frameworks based on the work of Beeby and Fullan. The distribution of teachers along Beeby’s formalism-meaning continuum is not homogeneous, and depends upon their educational and professional qualifications. Fullan’s work provided an analytical framework related to how change should be managed.
A comparison between the curriculum the pre-1986 and the post-86 periods showed that the earlier period was mainly characterised by features found in the Stage of Formalism. The contents were borrowed from other systems and were alien to the learners in Bhutan, and taught from the textbooks, through teacher-talk methods and children learnt the contents mostly by memorisation for examination. The main aim was preparation for work.

The post-1986 curriculum, on the other hand, was vastly different from the previous one. The content was based on Bhutanese way of life and things that children could see and feel. The teaching was activity based and child-centred. The main aim was preparation for life and hence many problem-solving activities were advocated. Understanding became more important than examination. This brought the post-1986 curriculum into the domain of the Stage of Meaning.

The insights into the implementation of the post-1986 curriculum provided a different perspective. There were variations in the way NAPE was understood and implemented. Literature on implementation of NAPE showed a clear tension between the intention and the practice in the field. Bray (1996:24) says that this tension was caused by qualitative reform and quantitative expansion, which was made more difficult by the rapid population growth. The distribution of teachers along the formalism-meaning continuum showed that the quality of the teachers was contentious to the effective implementation of the innovations. These problems, become the focus of the remaining part of this study.

The insights gained from the last part of the chapter corroborate the concerns expressed by the government, as mentioned in Chapter One, and the need expressed by the then Secretary of Health and Education (now the Minister) for an analysis of the curriculum implementation in our schools. The remaining part of the thesis will address the Minister’s concern further. The next chapter will explore a suitable methodology in order to find answers to the problems and tensions.