



A REVIEW REPORT ON
THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

PREPARED BY
SPECIAL COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION

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**Excerpts from the Royal Address by His Majesty The King
at the 3rd convocation of Royal University of Bhutan, Paro College of Education
February 17, 2009**

“I am a firm believer that if there is one word that will stand out above all other words when we describe our country’s amazing journey of modernization over the last few decades - it is Education.

“...Today I speak on behalf of our teachers and students – our teachers will always be committed and dedicated teachers – our students will always be diligent and loyal students – but it is the duty of parents, policy makers and the government to put the right tools in their hands – the right books, the right curriculum, the right direction.

“... For if our Vision for the nation is not contained in the pages of the books that our young children hold, in the words of our teachers as they lead their classrooms, and in the education policies of our governments, then let it be said – we have no Vision.

...We can dream of a strong bureaucracy of the highest standards but we must not forget that those standards must be set in school where our future bureaucrats are.

“...But if changing realities bring new ambitions and goals, it must also bring new plans and preparation. Most importantly, we have to ask ourselves how do we build and nurture the people who will implement the plans and fulfill our goals? The answer lies in Education.”

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Our gratitude also goes to the principals, teachers, students and management of Druk Padma Karpo School in Ladakh, Deyana Anglo Vedic Public School in Shimla, Vasant Valley and Sanskriti Schools in Delhi for their warm hospitality, invaluable help and sharing learning experiences.

A very special mention goes to the UNICEF, Bhutan for the partial financial support rendered to the Committee to visit India. We remain highly grateful.

Finally, we would also like to thank the Royal Bhutanese Embassy, New Delhi and Embassy of India in Bhutan for arranging meetings with the above schools in India.

2 Background

Education in Bhutan has come a long way since late 1950s with the introduction of modern education. The visionary leaderships of our successive Monarchs and the Royal Government have always accorded the highest importance to education as a result of which, Bhutan has witnessed significant progress in the human capital, as well as, in enabling unprecedented socio-economic development. However, with changing times, the education is also faced with numerous challenges. Amongst many, the quality of education is presently a matter of deep national concern.

A study conducted by the Royal Education Council reveals that “many students are performing below expectations of their grade level on both basic and advanced academic skills and lack basic communication and analytical skills...”¹ The same concern was reiterated by the Hon’ble Minister of Education during the 17th Session of the National Council (June 22, 2016) that on average a student requires one additional year to achieve the same level of competency for that grade. Further, it was submitted to House that the education sector requires 1500 additional teachers to bring the level of education to the national standard.

Recognizing the importance of education, the National Council deliberated at length on certain aspects of the Bhutanese education during its 17th Session in 2016. Eventually, the House resolved to form a Special Committee for Education to carry out a review study to better understand the situation. Accordingly, the Committee comprising of six members identified four strategic focus areas: Teacher Performance, Relevant Curricula, Student Learning Outcomes and Resource Allocation for the purpose of its study.

The Article 9.15 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states that “The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality”. As reiterated by His Majesty the King that “...it is the duty of parents, policy makers and the government to put the right tools in their hands – the right books, the right curriculum, the right direction”, these aspirations must be translated into a policy to provide a strategic direction to respond effectively to the emerging needs and changing times of the society. While trying to review the scope, objectives and coverage of the national education policy, it is evident that the policy has been in the draft stage since 2009. However, in the absence of the mother policy, other subsidiary policies, guidelines and the recent Education Blueprint 2014-24 have been put in place to provide necessary strategic direction.

This review study is in accordance with the Article 11.2 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan which states that “...the National Council shall act as the House of review on matters affecting the security and sovereignty of the country and the interests of the nation and the people...” and chapter 2.7 of the National Council Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan which states “The National Council shall ensure that the Government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfils the aspirations of the people through periodic public review of policies and issues....”

The Report is organized into four parts corresponding to the above four strategic focus areas.

¹ For detail, refer proceedings of national seminar on the quality of education I Bhutan, CERD, June 2009.

3 Study Approach

Various literatures were reviewed ranging from policy to plan documents, Blueprint, guidelines, organizational development exercise, research and statistical reports. As a part of the consultative process, discussions were held with several stakeholders namely the Ministry of Education (MoE), Royal Education Council (REC), Colleges of Education (CoE) and Royal University of Bhutan. Further to understand the ground realities, the Committee visited different levels of schools - Khangku MSS (Paro), Punakha central school, Wangduephodrang primary school, Mendrelgang central school (Tsirang), Serzhong primary school (Sarpang), Gelephu HSS (autonomous), Kuendrup private HSS (Sarpang), Martsala MSS and Deothang primary school (Samdrupjongkhar), and Phuntsholing MSS. A structured questionnaire was also designed to gather further information.

In addition, the Committee also visited Druk Padma Karpo School in Ladakh, Deyana Anglo Vedic public School in Shimla, and Vasant Valley and Sanskriti Schools in Delhi.

4 Teacher Performance

4.1 Background

Teacher plays an important role in the education system and the quality of education greatly depends on teacher's performance in the classroom and beyond. It is evident from the study carried out by McKinsey that "teacher quality effected student performance more than any other variable; on average, two standards with average performance (50th percentile) would diverge by more than 50 percentile points over a three year period depending on the teacher they were assigned.² However, the performance of teachers is also greatly influenced by their workload and working environment, instructional leadership and motivation, access to professional development, and so forth.

As of 2015, there were over 8,605 teachers in the country: 7,887 in the government schools and 718 in the private schools with 5,100 male teachers and 3,505 female teachers. The detail is given in the table 1.

Table 1: Number of teachers in Government schools with educational qualifications, 2015

Qualification	Teachers in Government Schools			Percentage
	Male	Female	Total	
PhD	5	1	6	0.1
Masters	738	271	1009	12.8%
PG Diploma	628	487	1115	14.1%
Bachelors	2489	1730	4219	53.5%
Diploma(PTC/ZTC)	816	653	1469	18.6%
Higher Sec/Matriculation	31	38	69	0.9%

Source: *Annual Education Statistics, 2015, p.39.*

4.2 Observation and Findings

4.2.1 Recruitment

Though the Teacher Human Resource Policy 2014 states that "stringent entry tests shall be conducted to recruit the most competent candidates into the teaching profession" the current practice of recruitment into the CoE is directly done electronically based on the merit ranking. This selection process as pointed out by the MoE and CoE however, constrains selecting candidates with right attitudes and aptitudes into the teaching profession. Moreover, both MoE

² Royal Education Council, 2009: *Teacher Quality Enhancement Project Part (I): Teachers in Bhutan and Their Work Environment*, p.25.

and CoE feel that teaching profession is not the first career option and hence, only those candidates who do not qualify for scholarships and other higher studies apply to CoE.

Likewise, the current system of recruiting teachers through general Bhutan Civil Service Examination also appears to be inadequate as the examination system does not test the requisite knowledge, aptitudes and competency, genuine interest for teaching, love for children, etc, which are prerequisite for the teaching profession.

4.2.2 Working Environment

Teacher job satisfaction index in Bhutan in 2013 was 3.41 - indicating that the level of job satisfaction of teachers in Bhutan was 68.3 percent.³ On average, 4 percent of the total teachers in the government schools leave the profession every year for various reasons.⁴ Though teacher has opportunity to choose from three distinct career tracks - teaching, administration and specialist the tracks for administration and leadership, as well as, specialist are highly competitive given the higher number of teachers in the country. For instance, recently over 101 teachers applied for two vacant posts of program officers in MoE.

Compared to other professions in the civil service, teachers in general have relatively poor working environment. It is a reality that teachers' performance is continuously constrained by small working space in the staff room equipped with poor furniture, limited computers, printers and copiers, weak or no internet connectivity, and limited teaching learning resources including delay in supply of learning materials. For instance, only about 44 percent⁵ of the public schools have access to internet connectivity. Moreover, teacher's motivation is also greatly influenced by the leadership and personal initiatives of principals that keep schools going.

The teacher-student ratio, which is generally used as proxy measures for teacher's workload and teacher's effective services to students, is not a good yardstick. For instance, though the national average of teacher-student ratio is 1:20 in 2015, it is observed that classes in most of the large boarding and urban schools are crowded with large number of students ranging from 35 to 50 students in a class. It is also evident from our field visit that on average, a teacher caters to about 169 students in a particular school.

4.2.3 Teachers' Workload

Teachers work goes beyond class room instruction and supervision. The time devoted to lesson preparation and assessment outside of school hours, as well as, the time devoted to extra and co-curricular activities are hardly captured to assess teachers' workload. Hence, teachers often expressed that they are both role overload (need to perform multifaceted functions in school) and task-overload (need to spend long hours in school).

Like in Britain and Canada, our teachers are supposed to teach a minimum of 22 hours per week. However, our survey⁶ results in figure 1 shows that teachers on average spend 18.54 hours on

³ MoE presentation to the Committee on July 26, 2016.

⁴ Annual Education Statistics, 2015, p.39.

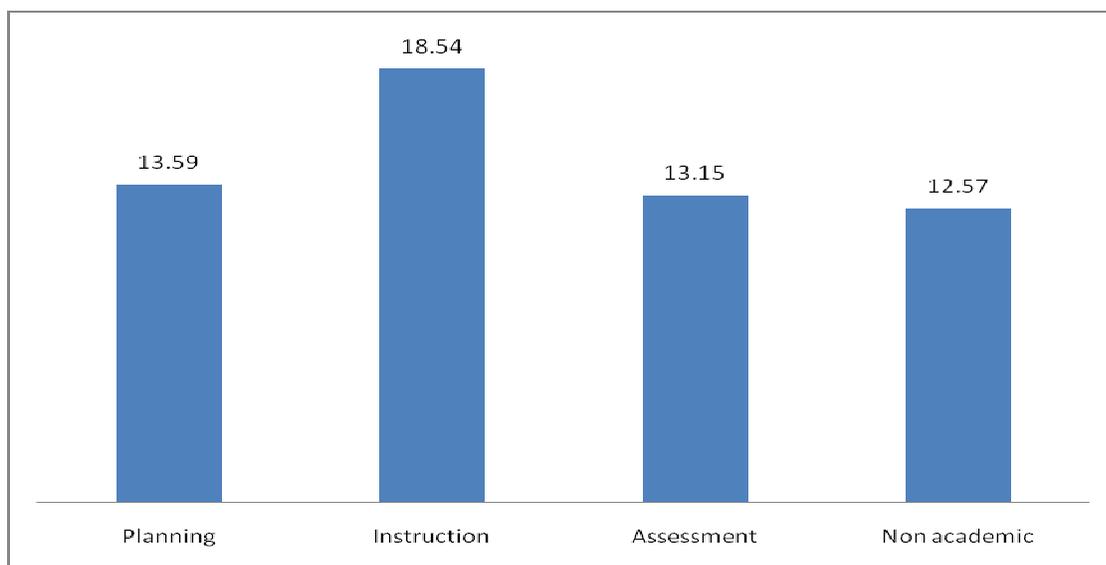
⁵ Ibid, p.59.

⁶ Structured survey questionnaire to assess teachers' workload was distributed to Khangkhu MSS, Wangduephodrang PS, Punakha central school, Mendrelgang central school, Gelephu HSS, Serzhong PS, Martsala

teaching in a week. But substantial amount of time is also devoted to lesson planning and assessment. Teachers spend around 14 hours for lesson planning and preparation, and about 13.15 hours on assessment and marking students' work per week. British, Canadian and Australian teachers spent an average 8 hours of time per week in lesson planning and preparation.⁷ Besides, our teachers spend about 13 hours for non-academic activities such as club, house, cultural, games, etc.

The analysis shows that teachers' on average work for 57.51 hours in a week or 10.45 hours in a day indicating that teachers work 2.45 hours more than a general civil servants in a day. Policy mandates teachers to devote a minimum of 180 instructional days in an academic year, which shows that teachers work 55 days more than a general civil servant in a year.⁸ This truly confirms that our teachers are over burdened, which invariably affect the students' learning outcomes if not addressed urgently.

Figure 1: Teacher's average workload in a week (in hours)



Source: *Findings from the Committee's survey report, September 2016.*

MoE plans to achieve Teacher-Student Ratio (TSR) of 1:24 in the coming years. As per the Education annual statistics 2015, Samtse Dzongkhag has the highest TSR of 1:27 and Gasa the lowest with 1:14. However, the challenges in achieving a desirable TSR will continue to remain unless an effective subject wise teacher deployment is addressed. The survey result also shows that on average, a teacher takes 4.8 sections in a school catering to about 169 students. This clearly shows the difficulty faced by teachers to carry out regular assessment of students' work. Moreover, a teacher on average spends 17.42 hours on non-academic activities in a boarding

MSS, Deothang PS and Phuntsholing MSS in the month of September 2016. Out of 268 teacher respondents, only 253 questionnaire forms were valid for assessment. Out of 253 respondents, 130 were males and 123 females. The Committee remains grateful to Mr. Tashi Dargey, Research Officer, National Council Secretariat for data punching.

⁷ Teacher Quality Enhancement Project Part I: Teachers in Bhutan and Their Work Environment, REC 2009, p.28.

⁸ $180 \times 2.45 / 8 = 55.12$ days.

school compared to 10.02 hours in a day school in a week. In other words, the teachers in boarding schools work more by 1.3 hours daily compared to teachers in the day schools.

4.2.4 Professional Development (PD)

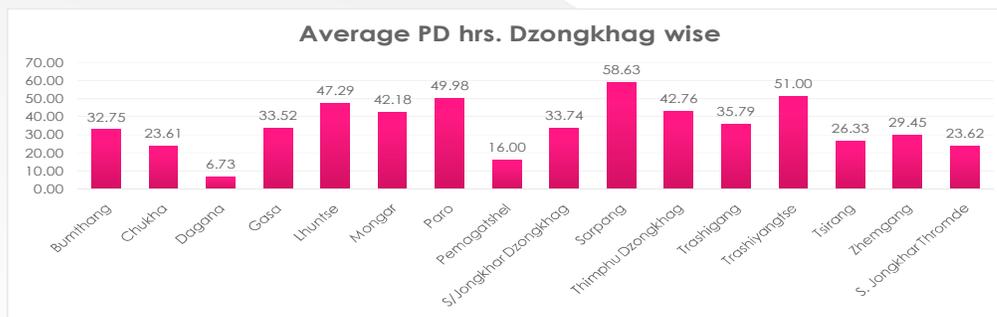
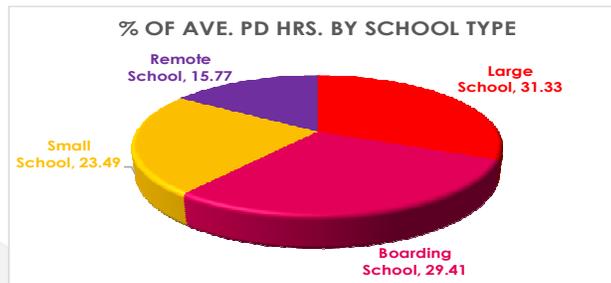
Education policy requires every teacher to receive a minimum of 80 hours of need based professional development in a year. While PD is regarded as important, it is observed that teachers in general do not receive adequate opportunities to enhance their professional and academic qualifications. Yet training and workshops related to life skills, agriculture, scouts, disaster, health and environment availed by some of the teachers are considered as part of overall PD requirement to fulfill the policy objectives.

The MoE’s situational analysis report 2015 shows that on average, PD received by teachers in 2015 was just 37.31 hours – short by 43 hours (53 percent) from the required 80 hours per year. The report also revealed that remote school teachers received only 15.77 hours, which is far less than their colleagues in urban schools, hence failing to reach to the needy one, as indicated in details below. Moreover, disparity in PD also exists among dzongkhags where Dagana received the lowest average PD of 6.73 hours.

Situation Analysis: PD in 2015

Summary

Details	Number /hours
Dzongkhag/Thromde	16 out of 20
Large School, Boarding School, Small School, & Remote School	52
Teachers covered	729
Average PD hours	37.31



It is also observed that the quality of PD courses deteriorates when they are cascaded from NBIP to DBIP to SBIP levels, which often results into compressed contents and reduced number of days owing to a lack of adequate fund. Between 2014 and 2015, only about 23 percent of the teachers in the government schools availed different workshops at national level.⁹ Besides, there is a lack of impact assessment and monitoring of PD courses carried out in schools by the concerned authorities, despite huge investments made by the Government.

However, the field report shows that recent Government's initiative in providing 21st century transformative pedagogy for all teachers has let them to achieve 40 hours of their PD requirement with strong sense of encouragement for teachers; such a whole school approach has caused visible impact in bringing real change and success in improving teaching learning processes in the classroom.

4.2.5 Qualification up-gradation

Annual Education Statistics 2015 shows that only 0.1 percent (6 teachers) of the total teachers have PhD and 12.8 percent have Masters Degree qualifications. Nearly 54 percent of teachers with Bachelors and 19 percent with Diploma Certificate in teaching certainly need qualification up-gradation in near future.

The government has prioritized the up-gradation of teacher's professional qualification through a distance mode education in the CoE as shown in the table 2 below. However, when teachers enrolled in this mode of education are required to fulfill their institutional academic obligations without compromising their instructional hours in their respective schools, it is deemed to affect both the quality of their research activities and teaching performance in the school.

Moreover, the duration of the courses is very short and carried out as a distance mode, which may also compromise the formal requirement/fulfillment as per the international standards and requirements. For instance, three years MEd course is being condensed to 4.5 months and similarly, two - year masters course is shortened to three months.

It is observed that due to low intake capacity of the two CoE, only a few teachers availed opportunity to upgrade their qualifications through a mixed mode approach. Further, many candidates are discouraged from applying to mixed mode professional courses due to the duration, timing of the courses, meager stipend coupled with heavy take home assignments. Therefore, it would be challenging for the MoE to succeed in providing 100 percent professional up gradation through this approach.

⁹ Annual Education Statistics 2015 (p.38) reveals that only 1809 participants participated in different workshops at the national level out of 7887 teachers between 2014-15.

Table 2: Long term PD courses in the RUB colleges

Programme	No. of Slots	Remarks
M.Ed. Leadership	25	Ongoing
M.Ed. Dzongkha	20	Ongoing
PG Dip. in English	25	Ongoing
PG Diploma in Guidance & Counseling	20	Ongoing
B.Ed. Primary	60	Ongoing
M.A. Counseling	25	New (Dec. 2016)
M.Ed. Science (Phy/Che/Bio)	30	New (Dec. 2016)

Source: HRD, MoE.

4.2.6 Teachers' Incentives

The Teacher HR policy emphasizes on attracting and retaining the best teachers through attractive remuneration and other incentives. Though MoE proposed teacher incentives to the Pay Commission in 2013 it did not materialize. However, teachers do receive a minimal lump sum professional allowance based on their seniority and position (shown in table below), which is not commensurable to their daily work load and working environment. Hence, the policy pronouncing attractive incentives to attract those high performing teachers to rural, remote and difficult school has not gained much attraction.

Annexure II: Lump sum Professional Allowance for Teachers

Positions	Revised Lump sum Teaching Allowance		
	(0-5) Years	(6-10) Years	(above 10) Years
EX/ES-1	5,460	8,185	10,915
EX/ES-2	4,580	6,870	9,155
EX/ES-3	3,870	5,805	7,740
P1	3,100	4,650	6,200
P2	2,735	4,105	5,475
P3	2,400	3,600	4,800
P4	2,135	3,205	4,275
P5	1,750	2,625	3,500
S1	1,635	2,455	3,275
S2	1,485	2,225	2,965
S3	1,355	2,035	2,710
S4	1,205	1,805	2,405
S5	1,115	1,670	2,225

Source: HRD, MoE.

For instance, the current financial norms restrict teachers from getting annual leave encashment unlike rest of the civil servants with the notion that teachers avail paid vacations. However, the study found out that fifteen days of summer vacation is being exclusively used for paper correction and result preparation and their winter vacation is being fully engaged with numerous national based in-service program (NBIPs) and evaluation duties, beside working 55 days more than a regular civil servant, which all defeats the whole purpose of vacation.

4.2.7 Teacher Deployment

Despite the policy and guideline to deploy teachers based on the actual requirement of teachers by subjects across the schools, and the decentralized deployment process at Dzongkhags and Thromdes, deployment is still a major problem across all schools in the country. Until the recent OD exercise by RCSE, MoE did not have a comprehensive teacher projection both in numbers and by subject requirements.

The mismatch in the placement of teachers by subject requirements in schools is critical, which is manifested in two ways. Firstly, teachers often teach some other subjects beyond their subject specialization either as a substitute for a time being, or in the absence of a regular subject teacher. Secondly, there is an inverse placement to schools by educational qualification. For instance, a teacher with BEd Primary is placed to a secondary school and a teacher with BEd Secondary to a primary school – completely compelling teachers to teach beyond their level of training and competence. Teachers also teach more than one subjects to fulfill 22 hours of instruction per week. This is seen to affect teacher's performance and quality teaching in classrooms.

Concerning the transfer, the policy clearly states that teachers will be eligible for transfer after serving for a minimum of three years in rural, remote and difficult schools in the initial 10 years of their teaching career. However, there are number of teachers who have been transferred from one rural school to another rural school in the same *gewog/dzongkhag*, or from one rural school to another rural school in another *dzongkhag*.

4.2.8 Counseling services

Some of the schools in Bhutan have fulltime counsellors. During our visit to the schools, it was reported that those schools, which do not have one need to be provided with fulltime counsellors soon. However, one of the problems shared by the school counsellors is that counselling is seen as a panacea to all the problems and that most teachers find easy way out to refer almost every issue to the counsellor.

The Committee during the visit to some schools in India observed that except for the DAV school, the other three schools have full time school counsellors. The school counsellors help students work with their problems, which are both academic and nonacademic in nature. Some of the students seek the assistance of the counsellors on their own while some are referred to them by the teachers. However, it was reported that all the teachers are expected to have some level of training and orientation regarding the basics of counselling and to this end, PD programs are organized as and when deemed necessary.

4.3 Recommendations

1. Strengthen the current recruitment procedure and criteria in colleges of education, with due consideration to trainee's attitude, aptitude for teaching.
2. Invest in enhancing teachers' working environment, with due consideration for their accommodation, working space, modern teaching learning facilities with adequate internet connectivity.
3. Revisit current workload of teachers to ensure adequate timing for lesson planning and assessment by deploying separate instructors for sports, arts, music, dance and culture, etc. based on the level of schools.
4. Package attractive financial incentives and high grade in the entry level to attract and enhance teacher morale and motivation.
5. Revisit current teacher deployment system, which is based on STR with due consideration to subject teacher specialization and as per the needs of schools in the country.
6. Review current teacher's PD programs and strategies to meet its minimum requirement with proper monitoring and impact assessment with due focus on whole school approach through a central based program.
7. Strengthen educational research in the education system to generate innovation in the practices of teaching and pedagogy.

5 General Education Curriculum

5.1 Background

In general, students in the school education system from Pre-Primary (PP) to class XII study about 20 different subjects including electives (offered from class IX and above)¹⁰. As evident from figure 2, Dzongkha and English subjects are taught compulsorily from classes PP to XII and Mathematics up to class X, which then branches out into pure Mathematics and Business Mathematics from classes XI to XII. Science is taught as an integrated subject from classes IV to VIII, which then splits into Physics, Chemistry and Biology subjects for upstream classes. Similarly, Social studies, which is taught from classes IV to VI gets divided into History/Civics and Geography from classes VII to XII. Students in the higher secondary education (XI and XII) choose between Arts, Commerce, Science and Rigzhung. It is interesting that Vasant Valley School in Delhi does not follow this kind of structured mainstream in higher secondary. Instead, it is left to the students for class XI and XII to choose the subject combination based on their interest and competence.

Figure 2: General education curriculum PP-12

Area	Subjects	Primary Education						Secondary Education				HSS		
		PP	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	LSS VII	VIII	MSS IX	X	XI	XII
Language	Dzongkha	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Rigzhung	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	English	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	English Literature													
Mathematics	Mathematics	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Business Mathematics									■	■	■	■	■
	Pure Mathematics									■	■	■	■	■
Science and Technology	Science	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Physics									■	■	■	■	■
	Chemistry									■	■	■	■	■
	Biology									■	■	■	■	■
	Computer Applications													
	Computer Science													
Human Society and Environment	Social Studies	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Environmental Studies	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	History									■	■	■	■	■
	Geography									■	■	■	■	■
	Commercial Studies													
	Commerce													
	Accounting													
	Economics													
Creative and Practical Arts	Visual Arts and Craft	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Musics	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Health, Physical Education and Personal Development	Health and Population Studies	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Games and Sports	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Moral and Value Education	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Scouts	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Socially Useful and Productive Work	Agriculture and Social Forestry	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	SUPW	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Basic Vocational Skills	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Source: *Annual Education Statistics 2015*, p.9

¹⁰ Dzongkha, English, Mathematics, Science, Health & Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts & Craft, History/Civics, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Commerce, Accountancy, Economics, Literature in English/Rigzhung, and so forth.

5.2 Observation and Findings

Sound curriculum is at the heart of a quality education and training system. It is what happens to students. The curriculum lays out the scope (breadth) and sequence (order) of what is to be taught and learned¹¹. Today, REC is responsible for the development of curriculum for the schools in the country while the Curriculum and Professional Support Service Division, which was later upgraded to the Department of Curriculum and Research Development was doing this job. In Bhutan, the education curriculum framework is organized around key learning outcomes that focus on knowledge, attitude, values, skills attainment and participation. Accordingly, the key learning outcomes are structured in five Key Stages, namely PP-III (key stage 1), IV-VI (key stage 2), VII-VIII (key stage 3), IX-X (key stage 4) and XI and XII (key stage 5).

It has been succinctly captured in the Bhutan education Blueprint 2014-2024 that “Curriculums must foster acquisition of 21st century skills of innovation, creativity, enterprise and universal human values of peace and harmony”.¹² Further, it goes on to elucidate that “School curriculum therefore ought to be dynamic, relevant and contemporary to foster the development of holistic education –education with character”.¹³ However, it is one thing to put it very clearly in the Blueprint and altogether a different thing to implement as envisioned. On observing more closely in the schools, our schools face significant challenges in the implementation of school curricula and achieving desired outcomes of children’s learning. The MoE is currently reviewing the national curriculum for the general education. While it is a commendable and timely intervention, such an important curriculum review exercise for all the subjects at the same time appears to be very heavy and rushed through by giving limited time at the school and district levels for curriculum review. The curriculum reform, revision and review for every single subject must go through standard curriculum cycle or process.

Out of the three areas of curriculum emphases¹⁴, the following curriculum review is discussed mainly around the intended and taught curriculum.

5.2.1 Areas or clusters of curriculum

In Bhutan, the general education curriculum from PP to XII is divided into seven major learning areas namely Language, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and Environment, Creative and Practical Arts, Health, Physical Education and Personal Development, and Socially Useful and Productive Works.¹⁵ These are delivered through over 20 subjects, which is an indicator of how a particular country divides knowledge into number of boxes. The restructuring of curriculum over the years saw integration of emerging issues into school curriculum such as Life Skills, Health, Disaster, Environment, Vocational Skills,

¹¹ For more information, refer *Curriculum report card*, a working paper series by the United Nations Children’s Fund, USA 2000.

¹² Bhutan Education Blue Print 2014-2024, p.27.

¹³ Ibid, p.30.

¹⁴ The three areas of curriculum emphasis: the intended curriculum (through a broad set of guidelines for overall curriculum), the taught curriculum (through curriculum materials and textbooks) and the learned curriculum (through desired learning outcomes).

¹⁵ Thailand’s education curriculum is divided into four clusters: life experience, character development, work orientation, and social experience. Likewise, Cambodia’s curriculum consists of three learning areas: communication, social experience, and personality. Curriculum Report Card (April 2000).

Technology, etc, thereby, facilitating broad-based learning, as well as, crowding of syllabi in schools.

5.2.2 Subject allocation

Figure 2 shows that number of subjects increases from primary to secondary education but decreases in higher secondary level. For instance, classes PP to III have four subjects compared to six subjects for classes IV to VI, seven subjects for classes VII to VIII and nine subjects for IX and X. However, XI and XII have only six subjects. In addition, schools have numerous activities dedicated to library, physical education, value education, clubs and SUPW.

5.2.3 Period allocation

Schools in general follow seven periods in a day during the weekdays - each period ranging between 45-50 minutes. Saturdays usually have a mix of curricular and co-curricular activities such as literary, reading, club, SUPW, etc. Looking at the overall period allocation by subjects, the school system allocates more periods to Language (Dzongkha and English) and Mathematics compared to other subjects. For instance, every class normally has one period each of Language and Mathematics every day while other subjects like history, geography, economics, chemistry, etc has only three periods in a week. While the importance of subjects such as Language and Mathematics cannot be negated, it would be worthwhile to consider the innate potential and the interest of the students in other subjects like Arts and Humanities.

5.2.4 Syllabi

Both teachers and students shared their difficulty in completing syllabi due to bulky content. It crosscuts across different subjects like English, Mathematics, History, Geography and Chemistry from classes PP to X. For instance, English in class IV, V and VI have 41, 42 and 47 structured texts (poem, essay and short story) respectively besides language, listening and speaking activities. Likewise, Mathematics for classes III to VI is vast as they contain too many questions under practicing and applying, several methods to solve a problem, and so forth. Class 10 Geography has substantial portion on world studies making the subject heavy. It is apparent that too much information is being loaded on to our students. Such style of learning through propositional knowledge deposit does not encourage students to be analytical and critical of what is taught and learnt.

Further, with the introduction of 21st century transformative pedagogy to engage students actively, teachers are concerned about completing syllabi on time as it now takes more time to complete a unit comparatively. Besides, the bulky syllabi compel teachers to take extra classes to complete syllabi on time, which in the process cannot focus well on students' learning and understanding.

5.2.5 Language standard

One of the characteristics and properties of good textbook is that students must find textbooks easy to read. However, it is evident that the language standard is not compatible to the level of grade for some of the subjects. For instance, the language standard of essays and poems in classes IV and VII is found difficult to comprehend. Likewise, vocabularies for English subjects

from classes PP-III is also beyond their standard and comprehension.¹⁶ Some stories in classes VII and VIII Dzongkha are also found to be difficult.¹⁷ Some excerpts in class XII Bhutan economics are also reported to have high language standard.

5.2.6 Relevancy

It can be viewed from both the subjects and their content relevancy. For instance, world history and Indian history are still a part of general school curriculum. Unlike in the past, there are more publications on significant historical events in the international, regional and local (Bhutan) to choose from. In the context of relevancy of subject content, for instance, Indian concepts, principles and examples are plenty in some of the subjects like economics and commerce. Likewise, English subjects in general have more of foreign content. For instance, in class IV, English subject has only three texts on Bhutan out of 41 texts. Similarly, class IX Geography has chapters on cocoa cultivation in Ghana, Masai herder of Tanzania, etc, which may not be necessarily relevant to the Bhutanese context. The Education Blueprint also recognizes achievement gaps between rural and urban students owing to disproportionate foreign and local content in the textbooks.

The inclusion and promotion of local content in the curriculum wherever possible was also raised during the National Council's deliberation on the review of the employment policy. For instance, children's understanding, appreciation, attitude and interest in agricultural and technical education and vocation need to be developed early on and steadily enhanced, therefore, children are imparted knowledge and skills in anticipation of the changing dynamics of our economy in future.

5.2.7 Textbook content

According to the curriculum development cycle, existing curriculum must be reviewed after five years of its implementation. However, it is evident that though text books have been reprinted periodically, their contents were not updated for many years - some spanning for more than a decade. Generally, a textbook should have a recent copyright date (within five years) but majority of the textbooks' copyright is a decade old. That is why, most of the information, facts and figures are old and redundant. For instance, Bhutan economics for class XII has most of the information and data pertaining to the 9th Five Year Plan while the country is nearing the completion of the 11th Five Year Plan.

Likewise, class XI Bhutan Economics contains outdated information such as 2002 infrastructure facilities, 2003 population figures, 1984 occupational structure, 1999 labour force survey, 2001 export and import figures, and 2003 educational statistics. Similarly, information in Geography is very old including the map of Bhutan. Besides, quality of text books and their timely supply have been issues affecting the schools.

Besides, factual errors are very common. For instance, a commentary (in the box) on class V Social Studies by Dasho Dr. Sonam Kinga provides an interesting introspection.

¹⁶ For instance, 'the river that ran away' and poem on 'every time I climb a tree' in class II.

¹⁷ Stories on '*choetrul*' in class VII and essay on '*chabdro*' in class VIII.

Government

In the past, our country was a monarchy. Bhutan became Parliamentary Democratic Monarchy in 2008. Our King is the head of our country. He is helped by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Ministers.

The Prime Minister is the head of our government. The Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers are supported by the members of parliament who are elected by the people from various constituencies (*demkhongs*). The King, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Ministers and the Members of Parliament and Opposition Party form the **Central Government**.

There are 25 representatives to the National Council (*Gyalwong Tshogde*) and 47 Members of Parliament (*Gyalong Tshogdu*). They are the members of National Assembly. The Prime Minister and the 10 Cabinet Ministers are elected from the Members of National Assembly.

The Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers serve for a term of five years. They cannot serve for more than two terms. The first democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan was Lyonchen Jigmi Yoezer Thinley of Druk Phuensum Tshogpa. There were only two parties in 2008 elections.

The Second democratic election took place in 2013. There were five parties namely- 1. People's Democratic Party, 2. Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, 3. Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, 4. Druk Chirwang Tshogpa and 5. Bhutan Kuen Nyam Party. People's Democratic Party and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa contested in the primary round on July 13, 2013. The second democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan is Lyonchen Tshering Tobgyal of People's Democratic Party.

The historical movement of 2013 election was a woman who paved the way for future generations of capable Bhutanese women. The nation's first woman engineer, Aum Dorji Choden, is the first woman minister to wear orange kabney. She is the Minister of Ministry of Works and Human Settlement. She has a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Birla Institute of Technology, India, and Masters of Arts in Public Administration from Syracuse University in the United States.



Text: "In the past, our country was a monarchy."

Commentary: Bhutan is still a monarchy today, not just in the past. This sentence draws a comparison with the present as if to suggest we are not a monarchy today.

Text: "Bhutan became a Parliamentary Democratic Monarchy in 2008."

Commentary: Bhutan became a parliamentary democracy in 2008. The form of government is a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. The usage of the words "Parliamentary Democratic Monarchy" is incorrect!

Text: "Our King is the head of our country."

Commentary: It is better to introduce the idea that His Majesty the King is the head of state. The fact that the Prime Minister is the head of the government is anyway mentioned in the next paragraph.

Text: “He is helped by the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers.”

Commentary: This seems to suggest that the King governs the country as head of government, and that the Prime Minister and ministers only help the King in governance. The King reigns whereas the Prime Minister and ministers govern. This distinction has to be clearly articulated to our students.

Text: “The King, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Ministers and the Members of Parliament and Opposition Party form the Central Government.”

Commentary: How wrong can one be! His Majesty the King is the head of state, and also one of the institutions of parliament. Members of Parliament and Opposition Party do not form the central government. There are members of ruling party in the Parliament. But members of ruling party are not part of the central government. They are part of the parliament. How can the opposition party be part of the central government?

Source: A commentary on the chapter on ‘Government’ for the class V Social Studies: somkinga.wordpress.com, August 4, 2016

5.2.8 Curriculum progression and textbook sequencing

There is a steep gradient in some of the curriculum of Science, Dzongkha and English. For instance, students find it difficult in comprehending the main idea, scientific concepts and principles in Science when they go to higher classes from IX to X, and also from XI to XII. Likewise, some of the concepts and plots of short stories, poetry and essays taught in class VII and VIII English is found very difficult.¹⁸ Some chapters like ‘the earth and its people’ in class VII Geography is found difficult given the general standard of class VI social studies. Besides, haphazard sequencing of chapters create confusion and difficulty for students to learn smoothly. For instance, students of class IV shared that many units in the literature texts start with difficult topics.¹⁹

5.2.9 Standardization of names, spellings, format, etc

Apart from numerous typo mistakes it is also evident that name of places, rivers, *dzongkhag*, *gewog*, etc. are spelled differently. Moreover, different formats for writing letter and application in Dzongkha from classes VII to XII create confusion. In the absence of proper guideline for assessing reading and writing portfolio in English, there is also a lack of uniformity in assessment.

5.2.10 Values education

Although the current period allocation policy prescribes one instructional period in a week for values education it is not followed strictly in schools. While assessing how the GNH values and

¹⁸ A few examples are ‘Bouquet of Love’ by Ruskin Bond, ‘Lochinvar’ by Sir Walter Scott and ‘Magic Brocade’ by Kevin Crossley.

¹⁹ Such as unit 1 poem on Janey.

principles are actually integrated in the main curriculum, there is a gap between desired learning outcomes and what is actually imparted. Values are dispersed and scattered in textbooks and teachers attempt to impart value education based on the relevancy of the lessons in the textbooks.²⁰ There is no separate curriculum despite the policy to impart GNH values in schools. It can also be debated whether or not a separate value education class as prescribed is necessary in the schools in the absence of a separate and well meaning value education or GNH inspired curriculum.

5.2.11 Main subjects

Based on the traditional approach, the school curriculum still considers Dzongkha, English and Mathematics as the main subjects from key stage 1 to 4 and only Dzongkha and English in key stage 5. There is no set of parameters that actually determine what subject qualifies as the main subject. Though English must be compulsorily included in the overall assessment for a student to be promoted to the next higher grade Dzongkha – the national language is not compulsory in the combination of subjects for promotion to next higher grade from IX upwards. Given the importance that we accord to the preservation and promotion of Dzongkha as our national language, it is essential to study the merits of including Dzongkha amongst the main subjects.

5.2.12 Subject Committee

Curriculum can be a direct medium to achieve the aims of education. Therefore, there is a need for better coordination and collaboration between various stakeholders. During the consultation with the two CoE and the officials of the Office of the Vice Chancellor, it was found that curriculum development cycle does not involve representation from the Royal University colleges despite their subject specialization. They used to be engaged in the past for subject related review, revision and development.

5.2.13 Teaching History in Dzongkha

Teaching Bhutan history in Dzongkha was piloted in some schools. Nonetheless, this was discontinued for some technical reasons. It was shared by some of the schools during the field visit that History texts written by great scholars such as Lopen Pemala and Lam Nado might have lost their originality and essence in the course of translation into English. The situation might have further worsened while translating the Bhutan history texts from English back to Dzongkha. It was reported that teaching Bhutan history in Dzongkha would be culturally appropriate and help impart traditional Bhutanese values of *ley jumdrej* and *thadamtse*. In Druk Pedma Karpo School in Ladakh, the local history and *choe* are taught in Bhoti – the native language.

²⁰ More focused discussion can be found in Dasho Karma Ura's *A Proposal for GNH Value Education in Schools*.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Carry out comprehensive curriculum review in a phase manner by considering a standard curriculum development cycle taking into account adequate time to provide current, relevant and right size curriculum through national level subject conferences and workshops.
2. Consider proportionate foreign and local contents in the curriculum and provide adequate space for school based curriculum and community based learning.
3. Review/update contents, standards and sequence of textbooks to ensure right size of syllabi, current and relevant information, and systematic flow of learning in the same grade and gradual progression to next higher grade.
4. Strengthen Bhutanese values education by developing curriculum to promote national aspiration and consciousness for progressive and harmonious society.
5. Further, strengthen Dzongkha curriculum to promote Dzongkha by reintroducing earlier textbooks on *namthar* and *legshey*, and Bhutanese history in Dzongkha and piloting Social Studies and Civics to be taught in Dzongkha.

6 Student Learning Outcomes - Access and Assessment

6.1 Access to Education

6.1.1 Private Schools

Besides the government schools, there are 35 formal private schools in the country today. Just as the government schools, the private schools have been giving opportunities for Bhutanese children to continue their schooling and hence one cannot negate the important role played by the private schools in providing education. It is in this light that we consider the need to look at not only the government schools but also those private ones in terms of providing quality education.

Although it has been observed that there is a guideline for the private schools in Bhutan there is no comprehensive Government policy to govern especially the operational aspects of the private schools in the country. For instance, the basis for fee structures and their proposition is being left at the discretion of the proprietors. It has also been found out that the PD services for the teachers do not receive much priority, which would have direct implication on the quality of teaching and learning.

Further, it should be noted that the Constitution under Article 9, section 16 provides in very clear and precise terms, inviolable right of access and opportunity to free basic education to all children of school going age up to class ten. It was interesting to note that in India, schools other than public schools are 'not-for-profit' schools only. To see this, in a country as huge and as populous as India, realizing the risks of commercial interests and profit directing the education sector, the Parliament of India enacted a right to education legislation in 2009. In our case, while the Government has provided tax deduction for educational expenses, besides the risk of being seen as shifting responsibility to private entities, it also does not provide the support to children whose parents cannot afford the expenses and have insufficient income to receive tax benefits, nor for those who may not have parents. The central school with all the support it offers would be perfect for such children, however, the divergence from the Constitutional direction still persists. This may need to be re-looked into as it may be going against the spirit of the Constitutional provision.

6.1.2 Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) program

The annual education statistics report 2015 records the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER)²¹ at 17 percent for ECCD program with 5,894 young learners across 321 community centres and 189 private centres. It is interesting to compare this to a GER of 112 percent with 13,882 learners for primary schools. The apparent gap in access to ECCD, especially by the children in the rural areas is a significant concern. The experiences from some of the teachers in the primary schools confirm the fact that children who had access to ECCDs exhibited comparatively better learning achievements and that young learner without access to ECCDs struggle to catch up with those

²¹ GER is the total enrollment in primary education regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of official primary education age. It can exceed 100% due to the inclusion of over-aged or under-aged students because of early or late school entrance and grade repetition (www.knoema.com)

who had gone to ECCDs. This has concurrence with findings of a study carried out earlier while assessing impact of ECCDs in the country²².

The ECCD besides the benefit of allowing very young children to begin preparing for school, it plays a critical role in the early detection of learning challenges. Early detection helps in facilitating better learning for children detected with learning challenges. Those who need special education could be attended to through this early detection system and for the rest, individual lesson plan flexibilities, etc. It provides an important link to SEN program. It is here that health sector and the education sector objectives come together in the assessments the teachers carry out on a continuous observations. The potential benefit the collected data could bring in adapting and making necessary policy intervention to achieve our collective goal of universal access to basic education and eradicating education poverty in the country. Therefore, poor penetration rate of ECCD in the country does not bode well for this objective.

6.1.3 Special Education Needs (SEN) Program

Nearly 22 percent of children aged 2 to 9 years in the country are found to have impairment or disability, with 15 percent alone for cognition across all functional domains²³. Given these findings, the SEN program has been a very important and timely shift towards making education accessible to the children with special education needs in addition to earlier initiatives at Khaling Muenselling, Trashigang and Drukgyal Wangsel Institute, Paro. There are 448 students and 369 teachers across 11 public schools²⁴. With 3.4 percent of the population living with disabilities²⁵, SEN program in schools and SEN trained teachers are needed everywhere. It may be a challenge to convince parents to let them come to school and also for those who are already enrolled; it presents another challenge of not being near to a SEN school. In some of the schools the Committee visited in India, children with special needs had assessment options besides scholastic, which helped these children progress forward in their journey of education. They have progression maps right up to university. The schools both in addition and in absence of such experts, had access to institutions outside of the schools that help with professional services.

In keeping with the SEN policy objective of inclusiveness, children with special needs are taught along with other students in addition to the two specialized schools. Unlike physically challenged students, students with learning disabilities face varying communication challenges. The policy document envisioned a class size of 20 with a maximum of 4 children with special needs. Further teacher assistants and care-givers were also to be provided. It has however been observed that teachers (without teacher assistants or care-givers) try and manage the situation by giving more attention and time to them. It is also observed that in terms of teaching material and assessment tools, nothing to this effect has been implemented. Access to these supporting resources made a huge difference in their learning as observed during visit to India.

Students with learning disabilities are expected to study the same curriculum and also appear for the same examination. For students with learning disability, it may not be cognitively palatable and therefore, cumulative examinations or even conventional methods may prove wrong to measure their learning attainment. To contextualize the concern, studies have shown that an extra

²² Children with access to ECCDs learn better and more, Kuensel, May 29, 2016.

²³ Two-stage Child Disability Study 2010-2011, NSB, MoE, MoH and UNICEF.

²⁴ Annual Education Statistics 2015.

²⁵ Population and Housing Census of Bhutan 2005.

year is needed to reach the competency of that grade²⁶. This is in the case of students with little known disability. Inferring from this, the need for more thinking into removing barriers to education for children with learning disability appears timely.

6.2 Student Learning Outcome Assessment

Ability, knowledge and values are the general expected areas of learning outcomes. Assessments are carried out against these outcomes to ascertain learning attainment level. The school education system has learning outcome targets set against children's age and class. This provides the basis for commensurate curriculum development and assessment.

The Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) was created in 2011 as the national assessment and monitoring body, replacing the Bhutan Board of Examinations that operated as a unit within the Ministry of Education. It has been mandated to monitor and assess health of the school education system. Towards this objective, it has conducted four National Education Assessments (NEAs) till date.

Schools use a combination of summative and cumulative assessment tools for evaluating student learning outcome. Academic year is divided into two halves and have two examinations generally; midterm and year end examinations, making up the summative assessments which are internal to schools. However, for classes X and XII, the year end examinations are conducted by BCSEA and externally assessed. Additionally, BCSEA also sets questions for classes III and VI while leaving the conduct and evaluations of examinations to respective schools. Pupil Performance Report (PPR) is an annual publication that uses data that the examination system captures to analyze and understand student learning outcome. While it provides a critical link to decision-makers as feedback, the absence of a follow-up report on identified problems and actions taken to rectify or improve it, is not seen.

Assessment also varies from cluster of grades. For instance, in classes IX and X, continuous assessment carries 20 percent and final exam scores carry 80 percent as a part of overall assessment. Whereas, in class XII, there is no weightage given to continuous assessment and hence, what is actually scored in the final board examination in addition to practical and project works for some subjects is the final score.

Additionally, the Ministry uses school performance scorecards; a school performance management system which assess the overall school progress. The scorecard assess schools on three fronts: (i) enabling practices scorecard which concentrates on school efforts in making learning easier against the School Improvement Plan (SIP) checklist of 20 variables; (ii) GNH score card assess overall growth of students against 16 variables; and (iii) academic learning scorecard (ALS) which focuses on the percentage of students performing above 45 percent, 60 percent and 75 percent as far as the results of classes III, VI, X and XII in addition to percentage of students that pass classes IX and XI.

²⁶ Education Commission report 2008 and also Findings from Bhutan Learning Quality Survey 2009 by the World Bank.

6.2.1 Summative Assessment - examinations

6.2.1.1 Student file use/performance tracking system

A news story in Kuensel²⁷ that discusses findings of a study make three significant conclusions: (i) Bhutanese students are poor in mathematics; (ii) Dzongkha subject and English subject share a negative correlation; and (iii) rural students perform better in Dzongkha while urban students fare better in English. While this type of information using data generated during examination is used for school improvement plan, data pertaining to students are left behind in their files with the school/dzongkhag education office, and fails in helping the next school of attendance track student performance.

6.2.1.2 Paper correction time

It has been observed that evaluators for board examinations are expected to complete correction of a standard number of answer papers within the allotted time, irrespective of the subject; whether language or not. Some subjects like English and Dzongkha need more time compared to others. This is also evident in an earlier study²⁸ that saw English teachers share similar concern regarding assessment mode for English. This needs to be looked into.

6.2.2 Cumulative/continuous assessment

6.2.2.1 Internal assessment biases

An inquiry²⁹ into the current examination system, combining internal and external evaluation points and acknowledges the benefits of more effort from teachers as external evaluations scrutinize their performance through the performance of their students. However, these external evaluations do not happen all the time while scores obtained by students continue to impact performances of teachers and schools.

For instance, the PPR 2014 (volume 8)³⁰ showing school wise written and continuous assessment marks comparison provides an interesting observation. A large discrepancy pointed out remains unexplained and unexplored.

There was a huge discrepancy between written mean and continuous assessment mean scores. For instance, the lowest mean score of one of the subjects was 26 out of 100 and continuous assessment mean score for the same subject was 93 (20 percent converted to 100 percent for easy comparison). There was a discrepancy of 67 percent. Such differences were observed across all subjects and schools.'

²⁷ Bhutanese students are poor in maths, reveals study November, 23, 2001. The study was carried out by the Education Department and funded by HELVETAS.

²⁸ National Education Assessment in Bhutan: a benchmark study of student achievement in literacy and numeracy at class 6, 2003.

²⁹ A report on examinations in schools 2003 by EMSSD, Department of Education.

³⁰ Table 4.5-4.6, p.36.

A few teachers the Committee met shared concerns of misuse of continuous/internal assessments. In the concluding remarks, the observation is once again reiterated as follows:

'...that students have been assessed without considering their learning outcomes. In other words, CA marks commensurate to the achievements of the learning outcomes as a result of one's teaching must be awarded to students.'

It will be difficult to point out the underlying reasons for the discrepancy without a study. Even though continuous assessment is given a weighting of 20 percent, with a continuous assessment mean score range of 90-100 percent (converted from 20 to 100), the area needs to be looked into as significant time and energy of both school and student are spent on it. This is important as examination, written class and homework are major forms of cumulative assessment in schools. Given that they test knowledge and comprehension and less about analytical and application part, it is also equally worrying that assessment is only limited to marks and hardly provide any pathway for improvement of teaching-learning process.

On the other hand, absence of continuous assessment or inclusion of internal assessment scores for board examination evaluation (class XII), according to some teachers has made it difficult to link internal mechanisms of assessing learning and final examination performance. It also opens up an area that deals with disciplinary concerns. The teachers believe without consequences of internal assessment on board examination scores, students do not take schooling as seriously as compared to when internal scores mattered and made a difference. Both sides of the concern remain important.

6.3 Recommendations

1. Accord due consideration to the concerns of fee structure and its revision and other operational aspects of private schools while reviewing the Guidelines for Private Schools of Bhutan, 2012.
2. Expand enrolment capacity of public schools up to middle secondary to fulfill constitutional requirement of access to free education to all Bhutanese school going aged children. In absence of in-take capacity in public middle secondary schools, option of financing students sent to private schools by the Government may be considered or even other arrangements.
3. Enhance establishment of ECCD centers across the country with standard operational guidelines to strengthen both accessibility and quality services.
4. Reinforce implementation of SEN policy to address educational needs of children with special needs by focusing on PD courses, teaching learning materials and separate mode of assessment.
5. Revisit the current Continuous Assessment system in school with the objective of assessing holistic development of school children (scholastic and non scholastic).
6. Introduce a system of CA in class XII with due weightage in BHSEC while at the same time initiate mechanisms to minimize biases in CA.

7. Institute a system of tracking overall student's performance (electronic or otherwise) that should be transferred from one school to another by the school authorities or accessible to the new school, as the child changes school to track and improve a child's longitudinal performance .

7 Resource Allocation

7.1 Background

Considering the importance of education sector for the overall development of the country, the Government has always allocated substantial proportion of the aggregate capital plan outlays to the education sector. On average, 11 percent of the total plan outlays were allocated to the education sector over the last ten Five Year Plans (FYP). The total outlay for education sector in the 1st FYP (1961-66) was Nu. 9.4 million. It was increased to Nu.10.3 billion in the 10th FYP (2008-13) and Nu.13.99 billion in the 11th FYP. However, in terms of percentage of the total FYP outlay, it was 7 percent in the 10th FYP which was further reduced to 6.57 percent in the 11th FYP.

Table 3: 11th FYP outlay (Nu. in million) for the education sector.

Agency	Current	Capital	Total	% of total
Ministry of Education	993.75	7,438.74	8,372.49	3.93%
REC	181.43	292.00	473.43	0.22%
BCSEA	404.01	50.00	454.01	0.21
Thromde schools	3,050.88	0.00	3,050.00	1.43%
Royal Institute of Management (RIM)	280.94	273.00	553.94	0.26%
Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)	0.00	1,086.45	1,086.45	0.51%
Total	4,911.01	9,140.19	13,990.32	6.57%
% of total outlay	35%	65%	100%	

Source: 11th FYP Volume I.

As evident from the table 3 above, 35 percent of the total plan outlay is for current expenditure and 65 percent for capital expenditure. Further, to understand how much the government has spent under current and capital expenditure over the years, the year-wise annual budget outlay trend for MoE in the last eight years are shown in the table 4.

Table 4: Annual Budget Allocations for MoE from FY 2009-10 to 2016-17 (Nu. in million)

Particulars	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Current	2,779	2,579	3,917	3,386	4,120	5,297	5,979	6,240
Capital	2,181	1,236	3,041	1,149	1,661	2,009	2,682	3,131
Total	4,960	3,816	6,958	4,535	5,781	7,306	8,660	9,372

Source: *Annual Education Statistics 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 & 2015 and Schedules of Budget Appropriations, Department of Budget.*

It is evident that the current budget has been steadily increasing from Nu.2,779 million in FY 2009-10 to Nu.6,240 million in FY 2016-17 with a slight dip to Nu.3,386 million in FY 2012-13 from Nu.3,917 million in FY 2011-12, i.e., a decrease by 13.56 percent. The capital budget on the other hand has been fluctuating from Nu.2,181 million in FY 2009-10 to Nu.1,149 million in FY 2012-13 to Nu.3,131 million in FY 2016-17.

7.2 Observations

7.2.1 Lesser budget in FY 2012-13

The total budget for FY 2012-13 was Nu.4,535 million, which is a decrease of Nu.2,423 million from Nu.6,958 million in FY 2011-12 (decrease by 34.8 percent). To that extent, the education sector would have had lesser volume of activities or fewer programs during the year.

Incidentally, the FY 2012-13 is the fifth and the last year of the first elected Government. Perhaps the majority of the capital work would have been completed during the first four years, resulting into lesser capital works during the 5th year. But for the current expenditure, the amount should not vary significantly from year to year as the nature of expenditure is recurrent depending on the number of teachers, students and schools around the country. The decrease in current expenditure in FY 2012-13 by 13.56 percent from FY 2011-12 doesn't seem tenable as the expenditure items such as number of schools, teacher/caregivers, and students have more or less remained at the same level, or rather the number of schools/learning centres and teachers/caregivers have actually increased in academic year 2013 from 2011 (straddling two fiscal years of 2011-12 and 2012-13) as tabulated below:

Table 5: Numbers of cost centres

Cost Centres	2011	2012	2013
Government schools and learning centres*	1,813	2,060	2,008
Teachers and caregivers*	8,034	8,549	8,118
Students and learners in government institutes*	184,713	189,843	179,346

Note: *Annual Education Statistics 2012 and 2013*

* including ECCDs, Extended Classrooms, Special Institutes, Continuing Education Centres, Monastic schools, Non-Formal Education Centres and Sanskrit Pathsalas.

With decreased budget in FY 2012-13, the plausible affect would have been on the curtailment of activities and programs for schools, teachers and other sub-programs. Cancellation or curtailment of annual programs, if any, may have had negative effect on the continuity of essential educational services, such as limiting PD opportunities for teachers, supply of teaching-learning resources in schools, etc., thereby affecting the quality of education. In fact, provisions of vital annual programs and activities for teachers and educationists should be consistent from

year to year so that delivery of educational services is maintained at required standard and quality.

The observation may also suggest that FY 2012-13 being the last year of the first democratically elected Government, the system possibly became complacent in terms of execution of activities and programs. Such a phenomenon, if turning out to be a practical reality in the democratic set-up of governance, it should be a firm reminder to the elected governments, for the present and future, that education sector (for that matter, the entire government machinery) should not experience any unexpected volatility of current budget allocations to compromise the education quality particularly during every final year of the government's tenure.

7.2.2 Disparate budgetary support to schools

While the Higher Secondary Schools have their own separate budget allocations, budgets for primary schools are allocated in lump sum clubbed with the respective Dzongkhag budgets. Therefore, primary schools have to compete among themselves in getting some fund for maintenance, celebration, library, etc. Moreover, there is a disparity in the staffing pattern of schools. For instance, though primary schools have to handle the younger students from 6 years yet they do not have support staff like sweepers and care givers. As a result, some schools resort to collecting some funds from parents to recruit a temporary sweeper.

Even the higher secondary schools share a lack of subject specialized teachers, administrative and finance staff, stores in-charge, games and sports instructors. In one central school, one Commerce teacher assumes job of an accountant. Such additional responsibilities hamper their main teaching responsibility. (However, Department of School Education Budget for FY 2015-16 has allocated Nu.1.5 million for capacity building of accountants in autonomous schools).

Further, the recurrent budget for schools also appears to lack equity and fairness amongst schools in different locations and regions as illustrated in table 6.

Table 6: Budget comparison per student between two MSS

	Martsala MSS		Khangku MSS	
	2014	2015	2014	2015
Current budget (Nu. in million)	1.695	1.975	21.451	23.033
No. of students	250	343	764	746
Nu. per student	6,780	5,758	28,078	30,875

Source: *Annual Education Statistics 2014 & 2015*.

Table 6 shows that budget share of each student in Martsala MSS was Nu.6,780 and Nu.5,758 for the academic year 2014 and 2015 respectively as compared to Nu. 28,078 and Nu.30,875 for 2014 and 2015 respectively for Khangku MSS.

7.2.3 Central schools and additional financial burden

The Government has already established 51 central schools with total budget allocation of Nu.2,192.374 million in FY 2016-17. There were 24 central schools last year with the budget allocation of Nu.622.203 million³¹. The Government intends to start eight more in the next academic year and eventually establish a total of 120 central schools by the end of 12th FYP³².

Maintaining of central schools is more expensive for the Government as it entails providing host of amenities to the students. There is a general public perception that running of central schools is very expensive and might be even beyond the government's affordability. In this context, it is important to find out per student cost differential between central and non-central school.

Table 7: Cost differential between the Central Schools and non-Central Schools

Students	Central Schools	Non central school	Cost difference
Boarder	Nu.50,204	Nu.30,834	Nu.19,370
Day student	Nu.27,714	Nu.20,168	Nu. 7,546

Source: *Annual Education Statistics 2015*

It is seen from the table 7 that the Government has incurred an additional cost of Nu.19,370 and Nu.7,546 for every boarder and day student respectively.

Table 8: Additional financial burden on the Government in 2016

Students	No. of students (2016)	Additional burden (Nu.)	Total additional burden (Nu. million)
Boarder	22,713	19,370	439.951
Day student	16,838	7,546	127.060
Total	39,551	33,072	567.011

Source: *MoE, Thimphu, for information on student enrollment in central schools for 2016*

Extrapolating this cost difference to 51 central schools (22,713 boarder students and 16,838 day-students) for 2016 academic year, the estimated additional cost is Nu. 567.011 million (table 8). Keeping the same cost for 120 central schools, the additional financial burden amounts to Nu.1,334 million.

Further, there are some 24,216 students under the WFP school feeding program, with 6,983 boarders and 17,233 day students.³³ If the WFP feeding program is to be withdrawn by the end of the 11th Plan, the resource strain on the government will further worsen. This will be in addition to the already expected increase of expenditure in coming years particularly with increasing cost of maintenance of existing infrastructure and additional capital investments to absorb the

³¹Annual Education Statistics, 2015

³²The State of the Nation Address by the Prime Minister, 5 July 2016.

³³Annual Education Statistics 2015

increasing enrollment pressure at various levels.³⁴This observation highlights a need to emphasize on how to ensure education sustainability in the long run.

7.2.4 Limited budget for PD, curriculum development and teaching learning resources, etc.

Budget for the FY 2015-16 is chosen randomly to analyze and provide an insight into how much budget is actually allocated to professional development, curriculum reforms, teaching learning resources and teachers' incentives.

Table 9: Analysis of FY 2015-16 Schedule of Budget Appropriations (Nu. in millions)

Departments	Total budget	Professional Development	Curriculum related	Teaching learning resources	Teachers' incentives
Secretariat	161.145	11.372	0.00	0.668	0.00
Dept. of Adult & Higher Edn	411.945	16.913	1.200	2.556	0.00
Dept. of School Education	2,408.346	41.948	9.538	22.690	1.607
Dept. of Youth & Sports	3,098.626	39.600	0.865	4.180	0.300
Thromdes	697.685	3.101	0.200	32.869	0.00
Dzongkhags	4,518.893	126.792	2.188	142.421	0.917
DCRD/REC	98.835	32.064	15.392	1.563	0.00
Total	11,395.475	271.79	29.383	206.947	2.824
Percentage of total	100%	2.39%	0.26%	1.82%	0.023%

Source: FY 2015-16 Schedule of Budget Appropriations

As table 9 shows, very minuscule part of the overall departmental budgets are allocated to specific areas of concern, i.e., professional development, curriculum related, teaching learning resources and teachers' incentives. For instance, PD gets a meager share of 2.39 percent of the total budget which also includes training and workshops not directly related to teaching. Similarly, curriculum reform has only 0.26% of the total budget and teaching learning resources is just 1.82% of the total budget. Worse is that teachers' incentives is only 0.023% of the total budget.

³⁴11th FYP Vol I, p.143.

7.3 Recommendations

1. There is a need to consider the student strength and geographical location as one of the basis for resource distribution amongst schools to promote fair and equitable allocation of budget.
2. There is a need to institute a system to formulate separate budgets for primary schools instead of consolidating with the Dzongkhag's budget.
3. The Government needs to be concerned of the long-term financial sustainability of the central schools due to seemingly extravagant provisions in the central schools.
4. The Government may wish to revisit the policy of providing basic amenities to all students, irrespective of their economic background.

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