

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL (PP-XII) ENGLISH CURRICULUM

Technical Report



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Foreword

The curriculum and instruction should be dynamic, relevant and current as per the school education continuum. To this extent, the Royal Education Council carries out periodic reviews of the school curricula and makes appropriate changes.

The current English curriculum for classes PP to XII was introduced in school stage-wise since 2007 starting with classes IX and XI and then for classes PP – VIII in 2009. To maintain the currency and relevancy of the curriculum in terms of age, context and content, minor changes across all classes were routinely carried out since the introduction. However, since the same curriculum has been in the schools for a little over a decade, it has been imperative to review it. Therefore, an evaluation study of the curriculum was necessary to firstly understand the overall implementation processes and secondly to find out its relevance and appropriateness with more focus on currency and cultural pertinence of curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches employed, and assessment tools used. The study was also timely to authenticate the suggestions and recommendations that have been received from schools and other relevant stakeholders. This book presents the results of the nation-wide curriculum evaluation study that was carried out in 2017 using the sequential mixed-method approach (commenced with a qualitative focus group interviews which informed the second phase quantitative survey).

Out of many findings, the study indicated that majority of the teachers spend most of the classroom time teaching the content rather than the language skills outlined in the curriculum. Furthermore, the assessment practices are influenced by the term and year-end examination which led the teachers teach only the areas that are asked in the examinations rather than teaching the skills as intended by the curriculum. On the curriculum materials, the findings presented that the majority of the instructional materials in the existing textbooks are of adequate quality, with some balance of well-selected local and international literature in all the genres. However, the findings indicated that classes VII-VIII contain more foreign literature which is challenging for the students to relate to their immediate environment. On the other hand, it was confirmed that the texts/stories written by Bhutanese are more “interesting and relevant” as both the teachers and students could relate to the Bhutanese culture and context.

Some of the recommendations made by the study *inter alia* include, overhauling the current English curriculum framework to meet the needs of the today’s youth as they venture into this global society. The study also recommends providing timely professional development to teachers as and when the curriculum is revised. On the training aspect, rather than following the ‘cascading’ model (which is the ‘Training of the trainer’, followed by ‘Roll-out’), the study recommends training all the teachers at a time for greater efficiency. In addition, the study makes specific recommendations for teachers and the curriculum developers to ensure that the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, reading and Writing are consolidated and integrated in the instructional materials and implemented as intended. Further, the study suggests the English curriculum to include more text materials at the elementary levels written by Bhutanese so that the learning becomes relevant and meaningful to the students.

In conclusion, the findings and recommendations validate and reaffirm the feedback received from various stakeholders and this will be useful while revising the curriculum in due course of time. This study has opened avenues to look at the English curriculum from multiple perspectives to include emerging trends in education such as the use of technology and 21st century pedagogy to make learning relevant and meaningful.

Kinga Dakpa
Director General

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Executive Summary

In Bhutan, one of the biggest shifts in the modern Bhutanese education system is the adoption of English as not only one of the core subjects but also as the medium of instruction for other subjects. This decision is generally applauded nationally and internationally, despite the fact that linguistic perspectives recommend mother tongue as the medium of instruction for elementary level for the learners' social, psychological, cognitive, including linguistic development. However, in the past few decades, a widespread apprehension about a perceived decline in the standard of English became a source of concern for all the educational stakeholders. Consequently, the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD, 2002) studied the standard of English in the curriculum, and indeed authenticated the perception of the falling standards. *The Silken Knot*, which is the guiding principle for English standards for the existing English curriculum is the result of the study. Following the recommendations of *The Silken Knot*, a major shift was made in the English education. The English curriculum (PP-Class XII) underwent a major revision, followed by teacher orientation workshops. The new curriculum was implemented in three phases: Classes XI and XII in 2006; Classes VII-X in 2007; and Classes PP-VI in 2008. Since then, the existing curriculum has never been reviewed and studied at the national level.

The purpose of the current study was twofold. The first purpose was to evaluate the perceived relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum materials, pedagogical approaches used, assessment tools, and cultural pertinence of the existing English curriculum. The second purpose was to evaluate the procedures followed in the implementation processes such as, the curriculum design, curriculum planning, and implementation processes used in the existing English curriculum.

The study employed a sequential mixed methods approach. In the first, qualitative phase, documented analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs), and focal person interviews were employed to elicit qualitative data. The FGDs included English teachers, students, and teacher trainers. English teachers from 12 schools, spread across three regions (four FGDs from each region); students from one of the schools in Paro, and English lecturers from the Paro College of Education participated in the FGDs. The focal person interview involved the English curriculum officers. An average of six teachers, students and teacher trainers participated in each FGDs. In the second quantitative phase, 939 English teachers from 190 schools (N= 539) selected through stratified random sampling strategy were surveyed.

The overall findings from this study provided insights into the overall design and implementation process of the current English curriculum. The existing English curriculum seem to have a sound vision, relevant standards for each level, and clear intentions; however, some problems existed with the design of the actual curriculum materials and implementation of the curriculum change. Hence, the English curriculum across all key stages definitely requires a revamp in terms of the curriculum materials and that the stakeholders take good care of the implementation process. Otherwise, no matter how farsighted the vision and the intentions are, without significant attention to the curriculum materials and change agents, not much change is likely to happen. Some of the significant issues emerged from the study centred on how teachers handle curriculum size, cultural relevancy, level transition, standard of language, assessment, technology, grammar, teacher preparation (both pre-service and in-service), resources, and professional development.

There is also a strong indication that the problem and the solution also lie in broader things like policies, funding, work culture, teacher attitude, shared practices, forms of accountability and responsibility. All these issues and components are interactive in a curriculum design and implementation process. Without due attention to these issues, achieving the goals of the English curriculum is a distant dream. It is also imperative to note that these issues cannot be solved by a single agency. It demands incredible support and collaboration from key stakeholders such as the Royal Education Council (REC), the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Bhutan Council for School Examination and Assessment (BCSEA), and the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). After all, these agencies share a common vision of providing quality education and producing quality graduates.

Key Recommendations for Improvement

Reading and Literature

- Curriculum materials must be at par with the standard of the Bhutanese students;
- The textbooks supplied to the schools must be of the same edition with biographical information, including religious and ethnic backgrounds of the authors;
- The textbooks must be thoroughly edited for typographical and structural errors;
- Must provide a variety of suggested learning activities;
- There should be adequate reference lists and further readings made accessible in the school library;
- In order for learners to understand both the content and the language of the texts, a balance of local and foreign texts with appropriate illustrations must be made available; and
- Other teaching and learning support materials such as CDs and DVDs must be made available.

Implementation Process

- No teacher must be left out from the curriculum orientation programme. Further, rather than following the 'Cascading' model (which is the 'Training of the trainer', followed by 'Roll-out'), all the teachers must be trained by the same group of specialised trainers;
- Provide regular refresher courses to all the teachers to update their knowledge and skills. Further, a system of feedback and reporting on the practical aspects of both the refresher courses and the feasibility of such courses be made mandatory;
- Teachers must be encouraged to carry out action research projects to make evidence-based changes and decisions on both the content and pedagogical aspects of the curriculum;
- The MoE to provide on-going support and follow up for the smooth functioning of the curriculum implementation process;
- The Colleges of Education (CoEs) provide thorough curriculum orientation to their pre-service students during the training period; and
- The MoE must frame robust policies followed by conducive provisions such as funding and other material support for the smooth implementation of the curriculum.

Curriculum Size and Syllabus

- Consolidate the curriculum by integrating the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The literature has remarkable frameworks for integrating the four

language skills (see for example, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006) which would help learners acquire communicative competence; and

- Another way of condensing the bulky syllabus is to integrate the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing into the literature genres like short story, poetry, essays and drama as intended in the curriculum. However, the English teachers do not seem to be professionally competent to do so. Refresher courses in integrating the four language skills into the literature lessons would be useful.

Internet Connectivity and the Use of ICT

- The MoE and local governments need to provide consistent efforts in improving the ICT facilities and support enhancement of teachers' ICT knowledge; and
- Review the policy of not allowing the students to use electronic gadgets such as smartphones, iPads and tablets in the schools.

Teaching and Learning of Grammar

- Teachers need to be thoroughly oriented on the intentions of the curriculum in order to clear confusions and idiosyncratic understandings of the curriculum intent;
- Stakeholders also need to support teachers by providing relevant materials and skills to integrate grammar lessons into other genres of the English curriculum; and
- The CoEs should train pre-service teachers in integrating grammar lessons into other genres of the English curriculum.

Class III to IV English Syllabus Transition

- The REC should consider revising the Class III to IV transition by making the level transition more progressive and coherent.

Assessment Practices

- All English teachers must have a clear understanding of the curriculum intention related to use of assessment tools provided in the guide for the reasons provided in 1 in Teaching and Learning of Grammar; and
- CoEs need to thoroughly equip pre-service teachers with necessary knowledge and skills to design assessment tools such as rubrics and checklists, so that the theory of assessment is linked to practice.

Seen and Unseen Texts

- All English teachers have to be thoroughly oriented not only in curriculum content but also on the curriculum intentions, in order for them to understand the philosophy and principles of having unseen texts in the curriculum; and
- To narrow down the gap between intention and implementation process, all English teachers must thoroughly read and be familiar with the curriculum framework and not just the text materials.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Context

Along with the decision to join the English-speaking community of nations in the early 1960s, Bhutan has made a conscious choice to adopt English as a medium to interact with international communities. Consequently, upon this decision English was chosen to be the medium of instruction in schools, and since then, the Bhutanese community has been aspiring to be proficient in the English language (REC, 2009, p. 25). However, a widespread discussion on the perceived decline in the standard of English in the late 1990s raised concerns amongst the stakeholders. Hence, the Centre for Educational Research Development (CERD, 2002) initiated an extensive research with students, teachers and educationists not merely to authenticate the genuineness of the concern on the declining standard of English but to chart a way forward for excelling in English. The fact that this study gave birth to *The Silken Knot: Standards for English for schools in Bhutan* in December 2002 was an unmistakable indication that the English curriculum needed a reform. Therefore, following the recommendations of *The Silken Knot*, two major moves were made in the Bhutanese education system. First, the English curriculum for classes PP-XII underwent a major revision, and second, workshops in the form of orientation programmes were organized to familiarize English teachers to the revised English curriculum. The new curriculum was implemented in three phases: Classes XI and XII in 2006; Classes VII-X in 2007; and Classes PP-VI in 2008.

Ever since its implementation, there has not been much research conducted to understand the quality and effectiveness of the current curriculum, except for a few studies. For instance, the study conducted by the iDiscoveri and the erstwhile Royal Education Council [REC] (2009) reported that the current curriculum while designed appropriately, had some procedural gaps in the implementation process. This study generally found that there was a gap between the intention and the actual ground realities. The CERD (2009) also conducted a seminar titled, 'Teachers' perceptions about the new English curriculum: Reflections and insights from the classroom' in which some sixteen teachers from secondary schools and teacher educators from the teacher education colleges presented their classroom experiences of implementing the current curriculum. The general perceptions of these teachers were that the current curriculum was more activity oriented (student centred) and designed to improve students' language skills. However, findings from these presentations noted many limitations, which among others include the difficulty of the text materials, lack of instructions for grammar teaching, bulkiness of the syllabus, and shortage of time, lack of reference materials, seen and unseen texts, too many assessment tasks, and typographical errors. Recently, other researchers like Tshomo and Sherab (in press) discovered that both teachers and students at the secondary level found literary texts from the local context more relevant, meaningful, and easy to teach and learn compared to the foreign texts. Furthermore, their study also concluded that literary texts were useful only if the text materials were appropriate to the students' cognitive background, indicating that the literary texts in the current curriculum were of a much higher standard. Have the relevant stakeholders been able to resolve such issues? Or are these issues still prevalent in the current curriculum? These were some of the concerns that this evaluation study addressed.

Existing literature argue that improvement in implementing such curriculum can be maintained by carrying out a systematic process of collecting, analysing every information relevant for judging and assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum (Nichols, Shidaker, Johnson & Singer, 2006). Al-Jardani (2012, p. 40) refers to this as curriculum evaluation, which is defined by key words such as

"systematic, process, collect and analyse, relevant information, curriculum effectiveness assessment, and to improve." There is evidence to suggest that curriculum evaluation plays a major role in keeping abreast of teaching methodologies, the content, and other curriculum features (Al-Jardani, 2011). More specifically, the English language curriculum evaluations in several countries suggest that curriculum is not a one-shot task; rather it has to be periodically evaluated in terms of its relevance to stakeholders and its appropriateness to the existing teaching and learning processes (Al-Jardani, 2012; Tom-Lawyer, 2014; Zangmo, 2014).

A decade has passed since the last reform and it is, therefore, a timely decision on the part of the Royal Education Council and the Ministry of Education to study whether the current English curriculum is responsive and robust enough to meet the intended goals and objectives. The changing needs of the 21st century have predominantly shifted from mere proficiency building to preparation for participation in international and global discourses. Further, this study aligns fairly well with the Second Shift of the Education Blueprint 2014-2024, which is to make the curriculum dynamic, relevant and contemporary (MoE, 2014).

Research Aims

This evaluation study was commissioned to:

- examine the relevancy of the current school English Curriculum (PP-XII) to the Bhutanese education system;
- find out if the current curriculum materials for each of the key stages indicated are appropriate for achieving the set benchmarks;
- explore if the pedagogies used by the teachers are relevant and effective in maximising student learning; and
- explore if the assessment tools are relevant and effective in assessing students' learning outcomes.

Chapter Introduction

The first step towards the reconstruction of curricula is to evaluate the existing curricula, bearing in mind that it is the curriculum in its widest sense, which equips or fails to equip children to educate themselves throughout their lives. Curriculum in its widest sense does not only mean the traditional curriculum of school subjects, but the school's hidden curriculum, derived from the pressures of school life, its teaching methods, and the interests and attitudes it induces (Skager, Dave & Robinson, 1977). School curricula are evaluated in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The results of such evaluations would be vital starting points in elaborating programmes of improvement that are sufficiently specific and realistic to offer genuine hopes of success.

Components of Curriculum

The term 'curriculum' is used at various levels of inclusiveness in educational discourse. Sometimes it refers only to a set of guidelines as in the content of instruction, in other cases to curriculum plans, which may be quite detailed in the sense of incorporating specifications as in instructional objectives, content, and methods. Separating content and method may be criticized as reflecting an artificial distinction that does not correspond to the realities of the teaching/learning processes (Skager et al., 1977). Educational content and educational method interact in complex ways. It can be argued that the manner in which something is learned is in itself a part of content. Modes of learning can themselves be defined as learning goals at the same time that they are processes. Curriculum is thus often thought of in much broader terms. In this sense, the real curriculum, the curriculum actually experienced by the learner, incorporates everything, planned and unplanned, that has any significant bearing on what is learned.

Skager et al. (1977) suggests six robust composites of curriculum. They include: 1) curriculum objectives (statements about what the curriculum should accomplish); 2) curriculum Plan (formal design for implementing the objectives); 3) teaching methods and learning activities (manner in which teaching and learning is finally carried out); 4) learning materials (textbooks and exercise materials); 5) evaluation procedures (pupil assessment, either formal or informal); and 6) curriculum implementation (planning and implementation of curricula change). All these components are theoretically interactive and collaborative. For example, the students' liking of a particular method of instruction may influence their response to the particular instructional content taught under that method.

Principles of Curriculum Evaluation

Much evaluation in education is informal and impressionistic, rather than systematic and objective. But whatever its nature, evaluation is so embedded in educational practice that it is unnecessary to make a case for its importance. Rather, the real concern is that evaluation be conducted in a manner that is both constructive and relevant. Evaluation must be adaptive to the values and philosophy underlying a given educational process. It must address criteria that are important to the case in question. The exploration of evaluative criteria is a way of becoming more precise about what is relevant and important in the perspective of lifelong education. Skager et al. (1977) suggested seven criteria for the evaluation of school curriculum; the summary is presented below:

- i. regard learning processes as continuous, occurring from early childhood to late adulthood;

- ii. be viewed in the context of concurrent learning processes going on in the home, community, place of work, etc.;
- iii. focus on the importance of essential unity of knowledge and interrelationship between different subjects of study while reforming school curricula;
- iv. consider school as one of the chief agencies for providing basic education within the framework of lifelong education;
- v. be cognizant of the fact that the school education controls the education that occurs during later years. Therefore, school curricula should emphasize value education, including self-learning and inter-learning, development of educability and readiness for further learning, and cultivation of learning attitudes appropriate to the needs of a changing society;
- vi. should take into account the need for establishing and renewing a progressive value system by individuals so that they can take their own responsibilities for continuous growth throughout life; and
- vii. should provide historical as well as contemporary perspectives of life and help understand divergent value systems.

Existing literature suggests that there can be two types of evaluation: evaluating the instruction and evaluating the curriculum (Oliva, 2005). Further, curriculum evaluation can be of two types: process and product. In process evaluation, the evaluators look for how the programme is implemented. On the other hand, in product evaluation the evaluators measure the outcome of the programme. This evaluation study focused mainly on the process evaluation, to see the impact of the current school English curriculum and also to some degree included aspects of the product evaluation.

English Standard and Curriculum

All stakeholders, educators, politicians, employers alike, often discuss the deteriorating quality of education in general and English in particular in Bhutan. However, a systematic study into this phenomenon is scarce. The only scientific study conducted on the quality of English in the school curriculum in Bhutan is by the iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009). The key findings of the study pertaining to the English curriculum are discussed in this section. The key findings pertain to all the six composites of the curriculum proposed by Skager et al. (1977). They include: curriculum objectives, curriculum plan, teaching methods and learning activities, learning materials, evaluation procedures, and curriculum implementation.

Curriculum Objectives

iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009) found that the text materials in the new English curriculum showed a clear structure of objectives and outcomes and were designed to promote understanding. However, a mismatch was found in the implementation of the policy and its objectives. The English curriculum was designed with the objective of instilling learners with analytical and application skills; however, the study found English classrooms not practising and promoting this objective.

Curriculum Plan

Curriculum plan involves a formal design for implementing the curriculum objectives (Skager et al., 1977). iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009) found the English curriculum well-designed with some well-aligned textbooks and a corresponding guide book. Despite the easy usability of the guides, the study recommended a considerable training and support for teachers to feel comfortable with the changed teaching styles of the existing curriculum. This gap according to the

study arose due to two factors. Firstly, the study points out a procedural flaw in the last curriculum reform in 2004. “Curricular reforms have been attempted piecemeal (in a few subjects like Mathematics and English) and driven top-down (grade XII downwards). Therefore, there is no uniformity in the approach across subjects and grades; this can potentially lead to confusion in implementation” (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009, p. 46). Secondly, most efforts to reform the curriculum failed at the implementation stage closest to school due to a lack of communication, orientation and resource support (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009).

Teaching Methods and Learning Activities

iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009) pointed out teachers’ lack of professional knowledge on language pedagogy and classroom learning activities as a serious gap in the implementation of the reformed English curriculum. “Classroom instruction shows predominance of one-way talk by the teacher and writing on the chalk board with lesser evidence of student-centric activities” (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009, p. 28). The format of the lesson plans was found to be very professional, using the standard format; however, they were devoid of variety and creativity. In other words, all the lesson plans looked similar and mechanical. The design of the lesson plan is best described here:

The lesson plans show errors in language and this affects the teaching of concepts too. Lesson planning appears to be a routine activity scrutinized for a school. A full one year of lesson plans for Grades VII and VIII revealed a striking similarity. Each component of the lesson plans each day was similar to the one for the next day. These were also signed by the school monitor. Teachers state the lesson objective but may not understand it themselves. (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009, p. 32)

Learning Materials

Even though textbooks and teacher guides were appropriately aligned to achieve the goals of the curriculum; the vast majority of instructional content actually used in most schools was not able to promote skills related to inquiry and application. To make matters worse, many schools and teachers were short of textbooks of the revised curriculum and hence continued to use out-dated materials. The repercussion of the shortage of teaching-learning material is expressed in the following words:

Teaching-learning materials are not available to the teachers thus impacting lesson delivery. Using teaching-learning materials for relevant activities and experiences in the classroom to enhance learning is a crucial part of making instruction effective and keeping students engaged in the learning process. Based on lesson observations and questionnaires as well as lesson plans there is a clear deficiency in this area. (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009, p. 32)

Another pertinent composite of learning material in the 21st century is the use of ICT and electronic gadgets like smartphones, iPads, and tablets. In Bhutan, there is an implicit policy of banning students to use such gadgets in all school premises. This policy is perhaps driven by the negative effects associated with the use of such gadgets. However, the use of such gadgets has proven to be a powerful learning tool in the 21st century. The use of smartphones, for instance, are found to help students become independent learners (Simuforsa, 2013) and improve teacher-student collaboration (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013). Recognising such benefits and in order to bring new technologies into schools, some schools in United States do provide smartphones to students (Philip & Garcia, 2015). The benefits of electronic gadgets like smartphones in the 21st century learning is summed up succinctly: “Smartphones are not supplementary devices for

developing countries but these devices can play integral part of their education systems. The smartphones provide access to modern society a massive amount of educational and learning resources" (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013, p, 220). The learners, however, should be taught to use them responsibly by educating them on the policies and procedures, and the repercussion of misusing such gadgets, instead of a complete prohibition (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013).

Evaluation Procedures

iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009) found that both formative and summative assessments were used in the English curriculum. However, the teachers seemed to be using homework as the main tool for formative assessment. Further, formative assessment was very rigidly structured, lacking coherence to curriculum objective and variety as expressed in the following words:

Assessment in the classroom does not close the loop between what is taught and what is learnt by students. While many assessment formats exist and tests are conducted, they lack variety and do not provide actionable feedback to students and teachers. Internal examinations by-and-large cover the content taught in classrooms and have to follow a pre-determined 'blueprint'. (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009, p. 32)

On the other hand, summative assessment seemed to be testing mostly knowledge and comprehension skills. Higher order skills like analysis, synthesis and applications were not tested. The down side of question papers in the summative assessment area was that many areas tested were exactly the same as those taught. So much so that the reading passages for comprehension were the same as those covered already and used in a number of exam papers across schools. This encouraged rote learning and answering by recall.

Curriculum Implementation

Skager *et al.* (1977) refers 'curriculum implementation' to planning and implementation of curricula change. It is fair to propose, based on the finding of iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009), that the reformed English curriculum was well-designed but flawed in the implementation process. Despite a well-designed curriculum (in the traditional sense of just the curriculum document, without other composites) iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009) found multiple but interconnected procedural gaps. The lack of pedagogical knowledge and assessment methods, including material shortage indicate the existence of procedural gaps.

iDiscoveri Education and the REC's findings presented above is a concern for all stakeholders in education. Other researches in the Bhutanese context in general have shown that the implementation of such educational innovations has suffered from lack of resources, inadequate teacher preparedness, lack of professional support, and lower teacher self-efficacy amongst others (for more detail see Sherab, 2001; Sherab & Halloway, 2006; Sherab et.al. 2009; Sherab, 2013). Are such findings still relevant even after more than eight years of the first ever research on English curriculum carried out by the REC? Have there been any improvements in the implementation process? What are some of the opportunities and challenges in implementing the current English curriculum? A recent study by Tshomo and Sherab (in press), specifically focussing on literary texts, has shown that both students and teachers prefer to learn from texts that suits their language proficiency, cognitive level and social background. They also found that the teaching of grammar has been, to a large extent, neglected. Are such findings applicable to all schools in Bhutan? Concerns like these merits a nation-wide investigation. These were some of the concerns that this evaluation study addressed.

Chapter 3: Study Framework

Chapter Introduction

This evaluation study was guided by two broad frameworks: Fullan's (1996) Dynamics of Educational Change and Stake's (1977) Countenance Model, which are further discussed in the following sections.

Dynamics of Educational Change

In order to get a sense of the implementation aspect of the curriculum, an analysis of educational change must be considered. Literature on educational change points out that whenever there is curriculum change or innovation in the schools, there has to be a proper way of introducing it (Fullan, 1996, 1999). Many curriculum specialists have suggested a number of change models. The Concern Based Adoption Model (CBAM) is one such change model (Marsh & Willis, 2007). This model suggests that collective change occurs as a result of change in individuals, and programmes should not be implemented without addressing the concerns of the individuals.

According to Hall and Ford (1987, 2001) and Rutherford, Hord, Huling, and Hall (1983, as cited in Marsh and Willis, 2007, p. 234), CBAM assumes that change is:

- a process, not an event, requiring time, energy, and resources to support it;
- achieved incrementally and developmentally and entails developmental growth in feelings about the skills in using new programs;
- accomplished by individuals first. Institutions cannot change until the individuals within them change;
- a highly personal experience; and
- and can be facilitated by change agents providing diagnostic, client-centred support to individual teachers.

The change facilitators should consider the concerns of change agents who are mainly teachers when a revised curriculum is implemented in schools. It is basic human nature to show his or her concerns when a new or revised curriculum is implemented in the school. Teachers normally do not like moving out of their comfort zone. The concerns of teachers come in the form of self, task and impact (Sowell, 2000). Once these concerns are addressed, the change facilitators should review the level of use of the innovation and address the concerns again if the level of use is inadequate by conducting professional development programmes.

Further, a study done on the implementation of the new curriculum confirms that "change requires support and commitment from all involved in the process; otherwise, implementation will result in the illusion of change" (Sherab, 2001. p. 39). This is evident from figure 1 (see Sherab, 2001). From this figure, we understand that for a change initiative to be successful all the eight elements have to be considered. For instance, if the vision is missing there is likely to be confusion amongst the stakeholders. If attitude is missing, there would be resistance from the change agents. So, what does it tell us in connection to the implementation of the current English curriculum? Is there a clear vision for implementing this new innovation? Are all the eight elements given adequate attention by the various stakeholders? A detailed analysis of the implementation process has been carried out.

MANAGING COMPLEX CHANGE PROCESS

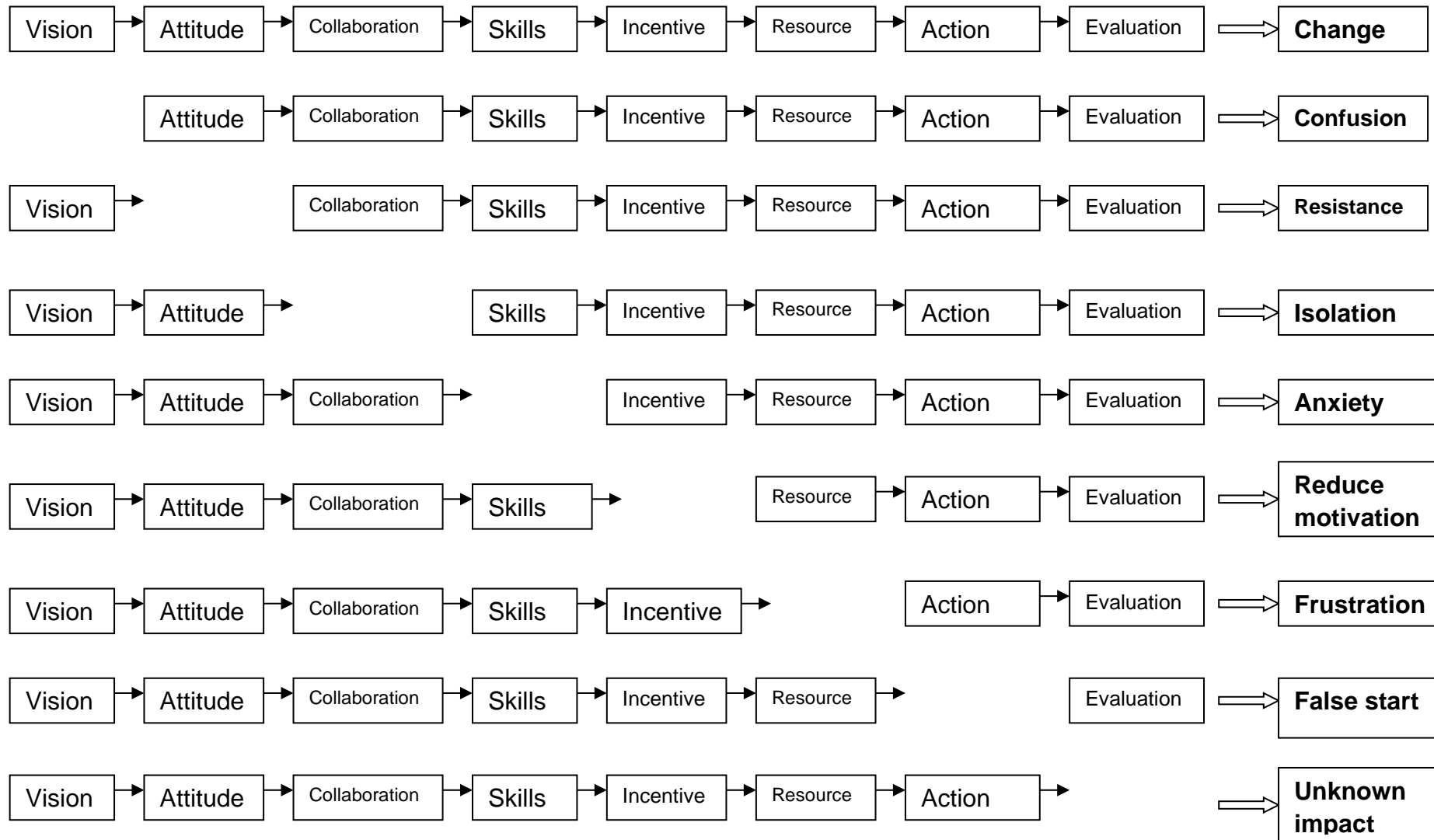


Figure 1: Managing complex change process. Sherab, K (2001) adapted from Kilcher, A (1994). Managing Change. Paideia

Stake's Countenance Model

This evaluation study of the current school English curriculum was carried out using Stake's Countenance Model (Stake, 1977) as reflected in Figure 2. As suggested by Stake, two sets of data namely descriptive and judgmental were collected regarding the current English Curriculum. In this model, the descriptive set of data focused on intents and observations regarding antecedents (conditions that existed before the curriculum was implemented or the reasons for which the curriculum has been implemented), transactions (the process occurrence during the implementation of the curriculum) and outcomes (the intended and unintended effects of the curriculum), while the judgmental set of data focused on judgments regarding antecedents, transactions and outcomes (see Figure 2). Furthermore, discrepancies in terms of contingency and congruence were analysed. Contingency refers to relationship between antecedents, transactions, and outcomes and congruence refers to whether intents actually occurred. Stake's model has been chosen for the study as it provides extensive evidence to support the success or failure of the English curriculum, documenting all plausible links between all phases of the curriculum implementation process – antecedents, transactions and outcomes.

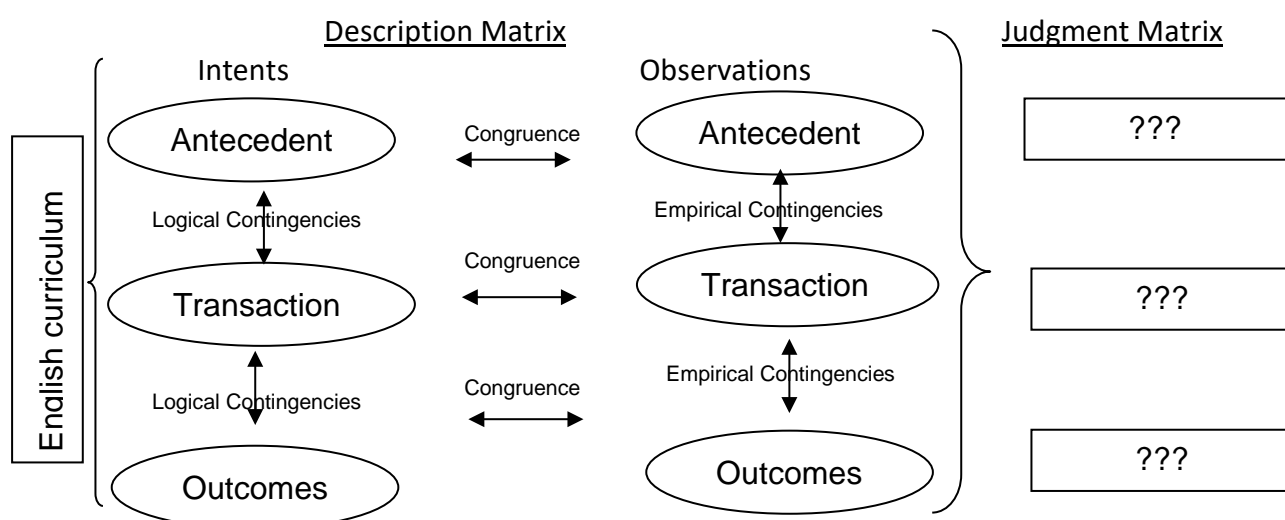


Figure 2: Framework to evaluate the implementation process of the current English curriculum. (Adapted from Stake, 1977)

The Stake's Countenance Model was applied in a five-step sequence:

First, the intent of the antecedents, transactions and outcomes were addressed. Intents in the model represent the overall intentions, which were planned – for conditions and behaviour - which include desired and anticipated effects;

Second, observational data for all the three phases (antecedents, transactions and outcomes) were collected and reviewed for each of the key stages in the curriculum in light of the intents;

Third, A detailed analysis of the three phases on logical contingencies and empirical congruence were carried out;

Fourth, the overall rationale of the curriculum was analysed. Data collection included both implicit and explicit rationale to study the overall rationale of initiating and implementing the current English curriculum; and

Fifth, data were collected for the judgement matrix through a study of logical contingency and empirical congruence between intent matrix and observation matrix. Judgments were made based on the interpretation of how the discrepancies emerged.

Evaluation Questions

This project looked at the antecedents and transactions of the current English curriculum implemented by the MoE since 2006 to improve the standard of English in the schools. The following key questions and sub-questions under the three phases of the curriculum implementation were designed to bring to light the impact of the current curriculum.

Antecedent Phase: Evaluation question 1.

Why was the new English curriculum designed or formulated?

- Was the curriculum design based on evidence?
- Was the curriculum developed as intended for all key stages?
- Was the curriculum appropriately designed?
- Who else were involved in the design stage?
- Did the curriculum address national concerns?

Transaction Phase: Evaluation question 2.

How was the curriculum implemented?

- To what extent are the current curriculum materials appropriate for achieving the set benchmarks of the English curriculum?
- Are the current pedagogies and strategies relevant and effective in the implementation of the curriculum?
- How relevant and effective are the assessment tools in assessing the student learning outcomes?
- Who were the curriculum implementers?
- What processes were put in place to implement the curriculum?
- Was the curriculum offered as intended?
- Were adequate resources put in place?
- Did the implementers receive adequate support from key stakeholders?

Outcome Phase: Evaluation 3.

What are the impacts (intended and unintended) of the curriculum implemented?

- Did the curriculum achieve intended objectives?
- What are some of the achievements?
- What were the English teachers' attitudes toward the curriculum?
- Are there any unintended outcomes?
- What are some of the current challenges and opportunities?
- Is it worth continuing with the current English curriculum?

Chapter 4: Methodology

Research Approach

The evaluation of the current English curriculum used a sequential mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014) beginning with a small-scale qualitative study using focus group discussions (FGDs) with English teachers, students, and teacher educators, followed by a large-scale quantitative survey of the English teachers. A summary of the research approaches and process is shown in Figure 3.

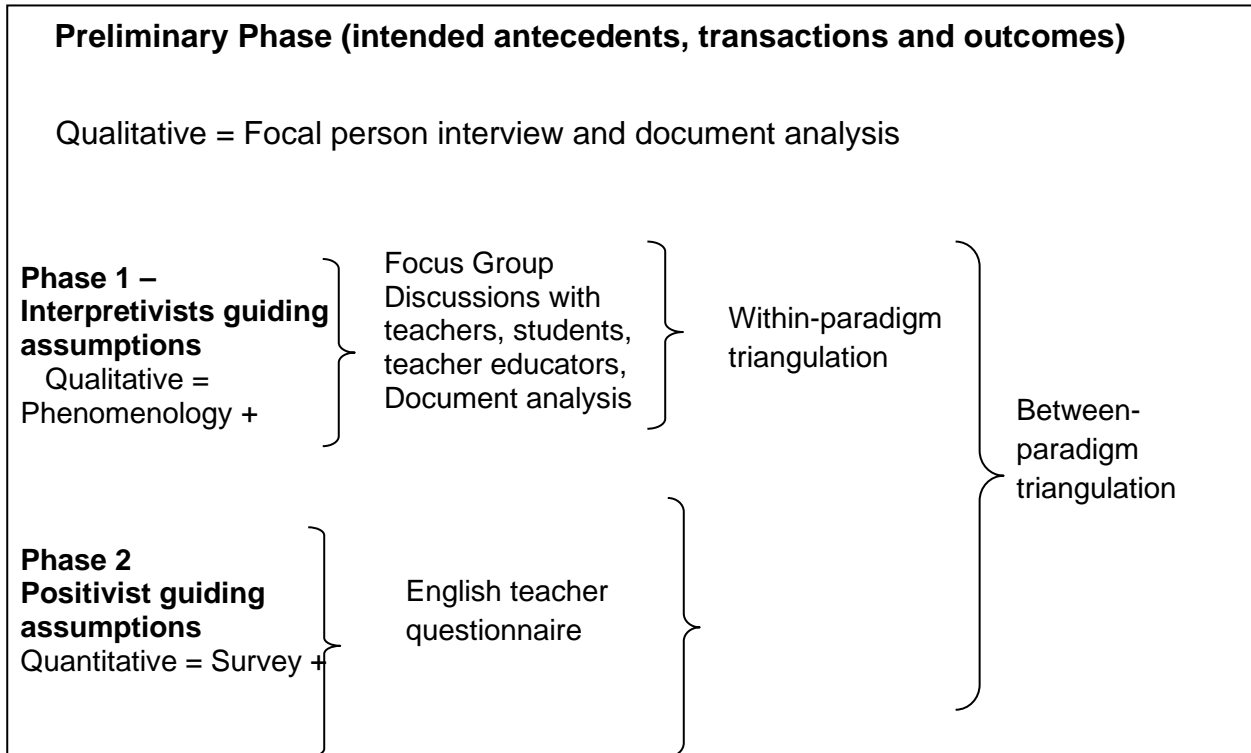


Figure 3: An overview of the research approach, design and data collection tools

First, as indicated, a preliminary data collection and analysis were conducted to understand and build a context for the study. In this phase, interviews with focal persons (Curriculum Officers) and a document analysis were conducted to collect data on intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Data analysis at this stage focused on finding logical contingencies among intended antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Findings from the interview data were triangulated with the document analysis.

Second, following the findings from the preliminary analysis, 12 English teachers FGDs (3 FGDs with PP-III; 3FGDs with IV-VI; 3FGDs with VII-VIII; and 3FGDs with IX-XII teachers) of different schools were carried out to collect in-depth information regarding observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Data analysis at this stage was focused on understanding the lived experiences of the English teachers at all levels of schools. One student and one teacher educator FGDs were also conducted to understand their perceptions.

Third, based on the findings from the FGDs and document analysis in the first phase, a survey questionnaire for English teachers teaching at various grade levels was administered. Therefore,

data from the second, quantitative phase provided more evidence to further establish empirical contingencies among observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes. Fourth, findings from the observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes were compared and contrasted to check the congruence between what was intended and observed. Fifth, based on the intended and observed findings, appropriate judgments were drawn on each of the antecedents, transactions and outcomes phases.

Finally, the overall recommendations are provided.

Data Collection Tools

This research was carried out by employing a combination of document analysis, focal person interviews, FGDs (see Appendix A for interview guide), and specifically prepared, self-administered questionnaires (see Appendix B). The questionnaires were administered in all four regions (east, west, north and south) by the research team. However, due to limited time, questionnaires for some of the remote schools were sent via postal mail and followed up over the phone.

Document analysis and focal person interviews were particularly important for this study, as the intents from antecedents to outcomes are documented in the English curriculum, policy documents, plans, and guidelines. Survey of the curriculum implementers (English Teachers) was useful for understanding their perceptions in terms of the observed antecedents, transactions and outcomes.

Sampling

The participants for the first phase FGDs included English teachers, students and teacher educators. English teachers from a total of 12 schools (spread across three regions with four FGDs from each region) students from one school, and English lecturers from the Paro College of Education participated in the FGDs. An average of six teachers, students and teacher educators participated in each FGD.

A total of 194 schools out of 539 (MoE, 2015), consisting of PS (n=74), LSS (n=43), MSS (n=41), and HSS (n=36) were sampled to achieve a 95% confidence interval in any statistics that the study may use. A stratified random sampling method based on region (East, North, South, and Central), location (urban, semi-urban, and rural), and type (public and private) was used to select schools from each of the four categories. A total 939 English teachers from 190 schools responded to the survey with a response rate of 97.9 percent.

Data Analysis, Report Writing and Ethics

The first phase qualitative data collected through FGDs together with the open questionnaire comments were transcribed and analyzed using the thematic coding method. The second, quantitative phase data were entered, screened and analyzed using SPSS v23. Survey data report consisted mainly of descriptive analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated to identify complimentary and contradictory themes. Finally, recommendations are provided separately in different sections.

To maintain the principle of anonymity and informed consent, pseudonyms were employed to indicate different schools and participants. The funding agency (REC) issued a letter to the relevant Ministry, departments and schools requesting them to provide access to all data related to the implementation of the current English curriculum. Informed consent from each of the FGD participants was obtained.

Chapter 5: Findings

Part 1- Findings from the First Phase Qualitative Study

Setting the Context

Qualitative data were collected from three sources: FGDs, focal person interviews and open-ended comments in the survey questionnaire. In the qualitative phase of the study, 15 focus group discussions with English teachers, teacher educators and students were conducted from across the country, representing different school levels, class levels, and locations. The purpose of the FGDs and interviews were to understand the lived experiences of how the current English curriculum was designed and implemented. The size of the focus groups ranged from four to ten participants in each group depending on the size of the school. All FGDs were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed later for analysis. Furthermore, huge amount of qualitative data were generated in the form of open-ended comments in the survey questionnaire. Every open comment in the questionnaire was compiled for qualitative analysis. The following sections present the emerging themes from the FGDs and open-ended comments.

Presentation of Themes

A total of nine themes that emerged from the FGDs and open-ended comments are provided in the following sections.

1. Curriculum Standard and Relevance

In general, teachers claimed that the majority of the materials in the existing textbooks were of adequate quality with some balance of well-selected local and international literature in all the genres. However, textbooks in Class VII-VIII tended to have more foreign literature. Upon further inquiry, the findings indicated that the curriculum designers had to include more foreign texts as there was a dearth of local materials then (Curriculum Officers; Teacher Educator FGD).

The teachers claimed that the focus of the existing curriculum is more on reading and writing. They also observed that the listening and speaking strands were given less importance. However, the data from the document analysis as well as from the teacher educator's FGD suggested that listening and speaking were purposefully given more importance at the lower levels. As the levels progressed, the reading and writing strands were focused on. This is an indication that teachers were either not aware of the curriculum objectives or they did not follow the language objectives and goals set in the curriculum. Teachers' lack of knowledge and proficiency in delivering all aspects of the English curriculum was also reported in the earlier studies (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009).

Of all the English genres in Class VI - VIII (grammar, essays, short stories, literature, poetry, and nature of language), students preferred the essays and stories to the other genres. The reasons for their preference were that essays were based on "true incidents, Bhutanese history, culture and context". They also found the texts "interesting". Both the teachers and students found the texts familiar and could relate it to their own culture and context. Some stories were based on the

Bhutanese context which the students found easier to understand. A high school teacher made a specific reference to a Bhutanese-authored text, “*Like Two Feet of a Travellers* appeals to students because of its local content”. Teachers suggested that the addition of some more Bhutanese literature would add to the variety and perhaps encourage students to work with local authors. For instance, a teacher from the primary level, specifically referring to class three texts, said, “We need to include more Bhutanese authors’ texts as our students enjoy reading materials related to our culture and tradition”. There is considerable research to show that student engagement increases and they learn better when curriculum materials are from their own culture (Yazzie, 1999; Feger, 2006; Sealey-Ruiz, 2007; Tshomo & Sherab, in press). Teachers also pointed out that some of the foreign literature might be detrimental in inculcating Bhutanese core values. One instance of such a text cited by the teachers is the text *Ghandhi’s Dandi March* which they claimed is politically rebellious in its theme.

Essays written by foreign authors or based on a foreign context tend to have more unfamiliar (difficult) terms than the stories related to the Bhutanese context. Teachers too thought that the cultural gap in the foreign literature is the main source of confusion and difficulty in comprehending the texts. To make matters worse, some foreign texts (such as the ‘*Kindness to Animals*’ and ‘*Dragon Mother*’ in Class IV) did not have any information about the authors, which made the texts more difficult to grasp. Further, when students referred to the dictionaries supplied to them, these dictionaries did not contain the difficult terms for meaning in the upper primary and lower secondary levels.

Teachers from all levels suggested a strong need for audio-visual support from the government to provide exercises in listening and speaking. It has been observed that one of the suggestions from the seminar on ‘Teachers’ perceptions about the new English curriculum’ was that teacher education colleges produce teaching-learning materials such as audio cassettes (CERD, 2009) which appears to have been not materialized even today. Another suggestion made by the primary teachers was the need for readymade activity books with exercises to teach the four strands of language effectively. Further, many teachers observed that the textbooks supplied to schools were not of the same edition. There was a clear indication that even though the curriculum was adequately framed in terms of text materials, other materials like audio-visual instruments, which are needed to enhance students’ learning, were not provided to achieve the intended goals of the curriculum.

2. Teaching Grammar Lessons

Teaching of grammar appeared to be a highly controversial issue among the teachers. Some teachers support continuing teaching grammar in context. Others thought that teaching grammar in context had never been effective. They suggested that, ‘grammar should be taught separately’; they justified their claims by saying that “BCSEA sets questions separately” for grammar. For example, English is tested as paper I and II. However, there is a general consensus both in the teachers’ interview and open comments in the survey on the need to strengthen grammar

teaching. Both the interview respondents as well as the survey respondents expressed a strong need to improve grammar teaching by supplying supplementary materials, allocating separate time, and prescribing standard grammar topics and directives. Some of these concerns are expressed in the following comments:

Separate time should be allocated for grammar in the teacher guide with instruction (Respondent 2, School 67).

It would be better if there was a separate activity book for teaching grammar (Respondent 3, School 65).

For lower classes, it would be easy if they have a definite grammar book, then there will be uniformity. For instance, when it comes to direct and indirect speech, I might teach [a] little bit but some other schools might teach [it] in detail. There should be [a] specific grammar book to guide both teachers and students (High school FGD).

The teachers also observed the inadequacy of materials and directives on how and what grammar points should be taught. Earlier studies have also shown the teaching of grammar as an issue (CERD, 2009; Tshomo & Sherab, in press). However, the data from the document analysis as well as the teacher educator FGDs showed clear directives on how and what aspect of grammar should be taught. Perhaps, as reported in an earlier study (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009), there is a gap in the implementation process. Concerned stakeholders need to identify the gap and do what is needed. The teacher respondents suggested adding adequate grammar exercises at all levels to ease them of the heavy preparation workload, which required them to spend long hours surfing the Internet for grammar lessons. Their frustration was further fueled by the poor Internet connectivity in schools. In fact, some teachers suggested that if the schools have good Internet connectivity, most of the grammar exercises and activities, including materials on the other genres could be downloaded from the Internet, replacing some of the texts for the English curriculum.

The findings seemed to suggest two things. Firstly, the schools were not supplied with adequate materials and teachers lacked appropriate skills as reported in the previous studies in terms of English curriculum materials (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009) as well as other educational innovations (Sherab, 2001; Sherab & Halloway, 2006; Sherab et.al. 2009; Sherab, 2013). Secondly, teachers were not clear about the directives mentioned in the guidebooks on how and what aspect of grammar should be taught at each level. As a result, teachers were in a state of confusion about the pedagogical aspect of grammar teaching. English proficiency has been a concern for the education system in the country, and it is reasonable to assume that grammar contributes a major composite to proficiency, especially for accuracy. Unless such confusion is sorted out and some kind of direction is prescribed in the curriculum, teachers may opt to use their idiosyncratic approach to the curriculum and pedagogy in teaching grammar, which would hinder the achievement of the English standards and goals.

3. Extent of the Curriculum

Generally, teachers across all levels felt that the syllabi of the school curricula were bulky. However, their opinions on the extent of the curriculum varied. Some teachers considered the bulkiness of syllabi as an opportunity, while others considered it as a challenge. Teachers who believed the syllabi to be bulky suggested removing some of the irrelevant texts such as the short story *Ghandhi's Dandi March*. The size of the syllabi, in both number of topics/chapters and the extent of the topics/chapters, was found to be bulky in literature genres like poetry, essays and short stories. They pointed out that there are too many poems, essays, stories; in certain cases, as many as 13 stories in one unit (6 units in a year), which they claim were very lengthy (for instance, 20-30 pages in Classes VII & VIII). They cited monotonous and redundant learning activities, and inadequate time to finish the syllabi as justifications for condensing the syllabi. They found the extent of the syllabi hindering the effective delivery of the lesson; hence hindering them in achieving their learning objectives too.

On the contrary, some other teachers were of the opinion 'the more the better', hence the curriculum should be retained as status quo. They justified their stance by saying that more numbers gave them the opportunity to do selective teaching. This group of teachers had a strong feeling that teachers should be given the liberty to choose and use as many texts as they think they could use in their classes. The existing practice is teachers take the liberty to leave out some materials which is a clear indication that English teachers still teach content and focus less on skill development. The findings also indicated that some of these teachers were not very clear about the intention of the curriculum, despite having the liberty to select materials to teach.

It is hard to make any robust deduction on the extent of the syllabi; however, three important issues emerged from the data. Firstly, syllabi structure seemed to be quite rigid or the teachers did not understand the curriculum intention. Secondly, this is also an indication that teachers did not read the curriculum framework and hence they were not aware of the curriculum intention. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to ascertain the teachers' reading habits about the auxiliary materials such as policy frameworks, and also to ascertain reasons for their existing habits. This is something that needs to be further investigated. Secondly, the goals of teaching seemed to be driven by summative examinations as reported in the previous study (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009) rather than the development of language skills. Findings from this study support the earlier findings that there is a need to build a synergy between the curriculum designers (REC) and curriculum evaluators (BCSEA) (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). There is strong indication that the collaboration between the two stakeholders is weak.

4. Curriculum Level Transition

Curriculum level transition seemed to be smooth and progressive, except for the transition from Class III to IV. Almost all the teacher respondents observed a transition problem from Class III to IV. The problems were wide-ranging, especially the huge gap in the level of language standard in the textbooks of Class III and IV. They also observed that additional texts like *different writing*

forms and *grammar* were introduced in Class IV. Further, most of the texts in Class IV were foreign texts. Upon triangulation of the interview data with document analysis data, the concerns raised by the teachers were confirmed. Both the interview data and document analysis suggested that the language standard used in the foreign texts were much higher than the students' level. The document analysis data enumerated 41 English texts in Class IV, and except two, all other texts were found to be foreign texts. Hence, teachers considered the transition from Class III to IV to be a 'huge jump', making it difficult for students to cope with learning. An example of the language difficulty in the Class IV text observed is an instance where Class IV learners are expected to understand and learn the following vocabularies: *scariest, threatening revolves, fiercely, disposal, snap, peeking* in the Reading and Literature textbook (Reading & Literature, Class IV, p. 38). The students too found the foreign names and concepts difficult to pronounce and grasp in the foreign texts. Upon analysis of the curriculum documents, the study indeed found a lot of foreign names such as: *Charlotte Zolotow, Meena Cariappa and Gita Dang, Eleanor Farjeon, Jack Prelutsky Michael Teitelbaum, Patrica Vickery* (Class IV textbook) difficult to be enunciated by both teachers and learners.

5. Assessment Practices

The data from the document analysis recommended two types of assessments: formative and summative. The observations shared by students on the mode of assessment confirmed the prescribed style of assessment. There were two types of assessments, continuous assessment and summative assessment. Continuous assessment consisted of "homework, classwork, project, writing portfolio, reading test, and presentation, which were assessed for 20% of the total marks. The summative assessment (final exam) was out of 80%" (High School FGD). The teacher participants expressed inadequacy in the mode of assessment prescribed in the teacher's guidebook, which led to confusion among teachers. They claimed that the assessment directives in the guidebook were not adequate and simple enough to use, specifically, in making rubrics and checklists. This observation is made apparent as one of the Lower Secondary School teachers remarked, "In my view, each school is practicing different criteria. Assessment has to be prescribed at the end of each chapter with simple and proper guidelines" (Respondent 06, School 68). Upon analysis of the curriculum documents, the study found that the directives in the guidebook were quite clear about student assessment at all the levels; however, the directives were not very prescriptive in nature. To put it differently, the directives in the guidebook provided just the recommendations, providing opportunity for creativity and innovation for teachers to use them. This clearly showed that teachers did not understand the essence of the non-prescriptive nature of the directives in the guidebook pointing back once more to lack of professional support, lower teacher efficacy, inadequate teacher preparation, and lack of resources as reported in previous studies (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009; Sherab, 2001; Sherab & Halloway, 2006; Sherab et.al. 2009; Sherab, 2013) Hence, a need for teacher orientation on the use of assessment tools is warranted.

There were other important issues that emerged from both the open comment and interview data regarding assessment. As the syllabi and the class size were large, the assessment too appeared to be bulky and redundant. Another observation made by the teachers pertained to the non-alignment of the assessment tools with the curriculum objectives. The data suggested that the teacher's objective of assessment was motivated mainly by the examination point of view rather than the development of language skills in the learner as was also found by iDiscoveri Education and REC (2009). As a result, there were unjustifiable variations in the allotment of marks in the continuous assessment across schools. In other words, some schools had the implicit policy of awarding higher marks to jack up the reputation of their schools. The data seemed to point at the lack of collaboration amongst the curriculum designers (REC), the curriculum implementers (teachers), and the curriculum evaluators (BCSEA).

Assessment related to 'seen' and 'unseen' texts was also raised as a problem by the teachers in the interview and survey open comments. This was particularly reported as a predicament faced by students in making biased and selective choices in reading the texts. The students seemed to disregard text materials with the assumption that they were tested on the unseen texts. This issue seemed to have come up due to the idiosyncratic pedagogical approaches used by different teachers. One teacher, for instance, commented:

As long as poetry comprehension skills are taught, they must not face problem with unseen texts; for example, teach them structural analysis, diction analysis, content analysis. If taught, they can do very well, but the irony is very few teachers do that. (Lower Secondary School FGD)

Further, there is a strong indication that both teachers and students were either not aware of the curriculum intention or they are overruled by the practice of teaching content and preparation for the examination rather than imparting the language skills. After all, at the end of the day, teachers are judged by their students' performance in the examinations.

6. Pre-service Teacher Preparation

Pre-service teacher preparation emerged as a theme from both the survey and the interview data. The issue regarding pre-service teacher preparation pertained to inadequacy of training at the CoEs in the familiarization of the school curriculum. The teacher respondents claimed that the English curriculum at the two CoEs focused on the teaching of content and less or no deliberation took place in the familiarisation of the school curriculum. This has implications on the CoEs. Upon analysis of the documents of the educational colleges, the study found the existence of one curriculum orientation module named, 'School Curriculum' for secondary programme. However, no such explicit module was available for the primary programme, except for some kind of familiarization on the school curriculum. This is an indication of the lack of a healthy collaboration between the educational colleges and the curriculum designers, including other stakeholders in the education ministry.

7. Kagan's Cooperative Learning (CL) Structures

Since curriculum, as in the sense of the 'hidden curriculum', is also inclusive of the pedagogical aspects and one of the important composites of any curriculum, the study explored the effectiveness of the recently familiarised pedagogical approach called the Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structures. Teachers seemed to have mixed responses to this newly familiarised strategy. All the teacher respondents found the Kagan's pedagogy interesting, lively, and student-centred, and involved active learning, but it was said to be feasible only at the lower levels. Teachers found the pedagogy not very feasible at the higher levels. However, at the lower levels too, the pedagogy is found to be time-consuming and monotonous. Time management issues were raised, for instance, by teachers as:

Kagan's Structure leads to active learning, but needs more time than what is allocated for that activity in the guide (Respondent 2, School 67)

Of course, it is easy for us as teachers, but in reality, it takes a lot of time. Students are not able to finish their activity on time, so sometimes we have to end the activity incomplete. (High School FGD)

Another observation made by some teachers was that Kagan's pedagogy had already been used in the existing teaching pedagogy as a cooperative learning strategy.

8. Reintroduction of Shakespeare into the English curriculum

As Shakespeare is reintroduced into Class XI and XII English curriculum beginning in 2017, the study elicited opinions about the readiness of the English teachers, students, and teacher trainers on the re-inclusion of Shakespeare into the curriculum. All three groups (teachers, students and lecturers) expressed a mixed feeling about the inclusion of Shakespeare into the curriculum. Irrespective of their educational orientation on Shakespeare, some teachers welcomed the idea of reintroducing Shakespeare while others were quite skeptical about the inclusion. Both the teachers and lecturers who welcomed Shakespeare back into the curriculum however raised their concerns about teachers' proficiency in teaching the subject. They suggested professional development support for teachers in teaching the subject. These groups of teachers and teacher trainers thought Shakespeare could help learners acquire rich language skills and cultural values. The teachers and teacher trainers who were skeptical about Shakespeare expressed their concerns about diluting Bhutanese cultures and values by foreign ones. They thought that the reintroduction of Shakespeare is an incorrect solution to the problem of English proficiency. This is explicitly expressed by a senior high school teacher in the survey comment: "I think the idea of bringing back Shakespeare is not the solution to the problem. When one is striving to promote one's own culture and values, teaching western values is the exact opposite to fulfilling our cultural objectives". Some of the teacher trainers were also concerned about the fact that teachers provided more focus on the content of the texts rather than on skills development (Teacher Educator FGD). They further expressed that if teachers continue to do that with the Shakespearean text, the intention of the English curriculum would be defeated.

The students who were skeptical about Shakespeare cited 'language difficulty' as the main reason for not favouring Shakespeare in the curriculum. One of the female students remarked: "The word he [Shakespeare] uses are often hard to understand". However, a male student contradicted the female student by saying that the difficult nature of the language in Shakespeare could be used as an opportunity for students to work harder in the acquisition of the knowledge of English.

9. Design and implementation of the current curriculum

One of the objectives of the study was also to find out the processes and procedures involved in designing and implementing the existing curriculum. The data from curriculum officer interviews and teacher educator FGDs suggested that all pertinent stakeholders of the education system such as, school teachers, teacher educators, curriculum officers, foreign consultants and subject specialists were involved in the design and planning phase of the existing curriculum. Further, the existing curriculum design was based on a study conducted by the Centre for Educational Research Development (CERD) in 2001-2012. Alongside, the REC, formerly known as the Curriculum and Support Division (CAPSD), did a thorough literature study of the English curricula both in the countries where English was taught as L1 and L2. Hence, the document, *The Silken Knot* was the creation of the deliberations of the pertinent educational stakeholders and scientific findings.

One of the major shifts from the earlier curriculum to the existing one was the focus on the four strands of language: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. However, the implementation phase of the existing curriculum seemed to have had procedural lapses. Both the curriculum officers and the teacher educators, who were involved in the design of the existing curriculum sounded skeptical about the implementation phase. When the curriculum officer participant was asked if the existing curriculum was implemented as planned, the response was "No, to a large extent" (Focal Person Interview). Two types of strategies, short-term and long-term, were used for the successful implementation of the revised curriculum. The short-term implementation phase was confined to a seven-day orientation programme that followed a cascading model where teachers were oriented solely to the text materials. This phase of the implementation did not dwell upon the philosophies and principles of the existing curriculum. Further, since the RUB was already delinked from the MoE, subject experts from the RUB who were involved in the curriculum design were not involved in the implementation process. As a result, randomly selected schoolteachers, who were not involved during the curriculum design and planning, facilitated the trainings. It is very likely that these facilitators would not have had a deeper understanding of the ideological principles that guided the development of curriculum intents.

As a long-term measure, two in-service English programmes were introduced, the 'Lead Teacher Programme' at the Samtse College of Education and the 'Post Graduate Diploma in English' at the Sherubtse College. However, these two programmes failed to serve the purpose in terms of the total teacher coverage as only a handful of teachers were enrolled into these two programmes. Thus, the data is robust enough to suggest that the existing curriculum failed in the implementation phase, despite the fact that the curriculum had a sound vision, appropriate

standards and clear intentions. The curriculum implementation phase is considered as an equally important aspect of any curriculum design. In fact, the implementation phase is interactive and collaborative with other phases such as, curriculum objectives, curriculum plan, teaching methods and learning activities, and evaluation procedures (Skager et al., 1977).

Part II- Findings from the Second Phase Quantitative Study

Setting the context

The second phase survey study was designed based on the preliminary findings from the data collected through FGDs and document analysis. A total of 939 English teachers from 190 schools from a total of 539, selected through stratified random sampling strategy participated in the survey. The questionnaire was pilot tested in two schools in Paro and accordingly improved. Once the data were entered into the SPSS database, a thorough screening process was conducted and a few typographic errors were corrected by crosschecking with the original questionnaires. As a part of the screening process, a total of 11 incomplete questionnaires were rejected. A discrete missing value of '9' was assigned to "Not Applicable" category to distinguish these responses from those coded as SPSS system missing values (i.e. no response to an item).

Demographic Details

A total of 939 English teachers from 190 schools across the country returned their survey questionnaires. For the demographic characteristics of the respondents see Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the survey respondents (n= 939)

Characteristic	Category	n*	%
Gender	Male	353	37.6
	Female	568	60.5
	Others	2	0.2
Basic Professional Qualification	PTC/ZTC	137	14.6
	B.Ed	553	58.9
	PGCE/PGDE	128	13.6
Age	Less than 29 years	215	22.9
	30-34 years	310	33.0
	35-39	248	26.4
	40 and above	130	13.8
English teaching experience	Less than 5 years	291	31.0
	6-10 years	302	32.2
	11-15 years	184	19.6
	16-20 years	78	8.3
	21 years and above	55	5.9
Present teaching level	PP- class 3	317	33.8
	Class 4-6	246	26.2
	Class 7-8	106	11.3
	Class 9-12	150	16.0
Religion	Buddhist	820	87.2
	Hindu	78	8.3

	Others	14	1.5
Service status	Regular	852	90.7
	Contract (expatriate)	49	5.2
	Temporary	11	1.2

*The total for each characteristic does not add up to 939 due to missing values

Measurement of Themes

A total of 13 themes - Reading and Literature; Curriculum objectives; Teaching methods prescribed in the guide; Practice of teaching methods; Support for teaching methods; Assessment and evaluation; Implementation process; Teaching learning materials; Internet connectivity; Use of technology; Teacher competency; Shakespeare; and Kagan's structure were measured to understand the English teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the current English Curriculum. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 440 variables/items that measured these 13 themes. An average score for each theme consisting of several items were computed using SPSS v23. Each of these themes are presented and discussed in the following sections.

1. Reading and Literature

'Reading and Literature' was further categorised into 12 sub-themes – Language standard; Currency; Cultural; Skill development; Illustrations; Errors; Level/transition; Edition; Author information; Reference list; Redundancy; and Syllabus coverage that measured the quality of the seven different texts (workbook- pp-3; grammar 4-12; short story 4-12; essay 4-12; poetry 4-12; novel 9-10; and drama 11-12) provided from Pre-primary to class 12. The overall score for each of these sub-themes are presented below in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for Reading and Literature

Sl no.	Sub-Theme	N	Mean	SD
1	Language standard	935	3.73	.68
2	Currency of the information	927	3.69	.62
3	Cultural relevancy	929	3.18	.75
4	Skills development	931	4.07	.59
5	Illustrations	925	3.43	.74
6	Errors	926	3.34	.85
7	Level transition	928	3.44	.87
8	Edition	926	2.99	1.26
9	Author information	919	2.65	.86
10	Reference materials	920	2.81	.91
11	Redundancy	924	3.64	.83
12	Syllabus	930	3.01	1.07

According to the score for each sub-theme shown in Table 2, skills development has the highest score (M= 4.07; SD= .59) indicating that the English teachers have the general perception that English texts provide opportunities for children to learn and develop the four basic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and also, presumably, others such as analytical, communication, academic, and personal development skills. On the other hand, sub-themes such as edition (M= 2.99; SD= 1.26), author information (M= 2.65; SD= .86), and reference materials (M= 2.81; SD= .91)

scored below average and also higher standard deviations compared to the other sub-themes. This clearly indicated that there were issues related to the edition of the texts supplied, information about authors in the texts, and reference materials. While scores for other sub-themes (such as language standard, currency, cultural, illustrations, level transition, errors, redundancy and syllabus) were slightly above average, it is noted that these scores were relatively much lower. For further investigation into the matter, each of these sub-themes were put under closer scrutiny to check if there were any differences in terms of the seven different texts in the following sections.

i. Language

In order to measure the standard of language across seven different texts (workbook- for PP-3; grammar for classes 4-12; short story for classes 4-12; essay for classes 4-12; poetry for classes 4-12; novel for classes 9-10; and drama for classes 11-12), five language standards were used across seven different texts provided for reading and literature from Pre-primary to Class 12. The means for all the seven texts (see Table 3) were above average which indicated that the English teachers generally seemed to agree that the standards of vocabularies used, adequacy of grammar for different levels, standard of language used, and the level of language formality had no issues across different texts on different grade levels. The standard deviations for all seven texts were low indicating that most of the respondents had similar views.

Table 3. Mean and SD for language across different texts

Language standard in the text	N	Mean	SD
Language- workbook	504	3.84	.74
Language- grammar	614	3.62	.79
Language- short stories	614	3.74	.76
Language- essay	612	3.76	.73
Language- poetry	609	3.70	.77
Language- novel	212	3.33	.85
Language- drama	152	3.75	.75

ii. Currency

The currency of the texts was examined on four main areas: classical versus contemporary materials, vocabularies, illustrations, and topics. The means for all texts were slightly above average (see Table 4), which indicated that the texts were to some extent current. However, just above average means also suggested that the texts needed to be more current. In addition, there was not much of variation between the responses as shown by the low standard deviation.

Table 4. Mean and SD for currency across different texts

Currency of content in the text	N	Mean	SD
Currency- workbook	477	3.72	.68
Currency- grammar	541	3.61	.73
Currency- short stories	609	3.69	.65
Currency- essay	601	3.67	.66
Currency- poetry	590	3.66	.66
Currency- novel	209	3.78	.60
Currency- drama	141	3.46	.77

iii. Cultural

A total of 5 items were used to investigate the cultural suitability and relevancy of the texts to the Bhutanese context. As shown in Table 5 the means of four textbooks (grammar, short story, poetry and drama) were below average and the other three texts (workbook, essay and novel) were just average. This demonstrated that teachers generally showed lower perceptions about cultural suitability and relevancy of texts to the Bhutanese context. This is an indication that these texts should include more local materials.

Table 5. Mean and SD for cultural relevancy across different texts

Cultural relevancy of the content in the text	N	Mean	SD
Cultural- workbook	485	3.54	.83
Cultural- grammar	500	2.79	.80
Cultural- short stories	603	2.96	.64
Cultural- essay	598	3.01	.67
Cultural- poetry	588	2.93	.67
Cultural- novel	212	3.33	.85
Cultural- drama	137	2.82	.72

iv. Skill Development

To investigate how different texts promote skills development, the following skills were examined: listening, speaking, reading, writing, analytical, communication, academic and personal skills. As shown in the Table 6, the means for the five texts (workbook, short story, essay, poetry and novel) were above 4 except grammar and drama, which were very close to 4. This is an indication that English teachers had stronger perceptions that texts effectively promote the development of the eight specific skills mentioned above. The lower standard deviation showed fairly similar views amongst all respondents.

Table 6. Mean and SD for skill development across different texts

Development of different skills	N	Mean	SD
Skill- workbook	472	4.09	.60
Skill- grammar	520	3.93	.70
Skill- short stories	603	4.10	.59
Skill- essay	598	4.08	.61
Skill- poetry	587	4.07	.61
Skill- novel	210	4.09	.64
Skill- drama	133	3.93	.67

v. Illustrations

The illustrations in the textbooks were measured on three main characteristics: adequacy of pictures, optimal size, and colour combination (see Table 7). The means of all texts were above average while the mean of the drama was below average. This indicated that to some extent, illustrations fulfilled the three characteristics but definitely the scores were not very robust.

Table 7. Mean and SD for quality of illustrations in the texts

Quality of the illustrations in the text	N	Mean	SD
Illustrations- workbook	489	3.72	.72
Illustrations-grammar	519	3.18	.82
Illustrations- short stories	602	3.31	.75
Illustrations- essay	593	3.29	.77
Illustrations- poetry	589	3.25	.82
Illustrations- novel	216	3.11	.87
Illustrations- drama	137	2.93	.87

vi. Errors

Five different types of errors: typographical, spelling, grammar, punctuation, page format and structural were measured to investigate whether the texts were error free or not. As shown in Table 8, all means were slightly above average. This indicated that the texts did not have serious problems. However, as the means suggest the texts were not completely error free.

Table 8. Mean and SD for errors in the texts

Errors in the texts	N	Mean	SD
Errors- workbook	478	3.28	.89
Errors- grammar	541	3.41	.88
Errors- short stories	608	3.25	.88
Errors- essay	596	3.31	.87
Errors- poetry	595	3.37	.88
Errors- novel	211	3.46	.88
Errors- drama	130	3.46	.77

vii. Level Transition

As shown in Table 9 below, there were seven different sub-themes to measure the class transition from one level to the next higher level. Three items (gradual and logical transition of curriculum objectives, clarity of directions for the teachers on how to transit from one level to the next, and smooth and progressive transition of text content from one level to the next) were used to measure the clarity of the directions prescribed for transition in the teacher's guide and the coherence of transition. The results seem to suggest the direction for transition and the logical transition from one level to another were not very clear (as shown in the table, mean score is slightly above average for all the textbooks). However, the workbooks, which were for the lower levels, seem to have better clarity and coherence ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 0.83$, which is the highest in the table). This indicated that almost all the textbooks did have clear and logical transitions from one level to the next higher level. However, relatively speaking, these scores were not very robust.

Table 9. Mean and SD for content transition

Content transition at different class levels	N	Mean	SD
Level Transition- workbook	478	3.69	.83
Level Transition- grammar	563	3.14	1.03
Level Transition- short stories	605	3.31	.94
Level Transition- essay	596	3.30	.92
Level Transition- poetry	598	3.32	.90
Level Transition- novel	211	3.40	.91
Level Transition- drama	136	3.12	.97

viii. Textbook Edition

There were two items to measure the consistency of the edition of textbooks supplied to the school and thence distributed to the students. As shown in Table 10, English textbooks in schools did not have same edition (Mean for six textbooks were slightly above average with higher standard deviations, and one textbook below average). This indicated that the schools were supplied with textbooks with different editions. To put it differently, students were given textbooks with different editions, which could become a source of confusion for both teachers and students. This indicated that some students had the updated version of the textbooks while others the older version. Furthermore, the workbooks seemed to be the most inconsistent textbook with different editions (Mean= 2.79 SD= 1.28) when compared to other textbooks. Common sense tells us that a newer edition is published to include changes made for certain errors in the older text. However, when textbooks of different editions are supplied to the same batch of students it could confuse both the teachers and students with regard to the content of the textbook.

Table 10. Mean and SD for edition of texts

Edition of texts	N	Mean	SD
Edition- workbook	476	2.79	1.28
Edition- grammar	542	3.12	1.29
Edition- short stories	603	3.09	1.28
Edition- essay	591	3.14	1.28
Edition- poetry	595	3.14	1.29
Edition- novel	217	3.32	1.22
Edition- drama	135	3.40	1.24

ix. Author Information

There were four items to measure whether the texts had additional background information about the authors of various materials used in the textbooks. The results seem to suggest that all the textbooks did not have adequate background information about the authors (see Table 11- Means were below average). However, comparatively, the textbooks of drama (M=3.21; SD= .80) and novel (M= 3.17; SD= .85) seemed to have comparatively better background information about the authors. It is fair to assume that textbooks such as workbooks and grammar may not require much of the authors background information but some background information about the authors of the textbooks like the essay, short story, poetry, novel and drama should hugely benefit students in understanding the authors' cultural, religious and regional backgrounds, which in turn should help them comprehend the texts better.

Table 11. Mean and SD for author information

Author information in the texts	N	Mean	SD
Author- workbook	476	2.53	.97
Author- grammar	491	2.71	.96
Author- short stories	609	2.71	.86
Author- essay	595	2.72	.84
Author- poetry	597	2.71	.87
Author- novel	219	3.17	.85
Author- drama	138	3.21	.80

x. Reference List

There were three items to measure the availability of reference list and further reading materials for the textbooks, and the accessibility of the reference list in the school library. The results in Table 12 suggest that all of the textbooks did not have proper reference list in the first place. Secondly, the prescribed references were not easily available in the school library. This is indicated by the below average mean and higher standard deviations for all the textbooks.

Table 12. Mean and SD for reference list

Reference list	N	Mean	SD
Reference- workbook	469	2.82	.98
Reference- grammar	526	2.86	.97
Reference- short stories	607	2.87	.91
Reference- essay	600	2.85	.90
Reference- poetry	591	2.83	.92
Reference- novel	205	2.83	1.05
Reference- drama	133	2.80	1.02

xi. Content Redundancy

There were two items to measure the redundancy of content topics and learning activities. As shown in Table 13, the results suggested that all of the textbooks seem to have some sort of repetition in both the content topic and the learning activities. This is indicated by the mean, which was slightly above average. The means were not robust enough to conclude that the textbooks were free of redundancies.

Table 13. Mean and SD for redundancy of information

Redundancy of information	N	Mean	SD
Redundancy- workbook	468	3.61	.87
Redundancy- grammar	521	3.56	.91
Redundancy- short stories	605	3.65	.85
Redundancy- essay	599	3.65	.87
Redundancy- poetry	595	3.68	.83
Redundancy- novel	204	3.74	.89
Redundancy- drama	133	3.70	.82

xii. Syllabus Coverage

There were three items under this theme; the purpose of the theme was to find out if the content topics and the learning activities could be completed within the allotted time prescribed in the curriculum. Therefore, this theme measured the bulkiness or the size of the curriculum. As shown in Table 14, the results suggested that teachers found it difficult to complete the prescribed syllabus in time for grammar, short story, essay and poetry (Mean below average and higher standard deviations). Though the means for workbook, novel and drama were slightly above average, it is not robust enough to conclude that these three texts were not bulky. Furthermore, their standard deviations were slightly higher indicating that English teachers had different perceptions about syllabus coverage in terms of the novel and drama.

Table 14. Mean and SD for syllabus

Syllabus	N	Mean	SD
Syllabus- workbook	481	3.17	1.11
Syllabus- grammar	550	2.92	1.07
Syllabus- short stories	608	2.86	1.09
Syllabus- essay	601	2.83	1.09
Syllabus- poetry	596	2.90	1.07
Syllabus- novel	213	3.18	1.09
Syllabus- drama	135	3.46	1.01

2. Curriculum Objectives

There were nine items designed to measure whether the current English curriculum – met the language standards set in *The Silken Knot*, were as per the level of learners, were contemporary, aligned with the content, were able to instill analytical skills, have been able to meet the intended objectives based on its scope and depth, activities prescribed in the guidebook have been able to meet the intended objectives, assessment tools and techniques were well aligned with curriculum objectives, and teaching strategies and methods prescribed have been able to meet the intended objectives. As shown by the mean ($M= 3.56$) and standard deviation ($SD= .65$), the respondents seemed to agree that the curriculum was as per the level of the learners, curriculum met the language standards set in *The Silken Knot*, curriculum objectives were contemporary, goals of the English curriculum aligned with the curriculum content and teaching strategies/methods prescribed in the guidebook were able to meet the intended curriculum objectives.

3. Teaching Methods Prescribed in the Guide

There were ten items used to evaluate the appropriateness and relevancy of the teaching methods prescribed in the guidebook. Judging from the score for this theme ($M= 3.64$, $SD= 0.62$), it showed that the teaching methods prescribed in the guide were fairly aligned with the content of the text and that the guidebook contained a variety of teaching methods to use. However, with a mean of only just above average, there are still plenty of opportunities to improve the teaching methods in the guidebook.

4. Practice of Teaching Methods

The study used four items to test whether the teachers made use of the methods prescribed in the guidebook. Findings indicated that the English teachers agreed ($M= 3.77$, $SD= 0.55$) that they found the prescribed methods easy to use, effective and that they had the liberty to use teaching methods of their own choice apart from using suggested methods in the guidebook. However, relatively speaking, findings also indicated that the application of teaching methods were not vibrant.

5. Support for Teaching Methods

To evaluate the kind of support the school provided (or did not provide) to the English teachers in enabling them to use the suggested teaching methods, eight specific items were used. The mean and standard deviation ($M=3.94$, $SD= 0.55$) indicated that respondents agreed that the schools

provided necessary support to use teaching methods as prescribed and mandated in the guidebook.

6. Assessment and Evaluation

Thirteen items were used to examine the English curriculum assessment and evaluation processes in the school. The mean and standard deviation ($M=3.53$, $SD= 0.85$) were indicative that over an average the assessment and evaluation procedures were adequately taken care of. And the respondents also seemed to agree that the guidebook explained the assessment and evaluation criteria quite precisely and also provided some flexibility to use a variety of assessment modes.

7. Implementation Process

To understand the implementation process (the transaction phase) of the current English curriculum, ten items were used. The mean and standard deviation ($M=2.76$, $SD= 0.88$) were indicative that the vast majority of the English teachers were not trained to implement the new curriculum, that they were not oriented to the curriculum during their training programme, that they did not receive refresher courses and that they did not receive good support from relevant stakeholders such as the REC, DEO, EMD and the Ministry. Thus, a structured curriculum implementation process is highly recommended that includes an orientation programme, a refresher course, good exposure to the current English curriculum and adequate support from the relevant stakeholders.

8. Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs)

A total of six items were used to measure the availability of teaching learning materials such as textbooks, workbooks, supplementary readers, guidebook, novels and library books. Findings indicate that teachers have favourable experiences with the adequacy of TLMs in their schools as shown by slightly above average mean score ($M= 3.53$, $SD= 0.85$). Also, the teachers' experience is fairly uniform as shown by a low standard deviation. However, there is still room for improvement in the supply of teaching learning materials as the mean score is not very robust.

9. Internet Connectivity

Five items were designed to assess the situation of Internet connectivity in the Bhutanese schools. English teachers reported that the Internet connectivity in their schools was almost non-affirmative because the mean score ($M= 2.97$; $SD= 1.12$) on this scale was just average. The standard deviation was also very high, showing that teachers had different experiences about the Internet connectivity in their schools. This is clearly an indication that schools in Bhutan definitely need improvement in their Internet connectivity, provide access to both students and teachers, and that the school management support the use of the Internet for teaching and learning.

10. Use of Technology

The availability of ICT facilities (such as LCD projector, audio-visual materials, sound systems), teachers' ICT skills (such as the ability to prepare power point presentations), and whether or not students have computer classes were measured using a 10-item scale. Teachers reported that the use of technology in their school was fairly affirmative because the mean score was slightly above

average ($M= 3.07$; $SD= .81$). Also, the teachers' experience with the use of technology was fairly uniform as indicated by low standard deviation. This finding showed that schools needed to improve their ICT facilities (such as LCD projectors, sound systems and audio-visual aids), ICT skills (such as preparation of power point presentations) and provisions need to be made for more computer classes for students.

11. Teacher Competency

Competency of the English teachers in terms of their confidence to teach the English curriculum, understanding of the content, ability to use assessment tools prescribed in the guidebook, teaching grammar, identification of plots, themes, and settings in the textbooks, and the requirement of professional support were measured by using seven items. Findings showed that ($M= 3.82$; $SD= .62$) the English teachers rated themselves just above average in their competency. However, teachers cannot just depend on above average competency. One must be fully confident and competent to make the teaching learning process effective.

12. Reintroduction of Shakespeare

The English teachers feel that Shakespeare will have good reception in the schools because the mean score is above average ($M= 3.62$; $SD= .83$). Also, the teachers were fairly unanimous in their feelings as indicated by low standard deviation. This is an indication that English teachers were pro-Shakespearean and that they welcome the reintroduction of Shakespeare in the education system as it has the potential to help students develop language and moral skills. However, the findings also indicated that the re-introduction of Shakespeare will require additional teaching hours and that there is still room for improving the score by providing appropriate training to teach Shakespeare.

13. Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structure

The English teachers' views on the usefulness of the Kagan Cooperative Learning Structure were measured using a 7-point scale. Findings indicated that the teachers have favourable views about Kagan's structure ($M= 4.00$; $SD= .59$). Also, the teachers have fairly uniform views about Kagan's structure as shown by low standard deviation. The findings suggest that English teachers generally prefer to use Kagan's structures in their teaching as it helps them to make their lessons lively and interactive, help build student-teacher relationship, and that it helps to keep their students engaged.

Chapter 6: Summary of the Findings and Recommendations

Chapter Introduction

This section brings together key findings derived from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study. The intent was to measure the perceptions of the English teachers, students and English lecturers on the design, preparation, and implementation process of the current PP-XII English curriculum. Research in educational contexts has shown that teachers play a key role in the implementation of the educational innovation (e.g., Fullan, 1996, 1999). This has shown to be even true in the Bhutanese education system (Sherab, 2001, 2013). It is therefore imperative that teachers are adequately prepared in terms of visioning, knowledge and skills, attitudes, incentives, resources, and support to implement the reform successfully (Fullan, 1996; Kilcher, 1994; Sherab, 2001). Lack of attention to any of these attributes could result in the failure of an educational reform, irrespective of its intentions. The summary of the findings presented in this section intends to provide insights into the implementation of current English curriculum in Bhutanese schools.

It is interesting to note that in most cases the findings from the quantitative phase corroborates with the findings from the qualitative phase. Furthermore, unfortunately, many of the findings from this study are also consistent with earlier findings that the implementation of educational curriculum innovation often encountered difficulties due to a lack of preparedness, lack of resources including funding, teachers' work culture, accountability and responsibility, and lack of support among others (iDiscoveri Education & REC (2009; Sherab, 2001, 2013; Sherab, et al. 2009). This is a clear indication that educational stakeholders in Bhutan do not seem to use field experiences and research findings in the process of reviewing and implementing the curriculum.

Key Findings and Recommendations

A total of 11 thematic conclusions with recommendations where appropriate have been presented in the following sections.

1. Reading and Literature

In the *Reading and Literature* category, while the curriculum seemed to achieve the objective of developing language skills, it became evident that there is less focus in the areas of developing language standards, currency of curriculum materials, cultural relevance, text illustrations, text errors, redundancy, drawing special attention to author information, text edition, and reference materials. There is literature to indicate that literary texts accompanied by background information in terms of "historical circumstances, social aspects, beliefs and values related to the text" and also "visual materials" such as films are found useful by the students in the European contexts where English is learnt as a second language (Tevdovskaa, 2017, p. 176). One of the findings of this study was that the standard of the language in the texts is much higher for the students. For instance, discussing the level of text difficulty for the students, a higher secondary school teacher teaching Classes XI and XII mentioned that, "the first and foremost limitation is that this new curriculum has been framed, keeping in mind the high IQ and proficiency level of some students only." (Janice, 2009, p. 34) This was also true for other teachers teaching at both the

lower and middle secondary levels (e.g., Wangchuk, 2009; Kharga, 2009). Linguistic difficulties in the texts have a higher probability of discouraging students from adopting proactive approaches to learning.

Recommendation

- Curriculum materials must be at par with the standard of Bhutanese students. However, a good selection of range of materials depending on the level of students must be made. Therefore, the curriculum must include a wide range of materials considering the fact that every class consists of high achievers and low achievers;
- Supply the same and the latest edition textbooks to all the schools;
- Provide author information such as, author's name, religious, educational and ethnic background;
- All the relevant texts must be provided with a reference list, a further reading list for students to do further research on their own. All the reference lists mentioned in the texts and further reading lists must be made available in the school library;
- To make it relevant to Bhutanese culture and also to facilitate students to cope with learning difficulties, the curriculum must consist of more local text materials in the elementary levels;
- Text materials must use illustrations such as pictures, maps, diagrams etc., wherever appropriate;
- Before textbooks are supplied to the school, they must be thoroughly edited and made free of typographical, format, and structural errors;
- The REC should encourage local writers, especially teachers, in developing local literatures pertinent to different levels to solve the problem of dearth of local literature. One of the ways to do this would be to organise annual writing competitions followed by book fairs as done by the DDC to develop Dzongkha literature; and
- Learning activities across all levels must include variety. It is recommended that some additional learning activities be included as optional rather than prescribing them for each lesson. Further, the responsible agencies should conduct professional development programmes to orient teachers about the use of learning activities.

2. Implementation Process

In the *implementation process* category, findings from this study largely indicated that the English teachers were not adequately prepared to implement the new English curriculum. It is important that stakeholders understand that teachers are the key change agents in the curriculum innovation process.

Recommendation

- No teacher must be left out from the curriculum orientation programme. Further, rather than following the 'Cascading' model (which is the 'Training of the trainer', followed by 'Roll-out') all the teachers must be trained by the same group of specialised trainers. There is literature to show that the 'cascading model' of professional development has never been effective as it dilutes information and it is a waste of time and resources (Bax, 2002; Ross, 1994);
- Provide regular refresher courses to all the teachers to update their knowledge and skills. Further, a system of feedback and reporting on the practical aspects of both the refresher courses and the feasibility of such courses be made mandatory;

- Teachers must be encouraged to carry out action research projects to make evidence-based changes and decisions on both the content and pedagogical aspects of the curriculum. Action research could be also promoted as a form of continuous PD for teachers;
- Other stakeholders, such as the MoE, the EMD, and the DEO's office to provide on-going support in the smooth functioning of the curriculum implementation process;
- CoEs provide thorough curriculum orientation to their pre-service students during the training period; and
- A change of the PD model, regular refresher courses and stakeholders support are not only the solution to the problem. The MoE must frame robust policies followed by conducive provisions such as funding and other material support for the smooth implementation of the curriculum.

3. Curriculum Size and Syllabus

In the *curriculum size and syllabus* coverage category, findings from this study generally showed that English teachers at all levels often faced difficulty in completing the prescribed syllabus in time, particularly for grammar, short story, essay and poetry; hence, affecting the overall learning of the children. Even for PP students there seemed to be too many readers. It is about time that the REC reconsidered consolidating the English curriculum. It is now a general practice elsewhere that the size of the curriculum is kept small, providing more focus on the depth of the materials covered.

Recommendation

- One of the ways of consolidating the curriculum is by integrating the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. The literature has remarkable framework of integrating the four language skills (see for example, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006), which would help learners acquire communicative competence. In this model, while the focus of a lesson may be on one of the skills other skills are also simultaneously integrated. For instance, in a Speaking lesson (pronunciation lesson), learners may be taught Listening (listening to specific sounds and sound differences), Reading (letter to sound correspondences), Writing (sound to letter/spelling correspondences); and
- Another way of condensing the bulky syllabus is to integrate the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing into the literature genres like short story, poetry, essays and drama as intended in the curriculum. However, the English teachers do not seem to be professionally competent to do so. Responsible agencies must provide refresher courses in integrating the four language skills into the literature lessons.

4. Internet Connectivity and the Use of ICT

Internet connectivity and the use of ICT are other important factors that should draw the attention of the relevant stakeholders. While the world of ICT is moving super-fast, schools in Bhutan seem to be still lagging behind in many aspects of ICT. We seem to still follow traditional classroom-based teachings with the use of textbooks and chalk and chalkboard. Without phenomenal improvement in Internet connectivity, ICT facilities, teachers' ICT knowledge, and the use of electronic gadgets such as smartphones and iPads, nothing much can be learnt. It is important to understand that in the 21st Century, much of the learning takes place through the use of ICT.

Recommendation

1. The MoE and local governments need to make consistent efforts in improving ICT facilities and support enhancement of teachers' ICT knowledge; and
2. The MoE needs to review the policy of not allowing students to use electronic gadgets such as smartphones, iPads and tablets in the schools. The ban on the use of electronic gadgets such as smartphones, iPads and tablets is not very explicit as a policy. However, there is literature to suggest that if students are taught to use them meaningfully these gadgets could be used as a powerful learning tool as the 21st century learning is a digitized learning generation. The MoE should therefore deliberate on overcoming the negative effects of use of gadgets rather than completely banning it in the schools. Furthermore, the Bhutan Education Blueprint 'Shift Six' clearly encourages learners to use ICT facilities to "access information and knowledge, and to make education more relevant and easier to administer" (MoE, 2014, p, 84).

5. Teaching and Learning of Grammar

One of the key aspects of the English curriculum and language proficiency is the teaching and learning of *grammar*. Findings from this study suggest that the teaching of grammar needs to be seriously addressed. Findings from this study confirmed earlier findings that there is a lot of confusion about the pedagogical aspect of teaching grammar (iDiscoveri & REC, 2009; CERD, 2009; Tshomo & Sherab, in press). Perhaps, this could be one of the factors attributing to the perceived poor English proficiency amongst the Bhutanese learners. This is something worth exploring further. Looking at the best practices of the other education systems, grammar is integrated with other aspects of the curriculum, which indicates that the current practices are appropriate.

Recommendation

- Teachers need to be thoroughly oriented on the intention of the curriculum (teaching grammar in context);
- Stakeholders also need to support teachers by providing relevant materials and skills to integrate grammar lessons into other genres of the English curriculum; and
- The CoEs should train pre-service teachers in integrating grammar lessons into other genres of the English curriculum.

6. Class III to IV English Syllabus Transition

One significant finding from this study was the existence of an abrupt transition from *class III to IV English syllabus*. Findings indicated that along with the introduction of new genres, a large number of materials from the foreign culture often made it difficult for the children to cope. The issue of foreign materials is also relevant for class VII and VIII texts.

Recommendation

- The REC should consider revising the class III to IV transition by making the level transition more progressive and coherent. The main gap in the transition from class III to IV is perceived to be caused by the classification of 'Readers' into literature genres in class IV. This shift tempted the teachers to focus more on the content matters and less on skill development, which is further driven by the content-based assessment mode used by the BCSEA. The text materials in the literature genres in class IV should consist more of local literature to ease the learners of learning difficulties.

7. Assessment Practices

Findings from this study showed some inconsistencies and confusion in terms of *assessment practices* followed in the schools. While there were more than adequate assessment tools provided in the guide, it became apparent that teachers were often confused and complained that they were not able to complete all the assessment tasks, not realising that they had the flexibility of choosing relevant and appropriate tools. This is clearly a sign of a gap that exists between the curriculum intention and the actual practice. Some of the other issues that emerged were a lack of training on the design and use of tools such as rubrics and checklists, lack of alignment between assessment system and curriculum, irrelevance of assessment tools for PP to 3, and problems associated with continuous assessment marks. This has implications to relevant stakeholders such as the REC, the BCSEA, and the CoEs. Such findings also point at a lack of collaboration between these stakeholders.

Recommendation

- All English teachers must have a clear understanding of the curriculum intention related to use of assessment tools provided in the guide. Therefore, the study recommends the relevant stakeholders to conduct PD programmes to orient teachers to the assessment tools and guides, including orientation on the intended balance between content and skill development;
- It is recommended that the CoEs thoroughly equip pre-service students with the necessary knowledge and skills to design assessment tools such as rubrics and checklists;
- The Educational Colleges' curriculum needs to link theory of assessment with practice; and
- The relevant stakeholders such as the REC, the BCSEA, MoE, and the CoEs need to work in close collaboration as these are the main stakeholders of the education system of Bhutan.

8. Foreign Materials in the Curriculum

One common issue that cuts across all levels of schools is the existence of too many *foreign materials* in the curriculum that often did not make much sense to the students as well as the teachers. Findings suggested that children as early as class four start learning foreign materials, which are often vague and irrelevant. It is important that children are given the opportunity to study curriculum materials relevant to their culture. In order to achieve meaningful learning, children must see themselves represented in their curriculum.

Recommendation

- Given the issue of foreign materials in the curriculum, it is recommended that the present English curriculum try to strike a balance between the local and the foreign materials, so that learners enjoy the material, and as a result develop interest in reading literature.

9. Reintroduction of Shakespeare

Findings from this study suggest that *Shakespeare* would be well received by the English teachers. However, there were some teachers, who believed that reintroducing Shakespeare would be illogical as the language in Shakespeare texts is considered out-dated. This would be an addition to the existing problems of the English curriculum being flooded with foreign materials. The MoE has already reintroduced Shakespeare without any scientific backing. As discussed in the earlier sections, there is enough evidence to show that such reforms are likely to encounter difficulties.

Recommendation

- If the reintroduction of Shakespeare into the high school system is to be successful, the MoE, the REC, and the Samtse College of Education need to provide appropriate training to the English teachers (both pre- and in-service) keeping in mind the intention of the reform. Teaching of Shakespeare must focus on skill development of the students rather than on the content (teaching word to word).

10. Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structure

The introduction of *Kagan's Cooperative Learning Structure* has been well received by the primary level teachers as it promotes active student engagement and meaningful learning. However, the high school teachers found it impractical for the higher classes as students found it slightly childish practically. Although most of the experiences in the lower level have been positive, teachers realised that it took away an enormous amount of time. Given the bulky syllabus, the continuation of teaching and learning using such strategies would have to be given second thought.

Recommendation

- If teachers are required to continue making good use of Kagan's cooperative learning structure, the study recommends the REC to reconsider the existing curriculum in terms of size across all key stages. It is also recommended that the use of Kagan's Learning Structures in the higher classes be refined to suit the mature learners.

11. Seen and Unseen Texts

Finally, findings also indicate that the relevant stakeholders need to resolve the issue of *seen and unseen texts*. It has been generally observed that students have been performing poorly in the unseen texts. The reason behind is that students are never serious about studying unseen texts. This is again another indication that the teachers were not adequately oriented on the pedagogical aspects and the curriculum intentions. Findings from this study also suggested that much of the confusion that existed in terms of teachers' knowledge, understanding, and awareness in terms of curriculum intentions were likely due to teachers not reading the curriculum framework, hence, an existence of a gap between the intention and the actual practice. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to ascertain the reasons for their reading habits. This is something that needs to be further investigated.

Recommendation

- All English teachers have to be thoroughly oriented not only in terms of the curriculum content but also on the curriculum intentions; and
- To narrow down the gap between the intention and the implementation process, all English teachers must thoroughly read and be familiar with the curriculum framework, and not just the text materials.

Concluding Remark

The findings from this study provide insight into the overall design and implementation process of the current English curriculum. Evidence from this evaluation study clearly suggests that the existing English curriculum has a sound vision, relevant standards for each level, and that the intentions are clearly mentioned in the curriculum framework. This is an indication that the overall English curriculum has a sound logical contingency in terms of antecedent, transaction and outcomes intent. However, there exists some problems such as with the design of curriculum materials and the implementation of the curriculum change which is an indication of the lack of empirical contingencies. This confirms the earlier findings with regard to the implementation of the curriculum reforms in the Bhutanese context. The gap that exists in terms of congruence between the intention and the actual observation needs to be narrowed down, so that the overall English curriculum outcomes become achievable.

Hence, the English curriculum across all key stages definitely requires a revamp to address the issues presented above and that the stakeholders, including the teachers, take good care of the implementation process. Otherwise, no matter how farsighted the vision is, how appropriate the standards are, and how realistic the intentions are, without significant attention to the ground realities (such as the selection of actual curriculum materials and the change agents in terms of attitude, support, resources, collaboration and skills), not much change is likely to happen (see Fig. 1). Some of the significant issues that emerged from the study centred on curriculum size, cultural relevancy, level transition, standard of language, assessment, technology, teaching grammar, teacher preparation (both pre-service and in-service), resources, and professional development. There is also a strong indication that the problem and the solution also lie in broader things like policies, funding mechanism, work culture, shared practices, teacher attitude, forms of accountability and responsibility which needs to be taken good care of. All these issues and components are interactive in a curriculum design and implementation process. Without due attention to these issues, achieving the goals of the English curriculum would go a long way. It is also imperative to note that these issues cannot be solved by a single agency. It demands the incredible support and collaboration from key stakeholders such as the REC, MoE, BCSEA, and the CoEs. After all, these agencies share a common vision of providing quality education and producing quality graduates.

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- All textbooks from PP-Class XII
- All guidebooks from PP-Class XII

Appendix A

Evaluation of the current school English curriculum

A project funded by REC

Focus group discussion guide for teachers

Grand Tour Question

The current PP-XII English curriculum is an outcome of the initiative for the English curriculum reform that began in 2002 with the publication of the Silken Knot. Could you please share your overall experiences as an English teacher in implementing the current curriculum?

Antecedent Phase: Evaluation question 1.

- Could you share your views on whether or not the current English curriculum is appropriate to build the standard of English of our students at par with international standard? (Probe on currency and look for their interpretation of currency)
- The initiative for the reform was in response to the concerns raised on the falling standard of English in the country. According to you how did the reform address the concerns?
- What professional guidance and support (PDs and others) did you receive in preparing you for the new curriculum?
- How did your training at the teacher college prepare you to teach the current curriculum?

Transaction Phase: Evaluation question 2.

- Could you share how In-service English teachers in the field were prepared to teach the current curriculum?
- What is your opinion on appropriateness of the current curriculum in achieving the set benchmarks?
- 6.1 How appropriate are the “Teacher Guide books”?
- 6.2 What is your comment on the syllabus content coverage & teaching periods allotted?
- What are your opinions about the cultural/contextual relevance of the textbooks and other supplementary readers?
- Please share your views on the relevance of the standard of the curriculum materials for the intended grade level.
- What are some of the specific teaching methods and strategies you use in English class?
- What are some of the frequently used learning activities in English lessons?
- Comment on the availability and adequacy of Teaching Learning Materials (Textbook, Guide Book, Supplementary Materials, tapes, audio files, videos, etc.).
- What support mechanisms (if any) are in place to implement the current curriculum?
- In context of the need to use “Teacher’s Guide” how flexible is it to accommodate creativity in your class such as in, lesson planning, setting objectives, introducing activities, etc.?
- What are some of the assessment tools you use in your English lessons?
- Comment on the kinds of homework?
- Frequency of assessment?
- Details of the assessment tools (Rubrics/Feedback/Criteria?)

- (For IV-XII) teachers – Please comment on the use of unseen texts such as poetry in your day to day Lessons. You might also share how resourceful you have to be in getting such materials)
- One major shift when designing the existing English curriculum has been assessing skills as opposed to assessing contents as in the past. Please share a typical example of you prepare your students in acquisition of skills.

Outcome Phase: Evaluation 3.

- What are some of the opportunities and challenges in teaching the current curriculum? How do the opportunities (if any) benefit the learners? How do you overcome the challenges (if any)?
- Teachers teaching in primary level point out lack of gradual progression in classes III to IV English curriculum. What are your observations on this?
- (For IV-XII teachers) English curriculum for grades IV-XII is specified in terms of strands- Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Language and Literature. Please share whether the curriculum addresses each of these strands adequately in good balance.
- (For PP-III teachers) The English curriculum for PP-III is theme-based unlike the IV-XII curricula which are dealt in strands such as Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Language and Literature. As English teachers for primary level can you share your opinion whether theme-based curriculum help children prepare for higher level English learning?
- MoE has a plan to reintroduce Shakespeare in English curriculum. Please share your comments on the opportunities and challenges of reintroducing Shakespeare?
- What are some of the remarkable achievements of the current curriculum?
- What are some of the drawbacks of the current curriculum?
- Please share your observations on whether or not teaching of language is adequately addressed?
- Some teachers think Grammar should be taught as a separate topic while others believe that teaching grammar in context is more effective. Could you share which of these approaches are adopted in the curriculum?

Appendix B

Teacher Survey Questionnaire (attached in a separate file)