

# Rationalization of School Curriculum

## Background

The conventional teacher centred and rote learning form of education has served us well through ages. As the education system in Bhutan embraces the 21<sup>st</sup> Century education framework and principles, it warrants a paradigm shift in curriculum design and development, including the pedagogy, commensurate the competency based learning. An approach, which underscores that learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is for the development of competencies through active engagement of learners in learning experiences, guided by formation and utilisation of “working knowledge”. This empowers learners to take responsibilities of their learning and develop “portable skills or soft skills,” such as critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration, vital for all as individuals with unique talent and competencies. The current culture of curriculum design and practices in schools, however, do not render condition to facilitate realisation of the national aspiration of nurturing “nationally rooted and globally competent” citizen.

Amongst others, it has always been a concern for REC on the extent, relevancy and quality of the curriculum in all subjects. Thus, in order to facilitate quality learning for 21<sup>st</sup> Century education, REC has initiated major curriculum reform in all subjects.

## Rationale

The Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 indicated that the existing curriculum was ‘heavy’. This was echoed as one of the major pointers in the National School Curriculum Conference 2016 that the curriculum was ‘vast’. These findings led to the need for curriculum “thinning” [Resolution 3.1.10 (IV)]. In response to these findings, REC started the rationalization of the existing curriculum by reviewing and screening out the obsolete and irrelevant content, and updating them with the most recent information and also rectifying errors in the textbooks. Therefore, some portions of the syllabi from several subjects, for instance, have been dropped. The rationalization or thinning of curriculum is one of the important considerations made while developing new textbooks based on new curriculum frameworks.

The curriculum rationalization process also aligns very well with Resolution 13 of the National Education Conference 2018 of “Doing away with the Saturday classes”. The para 13.4 of the resolution requires ‘REC to work on curriculum thinning and review of time allocation for each subject’. This resolution has further facilitated REC to expedite the curriculum rationalization and review the time and period allocation for each subject.

## Rationalization of the school curricula is based on the following strategies:

- i. Review the goals and outcomes of each subject to identify topics, chapters, learning activities, exercises and assessment.
- ii. Develop rationalized syllabus for each subjects ensuring conceptual linkages and progression within the chapter or topic in the textbooks.
- iii. Minimize lexical density in text by reducing heavy textual materials from the textbooks.
- iv. Remove topics, learning activities or assessment items, which are redundant, overlapping irrelevant or inappropriate.
- v. Delete irrelevant or inappropriate illustrations or diagrams, and examples from the text.
- vi. Update and align the content width and depth with the teaching time available for each subject.

- vii. The revised syllabi for each subject are categorised and compiled under four subject classifications, namely STEM, Social Sciences, Language, and TVET & Commercial Studies.

### **The review of the instructional time allocation is based on the following criteria:**

- i. Maintain the instructional time requirement at the international standard.
- ii. Maintain gradual increase of instructional time across most of the key stages.
- iii. Reduce the instructional time for each subject across the grades based on the doing away of the Saturday classes.
- iv. Allocate time for personal development learning areas, such as HPE, Arts Education, Values Education, CGC, TVET Program (clubs and PVOP).
- v. Non-curricular activities and programmes are to be conducted outside the instructional hours.
- vi. Calculate 150 actual curricular instructional days (excluding examination days in June and November months) in an academic year based on 5 working days per week.
- vii. Calculation of instructional time is based on 8 periods a day of 40 minutes each.

### **Conclusion**

Instructional time refers to the actual contact time in the classroom. This is the minimum time available for the delivery of the curriculum including assessment. Instructional Time equals to number of days multiplied by number of periods per day times duration of one period (180 x 8 x 40). The rationalization of the curriculum is based on 150 days of the actual instructional time.

Instructional days are the total number of days within which the curricular activities are conducted. Within these days, a maximum of 5.33 hours (320 minutes) are available for actual classroom instruction per day. This calculation is based on 8 periods a day of 40 minutes each. The average instructional time in the OECD countries ranges from 799 to 915 hours per year. This includes all the educational activities that happen in the school in a day. However, the calculation of instructional time for the rationalized curriculum is based on the actual contact time for curriculum delivery, which has resulted in more instructional time than in OECD countries.

Lastly, it must be noted that the instructional time and days are suggested guide. Thus, it is envisaged that schools will make adjustment in instructional time as deemed applicable.

Sl No	Strand/Unit/Chapter/Topic	Time (mins)	Weighting (%)	Changes	Reasons
1	TVET trades in 5 schools (Old curriculum) currently taught in class X only as it is phased out in class IX.	3600 (X)		No change	Same number of periods (3 in a week) allotted. The loss of time due to reduction to 40 minutes per period can be compensated through use of club periods to teach the subjects.
2	TVET (nine trades) in 7 schools to be implemented in 2020	3600 (IX)		No change	The proposal of 176 hours can be met with the implementation of differentiated curriculum for Science and Maths.
		3600 (X)		No change	do
		7200 (XI)		No change	The proposal of 256 hours can be met from the implementation of differentiated curriculum for Science and Maths.
		7200 (XII)		No change	do