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Lighting the Lamp School Library Development in Bhutan

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Telephone: (975-8) 272011/272829

Facsimile: (975-8) 271620

Email: cerdir@druknet.bt

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The views and opinions expressed in Yontoen are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Centre for Educational Research & Development, National Institute of Education, Paro, or the Royal University of Bhutan.

Author's note

Information concerning school library development was gathered during numerous visits to schools and educational institutes across Bhutan over a twenty year period from 1984 to 2004. During these visits, informal and wide-ranging discussions were held with teachers, especially the teacher-librarians, and many libraries were seen. In Thimphu, informal discussions were also held with education officers and representatives of donor agencies involved in education sector activities. All of this helped to improve my understanding of the developing school library system in its countrywide context.

Terminology: In this paper, any references to individual schools and administrative units of the education sector use the terminology which was current at the time to which reference is made.

Acknowledgements: I wish to warmly thank all those who have shared ideas with me. I find your dedication and enthusiasm inspiring. The fresh perspectives and many useful insights which I gained through our meetings have contributed greatly in the writing of this paper. However, I must stress that all opinions expressed and conclusions drawn are entirely my own.

Felicity Shaw
Centre of Asian Studies
University of Hong Kong
fshaw@hkucc.hku.hk

About the author:

Felicity Shaw is a professional librarian (now retired) with over 30 years working experience, mainly in the academic sector. She retains academic links as Honorary Research Fellow, Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong. Her professional interests focus principally on library organization and management. Since the mid-1980s she has been engaged in research and writing on library development in Bhutan

Editorial

A reading community is a wise community. It has access to the mind and soul of its own literary and scientific culture as well as that of cultures beyond itself. Reading enlarges the range of one's mind and enables cultivation of taste. It provides information on diverse fields of human endeavour and helps develop insights into the nature of phenomena.

The Library is supposed to be the most important facility in enabling a reading culture. It is a place where the inquiring minds of the community converge in search of the light of learning. The Library is the soul of institution of learning.

The Ministry of Education has long recognized the central importance of the need to encourage reading in our schools, set up libraries, albeit modest, and trained staff to man them. The revision of the English curriculum currently underway recommends intensive and extensive reading to meet the national standards that we expect our school graduates to achieve when they leave school.

In this Spring Issue 2005 of Yontoen – the CERD Occasional Papers, we present the saga of the origin, evolution and status of school library development in Bhutan. Lighting the Lamp is the work of a devoted professional who has followed most closely the growth of this critical learning resource in the country.

I thank Mrs Felicity M Shaw for sharing with our readers the labour of her love. Lighting the Lamp will be a most welcome source of much-needed information and knowledge on the development of library resources and services in our schools.

May the lamp continue to light out way

Thakur S Powdyel.

LIGHTING THE LAMP

School library development in Bhutan

- **Felicity M Shaw**

"Before I was in darkness but now reading has taken me to a place where the sun always shines brightly." Thupten Tshering, Class 8 A, Nangkor JHS, Pemagatshel¹

Only traditional monastic education was widely available within Bhutan before the country began its modernization programme in 1961. This paper first outlines the development of a modern, state-run education system and early attempts at library provision in the new schools, then studies in greater detail the ongoing School Library Development Project being implemented with funding support from donor agencies and through World Bank-funded (but education sector-inspired) development projects. Significant achievements in library development and reading promotion activities are being brought about through the vision and commitment of career education officers, working closely with sympathetic donor agency counterparts towards realization of longstanding goals.

INTRODUCTION

The kingdom of Bhutan is a small, mountainous country in the eastern Himalayas. It is bounded on the north by the Tibet Autonomous region of China, and on the south (west to east) by the Indian states of Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The population of approximately 640,000 is mainly engaged in subsistence farming. The system of government can best be described as a modified and evolving form of constitutional monarchy with popular representation. Modernisation of the country began in 1961, when Bhutan's first five year development plan was launched with generous support from India, which remains Bhutan's principal donor. Development aid also comes from various United Nations (UN) agencies and a number of county-based nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

Modern Bhutan is a multi-lingual society. Most Bhutanese follow Mahayana Buddhism, but in the south, most people are Hindu. The national language is Dzongkha, derived from the Tibetan dialect spoken by the forebears of the people of western Bhutan. English is the principal medium of instruction in the schools, but all students are expected to attain fluency in written and spoken Dzongkha. Adult literacy is rising steadily, and is now around 54%.²

EDUCATION SYSTEM

Education is free, but not compulsory. The government is committed to providing free basic education to all eligible students up to and including class X. Students are admitted for primary schooling at age six, but in practice many start school several years later. Community/primary schools (CPS, CS,PS) run from pre-primary (PP) to class VI, lower secondary schools (LSS) to class VIII, and middle secondary schools (MSS) to class X. Selected secondary school, (19 in 2005) also offer the post-secondary classes XI to XII. These are known as higher secondary schools (HSS). There is some

overlap outside major towns: lower secondary schools may include some primary classed, and middle secondary schools may start from class VII.

Movement upwards through the system is dependent upon success in common examinations held countrywide following classed VI, VIII and X. students who do well in the class X common examination may continue through classes XI and XII and then sit the Indian school Certificate examination (ISC). A good pass mark in the ISC opens the door to degree level studies in Bhutan, or further afield on scholarships (generally to India). Secondary students who fail their examinations may repeat the year. Alternatively, they may continue their education at a private school in Bhutan, or else seek admission to a school in India.

Primary schools are usually day schools, but those in rural areas may have boarding sections for the children who live furthest away. In remote, sparsely populated areas, small community primary schools offering multi-grade teaching are established to fill the gap.³ As student numbers grow, community primary schools are generally upgraded to full primary schools. Day schools are attended mainly by children who live within 1 hours' walking distance (i.e. about 3 km. radius), but in very sparsely populated regions some children are still walking 2-3 hours daily each way. Secondary schools in the capital do not have boarding facilities, but all others are mainly boarding schools, with just a few local day scholars. Government policy is to keep students in their home districts when allocating secondary school places.

As student numbers increase, education facilities are expanded by building new schools, and adding teaching streams or higher classes established schools. If higher classes are added, a school is upgraded, and when a school is upgraded, its name changes to reflect its new status. Prior to 2002, lower secondary schools were known as junior high schools and middle/upper secondary schools as high schools. In this article, individual schools are referred to according to the terminology which was in use at the time to which reference is made.

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION

A few primary schools had been established in the 1950s, but only monastic education was widely available within the country before modernization got under way. Children whose parents wanted them to have a secular, western style education were sent by the government to boarding schools in the nearby Indian hill stations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong which, before the roads came up in the 1960s, were about seven days' walk from the capital, Thimphu.

Education has always been one of the most important aims of Bhutan's development strategy, and in the first five year plan emphasis was given to expansion of existing education facilities. The new schools found it difficult to attract students initially – teachers would go around the houses and literally beg parents to permit their children to come to classes. However, once the utility of education became apparent (it led to employment prospects beyond subsistence farming – possibly even in Bhutan's growing civil service) demand quickly spread.

In 1963, the government invited a Canadian Jesuit educationist, Father William Mackey, to move to Trashigang, eastern Bhutan and take charge of Trashigang Primary School. For Father Mackey, who had been working with the Darjeeling

Mission in north-east India since 1947, this was the beginning of a lifetime involvement with education in Bhutan. Aided by two Jesuit colleagues, he brought the school of about 200 students up to the first high school in the country. In 1968, the threesome moved up to Kanglung (22 km. distant) and started Sherubtse Public School. Sherubtse subsequently expanded through high school and junior college stages to become an affiliated college of the University of Delhi. Sherubtse College held its first convocation ceremony on Nov. 18, 1986.⁴ Father Mackey and colleagues also founded jigme Sherubling High School, eastern Bhutan and Punakha High School, western Bhutan. Jesuit educationists have played a major role in development of the educational infrastructure of modern Bhutan.

In 1983, after 19 years of running schools in Bhutan, Father Mackey was invited to move to Education Headquarters in Thimphu, and at the end of 1985 was appointed Chief Inspector, inspectorate of Schools. Father Mackey, who was awarded Bhutanese citizenship in March, 1985, stayed on after Bhutan's contract with the Jesuits expired at the end of 1988 in conformity with the new localization policy. After Father Mackey stepped down from his post in 1992 at the age of 77, the Bhutanese government appointed him honorary adviser to Education, for life. Father Mackey had a great appreciation of the culture and traditions of Bhutan and was widely known and much loved throughout his adopted homeland. When he passed away on October 18, 1995 after a short illness, he was deeply mourned across Bhutan.⁵

In the absence of a domestic trained teacher cadre, schools were for some years run and staffed largely by contract teachers recruited from India (the majority from Kerala). In 1968, a residential teacher training college opened in Samtse, admitting class X graduates for a two-year Primary Teacher Training Certificate (PTTC) program. Degree level studies were introduced in 1983, when the first batch of class XII graduates began the three-year Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) course. In 1974 a second residential primary teacher training college was established in Paro. These two colleges now comprise the Nation institutes of Education (NIE).

Currently, NIE Samtse offers both B. Ed. (Primary)⁶ and B. Ed. (Secondary) three-year degree courses, a one-year Postgraduate Certificated in Education (PGCE) course for graduates of other disciplines wishing to make a career in teaching (introduced in 1989), and (from 1995) a part-time Distance Teacher Education Programme (DTEP) for in-service teachers, enabling holders of the PTTC to upgrade their qualifications. (The PTTC courses at Samtse and Paro were phased out in 2000 and 2003 respectively.) Two years of DTEP study leads to a Diploma in Primary Education; diploma holders are awarded a B. Ed. degree in Primary Education after three further years of study. NIE Paro offers B. Ed. (Primary) and B. Ed. (Secondary) three-year degree courses, a five-year, part-time Master of Education programme focusing on educational leadership and management for heads of schools (from 2003), and a three-year, part-time Diploma in Leadership and Management programme for the heads of community and primary schools (from 2004)

In 1981, total student enrolment was 36, 700. In 1990, 68,013 students were attending 233 schools; a further 2,341 studied at eight institutes and several Sanskrit pathshalas (these schools cater to study of Sanskrit). Approximately 38% of students were female. Teaching staff numbered 2,419, approximately 56% of whom were Bhutanese nationals.⁷

By contrast, in 2004, 139,369 students were enrolled at 433 schools and 14 institutes (including two Sanskrit pathshalas, each with 26 students and one teacher). Over 47% of students were female. Teaching staff numbered 4,697, over 845 of whom were Bhutanese nationals. An additional 15,866 students (over 67% female) were enrolled at 455 non-formal education centres, mainly attached to schools. All 519 non-formal education teachers (these are employed as part-time instructors) were Bhutanese nationals.⁸

SCHOOL LIBRARIES: the early years

Official recognition of the importance of libraries in schools came in 1947, with publication of a slim, 16-page document outlining the government's national education policy for the next ten years.⁹ This policy document states that although much had been achieved in the past, now the limited resources available were far too thinly spread, and that the next ten years should be an era of consolidation. This document goes on to lay out the proposed educational structure and discusses specific aspects of it.

In the final sector, dealing with schools administration, a paragraph is devoted to the Library: "The most important room in every school should be the library. Each class should have graded library books which should be read by each student in turn during schools year."¹⁰ A cautionary note is sounded in the conclusion: "The educational system in our country is still in its developing stage. All plans of consolidation and expansion must take into consideration the severe constraint of resources, both in terms of finance and personnel. What has been outlined above is a practical plan of action for the next ten years."¹¹

Although the importance of school libraries had been formally recognized, it was to be many years before funding could be spared for library purposes – for either books, or a special library room in which to house them, or for training and deployment of library staff. Student numbers increased sevenfold between 1971 (when a student enrolment of "over 9,000" was reported¹²) and 1991, and through this period funding priority had to be given to the building and fitting out of schools, and the recruitment and training of teachers.

Accommodation: When a school was first established, the books might be shelved in a separate room designated for library purposes, which would be kept locked except when a class was brought to the library. However, as student numbers grew, schools which started out with a separate library room often had to surrender this later for classroom use. More commonly the book collection would from the start be housed in locked cupboards in a classroom or the staff office, or on open shelves in the school storeroom, which was kept locked. If there was no special library room, teachers would bring an assortment of books to the classroom for students to look at and perhaps borrow, or else establish classroom libraries, borrowing books in their own names from the book collection wherever it was stored, and keeping them in the classroom, usually in a locked box which would be opened only during library periods for reading and/or loaning.¹³

Assembling collections: In the early years, there were many problems. School budgets made no provision for library development and in most schools basic

collections were assembled mainly from books donated to Bhutan through various government-to-government aid and clearinghouse schemes.

Sorting and distribution were handled by the Education Central Stores staff in Phuentsholing, whose main responsibility was the distribution of textbooks and other supplies to the growing number of schools. Due to shortage of both manpower and delivery vehicles, there were often delays in making up the batches of library books and sending them out to the schools. Sometimes consignments were not appropriate for the kind of school to which they were sent. This could have been due to sorting errors, but most likely reflected that the libraries were being stocked largely from shipments of books donated to Bhutan, and that more suitable books had not been available.

Additional problems for secure and timely delivery came when school construction in rural areas began to outpace the developing road network. Where there was no road access to a recipient school, its consignment would be dropped off at the nearest school on the road, or else left at the dzongkhag (district) headquarters for the dzongkhag education officer (DEO) to arrange collection/delivery. The DEOs generally carried everything themselves to schools accessible only by walking track. They often had a wide area to cover on their rounds, so delays were inevitable.¹⁴ For example, many new community schools were added in Trashigang dzongkhag during 1991. The DEO could not visit individual schools more frequently than every one or two months, as he had 57 schools to cover, many of which were there hours or more on foot from the nearest road. (Information from World University Service of Canada volunteer teacher, Adele Platt at Radhi, Nov. 21, 1991)

In this situation, consignments for remote schools sometimes did not arrive or, if they did reach their destination, were found to include fewer books than itemized on the packing list. Clerical or packing errors may have caused some discrepancies, but it is possible that some shortfalls were caused by the purloining of books from packages en route.

Material disbursed under the various donation schemes largely comprised books withdrawn from other libraries, multiple copies (often 20-40) of remaindered school textbooks (usually English or History readers for North American students), and pre-owned books (presumably donated by individuals)- however, many schools also received reasonably up to date encyclopedia sets and other reference works through such sources. Although most of this donated stock was not particularly appropriate, in the context of the times virtually any book was a welcome addition to the shelves. Generally speaking, donated material which was relevant was useful for reference purposes, rather than for stimulating an interest in reading, but with a committed and innovative teacher in charge of the library, even seemingly unpromising material could be successfully exploited during a class library period.

Secondary school heads sometimes managed to set aside something from the budget for their libraries, and in most schools money collected in fines for overdue or lost books was used to buy new – generally children's fiction, since this was where the need was greatest in most school libraries.¹⁵ In a few of the earlier schools established and then initially run with a measure of donor support, there was generally some

funding earmarked for library from time to time throughout the period of donor involvement.¹⁶

Special mention should be made of India's contribution to the school libraries in these early years. Every book collection, however modest, included a range of English language Indian newspapers, weeklies and children's magazines, regularly supplied to schools countrywide by India House (India's embassy in Thimphu). Collections sometimes included a small batch of children's books from the same source. (Indian's contribution to library development has been and continues to be substantial.)

More focused stock augmentation for individual libraries became possible as the pace of modernization grew, and international organizations and country-based NGOs participating in the development process set up offices in Bhutan. Library donations could be attracted through personal contacts with staff of these organizations. In such cases, the donor agency would order and donate titles from a books recommendation list drawn up by the school.

For some years volunteer teachers, recruited through the United Nations Volunteer programme (UNV) and country-based NGOs, played an important role in the teaching of English. Agencies usually provided their volunteers with small grants (£100-200) which could be spent on library books for the schools to which they had been assigned. Volunteers might ask relatives and friends back home to collect up and send reading material for the school library. Volunteers often formed close bonds with their school communities, and would keep in touch and send books and other materials after leaving Bhutan at the end of the two-years contract period.¹⁷

Setting up the libraries: Nearly all the libraries were set up and run by teachers (mainly teachers of English, recruited on contract from India) who looked after the library / book collection in addition to their regular duties. Most had no previous experience of library work and had been selected by their school heads because they were English teachers, and therefore thought to have an interest in books.¹⁸ There were no written guidelines to follow, so these untrained but generally enthusiastic teacher – librarians devised their own systems for library arrangement, sometimes modeling them on those of libraries with which they were familiar (perhaps from their own student days).

Due to their inexperience, teacher – librarians sometimes devised unnecessarily complicated systems for stock recording and control. However, all the libraries tended to be organized and run along similar lines: non-fiction stock was grouped by subject, and fiction by reading age. Detailed stock registers were kept, in varying ways. Loans were usually recorded in register books, one for each class, or else on individual student loan sheets which were batched by class. Students (and very occasionally teachers) were fined for overdues and damage to or loss of books. Handling of stock was carefully regulated and, in their anxiety to safeguard the contents of the collection, teacher – librarians sometimes made it difficult for students to gain access to the books for browsing purposes: for libraries which had few books and no funds to buy more, stock security had to be the main concern.

Continuity of administration was easily lost with a change of librarian. If other teachers knew how the library was run, or the retiring librarian was to remain on the staff, there would be no problem, but when the retiring librarian was leaving the

school for another, it was not uncommon for the new librarian to re-inventory and reorganize the collection and introduce a new set of administrative procedures. (Of course, where the new librarian had previous library experience this could be a good thing, if the result was the fine tune administrative routines.)

Library management became less of a problem in the early 1980s, when Bhutan began to receive volunteer teachers. School principals would usually put their volunteers in charge of the library, assuming previous experience in this area. Libraries set up and run by volunteers provided good models, with easily understood stock cataloguing and management systems, and clear instructions written in the front of the registers, explaining what to do. The volunteers were adept and innovative in exploitation of library resources to support their teaching programs. Eager to encourage an interest in reading for pleasure, they tended to criticise the philosophy of the locked cupboard libraries, and generally gave students much freer access to the books. However, sometimes their enthusiasm backfired, and where insufficient attention had been paid to library security, stock loss was higher than when the collection was under more conservative management.

Introduction of library periods: In the early 1980s, work began on restructuring the school syllabus to make it more appropriate to Bhutan's needs. Library periods were made a compulsory feature of the new school syllabus in 1984, with each class scheduled for one library period per week. When library periods were first introduced, few schools had a special library room, so students would select their reading matter from batches of books brought to the classroom by the teacher. Some library education might be given, but the main emphasis was on encouraging an interest in reading.

SCHOOL LIBRARIES: moving ahead

Renewed focus on strengthening the education sector dates from Bhutan's sixth five year development plan (7/87-6/92). With the country's basic infrastructure now firmly in place, it was now timely to pay closer attention to upgrading of facilities.

In spring 1989, His Majesty the King, accompanied by senior officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB), toured seven major dzongkhags, and held meetings in all the secondary schools and postsecondary institutions to brief students and teachers on government policies and the objectives of the Sixth Plan. He informed students and teachers that major renovations and improvements were necessary for most of the country's 195 schools and institutions, and that the problems faced by the education system in Bhutan stemmed from a shortage of qualified teachers and instructors, the need for better management and administration, and the poor quality of past construction work. As a result, Bhutan had failed to derive the expected benefits from the vast expenditures incurred in the past and must now make further investments to improve all educational institutions.

The importance attached by the government to improving the education system in Bhutan was reflected in the budget of Nu. 778.76 million Sanctioned for the Sixth Plan, and in view of what needed to be done, it was expected that even this substantial budget would be exceeded by the end of the Sixth Plan. In all his meetings in the schools and institutions, His Majesty repeatedly pointed out that the students that the

future of the nation lay in the hands of Bhutan's younger generations, and that the education system had the vital role of moulding younger generations into loyal and dedicated citizens.¹⁹

With this renewed emphasis on the education sector, as reflected in funding from the Sixth Plan onwards, ²⁰ school libraries could at last move forward.

Upgrading of library facilities: Libraries were already benefiting under a school building renovation programme begun in the mid-1980s, where work at individual schools sometimes included construction of a purpose building science-cum-library block. Increased scope for school library development came in 1988, with the launching of the Primary Education Project (PEP) to support the government's development plan for primary education.²¹ Major expenditure continued through the Seventh Plan (7/92-6/97).²² Plans for individual dzongkhags included the renovation of existing schools, the construction of new schools, and the upgrading and improvement of existing schools with the provision of additional facilities including a room for the library, often in a new science-cum-library block.

Under PEP, 12 new primary and junior high schools were constructed across the country, in each of which there was provision for a school library. PEP funding furnished these and other school libraries, and books were provided to many schools under the project, which came to a close at the end of the Seventh Plan period. By this time, school building and renovation plans routinely included library accommodation. This might be in a science-cum-library block, or in the administration block with the school staffroom and offices, or in some other building, but provision for a dedicated library room was always made.

School budgets and the library: A modest, separately itemized provision for library development was introduced into secondary school budgets in the mid-1980s. First set at Nu. 5,000 p.a., the library budget was increased to Nu. 10, 000 p.a. in 1991. Separate provision ceased when a general purpose school enrichment fund was introduced in 1992, at the start of the Seventh Plan. The Enrichment Fund is currently (i.e. 2004) set at Nu. 50,000 p.a. for higher secondary schools and Nu. 25,000 p.a. for middle and lower secondary schools. This fund is completely separated from a school's welfare fund and may not be used for welfare purposes. Schools may use the Enrichment Fund to buy medicines, laboratory consumables, stationery and other items. Many schools buy library books from it but, as use of the fund is discretionary, what – if anything – the library gets will depend on a school's circumstances and how library-oriented its head is.

Although there is no separate fund for library development nowadays, schools and other educational institutes do make budget proposals to the Ministry of Education under different heads at regular intervals during each five year plan period. If they make convincing proposals for development of their libraries and funds are available, they will get the money. It might seem that the library's interests would be better safeguarded if it had its own budget but, irrespective of the system of disbursement, what really matters is just how committed the principal and / or library committee members of individual schools are to library development. In the final analysis, it is the attitude of the principal which is crucial in determining the fate of the library. With

these considerations in mind, individual school libraries fare best under a centrally funded and administered collection development strategy.

LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT CONSOLIDATED

Through the 1980s, the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD) of the Department of Education had been occupied primarily with the development of an independent education curriculum for Bhutan and the preparation of new textbooks, to replace the Indian school syllabus and textbooks hitherto in use. (In 1993 CTDD was renamed the Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS), reflecting a change in direction now that its original mission had been largely accomplished.)

Moves towards establishing a formal programme for library administration and development date from 1992 when CTDD brought out a new publication, *Running the school library: a teacher librarian's guide*.²³ Few of Bhutan's teacher-librarians had had any previous library experience, and CTDD's new library guide was written primarily to address this problem, to provide practical advice on running the school library to those teachers to whom this important task was entrusted, and to introduce some uniformity of practice.

Many school libraries throughout the country had been surveyed in connection with preparation of the guide. The contents were wide-ranging and basic, assuming in the reader no prior knowledge of library work. The importance of setting up a proper system of management was emphasized, and clear instructions were given on how to carry out standard library routines. Adoption of the school library version of the Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme was recommended,²⁴ and a brief summary of the schedules, adapted for Bhutan's needs, was included as an appendix for the benefit of schools which might not be able to obtain access to the book.

Further assistance came with the July, 1994 launching of *CAPSS Newsletter*, (replacing separate English and Science newsletters) as part of CAPSS' professional support to schools and teachers. Libraries were given prominence in the first issue, which featured an article on how to organize and make best use of a small book collection.²⁵ Published three times a year, this newsletter covers a wide range of education-related topics and frequently includes hints or short articles on different aspects of school librarianship, with the emphasis always on how to make best use of available resources and how to encourage students to read.

School Library Development Project Launched: In November 1995, CAPSS announced the launching of the School Library Development Project (SLDP), under which funding would be secured to supply schools with a core collection of graded readers, novels and reference materials, and also basic library furniture. Schools were asked to earmark possible rooms for future use as a library.

Training of teacher-librarians was also to be funded under SLDP, and principals of high and junior high schools were invited to nominate one of their teachers to attend an induction programme to be mounted at NIE Samtse during the forthcoming winter vacation: "We would like the schools to select these people carefully. Teacher librarians are going to play an increasingly important role in the future. Once trained we would like these teachers to continue to work as teacher librarians. Teacher

librarians are definitely not clerks or store keepers. They are educators who should be able to help others to learn. We would like to congratulate all those who get selected for this important role."²⁶ It was envisaged that the teacher-librarians would have a reduced teaching load and devote 60-70% of their time to library management. Schools responded eagerly, and the 30-place course was soon oversubscribed.

Library training begins: The first induction programme for teacher-librarians was held at NIE Samtse from Dec. 30, 1995 to Jan. 11, 1996. The Programme was run by the librarian of NIE Samtse with the assistance of two experienced high school librarians. Nearly 40 teachers from high schools and junior high schools attended the course, which was based mainly on the handbook *Running the school library*, but also included a general introduction to the theory of cataloguing and classification, and a hands-on session on binding and repairs. This first library induction programme was very well received.

The second course was held Jan. 13-26, 1997, also at NIE Samtse, and run by the same team. The 45 participants comprised junior high school teacher-librarians and teacher-librarians from the larger primary schools. The head of the Library Development Unit and the Librarian of CAPSS also attended as observers. Drawing on their experience of the first workshop, the resource persons tried to make the content of this workshop more practical, so as to match participants' needs more closely.

In mid - 1997, a Library Induction Course appraisal team from CAPSS and NIE visited schools which had sent teachers to the first two workshops, to monitor the running of their libraries. The principal object was to get teacher-librarians' feedback and find out about the problems they encountered. Insights gained from this appraisal contributed to further enhancement of the workshop course content, to ensure that what was taught would be both relevant and easy to implement.

Induction courses have continued to be held annually, with around 40 participants in each programme. Workshop content has become more practical over the years, and theory is now kept to the minimum required to make a topic comprehensible. More time is set aside for group discussion and the sharing of experiences these days. In addition to the course facilitators, several experienced teacher-librarians attend as additional resource persons to interact with participants. At the conclusion of the workshop, participants complete an evaluation form covering all aspects of the course: hostel accommodation and meals; course content; most interesting topic/presenter; course duration.²⁷

Recruitment of library assistants: When the library workshops were first introduced, the intention was to build up a cadre of trained teacher-librarians who would have fewer teaching duties, and spend more time in their libraries. However, student numbers rose rapidly over the next few years, resulting in the serious teacher shortage.²⁸ In 1999 the post of library assistant (LA) was established to relieve pressure on the teacher-librarians, who could no longer be spared from classroom duties for long enough to look after their libraries as well. Placement priority was given to higher / middle secondary schools in the 1999 and 2000 recruitment exercises. Recruiting for lower secondary schools began with the 2001 intake. There is at present no plan to place LAs in primary schools.

With growing numbers of school leavers entering the work force each year, competition for these permanent positions within the Ministry's Administrative Support Cadre has become fierce, and in the 2003 recruitment exercise all but one of those appointed were class XII graduates. LAs are assigned to schools immediately on appointment (preferably to work under the supervision of a teacher-librarian or a more experienced LA) and sent for workshop training later, as places become available. Generally speaking, workshop training is now reserved for LAs, with priority given to those who have not already received training, but schools lacking an LA may nominate an interested teacher to attend. However, it may be several years before the training backlog is cleared.

Although there are now sufficient teachers overall, deployment is uneven and needs vary from dzongkhag to dzongkhag.²⁹ Moreover, frequent changes have been made to the curriculum since 1999, when schools formally initiated value education programmes for their students, and much time is now taken up with the supervision of the additional co-curricular activities which were introduced as part of this bid to provide more wholesome education. For these reasons, in many schools, teachers remain hard-pressed, with little time to spare for the library. Problems in implementation of the LA scheme are well understood. Results are mixed at present, but the scheme is clearly proving a success in school where management of the library is closely supervised by a teacher or trained teacher-librarian, who acts as mentor and provides advice and assistance as required to keep things running smoothly.³⁰

SCHOOL LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: support and implementation

When the SLDP was launched in November, 1995, the goal was to have 3-4,000 volumes in community school libraries, 5-6,000 volumes in primary school libraries, 7-8,000 volumes in junior high school libraries and 10-12,000 volumes in high school libraries, with around 25% of eventual stock supplied within several years of inception of the Project.

In 1996, a separate unit was established within the English Education Unit of CAPSS to give formal focus to library provision in the schools, which would be greatly enhanced during the Eight Plan (1997-2002).³¹ In the first few years of the SLDP, the Library Development Unit (LDU) was occupied primarily with collection development. The LDU compiled lists of books to be obtained for the different categories of school library beneficiaries under the Project, while CAPSS arranged procurement and distribution to the schools. When CAPSS moved to the NIE Paro campus in 2000 and became Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD) as part of a restructuring exercise, the LDU was dissolved and its functions absorbed within other units of CAPSD.

Although the number of schools has almost doubled since 1996 (with most of the new ones being community and primary schools) collection development targets are being met, and nowadays equal emphasis is given to collection development, library training, and reading promotion activities.

Donor support for the development of community / primary school libraries comes primarily from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which secondary school library development is supported mainly through consecutive World Bank-funded

education development projects. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) assists development of both primary and secondary school libraries through separate projects administered by the Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO) in Thimphu. UNICEF, CCO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also contributed in donating copies of Bhutan-related works (published at home or abroad) to all schools and other educational institutions. Additionally, both UNICEF and CCO have published colourful easy readers on Bhutanese themes and donated multiple copies of these to the schools.

UNICEF

UNICEF is a reactive (rather than proactive) development partner, assisting with funding where the government has identified needs. UNICEF aid activities are focused mainly on the education sector, and especially on assisting the government to improve the quality of education – both the quality of learning and the quality of teaching, and on the provision of teaching aids and materials. Ongoing programs support basic education quality improvement, early childhood education, education for the disabled and disadvantaged, non-formal education and distance education for teachers. UNICEF has since 1998 sponsored National Reading Week, an annual event held to encourage students, parents and teachers to read.

UNICEF and the government work together in drawing up a five-year programme of co-operation to support the development framework set out in the government's own five year plan. The UNICEF/Royal Government of Bhutan Master Plan of Operation is drawn up in broad outline to reflect governmental objectives, and then there is annual planning between October and December each year, when project managers come up with specific proposals. This allows for considerable flexibility in response throughout each RGOB plan period. Consequently, UNICEF was able to respond promptly when the School Library Development Project was launched midway in the Seventh Plan period (1992-1997), placing orders for and funding consignments of books to 14 primary schools, 15 community schools and six junior high schools during 1996. UNICEF has since 1998 sponsored National Reading Week, an annual event held to encourage students, parents and teachers to read.

UNICEF has been providing supplementary readers to schools for the past 10 years, as part of projects designed to enhance the quality of basic education delivered to students from pre-primary to class VIII.³² UNICEF provides a library kit of 400-700 volumes to 35 schools per year. CAPSD makes up the book list (in consultation with UNICEF) and selects recipient schools, giving priority to newly established schools and those in most need of reading material. The library kit has three components: easy readers for classed PP to IV; fiction for classes V-VI and some fiction for lower secondary school students in classes VII-VIII; reference materials (mainly for teachers, but including some for senior students).³³

During 2003, monitoring visits were made to recipient schools, to see how the library kits were being used, and to get feedback from both students and teachers as to what kinds of books were most enjoyed. In 2003, UNICEF began trying to establish Dzongkha and English reading standards for different age groups, so as to ensure that the books provided are at the appropriate reading level for the students. As books now have to compete for attention with television and the internet, it is particularly

important to know what students would like to read. (Student feedback indicates that there should be interesting text with not too many words.)

Though is now being given to an adjustment in strategy during the current plan period, so that in addition to supplying the library kits, UNICEF would also mount complementary activities to stimulate interest in reading, e.g. organizing story telling; using drama in library activity to introduce new books to the students.

World Bank

Bhutan became a member of the World Bank in 1981, and in 1987 the Bank began its programme of assistance in the area of institution building.³⁴ Bhutan has secured loans for three separate education development projects to date.

Primary Education Project: As part of the Bank-funded Primary Education Project (1988-1997)³⁵ which supported the government's development plan for primary education, many new primary and junior high schools were built, and others renovated. Library furnishings and books were provided to all of these, as well as to some other schools. After inception of the School Library Development Project, 47 batches of books were bought with PEP funding for distribution to selected secondary schools. Each batch comprised 2-3,000 volumes of mainly fiction titles, but also included some reference books for both the students and their teachers. High schools received eight of the consignments, but the main beneficiaries were the junior high schools.

Second Education project: The Second Education Project (SEP), which ran from March, 1998 to June, 2004, assisted Bhutan in providing a higher quality basic education (from Pre-primary to class VIII) to more children, particularly from rural areas.³⁶ Under SEP, new schools were built and existing ones upgraded, teacher training were expanded and improved, learning processes were improved, and management and administrative support for the system was strengthened. Library provision (including books and furniture) was included in each of the twelve schools which were built or substantially upgraded under SEP, and library book consignments were sent selectively to other schools also. However, for school libraries, the most significant feature of SEP would prove to be the inclusion of a reading programme in this education development plan.

SEP supported the development of libraries in primary and community schools through a supplementary reading programme, included under Component III: Improving Teaching and Learning Processes. Twenty community, primary and junior high schools from ten dzongkhags were selected as pilot schools for the program. Each school received a batch of 90 library books (comprising story books and reference books for both students and teachers) and copies of *Guidelines for the Supplementary Reading Program*,³⁷ a manual giving information on how to maintain the library and ideas and suggestions concerning how to promote and monitor reading. Funding also covered refurbishment of the library and provision for basic library furniture. Additionally, one teacher from each school was sent to the annually held Library Induction Workshop for Training. The reading programme began at the start of the 1999 academic year and ran for two years. A task force comprising lecturers from the

teacher training institutes and CAPSS staff monitored and evaluated this pilot project which, if proved successful, would be extended to all schools in the future.

Education Development Project: The Education Development Project (EDP), which was approved in August, 2003 and is to run to December, 2009, supports Bhutan's education development programme under the Ninth Plan (2002-2007) to expand access to primary and secondary education and improve educational quality at all levels.³⁸ There is extensive support for library development included within the first two components of EDP. Under **Component 1: Expand access to primary and secondary education**, five new secondary schools are to be built and 24 existing ones upgraded. Each school is to be provided with a properly fitted out library and a collection of library books. More far-reaching support is included under **Component 2: Improve the quality and relevance of education**: The supplementary reading and school library development programs introduced under SEP are to be expanded to 285 primary and secondary schools to improve reading skills and foster positive reading habits amongst students and teachers, and the rural network of resource centres supporting clusters of nearby schools is to be extended. The first invitation to tender for supply of library books to secondary schools and resource centres was announced in November, 2003.

The expanded supplementary reading programme has been going extremely well: by July, 2004 it had already been extended to cover 400 schools, and the few remaining schools were brought into the programme by the end of the school year. The programme has now been extended to reading in Dzongkha (previously excluded due to paucity of reading materials) and teacher training for implementation of the Dzongkha programme is well underway. In recognition of its new status, the programme has been renamed the School Reading Programme.

Canadian International Development Agency

Canada's assistance to Bhutan, routed through CIDA, is focused on human resources development in the education sector.³⁹ Programme support is provided through CCO in Thimphu. CIDA funding is disbursed in two ways: as a five-yearly grant made by CIDA for bilateral projects approved by Ottawa for implementation by the University of New Brunswick (the UNB-Bhutan Project), and as an annual grant for discretionary commitment by CCO (Canada Fund Projects).

UNB-Bhutan Project: CCO's main focus is the UNB-Bhutan project, which links Bhutan's education system with University of New Brunswick's Faculty of Education through successive five-year projects. The past projects, Phase I and II of "Educational Institution Strengthening of Bhutan" (EISB I and II) provided scholarships and work attachments for Bhutanese educators and long and short-term consultants for Bhutan's Department of Education.

Under EISB I (1992-1998) Bhutanese educators studied at UNB and UNB faculty acted as advisors to Bhutan's Department of Education, assisting Bhutanese counterparts with the design, preparation and editing of textbooks for the new social studies curriculum. Under EISB II (1998-2003), scholarships, work attachments and curriculum development assistance were provided. Additionally, EISB II Supported several special initiatives, including the development of information technology and

the building up of library resources at colleges and training institutes. Librarian training in Canada was extended to the officer in charge of the Library Development Unit (who undertook a Master of Library & Information Studies degree course) and to the Librarian of NIE Paro, (who studied for a Diploma of Library & Information Studies) under EISB II.

Under the current five-year project "Strengthening Support to Education in Bhutan" (SSEB) the education sector is to receive funding to help improve the quality of education, with a particular focus on basic education (especially the study and teaching of English) and increasing teachers' access to learning resources through information communication technology (ICT).⁴⁰ It is likely that school library resources will be further augmented as part of the project.

Canada Fund: Canada began funding small projects in the education sector through CIDA in 1984. Education puts up 15-20 proposals each year (usually one proposal from each dzongkhag) and then CCO and education officials meet to assess the various proposals and decide which have greater priority. Usually 7-8 are selected. Past projects include: provision of library books, school equipment and furniture for rural primary schools; building and equipping of high school science labs; building/renovating of girls' dormitories at 2 institutions; in-service training for teachers and school heads; production and printing of locally written textbooks; provision of solar power for remote schools; pilot project to enhance the quality of life for teachers living in remote conditions.

CCO can also disburse small discretionary amounts on a one-off basis for activities which fall within its mission (e.g. a children's writers' workshop and Bhutan's first national Reading Week in 1997; a one month mobile bookshop covering towns and villages of western and central Bhutan, in 2000: CCO provided the vehicle and hired three students to run the bookshop, which was stocked by two local bookstores).

In 1997, a Canada Fund project supported a six-week study tour in Canada for the Librarian of NIE Samtse and a library induction workshop appraisal tour for the Librarian of NIE Samtse (who organizes the workshops) and the officer in charge of the Library Development Unit. Project funding supplied three newly upgraded high schools with library books in 1999. Projects approved for 2001-2002 included supply of library books to 19 community schools, 4 primary schools and 6 junior high schools. Most schools also received library equipment and furniture, and a reading workshop for the teachers was held at all the recipient schools. Library books were sent to 25 community schools, 11 primary schools and 3 secondary schools under projects for 2002-2003. Projects approved for 2003-2004 included supply of library books to a further 30 community schools, 14 primary schools and 3 secondary schools.

In the current project period, 2004-2005, Canada Fund will support the mounting of a Pilot Project on Reading in three selected schools, designed to inculcate the reading habit amongst students and enhance teachers' abilities in promoting reading through a focused in-house workshop. Teachers who receive the workshop training will then be responsible for implementing the reading programme in their schools, and will also train colleagues at other schools in reading promoting techniques. A separate project, supporting, a Youth-cum-Resource centre in eastern Bhutan, includes in its objectives

the upgrading and updating of students' English through provision of reading materials, and the promotion of the reading habit in children.

BOOK ORDERING & DISTRIBUTION

Book ordering and distribution routines are handled centrally. Donor agencies deposit funding with the Procurement Unit, Ministry of Education. CAPSD compiles book lists from recommendations submitted by its curriculum officers, and forwards the book lists to the Procurement Unit, which then invites local booksellers to tender for the orders.⁴¹ Usually some business is given to each of those who submit tenders. Suppliers dispatch the books to Education Central Stores, which arranges onward Distribution to the schools.

At the outset, there were problems in identifying suitable books to be bought and then in obtaining them. Few reference resources and publishers' catalogues were available from which to select, and most were some years out of date. Moreover, Thimphu's few bookshops (the first opened only in 1990) carried only a limited range of books, and items back ordered from India often proved to be out of print or otherwise unobtainable.

Thimphu now has several well-stocked and efficiently managed bookshops which are more than adequate to meet the requirements of a centralized ordering system. Strong links have been established with counterparts in India, many of whom act as distribution agents for overseas publishers. There is no shortage of information about new books these days: the sales representatives of major Indian publishers pay frequent visits to Thimphu, and both publishers and distributors regularly sent catalogues and new book announcements.

Nowadays, any problem in acquiring books is usually related to the tender, which involves calling for quotations, and then re-tendering later for titles to replace any not able to be supplied in the initial exercise. There would be greater flexibility if orders were placed directly with booksellers, as local booksellers can provide a substantial proportion of what is wanted and Indian booksellers can usually obtain the rest. However, the tender system is used to support the local book trade, which needs regular government business in order to stay afloat.

Distribution of books to the schools: From 1996, when the School Library Development Project got under way and books could be obtained to order with donor support, there was no longer such a strong need to rely on randomly donated books to stock the libraries. Nowadays schools almost invariably receive material appropriate for their needs, as consignments generally comprise books specifically selected for order under the SLDP.

Since 2001, Education Central Stores has been assisted in its work by regional stores in Geylephu and Trashigang. Each store has its own delivery vehicle, and funding is available for the hire of vehicles, porters or pack animals as required to get the consignments to their final destinations. Administrative procedures have been streamlined, sorting of books has become more efficient, and security measures have been instituted for the safeguarding of consignments en route.

Central and regional stores staff make up consignments for schools of the dzongkhags which fall within their respective distribution areas. They sort the books by school in accordance with accompanying written instructions, pack the consignments in strong cardboard boxes, and seal the boxes securely with strapping tape. The boxes are then batched by dzongkhag and sent out in the delivery vehicles for distribution to the schools, generally in the winter months.⁴² Consignments are left with the DEO, whose responsibility it is to get them to the schools of the district. The DEO sends the books on in a pool vehicle if available, or else in a privately hired vehicle. Batches for schools on the road are dropped off directly.

Arrangements for distribution to off-road schools vary from dzongkhag to dzongkhag, but generally consignments are left at the nearest school which is on the road, and that school contacts the off-road school, which then arranges onward transport by porters or pack animals. (In the absence of a telephone line, messages to off-road villages are conveyed promptly through a very well organized system of postal runners and village messengers.) Commonly, the village headman arranges for parents of children attending the school to bring the books to the village. Whatever the arrangement, the Ministry of Education pays the transportation costs.

DONATIONS AND FUND-RAISING ACTIVITIES

Opportunities for “no-cost” enhancement of individual school libraries may arise from personal contacts established by Bhutanese teachers when overseas (studying, attending workshops, etc.) and from visits by tour groups, members of which sometimes donate money or else collect up and then post batches of books after returning home. In the absence of funding, personal contacts have proved a good avenue for acquiring appropriate stock, since those providing the books know what is wanted.

A case in point is the ongoing Books for Bhutan donations programme, launched in the mid-1990s by an Englishwoman who had been taken to see two schools which on a visit to Bhutan. A keen reader from her earliest years, she had noted that the libraries of these schools were sparsely stocked, and when she returned home she began collecting good use books from friends to send on. Word that she was collecting books some spread, and now the scope of this wholly self-funded scheme has widened to include consignments to other developing and / or book-deprived countries. The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom publicizes the scheme through its *Newsletters* and at its various functions.⁴³

Although there are several major funded projects putting books in Bhutan’s school libraries that can be described as well stocked. Between May, 1996 and December, 2003 Bhutan received a total of 613 boxes of books, dispatched in 19 consignments of 30-38 boxes each, under the Books for Bhutan donations programme. With each box holding 50 books or more, over 30,000 books have been supplied to date. Although staff members are undoubtedly hard-pressed to find time from their regular duties to process such large scale donations, the value of this remarkable contribution to the libraries is well understood, and school librarians are most appreciative of the high quality books which they periodically receive from this source.

When foreign consular representatives visit Bhutan, they often present some books to a local school or the National Library. NGO and UN agency representatives may also donate books when visiting. While the benefit is most likely to be for schools in or near Thimphu, sometimes schools countrywide receive donated books, or encyclopaedia sets. Such presentations to schools usually include high quality reference materials which the recipients would have little chance of acquiring by other means.⁴⁴

In some Thimphu secondary schools, library collections are now being augmented through directly solicited donation of library materials from within the local school community. At the start of the school year, class teachers invite their newly joined students to (if possible) bring a book from home for the school library; throughout the year, both teachers and students are encouraged to donate books and magazines from home when they are done with them. Though in principle a good concept, this method of augmenting library stock is only feasible for schools in urban areas where there is a more extensive reading habit and also more ready access to books and magazines.

Fetes, sports days, concerts, etc. provide fund-raising opportunities from which the library may benefit. Most schools hold an annual event of this nature, using funds raised through amusement stalls, raffles etc. to improve the campus, buy equipment, or support the school welfare fund. Generally speaking, however, only large schools in well-populated and relatively prosperous area are able to raise enough money for some to be earmarked for library development purposes.⁴⁵

READING PROMOTION

It is through the collected resources of libraries, museums and archives that we are able to interpret the past, acquire knowledge, and gain an understanding of cultures other than our own. Reading is an important and even essential tool in developing the ability to empathise with other ideas and other cultures. Reading is not an innate skill: it has to be introduced, taught, fostered and encouraged, and supported with appropriate resources.

Reading is not an established pastime in Bhutan, and traditionally was mainly confined to the reciting of holy texts by monks, in connection with religious ceremonies. The population is newly literate, the country's only public library (established in 1974) is in Thimphu, and there is a paucity of reading materials outside Thimphu and several towns along the Indian border to the south. Most Bhutanese children come from a non-reading socio-cultural environment and thus lack both parental guidance in choice of what to read, and access to reading materials in their homes.

However, Bhutan has a strong oral tradition, and story telling is recognized as a very important school activity for promoting the reading habit. In *Guidelines for the Supplementary Reading Program*, issued to support the supplementary reading programme initiated under the Second Education Project, the authors state that there is not much difference between children growing up in an environment of oral tradition of story telling and children of literate parents to whom stories are read aloud, since both equally transfer knowledge, positive attitudes and motivation to the reading process.⁴⁶

In 1997 the Department of Education launched an annual programme aimed at generating awareness of the lifetime importance of the reading habit. The first reading week (held July 27-Aug. 5, 1997, with the theme "Books: your windows to the world") was sponsored by CCO: since then, the event has been funded by UNICEF. Reading week is usually held late summer, with the venue changing each year from the main activities. A different theme is announced each year to give focus. Main events to date have included book fairs, public readings and readings in the schools by Bhutanese authors, book presentations to schools, inter-school competitions in different reading activities (e.g. poster competition on reading week theme, reading aloud). Individual schools arrange their own programmes around the theme (e.g. reading competitions, talks by teachers on the importance of reading, book reviews, dressing up as characters from books, writing and illustrating their own books). For the first few years schools needed some guidance about how they might organize their own events, but now many schools have incorporated the reading week in their annual calendar and hold their own reading week without any official directive.

Reading is further promoted through an annually held Reading Workshop for English Teachers. The 40 selected participants (two from each dzongkhag) who attend this 7-10 day training course learn how to create an interest in reading in their students and how to improve students' reading skills. After training, the teachers go around the schools of their districts at weekends, giving informal workshops to teach others what they have learned. Teachers are showing great enthusiasm for this programme, giving up much of their leisure time to conduct these activities. Through the mounting of these informal workshops, language teachers provide valuable reinforcement for successful implementation of reading programme activities first introduced selectively under the Second Education Project, which have now been extended to schools countrywide as the School Reading Programme.

CONCLUSION

School libraries have made significant progress since library periods were formally established some 20 years ago. While there have been occasional setbacks, and several difficulties still remain, nevertheless school libraries are now much better remain, nevertheless school libraries are now much better accommodated, furnished, stocked and managed than they had been. Aside from the collectives held by the religious institutions, the school library will frequently be the only literary resource of the district. In remote areas, where English is seldom encountered outside the school setting, the school library is the single most important aid to both students and their teachers in acquiring and then retaining language skills and in extending language vocabulary.

The importance of good school library provision, combined with reading programmes and activities designed to generate an interest in reading as a life-long, rather than examination-centred, activity, is now well understood and supported. With the School Library Development Project carrying over into the current plan period, and the principal donors remaining enthusiastic, financial support for further enhancement of school library collections seems assured.

The Ministry of Education remains firmly committed to the development of school libraries and the provision of a pool of trained staff to run them, and is working to

establish a uniform standard of library management, so that each school is provided with a properly trained and motivated person to care for its library. It will then become the responsibility of individual schools to provide whatever level of input is required to ensure that library staff remain motivated, that library routines are handled smoothly and efficiently, and that the book collections so laboriously assembled over the years are put to good use and properly safeguarded against damage or loss.

Reference Sources

1. Print materials

CAPSD Newsletter – This newsletter, launched in 1994 as *CAPSS newsletter*, covers a wide range of education-related issues and frequently includes items on school library development. In 2000 the title changed to *CAPSD Newsletter*, when the former Curriculum and Professional Support Section (CAPSS) was renamed as part of a restructuring exercise. *CAPSD Newsletter* is published by the Curriculum and Professional Support Division, Department of School Education, NIE Paro, Bhutan. *CAPSD Newsletter* no. 28 (2003) and following issues are posted in the CAPSD section of the Ministry of Education website, <http://www.education.gov.bt/>

Kuensel – Bhutan's national newspaper, *Kuensel* is the principal journal of record in Bhutan. It began as a fortnightly in 1965, became a weekly in August, 1986, and from February, 2005 is to be issued twice weekly. The newspaper is published by Kuensel Corporation, P.O. Box 204, Thimphu, Bhutan. In July, 2001 a daily online edition, *kuensel online*, was launched. (<http://www.kuenselonline.com/>) This website includes the text of recent issues and also some archived material.

Rinzin Wangmo & Serra, C. *Guidelines for the Supplementary Reading Program*. Thimphu: Curriculum and Professional Support Section, Education Division, Ministry of Health and Education, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1999. (Guidelines prepared for Second Education Project, Component III: Improving teaching and learning processes, B. Assessment of Learning Processes and Outcomes, Sub Component E: Supplementary Reading Program)

Rinzin Wangmo & Shaw, F. *Running the school library: a teacher-librarian's guide*. 2nd edition, Thimphu: Curriculum and Professional Support Division, Department of Education, Ministry of Health & Education, 2000.

Shaw, F. "School libraries in Bhutan", *Asian libraries*, vol. 1 no.1, 1991, pp. 19-28

2. Websites

Canadian Cooperation Office, Bhutan

Website <http://www.cco.org.bt/> This site includes a history of Canadian assistance to Bhutan, an overview of past and ongoing Canada Fund projects administered by CCO, and specific details of individual projects (many of which have a library component) through 2004. The site also includes details of the CIDA projects administered by the University of New Brunswick under the UNB-Bhutan Project, which is CCO's main focus.

Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan

Website <http://www.education.gov.bt/> This site includes comprehensive information on all departments and divisions within the Ministry, an overview of Bhutan's education system, and selected documents on education policy and planning.

Department of Planning, Ministry of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan
Website <http://www.dop.gov.bt/> (Formerly as the Planning Commission, and subsumed under the Ministry of Finance mid-2003 as part of a restructure exercise.) the Department of Planning's website provides a comprehensive survey of development activities, statistics, etc., and the text of each five year development plan to date. Of particular importance is the Planning Commission's Vision Statement, Bhutan 2020: a Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness (accessed through the Publications link) which summarises past development performance and presents Bhutan's longer-term vision for the future. This eloquent document should be read carefully for an understanding of the government's philosophy concerning development and change. The site also includes links to other ministries and departments, UN agencies and other donor agencies.

UNICEF in Bhutan

Website <http://www.unicef.org/bhutan/> The site provides an overview of UNICEF's activities in Bhutan, where education is one of four key areas supported. Descriptions of specific aid programmes are accompanied by accounts of their impact at the local level. Although the site has not been updated for several years, it is nevertheless still well worth visiting, as its vivid and sensitively written descriptions of life in rural Bhutan still hold good today.

World Bank Group

Website <http://www.worldbank.org/> Documents and reports concerning the Primary Education Project (approved 19/4/88, closed 30/6/97), the Second Education Project (approved 3/3/98, closed 30/6/04) and the Education Development Project to support Bhutan's 9th Education Plan 2003-2007 (approved 21/8/03 and to close 31/12/09) can be accessed from this website. The Bhutan Country Brief included here, under South Asian Region (SAR) Bhutan, provides a useful summary of development progress to date, and future goals to be achieved with World Bank assistance.

Endnotes

¹ CAPSS Newsletter, no. 17, Nov. 1999, p. 13 (quotation follows report on the Third National Reading Week.)

² See Kuensel, vol. 9 no.24, June 18, 1994, p. 2. In an article on the success of Bhutan's non-formal education scheme, reference is made to a UNICEF report which noted that adult literacy in the country had reached 54%, as compared to the 38.4% recorded in a 1990 UNESCO survey, and which gave the rise of non-formal education as one of the possible reasons for this.

Although 54% is still the generally accepted figure, literacy is now likely to be somewhat higher, as a much greater and still rising proportion of the adult population is enrolled for formal or non-formal education these days. A baseline adult literacy survey is now underway – see Kuensel, vol. 18 no.43, Nov. 1, 2003, p.6.

³ In all the dzongkhags, about 70% of building work for each new community/primary school is undertaken by the local villagers, following a standard plan issued by the School Planning and Building Division (SPBD) of the Ministry of Education. SPBD provides the building materials, and also meets the skilled manpower requirements (e.g. cement work, carpentry) for the job.

⁴ Kuensel, vol. 1 no. 14, Nov. 29, 1986

⁵ See obituary in kuensel, vol. 10 no. 41, Oct. 21, 1995, p.1

⁶ The B. Ed (Primary) degree courses at both NIEs include Agriculture classes, introduced in 2001. Students are given basic information on kitchen and flower gardening to utilize when they are finally sent out to schools after graduation.

Students for the B. Ed. (Primary) at Paro can specialize in English, Mathematics or Dzongkha. Those electing Dzongkha are generally recruited from class XII graduates of the Institute for Language and Cultural Studies (ILCS). Students join ILCS after graduating from class X at regular schools. B. Ed (Primary) with Dzongkha specialization differs from the other B. Ed degrees in that graduates are posted to primary schools, and sometimes to lower secondary schools to teach Dzongkha up to class VIII. Graduates posted to a primary school are expected to teach a range of subjects, but mainly Dzongkha, depending on the staff situation.

⁷ Figures extrapolated from *Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan 1990*, Thimphu: Central Statistical Office, Planning Commission, 1991, pp. 14-20

⁸ *General Statistics 2004*, Thimphu: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2004 (figures extrapolated from statistical summary on p. 7 of this document, which is posted at the Ministry of Education website <http://www.education.gov.bt/>) The students were enrolled in 202 community primary schools, 90 primary schools, 77 lower secondary schools, 29 middle secondary schools, 16 higher secondary schools, 19 private schools and 14 institutes (7 of which are post-secondary degree/diploma granting institutions).

⁹ Royal Government of Bhutan, National Education Policy, Thimphu: (n.d. 1974)

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 15

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 16

¹² 3rd Five Year Plan Document, Ch. 1, para 1.12 (website <http://www.dop.gov.bt/fyp/03/03fyp01.htm>)

¹³ Although facilities have improved greatly in recent years, the classroom library system is still used to supplement more formal library provision in many schools around the country for junior classes. Stock loss is always greater once books are moved to a less secure location with no one person responsible for the collection, so if there is a room but no full-time librarian, and insufficient space to accommodate a class, the classroom library is the next best thing.

¹⁵ New books for the library would generally be bought in India during the long winter vacation, usually by Indian contract teachers to whom the responsibility had been delegated. By the mid-1990s, Bhutan's own book trade had matured sufficiently for individual schools to be able to select new stock in Thimphu.

¹⁶ For example, donor support given by the United Kingdom's Overseas Development Administration (ODA), a functional wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. British aid concentrated on the education sector, to which ODA lent continuous support for over 10 years. Bhutanese teachers and educationists studied in the UK under an ODA-funded scholarship programme. ODA assistance enabled the development and upgrading of the National Institute of Education in Samtse, and also supported a primary English Textbook programme and development of primary science pilot materials. More latterly, ODA provided support in secondary school development and in the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE), a government initiative for restructuring the primary education syllabus, both priority areas identified by Bhutan's government.

For some years the principals of Yangchenphug High School (established in Thimphu in 1965), Lungtenzampa Junior High School (established in Thimphu in 1972) and Paro High school (established in Paro as a primary school in 1962, and upgraded to high school status in 1964) held ODA funded, British Council administered posts. During their tenure, ODA funding was also available for them to order books from UK publishers for their libraries, under the British Council administered Books Presentation Scheme. Lists were made up from UK publishers catalogues provided by the British Council, which then arranged for supply of the requested title to the schools. In 1975-76, the British Council donated a large number of books to Yangchenphug high School. In 1985, Lungtenzampa Junior High School received library books to the value of £ 1,000 and Paro High School books to the value of £ 1,000 under the Books Presentation Scheme.

Drukgyel High School in Pro was built with ODA funding and opened in 1994. ODA funding covered the cost of 1,600 books for the library and also the library steel shelving and other furniture. For a full report on the opening of the new school, see

Kuensel, vol. 9 no. 14, April 9, 1994, p. 1, 12. British High Commissioner for India Sir Nicholas Fenn, who formally inaugurated the school, read a message from the Minister of Overseas Development, and made a symbolic presentation of one volume of an encyclopaedia set to the Principal, and advised that the school would receive 2,000 books for the library. (However, when I visited the Library on Sept. 25, 1995, I was told that the stock was now 2,092 books, and that ODA funding had covered the cost of 1,600 of these).

¹⁷ Volunteer recruitment began in 1980, when the UNV programme in Bhutan was launched with 20 volunteer posts in education, health, animal husbandry and agriculture. By 1987 there were over 80 volunteer teachers working in the schools, recruited through the various volunteer organizations which had by then established a presence in Bhutan. Most had been recruited through three NGOs: Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO, United Kingdom – 38) World University Service of Canada (WUSC – 16) and Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA, New Zealand – 9). The volunteer teacher recruitment programme was phased out in the early 1990s, as Bhutan's own home grown teaching cadre strengthened. Technical assistance is the main focus of NGO education projects nowadays.

¹⁸ This was not always the case – sometimes selection was dictated by dire necessity. In March, 1991 the principal of a prominent Thimphu secondary school with a well-stocked library appointed one of its three games masters as librarian for the school year. The choice was made because the library really needed full-time supervision: the principal said he had asked him because the games teachers had more time. This games teacher-cum-librarian took games in the 7th and 8th periods daily (i.e. after formal classes had finished for the day) and spent the rest of his time in the library. Readers of this endnote will be relieved to learn that in December, 1991 the Department of Education appointed a Sherubtse College arts graduate to run the library. The library has remained under appropriate administration since then.

¹⁹ Kuensel, vol. 4 no. 17, May 13, 1989 carries an extensive report of the tour.

²⁰ Education sector outlays of development programmes (in millions)

5th plan (7/82-6/87): Nu. 519.1 (revised); 6th plan (7/87-6/92): Nu. 778.8 (revised);

7th plan (7/92-6/97): Nu. 1,738.0 (budget); 8th plan (7/97-6/2002): Nu. 2,966.8 (budget);

9th plan (7/02-6/07): Nu. 2,597.0 (budget) – see explanatory note below.

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan 2002*, Thimphu: Central Statistical Organization, Planning Commission, 2003, p. 180.

Note: The key feature of the 9th Plan is its district-based approach. With devolution of decision-making and financial power to the dzongkhags (districts) and geowog (sub-district blocks), development programmes and related budget to be implemented by the central Ministries and Agencies are now clearly separated from those to be implemented at dzongkhag level. The 9th Plan budget given above is that which is to be administered centrally. The combined Dzongkhag/geowog budget for the 9th Plan is Nu. 7,612.443. (See Ninth Plan Report presented to the 80th Session of the National Assembly (June, 2002) by the Planning Commission, Annex II, p. 19). Thus the combined budget for the education sector is Nu. 10,209.443 – approximately 15% of the projected plan outlay of Nu. 70,000,000.

²¹ The Primary Education Project (PEP) was funded through the World Bank's concessionary lending arm, the International Development Association, with contributions from Switzerland's assistance agency, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). PEP supported the government's development plan for primary education and aimed to raise the quality of education and student achievement and lower unit costs of primary schooling in Bhutan. PEP specifically sought to (a) increase the number and quality of primary schools; (b) increase the number and effectiveness of primary teachers; and (c) strengthen administrative and educational support services of the Department of Education. The project was approved on April 19, 1988 and closed on June 30, 1997.

²³ Shaw, F. *Running the school library: a teacher librarian's guide*. 1st (Provisional) edition, Thimphu" Curriculum and Textbook Division, Department of Education, Ministry of Social Services, 1992.

²⁴ *Dewey Decimal Classification for school libraries: British and International edition* edited by Mary L. South. New York: Forest Press, rev. ed., 1986. (Regrettably, this book is now out of the print).

²⁵ "Libraries and book boxes". *CAPPSS Newsletter*, no. 1, July, 1994, pp. 9-10. The article began "Most schools now have at least a small selection of story books and reference books. We would like more books but are we making the best of the books we already have?"

²⁶ *CAPSS Newsletter*, n. 5, Nov. 1995, p.7

²⁷ All participants want more time allocated to cataloguing and classification, and all want the course to be longer. In the workshops the participants catalogue actual library books, then assign classification numbers against titles on a list. The handout exercises progress from simpler to harder numbers using the DDC schedules, and then to adding number from the tables to the numbers found in the schedules.

²⁸ "Education Department would like to inform the schools that the position of teacher shortage in the country is a matter of serious concern. As of now, teacher shortage is around 650. While the department is exploring all possibilities of reducing the teacher shortage gap, the Dzongkhag Education Officers and the heads of schools are requested to ensure proper and maximum utilization and deployment of teachers. Further, the heads of schools are reminded that it is mandatory for them to teach a minimum of 12 periods a week." (Message from the Director in CAPSS Newsletter, no. 18, March 2000, p.2)

²⁹ *Kuensel*, vol. 18 no. 51, Dec. 27, 2003, p. 1,20

³⁰ Both National Institutes of Education offer a one semester Library Education course to their second and third year teacher trainees. As course content for both the workshop and the NIE programme is based on the same text (*Running the school library*, 2nd ed. 2000), even a fresh graduate teacher should be able to provide some measure of guidance and support to the library staff.

³¹ "Very high priority will be given to the development of a proper and well stocked library for each school, resourced by a trained teacher librarian. Every effort will be made to encourage children to develop love for reading and good reading habits". Eighth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) Vol. I Main document. Thimphu: Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1996, p. 187 (i.e. in Chapter 29. Education, under Programme for 8 FYP, section on Improving education facilities). See also under the Planning Commission website at <http://www.pcs.gov.bt/fyp/08/08fyp29.pdf>

³² UNICEF-funded projects in the education sector for the current (i.e. 2002-2006) five year plan period include further support for library development and administration under *Project 2: Basic Education Quality Improvement, Sub-project 1: Child-friendly schools*. The objectives of sub-project 1 are to make schools more child-friendly and attractive to all children, including disadvantaged and disabled children, and to improve learners' achievement of basic literacy and numeracy skills and higher level analytical skills. Activities planned include: "**Activity 5 Promote and develop supplementary readers:** Building on previous efforts to increase the number of books in primary schools, this initiative will promote the development of materials in the local context by local writers. This will strengthen literacy skills and promote a "reading culture". There will be technical assistance to develop materials, support for printing and distribution to schools, and promotion of reading through special events such as Annual Reading Week and regional book fairs." (Master Plan of Operations 2002-2006: Programme of cooperation for Children and Women of Bhutan. Thimphu: RGOB 7 UNICEF (2002) pp. 56-58

³³ For example, in 2001 UNICEF funded the supply of library kits to 40 schools, at a cost of nu. 97,298.24 per set. Each set comprised 671 volumes, as follows:

Easy reading (foreign titles) – 150 (2 copies of each); Easy reading (Indian titles) – 17 (2 copies of each);

Difficult reading (foreign titles)

- 60 (2 copies of each); Difficult reading (Indian titles)
- 92 (2 copies of each);

Reference for teachers/students (foreign titles)

- 13; Reference for teachers/students (Indian titles)
- 20

³⁴ Loans for World Bank-approved development projects are made through the Bank's concessionary lending arm, the International Development association (IDA), which provides interest-free loans with a maturity period of 40 years, including a grace period of 10 years. When a project is approved, it is funded through IDA, but development partners (i.e. UN and NGO donor agencies) may contribute to the total cost, thus reducing the sum eventually to be repaid to IDA.

³⁵ See endnote 22 above for more details of PEP

³⁶ The Second Education Project (SEP) was funded through the World Bank's concessionary lending arm, the International Development Association, with contributions from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UNICEF and the RGOB. SEP assisted Bhutan in Building and strengthening institutional capacity to provide a higher quality basic education to children, particularly from rural areas. The project had four components: 1) Increasing and upgrading facilities for basic

education by constructing new schools, substantially upgrading existing schools, and supporting decentralized construction; 2) expanding and improving teacher education; revising curriculum; and supporting in-service teacher-training programmes; 3) improving learning processes, and developing resource centres, school networks, and the supplementary reading programme; and 4) strengthening educational management and administration. The Project was approved on March 3, 1998 and closed on June 30, 2004.

³⁷ Rinzin Wangmo & Serra, C. *Guidelines for the Supplementary Reading Program*. Thimphu: Curriculum and Professional Support Section, Education Division, Ministry of Health and Education, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1999.

³⁸ the Education Development Project (EDP) is funded through the World Bank's concessionary lending arm, the International Development Association, with a contribution of approximately 10% of total cost from the RGOB. EDP supports Bhutan's education development programme under the Ninth Plan to expand access to primary and secondary education and improve educational quality at all levels. There are three components to the project: 1) Expand access to primary and secondary education; 2) Improve quality and relevance of education; 3) Institutional strengthening, to help the government implement its Human Resource Development plan for the education sector. The project was approved on August 21, 2003 and is to close on December 31, 2009.

³⁹ Canada's involvement with Bhutan began in 1963, when the RGOB invited Canadian Jesuit educationist, Father William Mackey to come to Bhutan and help establish a secular school system. In 1985 the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) opened an office in Thimphu. More than 40 WUSC volunteer teachers worked in Bhutanese schools, and 20 Bhutanese teachers studied at the University of New Brunswick (UNB) before WUSC withdrew from Bhutan in 1991 on account of financial difficulties back home. The Canadian High Commission in Delhi then took over the office, changing its name to the Bhutan-Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) agreed to continue Canada's assistance to the education sector in Bhutan. The CIDA-funded educational strengthening project (generally referred to as the UNB-Bhutan Project) began in 1992, and UNB was contracted by the Canadian High Commission to administer the office, which is now known as the Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO).

⁴⁰ Under the project, the education sector will receive C\$5 million, of which the Canadian government will contribute C\$4.5 million, the University of New Brunswick C\$350,000 and the RGOB C\$150,000. (*Kuensel*, vol. 19 no. 17, May 1, 2004, p. 3) SSEB will focus on basic education (especially English teaching and the English and Mathematics curricular); enhancement of Information Communication Technology (ICT) at Sherubtse College and at the Educational Resource Centres (ERCs) which support clusters of primary schools, in order to provide access to educational resources to teachers in remote areas; and on improving the quality of engineering instruction at the Royal Bhutan Institute of Technology.

⁴¹ A different procedure is followed for UNICEF. CAPSD sends the UNICEF book lists directly to UNICEF for processing. UNICEF handles all arrangements, going to tender and then purchasing direct. UNICEF-funded consignments are delivered to Education

Central Stores for onward distribution in the usual way. UNICEF Bhutan's Project Officer, Education explained to me (in Thimphu, July, 2003) that this procedure is not an administrative requirement, but merely something UNICEF does to help aid recipients get best value for money. He said UNICEF aid recipients are free to do their own tendering, but that no government is likely to be able to get better prices than UNICEF, which has tax exempt status and excellent connections worldwide.

⁴² Bhutan's narrow, winding mountain roads are frequently damaged by heavy monsoon rains during the summer months, so deliveries are generally made during the dry winter season, when road conditions are at their best. Schools may be closed, but as head teachers (or their representatives) are paid to remain at their posts over the winter vacation to look after repairs, renovation works, etc., this is not a problem.

⁴³ The Bhutan Society of the United Kingdom was founded in 1992 to encourage and promote knowledge and understanding of Bhutan and its culture. An account of the Books for Bhutan appeal appears in *The Bhutan Society*

Newsletter, no. 22 (April 2002) posted at the Society's website <http://www.bhutansociety.org/>

⁴⁴ For example, the following:

When the Director of the United States Information Service in India visited Bhutan May 30 – June 2, 1994, he donated 25 books each for 31 schools and institutions countrywide. The collection consisted mostly of American literature and books on American history, civilization, theatre and the environment. (*Kuensel*, vol. 9 no. 22, June 4, 1994, p.4)

In February, 1998 the Danish NGO, DANIDA, presented 23 sets of the Encyclopaedia Britannica for distribution to educational institutions. (*Kuensel*, vol. 13 no. 7, Feb. 14, 1998, p.4)

In February, 1998 Britain's Deputy High Commissioner to India Presented £10,000 (about Nu. 600,000) worth of books to be distributed to schools in Bhutan. (*Kuensel*, vol. 13 no. 7, Feb. 14, 1998, p.4)

In April, 2004, the Indian Ambassador to Bhutan presented a set of the Kanjur texts (the Buddhist Canon), several multi-volume encyclopaedia sets on general, literary, philosophical and religious topic, and other books to the Dzongkha Development Authority. The Ambassador said that the Indian embassy would also donate similar books to other institutions around the country. (*Kuensel*, vol. 19 no.15, April 17, 2004, p. 3)

⁴⁵ For example, the following:

Yangchenphug High School, Thimphu made Nu. 150,000 from its 1995 annual fete. The principal decided to commit the entire sum for purchase of new books for the library, with almost half the sum earmarked for fiction. (Information from the librarian, Aug. 1995). Proceeds of the school's 1996 fete were also reserved for the library. "The teachers of Yangchenphug High School expect to see proceeds exceeding Nu. 100,000 from the annual fete held this week. Crowd attendance was said to be one of the highest in years. The stalls at the fete, numbering more than 100, were run

by more than 1,000 students and teachers. The Principal of YHS, Tshewang Tandin, said the proceed will be used to buy library books and to improve the library". (*Kuensel*, vol. 11 no. 17, May 4, 1996, p. 1)

Punakha High School made about Nu. 40,000 from its annual school fete in 1996, and committed the entire sum to library development. (Information from the librarian, Feb. 1997)

⁴⁶ Rinzin Wangmo & Serra, C., *op.cit.* at pp. 21-23: "5.3 Language Teacher & Teacher Librarian: Students' own books. A writing/reading experience".