INVESTIGATING TEACHERS’ CONCERNS AND EXPERIENCES IN TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN BHUTAN

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KEYWORDS

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Special Educational Needs
Inclusion
Mainstreaming
Professional development
Mixed methods
Bhutan
ABSTRACT

The World Health Organization estimates that 15% of the world’s population consists of persons with disabilities. Further, they note that 80% of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. In recent years, the number of children with disabilities and learning difficulties enrolled in schools in Bhutan has increased, due to an increasing awareness of the need to educate children with Special Educational Needs. In this study, students with Special Education Needs are understood to be those students who have cognitive and physical disabilities, and learning difficulties. In 2014, there were nine mainstream schools that implemented inclusive education and two special schools for children with Special Educational Needs in Bhutan. This meant that eleven schools existed in the country that had the education of children with Special Education Needs as a priority. This study aimed to investigate the concerns and experiences of teachers in Bhutan regarding the inclusion of students with Special Educational Needs in inclusive and special schools. The study reveals that these schools face many challenges, including lack of professional development opportunities for teachers, lack of public awareness about, and a policy on inclusion and a lack of resources (both human resources and infrastructure resources). Seventy-eight teachers from the above eleven institutions completed an online survey that measured their level of concern with regard to supporting students with Special Education Needs in their classrooms. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to identify the key concerns and experiences of teachers when teaching these students. The results of the study indicate that teachers in Bhutan are greatly concerned about the acceptance of students with Special Educational Needs. Other key issues identified in the study are lack of resources, concerns about academic standards and the professional development for teachers. It appeared that the majority of teachers had a sound conceptual knowledge of inclusive education, but struggled to identify and use effective strategies to support inclusive practices in the classroom. The main focus of discussion in the current study was to identify the concerns of teachers in teaching children with Special Educational Needs. This study offers recommendations to support and enhance the ability of teachers to work effectively with students with Special Educational Needs in Bhutan.
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<td>Bhutan Board of Examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPAB</td>
<td>Disabled Person’s Association of Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNH</td>
<td>Gross National Happiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUT</td>
<td>Queensland University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGOB</td>
<td>Royal Government of Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SENCO</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs Coordinator</td>
</tr>
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<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:

Date: 05/06/2015
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Investigating teachers’ concerns and experiences in teaching children with special educational needs in Bhutan
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

Bhutan is a small landlocked country located between the two great powers of India and China. It opened its doors to modernization in the early 1960s with the formulation of the First Five Plan from 1961 to 1966. This plan involved the construction of roadways; building of hospitals, schools and post offices; establishing international relations with other nations and joining the United Nations. Geographically, Bhutan is entirely mountainous, lying between 200 meters above sea level in the south to 7500 meters in the north, in the Greater Himalayas.

![Map of Bhutan](image)

*Figure 1 Map of Bhutan*

To the outside world Bhutan is popularly known as the land of ‘Gross National Happiness’ (GNH). This philosophy was coined by His Majesty the 4th King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck who has guided Bhutan into the 21st century. All developmental
plans in Bhutan are in accordance with the philosophy of GNH and aim to maximize the happiness of all Bhutanese to enable them to achieve their full and innate potential as human beings” (Planning Commission, 1999, p.12). The concept of GNH consists of four pillars: sustainable socio-economic development (better education and health), conservation and promotion of culture, preservation of the environment and good governance (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2009). Simultaneously, the 66th session of the UN General Assembly in New York, which took place in 2010, adopted Bhutan’s proposal to include happiness as the Ninth Millennium Development Goal (Bhutan Broadcasting Service, 2011).

Beginning in 2009, Bhutan has taken GNH beyond an intellectual discourse and infused its values into all subjects of the school curriculum and school activities (Powdyel, 2012). Having done this, one of the challenging tasks that the philosophy of GNH now encounters is to look at the provision of the type of education that prepares Bhutanese youth for gainful employment and living economically contented lives (Dorji & Easley, 2005).

In 2008, Bhutan transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The administrative system in the country consists of the Central Government, comprising Ministries, Departments and Autonomous bodies; and Local Government comprising Dzongkhag Tshogde\(^1\), Gewog Tshogde\(^2\) and the Dzongkhag Thromde Tshogde\(^3\).

According to the last Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, in 2005, Bhutan has a total population of 634,982 persons, out of whom 333,595 (52.53%) are male and 301,387 (47.46%) are female. The urban population consists of 196,111 (30.9%) persons, while 438,871 (69.1%) live in the rural areas and are involved in subsistence farming (National Statistics Bureau, 2013). The prevalence of disability in Bhutan is high; 3.4- almost reaching the world’s average of 3.5 percent (Kuensel, 2014). According to statistics released by the Ministry of Education (MoE), there are a total of 176,647 students in the country and at least 30.2 % of children aged two to nine years in Bhutan have a mild to severe disability (Ministry of Education, 2013). Figure 2 represents disabilities by domains.

---
\(^1\) District committee for development.
\(^2\) Village committee for development.
\(^3\) District capital committee for development.
As of 2014, there are nine schools in Bhutan developing an inclusive model for students who have disabilities and two special schools in Bhutan with a total of 355 teachers, who teach 390 children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (P. Chhogyel\(^4\), personal communication, September 08, 2014). Children with conditions such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, autism, physical disabilities, Down syndrome and learning difficulties are enrolled in the above schools.

![Disability by Domains](image)

*Figure 2 Disability by domains. (Source: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2013)*

### 1.2 EDUCATION IN BHUTAN

The history of education in Bhutan stems from monastic education in the 17\(^{th}\) century (Rinchhen, 2013). The value of monastic education was based on traditional Buddhist values and culture. Besides studying the Buddhist scriptures, the curriculum largely comprised of “philosophy, astrology and fine arts” (Rinchhen, 2013, p.73). Those scholars who excelled in their studies were sent to Lamastic colleges in Lhasa (Tibet) for further studies.

Although modern education in Bhutan started with the establishment of two schools in the first quarter of the twentieth century, it was only in 1950’s that more

\(^4\) P. Chhogyel is a Programme Officer in the Special Education Section, Ministry of Education in Bhutan who provided the statistics for inclusive and special schools.
and more formal schools were built across the country. By the 1960’s, there were 30 government schools and 29 private schools, where both the curriculum and teachers were imported from India (Rabgay, 2012). Hindi, the national language of India was extensively used as the medium of instruction in these schools but this was replaced by English in the 1960s when the third King of Bhutan ‘decided to go for English Medium Schools’ (Mackey, 2012, p. 15). Today English continues to be the medium of instruction in schools in Bhutan although historically, some students were sent to India for higher studies.

In the 1970s, two teacher-training institutes were established to meet the need for appropriately trained teachers due to the growing number of schools. Then for the first time, in 1976, Bhutan developed a National Education Policy “which was very brief” (Rinchen, 2012, p.12). A detailed education policy however, was completed and approved in 1985. Between 1981 and 1987 a major overhaul of syllabi and textbooks took place to suit the nation’s needs and aspirations (Department of Curriculum Research and Development, 2014). This was also the period when Dzongkha, the national language received increased importance in schools. Although Dzongkha had been declared the National Language in the early 1970s (Rinchen, 2012), it took some time to establish Dzongkha as a subject in schools. Simultaneously, there have been concerns about the standard of teaching Dzongkha in schools (Pelden, 2014). According to Gyatsho (2013, p.270), for Dzongkha, “the intensity of learning and teaching is limited” in terms of instructional hours. For instance, the subject ratio between English and Dzongkha and their instructional periods is 6:2 (Gyatsho, 2013).

Table 1 represents the total number of periods and the amount of time allocated for different subjects for grades four, five and six in a primary school (Department of Curriculum and Research Development, 2014). This has meant that the ability of students in Bhutan to understand and speak Dzongkha has remained minimal. An additional factor adding to the poor standard of Dzongkha could be the late introduction of written script for Dzongkha which was initiated only in 1971 (Gyatsho, 2013). Even to this day, there are issues with a lack of spelling uniformity in Dzongkha (Wangchuck, 2012). Therefore, the government’s concern to raise the standards of Dzongkha is taken seriously by the MoE and various strategies have
been proposed such as establishing essay competitions, debates, quizzes, *loze*y^5 and spelling competitions in Dzongkha in schools (Wangchuck, 2012).

Table 1

*Time and period allocation (Number of periods and time per week)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dzongkha</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>8(5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>8(5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>9(6.0)</td>
<td>8(5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>7(4.40)</td>
<td>7(4.40)</td>
<td>7(4.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>5(3.20)</td>
<td>5(3.20)</td>
<td>8(5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Craft</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Education</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPW</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
<td>1(0.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>44(29.3)</td>
<td>44(29.3)</td>
<td>44(29.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Department of Curriculum and Research Development, 2014)

*Note: Except for Dzongkha, the national language, other core subjects: English, mathematics, science, social studies in grade IV, V and VI are taught in English. Teachers may however, use a mixture of both Dzongkha and English for subjects like art and craft, value education, physical education and also to guide students in the library and as well as during SUPW (Socially Useful Productive Work).*

^5 A poetry tradition among the yak herders of Bhutan.
As of 2013, Bhutan has a total of 519 schools (see Table 2 for a breakdown of school numbers by level and sector). The education system consists of: seven years of primary education i.e. pre-primary (age 6) to Class 6 (age 12); two years of lower secondary education i.e. Class 7 (age 13) and Class 8 (age 14); two years of middle secondary education i.e. Class 9 (age 15) and Class 10 (age 16); and two years of higher secondary education i.e. Class 11 (age 16) and Class 12 (age 17).

Table 2

Summary of schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of School</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Secondary School</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary School</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2014)

While schooling is not compulsory in Bhutan (Rinchhen, 2013), basic education until middle secondary is free in government schools. After this, students can either continue their education for two more years in higher secondary, or have the option of joining vocational training institutes or the labour market. Upon completing higher secondary education, students can enrol into tertiary institutes for a diploma or bachelor’s degree, or enter the job market.

There is also a provision for education known as the Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme, for those who have missed the opportunity to attend school, as well as for those who have dropped out of school. This category mostly comprises young people and some mature students, including mothers who attend evening classes. The MoE conducts NFE programme in all parts of the country, and focuses in particular on men and women in rural Bhutan. The NFE programme provides functional and skilled-based literacy training in both Dzongkha and English with the
objective of helping learners to: 1. Acquire literacy and numeracy education (read and understand newspapers, notices, advertisements, write simple letters, maintain simple daily accounts and to read sign boards); 2. Increase the literacy rate (70% adult literacy by 2013 and near 100% by 2015); 3. Provide livelihood skills in education and 4. Provide lifelong learning opportunities. At present, there are 953 centres across the country (UNESCO, 2009-2014).

Therefore, education in Bhutan can be viewed from three angles: monastic education, which still plays an important role in the lives of the people today and will continue to do so in the future; modern education; and non-formal and continuing education. The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources oversees vocational training institutes that provide training in arts and traditional craft, and vocations to students who chose not to pursue higher education. Altogether there are eight vocational training institutes that provide training to electricians, drivers, mechanics carpenters, masons, plumbers and welders. Tertiary education falls under the umbrella of the only University in the country, namely the Royal University of Bhutan, which was established in 2003. There are 11 member colleges, two of which offer teacher education.

1.3 EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS IN BHUTAN

One of the most far-reaching education reforms in Bhutan in recent times has been the introduction of inclusion, focusing specifically on the inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream schools. The term ‘Special Education Needs’ (SEN) is widely used by the MoE in Bhutan when referring to education for children with disabilities, both in inclusive and special schools. Bhutan’s current SEN policy is not yet fully finalized. The MoE has developed a SEN draft policy titled ‘National Policy on Special Educational Needs’ and this has been submitted for government’s approval (Ministry of Education, 2011; T, Lhamo, personal communication, 16 June 2014)

---

6 T. Lhamo is the Deputy Chief Program Officer of the Special Education Section in the Ministry of Education, Bhutan who provided the researcher with the information regarding the status of policy on SEN in Bhutan.
The first special school in Bhutan, Zangley Muenselling School for the Blind\(^7\) was established in 1973 in Khaling. The school started with three visually impaired students and three teachers (Chhogyel, 2013). In 1993, some students from this school were included within two mainstream schools for the first time. This programme was called mainstreaming as it happened through the integration of students with disabilities into general classes (Chhogyel, 2013). It was carried out in a very informal manner with no proper directives from the Department of Education. It was performed purely on a goodwill basis by the three institutions (two mainstream schools and the school for the blind) within the locality, basically in order to provide social interaction among the students. This was similar to what Carrington, MacArthur, Kearney, Kimber, Mercer and Morton, (2012, p.21) described as the “classes for non-academic subjects” that took place in Australia and New Zealand, before their shift towards inclusive schooling. This mainstreaming approach left many teachers in these three Bhutanese schools confused, because of their lack of exposure and skills in dealing with the situation. The situation at that time was similar to what the US had experienced in 1970s and early 1980s (Litton, Rotatori & Day, 1989), when mainstreaming was concerned with the integration of students with disabilities into the regular schools.

Despite the challenges faced, especially by the teachers in the two mainstream schools, the idea of inclusion helped both the visually impaired pupils and their sighted peers to experience and learn the importance and value of being included in society. Hence, the inclusive education programme was the turning point that provided a platform for the inclusion of children with SEN in Bhutan (P. Chhogyel\(^8\), personal communication, 05 August, 2014). According to the Draft National Policy on Special Education Needs (2011), Bhutan has now ratified, acquiesced or is a party to the following international conventions, instruments, declarations and commitments:

(a) The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

---

\(^7\) A Women’s Mission of Sweden, Kvinnliga Missions Arbetare (KMA) and a worldwide German Mission, Christoffel Blindenmission (CBM) financed the establishment of this school at Khaling, in east Bhutan (Chhogyel, 2013).

\(^8\) P. Chhogyel is a program officer in the Special Education Section, Ministry of Education in Bhutan who provided information about inclusive practices in Bhutan.
(c) Millennium Development Goals.
(d) Adopted the Education for All -Dakar Framework for Action (1994).

Although the need for educating children with SEN had already been felt, it was only in the early 2000’s that the MoE formally prepared some of the mainstream schools to accommodate children with SEN. In 2001 Changangkha Lower Secondary School in Thimphu became the first school in Bhutan to provide inclusive education (Chhogyel, 2013). It started with the inclusion of children with physical disabilities. This was followed by the setting up of a Deaf Education Unit for the hearing impaired in 2003. In addition, a non-governmental institute, Dratshok Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, a registered civil society organization, was founded in 2001. This organization supplemented the Royal Government of Bhutan’s (RGOB) initiatives in supporting children and young people with intellectual impairment by equipping them with vocational skills to be gainfully employed. Table 3 below shows the enrolment of students with SEN in inclusive and special schools. Besides these three institutions, children with other disabilities attended regular classes in the nine mainstream schools which are based regionally. Each of these schools has a designated Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENO) who is selected from the pool of teachers and is responsible for the overall coordination of the inclusive program in the school. Further, the Draft Policy on SEN outlines the mandate for each of these schools to define the roles and responsibilities including allotting sufficient time to the SENCOs for effective planning and implementing of the program (MoE, 2011).
Table 3  
*Enrolment of students with SEN in Inclusive and Special schools, 2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changangkha Middle Secondary School</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drukgyel Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gelephu Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jigme Sherabling Higher Secondary School</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamji Middle Secondary School</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaling Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongar Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendruk Higher Secondary School</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhemgang Lower Secondary School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drukgyel Deaf Education Unit (Special School)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muenselling Institute (Special School)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2013)

While some progress is being made by the MoE towards educating children with disabilities, it can be argued that more needs to be done for the 10-12 % of school-aged children who are unable to attend school (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2009). Three main reasons make attendance at school difficult for these children, including “living in very remote parts of the country, children with disabilities and children facing learning difficulties” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2009, p.119). Also, it should be mentioned that private schools in Bhutan at this period of time are far from ready to accommodate students with SEN. It is also apparent from the statistics released by the MoE that there are no students with SEN enrolled in private schools. In this case, it may be assumed that parents of children with disabilities are not able to afford to educate their children in private schools.


1.4 PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN BHUTAN

There are two pre-service teacher education providers in Bhutan, namely the Colleges of Education (CoE) in Samtse and Paro, which were established in 1968 and in 1975 respectively (Ministry of Education, 2013). They offer two full-time pre-service programmes; a four year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) and a one year Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Both the CoEs provide B.Ed. programmes that prepare teachers for primary and secondary teaching. The PGDE programme, which specifically prepares teachers for secondary teaching is provided only at Samtse. Approximately 400 new teachers graduate from these colleges annually. Table 4 below shows the number of teachers by degree level attained in government schools.

Table 4
Number of Government teachers by degree, March 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Teachers in Govt. Schools</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD Diploma</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>1540</td>
<td>2526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary teachers</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>1112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary/Matriculation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3125</td>
<td>4700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2013)

In Bhutan, the need to train teachers so that they can support students with SEN has remained a secondary consideration. Teachers in the aforementioned two special schools and nine mainstream schools that are developing an inclusive model
have had no special training in how to best support these students. Dema (2013) reported that a community primary school in central Bhutan did not have a single teacher who had been trained to specifically support students with SEN and the school looked forward to getting their teachers trained to teach students with disability. One major concern was identified by a visiting consultant to Bhutan who said: “They (teachers) have not been trained specifically in methods and strategies of teaching deaf students - that is one major concern” (Bhutan Broadcasting Service, 2013). She found that teachers in the Deaf Education Unit did not receive any training in deaf education prior to their employment. For a long time, neither preservice nor in-service teacher education programmes at the Colleges included specific instructional components to address the special skills required for teaching disabled children. Hence, teachers’ professional development in terms of special or inclusive education has been hampered, and this is likely to be affecting their ability to successfully teach and support students with SEN (Lane, 2013; Tshewang, 2004). Adding to the challenge for teachers is the fact that schools in Bhutan do not employ teaching assistants or teacher aides to assist teachers who teach children with SEN.

In the recent years, the MoE has identified and conducted some professional development programs for in-service teachers (T.Lhamo\(^9\), personal communication, 25 May 2015). These programs include;

1. Training of school heads on SEN.
2. Training of teachers (from inclusive and special schools) on SEN “All Children can Learn”.
3. Teaching and instructional methods for children with hearing impaired.
4. Training of teachers on orientation and mobility and activities for daily living for visually impaired students.
5. Awareness program on SEN for schools having children with SEN.
6. Training of teachers on ‘Model Education for all Abilities’.
7. Training on ‘Need Assessment of Low Vision Children’.

\(^9\) T. Lhamo is the Deputy Chief Program Officer of the Special Education Section in the Ministry of Education, Bhutan who provided the researcher with the information regarding the status of policy on SEN in Bhutan.
It may be highlighted that in most of the professional development programs and trainings, teachers from both school types (inclusive schools and special schools) are invited to participate jointly.

1.5 ABOUT THE RESEARCHER

This study is of personal interest to the researcher owing to the fact that the researcher is Bhutanese, with direct experience of the professional implication when teaching children with SEN with limited skills and teaching competency. The researcher has been a teacher and curriculum officer in Bhutan and is currently enrolled in a Master of Education degree at (Queensland University of Technology) QUT.

The researcher, a trained primary school teacher, initially worked in a regular primary school and then chose to teach at the institute for the visually impaired. With very limited experience in teaching (at that time) and in particular with no expertise in teaching students with SEN, the researcher faced many challenges in the beginning. There were times when teaching was done with the doors and windows of the classrooms closed due to lack of confidence in teaching and also to deliberately avoid being heard and observed by others when the researcher was teaching. Many things were tried out on a trial and error basis, some with satisfaction and some without success. There were times to rejoice when things worked out for the researcher during teaching and there were experiences full of frustration and desperation. Likewise, the researcher noted similar dilemmas for other teachers who continued to work in a confused state. Yet, these teachers were the chief educators of children with SEN and they worked hard to ensure they provided the best they could for all the children in their classrooms.

From the above practical experiences, the researcher strongly feels that it is time that professional training and support is provided for teachers in Bhutan so that they are respected in what they do and are able to provide excellent education for students with SEN. It is expected that the results of this study will offer recommendations as to how best to support teachers in Bhutan who educate students with SEN.
1.6 FORMULATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

The current research study is the result of undocumented concerns expressed by teachers about, and the researcher’s own experience with, teaching children with SEN. In the absence of any formal study on the performance of teachers teaching children with special needs in Bhutan, it is hard to judge the impact of their work. Teachers remain perplexed as to whether their teaching methods are really bringing about positive results. Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) found in the US, that teachers teaching in mainstream schools, who were not trained in SEN, expressed concerns about their teaching and support for children with SEN. Carrington et al. (2012, p. 22) also presented a similar view asserting that “some teachers are reluctant to teach a diverse group of students because they fear they will not have enough time to teach all students in their class well”. Similarly, teachers in Bhutan with no training in SEN are also likely to feel extremely unprepared. Bhutanese teachers rely on trial and error and the passage of time to help hone their skills. This likely means that children with SEN in Bhutan are not receiving the best education they can, and that teachers in Bhutan are not receiving adequate support in this important task. The MoE staff and a group of school principals have attended a range of professional development opportunities about inclusive education that are supported through aid programs such as Australian Aid. There is commitment to support the development of inclusive education and improve teacher preparation for teaching children who have disabilities.

Special education in Bhutan was very slow to evolve. While it started in 1973 “with the personal initiative of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyel Wangchuck” (Chhogyel, 2013), the government has only recently assumed growing responsibility for the education of children with SEN through the inclusive approach. However, as discussed earlier in section 1.3 and 1.4 there are challenges faced by these schools concerning the difficulties of implementing inclusive practices. Preparing the right kind of teachers is imperative because the teacher’s personality, experience, skills, qualities, membership group, reference group, aspirations and ambitions will influence the way he or she sees his or her role as a teacher. It is a serious concern to note that 40 years since the advent of Special Education in Bhutan, there is still no preparation in teacher courses that focuses specifically on how best to teach and support students with SEN.
The inadequacy of Bhutanese teachers’ professional development for teaching and supporting students with SEN suggests that it is now time to discuss and reflect upon the problems identified by this research. In this study, it is hypothesized that many Bhutanese teachers who are involved in educating children with SEN contend that they lack confidence in teaching and that they do not have any special training to teach these students. Besides these concerns, many teachers also feel that they do not have a good understanding of the principles and policies of inclusion.

1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTIONS

The aims of this study are two-fold: (1) to explore what concerns are felt most keenly by teachers in Bhutan when teaching students with SEN; and (2) to explore the ways teachers in Bhutan understand/articulate their experiences of teaching students with SEN.

To meet the aim within the context described above, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What concerns do teachers in Bhutan have about inclusive education, with particular focus on including students with SEN in their classrooms?
2. What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?

1.8 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Royal Education Council of Bhutan (2009) reported that little has been written on teachers’ competencies in Bhutan, and there is no evidence in the existing literature on the issues encountered by teachers who educate children with SEN in inclusive schools. Perhaps it can be argued that previous studies have failed to recognise the educational benefits for children with SEN which has led to overlooking the professional requirements for teachers to teach this group of children.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the concerns of teachers towards inclusion of students with SEN in their schools. Teachers’ concerns were investigated through an explanatory paradigm. In terms of practical outcomes, this
study seeks to provide substantial findings for the improvement of the quality of teaching related to inclusive and special education in Bhutan.

Finally, this study aims to contribute to the existing pool of resources about teachers’ issues in Bhutan in general, and in inclusive and special education in particular.

1.9 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher was cautious about the boundaries of the study. Keeping the research questions at the forefront, utmost care was taken to make sure that the goals of the study did not become impossibly large and at the same time difficult to complete and achieve.

This study is limited to 78 respondents in eleven government schools; two special schools and nine inclusive schools located in eight districts of Chuka, Mongar, Paro, Samtse, Sarpang, Thimphu, Trashigang and Zhemgang. These schools were selected because teachers in these districts there supported the learning of children who had disabilities in their classrooms.

A further limitation was that this study used one well-known questionnaire to explore teachers’ concerns about including students with SEN in their classroom, and added a very limited number (five) of open-ended questions. This allowed the respondents to take and complete the survey in a small amount of time.

1.10 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are applied throughout this thesis and are defined here.

**Special Educational Needs (SEN):** School-going children with learning difficulties or disabilities who find it hard to learn when compared to most children of the same age can be classified as having SEN. Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) state that special educational needs could mean that a child has: (a) cognition and learning needs; specific learning difficulty, moderate learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty, and profound learning difficulty, (b) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development Needs, (c) Communication and Interaction Needs; speech, language and communication needs and (d) Sensory and/or Physical Needs; visual impairment, hearing impairment, multi-sensory impairment and physical disability.
In the Bhutanese context, *Special Educational Needs* is the overarching term that defines the placement of children with SEN and their education in both school types; inclusive schools and special schools. Of the two special schools in Bhutan, the school for the visually impaired functions independently with residential facilities for the visually impaired students. This special school basically prepares students to read and write braille besides teaching other skills for independent living. Later, students from this school attend regular classes in the two adjacent mainstream schools (a lower secondary school and a high school).

On the other hand, the school for the hearing impaired is located within a regular lower secondary school environment in order to enhance inclusive modelling both educationally and socially. Although students from this school attend classes in the above regular lower secondary school, it functions independently under its own leadership and administration (Om, 2011).

In addition, one of the inclusive schools in Bhutan (Changangkha middle secondary school) has a self-contained classroom set up for students with severe disabilities and a pull-out program to support students with mild to moderate learning difficulties. This is similar to what is called a ‘Special Education Unit’ in some countries where support may be provided either in mainstream classes or in special classes (Lynch, 1994).

**Inclusive education**: Inclusive education means that all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, linguistic or other difficulties attend schools in their neighbourhood in regular classes with maximum support to learn and participate in all aspects of school life. “This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups.” (UNESCO, 1994, p. 6). Successful educational outcomes through inclusive education can be achieved when efforts are made to minimise barriers to learning and school activities, particularly for students with a disability (Carrington et al., 2012). Therefore, the concept of inclusion encourages the learning and in particular the participation of everyone; children, staff and the community members (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

When referring to inclusive education within the Bhutanese context, currently the focus is more towards the inclusion and education of children with SEN and in
particular children with physical disabilities. That could be one of the reasons why there are about 10-12% of school going age-children not enrolled in schools, as discussed in the last paragraph on page 10 (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2009).

**Special school:** This is a school that only enrols students with disabilities. It is therefore a school that provides only special education.

1.11 **BRIEF OUTLINE OF THIS RESEARCH DOCUMENT**

This research document is written in five chapters. The first chapter sets the foundation for the current study by providing a background about the focus of the location to which this of study is directed. It provides an introduction to the research where an overview of the proposed study is presented. Additional topics covered in this section include: the motivation for undertaking the study, the rationale for the study and the research questions.

The second chapter provides the background to the overall study through review of the relevant literature. In this chapter three significant components of inclusive and special education are discussed namely: understanding inclusion and exclusion; moving toward inclusion and the complexities of inclusion. The chapter discusses the worldwide shift from segregated education for children with SEN to an inclusive educational setting. In doing so, an overview of the history of special education around the world is presented; theories concepts and characteristics of inclusive education are also highlighted. Following this, the specific application of inclusive education in Bhutan is discussed. Teachers’ attitudes and teachers’ efficacy form a part of discussion towards the end of this chapter. Lastly, it highlights the gaps in the literature and provides justification for the importance of the current study.

The third chapter outlines the research methodology. The relevance of the methodology, on the basis that it connects with the reality of the current working situation for teachers in Bhutan, is discussed. The chapter also outlines the methods of data collection, the participants who were included in the study, the data analysis procedures drawn upon, ethical issues considered, and the study’s limitations.

The procedure used for the data collection, analysis and the key results are contained in Chapter Four.
Finally, in Chapter Five, discussions arising out of the findings from the study are presented. Other topics covered in this chapter are the limitations of the study, recommendations based on the overall findings of the study and conclusion in regards to the relevant literature.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review is organised into three parts. The first section provides an overview of both the SEN and inclusive education movement, including its history, theory, characteristics and policy. The second section presents a review of the research about teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion. Findings from scholarly research on developing pre-teachers’ attitude is presented in this section. This is followed by a discussion on strategies how inclusion can be promoted and supported. The third section then focuses on teaching competencies of teachers. Teacher’s self-efficacy regarding inclusion, with an emphasis on pre-service teacher education is discussed here. A discussion on the use of alternative teaching such as information and communication technology (ICT), collaborative teaching and inter-professional approach/practice are included towards the end of this third section.

As there is limited literature in these areas that focuses specifically on Bhutan, studies from a range of countries were examined. The literature review provided insight into past and recently-practiced inclusive programmes with regards to teaching children with SEN, and it also highlighted additional issues that may require future study.

Lastly, this review also endeavoured to highlight gaps in Bhutanese teachers’ current knowledge as well as explore current contentions within the teaching profession about how to provide effective teaching methods for children with SEN. The literature review concludes with a summary of the main issues that need to be considered for this research in Bhutan.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

2.1.1 Special and Inclusive Education

Special education dates back to the mid-sixteenth century, when Pedro Ponce de Leon, a Spanish Benedictine monk, found that oralism could supplement the traditional use of sign language to teach deaf individuals (Lane, 1989 and Winzer, 1998). This was followed by the efforts of Valentin Huay, who in 1784, created raised prints of letters and words to be embossed on paper, enabling blind students to
read (Winzer, 1998). In 1829, Huay’s idea was carried forward by Louis Braille who was blind himself, and who developed a raised dot system for reading and writing. The success of these approaches in providing education to people with sensory difficulties quickly spread to other parts of the world, particularly the USA and England, where numerous learning institutions were established (Fleischer & Zames, 2001). Many of these institutions provide outstanding services, such as the Perkins School for the Blind in the USA and the Royal National Institute for the Blind in England.

The term special education is predominantly used to mean the education of children with disabilities. Usually, it is a segregated form of education in which children with disabilities learn completely separately from their peers (Kohama, 2012). By the twentieth century, special education had greatly expanded across the world. A special education model informed “a changing mindset about education and about children who were different” (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 23). This approach was based on a deficit model that aimed to identify disability and disorder. More recently, this approach of segregation has become a topic of discussion. Hence, the notion of inclusive education is now broadly accepted throughout the world.

The advent of inclusive education occurred towards the second half of the twentieth century in response to the international concern that every child should have the right to access and complete a free and compulsory education that is relevant to their lives (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2000). UNESCO (as cited in Foreman, 2008, p. 39) noted that the segregation of students with disabilities was often the result of “inflexible and content-heavy curricula”. In addition, Carrington et al. (2012) note that inclusion is about creating an environment within which all children, irrespective of their ability, language, ethnic or cultural origin and gender, can be provided with real opportunities at school. Hence, in simple terms, inclusion is a concept that considers all children, not only those with special educational needs.

Furthermore, it should be noted that social movements have played important roles in shaping the education of all children. On the international front, the United Nations (UN) empowered UNESCO with a mandate to ensure that all children, youth and adults had access to a quality basic education. Through its broad definition, UNESCO (1994) articulated:
Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups, (p. 3).

Equally, the Salamanca Statement of 1994, to which 92 countries and 25 international organizations are signatories, stipulated that the education of all students should be in inclusive classrooms (Salend & Duhaney, 2011). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education was one of the most important international policy documents about inclusion and it emphasized:

We call upon all governments and urge them to adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise. (UNESCO 1994, p. ix).

Organized by the Government of Spain in co-operation with UNESCO, this World Conference held from June 7-10th, 1994, was an offshoot of three fundamental assertions: 1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights -1948; 2. The Conclusions from the World Conference on Education for All - 1990); and 3. The United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities -1993. Table 5 shows international conventions and declarations that are relevant to the development of inclusive education worldwide.
Table 5  
*International conventions and declarations relevant to inclusive education worldwide.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conventions/Declarations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Declaration of Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Declaration of Rights of Disabled Persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>World Declaration on Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>UNESCO’s Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>World Education Forum: The Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Millennium Declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 2.1.2 Special and Inclusive Education around the World

The SEN-related policies and legislation that have been adopted by most countries in recent times has specified that children with SEN should be educated in mainstream settings to the greatest possible extent. The fact that most nations have referenced The Salamanca Statement, which informs their national policy for inclusive schooling, is a step forward towards providing educational opportunities for every child (Foreman, 2008). These policies provide guidelines to ensure that all children are provided with the minimum standard of education.

For the purpose of this study, legislation and policies in the United States (US), Great Britain and Australia have been taken into consideration. It may be contended
that certain legislation and policies, especially those of the US and Great Britain, have been of particular international importance, and this importance goes beyond merely compelling numerous other states and nations to borrow their ideas when developing their own policies (Foreman, 2008). For instance, the early stages of special education in Australia were designed on the basis of overseas research (Jenkinson, 2001), “especially in the United States, that sought to demonstrate the merits or otherwise of either segregated or integrated educational settings for students with disabilities” (Jenkinson, 2001, p.142). While inclusive education in Bhutan started some ten years back, the program struggled to expand due to a lack of planning in terms of resources and expertise (Zam, 2008). However, Bhutan now has the option of borrowing ideas from and learning from the experiences of other countries where inclusion has been practiced successfully.

In Great Britain, as reported by Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009), the concept of SEN did not exist before the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Children with disabilities were looked after by their families or by their church. Later, it was the Handicapped Children Education Act of 1970 that, for the first time, gave children in Great Britain who had cognitive difficulties the right to a school-based education (Wearmouth, 2001). Following this, the Education Reform Act, “widely regarded as the most important single piece of education legislation in England, Wales and Northern Ireland”, came into place in 1988; in 2001 this same Act became a springboard for the No Child Left Behind Act in the United States (Wikipedia, 2014). The aforementioned 1988 Education Reform Act was regarded as highly contributory because it gave additional autonomy to the head teachers and governors of schools, in particular with regards to financial control. However, Garner (2009) came up with a very strong argument that the Education Reform Act of 1988 actually had a profound impact on enhancing segregation, at a time when the concept of educating children with SEN was moving towards inclusion.

Although Great Britain adopted comprehensive legislation to address the educational needs of disabled children, its legislation is generally less prescriptive than that of the US (Foreman, 2008). For example, the 1981 Education Act strongly indicated the “development of educational provision for children with SEN and disabilities” (Hodkinson & Vickerman, 2009), and supported segregated educational practices for children with SEN; while the 2001 Special Educational Needs and
Disability Act reinforced the notion that all children should be educated in mainstream schools, “unless that is incompatible with the wishes of parents or the provision of efficient education for other children” (The National Archives, 2001).

Legislation in Australia has not been very prescriptive either, especially when compared with the US. Foreman (2008) considers this both a weakness and strength. He argues that while prescriptive legislation helps in developing positive attitudes towards students with disabilities among the teaching communities, comprehensive legislation works best when families’ and students’ interests are also taken into consideration. According to Carrington et al. (2012), international and national policies, legislatives, and laws are important forces that influence inclusive education. For example, the Queensland Disability Services Act 2006 provides an overarching inclusive education statement that encourages all Queenslanders to promote and support inclusive principles within their own communities (Queensland Government, Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2005-2014). Berlach and Chambers (2011, p. 56) also reported that “some states appear not to have an inclusivity policy document”. For instance, in South Australia, there was no inclusive education policy and it was basically “embedded in other documents” (Berlach & Chambers, 2011, p. 56). While it was also reported that New South Wales, like Queensland, considered all students in its inclusive education policy, Western Australia focussed purely on students with disabilities (Carrington et al., 2012).

Another remarkable point to note in Foreman’s (2008) findings about the education policy of Australia is the significance and incorporation of the country’s cultural and historical aspects. This allows the schools to work with families in culturally appropriate ways. For example, “it is important for Aboriginal children with a disability to maintain their cultural connections and not become isolated as a consequence of disability-focused interventions, particularly during their years at preschool and school” (Ministerial Advisory Committee: Students with Disabilities 2003, p. 1). This cultural component is of great significance for the current research study, since in the Bhutanese context, culture, history and tradition all constitute valuable components in developing strategies for national developmental plans (Gross National Happiness Commission, 2009).
As stated in chapter one, the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is clearly preserved in the Education Policy Guidelines and Instructions which aim to instil positive attitudes in children for a happy life in the future (Ministry of Education, 2013). The Draft Policy on SEN also captures the essence of GNH, which will “ensure more enabling and responsive educational services to the children with Special Educational Needs and will go a long way in achieving GNH” (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 6). However, it is also important that care is taken when developing a policy. A policy should be seen as a process, responding to changes with progress and development rather than viewing it as an end. It is important to involve staff from schools, parents, administrators and officials from the government to ensure that appropriate provisions for the inclusion of children with SEN are covered.

Globally, it has been demonstrated that the mere placement of students with SEN in regular schools is not sufficient to make inclusion successful. In Norway for example, all children have the right to be educated in local schools as far as possible and that they are well supported by a special education team besides having access to pedagogical/psychological support services from the municipality (Flem & Keller, 2005). According to Flem and Keller’s study, which involved inclusive education teachers, special educators, principals, administrators from municipality, all of the respondents were positive towards the ideology of inclusion. This meant that “integration had become a natural part of the thinking and was thus taken for granted (Flem & Keller, 2005, p. 27). However, Haug, (1998) argues that most schools in Norway have not been successful in implementing inclusive education. Some issues have been highlighted that hinder inclusion, for example, the need for adequate teacher training, the effect of resources and social integration (Flem & Keller, 2005). This therefore implies that policies are just guidance and give directions that facilitate the implementation of an inclusive program. Policies alone do not make inclusion a success (Haq & Mundia, 2012); rather inclusion should be supported with good (positive attitude) trained teachers, appropriate infrastructure, resources and appropriate curriculum.

Jenkinson (2001, p. 91) contended that schools should be provided with the opportunity to develop their own approach to support the teaching of SEN students, and she quoted the example of the Department of Education in Western Australia,
which states that “rather than impose a centralized policy of inclusive education, schools should be given the opportunity to develop their own policy that will support the education of children with SEN”.

In comparison, Bhutan’s progress towards producing a national policy for special education or inclusive education has been very slow. For example, The Draft National Policy on Special Education Needs that was prepared in 2011 by the Special Education Division of the MoE has not come into effect yet. It is taking a long time to get approved by the government. However, the government’s commitment to provide education for all Bhutanese children is reflected in some of the national strategy documents and the Constitution of Bhutan; for example:

(a) **The Education Sector Strategy 2020** states that “all children with disabilities and with special needs – including those with physical, mental and other types of impairment – will be able to access and benefit from education. This will include full access to the curriculum, participation in extra-curricular activities and access to cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities. The programme will be supported by trained and qualified personnel using teaching strategies responsive to different learning styles to ensure effective learning. Teacher training will be re-oriented as a means of achieving these objectives” (Department of Education, 2003, p.36).

(b) **Bhutan’s developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness as outlined in Vision 2020 Part II** (Planning Commission, 1999, p. 12) strives to “maximize the happiness of all Bhutanese and to enable them to achieve their full and innate potential as human beings”. Further, the document also states that “education has become the inalienable right of all Bhutanese” (p.18), indicating that persons with disabilities shall also enjoy equal opportunities in all walks of life.

(c) **The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan** (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, p.20) under Article 9.16 states: “The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made
generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”.

Hence, it is clear from the above documents that Bhutan places high importance on providing free and basic education to all children. Nonetheless, with a rising population and the steady expansion of inclusive schools, there is a further need to specify a suitable policy to appropriately support students with SEN in Bhutan (Kipchu, 2015; Kuensel, 2014). This will ensure that the right to education is protected for children with SEN.

2.1.3 The Influence of India on Bhutan

One cannot understand the development of the Bhutanese education system without considering the impact that India has had on this system. The reason for this is that when modern education was introduced in Bhutan in the early 1950s, Indian curricula and teachers both played very significant roles in shaping its education system (Thinley, 2013). In India, although mainstreaming was conceptualized in 1944, the government placed priority on setting up segregated institutions. This resulted in schools for students with special needs being established mostly in urban areas; these were expensive and further marginalized people with disabilities in rural areas (Kohama, 2012). It was only in 1986 that the National Policy on Education was created to facilitate children with disabilities (physically and mentally handicapped) to be enrolled in mainstream Indian schools (Ministry of Human Resource Development, as cited in Kohama, 2012). The objective of this program was to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped children with the general community as equal partners and to enable them to lead an independent life. This program was further elevated with the launch of the Project for Integrated Education Development with assistance from UNICEF (Kohama, 2012). However, Kohama adds, “although this policy was created in 1986, it was not implemented until the Plan of Action was created in 1992” (p. 19). This was the time when children with moderate disabilities were included in Indian schools. Rapidly, children with multiple and severe disabilities were also integrated in the mainstream schools through the commitment to providing educational for all.
It was only in 2001 that the Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE) took over the administration of Class 10 (Year 10) board examination from the Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations. Until then, students in Bhutan were participating in board examinations administered by New Delhi, India (Rinchhen, 2013). Also in 2006, Bhutan took over the administration from India for the Class 12 (Year 12) examination, called the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate Examination (Rinchhen, 2013). It is therefore clear that, to some extent, the Bhutanese education system was influenced by neighbouring India. However, it is interesting to note that despite Bhutan’s education system benefitting from neighbouring India, neither special education in the past, nor inclusive education more recently, have been affected by any influences from India. This can be attributed to Kohama’s (2012) claim that India itself struggled to formalize inclusive education. According to the Annual Education Statistics of 2013 (Policy & Planning Division, 2013), there was only one teacher from India teaching in one of the special schools in Bhutan.

2.1.4 Promoting and Supporting Special and Inclusive Education

The journey towards inclusive education, according to Bui, Quirk, Almazon and Valenti (2010) is very convincing and encouraging. The researchers contend that over 20 years of consistent research has proved that inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms has demonstrated positive outcomes. According to Bui et al. (2010, p. 1), “positive outcomes have been shown for both students with high incidence disabilities (learning disabilities and other “mild” disabilities) and those with low incidence disabilities (intellectual, multiple, and “severe” disabilities). Inclusion of students with SEN itself is a success when they are moved into general classrooms from special education settings (Hunt & Farron-Davis, 1992). Studies found that there is an increase in basic academic skills such as literacy for students with severe disabilities when inclusion takes place (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994). It was also observed that when students were confined in self-contained classrooms, they were less engaged and their scope of learning was limited. According to Conona (2013), social inclusion programs aim at social discrimination and one way of dealing with this is through overcoming barriers to inclusion in schools where children and adults interact in
everyday situations. Students with SEN who study in inclusive schools can be generally supported with: more classroom instruction, 1:1 instruction time; wide range of academic content; more interaction and help from non-disabled peers; and less use of adults (Hunt et al., 1994). Likewise, students with SEN spent more time (58%) for non-instructional activity in self-contained classrooms while in general classrooms the time spent for non-instructional activities was far less (35%). Starcic (2010, p.26) emphasized that all approaches to inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools should be explored as “the identification and recognition of special educational needs, is an integral part of daily school work”. Taking the above points into consideration, it can be maintained that inclusion must be promoted by every means and support.

More research has been carried out to determine the relevant instructional practices and appropriate curricular efforts that result in improved learner outcomes for both students with and without disabilities. Sailor (2002) asserts that peer-assisted-learning is one of the most effective strategies to promote inclusion in schools. Sailor found that peer-assisted strategies work very well with children with mild disabilities. This is further supported by a study which found that there was significant increase in academic indicators such as reading, spelling, math and social studies when students learned through peer assisting/tutoring (Fisher, Shumaker & Deshler, 1995). Hence, promoting and supporting inclusion can be through many different strategies.

Both policy formation and its implementation are dynamic process. Despite the development towards enrolment of children with SEN in mainstream schools within Bhutan, there remains some variance in placement practices. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between the overall education policy and a policy on SEN. Recently, the MoE in Bhutan has come up with The Teacher Human Resource Policy-2014. This policy is formulated as “a part of an ongoing effort in this direction that sets clearer procedures on teacher recruitment, deployment, training, retention and appraisal system and enhances their professional development and opportunities” (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. v). However, no specific issues concerning the professional development of teachers who teach in inclusive schools are covered in this document. Hence, it is speculated that this group of teachers may remain unattended in one way or another. European Agency for Development in
Special Needs Education (2009, p.17) strongly recommends that “for teachers to work effectively in inclusive settings, they need to have the appropriate values and attitudes, skills and competencies, knowledge and understanding”. This means all teachers need to be trained and prepared to work in inclusive schools.

One way to make sure that these teachers are not left out would be to develop a policy or a national set of teacher competencies, a part of which could be comprised of skills in special and inclusive education (Jenkinson, 2001). However, Petriwskyj (2014, p. 81) cautions that when policies are directed explicitly towards a specific group, it ‘may require the provision of additional or specialised staff, specialised teaching materials, new community partnerships, and change in pre-service or in-service professional education’. Taking this into account will ensure that the policies are able to address overarching concerns related to a range of diversity categories.

Within Bhutan, the national policy on SEN has been deliberated by the MoE’s senior officials in the special education division and has been submitted to the government for endorsement (T, Lhamo\textsuperscript{10}, personal communication, 16 June 2014). Although the inclusive education program has been initiated by the MoE, drafting of a policy on inclusive education is yet to occur. Therefore, it is clear that schools in Bhutan do not actually have a policy of inclusion or how well they function. Rose (2001) noted that the necessity to have a clear policy on inclusive education for children with SEN was also highlighted by the UN at The World Programme of Action meeting held in Stockholm. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (2009, p. 21) further emphasized that “the promotion of quality in inclusive education requires a clearly stated policy”. Such policy must aim to take account of international level policies and initiatives as well as be flexible enough to reflect local level needs. Since the success in implementing the policy depends largely on the schools, such policies are not only meant to mandate governments to implement inclusive education, but should be easily understood and followed at school and community levels to support flexible curricula as well as adaptations to the school curriculum, including teacher training (Booth & Ainscow, 1998).

\textsuperscript{10}T. Lhamo is the Deputy Chief Program Officer of the Special Education Section in the Ministry of Education, Bhutan who provided the researcher with the information regarding the status of policy on SEN in Bhutan.
Foreman (2008, p.51) argues that apart from bringing changes in people’s attitudes towards disability through the implementation of legislations and policies, these documents generally “have had their greatest impact on the way in which education is provided to students with disability”. For example, the Queensland Department of Education adopted a policy of inclusive schools and curricula within a framework of social justice (Booth & Ainscow, 1998). This policy ensures that children with SEN attend schools within the community reach and in an inclusive manner. It is therefore emphasised through this research that the MoE needs to work to adopt adequate and appropriate measures to ensure that inclusion is fully supported throughout Bhutan via formal documentation.

Dorji (2003) argues that an approach similar to inclusive education that is already in place in Bhutan is that of ‘wholesome education’. According to Dorji (2003), wholesome education is a holistic approach through which children acquire all the qualities of goodness, such as respect, loyalty, honesty, cooperation, compassion, dedication and appreciation. Further, he argues that the concept of wholesome education in the Bhutanese context is “also interpreted as inclusive, bringing together children with varying abilities to learn” (p. 133). While Dorji (2003) and Namgyel (2011) look at Bhutan’s idea of ‘wholesome education’ as an approach comparable to inclusive education, there is still a need to make inclusive education a distinct and prominent educational practice. However, according to the United Nations (1989), special school education should be considered if mainstream schools cannot make adequate provisions for the needs of students with disabilities.

Today, there is a Division under the Department of School Education that provides special education services to both special schools and inclusive schools within Bhutan (Zam, 2008). In addition, in a move to scale up the education services for children with disabilities, two additional inclusive schools in the Chukha and Sarpang districts have been proposed (P. Chhogyel, personal communication, September 12, 2014). Therefore, as the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools is a growing reality in Bhutan, it is imperative that the MoE promptly generates a national policy on inclusive education.
2.2 TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS TOWARDS INCLUSION AND SEN

Since the commencement of inclusive practices, teachers’ attitudes towards children with SEN have been studied in many countries. Research has established that teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the inclusion of children with SEN have a tremendous impact on the education of these children (Beacham & Rouse, 2012). Providing education to children with SEN is almost universally accepted, and equally so is the challenge of providing an appropriate quality of education for all students. Prior to the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, very few educational institutions supported children with SEN throughout the world. The concerns that teachers have about educating children with SEN are influenced by their attitudes towards children/people who have a disability. According to Foreman (2008), the attitude of teachers is a major component that defines success in educating children with SEN. Teachers’ interactions with children in inclusive schools are influenced by their way of thinking about their students. Having a positive attitude toward students with disabilities is a prerequisite for the development of effective strategies in inclusive classrooms. The success of inclusion is only possible when teachers show accepting attitudes towards children with SEN (Beacham & Rouse, 2012). Due to their critical roles in response to the needs of these children, the attitudes of teachers are often investigated.

Research has supported that teachers in many parts of the world agree that the inclusion of all children in regular schools will help to develop an inclusive society, although concerns are expressed about the effective implementation of inclusive practices (Beacham & Rouse, 2012; Gao & Marger, 2011; Haq & Mundia, 2012). For example, a recent study conducted by Scruggs, Mastropieri and Leins(2011) found that teachers from the United States, South Korea, Italy Greece and Serbia had mixed opinions about inclusion of students with SEN in the inclusive schools and that teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion have not changed over the past 50 years. While the majority of teachers were of the view that students with SEN would gain from inclusion, they also reported that most teachers’ were actually concerned when students with SEN were placed in inclusive classrooms.
Inclusion largely depends on teachers’ attitudes and willingness to include students with SEN. “In a number of studies, the attitudes of teachers towards educating pupils with SEN has been put forward as a decisive factor in making schools more inclusive” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2004). In a study by Hastings and Oakford (2003) the researchers found that teachers’ attitudes towards children with SEN are influenced by the severity of disability. This phenomenon is further supported by Campbell’s and Gilmore’s (2003) study which reported that teachers exhibit favouritism and certain attitudes towards particular students in their class. Teachers strongly preferred integrating students with mild physical disabilities rather than those with both moderate and severe disabilities. The researchers found that “they (the teachers) were reluctant to include students with more severe physical difficulties or students with intellectual difficulties” (p. 369). In other words, teachers had a positive attitude towards the inclusion of students who required little or no assistance in the class. This is a clear demonstration of a negative attitude towards children with SEN by teachers. Teachers’ negative attitudes are a great barrier to inclusive education (Beacham & Rouse, 2014). When teachers become selective in terms of the severity of students’ disabilities, they basically tend to avoid the assumed added responsibilities.

Evidence suggests that teachers have not been effectively prepared regarding the policy of inclusion of children with SEN (Forlin, Douglas, & Hattie, 1996). Such shortfall can ruin the motive of inclusion as teachers may not be in a position to comprehend the needs of students with SEN. The influence of these attitudes is linked with classroom practice, although the outcome may not be visible straight away (Campbell & Gilmore, 2003).

Hull’s (2005) study established that teachers’ attitude is a critical element in promoting inclusion and in particular, the success of students with SEN. Teachers’ attitudes form the basis for being willing to support students with SEN. When teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion, then children are in the right place for learning. Teachers’ willingness to accept students with SEN gives them the confidence in their ability to support students in the class (Campbell & Gilmore, 2003).

In their study, Campbell and Gilmore found that initially student teachers views about inclusion were quite apprehensive. For instance, they reported that “28%
of their sample thought that inclusion would be detrimental to children with Down syndrome, 25% thought it would be detrimental socially and 38% thought it would be detrimental emotionally” (p. 3). On the other hand, when the same student teachers were asked about the effect of inclusion for other children (non-disabled), Campbell’s and Gilmore’s results showed that a very high percentage; 93% of student teachers thought that inclusion was socially beneficial, 89% thought that it was emotionally beneficial and 31% thought that it would be educationally detrimental. As the study progressed, the researchers also made further interesting findings. Towards the end of semester, the student teachers had different views. They reported that “students had a much more positive view of the benefits of inclusion, with 90% rating it as beneficial educationally, 95% socially, and 86% believing it to be beneficial emotionally for the child with Down syndrome” (p. 3). In view of this, it is important to explore Bhutanese teachers’ attitudes towards their students and this will be the focus of this study.

Campbell’s and Gilmore’s study and its findings are very important for the current study as it allows the researcher to look at both pre-service teachers’ understanding about inclusive education and the training aspect for pre-service teachers in Bhutan. Therefore, it can be drawn from the above study that education and training is one strategy that enables teachers to develop positive attitudes or change their attitudes from negative to positive.

The philosophy of inclusion is not only supported by policies and legislation but also through tradition, culture and religious values which surround children with SEN (Haq & Mundia, 2012). In their research which involved 89 Brunei student teachers, Haq and Mundia reported that the pre-service teachers had positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN. They attributed their findings to various explanations both within a global and Bruneian context. They emphasized that inclusion of children with SEN received “encouragement from cultural and religious values” (p. 371). It is worthy to note here the researchers’ use of an old Malay adage, “If you want to bend a bamboo, start with the shoot” (Mundia, as cited in Haq & Mundia, 2012), which they interpreted as “if you want people to develop positive attitudes toward disabled learners, start integrating the disabled early in childhood during the formative ages’ (p.371). The point here is that, both non-disabled students’ attitudes and regular teachers’ attitudes towards disability can be
changed or developed when they have the opportunity to interact with very young children with SEN. In addition the researchers argued that such an environment enabled society in general and non-disabled children and teachers in particular, to accept the disabled.

Haq’s and Mundia’s interpretation about inclusion of children with SEN based on cultural and religious values is of significant importance for this research. The openness of Bhutanese society makes inclusion favourable in schools. However, Haq’s and Mundia’s idea of early identification of children with SEN and their integration into the early childhood centres is not applicable in Bhutan’s context. Almost all the day care centres and the early childhood centres are managed by private entities. Although there is a policy which states that children with SEN should be supported in early childhood centres, most of these centres are not equipped with appropriate resources or expertise to support children with SEN. Therefore it is only at the age of six when children with disabilities come to school that they, in a real sense start to interact with other people outside their family. In Bhutan generally, children with disabilities are well looked after by their families (Zam, 2008). It is not common to find a person with disabilities who is neglected and wandering the streets or asking for alms. However, Dorji and Solomon (2009) found that not all health professionals who were covered in their study had positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities in Bhutan. Due to a lack of research not much is known about teachers’ attitudes towards children with SEN in Bhutan. Hence, the current study will highlight this concern.

In today’s world, it has become crucial for teachers to demonstrate the attitudes and behaviours that show that they are comfortable with children with disabilities and individual differences (Anwer, 2012; Salend, 1998). It is encouraging that according to Foreman (2008), most teachers, although initially unenthusiastic about inclusion, become positive after gaining confidence in their abilities with the benefit of support and experience.

However, Beare (1985) provides a differing view to the above statement. According to Beare, once a teacher develops a negative attitude towards inclusion, it is extremely difficult to change. While it may be a challenge to change the beliefs and attitudes of experienced teachers towards inclusion, Sharma, Forlin and Loreman (2008) ascertain that new teachers had the flexibility to think, understand and
develop positive attitudes towards students with SEN. The best approach is therefore increased information in pre-service teacher education rather than traditional one-shot approaches (Beare, 1985). In the same vein, Anwer’s (2012) findings in his study on teachers of inclusive education in Pakistan revealed that most teachers who taught in private schools held a negative perception of inclusion when compared to public school teachers. The researcher provides two justifications to support the findings in his study: 1) the quality of training received while on the job; and 2) the amount of pre-service training received by the teachers. Like the other aforementioned researchers, Anwer (2012) also ascertains that “attempting to educate teachers at the pre-service level may help to diminish the concerns regarding the implementation of inclusion” (p. 1007).

Many teachers in inclusive schools suffer from a lack of knowledge and training to teach appropriately. They are often confronted with the question of how to teach children with SEN. Lack of knowledge is prone to bring negative attitudes in teachers and many teachers do not feel competent to encourage learning in children with SEN due to limited skills and knowledge. Smith and Thomas (2006) argue that many teachers assume that some children with SEN are not capable of learning and these children do not receive the required support for learning in the class. Keeping a positive attitude is the single most important quality for any teacher who works with children with SEN.

Many studies emphasize the need for strengthening pre-service education in teacher colleges to promote inclusive education (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012; Woodcock, Hemmings, & Kay, 2012). According to Lambe and Bones (2006) the pre-service training stage is one of the most effective periods during which teachers can develop positive attitudes and build confidence to work with children with SEN. Hence, it is important for teacher colleges to ensure that pre-service teacher education incorporates all the elements of inclusion that will enable positive attitudes and build confidence among new teachers. Equally, school jurisdictions should make efforts to ensure that in-service teachers hold positive attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN in the schools. “This can be achieved through policies which only allow the hiring of new teachers with positive attitudes towards inclusion, and also by providing teachers with positive experiences with inclusive education” (Loreman, 2007, p. 25). This particular point is noteworthy when discussing this research; in the
context of Bhutanese inclusive setting. With just eleven schools that provide inclusive education (two are also special schools), Bhutan has the advantage of selecting teachers with the right attitude. Hence, it is important that policy makers are aware of this criterion when recruiting teachers to teach in inclusive schools and special school.

Praisner (2003), goes one step further by admitting that the leaderships of school principals is equally important for the success of inclusion of children with SEN. School principals play a unique role in demonstrating expertise at building a vision, setting direction, assisting students, teachers and staff, and parents to act more inclusively (McLeskey & Waldron, 2015). Their role is to support change, manage resources and people necessary to make inclusion happen in the schools.

According to Angelides (2012), leadership and its role is one important factor that has to be studied in depth in order to move towards more inclusive practices. Angelides’s study highlighted four areas of leadership: 1) the forms of leadership that promote inclusive education; 2) how these forms of leadership manifest in the practices; 3) activities of the schools’ head teachers; and 4) behaviours of the schools’ head teachers.

In Praisner’s (2003) study which surveyed 408 elementary school principals, it was found that only one in five principals’ attitudes towards inclusion were positive. This meant that principals who had positive attitudes supported the inclusion by placing students in less restrictive settings. To add to this, Bui et al. (2010, p. 10) summed up that “efforts aimed at providing teachers and administrators with meaningful contact with people with disabilities as well as information on special education concepts makes a difference in the quality of students’ educational programming”. Therefore it can be concluded that both teachers’ and principals’ attitude are essential factors that support the education of children with SEN.

2.3 TEACHERS’ TEACHING COMPETENCIES

Since the inception of special education throughout the world, one of the major challenges has been to develop a qualified workforce, including a suitable work-environment that sustains special educators’ involvement and dedication (Billingsley, 2004). One powerful barrier to inclusion in mainstream schools is teachers’ lack of
relevant knowledge and reluctance to support an inclusive approach. Booth and Ainscow (2011) argue that school communities must identify the barriers to learning and participation for children with SEN that are apparent in their school, and then work with staff, children and their families to remove them.

Ballard (2012, p.68) states that “inclusion implies that someone is being excluded”. For example, this can happen when teachers in local or mainstream schools think that children with SEN should be educated in a segregated setting. However, as teachers are the first point of contact for children in the class, the importance of teacher education for inclusion should be a high priority. While Ballard (2012) argues that teachers as individuals cannot solve problems of “poverty and other forms of oppression” (p.79), the author claims that they still have firsthand experience with children with SEN in their classrooms. Therefore, they can share ideas and assist in devising strategies for inclusion to be effective.

It must be highlighted that teachers in Bhutan miss the preparedness phase related to inclusive education. Teachers mostly learn about teaching children with SEN when they actually start working in inclusive and special schools. They learn through experience and from colleagues, using a time-consuming trial and error method. In connection to this, there is good reason to look at the educational policies in the European context. Their approach towards inclusion has tended to be proactive leading to the challenges and demands of time and circumstances (Starcie, 2010). In their educational policies, is a requirement of standards and competencies for all teachers and specifically key generic competences which provide the basis for inclusive education (González & Wagenaar, 2003). Therefore, one significant feature of the educational policies in the European context is that the teacher education programs are designed to meet the needs and challenges of inclusive education within the Bologna Study Programme Reform11 (Starcie, 2010). This is further supported by a report on Tuning Educational Structures in Europe in which González and Wagenaar (2003, p.125) state that:

11 The Bologna Process is a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna_process)
The important role teacher education has to take in educational reform has been explicitly mentioned. Investing in competencies for all (OECD 2001) has become a top priority. Knowledge—based and dynamic learning societies would depend on highly qualified education staff in a rich variety of contexts (e.g. lifelong learning, e-learning, inclusive education). As a consequence, the initial education and continuous professional development of education staff has become subject to rapid expansion, diversification and professionalization.

Further review of literature, enabled the researcher to grasp some of the essences of teacher education curriculum with regards to inclusion which lead towards a consistent educational approach within the European Union. “These include: 1) the appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism in the process of identifying learner disadvantages; 2) team work and skills which enable the teacher to collaborate with professionals, parents and fellow teachers in dealing with special education needs; c) sensitivity about ethical issues and ethical commitment and 3) inter-personal and communication skills” (Starcic, 2010, p.26).

Likewise, throughout the world, as more and more children with SEN are accommodated in inclusive schools, the necessity for professional development among the staff is heightened (Booth, Nes & Stromstad, 2003). In Australia, professional teaching organisations have been explicit in demanding action to compensate for perceived shortcomings in both initial teacher training and ongoing professional growth in special education (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). Accordingly, the Australian Association of Special Education (AASE, 2007) states:

Training courses must provide graduates with the necessary competencies if students with SEN are to receive a quality educational programme. After graduation, teachers and administrators require systematic development of their skills, knowledge and values, to ensure curriculum and instruction practices benefit all students, and are based on research-validated principles (AASE, 2007, p.26).

Similarly, drawing on experiences in England, it is worth noting that “one of the ways in which Birmingham City Council has promoted its inclusive strategies in schools is by sponsoring teachers on continuing professional development courses”
In fact, many teachers in England look for opportunities to enhance their teaching competencies. Wearmouth (2001, p.79) found out that “more teachers applied than the numbers for which there were places”. Further, Wearmouth also discovered that teachers were less likely to leave their profession if they were provided with opportunities to learn on the job. Thus, it is only fair that teachers’ competencies, in terms of their knowledge, skills and qualifications to teach children with SEN, be prioritised if inclusive education for these children is to be realistically successful. Therefore, the requirement to examine teachers’ additional pedagogical skills is of utmost importance if these teachers want to perceive themselves as capable of teaching children with SEN.

In Bhutan in particular, no studies have been found that focus on the practices and situation of teachers teaching in inclusive schools, which this study aims to address. Enhancing the working conditions of teachers, as articulated by Wearmouth (2001), are fundamental requirements of teachers to enable them to meet the challenges while teaching children with SEN.

Despite the MoE’s aforementioned efforts in launching inclusive education programmes in nine mainstream schools, teachers in these schools are concerned about their teaching competencies. Bhutan’s situation therefore is an example of what Smith and Thomas (2006) considered as an unfocused system of educating children with SEN. According to Smith and Thomas, many countries have been influenced by the international inclusion debate that focuses on the choice of schools, rather than focusing upon the quality of education and the support that is required. Warnock (2005) reinforced this view by arguing that inclusion should not only revolve around a shift from special to mainstream schooling, but the quality of educational experience received by a child with SEN should be the primary focus. In other words, she cautions that to continue with inclusion, without an appropriate educational placement for a child with SEN, would be challenging.

In Bhutan many teachers possess inadequate skills and relevant knowledge, thus hampering their performance in teaching children with SEN (Tshewang, 2004). Also, based on the researcher’s vast experience as a teacher and part-time teacher educator, there is a strongly-felt need to evaluate and understand the current situation of teachers involved in special and inclusive education in Bhutan.
Bhutan has much to learn from the provision of special education and inclusion in other countries. Booth and Ainscow (2011) suggest that professional development activities help respond to diversity and that teacher development must receive high priority if inclusive practices are to be adopted successfully in schools. The MoE and the Royal University of Bhutan are working very closely with the QUT to develop teacher education for inclusive education. One of the main barriers to inclusive education in Bhutan is the “lack of awareness among the teachers, schools, children and parents of such issues” (Zam, 2008, p.12). Currently the MoE works with the Bhutan Foundation, an American not-for-profit organization that supports the education of children with SEN by creating greater awareness among the public about SEN and by developing methods to identify children with special needs, particularly learning disabilities (Bhutan Foundation, 2014).

In addition, Billingsley (2004) concluded that many special education teachers seek to transfer their service to general education (mainstream schools) at some stage in their career. Wasburn-Moses (2005) pointed out that factors associated with teachers’ decisions as to whether to remain in the field of special education include: heavy paperwork; managing challenging behaviour; difficulties relating to their colleagues; administrators, and also, parents. Importantly, her research also found that school principals play an important role in determining teachers’ sense of efficacy and well-being, both of which are factors that play into their decision as to whether to remain in the field.

The impact of inclusive education has put many teachers in a perplexing situation. According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996), the majority of teachers agree that inclusive education is an appropriate programme to best educate children with SEN. Discordant with this, they further point out that there are teachers who have also expressed their concern about their incompetence in supporting and educating children with disabilities due to a lack of training and insufficient skills.

Bourke and O’Neill (2012) provided teachers with a systematic and logical explanation via a simple heuristic to promote inclusive education. Inclusive education draws on a social model of disability in which teachers are encouraged to identify dilemmas confronting inclusive education that are then grouped into three key areas: ‘teaching and learning repertoire’; ‘education policy and regulation’; and ‘ethical knowledge’ (Bourke & O’Neill, 2012, p.105). According to the authors, the
purpose of this model is to construct an arena of productive conflict or tension that will endow teachers, pupils and other students with benefits in mainstream settings. In this sense, the educators are motivated to identify the nature of the constituents for wider inclusion.

According to Booth and Ainscow (2011), identifying barriers is a positive move towards learning and participation. They argue that “using the notion of ‘barrier to learning and participation’ to help resolve educational difficulties can replace the identification of children as ‘having special educational needs’” (Booth & Ainscow, 2011p. 40). This can be invaluable information for planners, administrators and teachers in Bhutan, where the concepts of inclusive and special education are often understood to be the same.

2.4 TEACHERS’ SELF-EFFICACY

Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as an individual’s judgement of his/her capabilities to organize and execute courses of action in order to attain designated types of performance. The underlying importance of self-efficacy is to demonstrate a part of one’s self-system, meaning one’s ‘abilities’. When the desired outcome is achieved through one’s efforts, it leads to satisfaction, which will encourage and motivate him/her further to complete a given task. While encouragement leads to an increase in self-efficacy, discouragement on the other hand effectively decreases one’s self-efficacy. An important factor affecting self-efficacy according to Bandura (1997) is experience through which people are able to: 1) judge their performance; and 2) compare the level of their performance.

Over recent years, self-efficacy has become important for teachers to develop in the area of teaching in inclusive settings (Loreman, Sharma, & Forlin, 2013; Woodcock, Hemmings, & Kay, 2012). Although in-service teachers need to be considered for regular professional development, it is necessary to prepare new teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms (Van Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma, & Rouse, 2007). This is because “restructuring of teacher preparation programs has been widely recommended as a means to better prepare pre-service special and general educators for inclusive settings” (Van Laarhoven et al., 2012, p. 440). Many studies have been conducted on the self-efficacy of pre-service teachers of inclusive education. Basically, it is the role which is crucial that these pre-service teachers will
play in their future inclusive classrooms. Therefore, it is important to know about their self-efficacy towards inclusion.

Many researchers maintain that inclusion today is emphasized by policies and legal documents. Several developed countries (e.g., USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Norway, and Sweden) are models where inclusive education has been successfully implemented (Kuyini & Desai, 2007 as cited in Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin; Wu-Tien, Ashman, & Yong-Wook, 2008 as cited in Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, and Thomas & Loxley, 2007). While some developing countries do not have legislation to support inclusion, there are some countries that have formulated policies to promote inclusive education. Legislation and policies are enabling dynamics that facilitate to bring the required changes in inclusive practices. According to Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin (2012) in the recent times the focus in teacher education has been on promoting inclusive education. Sharma et al. highlighted two important aspects regarding how teacher self-efficacy can be enhanced to make inclusive more effective.

Firstly, with the diverse group of students learning in one class, the system requirement demands a change in the teaching strategy. Unless the teacher training institutions conform to the needs of differently abled children, both teaching for teachers and learning for students with SEN will be ineffective. Recognition of the needs of students has resulted in reviewing and modifying the teacher education programs at universities (Nougaret, Scruggs, & Mastropieri, 2005). Secondly, some teacher registration bodies: for example, New South Wales and Queensland in Australia, demand that all teachers training institutions offer compulsory subjects either in special education or inclusive education (Subban & Sharma, 2006).

The above assertion is a point of interest for this research. Bhutanese teacher educators are now more aware of the needs of children with diverse needs. When discussing inclusive education in the Bhutanese context, similar views appear like the ones discussed above. For instance, in Bhutan the pre-service teacher curriculum offers one module of study called special education which is a compulsory subject for the B.Ed primary students and optional for B.Ed secondary students (S. Rinchen\(^{12}\), personal communication, September 17, 2014; S. Bidha\(^{13}\) personal

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\(^{12}\) S. Rinchen is currently an Assistant Professor at Samtse College of Education who provided information about special education that is taught at the college.

\(^{13}\) S. Bidha is currently a teacher at Bhutan Education Commission who provided information about special education that is taught at the college.
communication, October 02, 2014). However, this course is not offered to postgraduate teacher students. Nevertheless, with the course being offered to B.Ed students, this is a good initiative by colleges of education in Bhutan as the teaching of special education subject will build teachers’ confidence when interacting with children with SEN in the future and, also enhance their self-efficacy. The introduction of this subject will also bring about a change in the attitudes of student teachers towards inclusion.

In their study, Woodcock et al. (2012) expressed their surprise when they found that some teacher education courses offered too little and/or even failed to address key aspects of inclusion. Even researchers like Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996); Winter (2006) found that pre-service teachers were apprehensive about their ability to teach in inclusive classrooms. These new teachers revealed that they were not adequately prepared during their education for teaching in inclusive classrooms. Findings by Carroll, Forlin, and Jobling (2003) reported that only a single introductory subject in inclusive education was included in most teacher preparation courses. Further, research has supported that such introductory subjects have a positive effect on the attitude and confidence of the pre-service teachers. Also, Sharma, Loreman, and Forlin, (2012, p. 13) argue that “teacher efficacy is also associated with improvement in attitudes towards teaching in inclusive classrooms”. Therefore, it can be concluded that if new teachers have the opportunity to learn about inclusion during their training, they can develop positive attitudes right from the start of their career.

An examination of the literature revealed that teachers can build self-efficacy within themselves. Teachers’ talents and self-efficacy can heavily influence the creation of an environment that’s conducive to learning (Bandura, 1993). Accordingly, when the learning environment is favourable, the learning outcomes of students are relatively high. This idea is further supported by Gibson and Dembo (1984), who found that teachers who possessed higher degrees of self-efficacy were keen to apply their knowledge in academic teaching for the betterment of students, including those with learning difficulties. Conversely, the authors established that this was not the case with teachers who possessed low self-efficacy. This group of

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13 S. Bidha is currently a lecturer at Paro College of Education who provided information about special education that is taught at the college.
teachers did not attend in detail to the academic learning of students. Such teachers also have a tendency to criticize their students when the students fail to succeed.

Teacher efficacy is an issue that needs to be considered when the challenges of inclusive education are studied in order to meet the requirements of the learners. A teacher’s role goes beyond actual classroom teaching in the sense that he/she should be able to monitor progress of learning in students and be able to answer all forms of queries posed by the students. Research has indicated that many teachers who teach in inclusive schools are generally overwhelmed by the belief that they can do too little to support learners with diverse needs (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012). This belief is more pertinent among those teachers who are not adequately prepared to teach in inclusive schools, whether it is at teacher colleges or in schools.

With the changing times, the practice and applicability of inclusive education must be viewed from a different perspective. While children with SEN are placed at the core of inclusion they must benefit much more from actual academic learning rather than just being placed in a regular classroom for the sake of inclusion (Sharma, Loreman & Forlin, 2012). This calls for teachers to develop a high sense of self-efficacy. Willingness to assist children with SEN must first come from teachers. Therefore, building positive attitudes towards children with SEN must occur among teachers of inclusive education.

One way to support the development of teacher’s efficacy is to find out and understand the teachers’ concerns when teaching students with SEN. Having an understanding of their concerns allows policy makers, principals, colleagues and the teachers themselves to put structures and practices in place that can address these concerns and work to enhance their efficacy.

Teacher efficacy is relatively high when they have the opportunity to work and support children with SEN when these children are very young. For example, in the US the majority of efficacy studies found that there were positive outcomes for both children with disabilities as well as children who had no disabilities when they interacted during their early childhood (Gao & Mager, 2011). Foreman (2008, p. 69) contends that “preschool teachers often find that the child identified with a disability on entry is not the most difficult child in the class to accommodate”. Through this experience, teachers are able to build confidence even though they may not have
availed of specialized training. This results in better support for the learning of children with SEN.

According to Foreman (2008), the majority of young children in Australia and New Zealand attend preschool. Education policy makers in these two countries have considered appropriate environments such as mainstream early childhood centres for the inclusion of all children regardless of their abilities. Through this mainstreaming of all young children, Llewellyn, Thompson and Fante (2002) found that teachers developed high level of acceptance of inclusive practices which translated into high teacher efficacy. It must however be highlighted that in Bhutan not many children with disabilities attend day care centres or early childhood programs. It is learnt that:

Although nominal, some children with disabilities have been able to go to the ECCE centres and participate in the ECCD programmes. There has been always a need for greater awareness, commitment, resources and overall policies and legislations to mandate equal opportunity and access for education for children with disabilities in Bhutan. (P. Chhogyel14, personal communication, 25 March 2015).

Their first interaction with other children is at the time when they start going to school at six years of age (also discussed in section 1.2). The consequences of delaying early inclusion of children with disabilities in the school exacerbates behaviour problems, communication and, literacy difficulties and can cause low self-esteem.

2.5 USING ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR INCLUSION

Technology plays an important role in creating an effective and adaptable learning environment when teaching children with SEN in an inclusive classroom. Technology is a powerful tool and its use can form an important medium for inclusion (Beacham & McIntosh, 2013). The use of technology has become a standard form of teaching in schools. It is one of the most convenient and effective

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14 P. Chhogyel is a programme officer in the Special Education Section, Ministry of Education in Bhutan who provided this information.
ways for teachers to deliver their lessons. However, the use of ICT to teach children with SEN has been inadequate (Starcic, 2010) in many countries, particularly in Bhutan. For example, a teacher from one of the schools in Bhutan stated:

Special software such as the screen reading software and magnifying software are so important for the children. They cannot read print and the teachers of the mainstream schools do not know Braille. The use of this software and the computer is the only means to reduce the gap between teaching and learning. (K, Chhogyel\textsuperscript{15}, personal communication, 25 March, 2015).

Even for a developed nation like Sweden, where ICT is meant to increase the general level of knowledge, taking ICT into general and special schools has been a big challenge (Brodin & Lindstrand, 2010). This is simply because there are not many technological infrastructures such as hardware and software to support a wide range of capabilities for people with disabilities (Wong et.al, 2009, p. 109). Even having infrastructure in place does not assure the success of inclusion. Bradbrook and Fisher (2004) found that one of the main barriers to successful technology in education in the UK was associated with low uptake and the usage of ICT despite schools having a good supply of infrastructure. Through these examples we can see that using technology within inclusive classrooms can be complex and challenging. Complex, because teachers may not have a sound knowledge about the programs and software and may not be acquainted with devices that support teaching. Challenging, because teachers may not be confident in using the technology.

Likewise, inclusive schools in Bhutan at present are not adequately equipped with technological infrastructure and teachers do not have the knowledge to use ICT in class. However, this can be supported by making technology accessible to the schools, followed by training teachers in how to use ICT in teacher preparedness. It is important that student teachers have a positive opinion towards using ICT in teaching children with SEN. They should consider ICT as an integral part of the learners’ identity rather than just a cognitive educational tool (Beacham & McIntosh, 2013).

\textsuperscript{15} K, Chhogyel is a teacher at Muenselling Institute for the Visually Impaired in Bhutan who provided this information on the status of using ICT in schools.
Technologies can create possibilities for inclusion. In the European Union, improved teacher competency in the use of ICT is one of the main drivers of change in teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion Buchberger, Campos, Kallos, and Stephenson (2000). Supporting the statement further, Bradbrook and Fisher (2004) emphasized that the use of ICT to teach children with SEN is based on teachers’ attitudes and not on inclusive practices. Hence, it can be justified that educational inclusion can be improved through digital inclusion.

Loreman (2007) established that teachers who teach in inclusive schools in many western countries find it challenging to implement the school curriculum. The above claim is supported by Goodman and Bond (1993, p. 48) who argue that “there is a tendency for curricula in today’s school jurisdictions to be linear, inflexible, divorced from context, overly specific, centralized, and unresponsive to the needs of minority groups”. This is where the use of assistive technology becomes more meaningful as teaching can be made interesting through, for example, drawing diagrams/pictures, colouring or with sound effects. In addition, Bradbrook and Fisher (2004, p.) claim that “using ICT can help children’s cognitive development, and schools can help build a more digitally inclusive society based on teachers’ practice of working with and through others to enhance the inclusion of pupils”.

Children’s inability to understand is one of the main reasons why they lose attention in the class. Therefore, a teacher must ensure that all students are involved in the learning process by providing alternative learning instructions for students with SEN and to this effect ICT can be a handy tool. When Foreman (2008) contends that curriculum can be a source of behavioural problems among children with additional needs, use of ICT in the class may facilitate the involvement of these children and thereby help control their behavioural problems. In addition, using ICT may also assist in supporting a positive learning environment.

2.6 COLLABORATIVE TEACHING AND INTER-PROFESSIONAL APPROACH/PRACTICE

Collaborative teaching in special and inclusive education is increasing. The Cambridge academic content online dictionary (2015) defines ‘collaborate’ as ‘to work together or with someone else for a special purpose’. The objective of collaborative teaching is to help children with SEN get an appropriate education,
through specialized instruction, in a regular classroom. Teachers from same schools or from different schools team up to teach together in one class. The starting point in collaborative teaching is to break the barrier between special education and regular education (Anwer, 2012). In doing so, teachers are able to share their expertise. For example, special education teachers provide specially designed instruction to students based on their IEPs, and teachers from regular education class can help alongside. According to Rief (as cited in Anwer, 2012) the regular education teachers can share their skills in-group instructions and classroom management. However, in the context of Bhutan, this is a new approach. Although most teachers who teach in the inclusive schools are not trained for inclusion and may not be confident to work with other colleagues, it would be worth trying this approach as it could bring success and change in their performance. Based on their experience of using this approach, these teachers could share their views with colleges of education for the improvement and designing of their courses. In addition to this, the drive for co-teaching must be seen as a growing expectation among general teachers. The fact that these teachers now have some extra responsibility for planning and providing an appropriate education to all students in their classroom, do not justify the responsibility for a child with SEN to be passed on to other professionals (Carrington et al., 2012). Rather, regular classroom teachers are encouraged to work and teach collaboratively. The other advantage is that, professionals’ teamwork and collaboration helps towards the development of IEPs of students with SEN which otherwise could be challenging for the individual professionals if they are managed singlehandedly.

Jenkins, Pateman, and Black (2002) recommended that collaborative teaching and teaching skills are of paramount importance for educators of special and inclusive education. According to the authors, teachers can improve their competencies through collaborative teaching equally since many teachers are anxious about inclusion and are therefore reluctant to cooperate with their colleagues.

Similar to collaborative teaching is inter-professional practice, in which two or more professionals team up to work on their mutual understanding to achieve a common goal (Mentis, Kearney, & Bevan-Brown, 2012). This is a student-centred practice in which professionals share the task dutifully and there is a clear communication about the classroom activities. Freeth, Hammick, Reeves, Koppel, and Barr (as cited in Mentis et al., 2012, p. 298) point out that the outcome of
effective inter-professional practice shows that the level of “conflict, confusion and duplication of work” is very minimal. One advantage of using inter-professional practice is that there is always a flexibility to include participants from among a range of professionals such as teachers from special schools and inclusive schools, SENCOs, teacher aides or teaching assistants and practitioners from community agencies (Mentis et al., 2012). The other advantage is that, professionals’ teamwork and collaboration help towards the development of IEPs of students with SEN which otherwise could be challenging for the individual professionals if they are to manage singlehandedly.

Research conducted in Australia by Cumming and Woong (2012) provide compelling evidence of the positive impact of effective inter-professional practice in inclusive settings. Some of the benefits that staff in schools derive from this approach are: 1) increased knowledge and skills that help teachers gain more confidence in their teaching; 2) development of collegial and supportive relationships among teachers which help to develop positive attitude towards inclusion; 3) career advancement opportunities; and 4) increased satisfactory of contributing to effective service delivery (Wong, 2014).

For any school to be more inclusive, both school leaders and teachers must work as a team (Carrington & Robinson, 2004). This team approach can result in bringing effective changes in schools. The idea of entrusting the responsibility of the professional development of teachers to the schools can be seen as a “democratic planning process” that will further “determine the capacity of the school to become more inclusive” (Carrington & Robinson, 2004, p. 2).

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter began with an introduction to special education and inclusive education in the global context. Understanding the importance of educating people with disabilities, particularly children with SEN, has been the focus of this study. The study equally paid importance to the roles of teachers who teach children with SEN.

In this chapter the researcher has outlined global understanding of the concept of inclusive education through which children with SEN are not only given academic education but also provided with the opportunity to be a part of the society. As
described at the beginning, this chapter consists of three broad sections. The first section provides an overview of historical establishments of institutions for the disabled with reference to segregated education systems and contemporary educational practices with regards to special education and inclusive education. Various social movements around the world that support the education of children with SEN have been discussed. In addition to this, theories, concepts and characteristics of inclusion were discussed. Towards the end of this section, universal declarations, national policies, acts and practices followed by some of the countries where inclusion has long been implemented were also analysed.

The second section, examined what literature says about teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion of children with SEN in inclusive classrooms. Discussion about promoting pre-service teacher’s attitudes was considered important in this section. In addition to this, strategies to promote and support inclusion through legal establishments (putting policies in place), improved teacher training, and supply of resources (human resource and material resource/infrastructure) were also examined in this section.

The third section looked at teachers’ teaching competencies with special focus on teacher’s self-efficacy that was highlighted as a matter of importance in this study. This section continued to look at pre-service teacher education which was another priority attached to this study. Finally, this section concluded with a discussion on the use of alternative teaching: Information and communication technology (ICT) for teachers, collaborative teaching and inter-professional approach/practice.

Hence in chapter 2, a range of research in the field of special education and inclusive education has been reviewed to inform the research focus of this study. Literature review has evidenced that there is a need to investigate the concerns and experiences of teachers in Bhutan in relation to teaching students who have SEN. A better understanding of the attitudes, the skills and knowledge will influence the efficacy of teachers to support children who have disabilities in their classroom. Chapter 3 will now outline the research design for this research.
Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter outlines the research design for the current study, which is followed by a description of the data collection methods, participant selection process, data analysis and ethical considerations. This study uses a mixed method research design in order to gain an understanding of teacher’s concerns and experiences when working with children with SEN in Bhutan. It is hoped this will lead to a better understanding of the situation of teachers’ who support inclusion, and in turn, help to determine what resources are needed to support these teachers. In order to meet the above aims, the following research questions will be the focus of this inquiry:

1. What concerns do teachers in Bhutan have about inclusive education, with a particular focus on including students with SEN in their classrooms?
2. What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?

3.1 METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2012) contends that there is no one right method for collecting data. It is often more beneficial to employ more than one research method in educational research. Each method has its own purpose, advantages, and challenges. For example, the strength of one method may compensate for the weaknesses of the other by providing evidence for studying a problem (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008). This study uses a mixed method design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in order to answer the two research questions stated above. The research problem in the current study is primarily quantitative in nature and it is complemented by the qualitative method. Therefore the notion of QUAN+qual is used which indicates that the study followed a deductive approach: “That is, when following the completion of quantitative step, a qualitative method is used to examine outliers or to explore unexpected findings” (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008, p. 152).

Based on Plano Clark and Creswell’s (2008) work, this study will benefit from a mixed methods approach as the researcher is seeking to collect quantitative
data from Bhutanese teachers who teach children with SEN about their concerns, in order to increase generalisability and gather more in-depth qualitative data that can provide greater insight into these participants’ particular experiences.

3.2 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

A total of 355 teachers teaching in 11 government schools (nine inclusive and two special) were approached to participate in the current study. Nine schools offer an inclusive education to children with SEN, and were thus chosen as the teachers work with children with special education needs. The justification for including teachers from the two special schools (schools that do not include non-SEN children) is that the majority of these teachers have limited special training and their teaching is based on their experiences and some short, in-service training, despite the complexities of their jobs (Tshewang, 2004). In addition the special schools are working to include children with SEN in the local schools. Besides, some experienced teachers from special schools preferred to teach in inclusive schools later in their career. In addition, teachers from both school types are generally invited by the MoE to participate in trainings that focus on inclusion. Hence, all teachers at these (eleven) schools were invited to participate in the study. Invitations to the teachers were made formally through the Program Officer in the Special Education Division, MoE who encouraged the school principals and the SENCOs to support the survey. Later, the researcher also wrote to each of the teachers to follow up on the survey. The school sites were deliberately chosen to allow a balanced representation of participants from different districts and to increase the generalisability of the results. In the end, useable data was collected from 78 teachers.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is an approach that was designed for social science inquiries that investigate human behaviour and organisation performance (Creswell, 2012). Quantitative research essentially involves collection of numerical data to explain a certain phenomenon. An explanatory quantitative research design (and a small number of qualitative open-ended questions that are discussed later in this
Chapter) was used to seek answers to the current study’s research questions. According to Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2002), correlational research in education seeks to determine the extent of a relationship between two or more variables using statistical data. For the survey, a questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. Creswell (2012) highlights the benefits of surveys, which are: 1) a researcher can easily compare across larger groups; 2) it is quick and easy to administer; and 3) it allows the researcher to target specific items that can be used to gather data on a researcher’s area of interest.

3.3.1.1 Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study was Sharma, Forlin and Loreman’s (2007) “Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale” (CIES). This scale was developed to investigate participant’s level of concern across a number of key variables, namely, confidence in teaching students with disabilities, knowledge of local disability policies or acts, and contact with persons with disabilities. The questionnaire also helps to measure the significant relationships between overall concerns and key demographics. Likewise, the current study investigated similar variables: 1) concerns about inclusive education and key demographics; 3) teachers’ experiences of including children with SEN; and 3) knowledge (policy and awareness) of SEN/inclusive education. The investigation of these variables is directly linked to the research questions and thus it is hoped that the CIES will provide information on Bhutanese teachers’ concerns about and experiences of teaching children with SEN and knowledge of inclusion and inclusive education.

The current study collected basic demographic data, including age, gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience and whether the participants have specifically taught children with SEN. The language in the survey was culturally appropriate for Bhutan, as it was delivered in English and English is the main language spoken in schools by teachers in Bhutan. What must be acknowledged is that item 21 (*The inclusion of a student with a disability in my class will lead to a higher degree of anxiety and stress in me*) was not included in the survey. This was an error of judgement where the researcher felt that this item was too similar to item 11 (*Many teachers in my school are stressed*) and should therefore be removed. In consultation with supervisors, it was realised that removing this item was a mistake. Therefore in
the current study, the CIES measure has only 20 items. To ensure that the measure was still valid, Cronbach alpha’s were run for the total measure and for each factor. It is widely accepted that a Cronbach’s alpha value of .7 is desired (Pallant, 2013). In the current study the scale was found to have good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .82. For each factor individually, the Cronbach’s alpha’s were .76 for Factor 1 (Lack of resources), .54 for Factor 2 (Workload), .54 for Factor 3 (Concerns of acceptance), and .78 for Factor 4 (Concerns about academic standards). While factors 2 and 3 have lower than desired alphas, Pallant (2013) states that it is acceptable and not uncommon to have alphas of .5 when a factor contains five or less items, as is the case with factors 2 and 3. Due to these alpha’s, it was deemed acceptable to continue with the analysis of the measure as it was used in the current study.

The survey had 20 closed-ended questions with a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) not at all concerned to (4) extremely concerned. Participants were asked to select the response that appeared true for them most of the time. For example: ‘My school does not have enough funds for implementing inclusion successfully’, ‘It is difficult to give equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom’; and ‘My school does not have adequate special education instructional materials and teaching aids (e.g., Braille)’. Sharma et al. (2007) reported the scale to be made up of four factors: Factor 1 – Lack of resources ($\alpha = .87$), Factor 2 – Workload ($\alpha = .82$), Factor 3 – Concerns of acceptance ($\alpha = .79$), and Factor 4 – Concerns about academic standards ($\alpha = .79$). In addition, the scale can generate a total score for teachers’ overall concerns about inclusion ($\alpha = .92$).

Participants completed the questionnaire online. The advantage of online administration is that it is quicker, simpler and cheaper to administer than face to face administration (Creswell, 2012). An online medium provides some key benefits, including access to remote locations and giving participants time to complete questions at their own speed (Creswell, 2012). As this research aimed to gather data from teachers who worked in various schools across Bhutan’s mountainous terrain, a web-based questionnaire overcame problems with physical access to participants. It was confirmed that participants had access to the internet. QUT’s official web-based survey, ‘Key Survey’ was used to distribute the online survey.
One major disadvantage with using an online medium is the difficulty in ensuring participants are aware of the research and having them choose to engage in completing the online questionnaire (Muijs, 2004). Therefore, in order to ensure reaching the desired population, arrangements were made with the Special Education Division, MoE, Bhutan and an official (Programme Officer) provided assistance to coordinate and also follow up with respondents regarding data collection (K. Gyeltshen, personal communication, March 03, 2014). The researcher also contacted the SENCOs at each of the 11 schools where data was to be collected.

3.3.2 Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, words are emphasised in the process of data collection and interpretation (Creswell, 2012). Creswell describes qualitative research as an approach that is applicable for social science inquiry, particularly that which deals with human behaviour. It is important to note that the goal of most qualitative studies is not about maximising generalizability, but rather, to glean a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, qualitative research was found to be the most appropriate method for the current study since it allowed the researcher to collect supplementary information (see the following paragraph) that was needed to back-up other information collected through survey.

In order to probe deeper and explore the many experiences of teachers in Bhutan, five open-ended questions were included at the end of the survey. According to Creswell (2012) one of the advantages of employing open-ended questions is to facilitate respondents to construct responses based on their cultural setting and social experience instead of the researcher’s experience. This is important because as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.6), so little is known about teachers’ views and their performance in this area. The use of these five open-ended questions ensured that participants’ responses were not constrained and that their response options could be further explored (Creswell, 2012). The five open-ended questions included in the survey were: 1) Do you feel that you are able to successfully support and teach students with SEN? 1a) If yes, describe a situation where you have been successful.

16 K. Gyeltshen is the Chief Programme officer of Special Education Section, Ministry of Education in Bhutan who provided support for data collection.
1b) If no, describe a situation where you have been unsuccessful; 2) What things make it difficult for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?; 3) What things make it easier for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?; 4) What type of strategies do you use in the classroom to support and teach students with SEN?; 5) Have you had specialized training to teach students with SEN?; 5a) If yes, describe this training; 5b) If no, what specific training do you think would be of benefit to you? All of the above questions encouraged the participants to share their experiences in including children with SEN in their classrooms. Thus, the second research question (RQ 2. What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?) was addressed through this qualitative method.

3.4 PROCEDURE

Prior to data collection, permission to contact the schools was sought from the MoE in Bhutan where the study was conducted. A formal approval was conferred by the Director General of the Department of School Education, MoE in Bhutan (Ministry of Education Approval Number MoE/DSE/ECCD&SEN/SEN/MISC-19/4619). As per QUT’s research ethical guidelines, the researcher also sought ethical clearance from QUT which was officially granted (QUT Ethics Approval Number: 1400000846).

Following research approval, a letter of introduction and a description of the study were sent to the Programme Officer in the Special Education Unit, MoE in Bhutan. Simultaneously, the Programme Officer provided the researcher with a list of emails of all head teachers and SENCOs.

All the school principals and SENCOs were asked to share with all of the teachers the URL for the online survey via email. The researcher clearly explained in the contents of the email that once the participants were online and followed the URL to the survey, they would first see a front page, which provided them with information about the nature of the study and what was required of them if they chose to participate. The participants were also informed that their participation in the study was voluntary; that they had the option to withdraw from the study by not completing the questionnaire at any time; and that their participation would remain anonymous (Creswell, 2012).
In addition, the researcher also collected the email addresses of the individual teachers from the Program Officer in Special Education Unit and sent separate emails to them to ensure that they were able to access the link to the questionnaire. The participants were encouraged to contact the researcher if they needed further information, but no participants contacted the researcher to make further enquiries about the research. They were asked to disseminate the information as well as to extend to their teachers an invitation for them to participate in the study. The link to the online questionnaire was also provided in the email.

3.5 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative Data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), one of the most widely used software packages in education research. The following structure for data analysis, suggested by Muijs (2004), was used:

3.5.1 Preparing for data analysis

As an online questionnaire was used, the data was exported into SPSS Version 21. This ruled out the need for manual data entry and also eliminated possible data entry errors. The dataset was screened for missing data and any abnormalities before data analyses were conducted.

3.5.2 Analysing the data

Initially, basic demographic information was collated and analysed. Then, the mean scores on each item of the CIES, and on each factor of the scale (Factor 1: Lack of resources; Factor 2: Work load; Factor 3: Concerns of acceptance; and Factor 4: Concerns about academic standard) were computed and examined to determine the areas in which teachers identify greatest concern in the teaching of children with SEN. In addition, teachers ratings on these factors in the current study were compared to those found in previous research by Sharma et al. (2007). Finally, a Mann-Whitney U test was computed to determine whether any significant differences excited between particular groups of participants (type of school, level of
qualification, gender, age and length of teaching experience) on the four factors of the CIES.

3.6 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The detailed qualitative answers to the five open-ended questions in this study were large and complex. Taylor and Gibbs (2010) explained that the process of qualitative data analysis consists of two important phases, which are writing and the identification of themes. The researcher began by coding the data collected.

The data was systematically coded and compressed into main categories and sub-categories; according to Mayring (2000) these categories and sub-categories are *words or concepts* that have similar meanings. The rules of coding were followed systematically so that the results from the content analysis were valid (Krippendorff, 1980). The development of categories was comprised of the following steps, which were based on Mayring’s (2000) and Grbich’s (2013) model of category development: (1) preparing text for analysis: this stage enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data through reading, re-reading, moving backward and forward when comparing aspects of the data; (2) formulating open-coding: here, the researcher went through the transcribed data and underlined/coloured key segments to elicit participants’ statements about their beliefs, attitudes, actions and events; (3) generating categories: the identified segments were “then matched with relevant, like segments across the database and grouped” (Grbich’s, 2013, p. 261); (4) making inferences and determining levels of abstraction: this was done by attaching overarching labels within the groupings, and the sub-groupings were formed accordingly; and (5) reporting results: the final stage involved the researcher organising the data to present it and included writing up the results.

An excel sheet was created for the purpose of coding the data (Appendix B). Since this excel sheet formed the primary base of data, all responses to the five (5) open-ended questions were transferred into it. The sheet was kept as simple as possible for better comprehension and for a clear perception. To maintain the reliability of data, the exact/original words, phrases and sentences of the respondents were transferred into the excel sheet. After that, 37 code headings were identified and accordingly codes description was done which summarized the responses for each
questions provided by the respondents. In some cases it was necessary to maintain the original statements of the respondents to provide clear explanation. Side by side, a tally frequency was maintained to keep a record of respondents who fell under each of the descriptive codes. Next, categories were formed to collate and compress the codes into smaller but broader components. According to Grbich (2013) this enabled the researcher to organize and group similarly coded data because they shared some characteristics. Categorizing required codifying, a process, in which the researcher had to reapply the codes which allowed data to be segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation (Grbich, 2013). Finally, the major categories were compared with each other and consolidated which lead to the identification and creation of three general themes with five sub themes: Theme 1: Professional development of teachers (lack of training and teacher skills); Theme 2: Lack of resources (inappropriate infrastructure/facilities, appropriateness of curriculum/syllabi and human resources); Theme 3: Policy on Special Needs and inclusion.

3.7 RESEARCH QUALITY STANDARDS

3.7.1 Validity, Reliability and generalizability of data

The quality of a research study is determined by the standard of evidence provided to support certain statements and declarations. Descombe (2010) maintains that consensus standards as well as consistent reporting are cornerstones in determining the quality of research. When validating the data, care was taken to ensure that the three key points, as recommended by Descombe (2010), were covered. First, the data were recorded accurately and very precisely by checking the data files against the sources and relevant data. The data checking process was further strengthened by checking to ensure that the data were appropriate for the purpose of the investigation. The suitability of the data was confirmed when the researcher was convinced that the research questions in the current research were answered by the dataset. Finally, as mentioned earlier in this section, efforts were made to ensure that the justifications that resulted from the analysis were correct.

In regards to the reliability and generalizability of the current study, it must be emphasised that the responses were obtained from only 78 teachers, out of a possible 355 (22%). Therefore while some generalisations can be made, it must be
remembered that the views reflected may not be indicative of all the teachers working in schools that have children with SEN in Bhutan. In addition, while some of the schools in this study had been implementing inclusive education programs for a few years, there were two schools that were identified as inclusive schools in 2014. This also means that everything was new for the teachers in these two schools. Hence, the information that they provided could be based on their assumptions and not on their experiences. Nevertheless, since all the above 11 schools function under one direction, namely the Department of School Education, these schools follow a uniform system of administrative management, and accordingly, they share the same quality of resources. Further, the government has maintained uniform construction designs of the schools throughout Bhutan, and teachers’ knowledge and skills across these different schools are more or less the same. Therefore, it can be said that the results obtained from this study are applicable to all inclusive and special schools. Any future research that is conducted in these areas is expected to bring similar results.

3.8 ETHICS AND LIMITATIONS

Research ethics are of great concern and are strongly based on respect for every individual and their right to make their own decisions. Therefore, ethical responsibility was accorded the highest significance. In line with Creswell’s (2012) recommendations, the following potential ethical issues were considered: anonymity of respondent participants; protection of confidentiality of responses; and care in reporting small subsets of results so that the identity of specific individuals is not revealed.

Creswell (2012) submits that obtaining relevant permission ensures participants’ cooperation, which leads to the supply of correct information during the data collection process. Therefore, utmost care was given to protect the confidentiality of all participants so as to reduce the probability of coercion, in accordance with research ethics protocol at QUT. No names of either the teachers or the schools were collected and all data were carefully reported to ensure that it did not allow for individuals to be identified. Only grouped scores were reported, and
qualitative responses were labelled with the participants’ gender, age and years of teaching experience only.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the overall research methodology. The rationale for the use of mixed methods was presented. An explanatory design in which both qualitative and quantitative data supplement each other was discussed. The characteristics and features of quantitative, qualitative, as well as mixed methods research paradigms were highlighted. In order to maintain the foci on the research questions, the two research questions were restated at the start of the chapter. This was followed by providing a justification for the data collection methods, including the instruments to be used. Next, a description of the procedures of how the main survey was administered and details of the participants and the sampling techniques were provided. A description of the data analysis method used for analysing the questionnaire was also covered in this chapter. Finally, the ethics and limitations of this study were discussed.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter reports on the research participants, measures, procedures, analysis methods and results. The results will be presented in two sections. The first section focuses on the results of the analysis of quantitative data from the online survey. The “Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale” (CIES) (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2007) was used in the current study. The aim of collecting quantitative data was to identify the key concerns of teachers in Bhutan who are teaching students with SEN. As such, the quantitative survey addressed the first research question:

RQ1. What concerns do teachers in Bhutan have about inclusive education, with particular focus on including students with SEN in their classrooms?

The second section focuses on the results derived from qualitative data from the open-ended questions that captured the experiences of teachers who taught students with SEN. In this section, the qualitative data will be used to further enhance the quantitative data. The aim of collecting qualitative data was to find out how teachers were experiencing including students with SEN in general classrooms. As such, the qualitative, open-ended questions addressed the second research question:

RQ2. What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?

The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings derived from the analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data.

4.1 PARTICIPANTS

Initial sample recruitment. Participants for this study included teachers from eleven schools across Bhutan, nine of which were inclusive schools and two of which were special schools. A total of 355 participants from each of the participating schools were informed about the online questionnaire, and seventy-eight teachers completed the questionnaire, demonstrating a response rate of 22%. Interestingly, it was found that the overall participation rate of teachers from special schools was higher than teachers from inclusive schools. Out of a total of 34 teachers who teach at the two special schools, 23 teachers as mentioned above participated in the online
survey, making 68% participation. On the other hand, from a total of 321 teachers from the nine inclusive schools, 55 teachers participated in the online survey, making 17% participation. One reason for the low participation rate of teachers from the inclusive schools may be due to the timing of the study. The timing of data collection occurred when the inclusive schools were getting ready to conduct their annual examination (which occurred two weeks after the survey was distributed). It may be that teachers did not have time to participate in the online survey during this period. The issue was addressed to some extent by contacting the schools’ head teachers and SENCOs, and the researcher requested them to organise some time for their teachers to complete the survey. In addition to this, soon after the examinations were over, the schools closed for a long winter vacation (during which the survey had to be officially closed), and some teachers may have forgotten about the survey. However, the researcher was able to contact most SENCOs and they made every effort to remind their teachers.

Final sample. Seventy-eight teachers from nine inclusive (n = 55) and two special schools (n = 23) in Bhutan participated in the current study (F = 44, M = 34). The age range of participants was: (1) under 25 years (1%, n = 1); (2) 25 to 34 years (32%, n = 25); (3) 35 to 44 years (44%, n = 35); 45 to 54 years (22%, n = 17) and (4) 55+ (1%, n = 1). Most participants (68%, n = 53) had a Bachelor of Education Degree (four year course), while some participants (22%, n = 17) had a Master of Education degree (two year course) in addition to the Bachelor of Education degree, and the remaining participants (10%, n = 8) possessed a Primary Teachers’ Certificate (two year course offered to students who completed high school). Of the 78 teachers who participated in the online survey, 64% (n = 50) were from urban schools and 36% (n = 28) were from rural schools.

4.2 MEASURES

Demographic questions. A small number of questions were asked to collect demographic data such as age, gender, length of teaching experience, type of school, location of school and the professional qualification of the teachers.

The Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES) (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2007). The 21 item CIES scale was used in the current study. This
questionnaire aims to gather data on how teachers view inclusion and the placement of children with SEN in their school and classroom. As described in chapter three, only 20 of the 21 items were used in the current study. The questionnaire uses a 4 point Likert scale for measurement with $1 = \text{not at all concerned}$, $2 = \text{a little concerned}$, $3 = \text{very concerned}$, and $4 = \text{extremely concerned}$. Example items include, “My school does not have enough funds for implementing inclusion successfully” and “There are inadequate resources/special teachers/staff available to support inclusion”. The scale generates an overall concern about inclusive education score, and additionally comprises four factors. Sharma et al. (2007) reported internal consistency for this measure at .92 for the total score, and .87 for factor 1 (Lack of resources), .82 for factor 2 (Workload), .79 for factor 3 (Concerns of acceptance), and .79 for factor 4 (Concerns about academic standards). In the current study the scale was found to have good internal consistency with a Cronbach’s alpha of .82. For each factor individually, the Cronbach’s alpha’s were .76 for factor 1, .54 for factor 2, .54 for factor 3, and .78 for factor 4. While factors 2 and 3 had lower than desired alphas, Pallant (2013) states that it is acceptable and not uncommon to have alphas of .5 when a factor contains five or fewer items, as is the case with factors 2 and 3. It was therefore deemed acceptable to continue with the analysis of the measure as it was used in the current study.

Open-ended questions. Five (5) open-ended questions were asked at the end of the quantitative survey in order to gather more detail about teachers’ experiences with inclusion. These five questions were: 1) Do you feel that you are able to successfully support and teach students with SEN? 1a) If yes, describe a situation where you have been successful. 1b) If no, describe a situation where you have been unsuccessful; 2) What things make it difficult for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?; 3) What things make it easier for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?; 4) What type of strategies do you use in the classroom to support and teach students with SEN?; 5) Have you had specialized training to teach students with SEN?; 5a) If yes, describe this training; 5b) If no, what specific training do you think would be of benefit to you?
4.3 PROCEDURE

There was no pilot study conducted for this survey as the instrument used in the survey was based on the CIES developed by Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2007). The online questionnaire (which included the demographic questions, the 20 items from the CIES, and the 5 open-ended questions) was made available using QUT’s KeySurvey platform for a period of seven weeks. The researcher sent alert emails one week prior to the closing of the online questionnaire to notify all potential participants that they only had one week left to complete the questionnaire. When the survey closed, a total of 79 respondents completed the survey, with an overall response rate of 22%. On close inspection of the data, one respondent had answered no more than the initial demographic questions, and therefore this case was removed from the data set. Thus the final total for the sample of teachers was 78. For ease of understanding, the quantitative results will be presented first, followed by the qualitative findings.

4.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA RESULTS

This section presents the quantitative findings to answer the research question:

RQ 1 What concerns do teachers in Bhutan have about inclusive education, with particular focus on including students with SEN in their classrooms?

Data Screening. Questionnaire item results were extracted from the KeySurvey file into an SPSS file. On close inspection of the data, one respondent had answered no more than the initial demographic questions, and therefore this case was removed from the data set. Thus the final total for the sample of teachers was 78. These 78 responses were analysed for any further abnormalities in relation to missing data and none were found. The data were also analysed in relation to normality, and were shown to be non-normally distributed. As such, a non-parametric test was used for analyses.

Quantitative Analyses. Mean analyses of individual items and the four factors that comprise the measure (Factor 1 = Lack of resources, Factor 2 = Work load, Factor 3 = Concerns of acceptance, Factor 4 = Concerns about academic standard)
were explored. Means for each item were calculated by adding up the ratings given for each item by all participants, and then dividing by the number of participants. The four factors generated by Sharma, Forlin, and Loreman (2007) for their CIES measure were retained and used for this study with one adaptation (the removal of item 21 means that this item is not a part of the factor). Factor means were generated by adding the means of the items that made up each factor, and dividing by the number of items. Table 6 shows the item and factor means for the current study, and the factor means found by Sharma et al. (2007).
### Table 6

**Factor and Item means for the CIES as used in the current study by school type, and factor means as shown by Sharma et al. (2007)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Current Study</th>
<th>Sharma et al. (2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Lack of resources</td>
<td>7. My school does not have enough funds for implementing inclusion successfully.</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. There are inadequate para-professional staff available to support students with SEN (e.g. occupational therapist, teaching assistants).</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. My school has difficulty in accommodating students with various types of difficulties because of inappropriate infrastructure (e.g. architectural barriers).</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. There are inadequate resources/special teachers/staff available to support inclusion.</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. My school does not have adequate special education instructional materials and teaching aids (e.g. Braille).</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. There is not enough administrative support to implement inclusive education program.</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Concerns about acceptance</td>
<td>1. I do not have enough time to design educational programs for students with SEN.</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. It is always difficult to maintain discipline in an inclusive classroom.</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I do not have the knowledge and skills to teach students with SEN.</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. It is difficult to give equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. I am not able to cope with disabled students who do not have adequate self-care skills (e.g. students who are not toilet trained)</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Concerns about academic standards</td>
<td>5. Students with disabilities are not accepted by non-disabled students.</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Parents of children without disabilities do not like the idea of placing their children in the same classroom</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. The overall academic standard of the school has suffered.</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. My performance as a teacher/school principal has declined</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. The academic achievement of students without disabilities has been affected.</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Workload</td>
<td>4. There is always more paper work to be done.</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. I do not receive enough incentives (e.g. additional remuneration or allowance) to teach students with SEN.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. My work load has increased.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Many teachers in my school are stressed.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Score</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Range of scores; Factor 1 = 6-24, Factors 2 and 3 = 5-20, Factor 4 = 4-16

A comparison was done between the mean factor scores of this study and the mean factor scores of the study conducted by Sharma et al. (2007). Participants in
their study included 577 pre-service teachers from Australia (n = 245), Canada (n = 58), Hong Kong (n = 182) and Singapore (n = 92) (Sharma et al. 2007). Table 6 shows the similarities and differences between the mean score of the 577 participants in Sharma’s study, and the 78 participants in the current study. Three significant interesting findings can be drawn from the above: both studies found that (1) the participants were very concerned about Factor 1: “Lack of Resources”; (2) the participants were only a little concerned in both studies about Factor 4: “Work Load”; and (3) that participants felt differently about Factor 3 “Concerns of Academic Standards” (a little concerned in the current study and very concerned in Sharma et al.’s study) and Factor 2 “Concerns about Acceptance” (a very concerned in the current study and a little concerned in Sharma et al.’s study).

It is important to note that while the same survey instrument was used in the above two studies (with the slight modification of the removal of item 21 in the current study), the current study focused on in-service teachers, while Sharma et al.’s sample were pre-service teachers. However, the comparison of the findings is still meaningful and interesting as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to understand the on-going concerns of teachers in relation to their views on the inclusion of students with SEN.

As with Sharma et al.’s study, the current study used the item means to determine the top and bottom three concerns about inclusive education for teachers in Bhutan. Table 7 shows these concerns for the teachers in Bhutan alongside those identified for the teachers in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore in Sharma et al.’s study.
Table 7

*A comparison of major and minor concerns identified in the current study by school type, and Sharma et al.’s study.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concerns</th>
<th>Bhutan - Inclusive School teachers</th>
<th>Bhutan – Special School teachers</th>
<th>Australian Pre-service teachers</th>
<th>Canada Pre-service teachers</th>
<th>Hong Kong Pre-service teachers</th>
<th>Singapore Pre-service teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of para-professional staff (M = 3.38, SD = .68)</td>
<td>Difficult to give equal attention to all students (M = 3.23, SD = .61)</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and skills (M = 2.91)</td>
<td>Lack of para-professional staff (M = 2.86)</td>
<td>Lack of para-professional staff (M = 3.21)</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and skills (M = 3.30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to give equal attention to all students (M = 3.27, SD = .67)</td>
<td>Lack of para-professional staff (M = 3.18, SD = .91)</td>
<td>Coping with students who lack self-care skills (M = 2.82)</td>
<td>Lack of resources/special staff (M = 2.74)</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and skills and special staff (M = 2.67)</td>
<td>Lack of special educational material (M = 3.12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources/special teacher staff (M = 3.16, SD = .76)</td>
<td>Lack of resources/special teacher staff (M = 3.14, SD = .71)</td>
<td>Lack of resources/special teacher staff (M = 2.80)</td>
<td>Lack of resources/special teacher staff (M = 2.74)</td>
<td>Lack of knowledge and skills (M = 3.10)</td>
<td>Lack of special educational material (M = 3.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in own performance (M = 1.98, SD = .94)</td>
<td>Lowering of academic standards of non-disabled students (M = 1.77, SD = .61)</td>
<td>Lowering of school’s academic standard (M = 1.36)</td>
<td>Lowering of school’s academic standard (M = 1.29)</td>
<td>Decline in own performance (M = 2.04)</td>
<td>No incentives to teach disabled students (M = 1.86)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering of academic standards of non-disabled students (M = 2.05, SD = .96)</td>
<td>Decline in own performance (M = 1.82, SD = .50)</td>
<td>No incentives to teach disabled students (M = 1.52)</td>
<td>Additional paper work (M = 1.38)</td>
<td>Lowering of school’s academic standard (M = 2.04)</td>
<td>Additional paper work (M = 1.93)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of non-disabled children do not like their children placed in the same class with disabled children (M = 2.09, SD = .79)</td>
<td>Parents of non-disabled children do not like their children placed in the same class with disabled children (M = 1.82, SD = .73)</td>
<td>Additional paper work (M = 1.61)</td>
<td>Decline in own performance (M = 1.55)</td>
<td>Lowering of academic standards of non-disabled students (M = 2.14)</td>
<td>Increase in work (M = 2.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table shows that the concerns of the teachers varied according to country, but retained some similarities. At least one of major concerns of the Bhutanese teachers (‘lack of para-professional staff’ and ‘lack of resources/special staff’) was also reflected in each of the other countries. However, the Bhutanese teachers reported one major concern not highlighted in the other countries, namely the difficulty ‘in giving equal attention to all students’. Amongst the minor concerns, the Bhutanese teachers were the only group to report ‘parents of non-disabled children do not like their children placed in the same class with disabled children’. Only the Hong Kong teachers agreed with the Bhutanese teachers that ‘lowering of academic achievement of non-disabled students’ was a minor concern. The Bhutanese teachers’ minor concern about ‘decline in own performance’ was also reflected in the Hong Kong and Canadian teachers answers; their minor concerns had no answers in common with Singapore and Australia. The diversity and similarities between the answers of the five countries suggest that the causes of these concerns cannot be as simple as whether a country is developed or not. The above table also provides more details about Bhutan, as it presents the concerns of both inclusive and special school teachers. Interestingly, both of the Bhutanese group report exactly the same concerns, just in a slightly different order of priority. The two major concerns for the Bhutanese teachers may be linked, since a lack of para-professional staff may make it more difficult for the Bhutanese teachers to give equal attention to all students.

In addition, the data from the current study were explored to determine if differences existed in teachers overall concern level about inclusion between various groups within the data set. As the data were found to be non-normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The Mann-Whitney test found no significant differences for teachers concerns about inclusion by gender, years of teaching experience, or age. A significant difference was found however, for school type, with teachers from Inclusive schools (Mdn = 2.65, n = 55) having significantly higher level of concern than teachers from Special schools (Mdn = 2.45, n = 22), \( U = 420.5, z = -2.083, p = .04, r = .24 \). One reason that supports the above findings is that some of the inclusive schools are newly established and teachers in those schools have therefore not had the opportunity to learn from their experience. In addition, teachers in the inclusive schools are unlikely to have had any training in relation to
supporting students with SEN (pre-service teacher education in Bhutan did not offer SEN module until 2010 and most teachers who teach currently in inclusive schools graduated before 2010), unlike the teachers in the special schools who have at least received some basic training.

Although the teachers from special schools are in a better position when compared to teachers from inclusive schools, they still have concerns and they have expressed these explicitly in this study. What is also likely to be a factor is that special school teachers only work with students who have SEN, while teachers in inclusive schools are challenged to support both students with SEN and mainstream students. Having this challenge present each day at school is likely to make teachers in inclusive schools reflect on, and potentially worry about, the costs and benefits of ‘doing’ inclusion.

Further exploration of this significance difference in school type revealed that the only factor to significantly differ was the Concerns about Acceptance factor, with teachers from inclusive schools (Mdn = 3, n = 55) rating higher on this factor that teachers from Special schools (Mdn = 2.8, n = 22), \( U = 421.5, z = -2.093, p = .04, r = .24 \) (small effect size, Cohen, 1988). (See Table 6 for means and standard deviations for each factor and total score by school type). This finding highlights that teachers from inclusive schools are concerned that students with SEN will not be accepted. As these classrooms include students with and without SEN, it follows that these teachers would rate this as a concern, whereas special school teachers, who have only students with SEN in their classrooms, are unlikely to consider this an issue. Note – SEN teachers working in inclusive setting.

In addition, a significant difference was found for level of qualification, with teachers with a Primary or Bachelor's degree (Mdn = 2.6, n = 61) being significantly less concerned about inclusion than teachers with a Postgraduate degree (Mdn = 2.85, n = 17), \( U = 337.5, z = -2.194, p = .03, r = .25 \) (small effect size, Cohen, 1988). See Table 8 for factor and total score averaged means for the CIES by level of qualification (undergraduate and postgraduate). Further exploration of this significance difference in qualification type revealed that two factors significantly differed from each other. Teachers who held a Primary or Bachelor’s degree (Mdn = 2, n = 61) were significantly less concerned about academic standards than teachers who held Postgraduate qualifications (Mdn = 2.4, n = 16), \( U = 321, z = -2.408, p = .02, r = .27 \) (small effect size, Cohen, 1988). Similarly, teachers who held a Primary
or Bachelor’s degree (Mdn = 2.25, n = 61) were significantly less concerned about workload than teachers who held a Postgraduate degree (Mdn = 2.75, n = 16), $U = 318, z = -2.460, p = .01, r = .28$ (small effect size, Cohen, 1988).

Table 8

Factor and total score averaged means for the CIES by level of qualification (undergraduate and postgraduate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Undergraduates</th>
<th></th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Lack of resources</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Concerns about acceptance</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 3: Concerns about academic standards</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 4: Workload</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Range of scores – Factor 1 = 6-24, Factors 2 & 3 = 5-20, Factor 4 = 4-16.

The finding that those teachers with higher level qualifications are more concerned about inclusive education is an interesting one. It is around concerns about academic standards and workload that is worrying to those with higher qualifications. A potential reason for this could be because most of the teachers with a Primary certificate or Bachelor's degree who participated in the survey have been teaching children with SEN within the age range of 6 to 14 years. Most children with SEN in Bhutan fall in this age group. This is also related to the fact that most inclusive schools were started just a few years back. Hence it can be judged that not many children with SEN have reached their high school level at this time. Therefore, this group of teachers now have some experience in working with children with SEN. It is understandable that these teachers have less concern about inclusion when compared to teachers who have a postgraduate degree. In Bhutan, most teachers with a postgraduate degree generally teach in high schools. By the time they come in contact with students with SEN (which is their first time to teach these students with SEN), this group of teachers find it challenging. This is because they are not trained to teach students with SEN, they have no experience in teaching students with SEN,
and they are uncertain about what resources they could use to support learning in class.

4.5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

As described earlier in this chapter, an additional data collection method was used in the current study, namely teachers’ responses to open-ended questions. This section presents the findings from these qualitative responses to answer the research question:

RQ 2 What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?

The qualitative data is presented based around the three themes that have emerged from the study: professional development of teachers, lack of resources, and policy on special needs and inclusion. Each of the themes is presented as sections. Some of the themes from these sections have been further broken down into relevant sub-sections in order to make the interpretations as vivid as possible. To support the themes and sub-sections generated by the researcher, key quotes from participants have been included in each section. The researcher was also mindful about the reliability and validity of each quote. In a few cases, qualitative data had to be represented in quantitative form (i.e. in percentages and numbers) as it helped in making judicious judgements.

Theme 1: Professional development of teachers

The number of students with SEN who are attending inclusive education schools should require a proportionate number of qualified teachers to teach these students (Booth, Nes, & Stromstad, 2003). Similarly, students who attend special schools deserve the best teachers who are trained to respond to their particular needs. The current study reports that teachers in Bhutan are very keen to enhance their professional growth.

Lack of training

The majority of respondents (69%; n = 54) expressed that they did not receive proper training on how to teach students with SEN. It is also important to note that some respondents (41%; n = 32) had over 15 years of teaching experience. Despite teaching for this long and only more recently teaching students with SEN, they had
not received training relevant to teaching this group of students. Table 9 provides an overview of training that teachers in this study indicated they required in order to adequately meet the needs of students with SEN.

Table 9
Overview of need for training expressed by teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of training required</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive classroom teaching strategies for students with SEN</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing IEPs/designing activities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum adaptation and preparation of teaching and learning materials</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the visually impaired</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom and behaviour management</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child psychology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General care of students with SEN</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of various disabilities and developing affirmative attitude</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy on inclusion</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teacher training on SEN and inclusion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching the hearing impaired</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short training sessions for in-service teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and preparation of SENCO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in the table 8 above, teachers’ concerns about the lack of sufficient training included the need for pre-service teacher training on SEN, the inclusion of short training sessions for in-service teachers, in addition to special and specific training on teaching mathematics and science to the visually impaired. The following quote reflects the range of areas in which teachers feel that they are unprepared to support students with SEN.

*Well, I don't look for training to earn some money which is a common notion...If at all there is training I would like to get trained in many areas...Such as: 1. To be able to understand their emotional and sentimental feelings. 2. To be able to design anything. E.g. a diagram to be easily understood by them 3. To be able to understand their psychology. 4. To be able guide them with affirmative attitude. Some tricks probably.* (Male teacher, aged 35-44, inclusive school).
**Teacher skills**

The literature suggests that teachers in the US who had not received training to teach students with SEN did not feel confident about their teaching skills (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). The current study has identified a similar tendency among Bhutanese teachers. It is evident from Table 8 above that as many as 36 (46%) teachers expressed the need to develop their skills by undergoing some training to teach children with SEN. In this study, this training is grouped in two categories: (1) Management skills – which, according to 37 teachers out of 78 (47%) is required to control student behaviour, to use time effectively in the classroom, to maintain a balance in the amount of work undertaken by students with SEN (not too much work at one time and not too little at other times), and to be able to support children with varied (dis)abilities within the inclusive classroom; (2) Instructional skill – This was identified by 53 teachers out of 78 (68%) as one of the most important areas for professional development in the current study. It can therefore be interpreted that the majority of teachers admitted that they lacked the necessary instructional skills to apply useful and appropriate strategies to support students with SEN, and felt that this often put them in difficult situations. For instance:

“I have been doing my best to give all I could to teach students with visual impairments and low vision. But sometimes I forget the total blind students, as we need to do more blackboard work for low vision students. So, I speak out what is written on the board loudly.” (Female teacher, aged 44-54, special school).

A number of teachers (n = 17) stated that they did not have the confidence to teach students with SEN, and at times, they were helpless. Teachers expressed that:

“I am not professionally trained to support students with special educational needs. Therefore I fail to give proper guidance and care”.

“Sometimes I feel that I am helpless as I could not make some of my students read and write braille especially those who have less sensation in their fingers”. (Female teacher, aged 35-44, special school).
In addition, a small number of teachers (n = 3) experienced difficulties communicating with students with SEN. Two of these teachers responded that:

*It was difficult to communicate [with SEN students].*

*There are communication barriers due to my lack of knowledge about Braille. I could not correct students’ assignments unless they were transcribed into normal English alphabets.*

(Female teacher, age 35–44, inclusive school).

Eight teachers (10%) expressed that they were not confident in designing activities and developing Individual Education Plans (IEP), which is an important element in the education of children with SEN in inclusive schools. According to Litton, Rotatori, and Day (1989) the success of inclusion is dependent on individualized programs for students. In addition to this, the majority of teachers (n = 74; 95%) expressed their concern about not being able to cope with disabled children who did not have self-care skills (e.g. not toilet trained).

Teachers also stated that helping students with SEN took most of their time. They were concerned that other students in their class would be left unattended if more time was allotted to support children with SEN. The excerpts below outline how challenging it is for teachers to manage time, and provide adequate attention to all their students, in an inclusive setting. The issue of time management was mentioned by 41% of teachers (n = 32), with most being quite concerned about their inability to use time effectively. One teacher from inclusive school mentioned that:

“Sometimes it is difficult for SEN students to complete the task in time and to go to next topic or area. Helping him or her consumes a hell of a lot of time and other students complain though they would be given additional work to keep them engaged. Therefore period time finishes without fulfilling the aims and objective of the lesson.” (Female teacher, aged 35–44, inclusive school).
Another teacher pointed out that:

“It is difficult when we have inclusive class as it is difficult to keep pace with each and every one; I mean, fast learners and slow learners. Moreover, we have to think of covering our syllabus on time.

(Female teacher, aged 35-44, inclusive school).

**Theme 2: Lack of resources**

Sharma, Forlin and Loreman’s (2007) study indicated that lack of resources was one of the highest concerns related to supporting inclusive education in the countries that were researched in their study, namely Australia, Canada, Hong Kong and Singapore. Lack of resources was identified as the second greatest concern in the current study, and teachers from Bhutan did state in their qualitative responses that there is a dire need for resources to support inclusive and special schools. Three main categories are described below according to the teachers’ experiences about how resources may influence the learning of students with SEN in the inclusive and special schools in Bhutan.

**Category 1: Inappropriate infrastructure/facilities**

A total of 16 (21%) teachers indicated that there was a need for appropriate infrastructure in the schools, like ramps for wheelchairs, concrete footpaths, and handrails on the walls for the visually impaired students. One teacher pointed out that the furniture in the classroom was not designed for use by students with SEN, which made it even more difficult for the teacher to support the students:

“Furniture and classroom setting make it difficult to support SEN students”.

Female teacher, aged 25-34, inclusive school).

Lack of infrastructure for students with SEN has been a serious concern for inclusion in Bhutan. Dema (2013) reported that one of the inclusive schools was established without much infrastructure in place. For example, the school principal who had initially asked for a wheelchair for a student in her school had to withdraw her request after the school realized that the wheelchair is not going to help the student, as there was no infrastructure in the school.
In addition to this, with this, there were four (5%) teachers who were concerned about insufficient funds, which is a challenge in supporting the inclusion of students with SEN in mainstream schools.

Category 2: Appropriateness of curriculum/syllabi

The teachers in this study also pointed out the need for appropriate and adequate teaching and learning materials. Teachers also expressed a wish to use the technology more actively in classrooms. Although technological development has not progressed very far in Bhutan, teachers thought that this would change. 6% teachers (n = 5) found that the syllabi was too bulky for students with SEN, and some teachers were not entirely comfortable with the contents of the curriculum, which they thought were inappropriate for their SEN students. For students to benefit from inclusive education, teachers should be in a position to use different instructional materials, assessment, as well as curricular and teaching accommodations within general education settings. For teachers in Bhutan, this seemed a difficult task. One teacher explained that she/he did not have any idea about how to modify an activity for a child:

“I taught one class where there was a child with special needs. While the rest of the students were engaged in the group discussion or involved in writing I didn't know how to engage the special child. So, mostly I gave him some questions (basic questions) written on a sheet of paper and got him to answer them. I didn't get time to give him feedback immediately. Had I been formally trained, I would be better equipped in engaging the child in meaningful activities. I should have modified the questions too. I should have done so many things differently although I made sure he is included in the group discussions”.

(Female teacher, aged 35-44, inclusive school).

Category 3: Human resources

Consistent with teachers’ identification of their need for professional development, concerns about lack of additional staff were also articulated by teachers both through the quantitative and qualitative data (n = 4). When asked to answer what things made it difficult for them to support students with SEN in their
classroom, one teacher specifically mentioned that the ‘shortage’ of teachers was a concern.

“I lack knowledge and skills to handle and teach deaf children. I also face time constraint because of the shortage of teachers. There is also a lack of materials and infrastructure.” (Male teacher, aged 35-44, special school).

From the above excerpt it is clear that it is challenging for teachers to work all by themselves in a classroom where students with SEN are placed. At present schools in Bhutan do not have support staff to assist teachers in classrooms. According to the teacher above, much of the teaching time is lost when having to support students with SEN in the absence of additional staff.

**Theme 3: Policy on Special Needs and Inclusion**

Teachers’ commitment to providing adequate education for all raises questions about how to educate children with differing abilities both *effectively* and *efficiently* (Schuelka & Johnstone, 2012). While the idea of inclusion and fairness is evident in Bhutan, they have taken a step further to address these concerns through the concept of inclusive education, which is “relatively new and has been a challenge to integrate into our mental make-up” (Zam, 2008, p.10). On the same note, in the absence of a policy on inclusion, this study found that teachers in Bhutan are not comprehensive in regards to understanding the principles and actual practices of inclusion. Similarly, teachers (43 %; n = 33) had experienced limited support from the school authorities in regards to inclusion of students with SEN. Lack of support towards inclusion from other relevant agencies was also highlighted by a few teachers (8%; n = 6). In response to a qualitative question that asked, “What things make it difficult for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?”, one respondent answered:

“Things that make difficult for me to support students with SEN are 1. Unfriendly physical environment, 2. Non-availability of resources, 3. Lack of full support from the concerned agencies and 4. Lack of proper knowledge to approach/operate the programs”. (Female teacher, aged 25-34, special school).
Teachers also identified that there were very few, if any, teachers who were trained or who were acquainted with the policies, guidelines or related documents around inclusion in Bhutan. According to teachers, policy was necessary in promoting inclusion and their comments revealed a nuanced view. Twenty-two teachers (28%) indicated that improvement in inclusion could occur with proper directives and guidelines. It was noted by one participant that:

*There is a lack of policies in school. There are no rules which state to include a child with SEN in a class. Many teachers are not aware of such policies, even if there is one.* (Female teacher, aged 44-54, inclusive school).

### 4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided information on participants, measures and procedures, and it reported on the data and discussed the study’s findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The first section focused on the findings of quantitative data. Four major factors formed the base for identifying teachers concerns about teaching students with SEN; Factor 1: Lack of resources, Factor 2: Work load; Factor 3: Concerns of acceptance, Factor 4: Concerns about academic standard. These factors were retained from Sharma, Forlin and Loreman’s (2007) research study.

The overall result from the quantitative data that was collected using a 20 item questionnaire indicated that teachers in Bhutan are concerned about their work related to the education of students with SEN. This study found that inclusive education programs, a new concept being implemented in nine schools across Bhutan, require serious and immediate attention from the authorities and the government. A more detailed discussion on the findings is presented in Chapter 5.

The second section of this chapter focused on the qualitative results from this study. The objective of collecting the qualitative data was to capture the experiences of teachers and to investigate how they felt about their teaching. The findings indicated that teachers had different experiences. In general, the results from this study indicated that most of the teachers in Bhutan who were teaching students with
SEN had vast experience in teaching both in inclusive/special schools and in the mainstream schools. Many teachers found that teaching students with SEN was a challenging job. While a few of them have received some training to teach SEN, the majority of the teachers expressed the need for special training.

The study also found that the manner in which the inclusive education program was being implemented in Bhutan was not clear to many teachers. This was attributed to a lack of proper policy on inclusion, and a lack of support for the schools in terms of administration guidance, finance, staffing and resources. The full findings from the current study will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5: Analysis

In this chapter, key findings of the current study are discussed in the context of Bhutanese education, the theoretical framework and relevant literature. First, the quantitative study aimed to identify various concerns held by teachers when teaching students with SEN in Bhutan. Most importantly, the researcher was mainly interested in discovering the key concerns that were identified by the teachers. The second aim of this study was addressed using qualitative methods to provide a more detailed picture of the experiences of Bhutanese teachers when teaching children with SEN.

To meet its aim within the context described above, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What concerns do teachers in Bhutan have about inclusive education, with particular focus on including students with SEN in their classrooms?
2. What are teachers’ experiences of including students with SEN in their classrooms?

These findings of this study are expected to lead towards developing evidence-based and successful future interventions in policy and practice in Bhutan.

5.1 DISCUSSION

One of the main reasons for undertaking the present research was to identify the issues that were hindering teachers’ performance when teaching students with SEN in Bhutan. Using a research design that allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected, a more in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by teachers teaching students with SEN was able to be explored.

Making the decision to become a teacher requires serious and careful consideration. When Hobson, Malderez and Tracey (2012) survey some student teachers in England, 98 per cent of the respondents stated that their primary objective for becoming teachers was helping young people to learn. As discussed in chapter 1, the teachers in Bhutan have taught students with SEN, and they joined most of the inclusive schools and special schools of their own volition, and without much
education and knowledge about SEN or any special training. Therefore, it appears that these teachers in Bhutan are also striving to support young people in need, reflecting Hobson’s findings. While these teachers are striving to support students with SEN, it is imperative that the Bhutanese education system supports these teachers. Thus, identifying the needs and concerns of these teachers is very important. The findings from the current research can provide a substantiated source of information for the relevant stake-holders, such as educators, schools, planners and authorities associated with the Ministry of Education. The following sections provide a discussion of the results reported in chapter 4.

5.1.1 Lack of resources

The means analysis for the above factor, derived from the quantitative study, revealed that teachers were fully aware of and concerned about the lack of resources in their schools. This was one of the highest concerns of teachers identified in the current study. Many teachers expressed that inclusion was challenging when schools did not have resources to support the learning of children with SEN. Different types of resources identified in the study are discussed in the following sections.

School infrastructure and accessible facilities

A number of teachers (37%; n = 29) as shown in the qualitative data, indicated that their schools had difficulty accommodating students with various types of difficulties because of inappropriate infrastructure, for example, architectural barriers. According to 12 respondents (15%), students with SEN in Bhutan, find it difficult to move within the school campus because of the lack of appropriate facilities. For example, not all the inclusive schools have ramps for wheelchair users. The chairs that are supplied to schools are normal chairs which are not appropriate for some children with disabilities. Therefore these issues act as barriers to inclusion.

Inclusive education is one of the biggest challenges facing education systems around the world and it is certainly a challenge for teachers in Bhutan. Literature suggests that removing barriers to education for all is usually the starting point towards inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2011), but for Bhutan, it has proved otherwise. For example, schools were identified and inclusion was implemented prior to
considering the barriers carefully. Even today, the inclusive schools do not have most of the characteristics of inclusion in place. Thus, teachers from these inclusive schools have expressed their need for the correct measures to be implemented to remove barriers to education for all.

According to the researcher’s experience as a teacher, despite the difficulties referred to in the above paragraph, teachers (including the researcher) have tried to remove these barriers through their own initiatives, such as: (1) supporting children of financially poor parents; (2) visiting families living in remote parts of Bhutan to persuade them to send their children to school; and (3) organizing cultural stage-performances to create awareness about the benefits of education for children with disabilities. This type of action by the teachers reflect Ballard’s (2012, p. 79) assertion that teachers need to see themselves as “as agents of change”. Ballard argued that teachers could be instrumental in critically disseminating issues related to inclusion and at the same time promoting inclusion and social justice in schools. However, Ballard cautions that these approaches are not enough to remove the barriers for the education of all children. It is imperative that relevant agencies work together to discuss how barriers to inclusion can be removed. The starting point for these types of discussions can be initiated by teachers as they would have the first hand information about inclusion. In Bhutan, in general, teacher representation within forums that deliberate on educational issues has been somewhat minimal. This could possibly be that teachers are not drawn from schools where their importance is felt most. However, when discussing matters about inclusive education, teachers could lead the discussions. This will allow them to express the issues and challenges of inclusive education. Teachers’ could also provide useful information to the planners and administrators.

Geographically Bhutan’s terrain is mountainous (from 200 meters above sea level in the south to 7500 meters in the north) which makes it rather difficult for individuals with disabilities to move around independently. In addition, not all persons with disabilities in Bhutan can afford to buy special devices and equipment to support them. In addition, many schools in Bhutan are located far away from children’s homes and most of the schools are located on slopes and mountains. A lack of pathways and ramps for wheelchairs is common in many schools in Bhutan.
Even to move around in the cities for persons with disabilities, is not easy. A newspaper, Kuensel, (2014) reported that:

*Our infrastructure, both public and private, is not disabled-friendly- the most common problem people with special needs complain about every year. We may not see many people with special needs on the streets or public places. This is because there is no access.*

Tshedup (2014) reported that according to a 2005 census, 3.9 percent of the Bhutanese population has at least one form of disability. Out of 25,134 persons with disabilities, 1,874 live in Thimphu which is the capital city of Bhutan. Pema, who has a disability, lives in Thimphu and like many other disabled persons, feels that lack of appropriate infrastructure and facilities are increasingly posing challenges for him/her. Pema, (as reported by Tshedup, 2014) mentioned that:

*Making lifts available in buildings with more than three storeys would make our lives much easier. There should be separate pathways for people with disabilities. The traffic these days has become very wild.*

Likewise, teachers in this study also shared that lack of pathways, ramps, and appropriate transportation facilities make inclusion difficult for children with disabilities. Therefore, all the above issues need to be addressed for the successful promotion of inclusion.

While the presence of special facilities and support from experts are necessary to accommodate the varying needs of children with SEN, Bhutan is yet to render schools fully accessible for these students. Conversely, the absence of special facilities and support for students with SEN can have serious disadvantages for these students. As a result, a number of students with disabilities are likely to drop out of school. Further to this issue is the problem that some children who have disabilities have never been to school.
This study found that the general curriculum was a challenge to both teachers and students with SEN. For example, the visually impaired students in Bhutan, who attempted the national level examinations in grades eight, ten and twelve, were usually expected to attempt the same questions set for all students in all subjects, such as mathematics, science and geography (L. Chedup\textsuperscript{17}, personal communication, December 23, 2014). This is a clear indication that there is a requirement within the education system as a whole and within the school in particular to look into the relevance and appropriateness of curricula for students with SEN. From the researcher’s experience of working in a similar environment, schools provided full support by making some adjustments like allocating extra time for students during examinations and supplying large print materials for low vision students. However, the technical part of the problem remained with relevancy of questions specifically for students with visually impairment, which was linked to the content in the curriculum.

Students who have SEN need to be able to access the regular curriculum and teachers should have high expectations for all students, including students with SEN. An interesting finding from March’s (2008) study in France, revealed that a major debate took place when a curricular issue for students with disabilities was highlighted as a policy issue. The whole purpose of inclusion was highlighted once more and there were professionals who constantly reminded the floor about the objective of setting up inclusive schools. While the educators of special needs kept pressing their views on having curriculum adapted, there was strong resistance from the other group who believed that inclusiveness meant nothing special and nothing to be excluded.

March affirms that, despite people held differences in their opinions, many schools in France considered curricular adaptations. This was especially relevant and beneficial for students with hearing impairments and for students with developmental delays as a priority. March (2008) further justified these curriculum changes: “An underlying goal was maximizing opportunities for participation in well-rounded curricular (for students with SEN), alongside peers” (p. 163). In her same study, March (2008) also discovered that, unlike France, Malta encouraged its teachers to

\textsuperscript{17} L. Chedup is a Special Educational Needs Coordinator who works in one of the inclusive schools.
design creative approaches for making curricula accessible and asserted that: “Curricular adaptations for students with disabilities are described in individualised learning goals pursued in inclusive educational classrooms” (p. 164).

Bui, Quirk, Almazan and Valenti (2010) claim that instructional and curriculum adaptations are effective strategies that enhance student performance. They found that students with learning disabilities benefited the most from these types of adaptations. In addition, curriculum modification based on IEPs for students with mild to severe disabilities produced encouraging results, especially ones that supported their physical, social and instructional inclusion (Salisbury, Mangino, Petrigala, Rainforth, Syryca, & Palombaro, 1994).

While the current practice in Bhutan is that students are expected to master the national curriculum, Bhutan also needs to make careful judgement about having appropriate curricula in schools for the benefit of all students. One of the basic approaches to support learning in students with SEN is through the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and implementing these effectively. For this to come into effect, teachers will have to be oriented first about the use of IEPs. The challenge however is that class size are large in Bhutan an it may be unreasonable to expect teachers to consider individualised planning for too many students with SEN. Another approach is to instruct schools and allow them to make some adaptations in the curriculum aspect of their teaching. Curriculum planning using a more inclusive approach will need to be explored as future priorities for the MoE in Bhutan.

Human resources

Human resources was one area that was identified as being of great concern among the teachers in this study. Many teachers (47%; n = 37) in their qualitative data indicated that schools would benefit from employing more staff. Inclusive education is a collective and shared responsibility. In order to prepare students with SEN to become independent and productive in their lives, teachers, parents and the society as a whole must share the responsibility. In some of the inclusive schools in Bhutan, parents volunteer to support their children’s learning and personal needs. Overall however, the majority of students with SEN are not accompanied by their parents to school. This is due to a number of factors, including parents needing to go to work, parents feeling that the education of their child is the school’s responsibility
and many parents also are poor to travel. Another important factor is that some of these schools are residential schools and parents do not live near.

In Bhutan, class sizes are comparatively large, with an average classroom containing about 50 students. In most cases, the large class sizes make it difficult for the lone teacher to adequately support students with SEN. However, the provision to recruit teaching assistants in inclusive and special schools has been reflected in The Draft Special Education Policy (2011). The need for para-professionals who are trained in supporting students with SEN is very necessary in schools where students with SEN are enrolled. However, it may not be practical in Bhutan’s context to employ these professionals. It is apparent that Bhutan has an acute shortage of staff who are available to support students with SEN, due to the fact that teacher preparation courses, and professional development courses, do not teach these skills. Thus, Bhutan has a lack of well-trained professionals (including teachers, para-professionals and teaching assistants) to support teachers in their role of supporting and teaching students with SEN.

5.1.2 Work load

This study confirmed that many teachers who teach students with SEN are very concerned about their work load. In most cases, teachers expressed that they did not have enough time to give extra attention to students with SEN because of the already large number of students in their class. Besides their teaching schedule, teachers in Bhutan normally take additional responsibilities at the school such as extra-curricular activities: games and sports; supervising prayer recitation before and after school; and supervising evening and morning study (in residential schools). In some schools teachers take turns to run the school for a day on a rotational basis, but are still required to teach on that day. Also, a particular feature in the Bhutanese education system is that teachers are required to teach half day on Saturdays.

Another concern outlined by teachers was that of time pressures, particularly that they are required to complete the syllabi on time. The need to teach the content is a pressure due to the assessment and exams which are an integral part of the Bhutanese education system. Teachers spend a substantial amount of time correcting students’ homework, assessment and examination answer papers, leaving them
limited time for actual teaching and lesson preparation. Having students with SEN in their class adds to a teacher’s workload. Teachers in this study were of the view that they already had to complete lots of paper work and handling students with SEN in their class added more paper work for them. It can therefore be concluded that teachers work load needs to be considered when they have students with SEN in their class. Time for meeting with special education staff will enable the class teacher to prepare and organise what support is needed to teach in an inclusive setting.

5.1.3 Concerns about acceptance and the need for policy

There is no specific legislation for inclusive education in Bhutan or for special education, although special education has been in the system for almost four decades now. However, there are some government policies that are consistent with the intention of inclusive education, as discussed in chapter two, namely the National Education Policy - 2012, the Draft National Policy on Special Education Needs - 2013, Teacher Human Resource Policy - 2014 and various circular and notifications from the Ministry of Education.

The study found that teachers have experienced difficulties in comprehending the concept of inclusion, which has often hampered the progress and effectiveness of the program. Although all of the above policies require that all students have access to primary and basic education, there is still a requirement for an explicit policy and guidelines to promote and implement inclusive education in a concrete way. It is also interesting, as a point of concern, that despite some issues being highlighted in the media some 12 years ago (Kuensel, 2014) many people in Bhutan are not aware of the concept of inclusion. One newspapers in Bhutan quoted:

*Our general awareness and acceptance of the needs of the disabled remains largely theoretical. In a practical sense, it is often seen as a luxury we cannot afford.* (Editorial, Kuensel, 2003).

Also, many parents in rural villages (69.1% Bhutanese live in rural areas) do not consider education a priority for their children who have a disability. The belief that many people hold, that children with disabilities cannot perform tasks independently or that they cannot be productive in their future, still lingers in many
parents’ minds. In one of the school principals’ coordination meeting in central Bhutan, Dema (2013) reported that the district education officer said “because parents of children with disabilities were not willing to send children to school, he (district education officer) urged school principals in the dzongkhag (district) to go around and convince parents to do so”.

This shows that the public at large need to be made aware of the acceptance of children with difficulties and the necessity of education for this vulnerable group. Further, it is also a point to note that even after the establishment of the Disabled Person’s Association of Bhutan (DPAB), four years ago, “Bhutan does not have a concrete policy that safeguards the rights of disabled individuals currently” (Kipchu, 2015 as reported in a newspaper). To this effect, DPAB states that the “government should promote awareness programs by organizing campaigns, seminars, conferences and using media to broadcast programs”.

However, it is now expected that the draft policy on SEN will give proper directions for the overall improvement in the education of children with SEN. However, unfortunately the government is taking a long time to approve the draft policy which was drafted in 2011. Recently, a newspaper, Kuensel (2014) reported that:

*It is irony that a country that promotes gross national happiness is still not sensitive to the needs of a small but growing group of people with special needs. We need to have policies in place and fast.*

Otherwise, the lack of any binding policy requiring education to be provided in the best manner could render the concept of inclusiveness meaningless for learners with disabilities in Bhutan.

5.1.4 The need for professional development and concerns about academic standards

A recurring theme that occurred during the data analysis was the concern about the professional development of teachers. When looking at the total teaching
population of Bhutan, 70% of teachers have at least a college degree in education. When looking specifically at only those teachers who teach students with SEN, 90% of those teachers have at least a college degree in education (Ministry of Education, 2013). It is evident from the findings of the current study that teachers teaching in inclusive and special schools in Bhutan have sound education qualifications. Interestingly, the majority of the teachers in the current study recognized that all staff needed to be trained in order to promote and support inclusive practices in their schools which was similar to the outcome of Waldron’s (2007) study. Waldron reported that about 70% of the general teachers lacked the expertise to teach students with SEN in inclusive schools.

Ensuring that all children are supported and catered for in curriculum delivery should be the key focus of professional development for teachers. This study has identified the need for retraining of the teachers teaching in schools in inclusive education pedagogies. Such training courses and workshops would provide teachers and practitioners with the necessary knowledge about effective inclusive education practices and management strategies when dealing with students with SEN.

Furthermore, the findings which emerged from the study illustrated that teachers held the view that new teachers were not adequately prepared during the initial teacher training courses to teach in inclusive classrooms. These findings support Campbell and Gilmore’s (2003) claim that new teachers initially hold unfavourable attitudes children with SEN. However, with some exposure and experience in working with these children, teachers can change their attitudes and be more comfortable in accepting the nature of disability. Most of the teachers established that teacher preparation by the colleges needed to be strengthened. Bhutan is investing in teacher development in this area. In 2014, staff from the Paro Teachers College in Bhutan participated in an Australian Aid funded program at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane. This program focused on enhancing the ability of teacher educators to teach pre-service teachers about the principles and practices of inclusive education.

Previous research has shown that scholars, educators, administrators as well as planners have paid limited attention to addressing the quality of education for
students with SEN, particularly for students attending the inclusive schools (Warnock, 2005; Pirrie & Head, 2007). As discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3) Warnock (2005) was highly critical and considered inclusion a disputable approach. She argues that in the process of trying to conform to various international declarations on inclusive education, the essence of academic learning had weakened. Likewise, the current study found that teachers in Bhutan were less concerned about the academic standards of their students with SEN. One teacher expressed her experience of concern towards this via responding to an open-ended question;

*There are a few students with SEN in my school, but I am not able to cope with them and they have never improved in the last three years.* (Female teacher, aged 44-54, inclusive school).

The above finding indicates that the teacher has an inclusive mindset. But her inability to support students with SEN did not link to effectiveness of inclusion. This is seen as a *difference* frequently observed (Lindsay, 2007). According to Phillips, Alfred, Brulli, and Shank (as cited in McDonald & Tufue-Dolgoy, 2013), the best way to resolve such disconnect was through training and knowledge which was lacking among the Bhutanese teachers.

There was minimal mention about the relationship between academic standards of their students with SEN and their performance in teaching. This finding supports Barton’s (1997) claim that inclusion is not merely about placing students with SEN in schools with other students, “rather it is about how, where and why, and with what consequences, we educate all pupils” (p. 234). Hence, there is a need to reinforce the focus of inclusive education towards academic standards of students with SEN.

The current study also found that teacher performance can have a direct bearing on the academic standards of inclusive schools. Subban and Sharma’s, (2006) discussion regarding mandatory course in special/inclusive education enforced in New South Wales and Queensland in Australia can be a point of discussion among the colleges of education in Bhutan. This study found that teachers expressed that pre-service teacher education needs to strengthened.
Another important area identified in this study was the usage of ICT in classrooms to support and enhance learning for children with SEN. Teachers need to be trained for this. Teachers in this study were able to identify the need for using ICT in classrooms which Starcic (2010) described as being inadequate in many countries. This is a new strategy that can make teaching effective and at the same time enable the learners to feel that they are being included.

In Bhutan, teacher performance is evaluated using three different strategies endorsed by the Bhutan Civil Service Rules (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 46-48):

(a) performance appraisal: schools ensure that the performance outputs of the teachers are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) and relevant; (b) evaluation rating: done on a scale of 1-4 (1: Outstanding, 2: Very Good, 3: Good, and 4: Needs Improvement) to facilitate planning for improvement, incentives and rewards; and (c) performance based incentives: out-of-turn and fast track promotions to outstanding performing teachers in line with Bhutan Civil Service Rules.

However, in the absence of any reliable data on the overall performance of teachers teaching children with SEN in Bhutan, it is difficult to comment on their performance. In other words, this could mean that teachers have no reliable and objective way to evaluate their own performance in educating children with SEN. Therefore, it is not clear how teachers’ performance is measured or assessed in this area.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are three limitations associated with this research. Firstly, the qualitative questions asked the participants to reflect on their past observations/records and work habits. Hence, it is uncertain whether the respondents were able to accurately represent their past experience when responding to the open-ended questions.

Secondly, while the CIES survey (Sharma, Forlin & Loreman, 2007) was originally used with a student population, the current study used it to measure the
concerns of in-service teachers. This is a consideration that must be remembered when comparing the results across studies. In addition, self-report surveys are subject to social desirability bias, where participants may respond in ways that they think the researcher would prefer, or in ways that they think are more socially acceptable. This is an unavoidable limitation with self-report questionnaires. However the use of qualitative questions encouraged participants to provide detailed thoughts and reflections.

Thirdly researcher error meant that one item of the CIES was left out of the data collection process. While this altered the makeup of one factor, and may have impact on the makeup of the other factors, Cronbach alpha’s provided evidence that the measure was still internally reliable and could be used. In addition, using factor means lessened the impact of the missing item.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Four main recommendations have emerged from this study: (1) development of a policy on inclusion; (2) strengthening teacher professional education; (3) building resources; and (4) future research.

5.3.1 Development of a policy on inclusion

First and foremost, there is a need to have a National policy in place to demonstrate a commitment and support for the promotion and effective implementation of inclusive education in Bhutan. At present there is a draft policy on Special Education Needs however, a policy or legislation to be adopted should be based on global agreements, such as the United Nations’ Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability (2006) to ensure that the principles of inclusion are adequately met. This practice will also serve as an offshoot of the Dakar World Education forum that took place in April 2000, which directed all countries to ensure they reflect on their national government and funding agency policies in the provision of the inclusive concept for educating all (UNESCO, 2000). It must be mentioned that there is a need for the MoE to re-examine and review the national policy on education in favour of an inclusive policy.
5.3.2 Strengthening teacher professional education

One of the main issues in the current study in relation to the education of students with SEN in Bhutan is that teachers do not consider themselves confident in their teaching. We have now established the fact that Bhutanese teachers are not adequately trained to support the learning of students with SEN within general and special schools. In fact, the development of inclusion and SEN in Bhutan like many other countries “has primarily been focusing on the four traditional disability categories: blindness, deafness; mental disabilities and physical (motor) disability” (Bayer, 2005, p.31). But now with an increasing student population and with better diagnostic equipment, more and more children are identified with learning difficulties who struggle with their learning and participation in mainstream society. Therefore, to ensure that every single child with SEN has access to and can benefit from a quality education, current teachers in all nine inclusive schools and the two special schools should be provided with basic training to support children with SEN.

The necessity for professional development of staff which was highlighted by many researchers (Booth, Nes & Stromstad, 2003; Starcic, 2010; González & Wagenaar, 2003) and discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.3) of this study draws full attention of the Bhutanese government towards the requirement of enhancing teachers’ knowledge and their skills in particular. It is expected that teachers’ competencies will be improved through further training. For the training purpose, schools have to identify and prioritized the area of training rather than being directed by educational bodies that may not be aware of the exact challenges faced by the teachers.

It is recommended that more in-service training, short courses and workshops be organized by the Special Education Unit, MoE, so that all teachers and service providers know the fundamentals of inclusive education and SEN. In addition, the study also emphasized the need to look at teacher preparedness. This is a strong and timely message to the colleges of education in Bhutan that they should prioritise certificate and degree courses in inclusive education and SEN. Further, as discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.5), using ICT as a means of teaching in inclusive schools
should be prioritized. While the colleges of education in Bhutan should emphasize on teaching ICT to their pre-service teachers, schools in collaboration with the Special Education Unit in MoE should organize to train their teachers in using ICT in classrooms.

5.3.3 Building resources

In order to effectively accommodate students with disabilities in all schools, the schools should have access to improved learning facilities and infrastructure. In line with this, provisions should be made to include adequate recreational facilities and play equipment for children with disabilities in all common areas, such as children’s parks and school play grounds. This will then ensure that inclusion affords equal opportunities for all learners to learn and succeed within society. There is also a need for additional resources to support learning such as improved technology and hands on resources that promote active and engaged learning and participation.

Further, although the recruitment of staff and teaching assistants in particular must be considered (World Conference for Education for All, 1990), the researcher considers what can be realistic for Bhutan at this stage. Immediate recruitment of additional staff in schools on a fulltime basis is not viable because, in the first instance, it is difficult (if not impossible) to get people who have knowledge about SEN in Bhutan. Secondly, there are no institutions that train and prepare people to work in this particular area. However, a probable solution is to provide some training to parent helpers to assist as support-workers in schools.

5.3.4 Future research

There is a clear need for further research that focuses on promoting inclusion of all children with disabilities in general schools. The current study has highlighted some areas of concern that require future research. For example, research should be undertaken to study teacher preparation to teach students with SEN. It is crucial to ascertain how teachers can be prepared at the colleges of education in Bhutan. Another area for future research could be patterns of technology usage in classrooms. In Bhutan, even in regular classrooms, technology is infrequently used. Teaching through technology provides equal prospects for all students to learn in a classroom
with diverse needs. Students’ learning can be enhanced by using a range of assistive and instructional technologies (Parette & Peterson-Karlan, 2010) such as: (1) technology in the twentieth century has advanced so much that it can support individualized instruction for learning in the classroom; (2) technology allows students with SEN to independently access all aspects of society; and (3) technologies also transform views of exceptionality thereby fostering morality and boosting their self-esteem in students with SEN. Therefore, research that focuses on the use of technology is a viable line of research to consider.

Further research that investigates the experiences of in-service teachers is very important, and should be conducted longitudinally. This will facilitate the identification of issues that are experienced by the teachers over time. Identifying these issues is likely to yield improvements, and changes, to actual classrooms practice once professional development opportunities improve.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Inclusion is a multi-dimensional concept in the sense that different scholars have viewed it from different perspectives, and often with conflicting ideologies. There are no single-defined approaches to inclusion, but the principle behind inclusion has remained the same, and that principle is to include all. Authors, like Cummings, Dyson and Millward (2003) and Stromstad (2003) argue that much of the literature on inclusive education emphasizes the structural characteristics rather than issues that require attention, like pedagogy and curricular. This study strives to fill this gap with a particular focus on inclusive education in Bhutan. Also, literature on inclusion suggests that policies, strategies, resources and system requirements are all important to effectively support teachers and other stake-holders towards promoting an inclusive culture and practices. While most developed countries, like the USA, the UK, Australia and Canada have legal frameworks to guide inclusive education programs, there are many other countries that are striving to achieve this goal, and Bhutan is among them. Therefore, it is crucial for the Bhutanese government to expedite commitment towards binding legislation for inclusive education.
The significance of this study is that it will provide valuable information for the Ministry of Education in Bhutan, colleges of education and the schools in particular. This information can be useful as they plan, design and execute educational programs for the inclusion of students with SEN in general and special schools. It must be mentioned that the findings from this study revealed the concerns and experiences of teachers, which so far, have remained under-researched. Based on these findings, some new ideas and recommendations have been proposed.

This study has made important recommendations to further promote and support teachers’ self-confidence in teaching and a practical embracing of inclusive education in schools. These recommendations include: (1) development of a policy on inclusion to ensure effective implementation of the program; (2) strengthening teacher professional education to support and enhance learning in students with SEN; (3) building resources to support and promote inclusion by making schools accessible for all students with SEN; and (4) future research in the areas of teacher preparation for teachers to be able to teach efficiently, use of technology in classrooms to enhance learning in students with SEN, and finally, investigating teachers experiences and concerns in teaching students with SEN for further improvement. The study has therefore, argued that implementing the recommendations discussed will lead to enhanced outcomes for teachers and students with SEN in Bhutan.

The overall success of inclusion depends on many factors, including policy at the national level and school level, administrative support to schools, availability of resources; teaching –learning materials, infrastructure, funds and staff, and lastly, professional development for teachers.
Reference list


Appendices

APPENDIX A: CONCERNS ABOUT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SCALE (CIES)

The following survey seeks to understand how you view inclusion; the placement of children with SEN in your school and classroom.

The following questionnaire has three parts. The first section involves the collection of demographic data (such as age, length of teaching experience). The second section requires you to answer a number of forced-choice items that look specifically at how you feel about including SEN students and examines any concerns you may have. The third section includes five (5) open-ended questions about your experiences with inclusion that allow you to answer more broadly.

It is expected that this questionnaire will take around 25 minutes to complete, although you may finish earlier or take longer. Please take the amount of time you feel you need to give considered answers.

Please answer all questions in the second section as honestly as you can by circling the number that you feel most strongly indicates how you feel. For example, if you feel ‘not at all concerned’ with question 1, you would circle number 1. In contrast, if you felt ‘extremely concerned’ with this question, you would circle number 4. If you felt ‘very concerned’ you would circle number 3, and if you felt only ‘a little concerned’ you would circle number 2. If you are unsure of your response, please circle the response that would appear to accurately reflect your feelings/thoughts most of the time.
Please begin the questionnaire now:

**Age (years)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 25</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Years of teaching experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less than 5 years</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>10-15 years</th>
<th>15+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Type of school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusive</th>
<th>Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Location of school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Professional qualifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Untrained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Concerned</td>
<td>Very Concerned</td>
<td>A Little Concerned</td>
<td>Not at all Concerned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I do not have enough time to design educational programs for students with SEN.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>It is always difficult to maintain discipline in an inclusive classroom.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I do not have the knowledge and skills to teach students with SEN. (K/S)</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>There is always more paper work to be done.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Students with disabilities are not accepted by non-disabled students.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Parents of children without disabilities do not like the idea of placing their children in the same classroom where there are students with disabilities.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>My school does not have enough funds for implementing inclusion successfully.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>There are inadequate para-professional staff available to support students with SEN (for e.g., occupational therapist, teaching assistants).</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I do not receive enough incentives (for e.g., additional remuneration or allowance) to teach students with SEN.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>My work load has increased.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Many teachers in my school are stressed.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>My school has difficulty in accommodating students with various types of difficulties because of inappropriate infrastructure (for e.g., architectural barriers).</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>There are inadequate resources/special teachers/staff available to support inclusion.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>My school does not have adequate special education instructional materials and teaching aids (e.g., Braille).</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The overall academic standard of the school has suffered.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>My performance as a teacher/school principal has declined.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>The academic achievement of students without disabilities has been affected.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>It is difficult to give equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I am not able to cope with disabled students who do not have adequate self-care skills (e.g., students who are not toilet trained)</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>There is not enough administrative support to implement inclusive education program.</td>
<td>4 3 2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please answer the following questions by typing as much information as you feel is necessary to answer each question fully.

1) Do you feel that you are able to successfully support and teach students with SEN?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

1a) If yes, describe a situation where you have been successful.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

1b) If no, describe a situation where you have been unsuccessful.

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2) What things make it difficult for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?

____________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
3) What things make it easier for you to support students with SEN in your classroom?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

4) What types of strategies do you use in the classroom to support and teach students with SEN?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

5) Have you had specialized training to teach students with SEN?

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

5a) If yes, describe this training.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

5b) If no, what specific training do you think would be of benefit to you?

____________________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX B: INFORMATION

Investigating Teachers Concerns and Experiences in Teaching Children with Special Education Needs in Bhutan

Research team contacts

Principal Researcher: Kishore Chettri, Masters of Education student
Associate Researchers: Professor Suzanne Carrington and Dr Amanda Mergler

Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

What is the purpose of the research?

This research is being undertaken by Kishore Chettri, as part of a Master of Education project through QUT in Brisbane, Australia. Kishore has worked with the Department of Curriculum and Research Development, MoE, in Bhutan. He also has some experience in teaching children with Special Educational Needs in Bhutan. He is being supervised by Professor Suzanne Carrington and Dr Amanda Mergler as he completes his study.

The purpose of this research is to understand the concerns and experiences of teachers who teach children with Special Education Needs (SEN) in Bhutan.

Are you looking for people like me?

The research team is looking for teachers who teach at the following schools:

If you currently teach at any of these schools we would like to have you participate in our study.

What will you ask me to do?

Your participation will involve the completion of an online survey which has 25 questions in total and will take around 30 minutes to complete.

Are there any risks for me in taking part?

The research team has identified the following possible risks in relation to participating in this study, mainly mild discomfort due to reflecting on your teaching concerns and experiences with children with special educational needs.

However if you don’t feel comfortable answering any of the questions after you have started the survey you can skip those questions, or withdraw from the survey at any time by just closing the browser down.

Are there any benefits for me in taking part?

It is expected that this project will benefit you directly through allowing you time to think about your teaching experiences and concerns when supporting students with special education needs. In addition, the findings of this study may lead to recommendations for support for teachers when working with students who have special education needs.

Will I be compensated for my time?

No, but we would very much appreciate your participation in this research.

I am interested – what should I do next?

If you would like to participate in this study, please follow this link to the study site.

You will be provided with further information to ensure that your decision and consent to participate is fully informed.

Thank You!

QUT Ethics Approval Number: 1400000846
APPENDIX C: APPROVAL

Ref: MoE/DSE/ECCD&SEN/SEN/MISC-19 Date: October 16, 2014

Mr. Kishore Kumar Chhetri
Student No: N8938211
Master of Education (Research) ED12
Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove Campus
Victoria Park Road, Brisbane
QLD, Australia 4059.

Sub: Approval for the Online Survey Data Collection.

Dear Mr. Kishore,

Department of School Education, Ministry of Education, Thimphu is hereby extending an approval for your online survey data collection (Pilot testing and final survey) for your study 'Determining Teachers' Competencies in Teaching Children with Special Educational Needs in Bhutan' from the schools catering to children with special educational needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No</th>
<th>School Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Changangkha Middle Secondary School, Thimphu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Drukgyel Lower Secondary School, Paro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School for the Deaf, Drukgyel, Paro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tendruk Higher Secondary School, Samtse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Zhemgang Lower Secondary School, Zhemgang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mongar Lower Secondary School, Mongar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Khaling Lower Secondary School, Trashigang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Muenzelling Institute, Khaling, Trashigang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gelephu Lower Secondary School, Sarang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kamji Middle Secondary School, Chhiha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jigme Sherubling Higher Secondary School, Khaling, Trashigang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information collected may be used for the academic purposes only.

Thanking you and with best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

(Karma Tenley)
Director General.

Copy to
1. Chief, ECCD&SpEdn Division for information.
2. Principals of the concerned schools for information and requesting to render necessary support and cooperation to Mr. Kishore.
3. Office copy.

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

THIS TEMPLATE WILL BE SHOWN TO PARTICIPANTS AS THE FIRST SCREEN BEFORE THEY AGREE TO COMPLETE THE ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT
– Questionnaire –

Investigating Teachers Concerns and Experiences in Teaching Children with Special Education Needs in Bhutan

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1400000846

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher: Kishore Chhetri, Masters of Education student, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
Associate Researcher: Professor Suzanne Carrington, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Dr Amanda Mergler, Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

DESCRIPTION

This project is being undertaken as part of a Masters of Education study for Kishore Chhetri. It may be mentioned that the researcher has been a teacher and a curriculum officer in Bhutan and he is currently enrolled in a Master of Education degree at QUT.

The purpose of this project is to understand the concerns and experiences of teachers who teach children with Special Education Needs (SEN) in Bhutan.

You are invited to participate because you are a teacher at one of the participating schools. The Ministry of Education, Bhutan has approved this study in the 11 schools where inclusive education is being carried out along with two special schools. Your principal has provided permission for you to participate.

PARTICIPATION

Participation will involve completing an anonymous online questionnaire with 20 likert scale answers (not at all concerned – extremely concerned) and 5 open-ended questions that will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. Questions will include “I do not have enough time to design educational programs for students with SEN”, “It is difficult to give equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom”, and “Do you feel that you are able to successfully support and teach students with SEN?”

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate you do not have to complete any question(s) you are uncomfortable answering, although the data will be more valuable to us if you do answer every question. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT.

If you do agree to participate and change your mind, you can withdraw from the project without comment or penalty while you are completing the survey. However as the questionnaire is anonymous once it has been submitted it will not be possible to withdraw.
EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this project will not directly benefit you, although you may find some benefit in thinking about your practice in relation to supporting students with special education needs. This research may benefit you and future teachers, as it is hoped that the results will allow for recommendations to be created that focus on supporting teachers who work with students who have special education needs.

RISKS

There are very minimal risks associated with your participation in this project. These include inconvenience and a sense of mild discomfort that you may experience from thinking about concerns and experiences you have had working with students who have special education needs. However, you will not be asked for any personally identifiable information, so you can feel assured that your responses will be anonymous.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses are anonymous. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses.

Any data collected as part of this project will be stored securely as per QUT’s Management of research data policy.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Submitting the completed online questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

You can withdraw from the project without comment or penalty by just closing the web browser.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If you have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Name – Kishore Chhetri
Phone – +61 (0)450 221760
Email - kishorekumar.chhetri@hdr.qut.edu.au

Name – Suzanne Carrington
Phone – +61 7 3138 3987
Email – sx.carrington@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on [+61 7] 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project.
### APPENDIX E: CODING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Do you feel that you are able to successfully support and teach students with SEN?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Without proper and effective training on the SEN, delivering classroom activities is a biggest challenge to every teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Not attempted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>No, I am not confident to teach students with SEN, because I am not trained in that field and also we do not have such facilities in this school for such programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Yes a trained teacher I fully support and assure that I can successfully support and teach students with sen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>I am not confident as I lack necessary skills in dealing with the SEN children. Somehow, we resolve to adjustable situation through limited experience in collaboration with senior teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>yes, I feel I could teach them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>I have been doing my best to give all I could to teach students with visually impaired and low vision but sometime I forget the totally blind children as we need to do more blackboard work to low vision students but I speak out what is/are written on the board loudly. But still I feel that I am not confident in teaching mathematics as I am not trained in that subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>after getting workshop and through experience, I am aware what strategies I can use and how to tackle the children with special education needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>50% I feel that I will be able to support the SEN students but it also depends upon the different disabilities of the SEN children’s approach towards learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Yes, I can successfully implement and teach the children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Other than the summer conference workshops that Bhutan Foundation has provided us with, I haven't had any training in teaching students with SEN, but from the progress of the children who come to my SEN classes, I do feel that I am successful to a certain extent in supporting them with what I have learnt from my teacher training, workshops, and classroom experiences. I could do better if I have specialized training, though</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>I can support but cannot teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Not attempted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX F: CODE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL.No</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Code description</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Tally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of training</td>
<td>Participant expressed that there is no proper training on SEN</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of confidence</td>
<td>Not confident to teach students with SEN (16)/ confident to teach (12)</td>
<td>33, 60</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of facilities/infrastructure and teaching and learning materials including advanced technology</td>
<td>Furniture is not appropriate. Children cannot access as there are no ramps or concrete pathways. Didn’t know what to use as not much teaching aids are available. Not being able to computer.</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 49, 51, 52, 54, 58, 59, 60</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of skills/knowledge</td>
<td>Participant lacks skills and knowledge about SEN</td>
<td>3, 5, 18, 29, 35, 42, 50, 54, 57</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Through experience</td>
<td>From teaching experience participant is aware what strategies can be used</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>Able to use different instruction</td>
<td>17, 18, 21, 31, 36, 27, 30, 36, 37, 55</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varied disabilities</td>
<td>difficult to handle differently able children during teaching and other activities.</td>
<td>51, 59</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successfully Support SEN children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot teach</td>
<td>Facing difficulty to teach and to look after both SEN and normal students at a time</td>
<td>7, 8, 51</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background on SEN</td>
<td>Participant feels that he/she can teach better if he/she has professional background on SEN</td>
<td>3, 12, 13, 18, 20, 24, 28, 35, 46, 47, 51, 54, 58, 59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time constraint</td>
<td>There is problem of time constraints when teachers need to give special attention to SEN students</td>
<td>3, 12, 13, 18, 20, 24, 28, 35, 46, 47, 51, 54, 58, 59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>