The education system at the end of the twentieth century: an overview

The challenges faced by the Ministry of Education in Swaziland are not very different from those faced by the rest of the world. It has been very necessary to continuously review the education system so as to ensure that it is always relevant to local needs. These review processes started off with the National Education Commission of 1971, followed by the National Review Commission in 1985 leading to the Education for All agenda in 1990, which in turn led to Dakar 2000. The thrust in these initiatives was the belief that, “A nation’s greatest asset is its human resources, Human development is therefore the great aim of education”, (NEC, 1975.)

As with many other developments in the world, the march of civilization and trends into the new millennium have indeed dictated the direction of the education process by, effort, pace and trends that have to be adopted to meet the ever changing needs of our society. This has been very essential not for the country to conform to “world standards” but also to keep up and engage fully in the “global village.

1.1 Major reforms and renovations introduced in the system

(a) Legal Framework

The skeleton of the legal framework of the education system was very much influenced by the aspiration of the party that won the first election, the Imbokodvo National Movement. Its policies and philosophies are still relevant even today. A few highlights of the manifesto include:

♦ Education is an inalienable right of every child and citizen to receive the limit of his/her capabilities
♦ The purpose of education is to produce an enlightened and participant citizenry
♦ Content must be work oriented from primary to the highest level etc.

(NEC,1975)

The manifesto makes no mention of tertiary education other than teacher and agricultural training, thus the country might be lacking in a framework guiding education at this level. As of now there is no laid down policy, it is no great surprise that the university has been a pioneer in this regard and it tows the line. Of interest in this level is the manifesto’s suggestion that government to any level of education will support a citizen. This is indeed very challenging with the prevailing economic reforms.

The country has since 1981 seen no change in the framework. However in 1999 the country did endeavour to come out with a clearly articulated policy of intent although this was still under the same manifesto. This policy does advocate for some specific legal innovations, which the Ministry is currently reviewing. This includes definition of education into the new millennium, curriculum review, funding, democratisation of the process and the engagement of the private sector and other stakeholders.
The intent of the country in the new millennium is clearly put in the Policy Statement, see annex 1. However, as expected in every policy documents, some gaps unfortunately exist, the most revealing one being a clearly articulated system of engagement with the NGO’s that play a very vital role in the country's educational system. This will be covered in the proposed national policy on engagement of NGOs with the government of Swaziland. The MOE’s policy is also silent on the funding of the education process; this could have been contributed by the fact that all developments are still guided by the Imbokodvo manifesto.

(b) Organisation, Structure and Management of the Education system

One major advantage of the country is its size, which has made it very convenient to administer the system centrally. The country has five levels of education, as defined in the International Classification of Education (ISCED 97),

1. Early childhood and Developmental Programmes (level 0)

MOE policy is moving away from Pre-School Education that caters for children between the ages 3 to 6. The MOE still has no effective control of this level of education, as it is, presently not integrated into the formal education structure, they operate independently. Having identified the need to integrate and formalise it into the MOE structure the MOE intends to collaborate with the Ministry of Health, Agriculture and Social Welfare, NGOs in drawing up an action plan that will embrace ages 0 to 6.

2. Basic education which consists of Primary and the first three years of Secondary Education (level 2 and 3)

Formal basic education will continue to provide the Swazi child with education and knowledge to survive in the world. The country, under the SADC Protocol has adopted a ten-year basic education programme; 7 years of primary followed by the three years of secondary education. Traditionally there has been a “pruning process” at the end of primary, this has been done largely for control than educational purposes This ten year system has obvious challenges which include the availability of schools, teachers and teacher salaries since more children will be moving into the first three years of secondary education.

As the quest for quality and relevance continue to dominate decision-making and policy formulation there has been major initiatives in this level of education. These include:

(a) The introduction of Continuous Assessment in primary schools and the proposed phasing out of the Public Examination at the end of primary. This CA system has been fully integrated, and contributes to the “end of primary exam”.

(b) With assistance of the Government of Australia, the kingdom is currently formulating a curriculum for physical education. There has always been physical activity in schools but it has never been part of the formal curriculum. Government and the
University of Swaziland are making efforts to train teachers who will be responsible for this activity. This initiative has seen an increase in the number of sporting activities at this level. This is further diversification of the curriculum such that it caters for all the needs of the children, especially those who might not be academically gifted.

(c) The shift of focus on producing job seekers by the present curriculum to the provision of entrepreneurship skills is yet another MOE initiative. It starts off with the provision of practical arts at primary school level, to technical and prevocational subjects at secondary levels. For “hands-on” practice, the MOE has included the private sector and some industries that are assisting in the design of specific courses to be offered to their “prospective employees”.

This initiative has also seen the introduction of the ICT in the schools. There is still need to further discuss in this area the role of the computer, as a tool or subject area.

(d) Though not exhaustive, the other initiative is that of special needs education. Realising the need to cater for this otherwise segregated population, the MOE has taken upon itself to change the present culture and negative attitude towards these children. A full time coordinator has since been employed to coordinate all the necessary activities that pertain to special needs education.

3. Upper Secondary Education (level 3)

Like in most countries in Sub-Sahara in Africa, the country’s system allows for a few students into this level, with a bulk dropping out at the preceding levels. This is largely due to the assessment system, which is presently under debate, to change it from the O’Level structure to IGSE/HIGSE.

At this stage the country has also realized that some children do not have the means and intention to go into tertiary education, the country has thus introduced the prevocational curriculum. This is still being piloted in 16 schools in the country.

4. Post Secondary and Tertiary Education (level 4 and 5)

Teacher Training and Nursing Colleges dominate this level. Other institutions include the College of Technology and the University. Such institutions included training of teachers to teach the citizens, nurses to see to the health of the nation and agriculture to feed the nation. Education is looked at as an investment to serve the country, rather than personal development or for self-improvement. The challenge for the country might be to integrate all the teacher-training colleges to be part of the Faculty of Education to fall under the University of Swaziland, so that government will offer a relevant service to the country.

The University of Swaziland is also under going some metamorphosis too. It has just completed its Strategic Development Plan; New Commitment to Self-Renewal. It affirms its faith in the principles of academic freedom and autonomy. It endeavours to provide a congenial learning environment that shall facilitate excellence in teaching and learning,
research, community service, consultancy, professional leadership and enterprise development. It plans to achieve this mission through:

a) provision of regular academic programmes at undergraduate and post graduate levels,

b) creation of continuing education opportunities for the inclusion of demand driven knowledge and skills, as well a positive attitude towards life-long learning

c) creation and preservation of knowledge through research, consultancy and technology development

d) dissemination of innovations for the betterment of the quality of life of the people of Swaziland and beyond

e) Involvement in relevant and profitable commercial ventures and

f) creation of an enabling environment for the efficient provision and utilization of the resources of the university.

The University of Swaziland does enjoy some autonomy. It enjoys its autonomy despite the fact that it gets a large portion of its funds from government, thus it has continued to pave its way into the new millennium. Of disadvantage are the colleges which are to still to be recognized as institutions of their own mandate by the government..

5. And Non-Formal and Adult Education.

In addition to the formal system there is the non-formal system that is currently taken care of by the SEBENTA National Institute, Rural Education Centres and other NGOs. However, the main educating NGO is SEBENTA, which also operates under the aegis of the MOE. Although this organization was initially tasked with education of adults, the prevailing socioeconomic situation has seen it educating both adults and those school-aged individuals who did not get a chance to get a formal education. This has been due to the poverty situation in the country caused by inequitable distribution of resources and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This is one of the vehicles the NGO with the Ministry will exploit to fight the viscous circle of poverty.

(c) Evaluation, Policies and Methods and Instruments

Education has been defined over the years as change in behavior. It has been very challenging to evaluate the system, policies and instruments of education in the country, although most people would claim standards are lower. A barometer of the effectiveness of education system has been for the graduates to be seen to be successful, there are no structures laid down to evaluate the system. Economists would tend to evaluate the effectiveness of the system by how much it contributes to the development of the country. The Ministry itself is very lacking in defining its instruments for measurement of the achievement of the process. On the other hand the review of the Ministry Policy Statement also goes a long way in reforming the educational system to meet the challenges of the new millennium. This was itself an evaluation of the whole system. The review of the policy as in turn led to the development of a new vision for the future.
The ministry has but endeavoured in the assessment of achievement of the students. This has seen the development of the National Assessment Framework that intends to monitor the progress of the students in the system. In turn this will assess the effectiveness of the teaching process, as some of the instruments will be used at classroom level. This framework proposes test at grades 4, 7 and 10 (basic education) to provide information on the “standards” and performance of the system. However, for this to be effective there is need for an effective Information System that will capture and track the students through the system - for one has to be seen to be comparing the progress of the same cohort.

There is no assessment procedure/tool for the “fly by night” schools in the country that unfortunately sit the same exam as formal schools. Their performance does affect the overall standing of the country. This is an indication that the MOE has to be seen to be doing something on the matter.

(d) Current and forthcoming reforms

As indicated above the review of the policy in the light of challenges of the new era has led to the need to review the education system. The Ministry has seen the need to explore the following:

♦ the shift from a free tertiary education to a system that will be determined by the country’s needs. The first move has been the relocation of E16 million (US $1.2 million) from tertiary education to basic education. The money was used for funding scholarship at tertiary level. Further to this, the country is developing and implementing the Human Resource Development Plan that guides our priorities in tertiary funding.

♦ the Education Act of 1981, this is still pending.

♦ the Teaching Service Act, the Ministry is already engaged in revamping this act.

♦ the scholarship bill which guides the management of the scholarship. It is envisaged that proper management of this fund can lead to re-investment at lower levels of education.

♦ the need to cater for poverty that might be caused by other issues including, the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

♦ the policy and decision making process of the Ministry

♦ the need to review the aspect of special education

♦ the move from a teacher centred approach to a child-centred one.

♦ exam bill
1.2 Results of the last ten years.

The progress and shortcomings of the last decade have been explicitly put in the country’s EFA 2000 report. However, for purposes of this report there is need to highlight some issues and includes:

(a) Cost of Education (Access)

The cost of education has continued to rise. This has unfortunately led to an increase in the number of children failing to get even the basic education that is essential for their survival. This has been one of the areas where the Ministry has endeavoured to meet its obligation. It has tried doing this through a number of initiatives that include:

♦ a subsidised book scheme, where parents instead of buying books, rent them. Each student pays ¼ of the cost of the book. This did meet its main priority that most kids did have books in the country. This has been slightly improved in that the Ministry is now considering that all books be free at primary education. This, it is believed, will improve the enrolment rates at this level.

♦ a shift from the traditional approach (teacher centred) to continuous assessment, a child centred approach, which is a three pronged and includes teaching, testing and remediing. The underlying principle is that every child is a successful learner, thus all children are indeed expected to progress to the next level of learning. This is aimed at both improving the quality and efficiency of the education system and also to improve retention. Of great challenge is how the Ministry will study the impact of both the “free books” and continuous assessment” in primary and how it will affect education at the next level - secondary education and beyond.

♦ there has to be a re-culturation and acceptance of the many special needs cases that exist in the schools. The Ministry, through the Special Education wing, is currently preaching this gospel and it is believed all the children who were “hidden” will now be enrolled into the schools that cater for special needs.

(b) Equity in the system

One major advantage of being a small country with a centrally controlled management system is that of being able to monitor all aspects of the system from without. The Ministry will continue to provide for an equitable distribution of resources, this it doing through the Planning Unit and the Ministry’s Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS). The Unit provides information on the need for teachers, physical resources like water, electricity, books, structures etc. that is used in the decision-making process of the ministry.

(c) Relevance and quality of the system

It is the challenge of every country to provide its citizens with an education that will give them skills and knowledge that will assist them to survive. This kind of education should be seen to respond to their needs and those of the society. Issues of relevance and quality include:

♦ the need to review and study the impact of the HIV/AIDS on the education system. The Ministry is doing this through the Guidance and Counselling Department.
However, it is worth mentioning that the Ministry is in close collaboration with NGOs, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the nation at large.

To assess this, the Ministry is also looking at the aspect of enrolment patterns in the schools, that is, the number of orphans and dropouts. As the scourge also affects the teachers, the Ministry is engaged with the Ministry responsible for labour in reviewing the impact on the teaching force and the implications to the number of teachers and the payroll. The Ministry is also studying the delivery of the curriculum to an AIDS/HIV affected and/or infected population.

♦ The Ministry also has a special education wing. Children who fall under this category need special treatment and encouragement. The country is indeed looking at options of engagement like inclusion and/or integration of these children to the normal system.
♦ Although this is a national issue, the Ministry is trying means to identify the pockets of poverty in the country with the hope of channelling resources to those areas. This is done through the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the World Bank, through the National Poverty Alleviation Strategy, which was recently launched by the Minister for Economic Planning.
♦ Providing an education that provides an entrepreneurship, focus is also high in the agenda of the Ministry. The country, through the ADB, has secured funding for 16 pilot schools in prevocational education. This it is hoped will provide for a relevant and quality education that will also help student be self reliant

(d) Participation of the society

The main measure of effective reform is the role the people play in the process. Swaziland has been very strong in this regard as all its reviews have included members of civil society. The latest is the policy that was drafted with a variety of stakeholders and was scrutinized nationally.

1.3 Lesson learnt in the process of reformation

Government has indeed made significant progress on the provision of schools, increasing access, provision of a curriculum for all its registered schools, the payment of most of teachers in the country, localization of the primary school curriculum, the localization of the administration of both the Junior Certificate and the O’-level examination and a budget allocation of above 20%. However the picture has not been rosy throughout; there have been challenges viz:

♦ that the Ministry has and is continuing controlling the number and type of schools that are mushrooming in the country which are under the control of the Ministry of Enterprise and Employment - commercial schools (fly by night). The Ministry still has no guidelines and does not intend to have such for the registration of such schools. Such schools are not inspected, monitored, and statistics are not collected and this does not only affect the figures that are reported but also the standards of education in the country.
the Ministry is still in the process of integrating the Early Childhood Development Programmes (ECDP) into the school system. This delay has seen some of the schools offering grades 1 to 3 in their “private homes”. This means some of the children are not under the control of government system, and this is a problem as such children tend to be “delayed” into the formal system. This has led to the negative change in enrolment ratio as observed in the Johannesburg EFA 2000 report. (Assessment of Education in Sub Sahara, p43). This was observed in the ages of grade 1 children who are above the entry age of six.

The Ministry has managed to integrate continuous assessment into the end of primary mark. However, there were a few administrative problems that needed to be addressed. These included the big class sizes in some of the schools. These large number do limit the one to one interaction which the strategy advocates and at the same time teachers are overwhelmed by the administrative work that goes with the initiative.

The lack of enthusiasm in the programme has seen rising levels of repetition and dropout in the system. This should be of concern to the Ministry especially to those schools that claim to have a fully operational CA System. The Ministry has to have a fully comprehensive system to convince stakeholders of the fruits of this system, it should not be seen as offering "lip-service” only.

Despite that the Ministry has included the EMIS in its decision making process it is currently working strengthening the unit such that it becomes a fully-fledged department. The department is fully operational the support it gets such as capacity building has been very minimal. This is not only unique to the country; other countries have also highlighted the need for policy makers to base their decisions on evidence.

The ministry is also working on means to have a fully functional inspection team. The current insufficient number of inspectors has led to some MOE policy options not being effected. This is one area that needs to be strengthened to ensure that the education process is judiciously executed in the schools.

The Ministry currently working on matching the non-formal education delivered by the SEBENTA institute to formal levels to enable students who have started off through it to join the formal system later.

Although the picture is not very rosy, the Ministry has endeavoured in meeting some its obligations:

the integration of the CA mark into the end of primary exam is a step in the right direction. This has also led to all schools taking CA with some seriousness and a platform for further development. However, the system still needs strengthening, especially the monitoring and support by the inspectors. Continuous Assessment should not be at the end of primary only. It is a process; a continuous one for that matter, there is need for proper tracking throughout the system and integration of more information at the end of the level for a rounded profile of the child.

the shift of a sizeable amount of the budget from tertiary to primary. This is in line with international measures, which advocate for a financially accessible basic education.
introduction of a prevocational education that will give students “hands-on” skills. This project also aims to include women in technology, this is indicative of the country’s dedication to the equitable distribution of resources. In addition, the Ministry is also exploring the possibility of bringing stakeholders into the design of the curriculum for vocational training such that students graduate with relevant experience - applicable to the available job market. The Prevocational education curriculum offers all students important learning opportunities regardless of their particular chosen study area. For example, successful students in the programme will:

- Develop skills that can be applied now and in future endeavours
- Refine career skills
- Improve entrepreneurial potential
- Acquire technology-related competence
- Enhance employability opportunities
- Demonstrate increased self-confidence and independence
- Apply and reinforce competencies developed in other study areas

the country, through a number of international organisations, is introducing computers into the schools system. The Ministry’s intention is that every child be computer literate, thus the need for subjects to have some computer usage classes. The computer should be used as a tool than an end in itself at this level.

move from a traditional academic exam system to a system that allows students to develop in areas where they are competent in.

the introduction of a distance education programme by the university. This programme exploited by those who cannot attend full-time by choice or situation. This programme has reduced the load on the formal system and has allowed the university to make full use of its resources even when the full-timers are out of session.

introduction of special needs education. These are children who most of the time were left doing nothing and dependent on others for survival. The Ministry has engaged a “special needs” specialist to address the issues. This is seeing many students, teachers and community at large reviewing their role in the education and empowerment of these people.

1.4 Challenges in the next century

The government of Swaziland recognizes and appreciates the need for a high literacy and numeracy for human development. It is also aware that those who will succeed in life are those who have the skills and the knowledge to make a meaningful contribution of the economic, social and developmental needs of the country. A good basic education is the answer to this need.

Globalisation has brought about other challenges to society. Of great challenge to the country is the continuous increase in the number of children who fail and then drop out of the system. Coupled with it is the inability of some parents to pay for their children’s education and government’s struggle to cope with the ever-increasing costs of both education and human resources.
- HIV/AIDS has also brought about unprecedented challenges, not only to the teaching but also the learning process. This has affected the delivery of the curriculum, as there is high absence rate in both teachers and students. This has led to other socio-dynamics, where girls are being compromised and left at home to care for their sick parents or siblings. In some cases incidence of school-aged children enrolling in adult literacy programmes due to costs of education and/or having to subsidize their income where a child is heading a household. The traditional role of the teacher and that of the student need to be reviewed to meet the challenges, some the children by being orphaned have assumed adult roles before being mature enough.

- Swaziland achieved universal primary education in 1985 but this is being eroded by the prevailing socio-economic situation. Despite governments endeavour in building schools the demand has increased drastically and this has seen the mushrooming of “fly by night” schools especially in the cities.

- The problem is not only at this level but there is need to review and consider distance education as an option rather than a second choice, children who are awaiting entry might have to be encouraged to go into employment and take their tertiary education part-time. The continuous sending of students to neighbouring countries might not be benefiting the country much.

- In addition to the provision of access to education there is need to monitor its relevance and quality. This is being explored in the primary school through the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) of which the country is a member, which monitors English, Mathematics and Science at grade 6 in all countries in the SADC. This will assist the country to review its standards in the region and internationally.

2.1 Curriculum development, principles and assumptions.

(a) The decision-making process

Schools are part of a wider education system that is part of a political, social, and economic framework. They are also within the framework of a community. Education is for citizens and citizens form a state. Therefore, all decisions about education stem from political decisions stated in national educational goals, articulated in the Imbokodvo National Movement, Manifesto,

From the goals, policy-makers articulate national educational aims. These state the knowledge, skills and attitudes which learners are expected to have acquired by the end of a given level or programme. All instructional decisions stem from the curriculum and its implementation.

Curriculum developers and their teams develop objectives that emanate from the educational aims, and content to meet the objectives. Evaluation procedures are in-built at instructional level, right from the statement of national aims to the assessment and evaluation of the instruction.
These decisions are taken at different times and forum. There are government approval structures in place that make decisions on the suitability of instructional/learning materials bound for the school system. These decisions are taken at pilot-testing stage, at publication/manuscript stage and at dissemination stage.

(b) Curriculum Planning and design

The curriculum development process is founded on national educational goals of the country, which embody the country’s philosophy or way of life. From the goals, policy makers articulate national education aims. These aims state the knowledge, skills and attitudes which learners are expected to have acquired the end of a given period or programme. Curriculum developers and their teams develop objectives, which emanate from the educational aims, and content and methods to meet the objectives. Diagrammatically, this is what happens:

![Diagram of curriculum planning and design]

From the above diagram, it is possible to identify the key elements of the instructional design process.
1. What do you want the learners to learn or be able to do? - (Objectives, characteristics of learners)
2. What educational experiences can be provided, that are likely to attain these purposes? - (Content)
3. How is the subject content or skill best learned? - (Teaching/Learning methods)
4. How do you determine the extent to which the learning has been achieved? - (Evaluation)

These four fundamental elements form the framework for systematic instructional planning. There are additional components that require attention and which are integrated with the basic four to form a complete instructional design model.

The main vehicle for curriculum development in Swaziland is the National Curriculum Centre (NCC). The principal function of the NCC is to interpret the MOE’s educational policies as contained in policy documents including National Development Plans, Reports of Education Review Commissions, Imbokodvo Manifesto, etc, and to formulate objectives and produce educational programmes for use in the school system.
The NCC Model of Curriculum Development

In developing the curriculum designers and their teams (subject panels) follow the eclectic model of curriculum design. It is combination of several instructional designs, all serving the purpose of meeting our educational aims. No one design can be adequate for the total curriculum plan for school, serving the varied population and multiple goals schools generally serve. Instead, appropriate designs for particular aims and learning opportunities are selected and developed,

For example, designs consolidated and used across subject areas are Learner-centred.

Those who develop the curriculum have to be aware of all aspects and dimensions of the experiences that pupils have during any period of formal education. This is not always the case though as some designers lack formal training in curriculum design and development, and has to learn on-the-job.

Swaziland moved away from the traditional approach to educational planning, which still dominates some subject areas particularly at secondary level and indeed in institutions of higher learning.

The Objectives-based curriculum has three bases (sources) for the selection of curriculum objectives:
- The needs and aspirations of the society, based on the Situation Analysis
- The needs of the learner, based on the Needs Assessment
- The requisites of the subject area, based on the nature of the knowledge, eg., Maths/ Science/ Language Arts/ Technical Studies or Religious Education.

In planning a curriculum objectives are framed and decisions are made on the appropriate content and procedures by continuously referring to the nature of the knowledge, what knowledge is, the different forms of knowledge and the different forms of logic; the nature of the child for whom the curriculum is planned, making it “child-centred”; due regard is paid to cognitive growth and child development generally.

At this point, the objectives are stated in the following order:

National Educational Goals

Educational Aims/Curriculum Objectives (Broadly stated for the various educational levels, ie., Primary, secondary, etc)

Instructional Objectives (Becoming more specific, for a unit, module or course)

Behavioural Objectives (Very specific, for each lesson, in a unit or module)
At each educational level, the objectives will reflect the scope of what will be covered. Further, the objectives for the different levels are grouped into three domains, following Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Each step of the model is evaluated before you move on to the next. In short, our model believes that to be considered educated is to have been helped to develop certain intellectual capacities acquired factual knowledge and to have one’s behaviour modified in certain ways.

The different types of knowledge (content) selected are based on goals and aims and objectives of the particular level, keeping in mind the key criteria: Scope (Breadth and depth); balance; validity; integration and continuity.

This content has to be organised in some form which is to organise means to give an orderly structure to something in order that there is continuity and appropriate level of scope or subject matter within a class and across classes. The development of a Scope and Sequence serves this purpose.

Because life in general is not compartmentalized into neat boxes of geography health, history, maths etc, integration of knowledge is necessary in the curriculum, particularly in the primary level. This is done at Scope and Sequence level. Sometimes it is the unification or fusion of curriculum elements of different subjects, or the blending of objectives, content, teaching /learning aids and methods and evaluation to make an integrated teaching package. This is normal in subjects like the social sciences, Religious education, social studies and Development Studies, which are an integration of geography, history, economics, anthropology, sociology, civics, and moral education. The same goes with the Practical Arts Arts/Vocational Studies. Practical Arts integrates Home Economics, Agriculture, Art and Crafts, Music and Physical Education.

Integration, a theory of knowledge, is a response to the kinds of pressure to restructure knowledge to changing social needs. In other words, through integration we try to put the pupil in a situation in which he can organise his knowledge in ways that are meaningful to him/her, as well as to society.

One merit in the curriculum planning is that we realized on time that curriculum planning couldn’t go on, cut off from contact with society and the culture in which it is practised. The curriculum developer has to be aware of the social pressures to which the curriculum development she is trying to foster are subject to. The first is the tendency of teachers to cling to those practices of teaching they were trained in, and refuse to innovate.

At the level of the NCC, four components work in a cooperative and coordinated manner to design, produce, trial-test, and evaluate curriculum materials. The four components each have specialised functions, and decisions about curriculum development are taken in each. The four components are:

1. Design and preparation
Materials are written based upon the objectives in the policy documents. These materials, for each grade level, include teachers’ guides, children’s’ workbooks, posters and other teaching aids. All designed materials are reviewed and improved by national subject panels and other educational bodies before they are printed and placed on trial in the pilot schools. After the first trials the materials are revised and again placed on second trial in the pilot schools. They are revised a last time in preparation for use in all schools (as approved by The MOE).

The new materials developed are introduced nation-wide after they have been commercially published.

2. Evaluation

The evaluation function serves a two-pronged purpose to improve student achievement. It includes assessing the efficacy of the instructional materials by eliciting formative feedback from the teachers and testing the pupils. It also includes continually assessing the pupils’ achievement of the curricular objectives and making the assessment data available for the teachers to use in diagnosing and correcting learning deficiencies in a timely manner.

3. Production

This component is responsible for producing the trial materials for use teachers and pupils of pilot schools. This includes all the technical processes of illustration, photography, printing, collating and binding. In addition, this component is commissioned by the MOE and other organisations to print special bulletins, reports, and other publications.

4. Teacher education

The main work of this component is to learn the intent of the new materials, distribute the materials to the 17 pilot schools, assist the pilot schools teachers in using and understanding the materials, and getting feedback from the teachers and pupils about the effectiveness of the materials. The ideas of the teachers are brought back to the designers so that revision can be made as the materials are improved. This component is also responsible for planning and coordinating workshops for pilot schools.

Workshops are an integral part of NCC activities, organised by the Teacher Education component. The regular ones that have been held the inception of NCC are:

♦ Orientation Workshops are conducted to introduce each grade level of pilot schoolteachers to the philosophy, approaches and the use of new NCC materials. These also are done for materials going for nation-wide implementation.
♦ Feed-back Workshops, help the curriculum developers, pilot school teachers, teacher educators and evaluators to share ideas on the curriculum materials being trial tested in pilot schools.
♦ Infusion Workshops, bring together the NCC teacher educators, curriculum developers, the inspectorate, inservice teachers (INSET) and classroom teachers to familiarise themselves with the materials to be implemented nation-wide, and to plan implementation strategies.
Revision Workshops, bring together all the above-mentioned groups, including classroom teachers, to give feedback on the impact of specific NCC materials used nation-wide, and to initiate the revision process on such materials.

Other decisions affecting the curriculum directly or indirectly (eg., teacher training, inservice training, examinations, etc), are implemented by the MOE and its agencies. Where capacities do not allow in the different agencies, projects with in-built capacity building and training components are put in place to facilitate implementation. The agencies and the MOE using existing structures (eg evaluate decisions and implementation of plans. Staff Conference, Curriculum Coordinating Committee, EMIS, Subject Panels, Subject Associations, etc) and other impact evaluation studies where MOE structures do not exist.

c) Teaching and Learning Strategies

Selecting and planning learning activities is based ion the content associated with learning objectives in order to achieve maximum learner success. This is the third of the four elements in the instructional design process: learners, objectives, activities and evaluation.

There is a wide range of possible activities from which to make a selection. There is no magic formula for matching activities with objectives. The teacher/curriculum developer needs to know the alternatives available to her, their relative advantages and also the various supporting materials that might be used.

Listed here-under are the various teaching/learning strategies used, as needed (across all the subjects developed at the NCC) to facilitate the learner's active participation:

- Educational Visits / Field Trips
- Demonstration
- Question and Answer
- Group Discussion
- Role-playing
- Reading Aloud
- Lecture
- Project method
- Experimenting
- Games for Learning
- Demonstrations
- Simulations
- Guest presentations

- Memorisation
- Singing method
- Debate
- Drama
- Silent Reading
- Showing method
- individual work
- Discussion
- Resource person
- Problem Solving
- Writing method
- Note-taking
- Research using reference material

(d) Assessment policies and instruments

At the end of each of each lesson, unit and term, the curriculum designer has suggested evaluation devises and the classroom teacher decides which evaluation devices to use in
order to assess if the learners are able to do what is stated in the instructional, behavioural objective.

Evaluation questions cover all the specific objectives in an instructional unit. There is a balance of questions in terms of pupils’ cognitive abilities, affective and psychomotor competencies, depending on the nature of the learning objectives.

A Draft National Assessment Framework, 1999, has been developed which spells out student evaluation and Assessment policy. The principles underpinning the testing exercise are:

♦ to assist in the development of a coherent and systematic assessment policies and practice in school;
♦ to achieve on a national basis clearer definition of structure, objectives and balance of curriculum;
♦ to achieve better communication with parents and better reporting on pupil progress.

The purpose of this document is to establish a direction for continuous assessment of students by providing answers to a number of questions pertaining to its implementation. The Framework for National Assessment will form a basis for the assessment of pupils from grade 1 to 10 in Swaziland schools, from 2000 onwards. Assessment of pupils will be in the form of school-based continuous assessment with National tests at grades 4, 7, and 10. The Exams Council of Swaziland will administer the national tests.

Assessment will occur at four levels:

a) In – classroom: objective tests developed, administered and scored by the teacher for instructional and remedial purposes.

b) Term Tests: developed, administered and scored by the teacher for instructional and remedial purposes.

c) Annual tests: developed, administered and scored by the teachers recorded and used by to monitor the effectiveness of the system and validate term test scores.

d) National tests: at grades 4, 7, and 10 developed by the Examinations Council, administered by teachers under the supervision of head teachers, scored by the teachers and submitted to the Exams Council for moderation at the end of the year. These classes will not write the normal annual tests. The purpose of these National tests is to provide National checkpoints. See National Assessment Framework attached. (Annex 2).

2.2 Changing and adapting educational content.

Around the 1980s or so, criticism of formal education continued to increase, that the education system was not bringing about the necessary changes in the behaviour of and attitudes of learners, graduates and push-outs at all levels have had increasing difficulty in finding jobs they expect. Concern about the relevance and quality of education in Swaziland and its role in the country’s future development, led to the establishment of the National Education Review Commission (NERCOM), in 1984.
The NERCOM concentrated on the review of the entire education system, from preschool, primary, secondary, teacher education, adult and non-formal education, special and tertiary education. This Review Commission also went to the different sections of society as the previous Commission did and came up with a number of recommendations based on the input of Swazi citizens and stakeholders, like the business community, the traditional structures at Tinkhundla, parents, teachers, parliamentarians, etc. The report suggested among others:

♦ All primary children benefit from a general, diversified curriculum and prolonged schooling, 10 years Basic education structure proposed)to better prepare them to make appropriate choices in life, the world of work and for pursuing further studies;
♦ Pupils be provided with an education that will better prepare them to participate more fully in industrial, agricultural and community development, by introducing practical subjects like technological, vocational, home economics and agricultural studies at primary and secondary levels.
♦ Proposed a new education structure that would cater for children of different talents and aptitudes, offering suitable choices of academic and vocational courses;
♦ Provision to be made for the introduction of continuous assessment in all schools. This will require the training of teachers in the relevant techniques, preparation of relevant materials and documentation, for ensuring the success of the innovation. Standardised procedure will aim at maintaining high standards throughout the country.
♦ At the end of the primary level, the Swaziland Primary exam Certificate (SPC) awarded will be based on the pupil’s CA record and his performance in the national SPC exam administered at the end of the 7th. Year.
♦ At the secondary level, the MOE develop a coherent policy for strengthening and expanding of practical subjects (Agriculture, Home economics, Technical, Business and entrepreneurial skills, taking into consideration the regional distribution of facilities, adaptation of curricula, rationalization of resources, teacher training and other related factors. MOE to introduce Prevocational subjects as an alternative or equivalent to O’Level in upper secondary;
♦ Practical arts to be strengthened by providing Prevocational education facilities at high schools
♦ Examinations at the end of secondary be equivalent to internationally acceptable levels of proficiency
♦ The exams be adapted to a diversified O’Level type syllabus with a balanced continuous assessment and final exam procedures.
♦ Teacher training be streamlined with the ongoing innovations etc

Cabinet approved these and the MOE committed itself to these reforms in the 5th. National Development Plan, 1989-1992.

From these recommendations educational programmes were put in place:
1) Curriculum be diversified to increase choices in non-academic subjects;
2) A programme of continuous assessment be introduced to monitor the progress of every child;
3) Supervision in schools must be strengthened.
There are many challenges facing the MOE regarding Continuous Assessment (CA). It is not popular with teachers who are not committed to teaching. Teaching is hard work, and improved teaching means that teachers have to put more effort.

Teachers want government to reduce class sizes and provide certain equipment such as duplicators and photocopiers in order to carry out CA effectively. There seems to be a great need for research in this area to come up with possible solutions. Head teachers need more training on CA. It is obvious that more training and professional support is still needed to back teachers where they need help. Pre-service teacher training is one area that still lags behind in enhancing the implementation process. Teacher Training still produces teachers who do not have the CA skills.

About the same time, feasibility studies had been started to see to the implementation of the diversification of the secondary curriculum with the view to overcoming some of the constraints identified by the Commission. Some of these constraints are

♦ over-age students and high repetition rates
♦ inadequate curriculum diversification and lack of alternatives for students not academically oriented
♦ inadequate preparation either for pursuing further studies or the world of work
♦ inadequate provision for maintenance of school facilities and for pedagogical and supporting materials;
♦ qualifications of teachers and weak motivation; and the need for training of headmasters in school management.

The Ministry through the development of the policy in 1999 was trying to institutionalise means to address these problems. It is hoped that through continuous review the policy will facilitate the ultimate goal, which is human development.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

