CHAPTER-III

POLICIES ON EDUCATION OF TIBETAN REFUGEES

Education in Tibet

This chapter explores the pre-migration conditions of education in pre-1959 and present day Tibet. It is an analysis of the influence of conditions in Tibet upon the system of education established for Tibetan refugees in India and the major policies and shifts in them.

Studies indicate that education in Tibet, prior to its occupation in 1951, was largely religious and monastic in nature. It was based on the monastic education prevalent in India in the sixth century A.D. The monasteries were the centres of Tibetan religion and culture. The lamas (high priests) were “elaborating and interpreting the collective myths, symbols and memories, which provided the axis of identification for successive generations of the community” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:79). The Tibetan system of education had therefore, developed from the religious system of education and continues to largely do so in exile and also partly in today’s Tibet. Education was the monopoly of monasteries, which provided training for the elite to lead the country and for ecclesiastical careers. Secular education was largely non-existent as indicated in earlier works by Sir Charles Bell, for instance, who referred to secular education being “meagre1 in Tibet” (Bell 1968:201).

The aim of education was very different from a modern system with “education in Tibet being mainly based on Buddhism”, and the purpose being “to guide its students towards enlightenment” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:79). “The entire educational thought was, it seems, “directed towards the workings of the mind rather than towards the external world”. “Profane reasons” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:79) for entering a monastery or a school, though, have also been referred to. As scholarly advancement was purely based on merit, the monasteries constituted the main prospect for upward social mobility.

1 “The only schools in Central Tibet kept up by the government are two in Lhasa, namely, the Peak School (Tse-Lap-Tra) for teaching boys and youths who intend to become ecclesiastical officials and the Finance Office (Tsi-Kang) for those who intend to become language officials” (Bell 1968:205).
The highest leaders in Tibet were, it seems, incarnated *lamas* who were usually discovered in peasant families. If a family had more than one son, one of them would frequently become the future head of the household and inherit the family’s land while the other would become a monk (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:79). A very large percentage of the male population became monks and received at least a basic schooling, which was a pre-requisite for them in order to conduct their religious and secular services (Michael 1982:137).

For the ordinary Tibetan, education was not entirely dependant upon literacy. As in other pre-modern societies, Tibetans learned about their culture and history “through spectacles and performances, religious processions, festivals and dances” (Michael 1982:152). These were considered as “an education in the tenets and mythology of the Buddhist faith” for both dancers and participants. Education was also received through “constant contact with monks and nuns and through religious leadership” (Michael 1982:152). To Tibetans, “the ideal was the educated man (*tam yig tsi sum*)” and a learned man was one who “combined the oral tradition with knowledge of literature (i.e. religious texts) and mathematics” (Michael 1982:155). It is therefore assumed that as many as “half of the people of pre-modern Tibet” had, at least, a rudimentary knowledge of how to read and write, enough to read religious texts and popular stories and thus, “could participate to a certain degree in the literary tradition of their country” (Michael 1982:139).

As mentioned above, there was, however, a lack of adequate ‘secular’ schooling facilities for people in Tibet. Only the children of the aristocracy, the urban middle classes, the upper social levels of the rural communities had access to secular education in private schools (Michael 1982:139). Private tuitions were also held for children of the elite classes, with children of retainers and of the peasants living nearby, sometimes joining in (Bell 1968:205). Children of a few feudal landlords were also lucky in terms of getting modern, secular education from Christian missionary schools in Darjeeling, India (Alam 2000:186).

Children of the commoners, it seems, received education at home or in the communities through “private teaching by monks or nuns or relatives or other religious teachers” (Michael 1982:137). Norbu observes, “Nobody went to a teacher unless he had
a specific use for education. The aristocrat’s sons were educated because they had to inherit their father’s position. The leading trolpas educated their children because they would be involved in constant transactions with the government. And since the petty tradesmen in Sakya, were compelled to sell their goods on credit, they needed someone to scribble notes” (Norbu 1997: 115).

Early attempts to modernize the system of education were made by the 13th Dalai Lama with his opening an English school for boys in 1923. However, the school was closed in 1929, it seems, due to pressure from monasteries that argued that “an English type of education would harm Tibetan religion and culture” (Dhondup cited in Tsering 2004:21). In 1944, another English school was opened again in Shigatse, but survived for only five months for the same reasons. Educational policies in Tibet were, thus, viewed first and foremost in the light of their bearing on the well-being of religion, which provided the “philosophical and theoretical foundation for the educational system” (Karan 1976:71).

On May 23,1951, sometime after China invaded Tibet, representatives of the Tibetan government signed a 17-Point Agreement with the Chinese leaders in Beijing. The agreement, stated that, “spoken and written language and the school education of the Tibetan nationality shall be developed step by step in accordance with the actual condition in Tibet” (Tsering 2004:21). Initially, it seems, the Chinese took a friendly stance towards Tibetans and allowed the monasteries to retain their privilege of being the main educational institutions. Gradually, however, Chinese government schools replaced traditional Tibetan schools. During the 1950s, it is claimed that the Chinese, made changes in the Tibetan curriculum by introducing various subjects to promote a “communist, propagandist education” (Tsering 2004:21) (see box).

“Teachers in the classroom used even institutional examples, containing propaganda and representing a Communist ideology”. The Mathematics teachers would give such examples as, “I have five eggs. I offer three to the People’s Liberation Army. How many have I left?” (Norbu cited in Tsering 2004:21).

The secular system of education introduced by the Chinese in Tibet, also received resentment from the monks and the nobility and it was interpreted as a “curriculum
designed to destroy the belief of young Tibetans in their own culture” (Burman 1979:99). The idea of secular education was considered “foreign” and therefore, “unacceptable to a large number of Tibetans”. Parents, also “did not like the idea” of sending their children to educational institutions in China, which the programme entailed (Burman 1979:99). Despite these resentments, during the late 1950s and particularly after the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959, large-scale expansion of secular education took place in Tibet. This further led to a decline in the traditional centers of learning - the monasteries (Karan 1976:71).

Studies observe that the direction and content of education in Tibet have, over the years, altered with changes of power in China, and that it has switched between “quality and quantity depending upon who was in power and their beliefs” (Tsering 2004:21). In 1959, during Mao Zedong’s ‘Great Leap Forward’ campaign, it seems the stress was on “quantity” which led to the starting of a number of “community schools” maintained mainly by rural people. In the early 1960s, proponents of the “quality” strategy apparently “abruptly closed many of these community schools” (Tsering 2004:21).

Diverse Views: Studies also refer to the Chinese government’s claims, on the other hand, to have made unprecedented progress in the field of education in Tibet since 1951. According to statistics of the Chinese government, by 2000, “There were 985 primary schools, 111 secondary schools with 78,529 pupils, 100 Middle schools with 71,710 pupils, and 4 Institutes of Higher Learning with 6,793 pupils” (Tsering 2004:22).

In contrast there are studies, which claim that only limited secondary school education facilities are available to Tibetan children in Tibet. It has been noted that in 1984, the Chinese government started separate primary schools for Tibetans (with Tibetan as medium of instruction) and for Chinese children (with Chinese as medium of instruction). In these Tibetan primary schools, Chinese language is taught for two years - in grades three and four. At the end of the primary education, both Chinese and Tibetan students are required to take an entrance examination to get into Chinese-language secondary schools. Tibetan children who have received no Chinese teaching until the age of nine or ten are, therefore, required to compete for entrance to secondary school in Chinese against children whose mother tongue is the Chinese language. Thus, most Tibetan children, it seems, fail to gain access to education beyond the primary level (Bass
Reference can also be made to a pilot project that was started to experiment with the possible provision of secondary education in the Tibetan medium for a few schools in different regions of Tibet, but was ended in 1995 (Tsering 2004:21).

Studies throw light on the fact that education available to Tibetans in Tibet is "largely discriminatory" in nature and is "effectively streaming out" many Tibetan children (http://www.Tibet.com/govt/edu.html). A report presented at the UN Commission on Human Rights on the right to education, referred to the low literacy rate in the TAR at 39.5 per cent. The report questioned the Ministry of Education (of PRC) whether one reason for the low literacy rate was the fact that "the literacy test was in Tibetan, while Mandarin is used in political, economic and social life" (Tomasevski cited in Tibetan Review 2004:13) in the region. Debunking China's claim as a "consistent respecter and defender of children's rights", the report says that, "contrary to China's human rights obligations, religious education remains prohibited in both public and private educational institutions" and "children's rights in education have yet to be recognised" (Tomasevski cited in Tibetan Review 2004:13).

Tibetan language in Tibet, therefore, seems to be also "discouraged in China both as a deliberate policy and as a result of the development policy" (Thinley 2004:22). Though elementary schools, still teach in Tibetan, "children begin learning Chinese by the third grade, when they reach middle school, Chinese becomes the main language of instruction". There is, therefore, "little incentive for students to concentrate on Tibetan because it is Chinese that will win them admission to college or good jobs in the government" (Thinley 2004:22) (see box).

A 17-year-old boy called Qiangjiu in Tsetang, China's third largest city says, "I use Tibetan at home, but I use Chinese with my friends. My teacher said, that's the best way. Now my Chinese is better than my Tibetan. That's the future" (cited by Thinley 2004:22).

Interviews with six students (born in Tibet, studied in Tibetan schools in India) in the study alongwith other research studies also highlight the desire for education in Tibetan schools in India. Studying in these schools emerges as a major reason for children to make hazardous trips from Tibet to India, sometimes accompanied by their
parents/elders. Tibetan schools in India are preferred as they are regarded as providing good quality, free-of-cost education, which enables them to preserve their Tibetanness (deemed to be under threat in Tibet under Chinese occupation). It is therefore, “with the hope of receiving a proper Tibetan education at schools in exile in India that minor children\(^2\) risk their lives crossing the treacherous Himalayas every year” (TCHRD report 2004:87). The “primary hope to undertake such risky journey is said to be “to get enrolled in exile schools and receive broad-based modern education”. Most are sent by parents “by paying guides and with trusted relatives or even strangers to accompany”. The “sheer lack of viable education, and discrimination”, it is observed, is the “driving force behind Tibetan parents making the choice to send their children to schools in India” (TCHRD report 2004:87). There is also the desire to seek a private audience with The Dalai Lama and to seek his blessings (something not possible in present-day Tibet). Tsering suggests that since the late 1990s, the Chinese government’s “educational goal has been to criticize the Tibetan culture and tradition, religion, and the Dalai Lama” (Tsering 2004:22). These are fundamental reasons, it seems, why many Tibetans risk their lives and jobs in Tibet to send their children all the way to India to enrol in educational facilities run by the exile Tibetan community.

Apart from the marginalization of Tibetan language in the TAR, a study by Lafitte (1999) refers to Tibetan school students, being taught a ‘Tibetan’ history, which labels them as “backward”, “barbaric” and “liberated” by China, which makes them feel “ashamed” of both their background and identity. Lafitte throws light upon the weaknesses of the education facilities available to Tibetan children in TAR, observing that a better system (of education) with better facilities are available to Tibetan refugees in exile, along with the chance to preserve their language and culture (see box).

\(^2\) “Children under the age of 18 constitute a majority of the Tibetans seeking asylum in India every year. In 2002, 715 children under the age of eighteen- mostly in the age group of seven to thirteen arrived at the Tibetan Reception Centre in Dharamsala, North India. Since the early 1980s well over 7,000 children have risked everything to journey across the Himalayas in the hope that they will receive education in exile that they have been denied back home: health, education and a sense of security and well-being”. “There are many instances of death, losing limbs by frostbite, drowning while trying to cross swift rivers, losing eyesight and immense psychological and emotional trauma on children from parting with their parents as they risk their life by crossing the treacherous and sometimes fatal journey across the Himalayas” (TCHRD report 2004:88).
“To a foreign visitor, accustomed to meeting highly educated Tibetans in the West and in India, the absence of a class of educated Tibetans in Tibet is more of a puzzle. Seeing Tibetan children eat Tsampa gruel three times a day for want of anything more nutritious offers a clue. Seeing cold concrete rooms in which children of the nomads sleep crammed head to toe is another clue. Entering the classrooms where children sit on bricks for want of stools or desks says much. Gradually a picture emerges. These are schools for failure. Being consciously designed to foster failure they could hardly be improved upon” (Lafitte 1999:14).

Lafitte likens the situation of Tibetan children in TAR to that of Black Americans in the US in the 1960s stating how discrimination and stigma breed failure, with the latter being told at every turn that they were “backward, lazy, incompetent and doomed to remain at the bottom” (Lafitte 1999:14). Lafitte further observes that, “in a system which rewards success with suspicion and failure as confirmation of the inherent stupidity and backwardness of Tibetans as a race, it is not surprising that young Tibetans increasing take the easier option of stupidity. They fail to learn, fail to become literate in any language, and if the medium of instruction is Chinese, they may well fail to have any Tibetan enrolment at all. In some areas, even spoken Tibetan is disappearing. The Tibetan language has lost all utility when one is a lone blade of grass in a desert of Chinese and an insistence on maintaining the language is akin to bringing down a curse on oneself” (Lafitte 1999:14). Experiences of students, who came to India for their school education in Tibetan schools, can also be mentioned in this regard (see box).

A 19-year-old girl from TAR says “I couldn’t understand Chinese well enough to learn another subject through it, so I had to keep asking the teacher for help again and again. Many of the Tibetans in the class were like me, and when we didn’t understand the teacher; the Chinese students would laugh and call us ‘stupid Tibetans’ and ‘dirty Tibetans’. Pretty soon, we gave up asking for help, and just sat there, waiting to fail. It was useless”. Another girl after escaping to India says, “From class three, mathematics was taught in Chinese. I didn’t understand anything the Chinese teacher said, and so could only sit idle in the class and wait for the lesson to end. I used to fail all my Math tests, but my teacher didn’t care that I couldn’t understand Chinese. She said it was because I was stupid” (TCHRD report 2004:46).

Studies refer to “deep-rooted feelings of prejudice that the Chinese government harbours against the Tibetans”, regarding Tibetans as “intrinsically deviant”, that
prevents the latter from improving their position in society. The Chinese government is also said to have made a “deliberate effort at erasing Tibetan culture, history and identity from the school curriculum in Tibet” (Lafitte 1999:17). Lafitte observes that, “because Tibetans are outsiders, whose sole historic task is to prove themselves worthy of being admitted to the inside, Tibetan history, culture and identity are seen as trivia to be ignored by the Chinese curriculum”. He says that “from primary schools to universities, Tibetan history and identity are ignored”. Children grow up with the idea that China “rescued Tibet from feudalism and slavery” and has “benevolently uplifted the ignorant so that they can begin to climb the evolutionary ladder towards the status of the Han, who are the apex of evolutionary progress” (Lafitte 1999:17).

China’s higher educational policies in valuing the dominant Chinese language as “marketable” and “modern” and marginalization of Tibetan language are also referred to (Clothey 2005: 409). Clothey explores China’s educational policies for ethnic minorities in the Central University for Nationalities (CUN) in Beijing. Clothey observes, “language is important as long as it is perceived as important to people whose ethnic or national identity it represents, and education can play an important role in legitimating that language. As long as dominant power structures are maintained within the status quo, however, such possibilities remain remote” (Clothey 2005:409). Elaborating upon the situation at CUN, she says that at CUN, language is viewed as “an important marker of ethnic boundaries”, yet those “students with better Chinese language skills are considered as being more marketable and more modern”. By tracking students according to educational background (i.e by the language of instruction used in the schools), the university, it seems, “reproduces a social structure that values the language of the dominant culture, making it more difficult for minority students who lack this linguistic competence or cultural capital upon entering the university to get good (or any) jobs after graduation”. Despite Tibetan language being less ‘marketable’ than Chinese language, Clothey also refers to the desire of the minority students to continue to value their own language for cultural preservation, despite the bleak scenario. “It is clear that minority students at CUN continue to value learning and using their native languages as important to preserving their cultural heritage”, she adds (Clothey 2005:408).
As another scholar puts it, "...the diversity that exists among China’s ethnic minority population does not appear to be fully reflected in the content of schooling, even though minority languages are emphasized in many regions" (Postiglione cited in Mackerras 2003:132). In other words, Mackerras observes, "there are limits to the degree of autonomy allowed or of identity encouraged. The fact is that the primary aim of education for the CCP is to integrate and modernise the country on the basis of a socialist ideology" (Mackerras 2003:133).

According to the Tibetan Government in Exile, the entire emphasis of the education policy of the Chinese government in the Tibet lies in producing Tibetan students who are “loyal to their motherland” and not to The Dalai Lama. Reference is made to a 1994 speech in this regard that says that in Tibet, “The success of education does not lie in the number of diplomas issued to graduates from universities, colleges... and secondary schools. It lies, in the final analyses, in whether our graduating students are opposed to or turn their hearts to the Dalai (Lama) Clique and in whether they are loyal to or do not care about our great motherland and the great socialist cause” (Chen Kuiyuan cited in Tsering 2004:21).

The situation of Tibetan children’s education in Tibet is regarded as very bleak with “lack of access to proper health and education; indoctrination through Chinese medium of instruction and content of the curriculum including Chinese history, politics and culture; various forms of discrimination suffered by native Tibetan children such as having to study in inferior schools with least required infrastructure or having to pay higher fees, or no access to schools” (TCHRD report 2004:87). It is observed that Tibetan children in Tibet are caught up with, “a cruel choice of either giving up the right to education or abandoning their Tibetan identity” (TCHRD report 2004:87).

According to Ngodup Tsering, “The purpose of Tibetan education in exile is to maintain Tibetan identity, culture and race. This means to preserve all that the Chinese have destroyed. We could have sent the children to Indian schools or aboard, but then 50,000 Tibetans would have been lost. Hence, it wouldn’t have been any point escaping” (Ngodup 1993:101). These words seem to illustrate the general feelings of the Tibetan educational staff, parents and pupils in India where the “fear of extinction” seems to act as a strong motivation for education.
It is observed that the “destruction of the culture in Tibet, the death of possibly more than a million Tibetans due to the occupation, the continuous reports of forced sterilizations, the immigration of large numbers of Chinese into Tibet, all foster the conviction among the refugees that their survival as a people, culturally and physically is threatened” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:101). Also, many of the Tibetans believe that the occupation of Tibet was due to their ignorance and lack of ‘modern’ education. It is observed that teachers in Tibetan schools in India, for this reason, keep telling the pupils: “You have to learn. You are the future of Tibet!” (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993:101).

It is therefore in the context of the above background and pre-migration conditions that the education of Tibetan refugees in India needs to be looked at. Post-migration circumstances and educational situation of Tibetan refugees need to be analysed in terms of the support provided by the host government, India and international organizations and the exile government’s efforts to create an education system in exile. This becomes important in the light of the fact that the events taking place in present-day TAR, and particularly the Chinese education system, seem to provide motivation for education of Tibetans in India along with fuelling and strengthening Tibetan nationalism in exile. The next section deals with policies on education of Tibetan refugees in India.

**Education in India**

The policies and programmes framed for education of Tibetan children aim, most importantly, at preserving their Tibetan culture, language, history and identity deemed to be under threat of extinction in Tibet, as stated in the above section. A whole new generation of Tibetan youth is being educated and fostered in exile guided by the belief, it seems, that they will one day, be at the helm of affairs in ‘free’ Tibet.

Rehabilitation of children was a major area of concern for the Dalai Lama after his flight to India, as mentioned in the second chapter. This concern is reflected in his autobiography, which he wrote in 1961 saying, “The children have been a special anxiety to me, there are over five thousand of them under eighteen. It is even harder for children than for adults to be uprooted and taken suddenly to an entirely different environment, and many of them died in the early days, from the change of food and climate” (cited in Saklani 1984:239). The Dalai Lama took under his protection orphaned children, as well
as those whose parents, were still living in temporary camps and were not in a position to look after their children.

Education in exile seems to have brought about a complete changeover from what it used to be in Tibet, before the exodus in 1959. Distinction between “secular” schools providing “secular” education to children from all classes and backgrounds along with monasteries providing monastic and religious education to monks and nuns has emerged as one of the major success stories of the Tibetan community in India. According to Chhodak, education in exile has been “extremely radical in the light of what the old Tibet used to offer” (Chhodak 1981: 165).

The Tibetan schools were established with very high aspirations and expectations. The widespread educational program took definite shape in 1960 when The Dalai Lama appealed to the Government of India for help to educate Tibetans in India. The interest and commitment of the then Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru towards the bringing up of Tibetan children well-steeped in their language, culture and tradition was an important factor which led to the establishment of Central Schools for Tibetan children. The gratitude Tibetans feel for this assistance rendered by the Government of India is expressed as “one of the biggest investments she (India) has made in the Tibetan refugees” and that this “unprecedented generosity has to be appreciated all the more because India is not without her economic problems” (Norbu cited in Chimni 2000: 496) (see box).

"Over the years the people and the Government of India have given us Tibetans tremendous support particularly in the field of education. They gave us financial assistance, found us buildings and provided dedicated and experienced Indian teachers. In addition we received generous help from many foreign relief organizations. To all these friends, I offer my deepest thanks. I cannot adequately express the gratitude I feel for the many who have so freely devoted their lives to helping my people often in poor conditions and in remote areas” (The Dalai Lama cited in http://www.Tibet.com/govt/edu.html).

Vision and Aims: The education policy for Tibetan children in exile, has since the beginning, been guided by the Dalai Lama’s vision of education that is based on the belief that children are the main source of hope for a future Tibet. In his autobiography, he specially highlighted the important role that these generations would play in the future survival of the Tibetan civilization saying, “...in the next generation, the five thousand
children in India may be very important people, a nucleus to preserve the heritage of peaceful religion, tradition and culture which is being wiped out in Tibet” (cited in Saklani 1984:239). Regarded as the “nucleus” for the preservation of Tibetan culture, religion and tradition, there has been much concern that younger generations do not grow up into “a culturally alienated human flotsam” (Saklani 1984:239) as has apparently happened with other immigrant groups aboard. The Dalai Lama also refers to conversations with Pundit Nehru, with the latter stressing upon the importance of bringing up children “with a thorough knowledge of their own history and culture” along with their being “conversant with the ways of the modern world” (http://www.tcewf.org). In their institutional patterns, it is observed that the Tibetan leadership has also been guided by “modern ideas of child psychology” along with “traditional Tibetan modes of rearing and training their children” (Saklani 1984:239).

The Dalai Lama also stressed that the “basic purpose of education is to broaden and cultivate the mind through a wide variety of learning’s”. This system, he observed, has proved effective in maintaining “a fairly high moral and intellectual standard amongst Tibetans, which was established many centuries ago”. Its defect, he recognized, as the fact that it “does not consider scientific and technological education” (The Dalai Lama cited in Chhodak 1981:55). It was this ‘defect’ that the new system of education in exile sought to rectify through ‘balanced education’.

The aim of these schools in exile was, therefore, to provide a “balanced education”. The Dalai Lama (1962) emphasized the importance of enabling Tibetan children to learn their own rich culture, history, language and traditions while at the same time imparting to them a modern, scientific education. He wanted them “to remain Tibetan” while functioning properly in today’s world. “Tradition” here, may be seen as encompassing ways and values in Tibet prior to 1959. “Modern” may be used interchangeably as “scientific”, “western” and “21st century education” (Chhodak 1981:25). Don Taylor (1969) also suggests that there are “three goals” for Tibetan schools, primarily, to “train the refugee for his technical and world role”; “for the inevitable acculturation that must occur for a Tibetan in India” and for the “successful retention of Tibetan culture and identity within the Indian scene” (Taylor cited in Chhodak 1981:39).
Inherent contradictions in the notions of “balanced education” has however been pointed out. According to Chhodak, these contradictions exist in terms of an “ideological problem” in the very nature of education for refugees. The educational process, Chhodak notes, seeks primarily “to conserve and preserve dominant ideologies, customs, laws and institutions of society and thus presumes stability”. On the other hand, “a refugee is an epitome of the transitional man, a man whose roots have been torn from the soil of his traditional life and a man who confronts contradictory ideologies, customs, laws, institutions and cultures” (Chhodak 1981:39). It is observed that the need to foster new thinking and programs while maintaining and preserving the culture, tradition and learning of the old is “integral” to the refugee’s life. Contradictions, however, are said to arise as refugees “never intend to stay in the host country, they must preserve the old and since they never know when they will return to the motherland, they must embrace the new” (Chhodak 1981:39).

Despite these apparent ‘contradictions’ in the notion of ‘balanced education’, the Tibetan refugee schools were established with far-seeking goals. There has been a conscious attempt to develop an education system in exile that is both ‘Tibetan’ and ‘Modern’. The “progress” made towards fulfilling the (educational) needs of Tibetan children is also said to be “something that Tibetans today are proud of” (http://www.tcewf.org/). The Tibetan Government in Exile and it’s Department of Education, aided by the Central government as also by a host of international aid agencies has over the years been able to claim to achieve, it seems, “almost universal literacy amongst the younger generations, when only 30 years ago it had a very low literacy rate” (www.tibet.com/govt/edu.html). The enrollment rate of children in Tibetan schools is said to be almost 80 percent. The Website of ‘The Office of Tibet’, the official agency of The Dalai Lama in London says, “many students have also been able to go beyond school to study at universities, colleges and vocational training centers. This represents one of the greatest achievements of the refugee community to education and the generosity of the Government of India, donors such as Kinderdorf International, and many individuals”(www.tibet.com/govt/edu.html). Access to education (particularly primary and secondary) is no longer seen as a problem, except for a minority of Tibetan refugee children residing in remote areas of the country. Attempts are also being made
with the setting up of schools or construction of hostels providing accommodation to students in such areas.

With a supportive host government in India, the Tibetan leadership has been able to provide children with an education in their mother tongue that seeks to preserve their language, culture and identity, something that is not available to Tibetan children in even the TAR today.

**Initial problems:** An exploration of the annual reports of CTSA, beginning from the early 1960s, however, also reveal the initial problems that were faced with the establishment of the Tibetan schools in India. These problems were of the following nature:

The change of schooling system from a monastic education to ‘secular’ schooling, created problems, for instance, in terms of need for procuring suitable reading materials, textbooks and reference books (CTSA 1963:17). Communication problems, also, it seems, arose between Tibetan and Indian teachers due to different languages spoken by them resulting in limited interaction with each other. Nowak regards the issue of language as having led to “unanimously strong feelings” (Nowak 1978:61) amongst the Tibetan community against Indian teachers and the desire for the latter to be replaced by qualified Tibetan teachers. These problems also seem to have existed amongst Tibetan and Indian children in schools. It was realized that it was necessary to device means of effective communication and attempts were made for doing this (CTSA report 1963:17).

In more recent years, according to respondents in the study, communication problems seem to continue to exist, to a certain extent, due to lack of Tibetan language skills amongst Indian teachers, who still constitute a minority in Tibetan schools. Certain staff motivation policies seem to have been devised, especially with regard to Indian teachers in CTSA schools where special incentives (cash) are provided to Indian staff passing an exam in Tibetan language proficiency conducted by the DOE, CTA.

Other problems also seem to have existed in the past with regard to the Indian teachers “lack of commitment” in Tibetan schools, because they were not teaching “their

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3 It was felt that Tibetan teachers needed to be encouraged to pick up elements of English and Hindi. The Indian teachers, on the other hand, had to make an extra effort to learn Tibetan language, at least a working vocabulary of 250 words, phrases and short sentences. The headmasters of different schools were asked to prepare lists of essential words, first in English, which could then be translated into Tibetan. These lists were then compared and a list of common words finally prepared and circulated (CTSA report 1963:17).
own”. There was even an added implication that “sincere interest in the children’s educational programme should perhaps not even be expected of them” (Nowak 1978:61).

Interviews with Indian teachers in a Tibetan school (Upper TCV School, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh) in the present study, however, reflected congenial relationships between teachers and students from the two communities. Interviews were held with (2) Indian teachers in the school. There were five other Indian teachers - Physics (2), Chemistry (1), English (1) and Maths (1) in the school. These interviews reflected no ill feelings between the two communities. They also reflected a certain degree of comfort level the teachers felt in working in such schools. An Indian teacher teaching Mathematics to class IX said, “There is no language problem”. He teaches in English and said that students “understand” him. In fact, he reiterated that he had earlier been a contract teacher in a Kendriya Vidyalaya school, teaching Maths to classes 9th and 10th and that the “Indian students there had problems understanding Maths, these students do not”. The atmosphere of the Tibetan school is “good”, “we do not face any problems here”, he added (IT1, T.S, H.P, 2006). Another teacher who has been teaching Mathematics to classes (IX-XI) in this school since the past 9 years said that she felt “quite comfortable” (IT2, T.S, H.P, 2006) teaching Tibetan students.

Educational Policies

Tibetan children in India attend three categories of schools in India: a) Tibetan Monastic Schools b) Non-Tibetan Schools c) Tibetan Secular Schools. The focus of the study is: Tibetan secular schools and non-Tibetan schools. Along with the “secular” system of education, there is also the traditional Buddhist education that has been re-established in exile to preserve traditional, religious learning based on Tibetan Buddhism, as mentioned above. In the Tibetan monasteries, the monks may acquire a complete education from basic knowledge such as: reading, writing, mathematics and English up to the geshe examination, i.e. the religious counterpart of the PH.D.

Non-Tibetan Schools includes convent and Indian public schools. Tibetan students also attend such schools in the country. Educational experiences of such students will be discussed in the fourth chapter. There are 81 Tibetan (“secular”) schools in India,
The Tibetan school network has a total enrolment of about 27,865 students (DOE, CTA report 2004:8).

Tibetan Schools in India can be divided into three major categories on the basis of the institution which funds and administers them: i) CTSA-run schools and ii) DOE-run schools iii) Autonomous agencies (TCV, THF, Others). The main sources of the funds for the educational expenditures are: the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Government of India, parents, individual donors and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government of India supports the education of Tibetan children by funding the CTSA schools expenditure. This is a substantial contribution considering that the CTSA schools enrol 33.18% of the entire student population in the Tibetan school network. The TCV, THF and the STSA schools rely on contributions from foreign individuals and NGOs more than the Government of India. Over the years an increasing number of Tibetan parents also seem to have contributed, according to their means, towards the education of their children.

The Government of India established the Tibetan Schools Society (now called the Central Tibetan Schools Administration or CTSA) in 1961 and Central Schools for Tibetans were set up all over the country, after discussions between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and The Dalai Lama. CTSA is an autonomous body under the MHRD India, to manage and assist schools in India for the education of children of the Tibetan refugees. The Joint Secretary (Secondary Education) MHRD, Government of India, is the Chairman. The administration includes members from MHRD, ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and Central Tibetan Administration of The Dalai Lama, Dharamsala (CTSA Report 2004:115).

This initiative of the Government of India to establish a separate system of education for the Tibetan refugees in India along with making efforts for the preservation of the refugee group’s language, culture and identity, acquires immense significance due to the fact that the Government does not grant concessions of a similar kind to other refugee groups in the country. The extent of the Government’s involvement in the education of this refugee group is reflected from the fact that in the year 1996, 11 million
US dollars, i.e. around 480 million Indian rupees were apparently spent on educating Tibetan refugee children in exile (Dhondup cited in www.tcewf.com).

a) Central Tibetan Schools (CTS): The Government of India’s outlook and rationale behind policies on education for Tibetans in the early 1960s is highlighted in the annual reports of CTSA. The rationale of the Central Tibetan Schools (CTS) is said to be to provide “good education” based upon “modern principles” to Tibetan children who, when educated would provide “enlightened leadership” to their own peoples. It is to provide an education that would enable children “to appreciate their own cultural heritage, religion and culture and also appreciate the culture of their surroundings”. The schools aim to enable children to acquire “basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, which would be the basis of higher education”. Lastly, the schools aim to make the children “aware of the technological age and its implications” and to be “equipped for vocation and trade in order to enable them to settle in life” (CTSA report 1963: 17).

The objectives of CTSA are “to establish and carry out the administration and management of the Central School for Tibetans in India for the education and training of Tibetan children; to control and supervise education, discipline, board and lodging, health and hygiene and general progress of the students and staff in CTSA schools; to get affiliation of the schools with any association, society or body which conducts public examinations for the purpose of preparing the students for such examination; to build, construct and maintain hostels, schools or other buildings and to provide and equip the same for the use to which each building is to be put up to”. It’s objectives are also to “give loans, scholarships, free-ships, prizes, and monetary and other assistance to the students”; to also “start, conduct, print, publish and exhibit magazines, periodicals, and newspapers, pamphlets that may be considered desirable for the promotion of the objects of the administration” and “to preserve and promote Tibetan culture, heritage and tradition” (CTSA report 2004:110).

Alongwith the Government of India, the Tibetan Government in Exile and its Department of Education (DOE) also acts as a major body looking after the education and welfare of Tibetan children in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Its policies on education have been analysed below:
b) DOE, CTA Schools: The Department of Education (DOE), Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is one of the seven major departments of the Central Tibetan Administration of the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala, India, established in 1960. The DOE is the apex body responsible for providing support for the educational and welfare needs of all Tibetan students in 81 Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Comprised of both residential and day schools, they range from the pre-primary to the senior secondary level. There are, however, only 2 senior secondary day schools in India. By necessity, these schools follow the education system of the country in which they are located but try to incorporate traditional elements, values and symbols into this education system.

Objectives of DOE, CTA are to “oversee the educational needs and welfare of the Tibetan children in exile; to ensure that primary education is available for every Tibetan refugee child in order to achieve 100% literacy among the Tibetan refugee community; to inculcate values of personal integrity and universal responsibility; to develop modern scientific and technical education and skills, while preserving and promoting Tibetan language and culture; and to address human resource requirements of the Tibetan community in exile and future Tibet” (DOE, CTA report 1998:5).

Organizational functions of DOE, CTA are “To provide young Tibetans with adequate care, appropriate foundation and opportunity for higher study by continually assessing the educational and human resource requirements of the community in exile”. According to these needs, it provides a wide variety of functions which include, “providing administrative guidance in overseeing all Tibetan schools; coordinating sponsorship and scholarship programs and creating new schools; teacher training centres and institutions while improving existing ones; recruiting teachers and arranging in-service trainings for them”. It includes “running an employment and placement bureau and being involved in continual research, planning and development, reviewing and supplying textbooks and other required resource materials; providing necessary buildings and constructions and raising and appropriating funds” (DOE, CTA report 1998:5).

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4 In settlements in India, Nepal and Bhutan, “the most needy children are selected on the recommendation of the local Tibetan settlement office, who is in daily contact with the local community and is responsible for their general welfare. Recommendations, background details and photos of the child are screened for authenticity and are then sent to prospective sponsors” (DOE, CTA report 1998:6).
c) **Autonomous Schools**: The 53 schools in this group comprise of 16 schools administered by the Sambhota Tibetan Schools Administration (STSA), 18 schools funded and administered by the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) Dharamsala, 13 schools under the Snow Lion Foundation (SLF), Nepal, 2 schools funded and administered by the Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF), Mussoorie and 4 other schools that are managed by other Tibetan charitable organizations. All the Tibetan schools are run almost on the same pattern as each other (DOE, CTA, 2004:3). Functions of two of these autonomous schools have been given below (see box).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) Schools</th>
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<td>Founded in 1960 as a nursery for 51 orphaned and destitute refugee children, it is now one of the largest Tibetan school communities “where children grow in a family atmosphere” (Saklani, 1984) and get formal education. They were built with the help of international voluntary organizations on the pattern of Pestalozzi Homes, Europe with small groups of children sharing a home under the care of foster home-parents. TCV today runs and administers 4 children’s villages, 5 residential schools, 8 day schools, 10 day care centres, 5 vocational training centres, 1 teacher training centre and 3 youth hostels. These establishments have a total of around 10038 students. TCV has 3 senior secondary schools with streams in Art, Commerce and Science. TCV supports students with scholarships for higher studies. A head office in TCV Dharamsala, H.P oversees the functioning of the schools (DOE, CTA report 2004:3).</td>
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<tr>
<th>Tibetan Homes Foundation (THF) Schools</th>
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<tr>
<td>Founded in 1962 in Mussoorie, U.P, THF is also modeled on the Pestalozzi Children’s Villages in Europe. It started with 3 homes for 75 kindergarten children, now runs 41 (30 large homes and 11 smaller homes) and a youth hostel with a total enrolment of 1415 students. THF provides education upto senior secondary level with streams in Arts, Commerce and Science and provides scholarships for higher studies. It also runs secondary schools in Rajpur, Dehradun with a current enrolment of 563 students and 2 pre-primary schools. It also runs a vocational training center in Tibetan handicrafts The Khashog (Parliament of CTA) appoints the General Secretary of THF who appoints all staff members and oversees administration of the schools. The Foundation receives financial aid from international voluntary organizations and individual donors (DOE, CTA report 2004:3).</td>
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**Preservation of Language and Culture**: CTSA annual report (2002-2003) states that “one of the broad objectives of the administration is to preserve and promote Tibetan culture, traditions and heritage”. It further notes that CTSA has been making “determined efforts to preserve and promote Tibetan culture and heritage” by conducting various short-term and long-term programmes. Studies also refer to children in the Tibetan homes.
(TCV and THF) being “brought up within the norms of the true Tibetan way of life with the aim to preserve the Tibetan national heritage” (Saklani 1984:240).

CTSA annual reports throw light on the fact that CTSA schools conduct a variety of co-curricular programmes on Tibetan culture viz. Tibetan folk dance, community singing, group songs, plays etc. These programmes of literary and cultural activities are also organized at regional and central levels. Recorded audiocassettes of speeches/community songs for the morning assembly are provided to all schools “to keep the spirit of culture alive” (CTSA report 2004:114). Literature on Tibetan history and culture is also acquired from the Department of Education, CTA with the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Varanasi extending help in conducting courses for Tibetan teachers to promote Tibetan culture and heritage. The DOE, CTA, Dharamsala also deputes experts to give talks on Tibetan culture to trainee teachers during in-service courses conducted by CTSA. Appointment of cultural and spiritual teachers on a long-term basis has also started since 1996 to impart cultural teaching and to promote values in education. It is believed that they have helped children to understand their cultural heritage and have contributed much for the propagation of Tibetan culture, language and tradition. CTSA, Delhi publishes an annual trilingual journal (in English, Tibetan and Hindi) with writings on Tibetan culture, tradition and heritage. Teaching and non-teaching staff as well as students contribute articles, poems etc to the journal (CTSA report 2004:113).

As stated elsewhere, the medium of instruction in all CTSA schools at primary level (from pre-primary to class v is Tibetan. After class v, while English becomes the medium of instruction the teaching of Tibetan continues as a separate subject till class xii. To encourage and motivate Indian teachers to learn Tibetan language there exists a scheme, as mentioned before, wherein teachers who pass the examination in Tibetan language at the lower level, conducted by CTA are granted an incentive award of Rs.2500/- (CTSA report 2004:113). Language labs have also been set up “to improve the spoken language” (CTSA report 1998:229).

The concern of the Government of India to formulate a syllabus that would enable the refugee children to respect their Tibetan culture, religion and history, while at the same time increase their awareness of the modern world is reflected in the annual report
of CTSA (1961-62). This report explains in detail the importance of education and its role in a society's cultural preservation. It also reveals the aim of the CTSA to introduce a syllabus that would "respect and give due credence to the earlier system of education in Tibet with its emphasis upon religious and spiritual education along with its earlier ways of life" (CTSA report 1961:46) (see box).

"Education of Tibetan children in India is a special challenge and must be faced with great care and tenderness of mind. It requires love and sympathy to transplant these uprooted seedlings...Tibet the land of the pious has rich historical and cultural traditions, which must be preserved. It's religion and scriptures must receive special attention and students should be encouraged to study them intensively". A system of education is needed that will "develop qualities of good citizenship and imbibe real patriotism"; to bring about an "emotional integration". Education is required that will "help the children in having pride in their extremely rich heritage and culture and have special reverence for His Holiness The Dalai Lama and their religion and scriptures". It should give them "an awareness of the modern and big world in which they live"(CTSA report 1961:46).

Similar initiatives for the preservation of Tibetan language, culture and religion have also been initiated in other Tibetan schools all over the country. Observance of Tibetan festivals and commemoration of important days in all the Tibetan schools also needs to be mentioned, for instance Losar (Tibetan New Year) etc.

a) Medium of Instruction: Preservation of language in host countries is for most refugees, including Tibetans, a "survival cause", as mentioned before, required for the preservation of their linguistic and cultural heritage. According to the interviewed officials in the Tibetan Government in Exile, for Tibetan refugees, the "prime reason for coming into exile was to preserve their unique linguistic and cultural heritage" (TOI, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). This concern can be seen in the major educational policies related to language and medium of instruction formulated by the Department of Education of the Government in exile over the years:

i) 'Three-Language Formula': This policy of teaching Tibetan, Hindi and English languages to students was initially followed in Tibetan schools, after the establishment of the latter in the early 1960s. English was the medium of instruction, with Tibetan and Hindi being taught as second and third languages respectively. Tibetan language, however, seemed to be the language largely spoken, by Tibetan teachers and
students within Tibetan schools. The use of Tibetan as the language for communication, it seems, had existed “right from the beginning” in Tibetan schools. For classroom situations however, choice of an English medium of instruction was initially made (with Tibetan being taught as Second language and Hindi as Third) “given these people’s newly fired determination to be able to communicate their story to the world” (Nowak 1978:49). The teaching of Hindi, on the other hand, was required as a “practical adaptation” in the host country to communicate with its people during their stay here. The three-language formula continued to be adopted in all the Tibetan schools till 1984.

Interviews with officials and teachers in the study throw light on the fact that a perceived ‘decline’ in the standard of Tibetan language gradually took place. This has been blamed on the faulty educational planning or even the lack of any future planning and dependence upon a ‘foreign’ (Indian) system of education. An official at the DOE, CTA, in an interview said that, the measures taken (to achieve a balance between traditional and modern education and to prevent decline of Tibetan language) did not work as there was “no planning for the future” in exile, based on the thought that they would “go back”. All measures that were adopted were, thus, short-term measures where fundamental changes were required. “Administrative lacunae and welfare issues” also, it seems, intervened. According to this official, due to the initial educational policy of the three-language formula followed in Tibetan schools, “Tibetan became just one subject out of eight-nine other subjects taught in school. There was very little time given to Tibetan and no way that the situation could be balanced” (TOI, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). These concerns led to a shift in policy with introduction of the policy of Tibetanization of Education.

ii) Tibetanization of Education: a shift in policy brought about the adoption of this policy in TCV schools in 1984. The policy was the result of deeply felt apprehensions amidst the Tibetan community in exile, the Government in Exile and Tibetologists that as a result of following the curricula of the host country (by necessity) and adopting English as the medium of instruction and teaching of three languages (English, Hindi and Tibetan), the new generation of Tibetan youth had “minimum awareness of their own language, history and religion” (TCV report 1999:3; Gyatso 1993:15). It was felt that because Tibetan language was taught as a second language, it
had lost its prominence right from the beginning. With years of exposure to “foreign influence” in exile, the background and attitude of the Tibetan children had also changed adversely. The majority of the children, it was felt, would leave school “in a state of semi-lingualism and minimum awareness and understanding of their own language, history and religion” (TCV report 1999:3; Gyatso 1993:15). Throughout primary and secondary levels, it was felt that, children were not only influenced by the environmental factor of living in a country not their own, but also had to cope with a course of study specifically designed for children of another country and taught in a foreign language. As a result, the Tibetan children’s capacity to comprehend and use their own language had been “dangerously eroded”. Besides language, the “whole set of traditional values and cultural education that are so essential for children”, it was believed, was also not given berth in the scheme of education (TCV report 1999:3; Gyatso 1993:15).

The Dalai Lama, it seems, was also aware of this fundamental problem and had apparently, expressed his “strong concern to review the language policy”. He had called for an exploration of avenues for a system of education that would place Tibetan language as the medium of instruction in the schools and ensure that the “content became relevant” for children. The Third Conference of Tibetan Teachers (1985) and the International Seminar on Tibetan language (1987) had also unanimously endorsed the idea of Tibetanization (TCV report 1999:3; Gyatso 1993:15).

The Tibetanization of education policy was regarded as essential based on the hope that “Tibetan education in exile will have a lasting imprint on the future generations of Tibetans in Tibet and outside”. It was based on the hope that when the occasion would come for the refugees to return to Tibet to shape their “own destiny as a people”, it would be required in the “re-construction and renewal of the educational system in Tibet- a system of education designed by Tibetans for Tibetans” (TCV report 1999:32). The policy, therefore, derives its rationale not only from a concern “to save the Tibetan language from further diminution, but from educational, economic, social and political reasons” (Sangpo 1997:19). The aim was also to “strengthen interest and love for the Tibetan language” and to “encourage a single strong Tibetan identity” so as to “lay down the foundation for an effective Tibetan educational system” in the future (Sangpo 1997:19).
It was also felt that using Tibetan as the medium of instruction is fully in keeping with the Government of India’s policy that every child should receive primary education in the mother tongue and also resonates with the UNESCO declaration of 1951 that “the best medium of teaching a child is his mother tongue,” based on strong psychological, sociological and educational reasoning (TCV report 1999:32). Based therefore on this conviction and confidence, the Tibetanization policy was started in Tibetans schools.

**Medium of instruction:** Due to the perceived decline of traditional Tibetan language, the medium of instruction in the junior classes (classes 1-5) was switched to Tibetan from English. Implementation of the Tibetanization of education policy first took place in the TCV schools in 1984. Since July 1994, the CTSA and other autonomous schools also endorsed the use of Tibetan as the language of instruction at the primary level (grades 1-5) in all Tibetan schools.

**Curriculum:** Apart from this, the vernacularization program also sought to change the content of textbooks to suit the needs of Tibetan children in exile and to build a “relevant curriculum” based on Tibetan cultural heritage, values and languages (http://www.tcewf.org/publications/csr/index.html) (TCV report 1999:5). It sought to develop a new curriculum for the primary classes (I-V) so that the ‘modern subjects’ like Science, Social Studies and Mathematics could be taught in Tibetan. It sought to also integrate Tibetan culture, history, Geography, Arts etc into the curriculum. Alongwith textbooks, “Tibetanised games and books on cultural history were also to be encouraged” (Liang 1999:23). It was felt that Tibetan children, born and brought up in exile, are vulnerable to the forces of assimilation. They need to be educated through a “specially designed and developed curriculum that effectively links modern education with an intimate understanding of Tibetan cultural heritage and national identity-both in content and process” (TCV report 1999:7).

**Textbooks:** a team at TCV, it seems, first translated NCERT books. It was learnt that merely translating the existing textbooks, however, defeated the primary purpose of the Tibetanization policy. It was strongly felt that the project must carry a bigger responsibility of creating “relevant” and “vibrant” textbooks for Tibetan children, and “plant the seeds for an educational process that will be rooted in using Tibetan as the medium of instruction” in the subjects that are taught to the children. Through such
planning, it was envisaged that children will have a better grasp of the subjects and the process will “naturally enrich the Tibetan language in the subjects that are being taught in the Tibetan schools” (TCV report 1999:7). To fulfil this objective, the Educational Development and Research Centre (EDRC) based in Dharamsala, H.P was created in 1986 with the goals: “To produce textbooks in Tibetan for primary classes in Science, Social Studies and Mathematics; to plan and organize workshops and orientation programs for the teachers who would be using EDRC textbooks; to revise, update and reprint the textbooks periodically; to produce workbooks and teacher’s manual for the use of the textbooks; to publish children’s story books and books on Tibetan culture, history, geography for children and to design and develop Tibetanized teaching aids for use in the schools” (TCV report 1999:7). This pilot project led to the publication of two textbooks of Tibetan history in English language for children so that they could learn their own history and culture and share it as they continue school. These two textbooks of Tibetan history still seem to be in use in Tibetan schools. An analysis of these textbooks has been done in the fourth chapter. It reflects efforts of the Tibetan school authorities to provide information to Tibetan children about their cultural and historic past so as to enable them to develop an appreciation of their remote past.

Since the students studying under this programme would have to revert back to the NCERT curriculum after class V, it was felt that the structure of the lesson development (choice of topics) should be the same as or close to the NCERT system. Therefore, many topics for Science, for instance, are the same as in the NCERT textbooks though additional topics have been added to make lessons interesting. In Social Studies, however, syllabus planning and development seems to be entirely different from the NCERT textbooks. In keeping with the stated objectives of integrating modern education with Tibetan culture, the syllabus on Social Studies contains a “rich mixture of general studies on evolution of human civilization and different aspects of Tibetan cultural heritage and geography, so that during the formative years, the child is taught the rich heritage of Tibet: its language, folk-lore, literature, music, customs, history, geography and festivals so that the child grows up naturally knowing more about his homeland and its cultural traditions in the early years” (TCV report 1999:7).
Besides school textbooks, the Central Tibetan administration in exile also seems to have published a number of supplementary textbooks related to the subjects taught at school along with a series of colourful children’s magazines called Phayul (‘Fatherland’), first published in 1990 and Gangjong (‘Snowland’) started in 1993. Similarly, various other institutional and children’s magazines have been brought out by TCV, THF and by other residential schools in India and Nepal.

An interview with an official of the Publications Department of the Tibetan Government in Exile also illustrated the efforts made in the direction of preserving Tibetan culture by developing Tibetan books for future generations. The concerned official spoke of efforts at translating popular world literature into Tibetan to promote awareness and appreciation amongst children. He spoke about the efforts of the department to bring about a standardization of Tibetan terms in five or six areas, beginning with science and technology. This was required, he said, as lots of discrepancies seem to exist of Tibetan terms spoken in different areas of present-day Tibet as also in different areas of in exile. A Tibetan-Tibetan dictionary is therefore, being worked upon to bring about a standardization of terms so that “on their return to Tibet, a “uniform vocabulary would exist for all the Tibetans” (TO4, Publications Dept, CTA, H.P, 2006).

An evaluation of the Tibetanization of Education policy, undertaken in 1993 by the EDRC, Dharamsala stated that teaching in Tibetan “benefited the children immensely” and that they “understood concepts clearly and learned textual matter faster”. The rapport with teachers, it seems, also improved because they could now communicate with their teachers in their mother tongue. Class participation, it was claimed, also “increased dramatically”. With Tibetan as the medium of instruction, the children, it was felt, understood and enjoyed their lessons more than before. More group discussions and activities could also be carried out since the language barrier was removed. The children, the report noted, had “gained in confidence in themselves and their learning” (TCV report

5 An official at the publications department of the Tibetan Government in Exile observed that the Tibetan word for computer, for instance, is different in south India, in North India and in Tibet. In Tibet, influence from the Chinese vocabulary has resulted in a computer being termed as ‘Loglek’ (literally ‘electronic brain’). In other places, a computer tends to be referred to as ‘Sekhor’ (‘to be able to compute/do calculations with’) (TO4, Publications Dept, CTA, H.P, 2006).
The policy, it seems, encouraged, “active participation, critical thinking and problem-solving skills amongst Tibetan refugee students”. It also succeeded in “enriching the Tibetan vocabulary” of both the teachers and the students (Tsering, 2001 cited in ISBN 0-493-27994-6).

Annual meeting reports of CTSA and other sources, however, refer to criticism of methods of teaching the traditional language. It was felt that the Tibetan teachers needed to be re-oriented in modern methods of teaching Tibetan language (as against continuation of the older methods) (CTSA 1963:17). For instance, lamas teaching Tibetan language to the students were criticized on grounds that they largely used methods like memorization of textbooks rather than co-curricular and classroom activities. It was believed that while lamas should remain in schools to teach religious subjects, they should not dominate over the qualified Tibetan lay teachers (Nowak 1978:61). Teachers also, it seems, doubted the “practicality of the project” and voiced the opinion that it would be more practical in a free country rather than in exile where “English medium is vital for a successful life”(Tsering, 2001 cited in ISBN 0-493-27994-6). Despite of the fact that to ensure a smooth switchover to English medium of instruction after class V, ‘ample’ periods were allotted to learning of English so that the latter would not suffer, it was felt that English language had taken a backseat.

Also, it was found that the sudden change in the medium of instruction from English to Tibetan had created problems for the teachers. Firstly, the teachers were not trained to teach in Tibetan. Secondly, they had all studied in English medium schools and many had “poor proficiency” in Tibetan. Above all, another problem was their “lack of confidence and being unaccustomed to writing in Tibetan”. The “complex spelling and confusing grammar” in the Tibetan language discouraged many of the teachers. Also, when it came to writing answers in Tibetan, children faced problems of “spelling and expression”. “Modernity of the subject matter and antiquity of the Tibetan language system” seemed to clash. Children's answers written in colloquial Tibetan became unintelligible to the teachers. Correction work became “hard and tedious for the teachers”(TCV report 1999:21).

The TCV evaluation report observed that “many of the lessons were not followed up with suggested activities in the textbooks and the speed with which a lesson was
covered was too fast". Instead of using words contained in the lessons, teachers would, it seems, resort to using English words. It also referred to a "lack of interaction between the students and teachers". It was to tackle the above problems that a primary teacher training centre, a teaching aids production section that concentrates on developing teaching aids in Tibetan and a mother training centre etc were set up in Dharamsala, H.P (TCV report 1999:21).

Despite these problems, the ‘Tibetanization of Education’ policy has been largely seen as a 'success' and a 'model'. According to a survey conducted by the DOE, CTA in 1997, 89.5% of the administrators regarded it as “good”(DOE, CTA report 1998:9).

It has been observed, however, that such views are based “solely on the basis of performance in examinations at the national level” (with TCV schools demonstratively performing the best amongst all the Tibetan schools in the public examinations) (Sangpo 1997:18). The Status Report on Education (1998) also mentions a “near consensus” among educators involved with the schools and the community in general that the “academic standard in the schools is not up to the mark”. It observes that “over 80%” of the children are at school and are thus literate and that much of the basic infrastructure in existing schools is now in place. It, however, also observes that there remains “a great need to improve general academic standards” especially in subject areas of Science, Technology, Mathematics and Tibetan language, dance and music (DOE, CTA report 1998:9).

The report mentions a growing concern over the “declining standard of Tibetan language” in the schools. It refers to a survey conducted by the Department of Education in 1997-98 where 82.1% teachers opined that the standard of Tibetan in the schools is “very poor”. Various reasons attributed to this were: “elders and teachers are not speaking ‘proper’ Tibetan, teachers use ‘mixed’ languages in class, CBSE exams in Tibetan are too easy (substandard), lack of nice story books in Tibetan, lack of usage of written Tibetan, untrained Tibetan language teachers, influence (negative) of western culture and television, society and government are more interested in English and language used in Tibetan language textbooks is not based on day to day life” (DOE, CTA report 1998:14).
Interviews with officials and teachers in the study throw light on the fact that “lesser number of periods allotted for teaching of Tibetan language (“as we did not want to overload the children”) and the “conversion to the English medium after primary schooling” led to the “decline in general academic standards” as well as “understanding of Tibetan language”. The lack of opportunity to study Tibetan after school, he said, is also responsible, for the standard of Tibetan going down. Another reason stated for the ‘decline’ was administrative and management-related issues. “All our schools were run by the Indian Government. Things are improving now and all of them are run by Tibetans. We don’t have to be dependent upon the Government of India now” (TO2, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

Some teachers also felt that the abrupt change in medium of instruction from Tibetan to English from middle classes (VIth onwards), brought about with the ‘Tibetanization of education’ policy is responsible for the ‘decline’ in English language abilities of children. An Assistant Headmistress, in a Tibetan school (senior section), stated that, with her “experience of 10 years of teaching” she “can say that the students’ command over English has declined over the years”. She observed that the students’ of earlier generations who studied in the schools when they were English medium, had a “much better command over English” as compared to the students who have had Tibetan as the medium of instruction. She admitted that reliance on Tibetan as the medium of instruction in the primary classes has led students from VIth onwards to want their teachers to speak in Tibetan (instead of English) as they find it difficult “to grasp the subject if everything is taught in English”. This is a problem faced by teachers particularly in the VIth grade, she observed, as the medium of instruction changes to English. This, she feels, is the “most challenging phase” for the students also as “results come down of the students who earlier were doing well”. The teachers are “forced to do a lot of translation” (from English to Tibetan), it seems, to enable students to understand the subject matter (TT1, T.S, H.P, 2006).

Interviews with teachers and officials of the Department of Education, CTA have also confirmed the existence of passive and non-participatory pedagogical methods that have contributed to the ‘decline’ of academic standards of English as well as Tibetan. An official at the Department of Education, CTA observed from his “personal experience as
an ex-student of CTSA, Dalhousie” that their “understanding and speaking of English language was not so good”. This was because they would “never speak in English outside the school”. There would be a lot of “mugging up of answers and no understanding” of Mathematics and Science concepts as, “English is not in our blood”. (Even) today, class XII students get information which they memorize and write down in the examination”, he added (TO2, DOE, CTA, H.P).

Exposure to exile environment and modern education in colleges was also cited as a reason by interviewed officials for the loss of Tibetan language amongst Tibetan youth and their becoming “more materialistic”. According to an official “students in schools as well as those passing out of schools seem to have been lacking in their own language because of the new environment”. The students do not have a keen interest and are not doing well in their own language”. The younger generations today, he observed are “suffering from a loss of Tibetan language: reading, writing and proficiency at both levels in school and they get further away from it while in college”. “In the university they learn many modern contemporary highly materialistic things in the name of Science and mostly it all boils down to money” (TO1, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). These concerns and reports of a perceived ‘decline’ in the Tibetan school education with Tibetan youth drifting away from their traditional language, culture and identity, despite implementation of the Tibetanization of education policy, has led to the formulation of the latest policy—‘Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile’ in 2004.

iii) ‘New Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile’: The policy has brought about renewed emphasis upon Tibetan language as medium of instruction in Tibetan schools for all classes. Interviewed officials of the Government in Exile justified its emphasis upon traditional Tibetan language in school on the basis of the fact that the “fundamental reason for their coming into exile” was the “preservation of their Tibetan culture language and identity” which “seems to be in danger”. This is seen as a “very serious and crucial matter”. The younger generations of Tibetans today are seen as suffering from a “loss of Tibetan language: reading, writing and proficiency” in school. This “loss”, it was observed, gets further heightened as they go to college. The preservation of language is seen, therefore, as the “cause for the survival of the Tibetan
people”. An official observed, “If this is not learnt in our schools then what is the whole point of life in exile?” (TO1, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

The new policy as compared to the previous policy gives more importance to Tibetan language as compared to English language. This is because it is seen as the “need of the hour” because of the youth being in danger of being “washed away by the flood of modern education”. This policy is regarded as “a fundamental policy” which like the previous policies “aims to balance traditional and modern education like the two wings of a bird” (TO1, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). However unlike the previous policies, where more importance was given to English and contemporary education, (seen as a “need of that time, not a mistake”, as English language was needed to communicate with people in the west and with the people in the host country), the present policy seeks to give more importance to Tibetan language and traditional education.

An official at the Department of Education, CTA, noted that this policy has been formulated based on the “international scenario and research on the issue” as well as their “own experience” which says that the “conversion to the English medium after primary schooling leads to a decline in general academic standards as well as understanding of native language”. He added that, “to retain a sense of Tibetanness and to preserve their identity”, they have taken this step (TO2, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

A Tibetan language teacher teaching class XI in a Tibetan school also observed, “We interact with different nationalities. There is the danger of our language disappearing. So the shift to Tibetan medium of instruction is a good way for preserving our language. By doing this we can preserve our culture” (TT6, T.S, H.P, 2006).

The change to mother tongue as medium of instruction has also been supported on grounds that it will facilitate the learning of other languages such as English. An official observed that changing of the medium of instruction to the mother tongue would facilitate the learning of the second language, English. He observed, “My experience is that if multi languages are taught right from childhood the child will not develop a very strong command over any one of these languages. If you know any one language very well, it is easier for the brain to learn other languages. If language proficiency is there in any one language, you will learn the second language faster” (TO2, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). Another official observed “If from a very young age a child learns to take strong
roots in any one language instead of learning too many languages together, it becomes a sound basis for the child for learning other languages. We are very confidently saying a child who learns English from class VI in our schools will be better in English (say at class VIII) than a child who learns English from Kindergarten onwards. I personally know of several Indian scholars who have a strong understanding of the English language and are better than people working in the BBC, even though the former had studied in schools in their mother tongue,” he noted (TO1, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

The policy also seeks to address the growing problem of unemployment in the Tibetan society by introducing a standard of education, by which school and university graduates can follow their family occupation or start a new occupation of their choice without difficulty. It states that, “pursuing of higher school education or vocational studies after completing class X shall be decided by individual choice and prescribed academic qualifications. Likewise, after graduating class XII, optional opportunity for pursuing vocational studies shall be facilitated” (DOE, CTA report 2004:63).

However, the purpose of education is said to be the preservation of traditional Tibetan language rather than ‘getting jobs’ for Tibetan youth. An official at the Tibetan Government in Exile (TO3, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006) observed that the teaching of English language “will be there, though the emphasis will not be so much as in the past”. He clearly stated that the new education policy “goes much beyond” the question of envisioning an education that is for “getting jobs”, as it aims “to enable children to get better rooted in their identity”. The vision of this education policy is that it “looks at creating people who will not just be employees in a multinational firm” but “people who will realize their inner potentials, who will be intellectuals, not just educated to fit into a factory”. The education policy is also seen as committed towards producing “knowledge for the sake of knowledge” and focused on “community needs” as against “individual needs” (TO3, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

Medium of Instruction: This policy formally approved in September 2004 seeks to be “a basis for the education policy of Tibet in future, when a self-governing status is
attained for the whole of the three *cholkas*\(^6\) of Tibet*. The policy stresses on basic education rights of any child, stating that, “all Tibetan citizens fulfilling citizen’s duties, without any discrimination on the basis of being ordained or lay, sex, race, religion, place of origin, being rich or poor, shall have the right to basic education upto class XII free of tuition cost” (DOE, CTA report 2004:59).

The new policy primarily calls for implementation of “a system of education having Tibetan traditional education as the core, and modern education as its essential co-partner”. The policy documents say that “Tradition”, must not be understood as any custom merely perpetuated for a long time. It instead must be understood as “a continuum of wisdom or science: (i) originated from a perfect source; (ii) passed down through an unbroken lineage; and (iii) verifiable by valid logical reasoning”. Besides, it should be “an everlasting source of benefit and happiness, independent of changes of time and circumstance” (DOE, CTA report 2004:63).

Tibetan Traditional Education is said to consist of the following elements: “The principal sources of the Tibetan traditional education are the traditions of *Yungdrung Bon* and *Buddha dharma*. Hence, base, path and result, and view, practice and discipline of the inner science contained in these traditions form the core of Tibetan traditional education. The four other Tibetan sciences: Science of Language, Valid Reasoning, Art and Medicine, along with their branches, which have been highly influenced by Bon and *Dharma* are also subjects of Tibetan traditional learning”. “Tibetan language, which is the medium of all Tibetan traditional studies, despite a long period of development has undergone very few changes. It holds great potency to communicate intended meaning. It is a great storehouse of many profound sciences and arts difficult to be found in other languages. It is, in fact, the only standard base of all Tibetan studies”(DOE, CTA report 2004:63).

The policy documents say that “modern education”, unlike the Tibetan traditional education, does not trace its origin to a religious or ancient cultural source. It instead, is a system that was begun and developed in recent centuries by human beings through

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\(^6\) The three historical regions of Tibet: U-Tsang, Dotod (Kham) and Domed (Amdo), popularly referred to as: U-Tsang, the *Cholka* of Dharma, Dotod, the *Cholka* of Man and Domed, the *Cholka* of Horse (DOE, CTA report 2004:59).
investigation and experimentation, primarily, on external objects and phenomena. “Modern education”, it says, “primarily includes the study of Science and Technology, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Economics, Management and Planning, and most Arts subjects, which fall under the category name of “Science”. Giving importance to traditional Tibetan education (over modern education), plans have been clearly chalked out for the Tibetan education policy in exile to march ahead of the Tibetanization policy of earlier times. The new policy asserts that, “In an education system having traditional education as its core, it is appropriate to have the medium in which the traditional learning abides as the medium of instruction for general education” (DOE, CTA report 2004:63).

The policy seeks to make efforts “to gradually convert the medium of instruction in all Tibetan institutions of learning from pre-primary level up to the highest research study level, into Tibetan language”. The policy states that the three-language policy will be adopted in all schools. However, from pre-primary and up to class III of primary school, the policy dictates that, “no other language besides Tibetan shall be taught. Even the teaching of terms in, and songs of, other language should be avoided. The teaching of second and third languages shall be started from class IV and class VI respectively”. Thus, importance of the mother tongue is highlighted with the hope that it would perhaps address the current problem that many Tibetan youngsters seemingly face of “understanding and communicating in the Tibetan language” (Chashar et al. 2005:13).

**Curriculum, Syllabus and Methodology:** to frame the curriculum and syllabus, for all classes up to XII, a special committee will be constituted. Also, a permanent body of the Tibetan Council of Education is to be established, to advise the Tibetan administration in exile on education policy and also, to monitor implementation of the policy. The Tibetan Council of Education, it seems, will also be responsible for granting recognition and permission to rules and regulations, curriculum, textbook composition, examination system of all Tibetan schools in exile, after necessary inspection. Further, it would serve to issue and renew teaching licenses and most, importantly, to monitor and oversee the overall educational affairs. While the new policy stresses on a “teacher-centred education”, it also avers that a “student-centred methodology” will be followed.
The system of evaluation is also to be overhauled with the present system of two to three hour examinations to be gradually done away with.

Thus, what stands out most significantly, amongst the above educational reforms to be implemented in all the Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan ‘within three years’, is the emphasis on traditional Tibetan education and use of Tibetan as a medium of instruction. While the effects of this policy still remains to be seen, the first model school where the new policy is being implemented was inaugurated on 4th October, 2005 in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh and consists of 40 students of pre-primary and class I and II of primary school.

Thus, an evaluation of the major policies on education for Tibetans in India throws light on the concerns of the Tibetan Government in Exile to devise policies that will enable the preservation of Tibetan language, culture and identity amongst the new generations of Tibetans in exile. Concerns of exposure to the exile environment and ‘declining’ language skills (Tibetan and English) as well as a ‘general decline in academic standards’ has led to renewed efforts to strengthen the former. The Tibetan Government in Exile, as mentioned above, justifies the official emphasis on Tibetan language on grounds that its survival (alongwith that of Tibetan culture, religion and identity) is the very reason for Tibetans living a life of refugees in exile. What needs to be looked at further, however, are problems and dilemmas, if any, faced by the Tibetan as well as Indian officials and teachers in trying to balance “modern” education with “traditional” education and to devise educational policies that enable Tibetan youth to preserve their Tibetanness as well as prepare them for higher education and employment in exile.

Dilemmas and Problems:

This section looks at issues and dilemmas faced by Tibetan and Indian officials, teachers in Tibetan schools in trying to balance modern and traditional education and curriculum/pedagogy and monolingualism vs bilingualism/trilingualism. It looks at how these concerns are addressed by Tibetan officials at the Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration (Dharamsala), Indian officials at CTSA, Delhi as well by the teachers (Tibetan and Indian) teaching at a Tibetan school (Upper TCV school in
Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh) and youth respondents in the study. These dilemmas seem to be related to:

a) **Medium of Instruction:** The official policies of prioritizing native Tibetan language as against English language as the means of instruction means that ‘ligatures’ (fostering of traditional bonds between people) have been given precedence over ‘options’ (skills that provide opportunities for higher education and jobs) for the Tibetan youth. Interviews in the study throw light on the fact that this has given rise to apprehensions amongst the teaching community and students that the shift to a Tibetan medium of instruction for all classes in Tibetan schools will hamper spoken English language skills (despite being taught as second language). These will, it is believed, further result in prospects of getting jobs outside the Tibetan community and getting admission in colleges getting hampered as well. An Assistant Headmistress of the senior section (IX-XII) in a Tibetan school voiced this dilemma by pointing out the practical problems that Tibetan children will face if their education system does not lay emphasis upon English language (see box).

| "I am not speaking about others or on behalf of the government but as a teacher and from my own situation as a mother to my children. Where is the future for them? Where will my children go after the XIIth grade? English is very important. Unemployment rate is rising in the Tibetan community. If students are good only in Tibetan, where will they find jobs? It is very important to know English. Since a few years back even our students have started saying, ‘what is the point of learning Tibetan if you cannot take it to college?’ I know that we also need to preserve our language, culture and identity, so Tibetan as medium of instruction until class V is fine. But beyond class V...I don’t agree with this new policy" (TT1, T.S, H.P, 2006). |

An English teacher regarded the policy as “good ideologically” as it seeks to preserve their culture and language with the shift to the Tibetan medium of instruction. But, from the “practical point of view”, the former was “uncertain as to its implementation” as it might lead to an employment problem. He observed, “If everything is taught in Tibetan, our government will not be able to provide jobs to all graduates and they will not be able to seek jobs outside our community, as English is required everywhere”(TT4, T.S, H.P, 2006).
An official spoken with, admitted that along with the preservation of Tibetan language, culture and identity and inculcating basic universal values amongst children, they need to devise an education system that will enable Tibetan youth to find jobs and "integrate with the whole society". This is because there are limited employment opportunities within the Tibetan community and Tibetans "will have to go out to the Indian society to get jobs". He observed, "How much importance do we give to traditional and to modern education? However, it is also important for us to give importance to both. We have to accept this world, our children should not be mechanical animals, and have to have deep-rooted universal values of honesty, care, compassion" (TO2, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

This dilemma, however, seems to be resolved by the Tibetan Government in Exile with its policies laying emphasis upon 'ligatures' or bonds between people rather than 'options' or life chances in exile, as the former is regarded as the fundamental reason for living a life of refugeeism in exile. Discussions with the officials of DOE, CTA in Dharamsala and interviews with Tibetan youth in Delhi revealed diversities in the perception as to the very meaning and purpose of education in exile. The younger generations agreed with the contention of the officials over the need to preserve Tibetan language, culture and identity. They, however, disagreed with the fact that the change of medium of instruction to that of the mother tongue in all classes is the proper mechanism to address the issue. They were apprehensive of the ramifications in terms of the possible 'weakening' of English language skills that might create difficulties in pursuing higher education in Indian colleges and in getting jobs in the host community.

b) Curriculum and Pedagogy: In the past, the teaching of Tibetan language through modern methods (which are simpler for students to grasp and understand) as compared to traditional, more difficult methods (relying largely upon mantra-recitation and rote methodology) has been a point of much debate amongst the Tibetan community itself. While the conservative amongst the Tibetan leadership seemed to favor teaching through old/conservative techniques, the younger generation amongst the Tibetan intelligentsia in India called for revision and revitalization of old/burdensome teaching methodologies. Attempting to strike a balance between the two seems to have been difficult. Over the years, however, a consensus seems to have emerged over the need to
teach even traditional subjects with the help of more child-centered methods like group discussions, presentations etc over the earlier lecture mode of teaching.

Whether consensus on the use of these methods has actually led to the use of such innovative methods in the classroom, however, is a question of debate and still needs to be assessed. Most of the teachers as well as officials in the DOE, CTA in the study expressed the view that use of such innovative methods are lacking and are required in Tibetan schools.

While the ‘Basic Education Policy’ seeks to make these changes (through a ‘teacher-centered education system with a student-centered methodology’ alongwith introducing radical changes in methods of evaluation, such as discarding of the present examination system), it is still not clear as to how these changes will be implemented and also as to the results of the same.

According to an English teacher in a Tibetan school, what is required is not Tibetanization of education, but “a complete change in methods of teaching”. His assumption was that “rote learning without understanding is the problem in the junior classes” and that “skilled, good teachers” with “good standard of teacher training” would solve the problem. He also called for “demonstration of child-centered teaching”(TT4, T.S, H.P, 2006). An official at the Guidance and Counselling Department, CTA also called for “the need for more teacher trainings with teachers being taught the explanations at the level of the students” (TO6, CTA, H.P. 2006).

Interviews with teachers threw light on the fact that lay teachers alongwith monks seem to be taking classes on Tibetan religion and culture in Tibetan schools at present. An interview with a Tibetan language teacher teaching XI class (answers were translated by an English teacher) suggests that methodologies for teaching Tibetan are largely outdated and need to be made more child-centered and interesting. The teacher observed, “The teaching of Tibetan language in our schools has not changed over the years. Earlier, monks used to teach Tibetan language but the subject matter is the same as before. Now, however, teachers teach using student-centered methods like group discussion, exercises etc”. The teacher observed that in the lower classes (VIII, IX and X), students seem to “lose interest in Tibetan language and culture”. The reason for this is that while ‘modern’ methods like Multimedia, magazines and comics etc are used as teaching aids in teaching
other subjects; they “don’t use these things to teach Tibetan language”. Teaching learning aids, therefore, need to be developed “to encourage the lower classes”, he added (T16, T.S, H.P, 2006).

The lack of child-centered pedagogy, especially in the teaching of traditional subjects, like Tibetan Buddhism, thus, seems to create problems. Lack of a child-centered teaching and outdated, uninteresting, examination-centered, lecture mode of teaching, outdated system of teacher-training etc, are also said to be responsible for the decline in interest and motivation amongst children to learn. An official at the Guidance and Counselling Department, CTA noted, “The religion teacher may be highly qualified but how he is teaching the sermons is important. He might be doing it the way he has been taught, which the students might not understand. More teacher trainings are required with “teachers to be taught the explanations at the level of the students”. “Proper guidance on responsible behaviour is to be given”, as right now there are many distractions (for the children)” (T06, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

An official also noted that the decline in standards of English is due to “faulty pedagogy and teaching-learning practices” in schools, which, he said, will be “corrected”. “Right now, we have text-book centered curriculum. Instead of cramming, we now seek to let them understand and express something, even if they make a mistake. There is a faulty system of teaching language now, where the teachers writes questions and answers on the blackboard, students’ copy and memorize the answers and write it down in exams. If we instead teach English in a better, more focused manner, it will be better” (T01, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006). Another official also accepted that the present system of teaching English is faulty with a lot of “mugging” taking place. This, he said will be “changed” with the implementation of the new policy on education. “Now, the methodology of teaching English language will be different (no mugging). We will have to provide more periods (maybe 2 in a day). The way it is taught, has to be different, so that they can pick it up fast and learn it”, he noted (T02, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

Interviews with Indian Education Officers at CTSA also suggest that along with continuance of the present system, there is a need for making the teaching of English language “more effective” in primary classes. Suggestions were given to incorporate “more classroom activities” and to “make proper reading and learning environment more
congenial for the child to learn English” in classrooms with teachers interacting with students in English and Tibetan (rather than only Tibetan).

The lack of resident counsellors in the schools was also said to be a problem. Two counsellors have been appointed by the Department of Education of the Tibetan Government in Exile, each responsible for schools in North India and South India respectively. While they keep touring the schools in these two zones, they are not able to, it seems, give “individual attention to every child over a sustained period of time”. Respondents said that it is these aspects that need to be first tackled (TO6, CTA, H.P, 2006).

c) Higher Education: studies highlight the fact that the access to higher education, might still be a problem with Tibetan refugees not wishing to forego their refugee status to acquire domicile certificates which are required to seek admissions to professional colleges and institutions of higher education/training in the country. This problem however seems to have been adequately solved, to a certain extent, with State Governments (ex-Himachal Pradesh) granting medical and other seats for Tibetan students (Tsering and Sinclair 1999:16).

Post-school education is available to Tibetan students in India, mainly in the Indian universities and at a few Tibetan institutes. The CTSA offers 15-degree level and 5 Diploma level scholarships to Tibetan children to pursue higher studies in Science, Arts, Engineering and Medicine. CTSA has 01 seat in Medicine, 07 seats in Engineering, 01 seat in Pharmacy and 05 seats in Diploma courses reserved by the Government of India for Tibetan students in different institutions in India. 04 seats are reserved in Regional Institute of Education in B.Sc. B.ED course by NCERT (CTSA report 2004: 108). Besides these reserved seats, Tibetan students can study diploma and degree courses in various Indian universities where admission is based on merit. Opportunities and scholarships for pursuing higher education aboard are also available. Foremost amongst these opportunities are the USA Fulbright Scholarships.

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7 This program began in 1988 and till 2004, three hundred and six Tibetan students had undertaken both degree and non-degree courses in various universities in the US. Annually, the DOE announces and coordinates the selection of candidates, which are divided into degree (10 seats) and non-degree (5 seats) categories. Various other scholarships have been available for Tibetan students to study aboard availed since 1982: USA: 306, Japan: 17, Mongolia: 9, France: 4,United Kingdom: 21, Poland: 4, Italy: 6, Denmark: 12, Germany: 4, Norway: 4, Hungary: 3, Taiwan: 12, Thailand: 7, Israel: 2 and Austria: 4. Recipients of DOE, TCV and THF scholarships have the obligation to serve within the Tibetan community for a specific period of time after completion of their studies (DOE, CTA report 2004:9).
Lack of adequate reserved seats is, however, said to be a problem, according to a respondent in the study who said that, “not being an Indian creates a problem” while seeking admission to professional courses in medicine, engineering, pharmacy etc, “in places like Karnataka where the Tibetan refugees have to pay an additional Rs10,000 to get admitted” (Tsetan, T.S, 2006).

Lack of adequate scholarships also seems to be a problem for students. The DOE, CTA admits, “many students who wish to pursue further study and training are unable to receive scholarships due to lack of funds” (DOE, CTA report 1998:6). It is noted that their “aspiration is to help provide all students with the chance to pursue advanced study, while helping them to gain the necessary human resource skills required by exiled communities and in Tibet when we return” (DOE, CTA report 1998:6). But of the youth who graduate from Tibetan schools every year, it seems that, “approximately one-third” are provided with scholarships for higher education and vocational courses. Interview with officials at CTA, Dharamsala also highlights the fact that an average of 900 students graduate from schools every year. About 40% of the new school graduates receive scholarships annually for further education (certificate courses as well as for higher degrees) through DOE, CTSA, TCV, THF and other institutions. Currently, nearly 800 students in India and about 50 students aboard are pursuing higher education (TOS, CTA, Dharamsala, H.P, 2006). All scholarships offered through DOE consider “a student’s history of community service, academic excellence and financial need” for grant of scholarships. Recipients are also “expected to serve within Tibetan community for a set period of time following program completion” (DOE, CTA report 1998:6). Vocational education (see details in annexure: 9.1) is also provided by the following schools and centres: CST Mundgod (Karnataka), SOS Vocational Training Center (Nepal), TCV Vocational Training Center, Selakui (Dehradun), Norbulingka Institute (Dharamsala).

**Diverse Perspectives:** Interviews conducted with some Indian officials at CTSA show that they believed that the education provided to the Tibetan children should preserve their culture, language and identity of the Tibetan children, as Tibetan schools have been set up specifically to provide such an education in exile. At the same time, however, they felt that the education system should also prepare students for getting jobs in exile. In this regard, they felt that the current system (medium of instruction as Tibetan
for primary classes (I-V) and a switch to English medium thereafter (with Tibetan being taught as a second language) is “better” than the new policy that seeks to introduce Tibetan as medium of instruction for all classes until 12th grade.

An Indian Education Officer at CTSA, Delhi observed, “culture is important but students cannot be forced to study only Tibetan. Employment will be a problem. Language is important for communication but it does not mean that you have to study only one language. They (Tibetan Government in Exile) are “blocking their (students’) way- the development level of the students’ will be affected”. He added, “You should talk to Tibetan parents’ and students’ in remote settlements in India, they will tell you that they do not want this...” He also noted that Indian students studying in Tibetan schools will also suffer under the new policy (10% of seats in these schools are reserved for Indian students from economically depressed sections) (INDO1, CTSA, Delhi, 2006).

Another official observed that, “We should keep in touch with our traditions but we need to keep in touch with modern Science and Technology also. In the name of tradition and culture we cannot get left behind from where the world is going.” The shift to Tibetan as medium of instruction will “block the students’ career in this era of globalization -what will they do with a degree/diploma in Tibetan?” “They should study modern subjects in English medium and where there is the possibility, they should be able to move aboard (seek resettlement)” (INDO3, CTSA, Delhi, 2006).

An observation was also made stating that this is the “era of LPG: Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization” and “teaching just one language is not sufficient for developing children for global resources and that sooner or later, one has to switch over to the international language i.e. English”. The concerned official referred to the Delhi Government schools, which have started teaching English at primary level. He noted the increase in number of public schools in Indian cities as well as villages, due to the attraction for English, as parents as well as students are “eager to spend their money on the former”. Likewise, even amongst the Tibetans he observed, “everybody who can, are also sending their children to such schools for the same reason: English” (INDO3, CTSA, Delhi, 2006).
Diversity of views, thus, seems to exist between the Indian authorities (CTSA) and the Tibetan Government in Exile (DOE) in terms of the issue of the nature of education to be provided to Tibetan children. Both the authorities seemed to agree on the need to provide an education that preserves culture, language and identity. The Indian officials, however, resisted the idea of a complete changeover to Tibetan (as medium of instruction) for all classes, on the grounds that it will adversely affect their acquisition of the ‘international’ English language, required to get jobs in exile. For the Tibetan Government in Exile, on the other hand, the issue of the change is a matter of survival of their traditional language and culture that is seen as declining over the years. Not only with regard to the medium of instruction but also to the teaching methodology, there seems to be several dilemmas that need to be, therefore, addressed.

This chapter has sought to explore the pre-migration conditions of education in pre-1959 Tibet. It has also explored the educational conditions existing in present day Tibet. The inter-linkages between the conditions in Tibet and the system of education established for the Tibetan refugees in India have been brought out. The chapter has analysed the policies on education of Tibetan refugees in India and shifts in them over the years. Interviews with officials in the Department of Education, Tibetan Government in Exile have thrown light upon the concerns of the Tibetan leadership to establish a system of education that preserves Tibetan language, culture and identity, to prevent its erosion. Interviews have also been used to highlight the diverse perspectives on this issue of Tibetan teachers and Indian officials at CTSA, Government of India.

The next chapter explores in detail the existing system of education of the Tibetan refugees in India. In-depth interviews with the Tibetan youth respondents highlight the diverse educational experiences and perspectives on education of Tibetan youth in India.