Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects 36

Matthew J. Schuelka
T.W. Maxwell *Editors*

Education in Bhutan

Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness

ASIA-PACIFIC EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness

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Foreword

During a historic session of the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, world leaders endorsed the post-2015 global development agenda called 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. Articulated via 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, the new paradigm seeks to achieve equitable and sustainable development and, through improved consumption and production patterns, to bequeath a healthy and secure planet to our future generation. Bold, radical and ambitious, the SDGs are underpinned by the ever-growing and ever-deepening understanding among nations that humanity's fundamental and irrefutable quest is prosperity, wellbeing and happiness which is only possible in a world free of violence and tyranny, safe, just, peaceful, tolerant and compassionate.

Having been associated with the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and its conversations led by Professor Jeffrey Sachs of Columbia University, it is so gratifying for me to think of the small ways in which initiatives or discourses emerging from Bhutan's educational development experience may have contributed to the shaping of the 2030 global 'plan of action for people, planet and prosperity'. The Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) initiative that Bhutan's Ministry of Education launched in 2010 across schools in the kingdom and emphasised for continuity in the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024: Rethinking Education* has helped not only to rethink educational policies and programmes in Bhutan, but it has also generated a lot of interest among educational institutions and educators in Europe, America and Asia. Of course, as this book will show, there are also challenges in our ability to systematically integrate EGNH values and processes in educational practice. The concept of 'green schools' for sustainable development is viewed with a great deal of interest and is beginning to be researched as well (e.g. a colleague in my college is studying green schools for her PhD work).

There is an enormous task ahead of us in our pursuit of the 2030 development goals. It calls for sustained efforts, meaningful global partnerships and true commitment across all sectors of national development, including education. In fact, leadership from schools, universities and knowledge institutions will be vital for achieving these goals. It is heartening to see that the values underpinning this

transformative universal development goal – health and wellbeing, cultural diversity, sustainable agriculture and ecosystems, early childhood development, genetic resources and traditional knowledge and shared responsibility, to name a few – resonate with the educational policies and programmes that Bhutan has been pursuing during the past half century. Bhutan's commitment to these goals is also evident in *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024: Rethinking Education* that outlines four thematic aspirations for the next decade – *achieving access to education, achieving quality education, achieving equity in education* and *achieving system efficiency*. Many of the chapters in this book – especially those on rural life and education, education and Gross National Happiness (GNH), non-formal education, gender and education, traditional medical education and development of special education – will give the reader an intimate understanding of Bhutan's policy initiatives and programmes in these areas.

There are exciting developments taking place in the educational system in Bhutan. Beginning in 2014, a number of schools in the country have been restructured and converted to central schools that now have greater financial and administrative autonomy and greater flexibility to innovate. Further, with the full implementation of the Teacher HR Policy (2014), teachers and principals will engage in continuous professional learning and development with the expectation that they will acquire teaching and leadership competencies for the twenty-first century. Efforts are also being made to expand Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes in rural Bhutan, improve nutritional standards in schools, validate school curricula against international benchmarks, improve the quality of learning for girls, professionalise the teaching cadre, improve school counselling programmes and strengthen GNH-inspired values education, to mention a few. It is expected that these initiatives will enhance the quality of education for children, especially the attainment of the nine learning attributes (see https://sites.google.com/a/gov.bt/blueprint/bhutan-education-blueprint) considered central to the quality of student learning outcomes in the 2014–2024 vision for education. Yet 'quality' is often a highly contested term, and when there are too many competing views that confuse understanding, the tendency is to oversimplify the purpose of education. Therefore, *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling and Gross National Happiness* will provide rich perspectives on the fundamental goals and priorities of education in Bhutan and help to put the discourse on 'quality' in meaningful contexts.

I am delighted to see the publication of *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling and Gross National Happiness* taking place just as Bhutan is beginning to reflect on the educational achievements of the past decades as well as the mistakes it may have committed along the way. This book will provide useful answers to many questions that policymakers, development partners, scholars, researchers and concerned citizens will ask about the role of education at all levels – primary, secondary, technical, vocational and university – in Bhutan's development journey thus far. Given the sheer diversity of themes treated in the book, I believe that the reader will develop a deep understanding of how the interaction of numerous factors has influenced the way Bhutan's educational system has contributed to the achievement of the country's development goals in the past decades.

The history of modern education in Bhutan began in 1913 when the country's first *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King], *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck, set up the kingdom's first school in the high valley of Haa in western Bhutan. This was the time when the world was busy preparing for war. *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling and Gross National Happiness* celebrates the marvellous achievements of all those who have contributed to the development of education in Bhutan since the earliest times to the present day. The farsighted visions of the country's successive bodhisattva [a compassionate being living for the sake of others] kings have been brought into reality by the hard work of the Bhutanese themselves, the support of development partners, the tireless efforts of international volunteers and the passion and commitment of expatriate teachers and educational workers over the last fifty years. For example, guided by the development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) first pronounced in 1972 by Bhutan's fourth *Druk Gyalpo* His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, school and higher education development in the country has consistently emphasised the importance of *tha dam-tshig* and *ley gyu-drey* [sublime statement of genuine commitment to others and the truth of causality or interdependence]. During his interactions with schools and colleges across the country, His Majesty would always urge them to pursue the qualitative development of *sems dang rig-pa* [*sems* is mind in a state of ignorance or obscuration, and *rig-pa* is mind in a state of pure awareness]. In the Buddhist texts, *ma rig-pa* [the opposite of *rig-pa*] is considered the root of all of our problems, while *rig-pa* [the ability for clear and unbiased understanding of reality] is what education must help a person to acquire. This rich legacy of educational leadership and vision is continued by the present *Druk Gyalpo* His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who has always made it known that the role of education is more important than that of any other aspect of national development, as the quality of education the younger generation receives will determine the quality of Bhutan's future. For example, in his royal address to teacher graduates on 17 February 2009, His Majesty said, 'We can dream of a nation of environmental conservation, GNH, a strong economy, a vibrant democracy and yet none are possible or sustainable if we have not already toiled and sweated in the building of a strong education system'. Thus, owing to the visionary and selfless leadership of the kings, today Bhutan's education system is on a sound footing in spite of the numerous challenges it is also beginning to confront, as many of the chapters in this book will show.

Rooted firmly in the country's rich heritage inspired largely by the Buddhist view of causality and co-existence – including harmony with nature – and the wisdom of compassion, the Bhutanese education system has also been resilient and open to change. References may be made to the education reform initiative called *New Approach to Primary Education* (NAPE) launched in 1985 in partnership with English, Irish and Welsh educationists, which resulted in a breakaway from a predominantly teacher-centric and chalk-and-talk educational methodology to one that put the child at the centre of learning in school. In the 1990s, in collaboration with Australian educators, multigrade teaching and in-service teacher training programmes were introduced with the aim to promote a culture of continuous professional learning among teachers. Building on lessons drawn from those

initiatives, today the Ministry of Education's HR policy requires teachers to spend at least 80 h of their teaching year in self-learning and professional enhancement activities. A significant education reform initiative in recent years was the rewriting of school curricula beginning 2004 with support from Canadian educators. Most school curricula for secondary schools (Class VII–XII) and public examination till then were either influenced or administered directly by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) in Delhi, India. With the new curricula in place, schools were freed of the pressure of external examinations, and teachers were able to introduce into the curriculum or their classroom practice materials that reflected Bhutanese culture and values and funds of knowledge available within their communities. Interestingly, the more Bhutan's educational system interacted with good models and best practices available elsewhere, the more it recognised the value of intelligent adaptation and careful blending and, through these, balanced tradition and modernity. Without the compassionate leadership of the successive kings and their wisdom and foresight, following the middle path would never have been a possibility.

This book has an excellent chapter on higher education in Bhutan, which adds richly to the rather scanty literature at present in this sector. The development of higher education in Bhutan can be traced back to 1629 when *Zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyel, the founder of the modern Bhutanese nation state, established Chagri Dorjeden located in the pristine mountains north of Thimphu, Bhutan's first monastic institution for higher Buddhist studies. Similarly, Tango Monastery – now a leading Buddhist university in the country, also located north of Thimphu – was founded in 1688 by Tenzin Rabgye who was the fourth temporal ruler of Bhutan. Subsequently, a number of monastic institutions for studying the *Drukpa Kagyu* tradition of Buddhism have been established in different parts of the country. Similarly, the famed Tharpaling Monastery in the Chumey Valley of Bumthang was founded by the renowned scholar and meditation master Longchen Rabjampa Drimé Özer (Longchenpa) in the fourteenth century. Here Longchenpa trained hundreds of students in the Nyingma tradition of Buddhist higher learning. In the early years of the twentieth century, this monastery was tasked formally by Bhutan's second *Druk Gyalpo* Jigme Wangchuck to serve as a seat of higher Buddhist studies. In 1961, when a school for philosophy and literary studies was established under the command of the third *Druk Gyalpo* Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the curriculum was for the most part modelled after those taught in institutions of higher Buddhist studies.

The development of higher education in the secular form has an equally fascinating history. Beginning in the 1960s, as Bhutan moved into the era of planned economic development, it was necessary to educate and train personnel to manage the complexities of modern development. Hence, higher education in the modern sense began in 1968 when Sherubtse School in the district of Trashigang in east Bhutan was established and launched by Bhutan's third *Druk Gyalpo* Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. It became a junior college in 1976. On the 29th of May of that same year, the first Teacher Training Institute (TTI) was launched also by His Majesty, the third *Druk Gyalpo*. In 1983, Sherubtse College became a full-fledged university college, while the TTI in Samtse became the National Institute of Education offering

bachelor degree courses in education. Although two forms of higher education – Buddhist scholastic and liturgical training and post-secondary college education – evolved in Bhutan at different points in time in its history, the two cannot be separated and perceived as being unrelated or different. The Buddhist values of selflessness and commitment to others, harmonious co-existence and mind training leading, ideally, to the development of the wisdom of compassion towards all sentient beings have always influenced the cultural character, the leadership style and the general psychological ambience in the colleges. These values continue to influence educational development in Bhutan. I am delighted to see that three chapters in this book – one each on monastic education, modern secular education and higher education – treat the points I have just flagged at great length. These chapters provide an invaluable source of information on and analytical insights into the complementarity of monastic education and modern secular education in Bhutan.

Education has an important role to play in the development of society, in the maintenance of our traditions and culture and in the embrace of the philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Within my lifetime, Bhutan has experienced many changes, with education perhaps being the most significant. Throughout the development and modernization efforts established by our kings and others, it has always been important that Bhutan preserves its cultural identity and that the next generation of youth remembers these traditions while also embracing the modern world. The philosophy of Gross National Happiness is seen as the means to accomplish balanced development so that Bhutan does not lose its way. The schools in Bhutan continue to strengthen GNH values – originating from Buddhism but with universal applicability – that emphasise community, wellbeing and sustainability above profit and egocentric pursuits or selfish endeavours. This is still a work in progress, of course, but the fact that Gross National Happiness is a part of the educational development dialogue in Bhutan in its most recent initiative as Educating for Gross National Happiness launched in 2010 is promising and can serve as an inspiration for other countries around the world.

Reflecting on my own early education in a rural school in central Bhutan, I now appreciate, more than ever before, the invaluable wisdom behind the school's requirement for students to grow vegetables and flowers or plant trees; care for their dormitories; learn dialects; recite long wisdom and mind-training prayers; respect teachers and elders; respect the letters because they embody the Buddha's enlightened body, speech and mind; and help parents with agriculture, cattle management or household work during school vacation, to mention a few. Children learnt the value of humility and developed the strength of character in the school's informal curricula – on nature's bountiful lap, as it were. Some of these powerful educational opportunities are, however, on the wane today. In fact, a growing concern often raised in relation to Bhutan's youth population is their alienation from their cultural roots and the consequent sense of loss. I am sure that relevant chapters in this book will highlight some of these concerns and suggest ways to ensure the continuity of these values. The good news is that while Bhutan's road map for educational development for 2014–2024 emphasises the importance of developing

knowledge, skills and competencies for the twenty-first century, it also reaffirms the need for the country's future citizens to carry the strengths of their family, community and national values and cultivate leadership of the self and care for others.

A fascinating work of research, scholarship and personal reminiscences, *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling and Gross National Happiness* will give its readers a thorough overview of the history and development of education in Bhutan – both religious and secular. Many chapters adopt a historical approach in the various sectors of secular education. Later chapters address significant issues now and for the future. The majority of the authors are Bhutanese brought together by two friends of Bhutan as editors. It is the first book of its kind, and I am delighted to be presenting it to readers as a comprehensive introduction to the development of education in Bhutan and as a discussion of current issues. As well, it will inspire many more publications on areas that have not found space within the scope of the present work.

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Series Editors' Introduction

This important, groundbreaking book, which is edited by Matthew Schuelka and T.W. Maxwell, on *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling and Gross National Happiness*, is the latest volume to be published in the long-standing Springer Book Series *Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Issues, Concerns and Prospects*.

The first book in this Springer series was published in 2002, with this volume by Schuelka and Maxwell being the 36th volume published to date.

This book is an excellent contribution to the field of international and comparative education. It provides a lucid, comprehensive and in-depth overview of the history and development of education in Bhutan, both religious and secular. The book discusses current issues in Bhutan regarding education and schooling and the extent to which the development of education in Bhutan has been largely indigenous with regard to the driving forces at work in influencing its direction and development.

The editors have successfully compiled a volume of wide-ranging articles which examine most of the key aspects of the education system in Bhutan, including monastic education, higher education, education in rural areas, non-formal education, gender and education and early childhood education. And they have done this in a way where multiple perspectives are presented. It is also excellent that so many of the authors are from Bhutan, with firsthand knowledge of the education system and culture in that country.

This book is the most comprehensive publication to date on the development of education in Bhutan, understood in light of the country's history, culture and development of the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Internationally, there is a growing interest in the notion of GNH so it is very helpful to have the background information provided in this book on the development of this notion.

This volume will be an essential guide for anyone with an interest in education and schooling in Bhutan and will be the benchmark against which other future books will be judged.

The various topics included in this Springer Book Series are wide ranging and varied in coverage, with an emphasis on cutting-edge developments, best practices and education innovations for development. Topics examined include: environmental education and education for sustainable development; the reform of primary,

secondary and teacher education; innovative approaches to education assessment; alternative education; most effective ways to achieve quality and highly relevant education for all; active ageing through active learning; case studies of education and schooling systems in various countries in the region; cross-country and cross-cultural studies of education and schooling; and the sociology of teachers as an occupational group, to mention just a few. For full details about books published to date in this series, examine the Springer website http://www.springer.com/series/5888.

All volumes in this book series aim to meet the interests and priorities of a diverse education audience including researchers, policymakers and practitioners, tertiary students, teachers at all levels within education systems and members of the public who are interested in better understanding cutting-edge developments in education and schooling in Asia-Pacific.

The reason why this book series has been devoted exclusively to examining various aspects of education and schooling in the Asia-Pacific region is that this is a challenging region which is renowned for its size, diversity and complexity, whether it be geographical, socio-economic, cultural, political or developmental. Education and schooling in countries throughout the region impact on every aspect of people's lives, including employment, labour force considerations, education and training, cultural orientation and attitudes and values. Asia and the Pacific are home to some 63% of the world's population of seven billion. Countries with the largest populations (China, 1.4 billion; India, 1.3 billion) and the most rapidly growing megacities are to be found in the region, as are countries with relatively small populations (Bhutan, 755,000; the island of Niue, 1600).

Levels of economic and socio-political development vary widely, with some of the richest countries (such as Japan) and some of the poorest countries on earth (such as Bangladesh). Asia contains the largest number of poor of any region in the world, the incidence of those living below the poverty line remaining as high as 40 percent in some countries in Asia. At the same time, many countries in Asia are experiencing a period of great economic growth and social development. However, inclusive growth remains elusive, as does growth that is sustainable and does not destroy the quality of the environment. The growing prominence of Asian economies and corporations, together with globalisation and technological innovation, is leading to long-term changes in trade, business and labour markets, to the sociology of populations within (and between) countries. There is a rebalancing of power, centred on Asia and the Pacific region, with the Asian Development Bank in Manila declaring that the twenty-first century will be 'the century of Asia-Pacific'.

We believe that this book series makes a useful contribution to knowledge sharing about education and schooling in Asia-Pacific. Any readers of this or other volumes in the series who have an idea for writing their own book (or editing a book) on any aspect of education and/or schooling that is relevant to the region are enthusiastically encouraged to approach the series editors either direct or through Springer to publish their own volume in the series, since we are always willing to assist perspective authors shape their manuscripts in ways that make them suitable for publication in this series.

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Contents

Education in Bhutan: Introduction 1
Matthew J. Schuelka and T.W. (Tom) Maxwell

Part I Historical Perspectives

Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System 19
Pema Thinley

The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan 39
Zangley Dukpa

History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century 57
Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen

Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges 73
Janet Ward Schofield

Bhutanese Traditional Medical Education 91
Phurpa Wangchuk, Tempa Gyeltshen, and Tashi Tobgay

International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan 109
Jagar Dorji

Part II Contemporary Issues

Rural Life and Modern Formal Schooling in Bhutan 127
Akiko Ueda

Conditions of Happiness: Bhutan's Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative and the Capability Approach 139
Pema Tshomo

Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative 153
Kezang Sherab, T.W. (Tom) Maxwell, and Ray W. Cooksey

Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact 169
Thakur S. Powdyel

Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education 181
Rinchen Dorji and Matthew J. Schuelka

Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s) 199
Tshering Wangmo and Margaret Brooks

Gender and Education in Bhutan 215
Kinley Seden and T.W. (Tom) Maxwell

Conclusion: Key Outcomes, Challenges, Ways Forward, and Future Research 229
T.W. (Tom) Maxwell and Matthew J. Schuelka

About the Authors 241

Index 249

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Common Abbreviations and Bhutanese Terms

BBE	Bhutan Board of Examination
BHSEC	Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (taken after Class XII)
BCSE	Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (taken after Class X)
Chökay	Classical Tibetan using the *uchen* script. This is the formal language of monastic education and the former language of Bhutanese political organization before the introduction of Dzongkha as the national language
Dasho	Honorific title bestowed upon esteemed Bhutanese citizens signified by receiving the orange scarf from the *Druk Gyalpo*
DoE	Department of Education (became the MoE in 2003)
Druk Gyalpo	Literally 'Dragon King' in Dzongkha, used to indicate the title of 'King'
Dzong	Fortress or 'castle' that serves as the administrative and spiritual centre for the *dzongkhag*
Dzongkha	Literally 'language of the *dzong*'. This is the national language of Bhutan and used predominantly in the Western regions
Dzongkhag	District. There are twenty *dzongkhags* in Bhutan.
EFA	Education for All
EGNH	Educating for Gross National Happiness
EVS	Environmental studies
FYP	Five-Year Plan
Gewog	Local block or sub-administrative units that make up *dzongkhags*. There are 205 *gewogs*
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GNHC	Gross National Happiness Commission
Guru Rinpoche	Known in Sanskrit as Padmasambhava ('Lotus Born') but known in Bhutan as Guru Rinpoche ('Precious Master'). He was a Buddhist bodhisattva that is credited with introducing Buddhism to Bhutan in the seventh century

g.so-ba-rig-pa	Traditional Bhutanese medicine [pronounced 'so-wa rig-pa']
KGUMSB	Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan
Lama	Venerated spiritual master
Lhakhang	Buddhist temple
Lobdra	Buddhist school
Lopen	Respected teacher
Lyonchhen	Prime Minister of Bhutan
Lyonpo	Minister
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAPE	New Approach to Primary Education (1980s–1990s)
NEA	National Education Assessment
NFE	Non-formal education
PP	Pre-primary (before Class I, known as 'reception' or 'kindergarten' in other contexts)
REC	Royal Education Council
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
Shedra	Buddhist college
Sherig	Education
Thromde	Town or city administrative unit, below the level of *gewog*
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
Zhabdrung	Literally 'before the feet of…' in Tibetan, used to signify a great lama or holy reincarnation. In Bhutan, *Zhabdrung* is an honorific always used to refer to Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of the modern Bhutanese state in the seventeenth century

Education in Bhutan: Introduction

Matthew J. Schuelka and T.W. (Tom) Maxwell

Abstract In this introduction to the volume *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness* we set out the purpose of the book and also describe the book's intended audience. We then discuss three specific stances on language and convention that we have adopted. Next, we discuss the three themes of this volume, each of which informs its chapters. Finally we indicate the simple structure of the book and describe briefly the contents of each chapter.

The Purpose of This Book

The fascinating history of schooling in Bhutan starts from Buddhist monastic education well before the modern mass education movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Monastic education continues to this day in Bhutan, but secular education only began, albeit in a very small way, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Secular education for the common people began in the 1960s. Yet, by the early twenty-first century, near-universal mass education has largely been achieved due to the successes of the Ministry of Education (and Health) in the second half of the twentieth century. What were the key ideas that promoted such a development? How did these ideas get translated into an education system largely within six decades? The challenge that this book faces is to bring to the fore the answers to these questions and more. The 'more' includes developments outside systemic education such as non-formal education in Bhutan that has been so important in bringing literacy skills to those, particularly older women, who had missed out on formal schooling. We also wanted to identify contemporary issues and explore them alongside the key theme of the book: Bhutan's innovative concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

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A book addressing these interesting questions and addressing these issues has never been published. Research on Bhutan in general, and in education in particular, is scarce. For this and other reasons, this book will be an invaluable resource not only for those personally or academically interested in Bhutanese education, but also in providing a window into a country in significant transition as it follows its GNH development philosophy which is clearly an alternative to the mainstream.

This book will be particularly interesting for those growing numbers interested in GNH worldwide. The primary audience for this book is, never-the-less, students and academic researchers from a variety of fields, including: education studies (general), education in South Asia, educational anthropology, educational sociology, comparative education, curriculum studies, change in education, South Asian history, and South Asian studies.

In almost all cases the authors are Bhutanese citizens who are scholars, policy makers, or experts in their fields. Consequently, most have been part of the experience of, and even led, the education developments set out here. In all cases the authors – Bhutanese citizens or not – have extensive knowledge of, and an interest in, Bhutan and in Bhutanese education in particular. The editors are not Bhutanese, but we have both lived and worked in Bhutan and have assisted in its development.

Language Conventions for Bhutanese Research and Academic Writing

Writing about Bhutan from an academic perspective brings with it unique challenges to the standard formats and conventions used in European, Antipodean, and North American publications. As editors, we made several key decisions to guide authors in reflecting some of these unique challenges. These editorial choices are explained below.

Bhutanese Personal Names Perhaps the most unique aspect of Bhutanese culture – and the most direct challenge to academic writing norms – is the structure of Bhutanese names. The vast majority of Bhutanese – not of Nepali origin – have neither a surname or family name, nor are names gender-specific except for a small number of exceptions. Most of these names are given by a *lama* [high priest] or *rinpoche* [revered reincarnate], and many Bhutanese have two given names. As we have said, neither one of these two names are family names. Names used for first and second names are interchangeable. For example, one male may be Tshering Pem and another female may be Pem Tshering. In the south and east of Bhutan, many only have one name. However, there are several family names that exist in Bhutan, mostly from prominent families, including the Royal Family name, Wangchuck.

The absence of a surname, of course, presents a challenge to standard, that is Western, academic citation practices. Such citation is surname-based. In order to be

culturally appropriate, and to not perpetuate Western-ethnocentrism, all contributing authors were instructed to cite their references using both Bhutanese given names. Citations were alphabetized according to the first letter of the first name. We would strongly advocate that academic publications with Bhutanese authors and citations continue this trend. All other names not specifically Bhutanese-Buddhist were cited in the conventional reference format. This includes Bhutanese citizens of Indo-Nepali origin, as those naming convention that do feature sur- or family names.

Romanization of Dzongkha, Tsangla, and Other Bhutanese Languages In Bhutan, the languages of government and education are Dzongkha and English which both serve as *lingua franca* amongst the over 20 distinct languages spoken in Bhutan (Karma Phuntsho 2013; van Driem 2001). For much of Bhutanese history, the Classical Tibetan language of Chökay was used in the monasteries and government when only few in society were literate. Dzongkha is a form of Tibetan, using the 30 letters of the Tibetan alphabet and written formally in the Uchen script. Dzongkha was declared the national language of Bhutan in 1971 by the Third *Druk Gyalpo*, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The standardization of Dzongkha only occurred in 1986 with the establishment of the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) by the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo,* Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

Given the recent development and standardization of Dzongkha, there is still a wide variety of spellings and uses to contend with. Spelling in Bhutan, for all languages including English, has more fluidity than is standard elsewhere. Schuelka experienced this first-hand as a lecturer in a Bhutanese college when he would receive student papers. Karma Phuntsho (2013) writes elegantly on this issue:

> Many Bhutanese youth do not have a first language with a full proficiency although for cultural and sentimental reasons, they claim a local language as their native tongue. Paradoxically, not all can speak their 'native tongue' fluently. This linguistic conundrum of multiple imperfect tongues with no solid grounding in one as the first language aptly reflects the very fragmented but dynamic personality of many young Bhutanese who are grappling between the traditional past and postmodern future. They have neither fully relinquished the old world and embraced the new, nor fully inherited the old and rejected the new; they linger in a limbo halfway between tradition and modernity, the East and the West, simplicity and sophistication, between linguistic poverty and proficiency. (Kindle loc. 1513)

As editors, we saw it as our job to provide some linguistic cohesion and guidance for the contributing authors. We instructed authors to be consistent with their spellings throughout their chapters. An attempt was made to be consistent *across* chapters for certain words and phrases, although the reader may still find a certain word spelled different ways in different chapters. To this point, materials given to the authors and that we used for editorial guidance included the following: DDC (2013), Rinchen Khandu (2010), and van Driem (1991).

Local Language-Driven Writing Taking a cue from anthropological and ethnographic practices, all attempts were made to use local words first and then provide a translation. Contributing authors were given this guidance as well. The reason for this stylistic choice is to provide the reader with a more immersive contextual experience. Additionally, often Dzongkha or Chökay does not directly translate into

English well. For example, *dzong* can roughly be transmitted in English as 'castle' or even 'administrative centre', but these translations are too simplistic. In reality, the *dzong* is the religious and bureaucratic centre in each *dzongkhag* [district] which also historically served the same defensive capability as might a European 'castle' because *Zhadrung* [Great Lama] Ngawang Namgyal in the seventeenth century was worried about Tibetan invasion. There is a lot of context to understand and unpack there. Additionally, an astute reader can follow the linguistic pattern and notice that *dzong* is related to *dzongkhag* that is related to Dzongkha ["the language of the *dzong*"]. Sometimes, of course, Bhutanese descriptions are just so much more interesting than a simple English word. For example, instead of 'King' it is much more descriptive and poetic to use the official Bhutanese title: *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King].

The most commonly used non-English words are listed in the front matters of this book. Chapters feature many more specific non-English words that are italicised and then translated at the first instance of their usage. It is our hope that this also becomes standard practice in academic writing on Bhutan in the future.

Book Themes

We argue that there are three central themes that emerge in an exploration of education in Bhutan: culture, schooling, and GNH. These themes were used to help guide the book design, as well as to assist the contributing authors to this volume in forming their chapters. The three themes are developed below.

Culture (History and Context) Culture is a strong discursive force in contemporary Bhutan. While Bhutan has never been colonized and has remained relatively isolated until recent times, Bhutanese historians like Karma Phuntsho (2013) remind us that the history of Bhutan is one of loose confederations, fractured political power-sharing, and multiple regions of control. *Zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal may have conceptualised Bhutan as a whole theocratic nation-state in the seventeenth century, but it was not until the introduction of monarchy in 1907 that Bhutan began to forge a widespread national 'culture'.

The contemporary discourse around culture in Bhutan seems to be centred on its urgent preservation and impending loss in the face of globalization (Ardussi and Pommaret 2007; Karma Ura 2009). We would argue that all nations around the world struggle with the notions of identity, culture, and diversity, and Bhutan is no exception. Indeed, Bhutan is a small country of rich cultural and linguistic diversity (Schuelka 2013b). We argue that 'culture' is something that cannot be explicitly 'preserved', in that it is an impermanent and transmutational phenomenon; however, culture – and its importance to Bhutanese identity – cannot be ignored. The importance of culture to the Bhutanese is also a product of its relative 'lateness' to modernization, which has the effect of not repeating some of the same

mistakes experienced by its neighbours and makes it a point of international distinction. Politically, cultural definition became an important statement for the Bhutanese in the late twentieth century in the regional context of the rapid globalization of Nepal and India and the intensification of the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

It would be a futile exercise to define what culture 'is' and 'is not' in Bhutanese contemporary society. Culture is, to paraphrase Geertz (1973, p. 5), webs of significance that we ourselves have spun. However, it is undeniable that Buddhism plays an integral role in the Bhutanese context from all historical and cultural angles. So, too, is it undeniable that Bhutan was collectively shaped by the history and cultures of its regional neighbours – particularly India and Tibet. The cultural forces at play in contemporary Bhutan are numerous, influenced from such things as the introduction of television in 1999, the increasing tourism sector, integration into the global economy, and increasing access to the world wide web.

In agreement with Karma Phuntsho (2000), we argue that one of the most significant cultural forces in Bhutan in the past 50 years has been the introduction of secular 'modern' education. In much of the 'Western' context, the place of school as a social institution is assumed. In Bhutan, the school is a new socio-cultural phenomenon and represents a significant break with the past, as we will explain further below. The authors of this volume each explore the context, history, and dimensions of 'culture' and 'schooling' in different ways.

For many readers of this volume, this may be their first encounter with Bhutan. Therefore, it was important to convey to the contributing authors that much context was needed in order to explain what schooling and education was and/or is like in Bhutan. Those unfortunate readers that have never been to Bhutan need to understand how the mountainous and rugged terrain shapes world-views and experiences, how Buddhism informs policy and attitude, how the seasons and the environment organise daily lives, and how much change has happened in Bhutanese society in the past 100 years because of the modern school.

Schooling Education is a discrete concept from schooling. Education, in anthropological parlance, is the act of cultural recruitment and maintenance (Spindler 2000). Schooling, on the other hand, is the formalisation of education as a social institution. In Bhutan, education is as old as people have populated its Himalayan mountainsides; the symbols, meanings, explanations, and ways of living being passed from one generation to the next via families and small communities. Schooling in Bhutan began in the Buddhist *gomba* [monasteries], *lobdra* [schools], and *shedra* [colleges] well over one-thousand years ago, and became a state institution beginning with *Zhabdrung* in the seventeenth century (Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan, this volume). It was not until the early twentieth century that anything other than Buddhist education was introduced in Bhutan, and even then it was not formally initialized until the 1st Five-Year Plan in 1959 (Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume).

It would not be hyperbolic to describe this shift in the location of learning and knowledge as anything but monumental to Bhutanese society. Introducing a secular 'modern' education displaced the primacy of local knowledge and fundamentally changed the relationship of schooling to all other cultural and institutional aspects of Bhutanese society. In the words of Gurung (2008), "With modernization and changing outlooks, children have started to judge and question the authenticity of everything" (pp. 27–28). Karma Phuntsho (2000) and Denman and Singye Namgyel (2008) have highlighted that Buddhist monastic education and secular 'modern' education hold very different worldviews and relationships to the purpose of learning. As Zangley Dukpa (chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume) rightly argues, the experience in Bhutan of secular education is much different than in European societies, where the Christian schools and colleges morphed into public education institutions over time. Instead, in Bhutan, secular schools were introduced whole-sale and completely exogenously. While much educational research has been done on the introduction of 'Western modern' schools in alien cultures (e.g. Carnoy 1974; Fuller 1991; Grindal 1972; Levinson et al. 1996; Spindler 2000), to date there has not been a significant amount of research on this phenomenon in Bhutan. This book is an attempt to begin to fill in this gap in the literature.

Formal schooling in Bhutan, apart from the monastic system, began in the early twentieth century at the invitation from the First *Druk Gyalpo*, Ugyen Wanchuck, to Jesuit missionaries working in northern India. These primarily Canadian and European missionaries – namely Fr. William Mackey and Rev. W.S. Sunderland – established schools in Haa, Bumthang, and Tashigang. While the Jesuits were not allowed to proselytize while they were in Bhutan, they did bring with them their own worldviews and understanding of the place of schooling in society born from a context very different from Bhutan. The Jesuit educational philosophy and curriculum was humanistic in its promotion of a secular canon used to teach moral character, promote the common good, foster social mobility, and provide intellectual freedom (O'Malley 2008). However, as Seth (2007) notes, often the goal of missionary education in northern India was not religious conversion but, rather, to prepare the student intellectually and rationally to come to Christ on their own volition. This, of course, is a much different placement of school and society than the Buddhist monasteries were to Bhutanese society.

The early days of the government education system, established in the 1st Five-Year Plan in 1959, was a period of heavy borrowing from the Indian education system (see also, Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume; Jagar Dorji, chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume). Like borrowing from the Jesuits, the importation of Indian education brought with it exogenous worldviews and out-of-context curriculum. The style of educational pedagogy and curriculum was very teacher-centred and subject-centred, inherited from British colonial education in India in the form of the 'monitorial' system (Dewan 1991), heavy reliance on textbooks (Kumar 1988), centralized examinations (Kumar 2004), rote

memorization, and child development models formed by 'Western' psychologists (Gupta 2006). While Buddhist education does traditionally espouse memorization, mimicry, and a hierarchical teacher-centred apprentice system (Karma Phutsho 2000; Rennie 2008; Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume), the wide-scale application of this approach to education was new to the majority of the Bhutanese population – not to mention the curricular materials coming from India were alien as well.

Beginning in the 1980s, Bhutan began to re-contextualize its schools under the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) during a period of 'Bhutanization' (Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume). New readers and textbooks began to feature Bhutanese names, places, stories, and worldviews. Using Hindi as a language of instruction was phased-out and replaced by English and Dzongkha. However, ghosts of the past still linger in the system which makes pedagogical reforms difficult. New curricular materials allowed the Bhutanese students to learn and understand about themselves, but the majority of teachers still maintain a strict, teacher-centred classroom and prepare students for harsh assessments and examinations using corporal punishment (Sonam Tenzin 2006; Schuelka 2014). The precipitous expansion of schooling provision, access to schools, and the *right* to a school education for *all* also brings challenges to a system of schooling traditionally focused on homogenous student populations in both the monastic and secular school systems (Jagar Dorji 2008; Schuelka 2014). Some of these challenges are taken up in this volume.

A recent initiative in trying to change the culture of schooling and teaching in Bhutan is Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH). The EGNH initiative embraces student-centred pedagogy (MoE 2012a) and is an attempt at operationalizing and inculcating GNH values into education. This will be explained in further detail below, and also in many chapters of this volume (i.e. Kezang Sherab, Maxwell and Cooksey, chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume; Pema Tshomo, "Conditions of Happiness: Bhutan's Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative and the Capability Approach", this volume).

Gross National Happiness Bhutan's GNH concept has captured world-wide attention. It is a concept that could probably only have come from a country that is dominated by Buddhist thinking and practices. It was first articulated by the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in 1972 (McDonald 1999). He contrasted GNH with Gross National Income/Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and articulated that GNH was more to be desired by a country than GDP. In Bhutan, 'happiness' is written *Gyalyong Gakid Pelzom*, which more accurately translates as "happiness and peace for all nations for the realization of all things good and virtuous." This transcends a more 'Western' idea of material happiness, or the American-Jeffersonian constitutional value of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." More than four decades later, the first and then the second democratically-elected government in Bhutan adopted GNH as a guiding philosophy for government decision-making. Symbolizing its importance, the Planning Commission, which

produced the influential *Bhutan 2020* document (Planning Commission 1999), was re-named the GNH Commission (GNHC). GNH addresses key areas of societal interest. The four pillars of GNH are:

1. Good governance
2. Sustainable socio-economic development
3. Preservation and promotion of culture
4. Environmental conservation

These pillars a divided into nine inter-related domains:

1. Psychological wellbeing
2. Standard of living
3. Good governance
4. Health
5. Education
6. Community vitality
7. Cultural vitality and resilience
8. Time use
9. Ecological diversity and resilience

The domains are further divided and sub-divided into categories that can be used to assist decision-making and even to define and analyse happiness as experienced by the Bhutanese.

One of the primary issues in using GNH as a development philosophy is how to actually operationalise GNH in practice. This has been an issue taken up at periodically-held International Conferences on Gross National Happiness and at the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research (see, for example, CBS 2015b; Karma Ura and Dorji Penjore 2008; Mancall 2004). The Centre for Bhutan Studies also runs the GNH Index, which is a measurement using objective indicators within each of the nine domains given above (CBS 2015a). The purpose of the Index is to help steer policy to become more GNH-relevant. All policies in Bhutan must also pass muster with the GNHC before they are allowed to be implemented (GNHC 2015). While the actual implementation of policy may vary in effectiveness and intention, at least on paper every policy and guideline must represent GNH values and the development philosophy.

Not surprisingly, one of the main sectors that GNH has the most traction is in education. From 2010, Bhutan has been attempting to integrate the GNH philosophy into schools via an approach called Educating for GNH (EGNH). GNH had to be a key focus in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools, even in tertiary education. However, it is not taught as a subject but as an overarching theme. This has the advantage of providing philosophical vision, but the disadvantage of requiring it to compete for time with school subjects that are examined externally. It is also difficult to operationalise an abstract concept, as mentioned above in the overall GNH approach to development.

The essential idea of EGNH is to use schools in Bhutan to teach GNH values, although how to do this is not made explicit. All teachers in Bhutan underwent EGNH trainings in 2012–2013 and made attempts during these trainings to operationalise EGNH for themselves in their classrooms using some guidance (MoE 2012a). For example, teachers were prompted to discuss 'GNH and the Successful Graduate' and focused on the domains of the Workplace, Community, Family, Citizen, and Self. These domains included attributes such as 'Choosing right livelihood', 'Respect and appreciation for the indigenous value system', 'Compassionate', 'Honest and resistant to corruption', and 'Involvement in the community' (MoE 2012a, p. 11). Teachers were also directed to address the "head (cognitive), heart (affective), hand (psychomotor) and home (social) domains of the child" (MoE 2012a, p. 11), illustrated in a Buddhist *mandala*. While the EGNH initiative focused on how teachers can inculcate GNH values, they were most often teaching using the same materials as before and, therefore, the results of reform effectiveness are mixed (Kezang Sherab et al. 2014; chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume).

One of the key proponents of EGNH, Minister for Education in the first elected government *Lyonpho* Thakur Singh Powdyel subsequently developed the idea of "green schools for green Bhutan" (MoE 2012b) with the emphasis upon 'green' as a metaphor. Green Schools are an attempt to create GNH-based schools built on eight dimensions: Environmental greenery, Intellectual greenery, Academic greenery, Social greenery, Cultural greenery, Spiritual greenery, Aesthetic greenery, and Moral greenery (MoE 2012b). This serves as an organisational and philosophical guidance for schools.

Consequently, Bhutanese educators are seeking a pathway that would be of considerable interest to many outside Bhutan. There are several reasons for this. First is the interest in GNH itself as a philosophy. Secondly, its impact on policy is worthy of attention. Third, the attempt to implement GNH through Educating for GNH addresses practical problems of resourcing, culture and custom, practices of teachers and administrators, and a range of other issues.

As a 'developing country', Bhutan's education system faces a number of current issues as its development aspirations challenge many traditional stances. Within the last 60 years, Bhutan has been moving away from an economic and social feudal system and into a modern democratic state. This movement is not without its frictions and challenges. Schooling has played a key role in promoting both the economic and social development of modern Bhutan. However, Educating for GNH impacts upon each of the current issues in Bhutanese education. Most of these were evident before the EGNH initiative. For example, the Ministry of Education has begun to address gender in education, students with disabilities, teacher training, student-centred learning, and quality control. The Royal Government is concerned about education and employment, particularly in rural areas. These issues will be discussed and potential ways forward identified by various contributing authors to this volume.

Book Structure and Outline

This book is more than a profile of the education system of Bhutan. Chapters on Bhutan's rich educational history provide the background to developments in the twentieth century leading to complex issues evident today and in the future. This book is structured in two parts: (I) Historical perspectives, and (II) Contemporary issues. Of course, all chapters are not just merely one part or the other as it is hard to discuss a historical event without discussing its contemporary implications, and vice-versa. However, the chapters of the first part are focused in scope on the historical development of the whole – or respective components – of education in Bhutan. The chapters of the second part of the book are focused primarily on specific issues in the education system in Bhutan today. These include both challenges to various demographic groups, as well as suggestions for the future.

Part I contains socio-cultural historical perspectives on the key sectors of education in Bhutan. Progress in secular education has been strong (Maxwell 2008) but there have been difficulties. *Dasho* Pema Thinley begins Part 1 with an overview of Bhutanese education as he has experienced it starting from life as a student; then as a teacher, lecturer, Secretary of Education in the Ministry of Education and Health, and then as the second Vice-Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). Pema Thinley also argues for the importance of 'mindfulness education' and EGNH in Bhutan's schools, and suggests that this is the 'heart essence' of the education system.

In the third chapter, RUB's first Vice-Chancellor, *Lyonpho* Zangley Dukpa, presents the picture of monastic education in Bhutan, the first systematised form of schooling in Bhutan. He explores how Buddhist monastic education developed in ancient India and Tibet and how this has informed the look and practice of monastic education in Bhutan. Contemporary issues in monastic education are also raised.

These two chapters are complemented by a history of primary and secondary formal schooling development in the fourth chapter by Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen. In this chapter, the authors view the development of secular schooling in Bhutan through the 'izations' – Bhutanization, nationalization, decentralization; and the 'nesses' – student-centredness, teacher-centredness, wholesomeness. They also trace the progress of organizational change in Bhutanese education, as well as a thorough description of the development of the education assessment system.

Higher education began with the attachment of colleges and institutes to their respective Ministries, except for Sherubstse College which was associated with Delhi University. In the fifth chapter, Janet Schofield sets out the organizational structure and functioning of government and private tertiary education in Bhutan, as well as the content areas on which it focuses. Four major challenges currently facing tertiary education in Bhutan are proposed by Schofield, which include: expanding tertiary enrolment, promoting high-quality research, balance between quality assurance and innovation and flexibility, and the 'fit' between graduates' skills and preferences and job market demands.

The sixth chapter presents the history and development of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* [traditional medicine] education in Bhutan. This chapter is a fascinating look into a unique aspect of Bhutan, and in how traditional medical education has become formalized into the modern education sector. The newly-established Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB), the second university in Bhutan, is discussed in terms of structure, curriculum, and integration with the health and education sectors.

The last chapter in Part I details the international influence in the development of the Bhutanese education system by Jagar Dorji, former member of the National Council and former Director of Paro College of Education and Sherubtse College. Jagar Dorji, himself, experienced many of the changes that occurred in Bhutanese education as a result of international contact. He draws upon other personal testimonials as well in his discussion of the international agencies and ex-patriate teachers that shaped the early days of the Bhutanese education system.

Part II of this book builds on Part I to link the historical context to the contemporary issues faced in the Bhutanese education system. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, the ever-growing expansion of educational provision mixed with a commitment to education for *all* has meant challenges in providing a quality educational experience. One of the biggest challenges faced by Bhutan is its helpless fate of being an extremely mountainous and rural country. In the eighth chapter, Akiko Ueda explores the impact that modern secular education has had on the rural character of Bhutan in terms of culture and also in the economy.

The ninth chapter is focused on one of the major themes of this book, Educating for GNH. Specifically, Pema Tshomo argues that the capability approach pioneered by Amartya Sen (1999) is a powerful lens in which to evaluate the EGNH initiative. The capability approach calls for the right conditions of freedom to be in place for quality and equity in education, which Pema Tshomo effectively argues needs to be at the centre of the EGNH framework.

Chapter ten is also centred on EGNH, primarily on understanding the teacher and the effective implementation and operationalization of EGNH in the classroom. Kezang Sherab, T.W. Maxwell, and Ray Cooksey argue that teacher understanding of how to actually *do* EGNH is low and, so far, the most effective use of the EGNH framework has been in extra-curricular activities and not within the school curriculum itself. They also suggest that changing the current culture of education in Bhutan is challenging, and more can be done in the pre- and in-service development of teachers.

Then follows a chapter on an important development in Bhutan: non-formal education. In chapter eleven, former Minister of Education *Lyonpho* T.S. Powdyel points out that despite the rapid growth of the formal education system, literacy remained out of the reach of many Bhutanese – especially among rural adult women and men. Non-formal education in Bhutan has been a critical strategy for inclusion and empowerment of a significant population of those citizens who missed the opportunity to acquire literacy skills.

In the twelfth chapter, Rinchen Dorji and Matthew Schuelka detail the recent developments in providing schooling for children with disabilities in Bhutan.

Educational policy has shifted from predominantly a special schools approach to, now, an inclusive education approach for children with disabilities. This chapter traces the historical developments in policy, as well as current provision, before arguing for the expansion of pre-service teacher development in the Bhutanese colleges of education specifically focused on teaching children with disabilities.

Chapter thirteen describes another recent development in education in Bhutan: early childhood care and development (ECCD). Tshering Wangmo and Margaret Brooks provide an overview of ECCD provision in Bhutan. They also argue for a socio-cultural 'funds of knowledge' approach (Moll et al. 1992) to understanding ECCD in Bhutan and for promoting EGNH in the early years of education. This chapter includes an effective ethnographic case-study of 'Bishaka' and her experiences in early childhood care and education.

Issues associated with gender equity are only now being addressed in Bhutan. Even though Bhutan is a signatory to major international conventions (Maxwell et al. 2015) practices have not generally followed. In the fourteenth chapter, Kinlay Seden and T. W. Maxwell provide relevant statistics and identifies a range of issues that need to be addressed. Much of these have to do with policy implementation issues.

In the final chapter, the editors will return to summarise the main points, issues, and suggestions for the future posed by the other chapters. It is our hope that a summary of the chapters as a collective effort will present a clear and coherent proposal for the future of Bhutanese education policy, initiatives, and vision. In particular, we are interested in ways in which EGNH can become more effective and concrete within the Bhutanese educational system.

Throughout the volume, we are also featuring photographs of Bhutanese schools and school children taken by Clint Chapman, Vice-Principal at Thimphu Primary School. These photos serve to help the reader better visualize the environs and context of the Bhutanese schools that are discussed in the chapters. Likewise, the photographs also help ground the book and serves to remind the authors and readers that these chapters – with a fair amount of academic language and policy discussion – are describing real schools with implications for real children.

It is our hope that the reader will find this volume interesting, insightful, and relevant. We believe that the case of Bhutanese educational development can be applicable as an example of a small state not necessarily following a typical economic development path (Schuelka 2013a). Rather, Bhutan is demonstrating that education and schooling can be a catalyst for societal development in dimensions other than human capital. It is this human-centred GNH approach that has so captured the global imagination when Bhutan makes the international news, or is a topic of conversation in the halls of the United Nations. GNH is not infallible, however, and needs to be continually examined, challenged, applied, and contextualized in order for it to resonate in Bhutanese society and beyond. There is nowhere we can think of more perfect for these conversations to start to resonate than in the Bhutanese classroom.

A boy run across the Punakha suspension bridge (Photo: Clint Chapman)

Students happily wait along the road to be blessed by the *Je Khenpo* (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Part I
Historical Perspectives

Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System

Pema Thinley

Abstract This chapter provides an understanding of the Bhutanese education system from primary to upper-secondary. In doing this, it considers the distinguishing characteristics of the present system of education, and examines how the system is shaped and determined by Bhutan's guiding philosophy of development, Gross National Happiness. The second part of this chapter considers Educating for GNH as the 'heart essence' of the unique education system suited to a truly GNH society – a society that recognizes and seeks to address the basic human aspiration of continued happiness and prosperity of all beings, and examines its current state of development and the prospects and opportunities for the future.

Introduction

> I am a firm believer that if there is one word that will stand out above all other words when we describe our country's journey of modernization over the last few decades – it is Education. Our institution, our leaders of today – all of us – including me – are the proud products of the Bhutanese Education System … Parents and teachers, I want you to know that as King, my passion will always be to nurture our youth for it is their skills, their labour and commitment to the country that will build our future. There is no other path – no other tool – for Bhutan's future.

These are the words of the Fifth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King], His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck – who is also the Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan – addressing the graduates of the two Colleges of Education of the Royal University of Bhutan at their Convocation (Royal Address Delivered on 17 February 2009). His Majesty's statement underscores the emphasis that the Royal Government of Bhutan, under the leadership of its visionary Kings, has always put people at the centre of its development strategies and accorded due importance to the education of its people – especially since 1961 – and affirms that it needs to be continued.

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The Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, formulated Gross National Happiness as a new ethic for human development which is used to guide Bhutan's distinct path of development. It seeks to balance sustainable and equitable economic development with environmental conservation, cultural promotion, and good governance since the beginning of his reign in 1974 (McDonald 1999).

Education is viewed as one of the basic needs required to achieve Gross National Happiness (DoE 2003). This chapter considers the secular education system – there is also a comprehensive system of monastic education (see Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume) – that has resulted from a process of development that the Royal Government of Bhutan launched with the start of the First Five-Year Plan in 1961. It is the development seen through the lens of my own knowledge, experience, and institutional memories. After a brief discussion of the country and its people, this chapter provides a critical appraisal of the current Bhutanese education system. In doing this, it considers the distinguishing characteristics of the present system of education, and examines how the system is shaped and determined by Bhutan's guiding philosophy of development of Gross National Happiness. The second part of this chapter considers Educating for GNH as the 'heart essence' of the unique education system of education, suited to a truly GNH society – a society that recognizes and seeks to address the basic human aspiration of continued *happiness* and *prosperity* of all beings and examines its current state of development and the prospects and opportunities for the future.

The Context: The Country and Its People

Bhutan is a small country of 38,394 km^2 sandwiched between India and China with a population of 733,004 in 2013 (NSB 2014). It is completely landlocked, with rugged mountainous terrain rising steeply from 100 m at the southern borders to over 7000 m in the north.

The population is widely scattered across the steep mountain slopes and valleys in the southern and temperate belts, making the provision of social services, including education and training, difficult. As per the 2005 census, about 66.7 % of the population were living in villages engaged in subsistence farming (NSB 2014). However, rural-urban migration is becoming an increasing challenge as it calls for creating additional classroom space and other facilities in the growing urban centers whereas the schools in rural areas are being emptied (Walcott 2009; Ueda, chapter "Rural Life and Modern Formal Schooling in Bhutan", this volume). Bhutan has a young population with 50 % below 24 years of age (NSB 2014). Population growth estimated at 3.1 % in 1994 has declined to 1.3 % in 2014 (NSB 2014).

For a small country, Bhutan is linguistically diverse with three main languages and 24 total languages spoken. Dzongkha is the national language with Tshangla (or 'Sharchop') and Lhotshamka being the other two major languages. English is used as the medium of instruction from the pre-primary to the tertiary level.

Table 1 The proportion of budget outlays for the education sector in the various Five-Year Development Plans

Five-Year Plans	Budget allocation (%)
1st 1961–1966	8.8
2nd 1966–1971	17.7
3rd 1971–1976	18.9
4th 1976–1981	12.2
5th 1981–1985	11.2
6th 1987–1992	8.1
7th 1992–1997	11.1
8th 1997–2002	9.4
9th 2002–2007	14.5
10th 2007–2013	12.8
11th 2013–2018	8.01

DoE (2003) and MoE (2014a)

Bhutan has a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy as a form of Government, established since July 2008 on the initiative of the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*. Before 2008, Bhutan was governed by hereditary kings who played an active part in the affairs of the government. With the establishment of the monarchy in 1907, the twentieth century was a period of relative peace, stability and development under a succession of five benevolent and dynamic kings.

Bhutan remained in relative isolation from the rest of the world until the middle of the last century. It was only in the early 1960s that Bhutan deliberately and actively increased contact with the outside world as it embarked on its First Five-Year Plan in 1961. The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has pursued a development strategy in keeping with the country's culture and Buddhist values (Planning Commission 1999). Development in Bhutan is not just judged in quantifiable and materialistic socio-economic progress, but also in terms of spiritual and emotional wellbeing. The RGoB, under the leadership of the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*, considered that "human happiness is more important than economic growth [alone]" and that its policies and the activities of development should be aimed at enhancing the happiness of all its people, and thus the philosophy of development of maximizing Gross National Happiness which has been used since shortly after the King's coronation in 1972 (McDonald 1999). As such, education received substantial portions of the Five-Year Plan (FYP) Budget outlays as seen in Table 1.

The Current Bhutanese Education System

Education systems can be described and discussed in different ways. One useful way of describing and discussing it is to consider the policies which express the intent and then discuss the structures and the system and examine the extent to

which the system is able to meet the expressed intents, which is what this section sets out to do.

Education Policy The *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024*, which has been launched in 2014, concludes that there are many policies in different documents and calls for a need to consolidate all the policy directives into one legal framework in the form of an Education Act (MoE 2014b). Given this situation, if one has to tease out the education policy that is currently followed, the mother of all laws is the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan promulgated in 2008, which provides that:

> The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality. (RGoB 2008, article 9.15)

> The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (RGoB 2008, article 9.16).

These provisions in the constitution of Bhutan are outcomes of what has been found to be possible and desirable based on the last 50 years' experience of building up a public education system and making it accessible to its people. Education in Bhutan is *provided* but not *compulsory*. Prior to the promulgation of the Constitution of Bhutan, the Planning Commission, the highest central planning authority, published a seminal document – *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness* – in 1999 which outlines the education policy that is followed in Bhutan. Prior to the *Bhutan 2020* document, there were two policy documents: Education Policy 1974 and Education Policy 1984.

The gist of the 1974 policy is summarized in the following general aims of education:

> To preserve our country's rich cultural and spiritual heritage while seeking at the same time to reap the fruits of science and technology; Education must be related to planned development goals. It should as far as practicable be closely linked with actual manpower requirements of the country at different levels in various fields, with a view to avoid the problem of "unemployment of the educated" in future; and Education must be closely related to and immediately applicable to local conditions. (ED 1974, p. 6)

The 1974 policy raised the issue of relevance, related to Bhutan's need for an educated workforce, and related to its social and cultural traditions. The 1984 policy is really an elaboration of the 1974 policy which is encapsulated in the following objectives:

> Inculcate in students spiritual, cultural and traditional values and contribute to national and social cohesion;
>
> Meet the manpower requirements of the country and to avert, as far as possible, the incidence of educated unemployment;
>
> Base teaching methods on learning by understanding, by emphasising the relevance and practical use of knowledge learned and by decreasing the emphasis on learning by rote. (ED, 1984, p. 2–3)

Fifteen years after the 1984 draft Education Policy of Bhutan, the celebrated *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness* document stressed the future strategies for basic education to refine and develop the following areas (Planning Commission 1999, pp. 52–54):

(i) Basic education … be further extended to cover the most remote parts of the kingdom and all our young people;
(ii) … the expansion of the coverage of education must be accompanied by further determined efforts to achieve an improvement in the quality of basic education … (and) … must meet several requirements, notably:
(iii) … guided by a holistic concept based upon the total development of the child and the need to ensure that the innate potential of each and every child is fully realised;
(iv) … instil an awareness of the nation's unique cultural heritage, drawing upon sources of inspiration that date from the time of the *Shabdrung* as well as universal values that develop the capacity of our young people to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and to lead lives that are guided by moral and ethical choices;
(v) … prepare young people for the world of work and instil an acceptance of the dignity of labour;
(vi) Curricula development must be accompanied by the expansion of technical and vocational training programme at the *dzongkhag* [district] level, with appropriate counselling services, that provide opportunities for drop-outs to join the world of work;
(vii) … train teachers who are not only highly professional in their approach to education but also motivated and dedicated to the profession they have chosen;
(viii) … introduce a system of continuous education that is responsive to the needs of communities, groups and individuals;
(ix) … Initiatives that lead to the establishment of private schools should be further encouraged; and
(x) … establish a National University ….

The *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024* confirms the earlier policies, and sets out specific strategies in what it calls the 'Education Shifts and Game Changing Initiatives' for the Government to follow, as its working document. Enhancing access to early childhood care and development programs (Tshering Wangmo and Brooks, chapter "Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)", this volume), special education and inclusion programs (Rinchen Dorji and Schuelka, chapter "Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education", this volume), and tertiary education (Schofield, chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume) are new areas which receive attention in this document. Values education and wellbeing also receive special attention being considered as one of the eight major shifts beyond revamping the curriculum and assessment.

Through the five successive policy documents including the pronouncement in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* (RGoB 2008), and the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–24* (MoE 2014b), I observe:

- the continued importance the Royal Government of Bhutan places on education as fundamental to its philosophy of development of Gross National Happiness;
- the education that is provided to be made relevant and meaningful;

- the education that is provided to be about the development of the whole person to their fullest potential, integrating the cherished Bhutanese cultural and national values with the modern knowledge and technological developments; and
- that whereas, the 1974 and 1984 documents see education to be a mechanism to develop the human resources that were required by the system to carry out its various functions, the 1999 and 2014, documents stress the need to educate all its people, both young and old, to realize their full potential.

One can thus see how the philosophy of development of Gross National Happiness has guided the policy of education to:

- be made relevant and meaningful – in terms of the curriculum materials and engaging pedagogies;
- facilitate the development of the whole person including an understanding of oneself and what one values, and learning appropriate knowledge and skills to be able to live satisfying lives; and
- be inclusive and affordable – create opportunities and keep it affordable to all persons, of all abilities and ages at any stage of their lives to develop themselves to live happier lives.

How these policies are implemented and realised is what is discussed next.

Formal Education Structure Bhutan is administered through 20 *dzongkhags* [districts] and 205 *gewogs* [local blocks]. In an effort to decentralize development efforts, including decision making, the RGoB is increasing the power and administrative functions of the *dzongkhag* administration as well as the *gewog* administration. While the curriculum and the general policy directions are the functions of the Ministry of Education and its functionaries in Thimphu, the day to day administration of the schools including the deployment of teachers within the districts, are the responsibility of the *dzongkhags*. The District Education Officer (DEO) heads the Education Section in the *Dzongkhag* Administration.

Bhutan's system of education consists of seven years of primary schooling, Classes Pre-Primary to VI, and six years of secondary education, Classes VII to XII, leading to tertiary education. Basic Education includes eleven years of free education: seven years of primary plus four years of lower secondary, or until the end of Class X. Children start school at the age of six when they enter the pre-primary class. The pre-primary class is considered to be a reception class to prepare children to formal school which involve early childhood care and development (ECCD) methods and approaches to education (see Tshering Wangmo and Brooks, chapter "Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)", this volume).

On completion of Basic Education in Class X, a minimum of 40 % of the students who pass the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE) continue to Classes XI and XII in government higher secondary schools. These schools are free and based on merit (MoE 2014b). Of the rest, about 20 % of the total who pass out of Basic Education go to private higher secondary schools, about 10 % go to technical institutes to pursue vocational programs, and about 30 % join the workforce (MoE 2014a).

Of those that complete higher secondary school, about 40 % go on to study various programs at the Royal University of Bhutan – in the public colleges, Royal Thimphu College (private), or the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences. Seventy percent of students studying at the tertiary level receive government scholarships and the rest study as fee paying students. Of the remaining 60 % who pass out from the higher secondary schools, about 2 % receive various government scholarships to study in professional programs abroad – particularly for medicine and those programs which are not yet offered by the two Universities within Bhutan – or on scholarships offered by other countries. About 30 % seek tertiary education as fee paying students in various countries, mostly in India. The rest enter the labour market (MoE 2014b).

Curriculum The easiest and the quickest way of introducing an organised system of schooling in 1961, when it did not have its own expertise, was to borrow and implant another country’s curriculum (see Jagar Dorji, chapter “International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan”, this volume; Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen, chapter “History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century”, this volume). Bhutan borrowed the curriculum, including the physical textbooks, which were being followed by some of the English medium schools in India. It recruited expatriates, predominantly Indians, to teach in Hindi and then English, which was later adopted as the medium of instruction. The content of the curriculum in terms of textbooks, the medium of instruction, as well as teachers were thus far removed from the experiences of the Bhutanese children (Pema Thinley 1980). Therefore, one can understand the concern for the need to make the curriculum relevant to the Bhutanese students and the need to teach the Bhutanese values expressed in all the policy statements as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The implementation of the policy of making curriculum more relevant and meaningful – particularly at the primary level – was carried out as an exercise involving the teachers on a massive scale only from 1986. The work on the new syllabi had started in 1985 with a working team consisting of experienced and progressive educationists selected from among the teaching force. The new curriculum included the three main “tool” subjects – Dzongkha, English, and Mathematics – as well as a new subject called Environmental Studies. This new subject, which was to be taught in Classes Pre-Primary to III, included elements of History, Geography, Science, Health and Hygiene, and Culture and Tradition. Prior to this exercise of curriculum reform; History, Geography and Science were taught as separate subjects, thus making the Curriculum in these classes crowded and heavy. The new primary curriculum – later called the New Approach to Primary Education [NAPE] – was to be based around a class teacher system, with children to take an active part in their lessons, using the local environment of the school, the community, the district, and the country as a basis for learning. Previously, teaching in primary school was based upon subjects where teachers rotated amongst the classes (Pema Thinley 1999).

The Department of Education (2003), in formulating the *Education Sector Strategy: Realizing Vision 2020, Policy and Strategy,* noted that the shift in pedagogy from rote-learning to activity and enquiry-based approaches through the NAPE introduced in 1986 and expanded during the 1990s, had significant impacts on improving student attendance, reducing dropout, and enhancing completion rates. However, Jagar Dorji (2003) in his study of the NAPE experience concluded that while the contents in the curriculum materials were found to be suitable to Bhutanese children, pedagogically the learner-centred approach did not materialise as intended. He attributes it to mainly (i) the shortage of qualified teachers combined with generally lower educational attainment of teachers already in the system, and (ii) an apparent lack of sufficient support, guidance and pressure from the centre in terms of providing effective In-service Education for Teachers (INSET) programs, visiting schools and interacting with them.

The efforts to take the NAPE curriculum reforms through to the secondary schools met with greater challenges. The next phase of curriculum reform, starting in 2002, focussed on the mastery of the key subjects of English, Dzongkha, and Mathematics from Pre-Primary to Class XII (DoE 2003). The *Bhutan Education Blueprint, 2014–2024*, in reviewing the reform process, noted that while students generally enjoyed learning both English and Mathematics, they find it challenging (MoE 2014b). The most recent move to make education relevant, meaningful and enjoyable is the Ministry of Education's initiatives indicated in the *Bhutan Education Blueprint, 2014–2024* which proposes to review and revise PP-XII curriculum across all subjects integrating GNH values and principles.

In all the works of school curriculum reforms, there has been little consideration that has been given to instituting GNH-consistent pedagogies and making the classroom practices consistent with GNH values and principles. The Educating for GNH (EGNH) initiative that has been implemented since 2010 implies such an initiative to be crucial, which would support at least three of the five pathways: infusing GNH values into the curriculum, holistic assessment of students, and media literacy and critical thinking skills. Some work that has been done at the Royal University of Bhutan to institute a GNH approach to teaching and learning involving critical pedagogy and contemplative education, through a Participatory Action Research format, would seem to be equally applicable for schools in Bhutan.

An extensive baseline study in 2012 identified gaps between essential qualities of a GNH classroom and existing classroom practices in the Colleges of RUB. The research team deduced that four essential qualities should exist in a GNH classroom:

- Students need to feel included and appreciated by peers and lecturers;
- Students are respected for their different abilities, cultures (family histories), gender, interests and dreams;
- Students are actively involved in their own learning; and
- Students have positive expectations that have been articulated from the lecturers that they will succeed. The lecturers are there to support their success as a learner (Young et al. 2012).

The work to close an identified gap was initiated through a workshop in the winter of 2012/2013 involving small groups of faculty from all the Colleges of RUB. Such an initiative, in the next phase of the efforts at the school curriculum reform particularly in consideration of Educating for GNH program initiative, would seem to be critical and have an empowering effect. The success of any reform however depends on the quality of teachers which is what is discussed next.

The Quality of Teachers Beeby (1966, p. 52), in his classic study of the development of school systems, proposed four stages of development based on the premise that "teaching that emphasises meaning is better than teaching that concentrates on form with relative neglect of meaning." He also proposed that the ability of the school system to move from one stage to the next higher stage is determined by the level of general education of its teachers and the amount and the kind of training that they have received. One of the main enablers to the development of the Bhutanese education system has been the trust and the will to invest in the teachers, knowing teachers alone can only deliver the type and the quality of education the nation desires, and co-create the aspirations for a GNH society (Planning Commission 1999).

The first Teacher Training Institute (TTI) was established at Samtse in 1968 to train primary school teachers, followed by the establishment of a Teacher Training Centre (TTC) at Paro in 1975, targeting early childhood teacher education. They provided a two year Primary Teacher Certificate Program after Class VIII initially, and after Class X starting in 1984/1985. Further in 1983, the TTI at Samtse was upgraded to a National Institute of Education (NIE) with the added responsibility to train secondary teachers through a three-year Bachelor of Education degree program after Class XII. NIE Samtse also introduced a one-year Post-Graduate Certificate in Education program for those who had an undergraduate degree.

Both these institutes became constituent Colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan in 2003 when the University was established (MoE 2014b). These Colleges now offer a range of professional training programs for teachers and educational leaders. A Bachelor of Education through a part-time mode has also been offered to allow teachers with the two-year Primary Teachers Certificate to enhance their professional education starting in the latter half of the 1990s. A Master of Education in Leadership and Management, through a part time mode, was also introduced in 2005/2006 as an in-service program. Similarly, the Ministry of Education facilitated many of its teachers to study abroad – particularly in Australia and Canada – through a mix of financial support mechanisms. In 2013 there were 5 teachers with PhDs, 655 teachers with Master's degrees, 725 with Post-Graduate Diplomas in Education, 4066 with Bachelor's degrees, 1973 with Primary Teacher Certificate, and 401 with Higher Secondary Education/Matriculation. One can see a critical mass of teachers who can provide the leadership in the transformation of education in the next phase of its development, as laid out in the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024*. Further, the Ministry of Education in 2013 for the first time was able to select the teachers through an interview from those who graduated from the two Colleges of Education since it does not now have critical shortage of teachers. In the past, the

Ministry of Education recruited and employed everyone who passed out of the two Colleges of Education.

The Ministry of Education has identified the need to raise the morale and motivation of teachers. It wishes to attract the best and the brightest into the teaching force, which is reflected in the new *Teacher Human Resource Policy 2014* and the implementation of this is incorporated in the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024*.

Inclusiveness, Affordability, and Sustainability An education system that aims to maximise Gross National Happiness has to be inclusive and made affordable and accessible for all of its people. This has been enabled through provision of free Basic Education; full scholarships to study at the higher secondary schools, and tertiary levels for substantial numbers (40 to 45 % of the cohort of students each year) based on academic merit; providing a range of supports for persons with special educational needs; broadening the range of educational opportunities, including private education offerings; as well as opportunities for continuing education throughout their lives.

Education in Bhutan is free, and is guaranteed by the constitution for up to eleven years of basic schooling. In order to make education accessible to everyone; free tuition, textbooks, sports items, meals and boarding facilities, where required, are provided by the government. The RGoB also provides free stationery to its rural schools. A minimum of 40 % of all students who complete Basic Education on merit, based on the BCSE results, also receive free education including textbooks and boarding facilities depending on the need. Further free education also includes a substantial day feeding program (MoE 2014b). Such facilities are also extended to the students of Technical Training Institutes who go there on completion of basic education.

As much as the RGoB sees the need to provide free education, it has encouraged the community, as well as private participation, to engender a sense of participation amongst the population and to engage and involve the stakeholders, including private enterprise, to share costs and induce long term sustainability. Rural communities contribute labor while the RGoB provides the building material for the construction and maintenance of the community primary schools, which has made the rapid increases in enrolments possible (DoE 2003). Where there is a feeding program, the parents also contribute to part of the feeding costs both in kind and cash to meet the costs of fresh vegetables. In addition, a nominal admission fee of 5 Ngultrum [US$ 0.08] is charged for every child enrolling at the Pre-Primary level. Students are also required to contribute towards a school development fund at the rate of Nu.30 [US$ 0.47] per annum.

In contrast to community participation in rural areas, to create greater opportunities beyond what it could provide the RGoB encourages the establishment of private schools and institutions “to allow greater choice of curricula and teaching learning approaches …and to lessen the resource burden on the Royal Government” (Education Sector Review Commission 2008, p. 15). While the RGoB sees the advantages of private schools and other educational institutions – including colleges providing tertiary education opportunities – it has been cautious to ensure that it does not lead to “simultaneous emergence of two tier system in terms of quality and

equity of opportunity” (DoE 2003, p. 19). To date there is a small number of private, fee-paying, primary schools; a large number of higher secondary schools which cater to Classes XI and XII students who do not get entry into the government schools on merit after Basic Education; and one private college catering to tertiary education. Generally the government schools, unlike elsewhere in other parts of the world, has remained the preferred option. The private schools, particularly some of the primary schools and the private college, offer a diversified choice of curriculum. In 2014, there were 32 private schools (MoE 2014b).

As the Bhutanese education system evolved, it has increasingly created opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to learn and develop, including establishing community primary schools in the most remote locations of Bhutan (Ninnes et al. 2007; Kucita et al. 2012, 2013), technical and vocational education for those not able to enter tertiary education, non-formal education provisions for those who missed formal education, continuing education for those who had to discontinue formal education because of personal circumstances (see T. S. Powdyel, chapter “Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact”, this volume), special education for differently-abled learners (see Rinchen Dorji and Schuelka, chapter “Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education”, this volume), and early childhood programs (Tshering Wangmo and Brooks, chapter “Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)”, this volume).

Most youth who do not meet the criteria to continue to Class XI often experience a great deal of anxiety and frustration. A look at any recent Annual Education Statistics of Bhutan (MoE 2014a) reveals that at least 30 % of the 10,000 to 15,000 students who complete Class X, and 30 % of the 6,000 to 8,000 students who complete Class XII each year, face this situation. Against these numbers in 2014, the six Technical Training Institutes, two National Institutes for *Zorig Chusum* [thirteen traditional arts and crafts] and a private Technical Training Institute, together were able to accommodate only 1405 students in the 18 to 30 months programs that they run (MoE 2014a). This is the weakest link in the Bhutanese education and training system which needs to be addressed without delay.

While the Ministry of Labor and Human Resources, which is responsible for technical and vocational education, is trying hard to create greater opportunities as well as to create employment for these students, more needs to be done to create a greater range of training as well as a greater number of places (see also, Schofield, chapter “Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges”, this volume). This will assist many young Bhutanese to develop their talents to participate fully in the exciting economic environment Bhutan finds itself. While the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024* recognizes this need and says that the quality of the existing technical/vocational institutes, including the programs and the quality of instructors, needs to be revamped and the numbers enhanced (MoE 2014b), I do not feel assured that it would actually be achieved since it does not provide any details.

At the same time, opportunities to learn and better their lives have to be made available for people of all ages and abilities, at affordable costs, thus creating an environment for a truly learning society. The Delors Commission (Delors 1996, p. 18) concluded that

> Valid responses to the problems of mismatch between supply and demand on the labour market can come from a more flexible system that allows greater curricular diversity and builds bridges between different types of education, or between working life and further training.

A larger number of what could be called ‘community colleges’ spread across the whole country could fulfill this function. One finds models of such colleges for example in the United States, Malaysia, Canada, and Thailand which provide a range of programs in duration as well as level. Some of the selected high schools in rural areas where the enrolments are dropping could be turned into community colleges.

Another opportunity for extended learning is the Non-Formal Education program, which was established in 1992 as a way of reaching out to those who missed formal schooling and those who dropped out early from school (see T. S. Powdyel, chapter “Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact”, this volume). It has won popular appeal for providing basic literacy and functional skills, and benefitted over 170,000 learners so far across the whole country (Division of Education 1994). In 2014, there were 8,079 learners in 774 centres, with 784 instructors (MoE 2014a).

Similarly, the Continuing Education Program started in 2006 to provide continuing and lifelong learning opportunities for people who did not complete their formal studies. In 2014, there were 2,096 students studying in 17 schools (MoE 2014b). Both the non-formal and the continuing education have become vibrant programs, opening new doors to numerous opportunities.

Educating for GNH: The Heart Essence of the Unique System of Bhutanese Education

The concept of Gross National Happiness, as I understand it, is underpinned by the profound understanding that all beings seek happiness and that Gross National Happiness can be maximised only when the happiness of every person is maximised. As Gaur et al. (2010) elucidate, happiness is an experience of being in harmony within the self, the family, the society and nature/existence and that one can learn to be in harmony at all the four levels of existence. Therefore, an education system that seeks to enhance Gross National Happiness has to develop so that it facilitates self-exploration and understanding of oneself and others in the family, society, and nature; as well as a system that offers relevant and meaningful curriculum and makes learning engaging and enjoyable. It is also a system that is inclusive and which extends opportunities to each and every citizen, thus creating an enabling environment for all.

Holistic Education The report of the First Interim Government states that:

> Education that is right for Bhutan … must provide its people, young and old, the opportunity to learn to be ‘smart’ (to live in a changing and increasingly globalised world), as well

as 'wise', who can rule their world, and live happier and dignified lives, in peace and harmony, with others and the rest of nature (RGoB 2013, p. 10).

Learning to be 'smart' is what is mostly taught in the formal courses of studies in schools and universities. Learning to be 'wise', on the other hand, is what His Majesty the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* always reminded the teachers, to teach children the following fundamental values:

- *'semdagzinthabni'* [to take care of their minds];
- '*semdring-di zoni'* [to be strong in their mind (founded on what is true and right) as opposed to being feeble]; and
- *'semgochoepzoni'*, [be mindful of their actions in body, speech and mind], such that their actions cause no harm to others (including the rest of nature), but rather benefit them, and in turn bring greater, peace, harmony and happiness among others around them including themselves.

'Mindfulness Education' is used to encapsulate these concepts on training the mind from His Majesty.

His Majesty's wisdom of Mindfulness Education, as I understand, is founded on the Bhutanese Buddhist understanding and values of:

- *le judrey* – the concept of cause, condition, and effect and the ethical Buddhist consciousness, of consequences of one's decisions and actions in daily life; and
- *thadamtshig* – that existence is co-existence and the need to exhibit mutual trust and affection (Royal Education Council 2012, p. 88).

Thinking back now, His Majesty the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* envisioned GNH to be Bhutan's philosophy of development and developing mindfulness in the children and the youth to be the path to reach GNH, for if most people put the welfare and wellbeing of others ahead of their own, then it would indeed promote a profoundly happy society.

Terminology can be confusing, particularly when it is used to represent new phenomena and developments. Holistic Education, Values Education, Educating for GNH, and Mindfulness Education, in the context of what is being discussed need to be clarified. *Holistic Education* is used to mean the whole school experience that allows students to learn to be 'smart' as well as 'wise', which affords them to develop their full human personality, to live happy and fulfilling lives in harmony within oneself, the family, the society, and the rest of nature. *Educating for GNH* is used, as the Ministry of Education envisaged it, as a program to teach the values and principles of Gross National Happiness through five pathways of meditation and mind training, infusing GNH values in the curriculum, holistic assessment of students, broader learning environment, and media literacy and critical thinking skills (MoE 2014b). *Mindfulness Education* encapsulates the essence of *semdagzinthabni*, *semdring-di zoni* and *semgochoepzoni* and covers the teaching of the core values and principles of Gross National Happiness. GNH values, as Karma Ura (2009) explained, are complex but in essence no more than what is contained in His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck's concept of *semgochoepzoni*

of teaching the students to be mindful of their actions in body, speech and mind, such that their actions cause no harm to others and nature; but rather benefit them, and in turn bring greater, peace, harmony and happiness among others around them, including themselves.

Most education systems, including that of Bhutan's for now, are outward bound or "used to explore outside" as Gaur et al. (2010, p. 11) put it. The students are taught to examine and study everything around them but not themselves. Educating for GNH teaches the students the values and principles of living fulfilling and happier lives based on the realization of *dharma* – the truth of the way things are – and being able to distinguish it from *drama* – the illusion that acts like truth as Dzogchen Ponlop (2010) puts it. It is expected to address this concern and make the education that is provided holistic.

Implementation and Practice of Educating for GNH The concept of Educating for GNH was articulated only in 2010 by the Ministry of Education, following a week long dialogue in December 2009 featuring 25 of the world's top educators in the fields of holistic education, eco-literacy and sustainability education, contemplative education, indigenous knowledge, and critical and analytical thinking; 50 international observers from 16 countries; and Bhutan's own leading educators. The aim was to chart out a pathway to infuse and teach the values and principles of GNH in Bhutanese schools and educational institutions (Pema Thinley 2012). I was a participant in the week-long dialogue. Previous to 2010, GNH values were taught as value education, integrated in traditional subjects particularly in Dzongkha, Environmental Studies, Social Studies, History, and to a lesser extent in English, Geography, and Economics. These values were also taught through the extra-curricular activities of games and sports, scouting, cultural and literary activities, counseling and career education, as well as social work. Targeting promotion of appropriate values amongst students, a *Choeshed* [Buddhist discourse] program was also initiated in 2003. Karma Ura's (2009) short study and reflection on the state of affairs of the teaching of GNH values revealed that the value education program that was offered in the schools in Bhutan to that date lacked clarity and focus resulting in no tangible impact on the behavior of the students.

In two unstructured interviews on the implementation of the Educating for GNH with the head of the Education Monitoring and Support Division (EMSD) Phuntsho Lhamo, who is also the focal person for Educating for GNH Program, I came to understand that the program is supported through the professional training that EMSD provides. They have covered about 50 % of Bhutan's teachers. The implementation is monitored through the reports of the School Management Performance System which has the Educating for GNH Initiative indicators reflected in it. A period of half an hour to forty-five minutes that was allotted to teach values education prior to 2010 was done away with. Apart from the first pathway of meditation and mind training which provide short periods of meditation during morning school assemblies and during the classes as teachers may wish, the rest of the programs are considered integrated into the activities of the school day. This poses a real danger of receding into non-action after the initial phase of excitement and the effect of the

four-day training wears out; there doesn’t seem to be anything really tangible to anchor the program.

Out of the five pathways, ‘meditation and mind training’ in my view, and as Karma Ura suggests (2009), would play the most transformative role if it is taught by persons who seriously study and practice meditation themselves. With scientific findings showing improvements in academic performance, mental health and psychological wellbeing as well as reducing stress and anxiety among students, meditation is becoming generally accepted as a valuable practice beyond any religion (Ricard 2006; Karma Ura 2009). The Educating for GNH Initiative is reported to have contributed to improving the physical and educational ambiance of the schools and brought positive behavior changes in both teachers and students (MoE 2014b).

In yet another development on the path to enhancing Educating for GNH, the Royal University of Bhutan borrowed a Universal Human Values Education course developed by three professors in India (Gaur et al. 2010). It was realized that the values that the Universal Human Values Education course covered are the same as the values and principles that under-pin the concept of GNH and the teaching of these values are made simple and easily accessible to facilitate self-exploration among the students.

The Universal Human Values (Gaur et al. 2010, p. 11) is based on the profound truth that:

- all beings seek to live with a feeling of continuous happiness and prosperity;
- human beings have an innate nature which they call ‘natural acceptance’ which is common to all human beings;
- being happy implies being free from contradictions, being in consonance with one’s natural acceptance, being in harmony;
- understanding and living in harmony within oneself, in family, in society, and in nature and existence, ensures continuous happiness and prosperity;
- and that these truths of life can be taught through a process of self-exploration to “find out what is valuable to me by investigating within myself.

This program was piloted at Gaeddu College of Business Studies in 2012 and introduced in all the Colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan as a compulsory non-credited course starting in the Autumn Semester of 2013 (RUB 2014).

In the First National Conference on Universal Human Values Education or GNH Values Education in December 2014, which I chaired, most Colleges reported seeing improvements in the behavior and the conduct of staff and students who attended the Universal Human Values education or ‘GNH values education’ course in the RUB Colleges. The participants at the Conference provided some examples of the impact of the GNH values education course (RUB 2014).

Need for Consolidation and Consideration of Possibilities The Educating for GNH initiative needs to be consolidated to serve as a centerpiece of the unique system of education in Bhutan. While no comprehensive review of the implementation

of the Educating for GNH initiative has been carried out as yet, some studies (Kucita et al. 2013; Sherab et al. 2013, 2014) report teachers struggling in the classroom and the schools experiencing considerable difficulties with the implementation of the program. This is to be expected in the initial phase of such a profound and complex change initiative, as Jagar Dorji observes in the case of NAPE, as discussed earlier.

Educating for GNH, in essence, is nothing short of getting the students to understand themselves through a constant and continuous process of self-exploration. In my own experience for the last one and half decades, engaging in the business of value education led me to engage in self-exploration through contemplation and reflection. I realize that learning to understand oneself and relating everything else to that understanding can make all learning and, in fact the life itself, meaningful and enjoyable in any situation.

The Educating for GNH initiative, as it is currently designed and implemented by the Ministry of Education, in my view lacks the anchor which could afford the time and space to study and deepen the understandings or the values students may become aware of as they live their lives. A subject called GNH Values Education would enrich and complement the meditation and mind training pathway, give greater meaning to the other four pathways, and help to make the whole Educating for GNH initiative, and in fact the whole experience of education, coherent and concrete. It would add vitality and strength to program. The GNH Values Education course would require a time allocation of one to two hours per week, depending on the grade level. The Universal Human Values Education (UHVE) Program which Gaur et al. (2010) developed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, provides a ready-made program, including different levels of training for teachers.

With little work, the UHVE can be adapted for use in different grade levels in Bhutanese schools to provide meaningful engagement for one to two hours per week. One would assume that this time can easily be made as it was already provided prior to 2010 as value education class, particularly because of the importance of Educating for GNH initiative, as a centerpiece of the Bhutanese education system which could provide its character.

The critical element in the teaching of the UHVE/GNHVE course however, would be the training of authentic teachers who continually carry out self-exploration and practice mindful living themselves. Educating for GNH can only be sustained through a committed cadre of authentic 'Master Teachers' who have undergone a rigorous process of training, who are committed to the cause of Educating for GNH and who would champion this critical program. This program has to be backed up by an equally committed leadership who will support and push it until it is fully institutionalized. In my experience this can only be done by those who really practice it themselves and truly believe in it, beyond intellectual understanding. The critical mass of the interested and committed teachers who would pursue rigorous study and practice would require, in my view, at least 10 % of the teachers if the program has to be sustained. The four-day Educating for GNH professional development course would need to continue to cover all the teachers. Once most teachers

are introduced to this program, they would find contents/topics within the existing curriculum where they could integrate the Gross National Happiness values and principles meaningfully in most of the subjects they teach. Fine tuning of the curriculum to include the appropriate topics would of course be very useful.

Beyond this, effective change management based on *capacity building with a focus on results*, as Fullan (2007) suggests, has to be continued and intensified, until it gets firmly established. The Ministry of Education, through the EMSSD, in fact is already doing this where it provides the four-day Educating for GNH professional development program and require results on the Educating for GNH practices reported through the School Management Performance Reports. However, the four-day professional development program can only be an orientation program. The need for more professional development programs could be fulfilled by the four different levels of UHVE training programs. But what is definite is a lot more work needs to be done if 'Educating for GNH' has to be consolidated and established as an authentic character of the Bhutanese education system.

Conclusion

Bhutan has developed a secular public education system, almost from scratch in just over fifty years, starting in 1961. However, the intention of building a GNH consistent education system – in terms of holistic education characterised by Educating for GNH, a relevant and meaningful curriculum which achieves world class standards, affordable and inclusive education which offer opportunities for learning and realizing their fullest potentials at any stage of their lives – remain to be realized in full. Educating for GNH, which really is the heart essence of the unique education system of Bhutan and which can become a showcase for developing happier societies, has now been articulated and needs to be continually worked on if it has to be consolidated and established as a true character of Bhutanese education system.

The strength and the inspiration of the Bhutanese education system lie in the vision and the leadership provided by its kings. The Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, articulated the vision of Gross National Happiness as a philosophy of development and Educating for GNH, as an educational vision. The reigning monarch, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgay Wangchuck, is determined to take this mission forward to its full glory and ensure that it truly serves a GNH country, as he states:

> As I serve my country, I have a number of priorities. Number one on my list is education. Education is empowering – it's a social equalizer and it facilitates self-discovery which leads to realizing one's full potential. Good education gives you confidence, good judgement, virtuous disposition, and the tools to achieve successfully. A good school gives a child a fair shot at success and ensures that a person's achievement in life will not be predetermined by his or her race, parentage and social connections (MoE 2014b, p. 5).

Students perform a song for their school's signing competition (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan

Zangley Dukpa

Abstract Monasteries were the only centres of learning in Bhutan until the advent of Western-styled 'modern' education in the late 1950s, although the first modern school was opened in 1914. Down the centuries, monastic education had been responsible for the culture and spiritualization of the Bhutanese. Until recently, all the laws of Bhutan such as the *Chayichhenmo* – the Great Laws – were based on Buddhist principles and precepts drawn from the *Vinaya,* one of the three *pitakas,* or canonical texts of Buddhism. However, the introduction of 'modern' education has added tension and forever altered the previous dominant and prestigious position of monastic education. This chapter, therefore, will provide a glimpse of monastic education in Bhutan through an historical lens drawing examples from the Buddhist education system of ancient India.

Introduction

Bhutan, which is the only Mahāyāna Buddhist State remaining in the world today, has seen the growth of two fairly well-developed parallel systems of education – monastic and secular. While secular 'modern' education, and its importation of a 'Western' world-view, has existed for a few decades only, Buddhist education has been evolving since the visit by Padmasambhava [in Bhutan, known as Guru Rinpoche] in the eighth century. Unlike the schools in Europe where the modern education system was based on Christian theological schools, education was introduced in Bhutan in the monasteries and the modern system developed quite separately. I will provide a glimpse of monastic education under the historical watersheds created by the great religious personalities such as Guru Rinpoche, Longchen Rabjam, *Tertoen* [treasure discoverer] Pema Lingpa, *Zhabdrung* [Great Lama] Ngawang Namgyal, and the establishment of the hereditary monarchy.

While the seed of Buddhism is claimed to have been sown during the reign of the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo in the seventh century CE, who constructed 108

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temples, two of which were in Bhutan – Kichhu *Lhakhang* [temple] in Paro and Jampel *Lhakhang* in Bumthang – the introduction of Buddhism is widely attributed to Guru Rinpoche in the eighth century. It was, however, *Zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal, the Tibetan founder of the Bhutanese state as we mostly know it today, who introduced formal monastic education in Cheri Dorji Den, north of Thimphu, in 1621. The Tibetan system was patterned along the line of monastic education in ancient India.

Buddhist Education in the Ancient World

Buddhist Education in Ancient India Since Buddhism began in India around 560 BCE, it is necessary to briefly describe the development of Buddhist education in ancient India to aid the understanding of the monastic education system in Tibet as well as in Bhutan. The period from 320 BCE to 500 CE was called the Buddhist period in Indian history (Singh 1990); and for over fifteen hundred years, Buddhism was dominant and developed a comprehensive system of education (Keay 1992). Unlike Brahmanic/Hindu education, Buddhist education was open to all regardless of caste, Buddhist, or non-Buddhist.

Although a life of retirement from the world was necessary in their pursuit of freedom from a worldly desire, the majority of *Bhikkhus* [monks] lived in groups within monasteries. These monasteries formed a distinctive feature of Buddhism, and for many centuries they were widely spread in India (Keay 1992). The history of the Buddhist system of education is particularly that of the Buddhist monasteries or *Sanghas* [Buddhist communities], where monks gathered together in harmonious pursuits of the way to enlightenment (Komatsu 1989). Education, either secular or sacred, was absolutely in the hands of monks and learning was, therefore, centred on monasteries (Mookerji 1947; Singh 1990). Kings and wealthy citizens patronized and promoted Buddhist education in their kingdoms and countries and, by the turn of the seventh century CE, monasteries had firm roots throughout the Indian sub-continent.

Of many Buddhist institutes of higher learning such as Balanda, Vikramasala, Taxila, Valabhi, and Jaggada; Nalanda became educationally important and famous with the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Students not only came from all parts of India but also from foreign countries such as China, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Ceylon, and Tibet "to put an end to their doubts and became celebrated" (Mookerji 1947, p. 563). Students also came to Nalanda to achieve fame as scholars. I-Tsing, who set foot in India in 672 CE in the quest of Buddhist wisdom, testifies to this fact: "There [in Nalanda] eminent and accomplished men assemble in crowds, discuss possible and impossible doctrines, and after having been assured of the excellence of their options by wise men, become far famed for their wisdom" (Mookerji 1947, p. 563–564).

These institutes were open not only to Buddhists but also to *Brahmacharis* [non-Buddhists] and *Manavas* [non-ordained students] as they were the centres of both sacred and secular learning. For example, Taxila was the seat of medicinal learning. Other institutes offered a wide range of disciplines. “Sanskrit, medicine, astronomy, law, [and] administration were taught for the benefit of lay students in order to facilitate their way of getting service or to follow useful profession in society” (Singh 1990, p. 50). Singh goes on to say that some *Bhikkhus* [monks] were even deputed as overseers for constructing buildings and bridges. He also argued that the development of medicine and surgery in ancient India took place in Buddhist monasteries. Thus, there was a wide spread of Buddhist learning and culture in the Indian sub-continent from 320 BCE to 500 CE.

Nalanda is used here as an example to describe subjects taught in the institutes mentioned above. Nalanda attracted foreign students and scholars like the German universities did in the latter half of the nineteenth century because of library and laboratory facilities for research. Nalanda had a huge library. According to the account of Hiuen-Tsiang (Beal 2003), who also studied there and mastered Mahāyāna Buddhism, the highest degree or distinction of the times was a Fellowship at Nalanda. He observed that “those who stole the name of Nalanda brother were all treated with respect wherever they went” (Mookerji 1947, p: 565). Ten thousand monks and 2,000 professors resided at any given time at Nalanda, and it offered a wide range of courses encompassing almost the entire circle of knowledge then available. They were drawn from different fields of learning: Brahmanical and Buddhist, sacred and secular, philosophical and practical, the sciences, and the arts. All studied the Great Vehicle [Mahāyāna] and also the works of the other eighteen sects of Buddhism. They also studied ordinary works like the *Vedas* and other books including the *Hetu-vidya* [logic or science of reasoning], the *Sabdavidya* [grammar and lexicography], the *Chikitsavidya* [science of medicines], the works on *Atharvaveda* [Magic], *Sanskrit* Grammar, and other books on Philology, Philosophy, Law, Astronomy and Medicine. *Yoga-Sastra* was another subject of study. According to Hiuen-Tsiang (Beal 2003), one-hundred different subjects were taught in a day, all students attended these discourses without fail, and they found the day too short as they were so engrossed in their works of study. A time-table was maintained by means of the *clepsydra* [water clock].

According to Haskin (1957), there emerged in Paris and Bologna in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries those features of organized education such as faculties, colleges, courses of instruction, examinations, and academic degrees. This led to the genesis of the university in Bologna in the twelfth century. By this definition, Buddhist institutes in ancient India were universities. However, things would have been different for Buddhist learning had there not been a political change with the invasion of India by Muslim emperors from the North and West. Bakhtriyar Khilji destroyed the famous Nalanda University in 1197 CE. It was Chinese and Tibetan scholars and visitors from other Asian countries, notably Ceylon, who carried with them many sacred texts, relics and images of the Buddha and his saints and many other manuscripts from India to their respective countries during these troubling

times in India (Mookerji 1947). Original sacred texts were therefore retained in these countries, from where Buddhism spread again to other countries.

Quoting Indian sources like the *Rajatarangini* – a chronicle of Kashmir Kings by Kalhani – Chakravarti (1979) avers that Buddhism came to Bhutan earlier than to Tibet during the fifth century. Other than this claim, there is no historical record of any Bhutanese who went to study in ancient India. This requires further research. For Bhutanese historians and scholars, Tibet was the destiny for Bhutanese students for centuries. The monastic system in Bhutan, which will be described later in this chapter, was based on both the models of ancient India and Tibet. It is, therefore, important to provide here a brief background of the development of monastic education in Tibet.

Buddhist Education in Ancient Tibet India and China were the main centers of pan-Asian civilization during the Buddhist-era in ancient India from 320 BCE to 500 CE. Cultural contacts were maintained between these two great countries through the learning of Buddhist religion and its texts. They ignored Tibetans – considering them as illiterate, unkempt, and barbaric tribes – until the enthronement of Songtsen Gampo (617–668 CE) as the 33rd king of the Yarlung dynasty (Trulku Thondup 1987). Sensing the threat from their increasingly powerful neighbour, Nepal and China each offered the king a bride from their own royal families. These princesses – Wen Cheng, daughter of Emperor T'ang T'ai Tsung of China and Bhrikuti, daughter of King Amsuvarma of Nepal – were ardent Buddhists and they converted their young husband of twenty-three years old to their faith and prevailed upon him to introduce their religion into 'savage' Tibet (Waddell 1975). Thereupon Songsten Gampo became a zealous patron of Buddhism, devoting his resources and wealth to the diffusion of this newly found faith in a country where, for centuries, the Bon religion prevailed. The Bon religion is defined by many as an animistic belief-structure governed by exorcists, shamans, and priests (Batchelor 1987). Under the influence of Queen Bhrikuti, who had a dream of a demoness preventing the conversion of Tibet to a new faith, Songtsen Gampo constructed 108 temples, two of which remain to this day in Paro and Bumthang in what is now Bhutan.

Anxious to introduce Indian writing and learning to Tibet, Songtsen Gampo sent his minister, Thonmi Sambhota, to India with a large quantity of gold to be given away as presents to the Indian scholars. According to Mookerji (1947), Thonmi first approached the famous Brahman Sanskritist, Lipidatta [*Libikara* in Tibetan] and, having learnt Sanskrit and the scripts under him, he came to Nalanda University. Here, he placed himself under the tuition of the teacher named Acharya Devavid Simha [*Lha Rigpai Singye*] who imparted to him instruction in Brahmanic and Buddhist sacred literature.

On his return to Tibet, Thonmi stayed in retreat for three years contemplating the founding of a new script for the Tibetan language. He adapted to the needs of the Tibetan language a northern form of the Indian Gupta alphabet. Some of the sounds/letters not relevant to the Tibetan language were deleted and new letters representing the typical sounds of the Tibetan language were added. Thus, the Tibetan alphabet, as then devised and as still used, consists of thirty basic letters, including the

vowel *a*, and four extra vowel-signs on the Indian model for *I*, *u*, *e* and *o* (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968). This new script, called *uchen,* is the script of Chökay [Classical Tibetan] and Dzongkha [national language of Bhutan]. The new script gained momentum as some Indian scholars also learned the Tibetan language and its script and translated Indian Buddhist texts into Tibetan. It took Tibetans 600 years to complete the monumental task of translation, the result of which was 108 volumes of *Kagyur* [discourses] attributed to the historical Buddha and a further 227 volumes of Indian commentaries to these discourses (Batchelor 1987).

Samye was the first monastery built in Tibet around 770 CE by the trio of Thrisong Duetsen [Tibetan king], Shantarakshita [Indian abbot], and Guru Rinpoche, who are still venerated as *Khen-Lop-Choe-Sum* [professor, teacher, and religious king]. It was here, towards the end of the eighth century, that the first group of Tibetans were ordained as monks by Shantarakshita, who tested seven men from noble families to see if they were suitable for the monastic life and then ordained them (Batchelor 1987).

With the patronage of successive kings, there was a rapid growth of Buddhist education across the Tibetan plateau, especially after the construction of Samye monastery. The direction of the wind, however, changed with the enthronement of King Langdarma in 901 CE. Favouring the Bon practices, he suppressed Buddhism by executing Buddhist priests. Many great scholars and saints took refuge in Kham, the eastern part of Tibet, and in other Himalayan countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, and Sikkim. The reign of Langdarma was known as the dark period for Buddhists as their religion came close to extinction in Tibet. During this period, many learned *lamas* [high priests] came to Bhutan and accelerated the growth of Buddhism and monastic education there.

The revival of Buddhism in the eleventh century in Tibet witnessed the emergence of a number of schools, amongst which four orders became prominent: the *Nyingma* [traditional school], the *Sakya* [pale earth school], the *Kagyu* [oral transmission school], and the *Geluk* [virtuous school]. Bhutan was fortunate to have been visited by great *lamas* of all four major traditions. There are now only two dominant traditions in Bhutan, the *kagyu* and *nyigma*. The co-relation of these two traditions is referred in the Bhutanese language as *ka-nyingzungdrel* [inseparably linked *kagyu* and *Nyingma*]. All four principal orders had established their own monasteries, the centres of learning patterned along the line of monasteries in ancient India. A monastery of any order in Tibet consisted of several *dratshangs* [colleges]. A college would have several *khangtsens* [houses] where students would be accommodated on the basis of the regions they came from.

In the first month of the Tibetan calendar, students from three *Geluk* monasteries – Gaden, Drepung and Sera – would gather at Lhasa during the festival of *Monlam Chhenmo* [Great Prayers] and engage in debates, trying to outsmart or intellectually vanquish their opponents similar to those of ancient Indian monasteries who would debate in the great hall of the palace in the presence of king. The winners would be awarded the highest degree certificate called *gesheylha-ram-pa*. The monastery would confer degrees on its graduates following the same procedure of debate. This was considered a second level degree, *gesheytshog-rampa.* The

lowest level was the one that was awarded by the college called *gesheydorampa*. Aspiring candidates could reappear in the examinations characterized by public debates any number of times for any of the above degrees.

Over the years many monasteries have been built in Tibet. Since 1963, Tibetans in exile in India have established a number of monasteries and *Shedras* such as Mysore *Shedra*, Varanasi *Shedra* [now Varanasi Buddhist University], and Muenling *Dratshang*, which are popular for higher Buddhist learning. Hundreds of monks from Bhutan, Nepal, and Ladakh pursue studies in these *Shedras*.

Buddhist Education in Bhutan

The crucial contribution of Guru Rinpoche to the development of literacy in Bhutan was the bringing of his main disciple, Denmatsemang, from Tibet, who founded the Bhutanese script based on the Tibetan script. It was known as *jog-yig* [fast script] or *lho-yig* [southern script]. The Tibetan script known as *tshug-yig* or *uchen* came to Bhutan only in the eleventh century (Lopon Nado 1986; DDC 1990). It was also Denmatsemang who introduced written Chökay in the court of Chagkhar Gyalpo [King of the Iron Palace] in Bumthang. He taught basic grammar, language and lexicon (Lopon Nado 1986). Thereafter, Chökay remained the main means of written communication until Dzongkha, which was introduced in a written form in Bhutan only in the 1980s.

After the visit of Guru Rinpoche, the history of Bhutan records the arrival of numerous religious and political personalities from Tibet, especially during the reign of King Langdarma, who patronized Bonism and suppressed Buddhism. Most of these *lamas* had established a number of temples or *dzongs* [fortresses] which had become the centres of teaching their traditions, thus contributing to the growth of literacy in the country. One such *lama* was Lhanangpa Zijid Palbar (1164–1224) who founded the *Lhapa* School. "Over 1700 monks are reported to have assembled in Chalkha for religious sermons, which Lhanangpa gave" (Karma Phuntsho 2013, p. 140). Drupthop Thangtong Gyalpo (1385–1464), who came to Bhutan in 1433 to collect the iron for the Tsangpo river bridge construction, had popularized the craft of black-smithing across the country, and taught the trade as a means of vocational education. *Parops* [people of Paro] are still known for their expertise in this field.

Another *lama*, Kuenkhen Longchhen Rabjam, made a considerable contribution to the growth of monastic education. He came to Bhutan in 1351 (Lopon Nado 1986). It was he who organized the teachings of *Dzongchhen* [Wisdom of Great Perfection] in a collection of texts called *Nyingthig Ya-Shi*. He was given the name of *Taisitu Jangchub Gyeltshen* [Professor of Expansive Knowledge] by the ruler of Tibet (Padma Tshedwang et al. 1995). Unlike his contemporaries, whose teaching was confined to the Western region, he established eight centers of teaching *Dzongchhen* in different parts of the country in the early 1350s. These centres produced learned *lamas*. Of the eight centres, Tharpaling in Bumthang is still thriving in terms of providing education.

The First Formal Monastic Education in Bhutan Although Tharpaling was the first monastery to have *shedra* in the early 1350s, it was *Zhabdrung* NgawangNamgyal who introduced the first formal monastic education in Cheri Dorji Den in 1621 with thirty novices (Lopon Nado 1986). Gifted, extraordinary, and highly learned, *Zhabdrung* gave initiations and instructions to these 30 monks. He invited his teacher *Khedrup* [Professor] Lhawang Lodroy, a great scholar and saint from the Druk Ralung Monastery in Tibet, to teach all three *pitakas* [the *Vinaya,* the *Sutra,* and the *Abhidharma*] and all those treatises and texts that constitute the main curriculum for higher Buddhist institutes in Tibet.

Monasteries were the only centres of learning during the theocratic rule of Bhutan, which extends from 1616 to 1907. Admission was confined to the sons of clergy. Later, with the shifting of the administrative headquarters from Cheri to Punakha in 1637 and the construction of a chain of new *dzongs*, more monks were admitted from different social backgrounds. Although the main aim in monastic education was to prepare a monk for his future life, it was also the means of social advancement. Thus, monks had respect and privilege in Bhutanese society. If a *minagp* [lay-person] came across a group of three or more monks, he or she had to take off their hat and bow towards the approaching group of monks lest they should face the law of the country.

The theocratic period also witnessed the growth of private or community *lhakhangs* [temples] across the country. Learned *lamas* would normally retire to their village *lhakhangs* or settle down in suitable places for their spiritual pursuits. Villagers would approach them with the request to impart education to their sons who would live in huts constructed around temples where the erudite dwelled. Some such *lhakhangs* became more popular and famous than state monasteries. For example, in 1944 Dralop Namgay, on his retirement from the state monastery, resuscitated the Nalanda centre of learning in Punakha which was founded by Je Gewa Shacha Rinchhen in 1754. According to the verbal account of his disciple (Lopon Dorji Gyaltshen, personal communication, 2015), Dralop Namgay had over 100 students of different social backgrounds, including many that went on to become leading figures in Bhutan. In the 1950s and 1960s, Lopon Dorji Wangchuk at Thonphu Gonpa in Pemagatshel would be surrounded by young men and *gomchhens* [lay priests] learning basic astrology, grammar, language, and liturgy that could be put to use immediately in their day-to-day lives.

Monastic Education for Women The Buddha, initially reluctant, admitted women as his disciples on their renouncing worldly affairs under the influence of his foster mother Mahaprajapati and his main disciple Ananda [*Kuengawo*]. The *Bhikkunis* [nuns] were, however, required to respect *Bhikkhus* [monks]. The discipline and duties of daily life were the same for nuns as for monks (Mookerji 1947). Tsai (1972) also observed that the Assembly of Nuns in first century China was dependent on the Assembly of Monks for several of their required rites. Some of the nuns in ancient India became very distinguished, giving a new dimension to the social and cultural life of women in an India where women were required to serve their husbands.

There is no historical document of any nunnery established during theocratic rule in Bhutan, although Jachhung Karmo in Punakha and Chhoedrak *Gompa* [religious centre] in Tharpaling in Bumthang are claimed to be the oldest nunneries established in Bhutan (1680s). The current status of nunneries in Bhutan will be discussed later in this chapter.

Admission and Ordination To describe briefly the admission and ordination procedures for monastic education, those children who met the criteria in ancient India were initially ordained as *samanera* [novices]. This first ordination was called *Pabbajja*. The novices were put under pastoral care of fully ordained monks who acted as their preceptors, responsible for training and introducing them to monastic life. With administration by their self-chosen preceptors of the *Gaetshuel Ragpachu* [Ten Commandments], they were formally admitted to the Order. Acting *in loco-parentis*, preceptors nurtured, nursed and trained their novices until they were deemed fit for higher ordination (Keay 1992; Humphreys 1951). A novice, in return, served his master with devotion as required by the system as part of his education. Their relationship was of a filial kind which did not transcend those beyond the *Sangha* to which both of them owed a common allegiance as members.

In Bhutan, a *Totshang Lopon* [teacher-friend] assumes the role of a *upjjhaya* [preceptor]. Parents, as in ancient India, choose *Totshang Lopons* for their young novices. Then, on an auspicious day, they bring their sons tonsured and donned in red robes. These young novices remain with their *Totshang Lopons* until they are fit to enter into the full membership or *drig-nang-tshuelni. Toktshang Lopons* recommend candidature of novices under them to the *Umdzey* [Head of Liturgical Activities] and *Kudrung* [Aides-de-Camp] for ordination. *Umdzey* and *Kudrung,* who are the two key senior monks, administer this second level of ordination, with the final one administered by the *Je Khenpo* [spiritual leader of Bhutan].

Children with physical and mental disabilities were refused admission to Buddhist education in ancient India (Mookerji 1947) and also in Tibet and Bhutan because it was deemed that a monastic life demanded physical and mental fitness for moral and mental advancement. Even today, a monastic school does not admit children with disabilities (Karma Ura 2014). The reason recently expounded by the Principal of the Decchenphodrang Monastic School in Thimphu (personal communication, 2015) was that the life of a monk demands strict disciplines.

Curriculum There are three canonical texts known as *Pitakas* (baskets) in Sanskrit: the *Sutra*, the *Vinaya,* and the *Abhidharma*. The *Sutra Pitaka* comprises the Buddha's teachings, discourses and sayings. *Sutra* means "thread", suggesting by way of metaphor that the Truth in the *Sutras* is linked together as flowers are strung together to make a garland (Komatsu 1989). A *Sutra* is a text that contains the teachings and sayings of the Buddha himself [*prajnaparamita*] as well as of the *Bodhisattvas* [enlightened ones]. The second *Pitaka* is the *Vinaya* [regulations and precepts] that contains the laws and prohibitions designed to prevent the occurrence of physical and mental misdeeds. It is a collection of the holy sayings concerning regulations and precepts. The *Abhidharma,* the third *Pitaka*, consists of commentaries and

treatises, which are the formal interpretations and elaborations of the principles taught by the Buddha.

Besides these *Pitakas*, there are other texts and treatises, especially of Mahāyāna. When the monasteries in ancient India were at the peak of their growth, the writing or making of *Sastras* became a kind of academic recognition, similar to the kind of academic culture prevalent in the present day of "publish or perish." This led to the birth of numerous *Sastra*-masters. According to Dutt (1962, p. 270):

> A *Sastra* is a treatise written by an individual author or by joint authors, known by name, which quotes the *sutras* as authority and formulates and systematizes the profound mystical truths contained in them, either in verse (*karika*) or in prose.

This took place during the time of great scholars and saints like Nagarjuna, Asvaghosa, and Vasubandhu, who were authors of several treatises, epistles, and essays in the fourth and fifth centuries. There are also *sastras* of ten sciences: (1) *drarigpa* [science of language, *sabdvidya*] (2) *tshema* [science of logic, *hetu-vidya*], (3) *nangdoenrigpa* [science of philosophy, *adhyatmavidya*], (4) *sowarigpa* [science of medicine, *chikitsavidya*], (5) *zo rigpa* [science of arts and crafts, *silpakarmasthanvidya*], (6) *nyennga* [poetry, *Kavyabandha*], (7) *kartsi* [astrology, *JyotiShastra*], (8) *doe gar* [drama, *Nataka/Rasaprabandha*], (9) *ngoenjoed* [semantics/synonyms, *Abhidhana*] and (10) *depjor* [lexicography, *Samgranthana*]. The first five are known as major sciences and the later five as minor.

In state monasteries or *dratshangs*, monks were required to perform religious rites and rituals daily for the country, and during special festivals and functions. Therefore, the focus of their learning was on *gar thig yang sum* [dance, drawing, and music]. *Gar* includes all kinds of dance including mask-dances required to be performed by monks during festivals. *Thig* covers learning of drawings and making of intricately patterned religious structures and *tormas* [dough idols]. *Yang* is the learning of tunes for recitation of prayers and the playing of different kinds of religious instruments. Some monks would also study five minor sciences and language.

Besides religious and literary education, monasteries in ancient India provided practical aspects of education such as spinning, weaving, tailoring, painting, and other skills required for society and for the upkeep of their monasteries. In Bhutan, all monasteries provided such facilities for monks to take up one of such trades. It served as a recreational activity from the rigid and rigours of the monastic learning and life.

There were no structured courses of instruction and levels such as primary, secondary, and higher education across the monastic education system. Semtokha Rigzhung School (now the Institute of Language and Culture Studies), which was established in 1961, is used here to demonstrate the absence of structured courses of instruction. Semtokha was more of a monastic school although it did not follow rules and regulations in strict sense. Blessed by celebrated Buddhist saints and scholars as its heads, Semtokha soon became a leading centre for Buddhist studies in the country. The first batch of 100 students had come from all parts of country and

from different backgrounds. Their ages ranged from seven to over forty years. Some of them were monks, some civil servants, some clerks from defense services and some were wandering *gomchhens* [lay priests] with different motivations.

A group of students would learn the alphabet. Another group might study a text of *sastra* for hours, days, and months until they understood if not mastered it. Some would learn liturgy, and some practice mask dances. This school was similar to Summerhill School in England where students were not dictated by set standards of learning. In the early 1980s, for good or bad, structured courses were introduced in Semtokha Rigzhung School and students were graded and age limits for admission imposed.

Pedagogy In all monastic education systems in India, Tibet, and Bhutan, memorization, recitation, and exposition were the main techniques of teaching and evaluation. Recitations and debates were conducted in a large hall attended by all teachers and students. In ancient India, all scholars were required to defend their research works, dissertations, and thesis in the form of religious treatises, texts, and books before a large gathering of reputed scholars and saints chaired by the kings. Failing to defend in a convincing manner would result in the burning of their books and research works and they would be penalized and expelled from the monastery. There were cases of banishing such monk-students out of the country. On the other hand, successful candidates would get international recognition. If desired, they would be employed by the kings.

Similarly, in Tibet such debates became the main modes of examination and the certificates [testamurs] would be awarded at three levels as mentioned above. In Bhutan, there were no public debates to earn certificates or recognition. Monks would proudly proclaim that they had learned *garthig yangsum* under the tutorship of such *lamas* and studied certain texts of *sastras* under famed scholars. No certificates would be awarded, but their competence recognized through their practical applications as well as teachers under whom they studied.

According to the *Tsugla Lopon* [master for higher education affairs] of Dratshang Lhentshog (pers. comm., 2015), the memorization method is central to the learning process in monasteries. Memorization of especially religious texts is necessary because reading a text would disrupt the smooth musical recitation, playing of instruments, and meditational process and synchronization required during the performance of religious rites. It also situates learning as a life-long pursuit, rather than as a means to an end, as in the secular 'modern' educational system (Karma Phuntsho 2000). Mookerji (1947, p. 537) quotes I-Tsing who said

> In India there are two traditional ways by which one can attain to great intellectual power. Firstly, by repeatedly committing to memory, the intellect is developed; secondly, the alphabet fixes one's ideas. By this way, after a practice of ten days or a month, a student feels his thoughts rise like a fountain, and can commit to memory whatever he has once heard (not requiring to be told twice). This is far from being a myth for I myself have met such men.

The influence of ancient India in terms of the memorization method is still pervasive.

Tension and Reform in Monastic Education

The First Five-Year Plan launched in 1961 to monetize and modernize the Bhutanese economy had triggered the opening of numerous Western-styled ‘modern’ schools across the country. The purpose of modern secular education was to produce human resources required for what the Government would call the “modern sector.” One of the five objectives envisaged in the National Education Policy (RGoB 1974, p. 1) was that “Education must be related to planned development goals. It should, as far as practicable, be closely linked with actual manpower requirement of the country at different levels in various fields.”

The aim was similar to that of the schools and colleges established by the East India Company in India, that is, to produce manpower – mainly clerks or lower-level personnel required for their company. In 1844 in India, it was announced by Lord Hardinge that preference in the recruitment of natives to posts under the government would be given to those who had received an English education (Gosh 1939; Ashby 1966). This policy decision transformed English education into a status symbol and the road to social advancement, resulting in the birth of a new rich class of “sons of *dewans* [minister or official],” “brothers of clerks,” “nephews of *khajanchis* [accountants],” and “grandsons of *Sarkars* [auctioneers and sellers].”

Similarly, modern education in Bhutan has created a new “Western-educated” class, relegating to some extent the class of clergy and nobility as modernly educated young men who started shouldering greater responsibilities in the civil service which hitherto was the prerogative of the graduates of monasteries. Many monastic establishments in Bhutan were associated with leading families and clans. Initially, traditionally rich parents refused to send their children to secular schools, while children of humble families were conscripted in some cases. Further, the monetization of the economy aimed to improve the day-to-day life of people has created unprecedented opportunities to make a great deal of money very quickly, threatening the ultimate purpose of Buddhist institutions and traditions.

According to Karma Phunstho (2013), the new breed of secularly-educated Bhutanese “have failed to recognize the erudition of the traditional scholars. Some would even treat learned *khenpos* and *lopons* with contempt as know-nothings, partly because they cannot speak English” (p. 128). Some forms of tension, perceived or real, between the modern and the traditional institutions occurred especially in the 1970s, during which the limited number of secularly-educated Bhutanese started shouldering key positions and higher responsibilities in the government. These jean-clad and long-haired young officers, most of whom studied in the Christian missionary schools and colleges of Northern India, had little or no knowledge of Chökay. However, those who studied in schools within the country were better equipped with Chökay, the then only written communication of the country.

As alluded to earlier, monasteries and monastic education were responsible for the development and evolution of unique culture in the country and, therefore, the identity of the nation. Sensing the impact of modern education both on the

Table 1 Course of study in *Shedra* by years, major subjects, and award

Years	Major subjects of study	Awards or certificates
1–4	*Madyamik* [philosophy of middle-path] and Logic	*Uma Gongma* [Madyamik Diploma]; Class XII Equivalent
5–7	Prajnaparamita Sutras [Teachings and sayings of Buddha]	*Tenchoed Khenpo* [Mastery of *sastras*]; Degree of *Shastra*
8–9	Tantrism (Vajrayana) and Buddhist Views	*Rigshung Lopon* [Master of Language and literature]; Master's Degree of *Acharya*

Khenpo of Deothang *Shedra* (personal communication 2015) and Principal of Tango *Shedra,* (personal communication 2015)

Bhutanese society as a whole and on monastic education in particular, the Third *Druk Gyalpo* and Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* initiated a series of policy decisions. For example, in regards to monasteries and monastic education, the *Dratshang Lhentshog* [Council for Religious Affairs] was established in 1984 to strengthen the institution of the religious body and, therefore, monastic education. This newly formed Council reviewed the monastic education system under the leadership of the 68th *Je Khenpo* Tenzin Dendup. One of the immediate outcomes of the review was the restructuring of the system along the line of modern education.

There is now a pyramid structure of the monastic education system: *zhirimlobdra* [primary school], *dringrimlobdra* [secondary school], and *thorimlobdra* and *tsuglalobdra* or *shedras* [college and university]. Each *dzongkhag* has either a *dratshang* or *rabdey* [district level monastic body] which has *lobdra* of up-to Class VIII or X. Here, a novice would start with the learning of the alphabet, the sound of four vowels added to each of 30 letters of alphabet, *jorlog* [spelling of words], *tshigdu* [spelling and reading words that represent one name or meaning], *logjang* [reading], *chorjang* [reading texts or prayers repeatedly], followed by the learning of *garthig yang sum* (dance, drawing, and music) as mentioned above (Karma Ura 2014). Equipped with this knowledge and skills, monks would be competent to perform religious rites. By this stage, some of them would also go through preliminary meditation practices. The focus of learning in *lobdras* is on *gar thig yang sum.*

Curricula from Class XI and XII through to the Master's degree level, which are offered in *shedras*, consist of texts culled from *kagyur*, *tengyur,* and *sastras*, especially the *nyigma* tradition popularly known as *zhungchhenpotichusum* [thirteen volumes of great philosophies]. They form the main curriculum of Buddhist higher studies in Bhutan. These developments are summarized in Table 1.

Tango *Shedra* has recently been upgraded to a Buddhist University to be housed in new campus buildings. The idea of a Buddhist University in Bhutan was conceived two decades ago. In the 1980s, *Khenpo* Yeshi Choedar, *Khenpo* Sonam Jamtsho, and *Khenpo* Shedrup Tenzin from the Tibetan Bhuddhist Univeristy at Varanasi in India came to Bhutan at the invitation of the *Dratshang Lhentshog* to give their expert views on the reforms of monastic education including curriculum for different levels.

The pedagogical approach in monastic education has not changed. Lecture and memorization methods are still dominant. Debates and discussions are occasionally

conducted amongst students, but not assessed according to Tsugla Lopon, who was the former Principal of Tango *Shedra* (personal communication, 2015). Written examinations have now become the main means of assessment similar to those of modern schools. The Examinations Council of the State Monastic Body is responsible for conducting external examinations, mainly for *shedras*. Certificates [testamurs] are awarded for different levels of monastic education on fulfillment of requirements.

The 1980s also saw the opening of more nunneries in the country. Until recently, monastic education for women through nunneries was loosely organized. The need was to create *shedras* within Bhutan for nuns to pursue higher studies. Further, living conditions of nunneries across the country needed improvement. The State Monastic Body has helped some nunneries in the form of providing teachers. However, there was no agency to coordinate, guide and support nunneries. The Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF) was, therefore, established as a non-governmental organization in 2009 under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother *Ashi* Tshering Yangdon Wangchhuck to spearhead, steer and support monastic education for women. There are now 26 nunneries with 1020 nuns.

Some of these nunneries now offer courses of higher learning that are offered in *shedras* for monks. In the beginning of 2015, the Wolakha Nunnery in Punakha has been upgraded to a Buddhist College, creating the first facility within the country for nuns to pursue higher studies. Hitherto, those ambitious nuns had to go to Tibetan Buddhist Colleges in India for further studies. The statistics below in Table 2 indicate the present numbers of monks and nuns in various types of religious institutions in Bhutan. These exclude those *shedras* founded and funded by prominent religious figures – such as Dewathang *Shedra* in Samdrup Jongkhar sponsored by Dzongser Khentse Rinpochhe, Gangtey *Shedra* by Gangtey Rinpochhe, and so on. Apart from the two oldest *Shedras* – namely Tharpaling established by the First *Druk Gyalpo*, and Phajoding by the Second *Druk Gyalpo*– most *shedras* were opened in the 1980s and 1990s.

For want of space, nothing much is mentioned here about *drubdeys* [meditation centres]. Cheri Dorji Den has now become a higher level meditation centre. Those

Table 2 Numbers of religious or monastic institutions; and monks, nuns, and *gomchhens* [lay priests] in Bhutan

Types	Number	Enrollment/strength
Lobdra in *dratshangs/rabdeys*	30	4801
Lobdra (school) outside *dratshangs*	47	1084
Shedra	19	1295
Drubdey [meditation centres]	31	412
Nunneries	26	93 (govt.) + 927 (private) = 1020
Gomdey [monastery for lay priests])	271	3474(govt.) +1439 (private) = 4913
Lhakhangs (temples)	2570	–
Total	2994	13,525

Dratshang Lhentshog (2015) and Bhutan Nuns Foundation (2011)

who complete the course at the Tango Buddhist College pursue meditation at this historically important place.

Conclusion: Two Education Systems, One Bhutan

This chapter has provided a bird's eye view of the development of monastic education in Bhutan and its relevant context, from the historical perspective to how modern education triggered reform in the system. Unlike schools in Europe where the modern education systems had developed based on Christian Church schools, modern education in Bhutan was introduced entirely outside the monastic education system. The only aspect of traditional education that became visible in modern schools was the teaching of Chökay (now Dzongkha), performing or reciting prayers and, pedagogically, rote learning.

The influence on 'modern' education from historical monastic education in Bhutan can perhaps most be seen in an application of rote-learning and corporal punishment towards modern schools. It is difficult to untangle if the prevalence of often harsh educational conditions in secular schools today is *only* a result of previous precedent within Bhutanese monastic education, or if it is also a result of the influence of the British-Indian colonial educational structure. Certainly, Bhutan is not alone in the world in now trying to reform its educational system to be more inclusive and more student-centred. The lasting effect of a history of monastic education in Bhutan is, in the end, a socio-cultural reevaluation of what education is *for* and *who* should go there.

The influence between both systems of education also go both directions. Secular education is having a significant impact on monastic education. This can be seen with the revisions in curriculum and pedagogy that I described above. The introduction of English and Dzongkha instruction into monasteries has 'modernized' monastic education to some degree, although many in Bhutan argue that they should be separated and the worldly isolation of monastic life be maintained. Karma Phuntsho (2000), and others, suggest that both systems can be relevant in Bhutan and form a symbiotic relationship to the culture of the country.

Although some Bhutanese scholars have studied the convergence of the two systems (e.g. Denman and Singye Namgyel 2008; Karma Phuntsho 2000), more research and studies are required in select areas potentially sponsored by the Government. The development of a common educational curriculum for Gross National Happiness (GNH) and pedagogical skills could be a benign beginning. As I have suggested above, and as Karma Phuntsho (2000) argues, there are vast differences between the 'modern' secular education system and the monastic education system in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. Not only that, but there are philosophical differences as well. Monastic education is not viewed in Bhutan as a short-term prospect, but rather a lifetime pursuit of education to benefit all of humanity. 'Modern' education is decidedly focused on individual development and gain (Karma Phuntsho 2000). Reconciling these two systems is difficult in that they are conceptually different within the socio-cultural fabric of Bhutan. However, there are opportunities.

For example, the two systems could explore working together in the teaching and application of *Zorig Chusum* [13 traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts] which used to be the prerogative of monasteries. Some experiences and examples of the success of collaboration between the traditional and modern healthcare services can also be considered for their ramifications (see Phurpa Wangchuk, Tempa Gyeltshen, and Tashi Tobgay, chapter "Bhutanese Traditional Medical Education", this volume). There are definitely common goals and interests that can bring the two systems closer for the benefit of students and society at large. These goals and aspirations include ethics and purposes of education, human values, and cultural aspects, which are necessary for the identity and unity of a country. Both Buddhism and GNH are premised on the principles of love, compassion, contentment and also the balanced development of mind and body.

The *Education Blueprint* (MoE 2014) is focused only on secular education, and a majority of the Royal Government educational budget is put towards secular education. Section 20 of Article 9 of the Constitution of Bhutan (RGoB 2008) requires the State to promote "a compassionate society rooted in Buddhist ethos and universal human values." This can be achieved only through education, both modern and monastic. Surely there is a great opportunity now in the twenty-first century to come to the conclusion that education in Bhutan need not be a 'one or the other' proposition. In exploring the history of Buddhist education, we are reminded that formal education in Asia has had a proud tradition of culture, knowledge, and – indeed – innovation for thousands of years. The two systems of education – sacred and secular – both serve the culture, people, and development of Bhutan in separate but interwoven ways.

Young monk acolytes practice making *torma* (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century

Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen

Abstract What makes Bhutan a fascinating country to study, in terms of educational development, is the relatively recent transition it has made from a feudal and monastic system toward a modern capitalist economy and mass education system. This has all occurred in the last half of the twentieth century when Bhutan initially adopted the Indian education system, and it has only been in the last 20 years that the Bhutanese education system has become largely independent from India. This chapter presents a brief history of Bhutan's secular school education system. It is predominantly a qualitative research approach with an extensive desk review and document analysis. Interviews of senior educationists and their views have supplemented the literature review. Within the structure of secular education in Bhutan, we argue that policy changes and reforms in the system to a large extent have been influenced by the leadership of the Ministry of Education and Royal Government.

Introduction: Birth and Expansion

The 'Western' model of education in Bhutan started as early as 1914 in the district of Haa in Western Bhutan (Jagar Dorji 2005, chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume). Previous to this, there had been some Bhutanese from prominent families that had studied in the Jesuit missionary boarding schools in Northern India – particularly Darjeeling (Dewan 1991). With the establishment of hereditary monarchy in Bhutan in 1907, the First *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King], Ugyen Wangchuck, inspired by his brokered peace negotiations between Colonial British India and Tibet, invited several Jesuit missionaries from India into Bhutan to establish schools (Sonam Tobgye 2011, 11

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Nov). These missionaries included the Reverend W.S. Sunderland of the Church of Scotland Mission in Kalimpong and Canadian Father William Mackey who was particularly instrumental in promoting a secular education system separate from the monastic system (Karma Phuntsho 2013). The First *Druk Gyalpo* explicitly forbid the Jesuit priests from Christian proselytisation, to which Father Mackey was especially proud not to have converted a single Bhutanese to Christianity (Solverson 1995). Father Mackey established his school in Tashigang, which would later become Sherubtse College.

The launch of the 1st Five-Year Plan in 1961 – and subsequently every five years since – is significant because Bhutan began its socio-economic developmental activities in a more organized manner. This meant that key government activities were considered with proper planning; prioritising needs, timely mobilisation, and balanced allocation of resources to different sectors and regions (RGoB 1999). From about the same time, any approach to development was considered 'modern'. Consequently, 'modern' is also related to physical facilities development in the Bhutanese context. "Modernisation started with the realization of basic infrastructures (until then Bhutan had no motorable roads and was connected only by footpaths and mule tracks) upon the initiative of the third king Jigme Dorji Wangchuk" (Simoni 2003, p. 30).

In 1961, Bhutan had some 11 schools, 90 teachers, and 400 students (Jagar Dorji 2005; Singye Namgyel 2011). These schools were spread across the country. The purpose of education then was twofold: instrumental and integration. It was instrumental, because "there was a need for people to use new languages, learn new forms of knowledge and acquire new sets of skills to be able to participate fully in the newly adopted developmental process" (Jagar Dorji 2005, pp. 2–3). With ever-increasing globalisation, Bhutan could no longer remain isolated from the rest of the world and integration became a necessity (Simoni 2003). Integration meant becoming part of the global community, and a tool to enhance the position of Bhutan was education. The choice of English, replacing Hindi, in the early 1960s as the medium of instruction is evidence of Bhutan's commitment to integration with the outside world (RGoB 1999). Father Mackey, in his book *The Call, Stories of Yesteryears* (cf. CERD 2002), provided a list of some of the first schools established in late 1950s and early 1960s in the various *dzongkhags* [districts] (Table 1).

Most of these schools exist even today. In addition to Bhutanese teachers and heads of schools, there were many from India and Canada (Jagar Dorji, chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume).

Growth and expansion of education in Bhutan has been tremendous. In a little over five decades, the number of schools has grown from 11 to 659, student annual attendance grew from 400 to 172,222 and teachers from 90 to 8572 (MoE 2014a).

Table 1 Early secular 'modern' schools in Bhutan, with some head teachers of note

Dzongkhag	School(s)	Head teachers
Bumthang	Ura, Jakar, Domkhar, Tang	M.K.G. Kaimal
Chirang	Damphu, Gopini, Pataley, Khorsaney, Lamidara	
Dagana	Goshi	
Haa	Haa	Lopon Dago
Lhuntshi	Lhuntshi, Zangkhar	
Mongar	Mongar	R. Shivadasan, Lopon Phuntsho
Paro	Paro, Drukgyel	Mr. Phillip, P.B. Nair, M. Prasad
Pema Gatshel	Yurung, Shumar	
Punakha	Tschochhasa, Logodama	Fr. J. Coffey, Mother Peter
Samchi	Samchi, Kalikhola, Sibsoo, Chengmari	
Samrup Jongkhar	Deothang Primary	
Sarbhang	Gaylegphu, Surey	
Tashigang	Radhi, Bidung, Tashigang, Wamrong	Rev Fr William Mackey, Babu Tashi, Lopon Kharpa, Dr. Karchung, Dasho Karma Dorji, Ms. Lingshi, R. Singh, K.P. Nair.
Tashiyangtshi	Tashiyangtshi	
Thimphu		Dasho Pema Wangchuk, Ms. Namchu
Wangdi	Gaselo, Samtengaang, Gangtey Gompa (Phubjikha)	

CERD (2002, personal data)

A Period of Learning Through Adoption and Dramatic Change

The decades of the 1960s through the 1970s was a period of adopting parts of the education system of neighbouring countries, particularly India. Jagar Dorji (2005) identified three reasons for the adoption of already existing approaches. Firstly, Bhutan further opened its door to the outside world to seek greater global integration. In order to catch up, the government of Bhutan believed it expedient to adopt, rather than create. Secondly, Bhutan had insufficient human and financial resources to develop and implement a unique solution to its immediate needs called upon by the fast developmental activities taking place. Finally, Bhutan had close relations with India and a system was readily available. In the same vein, India had exclusively financed Bhutan's 1st and 2nd Five-Year Plans (Karma Galay 2004) and assistance was mainly in the social sector, including education (Tashi Choden 2004). Thus, Bhutan adopted the education system that was prevalent in India which was largely that of the legacy of the British colonial education system.

The 1980s through the 1990s was a period of the evolution of an indigenous Bhutanese Education system. One of the reasons for dramatic change can be linked

to the Bhutanese people returning from higher studies outside of Bhutan and beginning to take up important decision-making posts in the country (Jagar Dorji 2005). These leaders came back from the United Kingdom, Australia, and other 'developed' countries, which implies that their experiences influenced changes in the system. For a further discussion on the outside influence on, and support for, the development of the Bhutanese education system, see Jagar Dorji (chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume). Changes in leadership with different beliefs and ideologies also impacted education policies and, therefore, educational plans and programs (RGoB 1999). As a result, two periods are identifiable; that of 'isations' – which concerned Bhutan*isation*, national*isation*, decentral*isation;* and 'nesses' – which concerned student-centered*ness*, teacher-centred*ness*, and wholesome*ness*. Each of these is subsequently discussed.

Bhutanisation Singye Namgyel (2011) maintains that the *Bhutanisation* of the education system began in the 1980s and continued in the succeeding decades. This change was evident in curriculum development and text-book production.

In the 1960s and 1970s, school children had to learn content that was not relevant to their everyday lives. They learned about contexts that existed hundreds of years ago and thousands of miles away from Bhutan due to the importation of Indian/ British colonial educational curriculum. One of the reforms initiated in curriculum in the 1980s was that textbooks were more contextualised such as Druk Readers, Druk English Series, Druk, and Drukpa replaced Radiant Readers and Brighter Grammar, for example. Geography, History and Civics based on Bhutanese content and context replaced earlier textbooks which were imported from India. The Bhutanese educational system was consistent with the psychological approach followed in curriculum development which maintains that children learn better if they are taught from known to unknown, familiar to unfamiliar, concrete to abstract (Sowell 2000).

Environmental Studies (EVS), within the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE), was one of the important initiatives taken to bring the contents and delivery of the subject into the Bhutanese context (DoE 2003). The change coincided with the institution of the Curriculum and Textbook Development Division (CTDD) in 1985. The Royal Government realized that the curriculum borrowed from other countries was not relevant to our students. A major step was introducing the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) to primary schools in 1985. Large numbers of teachers were trained on its concept, philosophy and methodological components. This new initiative emphasized the pre-service and in-service [of] primary teachers (CERD 2002, p. 18). The CTDD itself has undergone some organizational changes. It was renamed as the Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD) in the 1990s, and later upgraded to the Department of Curriculum Research and Development (DCRD), and in 2014 it was merged with the Royal Education Council (REC). It is expected to function as an autonomous body.

Nationalisation The visionary leaders of Bhutan coined the concept of 'One Nation, One People' (RGoB 1999). Bhutan, being a small country located between two big nations, needed to remain united as one people. This concept had an impact on the Bhutanisation process and so on the education system. From the inception of planned development activities and establishment of formal secular schools in the 1960s, most of the schools, institutions, and educational organisations were headed by expatriates, chiefly from India. From 1988, Bhutanese were appointed as the heads of schools and institutions across the country, a process that commonly came to be known as 'Nationalisation of Heads'. The ground-breaking implementation of the policy was carried out during the tenure of *Lyonpo* Thinley Gyamtsho as Director General of the Education Department. Gradually, most of the then high schools and institutes became headed by Bhutanese. Some of the expatriate heads remained as teachers while others left Bhutan. This new cadre of educational leaders had uniquely Bhutanese experiences and orientations and their leadership impacted on the education system of the country at large. One particular impact concerned Bhutanese culture and values which notably began to make headway in the schools (DoE 2003) which coincided with the introduction of 'wholesomeness education' at about the same time (see below).

Decentralisation In the 1990s, decentralisation achieved prominence as a new concept and practice in the Bhutanese system of governance in general, and in the education system in particular. The institution of *Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogdu* [District Development Committee] in 1981 and *Gewog Yargye Tshogchung* [Block Development Committee] in 1991 was the beginning of the decentralisation process. In particular, political change initiated by His Majesty the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo,* Jigme Singye Wangchuck, was the most influential to the decentralisation process. In 1998 he dissolved the Cabinet of Ministers and instituted a system whereby Ministers were elected by the National Assembly. This was the most significant step in the decentralisation of power because, since that change, authority and responsibility of decision-making, choices of local leaders, choices of development activities, and planning and prioritization of needs have been increasingly devolved to the people though the *Gewog Yargye Tshogchung* and the *Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogdu*.

Understandably, this national policy had an immense impact on development and management throughout the country, including its education system. Parents, stakeholders, and to some extent students, began to have a say in the decision-making process related to education. Local leaders planned and decided what type and how many schools they would like to have in their locality. Local leaders and educational leaders of various levels also discussed issues of common concerns. Since the beneficiaries, particularly in the rural areas, contribute to the construction of facilities and maintenance of the schools, they had the responsibility of critiquing the performance of their children and being involved in the teaching learning process.

Decentralisation also included privitisation of schools. Kelki Primary School was the first private school established in Thimphu in 1987. It was upgraded to Higher Secondary School (HSS) in 1999. Since then, a number of private schools have sprung up around the country at all levels: Nursery, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary education. The latest record shows more than 87 private schools across the country (MoE 2014a). To put this in perspective, however, there are a total of 1948 schools, of which private schools make up 4 % of the total. The main reasons for the Royal Government allowing private education are to encourage participation in the provision of education and also to ease pressure from the government in its allocation of resources.

Student-Centredness The concept of student-centeredness featured in the Bhutanese Education system with the introduction of the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) in 1985. A student-centred approach views each child as the centre of the educational process. The student's needs in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains are priorities to be addressed. This change in pedagogical and curricular approach – which differed from the previous 'psychological approach', as described earlier, or the teacher-centred approaches of the borrowed Indian educational system – gave directions to the development and strengthening of educational programs at the primary level. From this change emanated curriculum development, revamping of teaching learning approaches, development of user-friendly infrastructures. These changes were captured using the phrase "student-centred approaches". This renewed commitment continues today (MoE 2014b) although Jagar Dorji (2005) provides a critique of its introduction.

The 1980s and 1990s was also the period when the country aspired to meet national and global obligations of Education For All (Ninnes et al. 2007). In order to address the challenge of human resource constraints in rural areas, multigrade systems of teaching became common in small schools of Bhutan (Maxwell 2012).

Teacher-Centredness *Lyonpo* [Minister] Sangay Ngedup was appointed as the Secretary of Ministry of Health and Education in 1996. He was also charged with the responsibility of bringing further changes in the education sector. A change in leadership propagated a ground-breaking initiative surrounding *'Teacher-Centredness'* – not to be confused with the pedagogical approach of teacher-centred learning. This approach was a development in the history of the Bhutanese Education system in that three major changes were observable beginning in the late 1990s (MoE 2006). Firstly, policy and programmes were put into place that facilitated the enhancement of the academic and professional qualifications of teachers. For example, teachers with certificate qualification were encouraged to upgrade to a Bachelor's degree. As a result of this initiative, teachers had an advantage through this encouragement over other professions at that time. Secondly, teachers were given an additional financial allowance of 15–45 % of the basic salary. The policy was intended to attract better-qualified teachers. Thirdly, policies, plans and programmes were put in place to improve the living conditions of teachers, particularly in redesigned teachers' residences, and providing free housing to the

head teachers and essential staff of schools and institutions. Except for the financial allowances, other incentives mentioned above continue today. From this period, there has been increased interactions and sharing of information among different stakeholders. A bottom-up policy was initiated which encouraged every teacher to have a say in the educational decision-making through the institution of the *Dzongkhag* Annual Education Conference and the Annual Education Conference (DoE 2003).

Wholesomeness During this time of substantial change, a decline in basic Bhutanese values became an issue to many leaders. The claim was made that the '3Rs' in the classrooms focused only on the cognitive aspects of education and not on the whole person. Two related concerns appear to be the increased rate of unemployment and perceived anti-social activities that were displayed by some youths.

The approach known as the 'wholesomeness in education', or 'wholesome education', came into being in the mid-1990s. It consisted of a number of policies and programs put into place to provide education beyond the four walls of the classroom (MoE 2006). Some of these policies related to vocational education, values education, guidance and counselling programs and scouting programs. These led to the establishment of new department called the "Department of Youth and Sports" in 1996 within the MoHE. The policies and initiatives were to be immediately implemented at the grassroots levels (Department of Education 2003). Today we observe that these activities are increasingly becoming institutionalised in the education system, most significantly through the Education for GNH initiative beginning in 2010, as will be explained in the next section.

Major Reforms in the Movement Towards Democracy The Bhutanese education system also experienced major reforms during the period from 2003 to the introduction of democracy in 2008. *Lyonpo* Thinley Gyamtsho was appointed as the Minister of Education (2003–2008), and introduced a policy known as 'Five Pillars.' These pillars were comprised of the following: teachers, curriculum, infrastructure, wholesome education, and values education (MoE 2006). The pillars were considered to be the basic elements that made up the Bhutanese education system. Major changes in the education sector included the Education Department in the MoHE becoming the Ministry of Education, the establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan, the launching of early childhood care and development (ECCD) programmes (Tshering Wangmo & Margaret Brooks, chapter "Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)", this volume), and establishment of the Education for the Hearing Impaired Unit all in 2003. It was also during this period that major curriculum reforms in English, Dzongkha, and Mathematics were initiated at all levels (Pre-Primary–Class XII) and the Bhutan Board of Examination (BBE) conducted the first Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) Examination for Grade XII (see below). Continuing Education (CE) programmes started in Kelki Higher Secondary School in 2006, and in 2007 the Royal Education Council was established. Royal Thimphu College, the first private tertiary college

was established in 2007. The centrally-conducted Class VIII Common Examination was discontinued in 2008 (MoE 2014b) (see below).

The first democratically elected government came to power in 2008 for a term of five years. One of the major impacts on the education sector was the new emphasis on Gross National Happiness (GNH). The then-Prime Minister, Jigme Y. Thinley, together with then-Education Minister, *Lyonpo* Thakur Singh Powdyel (chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume), were central in bringing GNH to the forefront of the education system. Therefore, in many ways the impetus for changes and initiatives in this front came from the top leadership of the government in general and the education ministry in particular.

One of the key initiatives infusing GNH-values into the education system was the Educating for GNH initiative (MoE 2010) wherein a significant number of principals of schools underwent a week-long workshop. They were expected to disseminate and replicate the same capacity building in their respective schools and the community at large. The Prime Minister's report on "the State of the Nation" captures this:

> Although it has only been a little over a year since the launch of the project *Educating for GNH*, it has shown encouraging results with schools reporting visible impacts on student behavior and discipline; a more systematic and gentler attitude on the part of teachers; greater harmony in schools; and a sense of responsibility towards nature and the environment. (Jigme Y. Thinley 2011, p. 21)

A number of programmes were generated from the Educating for GNH initiative including a development of national guidelines, core modules, and the institution of GNH clubs in schools. A "Green School" concept also emerged as an offshoot of GNH. 'Green' is a symbol of goodness that is presented in some eight aspects of education; environmental, social, intellectual, academic, cultural, spiritual, moral and aesthetic greenery. With such a major initiative, some difficulties were experienced (see Kezang Sherab and colleagues' chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", in this volume).

With another political party coming to power in 2013, education gained different leadership. *Lyonpo* Norbu Wangchuk is the current (2016) Education Minister. Arguably, the most significant initiative of the present government is the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024* (MoE 2014b). This document sets out a ten-year education cycle with four main themes: Achieving Access to Education, Achieving Quality of Education, Equity in Education, and System Efficiency (MoE 2014b). Each theme is translated into aspirations. Each aspiration has implementation tools and strategies, described as shifts (eight of them), and game changing initiatives (forty of them). The *Blueprint* uses three Waves (I: 2014–2017; II: 2018–2020; III: 2021–2024 to strategise the implementation (for details see Bhutan Education Blueprint, MoE 2014b).

The most significant contribution that the *Blueprint* brings to education in Bhutan is that it has 'implementation teeth' including a timeline for actions and finances. The document, at best, is an excellent compilation of the findings of surveys and public consultations, many of which confirm earlier research and consultancy

reports. Two of the findings appear recurrent. The first relates to the "heavy work load for teachers" which has ripple effects on their performance and could adversely affect output, that is, the quality of teaching and learning. The second recurrent finding is building an attractive remuneration and ambient working environment to attract the best and the brightest to the teaching profession and retain them. However, this rhetoric has been evident for many years now. The erstwhile "Teaching Allowance" introduced in the 1990s (see above) as part of a 'teacher-centred' policy, served its purpose then. However, good working environments are often difficult to create, particularly in many isolated communities (MoE 2014b).

Changes in the Organisational Structure of the Bhutanese Education System

This section briefly presents the organisational structure of the Bhutanese education system in terms of levels/grades of students in the 1960s–1980s. The system saw a sea change within a period of three decades. For an overview of the current Bhutanese school system, see Pema Thinley (chapter "Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System", this volume).

Nomenclature for the levels/grades and school system has undergone several changes over the years. In the 1960s and early 1970s, a child had to spend two years before entering Class I. These levels used to be called Lower Kindergarten (LKG) and Upper Kindergarten (UKG). LKG and UKG replaced erstwhile Infant B and Infant A respectively. Around the same time, Class X level used to be called Matriculation, the name adapted from the Indian system. Classes XI-XII used to be named as Pre-University or Junior College. There were also changes in the academic session of schools. In the 1960s through 1980s, schools followed a three term system. However, beginning 1990s, two terms were followed. The main rationale for these changes was to maintain consistency with international practice elsewhere. Essentially the changes ensured the structure to be seven years of primary, four years of lower and middle secondary before completing basic education, and two years of higher secondary school.

The names given to a school underwent some changes over time as well. These corresponded with the development of the education system in Bhutan. In the 1960s and 1970s, schools used to be described as a primary, central, or secondary schools to indicate the differing ages of pupils attending them. However, by the 1980s at least two new types were introduced: junior high (the present lower secondary) and high school (the present middle and higher secondary schools). It was in the late 1990s and early 2000s that schools were organised with the present nomenclature.

The organisational structure of education also evolved at local and regional levels as the Ministry of Education and Health developed. In the 1970s, systems such as the Regional Education Office were introduced mainly for the purpose of monitoring and reporting. Later in the 1980s, for administrative convenience, the country

was divided into four Zones: East, West, South, and Central. Each Zone had a Zonal Education Office (ZEO) with an Officer (referred to as ZEOs). ZEOs remained for only three years from 1989 to 1991 and were replaced by the *Dzongkhag* Education Office (DEO). Now each Dzongkhag has an Officer (also referred to as DEO) and one or two Assistant DEOs (ADEOs) for effective education monitoring, support services, and the conduct of professional development programmes at *dzongkhag*-based, cluster-based (for purpose of effective monitoring management 3–5 schools were grouped to form a cluster), school-based is also used but the latter were only introduced in the last 15 years (Laird et al. 1999). A more organised national-based capacity building took effect from mid 1990s.

There also have been organizational and structural changes in the Ministry and at Departmental levels. The Ministry of Education (MoE) used to be one of the Departments in the erstwhile Ministry of Social Services. The Health and Education Departments jointly formed the Ministry of Health and Education (MoHE) until the mid-2000s. With preparation towards democratization of governance, the Ministry of Education (MoE) was created in 2003. With over 8000 teachers, instructors, and support staff in schools, and close to 300 staff in the headquarters, the MoE is the largest ministry in the country.

The Assessment System and Its Journey

Until 1971, there were no national level examinations in Bhutan. All the assessments were done at the school level and they were mostly paper pencil tests. In 1975, an Examination Cell (EC) was established within the Directorate of Education headed by a Controller of Examinations to coordinate national-level examinations at the primary and secondary levels. From 1972 through 1981, the question papers for 'All Bhutan Common Examinations' were set, and the answer scripts marked, externally. In 1982 and 1983, question papers were set externally but the evaluation was done within Bhutan with the assistance of expatriate chief examiners. From 1984 onwards, both the setting of question papers and evaluation of answer scripts were done within Bhutan. In 1986, the EC was renamed the Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE) with a Secretary as its head.

The Primary School Certificate Examination (PSCE) for Class VI replaced the Class V All Bhutan Common Examination. In 1999, the conduct and evaluation of the PSCE was decentralized to schools with the BBE providing the question papers, model answers and marking schemes. The schools sent the consolidated results and selected answer scripts to the BBE for analysis and feedback. Similarly, starting in 2009, the Lower Secondary School Certificate Examination (LSSCE) for Class VIII was fully decentralized. For middle and higher secondary school examinations, in 1974 all the high schools in the country were affiliated to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), New Delhi, which conducted the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE - Class X) Examination and the Indian School Certificate Examination (ISC - Class XII) for schools in Bhutan.

In 1996, the first joint Bhutan Board-Indian Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (BB-ICSE) was held. From 1996–2000, question papers for Dzongkha, History, Civics, Geography, and Economics were set and evaluated in Bhutan and the remaining subjects such as English, Mathematics, Sciences, Computer Science, and Commerce were set and evaluated by the CISCE. In 2001, the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE) was localized and the BBE took over the conduct of the Class X examinations completely. Similarly, the Indian School Certificate (ISC) Examination (Class XII) was conducted in December 2001 so that the ISC graduates could participate in the selection for job training which normally commenced in various training institutes in March of each year. In 2006, the BBE took over the complete conduct of the Class XII examination, called the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) Examination. From 2007, the BBE started conducting BCSE (Class X) and BHSEC (Class XII) examinations for Continuing Education (CE) candidates.

From 2002, the BBE started to coordinate the National Education Assessment (NEA) of student learning and performance using standardized tests and questionnaires (see Maxwell et al. 2010). Accordingly, the first study on Class VI Literacy (English) and Numeracy was completed in 2004. The first NEA on Class VI Dzongkha was completed in 2006. The NEA for Class X Mathematics and English was completed in 2007. The second round of the NEA Class VI Literacy and Numeracy was conducted in 2011 and the report published and disseminated in 2012.

From 2011, under Charter 7 of the Accelerating Bhutan's Socio-economic Development (ABSD) project, the BBE developed and implemented modular Competency Based Assessment (CBA) instruments for Classes V, VII and IX in English, Dzongkha, and Mathematics. These instruments can be used for both formative and summative purposes. The development of CBA for Science Class V and History/Civics Classes VII and IX started in 2012 for implementation in 2013. The BBE also developed and administered the end-of-year CBA instruments for Classes III, VI and X in English, Dzongkha and Mathematics in 2011. The CBA instruments for Class III Environmental Studies (EVS) were developed and administered in 2012.

Although BBE lived up to its aspirations, the world of educational assessment is rapidly changing across the globe, especially in 'developed' countries where the national assessment bodies are taking up additional mandates to assist in the reform of their education systems. In fact, many countries like Bhutan were conducting national assessments with the purpose of obtaining information to improve the quality of education. Concurrently, the range and scope of public examinations are expanding and many countries are developing national autonomous assessment institutions. Therefore, if Bhutan was to keep pace with the educational developments across the world, then an independent national assessment body was necessary.

Moreover, the ease and facility with which BBE took over the conduct of the Classes X and XII terminal examinations from the Indian Council for School Examinations and the commendable professionalism and integrity it displayed

thereafter in handling these high-stakes examinations signalled the readiness of the BBE to assume autonomy and independence (BCSEA 2011). During an organizational restructuring exercise in 2007, the Ministry of Education came up with the idea of an autonomous BBE. Further, in 2010, the ABSA project proposed that an independent education quality assurance agency to be established.

In 2011, the *Lhengye Zhungtshog* [Cabinet] issued an Executive Order endorsing the establishment of Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) from 1 July 2011 as an autonomous body. The Executive Order also approved the constitution of a six-member board with the Minister of Education as its Chairperson. The *Lhengye Zhungtshog* envisaged BCSEA as an internationally recognized educational assessment and monitoring agency providing quality services to build the integrity and profile of the education system as a whole. The BCSEA is mandated to drive the quality and standard of student learning. It is intended to play a pivotal role in promoting quality and standard in curricula, teaching and learning through advocacy, policy advice and support, specialist knowledge and skills, and services. It is the watchdog of the education system in the country (BCSEA, 2011).

Implications of the Changes in Assessment Structure Educational assessment is a relatively new area of specialization in Bhutan. Challenges to examinations and assessment policies and practices emerging as a result of various paradigm shifts within the education system will demand substantial capacity enhancement of BCSEA. For example, a professionally competent examinations and assessment agency will need to play a catalytic role in training teachers, parents, education officers, curriculum developers, educational leaders, and other stakeholders in the vital areas of assessment, test development, and so on. These specialist tasks require an independent institution with a core group of knowledgeable, skilled and competent professionals with vast experience in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and educational research.

Further, the outcomes of BCSEA's activities must support the on-going shift in policy focus from 'educational inputs to learning outcomes' (OECD 2008) and assist the Ministry of Education in bringing about improvements in schooling so that students not only fulfil their potential within the school system but are also better prepared for the world of work. Increasingly, BCSEA's activities must provide evidence to direct national policy for schools' curriculum and instructional efforts, and for students' learning.

Experiences in many developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America show that the most stable institutional arrangements are those that are established outside the organizational structure of the education ministries. Those systems have greater administrative and technical autonomy than other line agencies. They typically conduct assessments and report results with greater flexibility and consistency than systems that are dependent on the ministries. International experience also shows that high quality institutions in research and education, including the vital areas of examinations and assessment, require a high degree of

autonomy. Experience suggests that if an examinations and assessment agency is to be genuinely committed to upholding and advancing a country's educational standards and quality in achieving world class status, it must have a degree of independence that allows it to plan and implement its HR policy, finance, infrastructure, programmes and services along a vision of excellence. It would, for instance, need the flexibility to raise funds and generate revenues.

This will enable the agency to generate revenues through professional services (e.g. consultancy services, development of high quality assessment tools, conducting workshops or specialized trainings, research, and publications, etc.) and also to have subsidiaries that could become profit-generating entities over time. International best-practices show that autonomous examinations and assessment agencies play a vital role in establishing and promoting a country's international status as an educational hub (for example, Education Assessment, Australia; Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations, India; Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board, Singapore; University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, UK).

Assessment must be seen as a fair and objective way to set and maintain standards, to spearhead reform at the levels of both policy and practice and to establish a basis for meaningful accountability. It is agreed that major improvements in assessment systems must be part of a broader educational reform agenda that will be driven by – and constrained by – political, economic and social considerations. Therefore, if Bhutan is committed towards ensuring that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, some form of assessment will be required to determine if this happens. Thus, there is a need for an independent assessment agency with technical means and capacity to measure student achievement, evaluate systemic progress and translate assessment data into policy and instructional procedures that will improve the overall quality of education.

However, in its present setup, BCSEA's potential to become a professionally sound institution for examinations and assessment is limited by a number of factors. These include lack of independence in terms of mobility of resources both financial and human, governance and management, infrastructure development, and diversification of programmes and services and the ability to generate revenue. As an autonomous agency, BCSEA would help to consolidate a robust and legitimised assessment culture that would eventually result in a greater impact on policy making in the country's education system. The autonomy would also allow for new structural and institutional changes within BCSEA, say for example, in the areas of test methodologies and coverage. Autonomy will also mean greater latitude in making technical and administrative decisions.

Finally, the BCSEA's mission is to provide its essential services to the Bhutanese nation in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Efforts are being put into strengthening lateral ties both within and outside the country. Better collaboration and coordination are needed with schools on the development of examination papers, the conduct of the NEA, and with other ministerial entities such as the Department of Curriculum, Research and Development (DCRD) and the Education Monitoring and Support Division (EMSD). Increased networking with overseas

entities such as examination boards in India, the UK, and Singapore, and other renowned international assessment agencies such as Cito in the Netherlands and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is also being actively promoted.

Conclusion

The Bhutanese secular education system experienced rapid growth and development in terms of enrolments, number of schools, curriculum, and pedagogy. Our analysis reveals that leadership of the Ministry of Education had a significant impact on the system. The 1980s saw a significant change in that nationalisation of leadership of schools and institutions and Bhutanisation of curriculum made headway. The political change and shift in governance, namely the decentralisation process and empowering the people at the grassroots level, have had an impact on the education system and the way it began to function. While student-centeredness as an approach to teaching is desired, debates about teacher-centeredness in terms of providing attractive salary and incentives continues. What is not clear are policies and strategies that would attract the best school and university graduates to join the teaching profession, notwithstanding that the Ministry of Education has invested substantial effort.

This chapter also presented an analysis of the assessment system in Bhutan. It delved into the establishment of the Bhutan Board of Examinations to conduct national level examinations at classes VI and VIII. Working closely with the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), New Delhi for the conduct of Classes and X and XII examinations for some years, it completely took over the conduct of these examinations. BBE also conducted other assessments such as the National Education Assessments in Literacy and Numeracy for Classes VI and X and Competency Based Assessment (CBA) for Classes V, VII and IX. Finally, through government directives, BBE became an autonomous assessment agency called the Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA).

The secular school education system has made tremendous achievements in all its aspects including curriculum, infrastructure, coverage, and so forth. These are evidence of political support, commitments, and recognition of the importance of education for Bhutan's overall development. The rapid growth and expansion also posed some undesirable implications. However, the future for Bhutanese education in the twenty-first century, if we can understand and learn from the history of its development in the twentieth century, is undeniably bright.

Students have fun on a school fieldtrip (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges

Janet Ward Schofield

Abstract Higher education in Bhutan is one of the most recent and important additions to the country's educational system, with the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) having been set up only in 2003 to incorporate and direct a set of nine colleges and tertiary education institutes previously functioning under institutions ranging from ministries of the Royal Government of Bhutan to Delhi University in India. Private tertiary education is an even newer phenomenon there, with Bhutan's only private college having opened in 2009. This chapter briefly describes the organizational structure and functioning of higher education in Bhutan, as well as the content areas on which it focuses. It then highlights several of the major issues currently facing tertiary education in Bhutan: a) the desire to markedly expand tertiary enrollment within the country while keeping the costs incurred by the government for this under control, b) the promotion of high quality research in an environment with limited human and financial resources available for this task, c) finding the right balance between central oversight and the growing need for innovation in education in a rapidly changing society increasing connected to the outside world, and d) the "fit" between the attitudes, knowledge and skills of current college graduates and those needed for the kind of vibrant knowledge-based economy Bhutan is hoping to create.

Brief History of Secular Higher Education in Bhutan

Secular higher education within Bhutan is relatively new. Indeed, it was not until 1983 that Sherubtse College began providing the first BA degree programmes within the country. It did this under the auspices of Delhi University in India, which set the curriculum, graded students' exams, and even gave their own rather than Sherubste College Bachelor's degrees (Brief History of Sherubtse College n.d.). India was also the source of many of the college's faculty members. The first B.Ed

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programme was also introduced in 1983 at Bhutan's National Institute of Education (NIE).

Today there are two universities in Bhutan which together provide essentially the only college and post-college education available within the country. The first, the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), was established in 2003 as a federation of nine institutions, including Sherubste College and the NIE. The establishment of RUB was important because previously most of these institutions, which had typically been set up by government ministries, served virtually exclusively to provide those ministries with needed technical or professional training at the pre-college level. The Royal Charter establishing the RUB gave these institutions a broader mandate, including fostering personal, cultural and economic development.

The institutions comprising the RUB in its earliest years, some of which came fully under it in the five years after its founding, originally served varied purposes. Sherubste College, whose name translates as "Peak of Learning," started as a school and then evolved into a junior college before turning into a full-fledged college awarding degrees in science, the arts, and commerce, and educating many who went on to play prominent roles in Bhutan in government, business, and other fields. In 2008, Sherubste's commerce programme was spun off into a separate institution, Gaeddu College of Business Studies, now also a constituent college of the RUB. Samste College of Education was originally set up by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1968 as its Teacher Training Institute (TTI), enrolling 41 students in its first year. In 1983, when it began to offer B.Ed degrees, it was re-named the National Institute of Education. It adopted its current name in 2008. Paro College of Education started in 1975 as a pre-school care training centre with only eight female trainees. The College of Natural Resources was first set up in 1992 as the Natural Resources Training Institute by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to bring into one institution its previously separate extension agent training programmes in agriculture, forestry and veterinary matters. The National Institute of Traditional Medicine (NITM) evolved from a complex set of initiatives starting in 1968 undertaken by the then Health Department to provide traditional medical services to the populace. The Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS) was started in 1974 as the Health School to train health workers such as nurses and technicians. The Institute for Language and Culture Studies was opened in 1961 as a monastic school and evolved to offer undergraduate degrees in language and culture in 1999. The College of Science and Technology emerged in 2001 from the earlier Royal Bhutan Institute of Technology and currently offers Bhutan's only undergraduate degree in engineering. Jigme Namgyel Engineering College opened as the Royal Bhutan Polytechnic in 1974 and then became Jigme Namgyel Polytechnic (JNEC). It offered only short certificate level courses in areas like surveying and 2 year diplomas in areas civil and electrical engineering until 2015. At that point, it was renamed JNEC and it added an undergraduate degree in power engineering to its offerings.

Representative programmes currently offered by the institutions now part of the RUB are presented in Table1 below.

The second Bhutanese university, the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB), was officially launched in early 2015 to serve, as indicated in the act of Parliament creating a medical university, as an "overarching university for existing institutions engaged in medical and health care education and training programs in the country and new institutions established hereinafter" (RGoB 2012, p. 3). RIHS was moved from RUB to KGUMSB to provide Bachelor's degrees in various areas of nursing and public health as well as shorter programmes training health workers including midwives and hospital technicians when the medical university when the latter was set up. Those programmes now enroll a total of about 485 students (MoE 2015). KGUMSB also absorbed from the RUB the NITM, which now offers a five-and-a-half-year Bachelor's degree including study of topics from anatomy to disease diagnosis to astrology as well as three-year diploma programmes. KGUMSB also offers training in numerous specialties for individuals already holding allopathic medical degrees from outside the country. However, both the traditional medicine Bachelor's programme and the additional training for those holding allopathic medical degrees are small, currently having roughly a dozen or fewer slots for new students annually (see Phurpa Wangchuk, Tempa Gyeltshen, and Tashi Tobgay, chapter "Bhutanese Traditional Medical Education", this volume). Finally, there is now also one private institution which is part of KGUMSB, the Reldri Academy of Health Sciences which offers 3-year diplomas in general nursing and midwifery to classes of about 50 students a year.

Bhutan also has numerous vocational training institutes generally enrolling Class X graduates. However, there is considerable concern about the quality of their programmes and many young people are not interested in the kinds of "blue collar" jobs to which they lead (UNDP 2013). In addition, there are two tertiary-level training institutes offering two-year and shorter programmes. One, the Royal Institute of Management, provides programmes for post Class XII and college graduates selected for civil service jobs. A few years ago, it also began to offer programmes leading to Master's degrees such as the MBA and MPA in collaboration with the University of Canberra in Australia. The most recent enrollment figures available show it serving a total of just under 400 students (MoE 2015). The other tertiary-level training institute, the Royal Institute for Hospitality and Tourism, enrolled its first students in 2010. It provides two-year and shorter training programmes for Class XII graduates and middle managers and had just over 90 students enrolled as of 2014 (MoE 2015). Because the tertiary institutions outside of the RUB are so new, so modest in size, and/or so specialized, the rest of this chapter will focus on the RUB including the centralized administrative structure and the nine widely dispersed institutions of tertiary education that together currently comprise it.

The RUB's Structure, Composition and Representative Programmes

Symbolizing the great importance given to education in Bhutan, His Majesty the Fifth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King] is the Chancellor of the RUB. The University Council, appointed by the Royal Government of Bhutan, is the university's supreme governing body. The RUB's Vice-Chancellor serves as the university's executive head. The Academic Board, the RUB's primary academic authority, has broad power over the approval of programmes, student admissions, the promotion of research, the provision of library and IT facilities, planning for the future, and more. The RUB's rules and regulations on how some of these functions are performed and on many other aspects of how the institutions within it must function are collected in a lengthy document, *The Wheel of Academic Law* (RUB 2015a). The MoE is ultimately responsible for tertiary education in Bhutan through a Tertiary Education Board and the Bhutan Accreditation Council, both of which are quite new and whose decisions are implemented through the Ministry's Department of Adult and Higher Education. However, the RUB is now classified as an autonomous institution and has considerable independence in staffing, as well as in planning and decision-making about how to allocate the budget it receives from the government.

The RUB central offices are located in Bhutan's capital, Thimphu. RUB employs about 300 technical and administrative staff (RUB 2015b), many of whom are in Thimphu. Others, as well as over 500 faculty members, are at the constituent institutions each of which has its own Director and Deans. These institutions are scattered around the country, some at two days hard journey from the central office. Bhutan's only privately funded college, Royal Thimphu College (RTC), was founded in 2009 as an affiliate member of RUB rather than a constituent member as the government-funded institutions. As such, RTC has somewhat more freedom of action in some areas. However, it is subject to many of RUB's rules and regulations and does not receive some of the benefits given to constituent colleges.

The constituent colleges generally offer diploma (two year) programmes and Bachelor's degrees (typically three years for a BA, or four years for an honours degree or a degree in education or engineering). Some colleges have begun planning for, or now have, a small number of Masters' programmes in selected areas. Specifically, Gaeddu College of Business Studies offers an MBA and the Paro College of Education offers a part-time M.Ed in leadership and management. The RUB is planning for PhD programmes in some areas as well (RUB 2013). Table 1 summarizes some basic information about the constituent and affiliated institutions now under the RUB. The RUB Strategic Plan (2015b) calls for increasing the 86 programmes offered by these institutions in 2014 to 110 by 2020.

Table 1 RUB constituent and affiliated institutions' enrollment, faculty, and representative programs[a]

Name	Student Enroll.		Faculty		Representative programmes	Awards (Years)
	M	F	M	F		
College of Natural Resources	389	149	24	8	Agriculture (Dairy, Horticulture, Forestry)	BSc (4)
					Sustainable Development	BSc (3)
					Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Forestry	Dip (2)
					Development Practice	MA (2)
					Natural Resource Management	MSc (2)
College of Science & Technology	566	222	43	11	Architecture	BA (5)
					Civil Engineering	BE (4[b])
					Electrical Engineering	BE (4[b])
					Electronics & Communications	BE (4)
					IT	BE (4)
Gaeddu College of Business Studies	702	630	63	17	Business (Accounting, Finance)	BCom
					Business (Human Resources, Marketing, Entrepreneurship)	BBA
					Business (Finance)	MBA
Inst. of Language & Cultural Studies	621	512	36	8	Language & Culture	BA (4)
					Language & Literature	BA (3)
					Bhutanese & Himalayan Studies	BA (3)
					Language and Communication Skills	Dip (2)
					Language and Culture	MA (1.5)
Jigme Namgyel Engineering College	557	180	41	2	Civil, Electrical, Electronic & Communication & Mechanical Engineering	All
					Computer Hardware & Networking	Diplomas (2)
					Power Engineering	BE (4)
Paro College of Education	879	666	46	18	Primary Education	BEd (4)
					Information Technology & Maths	BEd (4)
					Dzongkha	BEd (4)
					Dzongkha	PgDip (1)
					Leadership & Management	MEd (3, p/t)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Name	Student Enroll. M	Student Enroll. F	Faculty M	Faculty F	Representative programmes	Awards (Years)
Samtse College of Education	586	576	40	14	Primary Education	BEd (4)
					Maths & Physics	BEd (4)
					History and Geography	BEd (4)
					English & History	BEd (4)
					Education	PgDip (1)[c]
					Guidance & Counseling	PgDip (1, or 2 if p/t)[c]
					Higher Education	Includes distance ed.
						PgDip (2, part time)
Sherubtse College	888	831	81	21	Physics & Chemistry[d]	BSc (3)
					Computer Science	BSc (3)
					Life Science	BSc (3)
					Political Science & Sociology	BA (3)
					Media Studies and English	BA (3)
					Dzongkha & English	BA (3)
					Economics & Geography	BA (3)
					English	PgDip (3, p/t)
Royal Thimphu College	556	602	41	26	Business (Accounting, Finance)	BCom (3)
					(HR, Marketing)	BBA (3)
					Environmental Mgt	BSc (3)
					English Studies	BA (3)
					Computer Applications	BCA (3)
					Political Science & Sociology	BA (3)
					Development Economics	BA (3)
					Dzongkha and History	BA (3)
Totals	5744	4368	415	125		

[a]Student and staff information are from the Ministry of Education (2015) with the exception of RTC numbers which come directly from RTC. Programme information is taken from Phanchung (2014), although some was updated from college web sites
[b]3 years full time for working individuals with a relevant engineering diploma
[c]3 weeks each year residential. The rest is distance education
[d]A 4-year Honours degree is available in all majors for outstanding students

Admissions and Enrollment at the RUB

> RUB handles admissions to its constituent colleges centrally. Its policy is to admit all students to its tertiary education programmes that have a reasonable expectation of completing their programme of study successfully, subject to the proviso the University has the necessary resources to support the number of students in the programme. (RUB 2015a, p. C1.1)

Admission to the RUB undergraduate programmes is based on students' performance in subjects relevant to the programme for which they are applying on a national examination given to Class XII graduates. So, students' choice between programmes emphasizing business, science, or the arts when they enter Class XI strongly impacts the college programmes for which they are eligible. The number of students admitted is limited by available funds since over 75 % of the students receive full scholarships (MoE 2015).

As is apparent from Table 1, in 2014 only 44 % of those enrolled in RUB institutions are female (MoE 2015) in spite of the fact that the number of males and females enrolled in pre-collegiate education is quite similar. Specifically, girls slightly outnumber boys in primary and middle secondary school, with just under 52 % of the students enrolled in classes VII-X (MoE 2015) being female. But by Class XII graduation, males outnumber females by a modest half of one percent (MoE 2014). One possible explanation for the difference in male and female tertiary enrollment is that female students are much less likely than males to have enrolled in the science stream of study in higher secondary school (MoE 2014). This makes them unlikely to be eligible for admission to a number of the RUB institutions that focus on technical subjects such as engineering, technology, and veterinary medicine, which have much more disproportionately male enrollments than the liberal arts, business, and education colleges (MoE 2015). Another contributing factor is that, although the gap has been closing in recent years, girls' performance on national exams is still slightly less good than boys in many areas, which can end up having a major impact on admissions to both to Class XI-XII government-funded schooling and to college (Nima Tshering 2014). It is also worth noting that both school and college teachers in Bhutan have traditionally been more likely to be male than female, providing a relative paucity of female role models engaged in academic work. Indeed, even now, fewer than 25 % of the RUB faculty members are female, as shown in Table 1.

Enrollment in constituent colleges is biggest in the RUB programmes preparing teachers (Table 1). The next biggest programmes are business/management and arts/humanities. Consistent with Bhutan's 2010 Tertiary Education Policy, which states explicitly that "access shall be broadened to cater to a wide range of students" (MoE 2010, p. 14), tertiary enrollment within Bhutan has been growing at around 15 % annually (MoLHR 2014a). In addition, about 4,000 Bhutanese students are studying abroad (MoE 2015) for reasons commonly including an inability to qualify for the RUB colleges or preference for programmes not offered in Bhutan, often in technical areas like medicine or some kinds of engineering (MoLHR 2014a).

Institutional and Individual Funding for Students

The RUB is funded by the Bhutanese government. Most of the funds for capital costs come from grants to Bhutan from the government of India (RUB 2012a) and from foreign aid programs from countries such as Denmark. Until recently, all students admitted to the constituent colleges received government scholarships covering tuition costs and a modest stipend for living expenses. About one-tenth of the students attending the private college, RTC, also receive government scholarships based on national exam scores. Others must find a way to raise the needed funds themselves.

Most of the Bhutanese students enrolled in college outside of the country are self-funded (MoE 2015; MoLHR 2014b). The most common type is study abroad is clearly study in India using private funds. For example, in 2015 around 3,200 Bhutanese students were pursuing this path to a tertiary education (MoE 2015). In addition, another roughly 1050 Bhutanese students were studying on scholarships in a wide variety of countries including Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh, although over 50 % of them were in India and another almost 20 % were in Sri-Lanka (MoE 2015). Many of these students were on one of the roughly 200 scholarships that the Bhutanese government provides annually for Class XII graduates, generally for professional training not available within Bhutan (MoE 2014). In addition, quite a few Bhutanese Class XII graduates study outside the country on other scholarships. For example, the Indian government has recently provided roughly 100 scholarships for study there each year for Bhutanese students (MoLHR 2014b).

There are also some Royal Government of Bhutan scholarships for advanced study by government employees with college degrees as well as some open scholarships for advanced study funded by friendly governments. For example, since 2007 the Australian government and private sources there have given about 300 scholarships to Bhutanese for Master's level studies in Australia as well as seven PhD scholarships for study there (Maxwell 2015).

Curriculum Development and Pedagogy

The RUB constituent and affiliated colleges currently develop curricula for the programmes they wish to offer. Programme proposals must be approved by the RUB which examines them in very close detail. Furthermore, once a programme has been developed, if another RUB college wishes to offer the same degree, it must adopt the already existing curriculum. Approved programmes must be re-approved by the RUB at set intervals, generally about every five years.

Reflecting both their historical connection to specific ministries and their mission to prepare professionals in fields such as education, business, and engineering, most of the RUB colleges have professionally oriented curricula. At Sherubtse

College, the RUB's only constituent liberal arts college, virtually all programmes are double majors, combining subjects such as Population Studies and Economics. This has the advantage of breadth; it has the corresponding disadvantage of lack of depth, especially given that only three years of study are generally required for a Bachelor's degree in non-technical fields in Bhutan.

Current thinking in Bhutan about the goals of education and desirable ways of teaching reflect disparate influences (Karma Phuntsho 2000). First, it reflects traditional Buddhist monastic practice as well as education practices in India, both of which emphasize memorization. Second, it reflects the philosophy of GNH as exemplified by the introduction of mindfulness education as a required non-credit subject in the RUB colleges (Pema Thinley 2012) and plans to continue to infuse the RUB's colleges with GNH-inspired teaching and learning practices (RUB 2015b). Third, it reflects global educational trends endorsing active student-centered learning aimed at developing students' understanding and problem-solving ability rather than a lecture-centered approach emphasizing memorization of facts. For example, the Tertiary Education Policy (MoE 2010, p. 51) states,

> There has been a paradigm shift in tertiary education; universities no longer only provide instruction but they also promote active learning…. knowledge quickly becomes outdated and … the real benefit that students acquire is in the capabilities that they acquire, particularly the abilities to understand and utilize change, and to continue learning and adapting throughout their lives.

However, implementing student-centered approaches is very difficult for numerous reasons including the traditional emphasis on memorization and passive approaches to learning (Deki Gyamtso and Maxwell 2012; Karma Phuntsho 2000). Indeed, a large study of Bhutanese schooling concluded that there is too much emphasis on "teachers simply conveying textbook content without getting students to comprehend and demonstrate their learning" (iDiscoveri & Royal Education Council 2009, p. 7). In addition, a study at one of the colleges of education concluded that there are many "grey areas" in the understanding of the kinds of learner-centered approaches that are officially endorsed and that implementation of such approaches is varied in both its extent and depth (Deki Gyamtso and Maxwell 2012, p. 65). Consistent with this, it is quite common for students to enter college expecting faculty members to supply them with lectures and notes covering more or less all they need to learn in a particular class to pass the examinations rather than expecting to need to do some independent learning through reading or project activities.

Challenges Facing Bhutan's Tertiary Education System

There are a great many challenges facing Bhutan's secular tertiary education system including financial, organizational, and human resource ones. Below, four major challenges are discussed.

Expanding Tertiary Enrollment Expansion of tertiary education is a recent global trend often accompanied by a struggle for governments to find ways to shift its cost to others (Shin and Harman 2009). Consistent with this, enrollment in the ROB colleges expanded from roughly 3700 in 2005 to about 10,000 or 10 % of college-age youth currently and the goal is a major expansion to 14,500 students in its constituent colleges by 2020 (RUB 2015b). In addition, Bhutan's Prime Minister announced in the spring of 2016 that three additional government-funded colleges will be opened in the future, in fulfillment of a campaign promise (Tempa Wangdi 2016). However, the goal is to expand enrollment without drastically increasing expenditures (MoE 2010) as the government already spends a greater proportion of its budget (16.7 %) and a higher percent of its GDP (7.3 %) on education than almost any other country in South Asia (World Bank 2014). Policy documents occasionally mention the potential social problems inherent in educating more college students than Bhutan's economy can appropriately employ. However, the emphasis is nonetheless clearly on expanding access to significantly increase the pool of educated individuals (MoE 2010; RUB 2015b).

Various approaches to keeping government costs down, while still expanding enrollment, have been adopted. First, in 2011, a "self-finance" option was made available at the RUB constituent colleges (RUB 2011). Specifically, students whose marks were not high enough to receive a full scholarship, but who nonetheless met certain academic requirements, began to be admitted to constituent colleges for diploma or Bachelor's degree programmes at a tuition fee of about USD $1,100-1,400 per year plus food and lodging expenses. Roughly 2,000 students are now enrolled under this option (MoE 2015). But, the deadlines for such applications have commonly been extended because this programme's "seats" have often not been promptly filled, perhaps at least partially due to the many inexpensive educational options available in India. Second, the government also plans to encourage enrollment in diploma programmes, which are generally a year shorter than degree programs (MoE 2010) and hence less expensive. Third, in 2014 a no-interest educational loan program was implemented with preference given to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and those attending colleges within Bhutan (Nirmala Pokhrel 2014).

Yet another approach used to promote education within Bhutan while keeping government costs down is to allow or encourage others to provide it. Thus, for example, the 2010 Tertiary Education Policy states that the government shall endeavor to attract to Bhutan high quality tertiary education institutions from other countries (MoE 2010). Indeed, in 2007 the government announced ambitious plans, eventually unrealized for a variety of reasons, to develop an "Education City" that would attract thousands of international students and faculty (*Kuensel* Online 2014).

Allowing the opening of domestically-funded private colleges is also compatible with the strategy of shifting costs (World Bank 2014). This approach is clearly endorsed in Bhutan's Tertiary Education Policy (MoE 2010) and was favorably mentioned in the Prime Minister's 2015 state of the nation address to the Bhutanese Parliament. But, to date, only one such college has opened although there are

numerous private sector institutions offering early childhood care as well as primary and secondary education.

Private tertiary education in Bhutan not only shifts the cost of education away from the government since it is funded through students' payment of fees. It also helps to decrease the massive outflow of foreign currency, especially rupees, currently needed to support Bhutanese students studying outside of the country. Recruitment efforts by Indian and other foreign universities have intensified markedly since around 2010 and study in India is an option commonly chosen by Bhutanese students not qualifying for a full scholarship at a government college within Bhutan. This is a problem because Bhutan, which exports very little but imports large quantities of essential goods including food and gasoline from India, experienced a "rupee crisis" in 2012–2014 (Karma Ura 2015) so serious that the import of vehicles and other non-essential goods was banned (Krishna Ghalley 2015).

Promoting High-Quality Research The RUB's Royal Charter lists two major objectives for the university. The first is developing and providing relevant good quality programmes of study. The second is "To promote and conduct research, to contribute to the creation of knowledge … and to promote the transfer of knowledge of relevance to Bhutan" (RUB 2003, p. 3). This objective is especially important in Bhutan because so little research has been done there that dependable country-specific information for use in teaching or policy formation is extremely scarce. The Royal Charter does not specifically mention community service, another commonly listed objective for tertiary education systems in many countries. However, it does call on the RUB to "promote the … well-being of our people" through its teaching and research (Royal Charter, p. 3).

Historically, most of the institutions that evolved into the RUB colleges focused exclusively on teaching (Maxwell and Phintsho Choeden 2012). Therefore, a shift to including research in the RUB's mission required both capacity building and a shift in culture (Maxwell 2012). In 2005, to begin to enable attainment of this new mission, the RUB established a department focused on research. Especially since 2011, the RUB's Department of Research and External Relations has been vigorously working to build the research capacity of RUB faculty members by sponsoring conferences, modestly funding research projects at constituent colleges, and obtaining research grants. In 2012, the RUB started publishing the *Bhutan Journal of Research and Development*. In 2013, it set up the Institute for Gross National Happiness Studies to foster GNH-related research within the country. The following year, a lengthy document was developed detailing the RUB's research policies (RUB 2014). Research Centres have also been started at all the constituent colleges, although most such centres are still in a very formative stage.

However, successfully fostering high-quality research is not easy. Several years after the Department of Research and External Relations was first set up, there was still a "lack of research capacity and lack of infrastructure to support research" in the RUB (Maxwell and Phintsho Choeden 2012, p. 187). Faculty members at the RUB colleges see themselves as having heavy teaching loads, so it is no surprise

that they often report having no time for research (Maxwell 2012; Maxwell and Phintsho Choeden 2012). They also report a lack of administrative and other support for research (Maxwell and Phintsho Choeden 2012) although the appointment of Deans of Research and Industrial Linkages at all constituent colleges in the past year or two is intended to change that.

Importantly, many faculty members do not have the training needed to engage in high-quality research. At the RUB constituent colleges in 2013, only 18 out of about 350 national faculty members (5 %) had PhDs. About 250 more, or 70 %, had Master's degrees, but many of their programmes of study required little or no research. Over 20 % of RUB national faculty members have just Bachelor's degrees (RUB 2015b). Thus, in spite of notable progress, the RUB still faces fundamental challenges in stimulating high-quality research stemming from limited financial and human resources and a prevailing academic culture that, generally speaking, gives low priority to research (Maxwell and Phintsho Choeden 2012). Given the very limited number of PhD faculty members spread across a wide variety of disciplines, it should not be surprising that the RUB has not yet implemented the plans it developed a few years ago to provide in-country PhD-level degrees. However, it intends to have nine such programmes by 2020 (RUB 2015b).

Balance Between Quality Assurance and Innovation and Flexibility The RUB has rules designed to promote quality assurance and enhancement in the institutions under it. For example, at the college level, it requires that proposed exams be reviewed by colleagues of the faculty members teaching each class to check for clarity, appropriate level of difficulty, etc.

RUB also has detailed rules and procedures to assure quality at a more macro level. For instance, there are regulations pertaining to research ethics and academic integrity. In addition, a detailed and lengthy description of all proposed new programmes of study must be submitted to the RUB by the institution developing it, including seven to twelve specific learning objectives for each module (class) offered, all readings, specific detailed descriptions of the content of all assessments and their weighting, etc. Such proposals, sometimes substantially exceeding 100 pages, are minutely reviewed and virtually always returned for very extensive revision and are even sometimes rejected.

Once a programme is approved by the RUB and adopted at a college, an annual written report is required detailing even minor changes in content, teaching practices, modes of delivery, the nature or weighting of the assessments, etc. More major desired changes, including changes in programme philosophy, management, regulations, or the classes included in the programme, must be approved by the RUB (RUB 2015a). Teams visit the colleges annually to check that programmes are operating as approved.

Such quality assurance procedures have both strengths and weaknesses. For example, on the one hand, close oversight of the curriculum and assessment procedures is important in an environment in which some faculty members have only a Bachelor's degree and where faculty morale has been characterized as low (Education Sector Review Commission 2008). On the other hand, such procedures

take a great deal of time, discourage flexible response to students' needs, and sometimes are used to try to justify behavior that works to students' disadvantage. For example, some faculty members try to justify cancelling days or even weeks of classes by claiming that they have "covered the syllabus" as described in programme documents. But, since many students pass with grades of 50 or 60 out of 100, it is clear that additional learning is possible.

The language in the RUB's *Wheel of Academic Law* regarding approving, reviewing, and updating programmes endorses some flexibility. However, in practice, these procedures can delay and inadvertently discourage innovation and responsiveness to students' and even the nation's needs which are changing extremely rapidly as Bhutan connects more to the broader world and attempts to move from a primarily agrarian economy to a "knowledge economy." For example, Royal Thimphu College (RTC) decided to set up a continuing education (CE) programme to provide working adults with the opportunity to earn a college degree at night and on weekends. This initiative was consistent with policy documents emphasizing the "urgent priority" of starting such programmes (Education Sector Review Commission 2008, p. 9; Planning Commission 1999; RUB 2015b). Yet, it took two-and-a-half years and four attempts to get the RUB's approval of this innovation, even though the proposed curricula were *identical* to those in the college's already-approved daytime programmes. Furthermore, seemingly reasonable proposals, such as letting these adult students "test out" of classes through strong performance on the same exams given to daytime students taking such classes in the same programme, were disapproved in spite of language in the *Wheel of Academic Law* allowing for credit for previous learning. Thus, adults who have worked for many years as accountants must spend roughly four hours a week in introductory accounting classes even if they already know the material covered. In addition, requests to be allowed to deliver classes in suitable downtown locations, to save these adult students roughly an hour of commuting time each day, were never approved. Students in the CE programme reported in interviews that one of the main reasons for dropping out is the difficulty of balancing the heavy time demands of work and study, thus suggesting that denial of the "test out" and "downtown" proposals contributes directly to student attrition, which has been substantial.

Although the RUB set up many mechanisms to assure the quality of the tertiary institutes, early in the RUB's existence calls for a separate body to enhance and assess quality through an accreditation process were made (Education Sector Review Commission 2008) and in 2010 a Tertiary Education Policy was adopted requiring the creation of the Bhutan Accreditation Council (BAC) (MoE 2010). In 2015, the BAC undertook two "pilot" accreditations at RUB colleges in preparation for formal accreditation visits to Bhutanese institutions of tertiary education covering their curricula, faculty qualifications, research, innovative practices, student services, governance, infrastructure, internal quality assurance, and enhancement processes, and more. Implementing an accreditation system recognized outside of the country is an increasingly important challenge as the lack of such currently reduces the options of the RUB graduates for advanced study in some countries outside of Bhutan.

The "Fit" Between Graduates' Skills and Preferences and Job Market Demands The reason most frequently given for pursuing higher education by students in the RUB colleges is to improve their job opportunities (Hernadi et al. 2013). However, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the degree to which college graduates are prepared to function effectively in the workforce (Mindful Education Consultants and Royal Education Council 2009; Tshering Dorji 2014). Some of these concerns revolve around a shortage of individuals trained in technical fields and policy documents have stressed the importance of aligning the college programmes offered with the specific needs of the economy (MoE 2010). However, many complaints focus on issues such as the level of graduates' analytical and communication skills and the attitudes of entry-level employees (Gross National Happiness Commission 2013).

A number of factors appear to contribute to graduates often not having the skills and attitudes employers' desire. First, many college faculty members and employers complain about the preparation of secondary school graduates (Mindful Education Consultants and Royal Education Council 2009; iDiscoveri & Royal Education Council 2009). Given the enormous challenges faced in providing pre-collegiate education in Bhutan, this should come as no surprise. In a country where some students have to walk hours to school, where some teachers still have quite minimal education, and where even adequate nutrition at boarding schools has been an issue in the recent past, students often enter college less well-prepared than is desirable. Thus, preparing them to function effectively in the hoped for "knowledge economy" is a huge challenge, exacerbated by the relatively short three years required to graduate from most college programmes. The fact that teaching and learning is usually conducted in English, a second or even third language in which many students are not fully proficient (Gross National Happiness Commission 2013), increases challenges related to prior preparation. Such challenges will most likely be increased by the implementation of plans to substantially increase enrollment because that most likely will require dipping down further into the pool of available students to admit lower scoring ones. Finally, management issues may impede student learning. For example, a report on one of the country's most respected colleges indicated that both staff and students complained that several faculty who just do not show up for class and who fail to arrange for a substitute at such times suffer little in the way of apparent consequences. Faculty absences from the classroom without arranging for a substitute teacher have been reported elsewhere as well (Deki Gyamtso and Maxwell 2012; Education Sector Review Commission 2008).

In addition, motivation is clearly a factor that impacts how much students learn. Unfortunately, the commonly expressed goal of college students in Bhutan is to "pass" rather than to excel and it is often noted that college students do not seem very engaged with their studies (Education Sector Review Commission 2008). The sources of this disengagement appear to be multifaceted. First, some students must study areas in which they have little interest and for which they have no particular aptitude because decisions made when entering higher secondary school greatly constrain what they can study in college. Second, schooling in Bhutan is commonly

very teacher-centered, often providing few opportunities for student participation (Royal Education Council 2012) which can undermine involvement and motivation. In addition, many students have become used to "spoon feeding" in school, with some teachers providing notes on exactly what students need to know to pass exams. So, going beyond what is required in order to develop one's own intellectual or potential professional capacities and learning independently from reading or undertaking projects does not become habitual. For example, one instructor at a Bhutanese college of education reported, "I asked the students who were about to graduate, 'How many books have you read in the last three years about education?' and the most any student mentioned was three" (Mindful Education Consultants and Royal Education Council 2009, p. 17). Combined with the "spoon-feeding" is a system which commonly allows "second chances," so that failure is generally not final. For example, students in government-funded secondary schools who fail the Class X or Class XII national exams can re-take the exams multiple times and it has also been proposed that they can repeat their classes for free the year after a failure in spite of concerns about limited seats and costs to the government (Tashi Deki 2013). RUB regulations also provide multiple chances for students to pass failed college classes.

In addition, until quite recently, just passing was generally enough to ensure a secure and well-respected job because there were so few college or even higher secondary school graduates that they were virtually guaranteed a job in the "charmed realm" of the Royal Civil Service (MoE 2010, p. 72; MoLHR 2014b). Such jobs are still the goal of about 75 % of college graduates (MoLHR 2014b), including one who told me bluntly "There is no point in getting a college education unless you get a Civil Service job." However, the employment situation has changed markedly recently, with only about 20 % of graduates actually getting civil service jobs (MoLHR 2014a). Why this has not created more motivation to excel in order to get one of those increasingly scarce jobs is unclear. But my personal experience with students suggests that many just choose to ignore the changed situation and hope that they will do well on the all-important post-college national exams that play a decisive role in selection for such jobs. The fact that enrolling after graduation in classes designed to enhance performance on such tests is very common may help make such expectations appear plausible.

Not surprisingly, given dissatisfaction with many graduates' readiness for the workforce, there is also a significant amount of youth unemployment, including that of recent and future college graduates. Although the overall rate of unemployment in Bhutan is low (2.1 %), the unemployment rate for those at the age most graduate from college (20–24) is relatively high (7.5 %) (UNDP 2013). In addition, as mentioned above, although roughly four out of five graduates prefer a government job, less than one in five is likely to get one (MoLHR 2014a) leaving others to have to find employment elsewhere in the rather limited private sector. The government has undertaken many efforts to encourage graduates to become entrepreneurs or to take overseas employment, but neither of these has produced a great deal of actual graduate employment (Alka Kotwal 2015; MoLHR 2014b).

Conclusion

Bhutan's tertiary education system has made remarkable strides in a relatively short time. Having started on a tiny scale about 35 years ago, it now serves over 10,000 students with programmes in a wide range of fields.

Yet, this system also faces many challenges. Consistent with international trends, serious concerns about its cost to the government have led to adopting strategies that shift these costs to students and their families. Although significant progress has been made in promoting research, human and financial resource limitations make this very difficult. Efforts to ensure and enhance quality sometimes inadvertently impede desirable innovation. And, very importantly, limitations both in the pre-tertiary and tertiary education system itself contribute to widespread dissatisfaction with what college graduates know, as well as what they wish to do and can do in the job market. Therefore, depending on one's point of view, the tertiary education glass in Bhutan is half-full or half-empty. However, there is no doubt that it has been getting steadily fuller and this process is likely to continue.

Students get ready for a school dance performance where they perform dances from the various regions of Bhutan (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Bhutanese Traditional Medical Education

Phurpa Wangchuk, Tempa Gyeltshen, and Tashi Tobgay

Abstract Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* [pronounced as *So-wa Rig-pa*], or Bhutanese traditional medicine, is one of the rich cultural heritages and oldest tertiary education sectors in Bhutan. It was initially taught in the monastic institutions that were established by *Zhabdrung* Ngawang Namgyal in 1616. A separate *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical dispensary was established only in 1968 after the Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, introduced the health integration policy in 1967. Since then, *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine has expanded its services by establishing 54 traditional medicine centers alongside allopathic hospitals and basic health units in the country. Today, it has become a reservoir of knowledge and employment for *Drungtshos* [traditional physicians] and *smen-pas* [traditional clinical assistants], a cradle of health and cure for patients, and a source of income for farmers and herbal traders through medicinal plant programs. The Faculty of Traditional Medicine (FoTM) under the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan is the pillar of these developments as its graduates form the core human resources of the system. This chapter describes the historical aspects of the Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical education system and highlights its present practices including policy, governance, institutional and structural developments, teacher and student recruitments processes, curriculum development, teaching learning methods, types of degree courses offered, changes in learning tools and resources, internships, and the student assessment system. It also discusses the scope and the challenges of the FoTM and recommends the ways forward for achieving its long-term sustainability as a tertiary education provider.

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Introduction

Ancient Bhutan was known both as *bruk-tsen-dhen-b.kodpai-rgyal-khab* [Dragon kingdom of bountiful medicinal sandal wood] and *smen-jong* [Land of medicinal plants] (Yeshi 2005). The ascribing of such appropriate names is today authenticated by the presence of a rich traditional medical knowledge that is being supported by the country's unique biodiversity. There are two forms of traditional healing systems (THS): the local healing system (LHS) and *g.so-ba-rig-pa* [pronounced as *So-wa Rig-pa*] medicine (Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2013). This chapter focuses on *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine with particular emphasis on its education system in the country. The term *g.so-ba-rig-pa* is a combination of two words: *g.so-ba* [healing], and *rig-pa* [awakening knowledge]. Together it means 'the awakening knowledge of healing'. The practitioners of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine are known as *Drungtsho* [traditional physician] and *smen-pa* [traditional clinical assistant]. The medical philosophy of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* is influenced by Buddhism and its health system belongs to the larger corpus of the scholarly Tibetan *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine, or often just called Tibetan medicine. It has the properly recorded codes of disease classification, pathophysiology, diagnosis protocols, treatment regimens, plant monographs, and the pharmacopoeia. Tibetan medicine is one of the largest traditional medical systems that is practiced across the globe, either in its pure form or through adaptations to the need of people in other countries. According to Boesi (2006), the *materia medica* of the mainstream Tibetan *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine should not be considered as standard and static both in time and space, but as a tradition that has been constantly evolving in several countries with its adaptations to local vegetation, culture, and foreign influences.

In Bhutan, this *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical system blended well with local beliefs, culture, knowledge, and indigenous ethno-medical practices. Through constant processes of review, adaptation, and innovation, the Bhutanese *Drungtshos* adapted Tibetan medicine to suit the needs of the people, thereby making its education system and the practices unique to Bhutan. For that reason, it is often called Bhutanese Traditional Medicine (BTM). For example, the g.*ser-khab* [gold needle acupressure therapy], codes of health related problems, and more than 30–40 % of traditional medicine formulations are said to be the practices developed by the Bhutanese *Drungtshos* (Dompnier 1998; Dorji Wangchuk 2008; Karma Gayleg 2005; Pema Dorji and Morisco 1989). The inclusion of medicinal ingredients in the Bhutanese formulations relied on the availability of local resources and the practitioners' familiarity with ingredient identification. Until the advent of allopathic medicine (bio-medicine) in the 1960s, Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine, along with the LHS, had been the mainstream health care system in the country. The Ministry of Health (MoH), Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), officially integrated it with the allopathic medical system in 1967 (FoTM 2014) which subsequently led to the establishment of a small dispensary in 1968. Today, it has become a complex traditional medical system with one higher learning centre known as the Faculty of Traditional Medicine (FoTM), one National Traditional Medicine Hospital

(NTMH), two regional traditional medicine referral hospitals in Mongar and Gaylegphu, 19 *dzongkhag* [district] traditional medicine hospitals/units, another 34 traditional medicine units attached to major Basic Health Units (BHUs),[1] and one medicine manufacturing factory called Menjong Sorig Pharmaceuticals (MSP) with all modern equipment. These traditional medicine hospitals and units function within the auspices of allopathic hospitals and BHUs and provide health care services to 20–30 % of the out-patients who visit the health centers on a daily basis (Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2011). In 2014, the *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine units treated 119,304 patients (MoH 2015). Both the traditional and the allopathic medical systems are equally enshrined in *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* (RGoB 2008) and receive the policy, governance and financial supports from the RGoB to make them freely available to the people (MoH 2012; Planning Commission 1999).

Bhutan was one of the first countries to implement a traditional and allopathic health care integration policy. It gave the people freedom to choose between the two health care services. As these two medical services function within the auspices of the same hospitals and BHUs, cross-referral of patients between the *Drungtshos* and allopathic doctors is often practiced. Chronic ailments, lifestyle and autoimmune diseases, and mental health are the areas where the potential benefits of integration have been explored by the MoH (Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2007a). Recent grouping of the National Institute of Traditional Medicine (NITM) with the Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS) to form the newly established University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (UMSB) in 2013 (NAB 2012) further enhanced this integration policy and created a better platform for academic exchanges including the teaching-learning process and research and development. The UMSB was renamed as the 'Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan' (KGUMSB) on 28th February, 2015 with three faculties: the FoTM, the Faculty of Nursing and Public Health (FoNPH), and the Faculty of Post Graduate Medicine (FoPM). The FoTM is the guardian of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* traditional medical culture. Its system and practices fall within the jurisdiction of at least three of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH): preservation of traditions and culture, socio-economic development, and environmental preservation (Phurpa Wangchuk and Tashi Tobgay 2015). The FoTM, therefore, has responsibility to provide GNH-inspired education and training to *Drungtshos* and *smen-pas* who form the core human resources of the Department of Traditional Medicines (DTM) under the MoH.

With this background, the subsequent sections describe the establishment and the development of the traditional medical education system and how it was transformed from a small dispensary unit with on-the-job training courses in 1971, to the current full-fledged Faculty of Traditional Medicine under the KGUMSB. Over the period, there was a constant progressive institutional development in terms of curriculum, teaching learning methods, faculty, and infrastructure development.

[1] Basic Health Units (BHUs) are *Gewog* [local administrative block] level health facilities located throughout Bhutan.

Institutional and Infrastructure Developments

Prior to 1967, *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine remained as a part of the monastic education system which was institutionalized by *Zhabdrung* [Great Lama] Ngawang Namgyal in 1616 (see Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume). However, the existing literature (Dharmananda 2002; FoTM 2015a; Pema Dorji and Morisco 1989) reveals that most of the practising *Drungtshos* during and in the post-*Zhabdrung* era were educated at the Tibetan Chagpori Medical School. A later record also shows that most of the *Drungtshos* who served in the royal courts of the Trongsa *Poenlop* [Regional Administrator], Jigme Namgyal (1825–1881), and the successive rulers of the country obtained their *g.so-ba-rig-pa* education from the Tibetan medical schools and spiritual masters. *Drungtsho* Mahaguru from Gangtey *Gompa* [monastery], who served in the royal court of the Second *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King] Jigme Wangchuck in the early twentieth century, was the only physician who obtained his monastic medical education from Gangtey *Gompa* in Bhutan. Since he was trained in Bhutan, Mahaguru knew from where to source the medicinal ingredients and how to prepare them by himself (Pema Dorji and Morisco 1989; Ugyen 1999). The separate institutional development occurred only after the integration of *gso-ba-rig-pa* medicine with allopathic medicine in 1967. The first *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine dispensary was built at Dechencholing, Thimphu in 1968 (Fig. 1).

The Dechencholing *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine dispensary unit (DGMDU) first started providing three year on-the-job training, called the *smen-pa* course, in 1971. This *smen-pa* training course was the precursor to professional-based *g.so-ba-rig-*

Fig. 1 *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine dispensary house established at Dechencholing in 1968 (Photo: Tempa Gyaltshen)

Fig. 2 National Institute of Traditional Medicine established at Kawangjangsa in 1979 (Photo: Tempa Gyaltshen)

pa medical education in Bhutan, including the bachelor's degree (*Drungtsho* course) in traditional medicine in 1978. The bachelor's degree program was introduced by the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*, Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Thubten Lekpai Lodre was appointed as the first Principal in 1978 and he served until 1997. His students formed the core group of the then National Institute of Traditional Medicine (NITM) teachers. He composed many textbooks, including a treatise on pulse reading and urinalysis, developed standard training curricula for the five year *Drungtsho* program, revived the traditional methodology of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* teaching and learning, and established institutional norms. The first batches of *Drungtsho* and *smen-pa* students were recruited from the monk organizations, *Gomchhens* [lay priests], *g.so-ba-rig-pa*-practising students of different lineage masters, and secondary school graduates from the Institute of Language and Cultural Studies (ILCS).

The DGMDU was upgraded to the national indigenous hospital in 1979 when it moved to the new location in Kawangjangsa, Thimphu (Fig. 2). In 1988, it was renamed as the National Institute of Traditional Medicine (NITM). *Drungtsho* Pema Dorji was appointed as the first Director and *Drungtsho* Yeshi Dorji as the Principal of NITM. The course duration was set for five years and six months (six months for internship) to maintain equivalence to the allopathic system of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) courses. The Royal Government of Bhutan and the World Health Organization provided the financial support for the expansion and improvement of the *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical system.

In an effort to modernize and transform *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine into a scientifically-validated and evidence-based medicine, various project-tied

pharmaceutical research and production activities were initiated. With the help of an Italian Disarmo Sviluppo (DISVI) project, Dr. Paolo Morisco established the Research and Quality Control Laboratory (RQCL) in 1990. The first batch of students – five in total – were trained on-the-job as Research Assistants at the RQCL. The people with multi-disciplinary expertise in the areas of ethnobotany, pharmacy, pharmacognosy, chemistry, pharmacology and herbalism were recruited to establish research units and to train the local students at the RQCL. The traditional identification of medicinal plants was initiated in consonance with the ancient traditional medical texts, *Shel-gong-shel-phreng* (Tenzin Phuntshok 1983).

The Traditional Medicine Research Committee was established in 1993, under the chairmanship of *Drungtsho* Sherab Jorden. The *g.so-ba-rig-pa* nomenclature, medicinal plant identification protocols, formulations and preparation of traditional drugs, and the teaching programs were standardized. However, the *g.so-ba-rig-pa* plant classification system lacked the depth of identification protocols – especially for the plants that are closely related at the genus and species level. To address this anomaly, the botanical identification at the species level were carried out from 1994 to 1998 under the funding provided by a European Union project (Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2011). Phurpa Wangchuk was heavily involved in these ethnobotanical surveys and the identification of high and low altitude medicinal plants from various places in Bhutan. In 1998, the NITM was renamed as the Institute of Traditional Medicine Services (ITMS) and had three administrative and functional units: NITM, National Traditional Medicine Hospital (NTMH), and the Pharmaceutical and Research Unit (which was later renamed as Menjong Sorig Pharmaceuticals (MSP)). Despite functional segregation, the three units collaborated in teaching and learning activities.

In 2003, a Royal Charter granted the establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB 2010a) with ten affiliated colleges – of which the NITM was one. Dorji Wangchuk was appointed as the new director of NITM (2003–2012) and *Drungtsho* Dophu became the principal of a newly re-oriented institute of traditional medicine under RUB. Various changes, including the curriculum, were implemented in accordance to the requirements of the RUB system and guidelines (RUB 2010b). Some of the important academic changes introduced were the establishment of the 'Traditional Medicine Research and Development Committee of Bhutan' (TMRDCB) and the introduction of the '*Menjong Sorig* Journal' (MSJ) in 2008. Phurpa Wangchuk and Tempa Gyeltshen played a significant role in conceptualizing and coordinating various TMRDCB activities as well as the MSJ publications. This annual educational journal was initiated to provide a platform for publication, documentation, and dissemination of scholarly articles and discourse on Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine. Students are encouraged to contribute articles to the journal. Major infrastructure developments also took place including complete rebuilding of the whole teaching and administrative block and the student accommodation in 2013 (Fig. 3).

In line with the provisions of the University of Medical Sciences Act (NAB 2012), the NITM and the Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS) were formally transferred to the newly established University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan

Fig. 3 New administrative and teaching building and student accommodation building built in 2013 (Photo: Tempa Gyaltshen)

(UMSB) in 2013 which was in 2015 renamed as the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB). The FoTM has a newly constructed state-of-the-art administrative and academic block (Fig. 3) with built-in library facilities providing more than 5,000 items on both *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine and others; a computer laboratory with Wi-Fi internet connections; modern lecture rooms equipped with liquid-crystal display projectors; a demonstration laboratory with facilities and dummies to learn human anatomy; and the traditional equipment for medicinal preparations.

Gyud-zhi [Four Medical Tantras] (Yuthok Yonten Gonpo 1980), and *shel-gong-shel-phreng* [The Crystal Mirror & Rosary] (Tenzin Phuntshok 1983) are the main textbooks used for teaching purposes at FoTM. In addition, there are also about 26 contemporary textbooks (mostly Tibetan) which are used as key teaching and learning resources. The academic block has a separate room designated as a *Sangay smen-lha Lhakhang* [Medicine Buddha shrine] where teachers and students can learn spiritual courses, practice meditation, and perform *smen-lha* prayers and offerings. There are also student hostel blocks, which can accommodate about 100 students on campus. The RGOB provides per capita student fees, faculty base grants and other capital development funds. The budget allocated by the government to FoTM for the financial year 2014–2015 is Nu 12.608 million [USD $193,715].

Faculty Recruitment and Development

Currently, there are 29 staff including 17 supporting staff and 12 faculty members. The teacher to student ratio for 2015 is 1:5. The lecturers are recruited from among the best practising *Drungtshos* who were themselves FoTM graduates. The faculty selection is based on a competitive process as per 'Condition of Service' of the KGUMSB. *Drungtsho* Phurba Tshering is considered to be a highly learned and most experienced teacher and is retained by FoTM on a contract basis even after his retirement age. Unlike the teachers in other university education sectors who undergo a compulsory postgraduate certificate and diploma courses in education and teaching at the Paro College of Education or Samtse College of Education, the FoTM lecturers have no formalized training in modern pedagogy. However, they undergo yearly training-of-teachers crash courses to learn modern approaches to teaching and learning.

In a university level academic institution, master's degrees and PhD qualifications are the basic requirements. Currently, out of 12 faculty members, nine of them have achieved a master's degree qualifications from the Health Sciences University of Mongolia; University of Leeds, UK; and the University of New England, Australia. While there is a plan to upgrade the qualification of other faculty members in collaboration with Sarnath Central University of Tibetan studies in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India and other regional institutes, there is also need for PhD qualified academic staff at FoTM. With qualifications comes enhanced skills and knowledge which would enable them to develop comprehensive curriculum and pedagogies, and groom the students to higher quality and standards.

Curriculum Development and Courses Offered at FoTM

The FoTM offers two main academic courses: the *Drungtsho* course (Bachelor of Science in Traditional Medicine) that takes five years academic program with ten semesters followed by additional six months of compulsory internship, and the *smen-pa* course (Diploma in Traditional Medicine) that takes three years with six semesters. Two-year certificate courses for pharmacy and research technicians are offered occasionally based on the demand and requirement of the Ministry of Health (MoH). The medium of instruction is Dzongkha [Bhutan's national language] and Chökay [Classical Tibetan]. These programs are recognized by the Bhutan Medical and Health Council and Royal Civil Service Commission. During the early stages of the institute, the training course was based on *rgyud-zhi* [Four Tantras] (Yuthok Youten Gonpo 1980): *rtsa-rgyud* [The Root Treatise], *b.shed-rgyud* [The Explanatory Treaties], *phyema-rgyud* [The Subsequent Treaties], and *sman-ngag-rgud* [The Oral Instruction Treaties] derived from the ancient Lhasa Mentse-Khang curriculum from Tibet (FoTM 2015a). When the institute became part of the RUB, the curriculum was revised by incorporating modules on research methodology, information

and communication technology, academic and analytical skills, and human values to provide a holistic education.

The five-year academic program for the *Drungtsho* course has a total of 49 modules with 660 credit hours out of which 39 modules are on *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine (FoTM 2015b). The four broad modules derived from *rgyud-zhi* are taught to the students in five ascending levels (simple concepts to deeper clinical practices) of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* study. Other core subjects include *shel-gong shel-phreng*, z *in-tig* [Practical Treatment], *Tsi* [astrology] and *smen-gi-phen-nue-jor-dey* [Medicinal Formulations and their Therapeutic Indications]. The remaining ten modules include research methodology, English language, information and communication technology, universal human values and professional ethics (see Pema Thinley, chapter "Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System", this volume), analytical skill, modern anatomy and physiology, hospital management, and the national health care system. The three-year *smen-pa* course has a total of 28 modules and 360 credit hours (FoTM 2015c). *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine constitute 21 core modules based on general four medical treatise of *rgyud-zhi*. The other seven modules included are similar to *Drungtsho* course as mentioned above.

Formal classroom learning is supported by practical sessions. The students get practical sessions from the National Traditional Medicine Hospital (NTMH) which is the teaching hospital for the faculty. Field practical sessions for the identification and familiarization of *Khrog-smen* [low altitude medicinal plants] and *Ngo-smen* [high altitude medicinal plants] are organized on an annual basis. Additionally, four-week practical sessions are conducted in the medicinal plants collection centers in the country: Langthel *Gewog* [local block] in Trongsa *Dzongkhag* [district] for *Khrog-smen* identification and Lingzhi *Dungkhag* [sub-district] in Thimphu *Dzongkhag* for *Ngo-smen* identification. From time to time, the teachers take their students to familiarize them with the *Tsha-chus* [hot springs] and *smen-chus* [medicinal water] of Bhutan (Phurpa Wangchuk and Yeshi Dorji 2007). The faculty is in the process of developing an *ex situ* herbal garden to facilitate teaching learning and knowledge management of rare medicinal plants. In addition to the set curriculum, extracurricular activities like literary, social, cultural and *smen-lha* [religious discourse and meditation] clubs are also instituted to promote a sense of responsibility and to diversify the learning program.

The compulsory six months internship provided to the final year for *Drungtsho* course students include clinical attachments to the traditional hospitals and the practical associations with MSP. During the clinical attachments, the students learn various practical skills from the senior practicing *Drungtshos*. The practical components include patient record keeping, counseling, diagnostics, prescriptions of drugs and providing therapy services. Attachments to the MSP provide the students with the know-how on medicine production, formulations, good manufacturing practices, quality assurance, research and development and good laboratory practices. All the *Drungtsho* trainees complete the internship program for clinical and manufacturing process of traditional medicine at NTMH and MSP respectively.

Student Enrolment, Pedagogy and Assessments

This section addresses the student enrollment process and how teaching and learning takes place, including recent developments. Finally, we discuss the assessment of students.

Student Enrolment Student enrolment is carried out through a fair and transparent process based on the student's academic ranking in the Class XII external examinations and the FoTM's academic requirement for *Drungtsho* and *smen-pa* courses (FoTM 2015a, b). Student applicants of top rankings in their previous academic performance are usually given first preference for *Drungtsho* course and the lower rankings are given opportunity for *smen-pa* course. Generally, for those students from ILCS, their Class XII aggregate marks in Dzongkha and English must be a minimum of 60 % and 50 %, respectively. For the general science Class XII students, the minimum requirements are Dzongkha (70 %), English (50 %), and Biology (60 %). The student intake is in accordance with the MoH human resource plan and requirements. Currently, there are a total of 60 students at various levels of their degree courses (Table 1) and the average ratio of female versus male students is 1:2. According to the Ministry of Health Human Resource Master Plan 2011–2023, about 113 new *Drungtshos* and 441 *smen-pas* will be required by the year 2023 to provide various traditional health services in the country (MoH 2011).

By 2014, 64 *Drungtshos*, 97 *smen-pas*, 11 research assistants, and 17 pharmacy assistants obtained their degrees and certificates from FoTM. (Table 2). These professionals were recruited by the Royal Civil Service Commission of Bhutan and are currently working as lecturers at FoTM, *Drungtshos* and *smen-pas* in the traditional medicine hospitals, research and pharmacy assistants at MSP, store managers at the medical supply storehouses, inspectors at the Drug Regulatory Authority of Bhutan (DRA), and owners of private businesses. This past trend of employment provides the outlook for the sort of job prospects that the present and future students will be looking at while taking up the courses at FoTM.

Table 1 Current student status at FoTM (as of May 2015)

	Training category				
	Drungtsho		*smen-pa*		
Semester	Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
2nd semester	6	2	9	2	19
4th semester	4	2	3	3	12
6th semester	4	4	5	5	18
8th semester	3	3			6
10th semester	5	0			5
Total	22	11	17	10	60

Table 2 Yearly FoTM graduates between 1974 and 2014

Year	*Drungtsho*	*smen-pa*	Pharmacy Assistant.	Research assistant	Total
1974		3			3
1978		1			1
1982		6			6
1984	3				3
1986	2	2			4
1989	3				3
1990	2				2
1991		1			1
1992	4		4	5	9
1995	3				3
1996		5			5
1997		1			1
1998	8		3	3	14
1999	4				4
2001			5	3	8
2002		6			6
2003		4			4
2004	1				1
2005	4	10			14
2006			5		5
2007	4				4
2008		11			11
2009	3				3
2010	4	10			14
2011		10			10
2012	6	9			15
2013	6	8			14
2014	7	10			17
Total:	64	97	17	11	189

Pedagogy Prior to 2003, the pedagogy of the traditional education system has been similar to the classical monastic education system in Bhutan. Students received lectures and were evaluated through written exams, memorization, explanation, contemplation, debates and recitation tests. It was more of a teacher-centered system and had minimal learner-centered protocols. This teacher-centered system which promoted teachers as discipline-keepers and knowledge-providers was not confined only to the FoTM. It has been reported as ubiquitous in schools, colleges and RUB in Bhutan (Maxwell et al. 2008). It was only after 2003 that the modern pedagogical approaches were incorporated into the classical curriculum of FoTM. The first formal validation of the curriculum was done by the RUB in 2007. The curriculum underwent further revision to incorporate the updates in 2013 and was validated by KGUMSB in 2014. As per the KGUMSB academic regulation

(2013), the curriculum needs to be revised every five years to keep abreast of the modern pedagogical approaches of teaching and learning. Currently, FoTM staff have adopted more progressive educational pedagogical methods including question-answer sessions, presentations, project-based learning, demonstrations, clinical assessments, spot identification, interacting with dummies, and field work training.

The FoTM's curriculum has, so far, produced high-quality graduates that have even surpassed other technical graduates who have passed out from other modern technical universities both within the country as well as from abroad as evidenced during the Royal Civil Service Selection Examination where graduates from FoTM excelled. This success owes to the high quality traditional medical education system molded by the lecturers. Although they have not undergone any formalized pedagogical trainings (like other RUB lecturers), they have set high standards in the quality of teaching by practicing whatever they could learn from the short crash-courses on modern pedagogies. Many staff members were also keen to retain the best aspects of the traditional learning model – including memorization and recitation techniques – while seeking ways to 'blend' it with the best of modern teaching approaches. Perhaps, the development of this blended pedagogy integrating best practice from both modern and traditional teaching system and retaining the memorization and recitation techniques may have worked in unison to produce such high quality students.

Student Evaluation Process Student assessment involves written examinations, memorization and recitation tests, demonstrations, and practical examinations. Student assessment may vary for each module. Mainly, two assessment components are followed: Continuous Assessment (CA) and Final Assessment (FA). CA has a percentage composition of 40 % and it includes class tests, projects, presentations, and question-answer sessions held during the module. The FA has a percentage composition of 60 % comprising written exams, oral exams, and practical tests at the end of the module. The main aim of conducting written examinations is to test the knowledge of the student in the theory of *g.so-ba-rig-pa*. The demonstrations and practical assessments are carried out to measure the ability of a student in managing and handling patients. For the memorization and recitation test, the students have to memorize important texts and chapters and recite them in front of the panel of teachers. Contrary to modern teaching-learning approaches, this memorization and recitation method has been retained in the system as it aligns with the general Buddhist teaching-learning practices and also develops the set of skills necessary for the medical profession. The teachers believe that the method of memorization improves students' vocabulary and facilitates their ability to remember and recall the information useful for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. By letting the students to recite the memorized texts in front of the panel of teachers, it helps students to develop composure, confidence and presentation skills that will be required of him/her while treating and providing counselling to the patients. Students who can memorize all the texts and reproduce them with stanza and page numbers through recitation techniques are considered best and receive higher merit marking.

In an era where electronic and other reference materials are available readily, such evaluation methods could be seen as an obsolete technique by outsiders. However, since the remote parts of Bhutan are yet to be connected with internet facilities, knowing the *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical texts by heart becomes handy as the physicians can recollect the valuable information at any point of time and in any situation. Telemedicine can be effective only if there is efficient telecommunication and information technologies. Unlike the modern medical system that has heaps of online information, there is a scarcity of both printed and digitalized online medical information on the Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine, making it harder for even those physicians posted in places where the internet facilities exist.

Challenges and Opportunities

Given that one of the main mandates of the FoTM is preservation of rich traditional medical culture through provision of quality education, its traditional values sometimes conflict that of modern approaches. To earn respect and acceptance by the present generation of people in Bhutan, modernization of FoTM and its education system is essential – but not at the cost of losing all its values and unique identity. Scientific research can enhance the empirical traditional *g.so-ba-rig-pa* knowledge and could make it an evidenced-based medicine. With scientific proof, the integration of allopathic and *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine would be smoother and better. Integration of two different medical systems has been a challenging policy for the MoH. The recent unification of FoTM (traditional system), FoNPH and FoPM (allopathic system) under one administrative authority of KGUMSB could nurture a better integrative environment. It would be a great integration initiative if the KGUMSB could devise a general first year curriculum where the medical students from both the faculties (*g.so-ba-rig-pa* and allopathic) are taught about the fundamentals or basic concepts and principles of both the systems.

Other challenges affecting FoTM are the deficiency of proper research and development (R&D) facilities and the shortage of PhD qualified academic lecturers. Finding a relevant institute or university that could provide required trainings and qualifications (with R&D skills) to the FoTM lecturers has been a very tricky one. Lack of qualified staff with R&D knowledge has restricted the appropriate course diversifications and research initiatives. The current courses offered at FoTM are fully determined and dictated by the human resource plan and the requirements of the MoH. Thus, the MoH is the only organization that could employ the FoTM graduates and once this human resource requirement is fulfilled, the employment for the FoTM graduates remains questionable. Moreover, the currently employed *Drungtshos* and *smen-pas* are young and as a result the likelihood of job vacancies within the MoH will be minimal. Currently, the private clinical practice of both traditional and allopathic medicines are prohibited for social, economic, moral, and ethical reasons. Looking beyond the country, the mainstream Tibetan medical institutes (established worldwide) possess a greater threat and competition to the

FoTM. As the Tibetan institutes become more popular among the international communities, it would be challenging for the FoTM to attract international students unless the courses are diversified. All these present serious employment risks for FoTM graduates and limits the long-term sustainability of the institute as a tertiary education provider.

However, despite minor challenges, there are many reasons and opportunities for FoTM to outshine other institutes and competitors that have sprung from outside the country. The FoTM and the traditional medical services enjoy full support from the government, country-wide respect and acceptance by the people, and there is no competition from within the country. The Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical education system has significant bearings on the four pillars of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and holds huge socio-economic resources. It serves as the center for preservation of a rich traditional medical culture, improves the health of the people, uplifts the country's socio-economic status, and helps in the preservation of the country's pristine environment. In particular, it has become a source of knowledge and employment for the *Drungtshos* and *smen-pas*; cradle of health and cure for patients; a basis of income generation and livelihood for farmers, nomadic yak herders, and the herbal traders; and can facilitate the development of private *g.so-ba-rig-pa* hospitals and pharmacies in the country (Phurpa Wangchuk and Tashi Tobgay 2015). The rich herbal tradition of *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine also presents potential for growth of herbal industries including herbal cosmeceuticals, nutraceuticals, fragrance, flavor, incense and other religious products in the country. These industries demand different sets of knowledge and skills which consequently open up the avenues for course diversification at the FoTM. The course diversification can include: traditional *gso-ba-rig-pa*-based gynecology, pediatrics, dentistry, preventative care, spa and massage, palliative care, health and meditation, ethnobotany, pharmacognosy, phytochemistry, pharmacy, ethnopharmacology, medical anthropology, quality assurance, GMP technologies and the manufacturing system. While many of these newly diversified courses can be taught by the senior FoTM lecturers, it would be worthwhile to recruit a small number of qualified researchers/professors with scientific research background (preferably with research experience in traditional medicines and associated fields) to establish the scientific fields of studies mentioned above. Having these fields of research established at FoTM will not only improve the quality of *g.so-ba-rig-a* medicine but would also facilitate the biodiscovery research projects. These diversified courses have potential to attract international students and also to increase the employability of the FoTM students not only in the country but also abroad.

The fact that *g.so-ba-rig-pa* has rarely been studied through a scientific lens has huge avenues for research and development. Beside diagnostics, treatment methods, and therapy services; the traditional formulations and its medicinal ingredients also provide a huge platform for research and bio-discovery programs. Previous studies (Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2007b; Phurpa Wangchuk, et al. 2010; Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2012; Phurpa Wangchuk et al. 2015) involving medicinal plants – carried out in collaborations with the University of Wollongong and James Cook University in Australia, and BIOTECH and Srinakharinwirot University in Thailand – revealed the

potential of medicinal plants research for novel drug discovery. Another research area that has been hardly touched by the researchers in Bhutan is the LHS or folklore medicine. Some of these practices, especially the bone setters – similar to chiropractic – and the herbalists, are unique and perceived effective. Studying them and incorporating some of their good practices into the mainstream *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine would be enriching and could be a useful tool for developing the medical practice unique to Bhutan. These LHS practices are entwined with the Bhutanese culture and has potential to become good GNH projects for the students and the teachers of FoTM.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This chapter highlighted the historical aspects, institutional and curriculum developments, staff development, student enrolment, teaching-learning processes, student assessment system, and other recent changes instilled in the Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical education system. Historically, Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medicine belonged to the larger corpus of Tibetan scholarly medicine and the monastic education system. Hence, the similarities are striking, especially with the curriculum as it has been adapted from the old Tibetan Lhasa Mentse-khang medical school. Most of the earlier FoTM academic staff – including Lhadak Amchi, *Drungtsho* Sherub Jorden, and *Drungtsho* Pema Dorji – had their roots or education from the Chagpori medical school in Tibet before it became part of China. However, some variations can be observed in the therapy services, pharmacopoeia, and the way FoTM's current education system operates and how these are practiced in Bhutan. The health integration policy of 1967 triggered the establishment of a *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical institute which separated it from the mainstream monastic institutions. The Bhutanese *g.so-ba-rig-pa* medical institute evolved from a small dispensary-based education center established in 1971 to a sophisticated, university-based FoTM. At the date of writing, 189 students have graduated from the present and earlier forms of the FoTM and they form the core human resource structure of the 54 traditional medicine hospitals/units that are built alongside allopathic medicine hospitals to provide holistic and integrated health care services to the people. Another 60 students currently studying at the FoTM, will follow them.

Since the FoTM receives full government support including the policy and finance, the opportunities that lie ahead outshine the small challenges it faces currently. The newly built academic block is one of the best in the country. With better missions, visions, dynamic curriculum, course diversification and improved research and development activities initiated by KGUMSB, the FoTM is set to catch up with the allopathic medical system and other scientific medical breakthroughs. The immediately doable initiative of the FoTM is to take feedback from past graduates on how the FoTM academic training helped them in their professional work-settings and what needs changing in the curriculum. Based on the feedback, the FoTM can look into diversifying the courses and accommodating inquiry-based problem-solving and new knowledge-creating scientific approaches. Diversifying the traditional *gso-*

ba-rig-pa courses in the areas of gynecology, pediatrics, dentistry, preventative care, spa and massage, palliative care, and the health and meditation would require technical inputs from both the FoTM lecturers and allopathic medical doctors. Introduction of such diversified courses and the incorporation of traditional wisdom into modern therapeutic system would improve the overall patient care system. The course diversification and the introduction of scientific approaches to education will need a huge investment in building strong research and development facilities. Research and development is the hallmark of any good university. Current lecturers at the FoTM lack PhD qualifications, which limits their abilities to carry out advanced research and development activities. Therefore, there is urgent need to upgrade their qualification.

Overall, upgrading the staff qualifications, adapting the curriculum, diversifying the courses, and building good research and development has an ultimate bearing in: (a) providing quality traditional medical education, (b) attracting merited domestic and international students, (c) opening up career opportunities for its graduates, (d) providing quality traditional medical services and medicines, (e) fostering better respect and collaborations, and (f) preserving Bhutan's rich traditional medical heritage. Strong foundations in research and development areas would eventually make the FoTM a major competitor in the global marketplace for traditional medicines and could promote the innovation of Bhutanese research. This can ensure the future sustainability of the FoTM and put the KGUMSB in a better position to become the prestigious traditional medicine research university in the Himalayan region.

Students play baseball at a school picnic (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan

Jagar Dorji

Abstract In 1913, the first 'Western model' school was established in the Haa District of Western Bhutan and a mobile school in Bumthang two years later. By 1959, the Royal Government planned to make school education available to the general population. However, the general population had reservations about the 'Western model' of education. The main goal of education was to improve the well-being of the people and to meet the need for a trained workforce for the new 'modernized' economic development programmes. The Royal Government was faced with the problem of unavailable consumables for schools, a shortage of teachers, and a lack of funds to build schools and to pay the teachers. As these challenges were being addressed with the goodwill, support, and cooperation of the United Nations, national governments, non-government organisations, and individuals, there arose more problems endemic to a growing system. With the help of a number of supporters, Bhutan has been able to make remarkable progress in education, as well as in other sectors. The last four decades of the twentieth century have been a stage of hardships and progress for the people of Bhutan, but under the astute leadership of the Kings, Bhutan is now almost self-sufficient in human resource needs. This chapter will explain how the Bhutanese education system developed through the assistance of the international community.

Introduction

The knowledge that reading and writing for general people outside the monastic system was important to bring improvement in the economy and welfare of the people of Bhutan was clearly foreseen by *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck, the First *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King of Bhutan]. The first school at Haa in 1913 sowed the initial seed for the growth of secular education on a contemporary 'Western' model (Powdyel 2008).

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The First and Second *Druk Gyalpo* established several schools, including the mobile court school in Lamey Gonpa, Bumthang. Besides Dzongkha, the students were taught Hindi and English, preparing them to be able to communicate and administer the affairs of the country as *poenkhags* [government officials] (Mackey 2002).

Bhutan began the process of Five-Year Plans (FYP) for economic development in 1961. The emphasis of the 1st FYP (1961–1966) was “Education, Health and Infrastructure” (Nado Rinchen 2012, p. 10). School education, thus, became a nationwide programme as it was expected to train enough “manpower required” for the overall development of the country (ED 1976, p. 1).

Having started an education system on a Western secular model, the obvious need was enough cash to pay the teachers, buy the stationary, science apparatus, and textbooks. Proper school buildings had to be built. The textbooks for all learning areas, except Dzongkha, were very different from those in the existing monastic education system in terms of language, nature, and organisation of content. These learning materials had to be imported from outside. As Bhutan’s economy was predominantly agrarian, people paid their taxes only in kind – in the form of food grains and free labour, among others. Cash was, therefore, a scarce resource.

The noble initiatives to educate the masses for their own well-being, and that of the country, would have been very difficult without the goodwill, support, and cooperation extended by a number of countries and international agencies over the years.

This chapter reflects on how Bhutan has been able to draw the benefits of Western secular education with the assistance and cooperation of a number of national governments, multinational and international agencies, individual sponsors, and not the least, the expatriate teachers. Within the scope of the chapter it is only possible to make a general mention of the immense support and assistance extended to Bhutan. I will first outline the initial challenges that Bhutan faced in its early days of mass education, then highlight the particular support from India in Bhutan’s educational development. Next I will focus on the acute issue of teacher shortages faced by a burgeoning Bhutanese education system, and lastly I will explain the numerous areas and organisations from around the globe that have supported Bhutanese education.

Initial Challenges

Initially the Bhutanese people were not so sure about outcomes of the foreign system of school education. In those early days, the Royal Government was compelled to use ‘conscription techniques’ to get children to school, but parents adopted their own tricks to keep them at home as recalled by some of our former teachers such as Jigme Zangpo (2002) who found that even in the 1970s, there were parents unwilling to send their children to school (see also Dorjee Tshering 2002; Nado Rinchen 2012; Pema Thinley 2012; Zangley Drukpa 2002). Those who ‘could not escape’ the conscription often walked for hours or even days from their villages, living in

Table 1 Number of schools and teachers in Bhutan between 1961 and 2014

Year	No. of schools and Institutions	Number of teachers	Number of students
1961	11	15	450
1971	98	538	12,093
1981	100	1023	24,057
1991	252	2337	52,198
2007	527	5372	152,194
2014	551	8574	172,393

Jagar Dorji (2000) and PPD (2007, 2014)

rapidly-built camps or *gar* [structures made of bamboo mats] and learning the texts by heart and aloud. One of the earliest volunteers mentioned this as the most dominant way to teach (Strickland 2015, personal communication).

School buildings in villages were built by the local people but many of these were poorly lit classrooms, as the windows were very small, particularly in the southern communities. Electricity was not available in most places. Huge amounts of resources received through donor assistance were used for making school buildings, but these were not up to the standard, for which more funds were required for "renovation and replacement" (ED 1989). School-related consumables were hard to come by. Textbooks and stationery were purchased and transported to the schools on horseback and/or by porters changing hands at the boundary of every district (Nado Rinchen 2015, personal communication).

The 1990s saw exponential growth in the number of schools, teachers and students demanding more funds to meet the cost of books and stationery, scientific apparatus, and salaries for teachers (see Table 1). The 1990s was also a decade when the qualitative reform in school education was also at a critical stage – as will be explained later – adding to the rising cost.

In short, the western model of school education had to be imposed on people who were uncertain about its outcomes. Even though there were not sufficient resources available, the Royal Government was determined to open more schools across the country as this was the principal means of improving the well-being of the people. In order to grow its education system, Bhutan needed help from the outside. The biggest supporter of Bhutanese education development was its neighbour to the south: India.

Indian Support

India has always been a great benefactor to Bhutan. The initial support for education began with the letter the First *Druk Gyalpo*, Ugyen Wangchuck, wrote to the Viceroy of India in 1921. His Majesty submitted a 20-point proposal along with a request for a grant of 130,000 Rupees. The grant was to support the Bhutanese boys from the first school in Haa in 1913 for their higher studies in India in various fields such as

medicine, engineering, teaching, agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, and other fields necessary to bring improvements in the lives of Bhutanese people (Tshering Tashi 2008).

In 1914, 46 boys were taken to India from the school in Haa (Khandu Om Dorji 2008). Another group of 30 students were granted the Government of India Scholarship and admitted to English Medium Schools (Khandu Om Dorji 2008). These schools were generally in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal State and the hill districts of Utter Pradesh, in India, according to *Dasho* Nado Rinchen (2015, personal communication). *Dasho* Nado Rinchen was one of the 30 boys who were assembled from various parts of the country by the late Prime Minister, Jigme Palden Dorji. These scholars later returned to Bhutan as "teachers, sub-assistant surgeons, trainers, forest rangers, mining engineers and vets" (Khandu Om Dorji 2008, p. 19) needed in the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1st Five-Year Plan (FYP), including education, was fully supported by the Government of India (GoI) (Planning Commission 1981; Tashi Choden 2004). In the 2nd FYP (1967–72), the GoI's aid was reduced by 1.1 %, and then further reductions by 11.1 % and 13.1 % during the 3rd and 4th FYPs respectively. Bhutan became a member of the United Nations (UN) in 1971, after which the UN and other international agencies contributed 3.3 % in the 3rd FYP which was increased to 17.5 % in the 4th FYP. The Royal Government's resource mobilization among other international partners generated 1.1 %, 6.4 % and 5.4 % during the 2nd, 3rd and 4th FYP respectively (Planning Commission 1981).

During the 1970s and 1980s, domestic revenue had increased but was only just sufficient to meet the day-to-day administrative cost. The land reform of the 1960s changed the payment of tax to cash, but it was only nominal. India still continues to be the major source of assistance for Bhutan, but increasing expansion of the education system required more assistance from elsewhere. Specific issues and challenges around the language of instruction, curriculum, libraries, nutrition, and teachers will be highlighted below.

Challenges of Growth and Expansion

Language of Instruction As school education was to provide a trained work force for modern economic development, the language of instruction was an issue of immense importance to the Royal Government. In the beginning, Hindi started as the language of instruction in schools. This could be because India was the closest neighbour, and a country with which the Bhutanese people would interact at all levels of social, spiritual, commercial, and political domains. For the students, this was another foreign language and the learning materials, according to the late *Dasho* Kunzang Tangbi[1] (2014, personal communication), were all bought from India.

[1] *Dasho* Kunzang Tangbi was a student of the mobile court school in Bumthang in the 1940s.

In 1962, however, the Royal Government changed the language of instruction to English. This was necessitated by the fact that English was already a *lingua franca* of the region and the ability to comprehend and communicate in this language would connect Bhutan to the wider world for economic and educational needs (Bray and Packer 1993), including India.

Following the adoption of English as the language of instruction, the Prime Minister of Bhutan approached the Darjeeling Jesuits of St. Joseph's College in 1962 and invited Fr. William Mackey to Bhutan. His Majesty the Third *Druk Gyalpo*,Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, and the Prime Minister asked Fr. William Mackey to set up an English-medium school based on the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education system. Fr. Mackey then went to the east and opened the Trashigang High School where the first batch of students passed Grade X in 1967 and 1968 and were then sent to Australia for higher studies (Mackey 2002, p. 6). This school was later shifted to Kanglung, and then to Khaling as Kanglung became the first university college, known as Sherubtse, which was also managed by the same group of Jesuits. In 1975 Fr. J. Coffey and a group of priests and nuns started the Punakha High School. The Canadian Jesuits focused on educating the children instead of changing their faith. Fr. Mackey, in particular, was convinced that living and working closer to the Buddhist and Hindu culture was equal to "what Christ stands for – love of God and neighbor" (Solverson 1995, p. 293).

Today, English has gained more popularity and is linked to social status as well as a means to accessing training and employment (Sonam Rinchen 1999). However, language experts say that "The first step in language endangerment is bilingualism. The second step is the loss of domains of usage to the dominant language" (van Driem 2015, p. 66). Both steps are at play in Bhutan. Others (Singye Namgyel 2003; Dorji Thinley and Maxwell 2013) point out that we still have a long way to master the academic standard in English, whilst the popularity of English may also lead to the decline in the minor dialects of Bhutan.

The adoption of English as the language of instruction for school education was a landmark decision that has a lasting effect on the country. Though the use of English has been seen as advantageous, its popularity is also viewed with concern on the future of Dzongkha and other minor dialects.

Making the Curriculum Relevant Even though educating children was one of the core policies of the Royal Government, it was obvious that apart from Dzongkha texts, all the learning materials had to be adopted from India in those early years. So the textbooks used in schools were "a replica of those used by the missionary schools in the state of West Bengal in India" (Jagar Dorji 2000, p. 6). The content of learning in the 1960s and 1970s was "far removed from the needs of the Bhutanese children and [also] organised in rigid syllabi" (Jagar Dorji 2000, p. 70–71).

By the 5th FYP (1982–1987), the Royal Government considered improving the quality of education through curriculum reform, upgrading teacher training programmes, and even introducing double shifts in urban schools (World Bank 1984) corresponding to the growing number of students. In the early 1980s, British volunteers were employed to write the Druk English series for pre-primary to Class VIII

levels, based on Bhutanese contexts. As a part of the reform initiatives, the Department of Education replaced Social Studies and Science with a new subject called Environmental Science (EVS) in the primary schools. The volunteers were also engaged with Bhutanese counterparts to write students' workbooks and teachers' manuals for EVS, English, and Mathematics.

Concurrent to the curriculum reform, it was clear that a different approach to teaching was necessary. The traditional style of teaching was dominated by lecturing, note taking, and rote learning while the new approach was to make the pupils explore the environment and acquire the knowledge and skills from the day-to-day events and experiences of their lives. Being starkly different from their previous practices, teachers were expected to change their role from lecturing to guiding the pupils in the process of learning. The nomenclature adopted for this method was the New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE). By the mid-1990s, the reform was extended to the secondary schools (Jagar Dorji 2000, 2005; Singye Namgyel and Phub Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume).

As indicated earlier, the reforms, in effect, had huge financial and human resource implications. Writing textbooks, manuals for teachers, and student workbooks; the in-service training of teachers; and printing required not only the initial expenses but also recurrent costs. The support of the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) of the United Kingdom, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), World Food Programme (WFP), and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in terms of technical expertise, grants, and soft loans came as an enormous blessings. The reform was, however, contended by overcrowded classrooms and the urgent need to build more schools across the country, which is elaborated in another section later in this chapter.

In short, international support for curriculum reform was troubled by the need to divert the resources to the expansion of schools. Educationists like Beeby (1966) doubted the efficacy of the dual efforts in qualitative improvement and physical expansion of schools.

School Libraries The importance of libraries in school was reflected in the Draft National Education Policy (1976) in which the library room was designated as the most important room in every school. Reading beyond textbooks was made mandatory in the 5th FYP (1981–1986) as a part of reform initiatives. Graded readers in English were published as supplementary reading materials for primary schools.

Many volunteers had thoughtfully spent discretionary funds for the purchase of library books. The School Library Development Project (SLDP) was initiated in 1995 and a teacher in each school was trained and designated as teacher librarian. In 1999, library assistants were appointed to help the teacher librarian.

UNICEF, the World Bank, CIDA, UNFPA, GoI, and a number of individuals had recognised the importance of libraries and helped to train teacher librarians, library

assistants, and build the supply of books (Shaw 2005). These supports were provided from primary to tertiary levels of education. “School libraries have made significant progress … while difficulties still remain, schools libraries are now much better accommodated, furnished, stocked and managed” (Shaw 2005, p. 30). Save the Children International still continues to support the lower primary schools through the Bhutan Children’s Book Initiative (BCBI) programme (Karma Dyenka, 2015, personal communication).

Enriching Nutrition Lack of nutrition has been identified as a cause of poor performances of children in schools which, in turn, led to high rate of repetition and dropouts. The Royal Government approached the World Food Programme (WFP) for food support to rural and remote schools in the country. The WFP support began in 1974 with nine schools, and gradually covered almost all schools except those in the urban areas. WFP provided mainly breakfast and lunch, cooking facilities such as electric cookers and built kitchen space in schools. It also helped in capacity building in feeding management and training the cooks for hygienic food preparation.

These have not only helped children in the villages to go to schools but also sustained them to complete basic education. Today our schools maintain more than 90 % attendance and the dropout rates below 5 % (WFP 2010).

Growing Pressure The high priority accorded to education led to dedicating a high proportion of budget provisions during successive FYP periods (Jagar Dorji 2000). As mentioned earlier, the Department of Education tried to enroll as many children as possible in schools. By the mid-1980s, Bhutanese parents had realised that education could lead to improved living conditions and even provide assistance to their families in the villages. The pressure now mounted on the Royal Government to build more schools and recruit more teachers, especially from the 1990s when the enrolment saw a huge leap forward in all types of schools. The expansion demanded a great expenditure during this period. Although the statutory age of admission in school was 6 years, parents were eager to send their children to schools much younger. A survey showed that 913 children in primary schools were under-aged (ED and UNICEF 1990). The conscription technique was a thing of the past.

The support and, indeed, pressure from international agencies, mainly UNICEF and the World Bank, were boosting the expansion of school education (Jagar Dorji 2000). Bhutan was party to the declaration of Education for All (EFA) at the World Education Conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, and also at the Dakar Declaration of “EFA by the year 2015” (UNICEF 2000). As a result, the number of schools doubled during the 1990s. The need for more schools soon extended to secondary levels to accommodate students leaving the primary schools. The Annual Education Statistics in the 1990s calculated the annual rate of enrolment growth above 10 % at both primary and secondary levels.

In summary, the urgency and commitment to physical expansion as well as qualitative reform had been difficult for Bhutan’s developing economy. This was further aggravated by a pervasive shortage of trained teachers, which is the focus of the next section.

Outside Solutions to Teacher Shortages

The boys that the First *Druk Gyalpo* sent to India were distributed to different sectors of development, as mentioned earlier. Those who had learnt the art of teaching were sent to different districts to teach in the schools that had increased to 11 by 1959.

During the first five years of modernization efforts (1961–1966) there were enough teachers but, as the children moved up in grades, more schools were added with rising enrolment over the successive years. Then the shortage of teachers was felt across the country, particularly in the rural and remote schools. Education's First Director, Dawa Tshering, had gone to the Indian State of Kerala in 1962 and recruited 20 teachers (CERD 2002). Kerala was chosen because the language of instruction in that State was English. It had also achieved the highest rate of literacy among the Indian States in the 1960s (Nado Rinchen, 2015, personal communication).

In the 1970s, most school leavers and university graduates preferred, and were absorbed into, the newly established departments and ministries that were growing in size. Apart from being a taxing job, the teaching profession did not enjoy the social glamour and promotions compared to those in the administrative cadre. Hence, except for a few individuals who were genuinely interested, teaching was usually the last choice among the graduates. A shortage of good teachers had become a pervasive problem in Bhutan's education system.

Education had been one of the highest priority areas in the planned development programmes for providing trained workforce. Yet, by the beginning of the 5th FYP (1981–1986), Bhutan's main problem continued to be the shortage of a trained workforce (Planning Commission, 1981). The number of trained teachers from the Teacher Training Institute (TTI) established in 1968 in Samtse and the Teacher Training Centre (TTC) in Paro established in 1974 (Table 2) was "like a drop in the

Table 2 Student enrolment in the two teacher education colleges

Year	Samtse	Paro
1992	127	61
1994	160	146
1996	189	177
1998	207	280
2000	278	554
2002	381	633
2004	637	489
2006	483	744
2008	540	724
2010	664	907
2012	1201	1239
2014	1162	1545

PPD (1992, 2000, 2007, 2014)

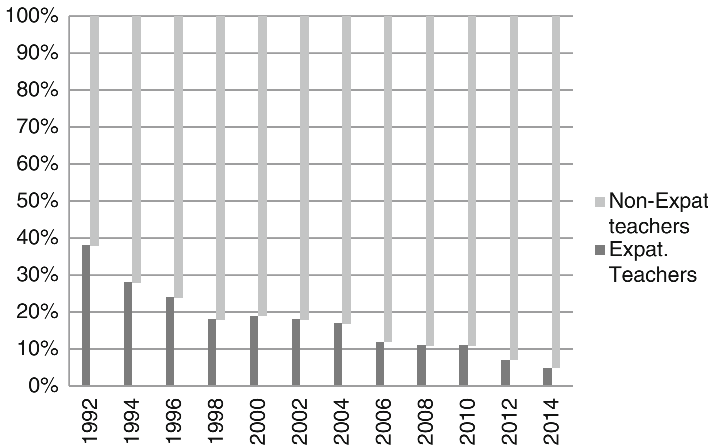

Fig. 1 Percentage of expatriate teachers in Bhutanese schools, 1992–2014 (Policy and Planning Division 2000, 2007, 2014, p. 19)

ocean" (Nado Rinchen 2012, p. 11). Therefore, the Department of Education had to recruit teachers from outside in large numbers.

The World Bank expressed concern that due to the severe shortage of qualified Bhutanese teachers, vis-à-vis the estimated annual enrolment growth rate of more than 10 % in student numbers, the "education system [in Bhutan] will remain heavily dependent on expatriate teaching staffs during the 5th FYP" (1982–1987) (World Bank 1984, p. 117). The early 1990s saw a higher proportion of expatriate teachers which gradually reduced towards the end of the decade (Fig. 1).

Samtse offered three year B.Ed Programmes, while the two year Primary Teacher Certificate (PTC) Programme was offered both at Samtse and Paro. By 2002, both colleges offered the B.Ed. Programme even for primary teachers as the entry level for teacher training was raised to Class XII. Nonetheless, it was pointed out that "until recently a weak aspect of the programme has been the lack of attention given to supply of trained teachers" (World Bank 1989, p. 50).

Local Solutions to Teacher Shortages Multigrade teaching was seen as an option to resolve the teacher shortage, particularly in rural and remote schools. It was suitable particularly for community schools as one teacher taught more than one level of classes at a time. With the support of UNICEF, about 130 teachers have been sent on an attachment programme with the University of New England (UNE) in Australia from 1993 until 2008 (Maxwell 2012).

Bhutan's civil service grade ranges from 1 to 17 in terms of salary variation – 1 being the highest and 17 being the lowest. Until 1988, the lowest entry grade for teachers was 13 according to civil service system. In 1988, this was raised to 10 in order to attract more candidates to join. Until 1991, all university graduates were required to sit for the civil service examinations irrespective of which sector they

chose to work. Those graduates joining the teaching force were exempted from this examination, but they were required to undergo the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). They could also leave teaching after 5 years if they wished to change their jobs. These policy decisions have made a difference in the number of people opting to teach, but the number was still far from adequate.

Looking Outside to Fill the Gaps The Royal Government eventually turned towards countries beyond India. As noted earlier, Bhutan's connection with the United Kingdom began with the communications between *Gongsa* Ugyen Wangchuck and the Viceroy of India. In 1983, Mr. Peter Collister, Director of the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) supported the fielding of several volunteers to teach English, Science, and Mathematics through the British Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO). Some of these volunteers taught in schools, some were engaged in developing learning resources in Thimphu, while others became resource teachers for NAPE working for a cluster of two to three schools located at a close distance. A VSO field office was set up in Thimphu to coordinate and support the volunteers while in Bhutan. This office, as well as the volunteers, was discontinued after 8 years due to funding problems.

In 1984, the World University of Canada (WUSC) sent its volunteers with funding from the Canadian International Development Cooperation (CIDA). The Canadians went to work in the eastern *dzongkhags* [districts], following the footsteps of the Canadian Jesuits, while the British volunteers worked in the western *dzongkhags*. Through this arrangement, more than 40 Canadian teachers had worked in Bhutan and, in addition, more than 20 Bhutanese teachers studied at the University of New Brunswick (UNB). The WUSC Office in Thimphu coordinated the Bhutan-Canada activities and was later replaced by the CIDA funded Canadian Cooperation Office (CCO), which continued to support the education sector through an agreement with the UNB (*Kuensel*, 1991, 12 October). The CCO has since been replaced by the Bhutan-Canada Foundation, which continues to bring in volunteer teachers from many Western countries, not just Canada.

The United Kingdom and Canada were the two main contributors to teaching, but they were not the only ones. During the same period, volunteers from New Zealand and Australia were also recruited through the Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA). They were also actively involved in helping to implement the NAPE programme. The VSA has withdrawn from Bhutan, but Australia has continued to grant scholarships for human resource development (HDR) through agencies like AusAid and Endeavour, including a large number of teachers. Swiss support began in the early 1970s through the Pro Bhutan Foundation which was taken over by Helvetas in 1975. The link between Pedagogische Hochshule in Zurich and teacher training colleges in Bhutan, called the Partnership in Teacher Training (PITT) programme between 1989 and 2003, had valuable inputs in various aspects of pre- and in-service teacher education programmes in Bhutan (Pedagogische Hochschule 2003). The Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) joined the World Bank in the Primary Education Project (PEP) in 1985 and the Second Education Project in 1998 to assist in teacher education (SSB, 2008). The Support for the Teacher Education Project

(STEP) (2003–2008) was developed in which SDC/Helvetas took up infrastructure and scholarships for the two education colleges (Pedagogische Hochschule 2003). More recently, Japanese volunteers joined Bhutanese teachers to implement physical education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects. The Japanese volunteers are still active in Bhutanese schools.

There were also UN volunteers who were directly paid by the UN agencies and receiving country-provided accommodation. In the case of other volunteers, the Royal Government paid local salary, transportation, and accommodation while the source-country paid air fares and other necessities. This arrangement was beneficial for Bhutan as it involved less cost but at the same time provided teachers for Science, Math, and ICT, in which the shortage was more acute. In summary, volunteer teachers from a range of countries have been helpful in resolving the shortage of teachers as well as assisting in the curriculum reform in the late 1980s and 1990s. Not only did non-Bhutanese teachers support an overwhelmed educational system, but they also brought in a wealth of global knowledge and cultures to a mostly rural and isolated Bhutanese population.

Expatriate Teacher Experiences The expatriate teachers, whether from India or overseas, had the courage to leave their homes and families thousands of miles away to teach in schools in far-flung Himalayan villages. They had to endure "many days of difficult trekking into remote areas to reach their schools" where "they had to live in the classrooms and cook in open places and at time under an umbrella during rainy seasons" (Nado Rinchen 2012, p. 12). The experiences of two teachers are summarised below as an example.

In 1962, Mr. G.B. Kurup, one of the 20 teachers from Kerala, had arrived in Trongsa where I was a student at the time. In a brief but poignant memoire, he wrote of the ten days' walk from Gelephu [a border town to the south of Trongsa], the physical and emotional pains he had endured, and finally being dumped in a forlorn place. Lying down on his bed on the dusty floor of a dilapidated school classroom, his only thought was to escape at the first opportunity. However, upon seeing the innocent children, his inner compassion overruled his emotions and he decided to stay on. "I will work for these children. I will give whatever I have to make them better persons" (Kurup 2002, p. 62). Mr. Kurup returned to his country in 1987.

Nancy Stickland, a Canadian Volunteer,went to teach in Phongmey Primary School in Trashigang, living with the bare minimum of amenities. She wrote home describing her humble quarters, cooking her food on a wooden fire, fetching water in a bucket, eating meals by kerosene lamps, and her anxieties about the unreliable road which was the only access to essential commodities in the market. Teaching a classroom of 50 children seated on decrepit floors (Strickland 1988) would not have been easy. Today, she continues to work in Bhutan bringing Canadian volunteers.

The other expatriates and volunteers have had their share of experiences in varying degrees of challenge. Many of our Indian teachers also shouldered the responsibility of managing the schools until their own Bhutanese pupils became capable of assuming the responsibility in the late 1980s. They stayed far away from their families, often cut off by bad weather and roads and lack of communication for

days. Nonetheless, it was their benevolent disposition that urged them to stay on as they did to make a difference in the lives of many children. The sacrifices of these teachers have not been in vain as their pupils are in the driving seats of progress and development in Bhutan today. Being away from modern amenities and living in places not very different from medieval conditions, expatriate teachers will always be remembered for their contributions to the development of education in Bhutan.

School Leadership and Management Educational institutions require effective heads to perform well despite the odds (REC 2012). It was from the mid-1980s that heads of schools had been given some exposure in school administration in the United Kingdom with support from UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP. The Advanced Diploma programme for primary school principals and the Masters in educational management and leadership through distance mode for secondary school principals began at the Paro College of Education in 2003 in collaboration with St. Francis Xavier University of Canada, with UNESCO and CIDA funding. By 2008/9, about 100 principals have completed the M.Ed. programme and about 300 primary school principals have completed Advanced Diploma (NIE 2004).

Bhutan's Education Benefactors

The preceding sections give some indication of the generous support provided to the education sector in Bhutan, which are summarised in Table 3. The achievements of Bhutan in education, just as in other sectors of the economy, would have been immensely challenging without the support and cooperation of all our development partners and individuals.

The contributions made by our supporters and teachers are remembered in the following words of the former Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigme Y. Thinley:

> I offer our deepest gratitude to all the selfless teachers and educators, both from Bhutan as well as from around the world, who made this transformation (in education) possible. I also offer our deep appreciation to all our development partners and friends, our friend and neighbour India, and governments, agencies and institutions around the world that have stood by us and so generously supported our efforts to advance modern education in Bhutan. (Jigme Y. Thinley 2012, p. iv)

Conclusions

Educational development in Bhutan started with a great deal of hardship with parents uncertain of its outcomes. In the early days there were hurdles in meeting the human, financial, and materials resources followed by concerns on the quality of learning. Today, thanks to the consistent priority given to education by our successive monarchs, Bhutan has leap-frogged economic and knowledge capacity from medieval to the digital era within about five decades.

Table 3 Support for education development in Bhutan

Source	NGOs/Agencies	Areas of support and cooperation	Approx. dates of activity
Australia	VSA, AusAid, Endeavour	Scholarships (including First Bhutan Class X), volunteer teachers, research, library, HRD, School Feeding (WFP)	1985+
Canada	CIDA, WUSC, UNB, St. F.X Unversity, Bhutan Canada Foundation	HRD, teacher education, curriculum development, printing of textbooks, library, in-service training, publication, M.Ed Programme	1987+
Denmark	DANIDA	Scouts, Construction, HRD, Library	1990s–2013
Great Britain & Ireland	ODA, VSA, Oxfam	HRD (for school managers), volunteer teachers, Model school (e.g. Drugyal HSS), library	1980s–1995
India	Government of India	Teachers, HRD, library, infrastructure, stationery, books, examinations, certificate recognition, finance	1914+
Japan	Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Teachers for Physical Education, ICT, computers, finance	1985+
Kuwait	AGFUND	Teacher education through UNESCO	1980s
New Zealand	Through VSA	Volunteer teachers	1980s
Singapore	Singapore International Foundation (SIF)	ICT, Teacher Education, scholarships	1990s
Switzerland	SDC, Helvetas, Bhutan-Swiss Friendship Association	PITT, STEP, Infrastructure for teacher education, HRD, library, school project	1980+
United Nations	UNICEF, UNESCO, UNV, UNFPA, UNCDF, WFP	HRD, Infrastructure, Library, School Feeding, curriculum development, printing	1974+
United States	Save the Children (now SC International), Wheaton College, Bhutan Foundation	Library, life skills education, multi-grade, parenting education, disaster preparedness, exchange programmes, inclusive/special education development	1980s
World Bank	IDA	Infrastructure, HRD, research, curriculum, ICT, library development	1980+

Source: author

The use of English to teach almost all subjects in schools, except Dzongkha and Environmental Science, has enabled the Bhutanese people to connect well with the wider world as was envisaged initially. Our ability to communicate, negotiate, engage in trade transactions, pursue higher studies, and to understand others has been significant. A number of Bhutanese scholars have earned merits and excellence abroad, a fruition of the policy maintained by our leaders in the past. At home, foreign visitors find it easier to communicate with the Bhutanese as tourism continues to grow. In hindsight, the popularity of English is already making Dzongkha a dispensable option for many. English is preferred to Dzongkha in schools, social, and official circles. A decrease in the use of Dzongkha at the personal and official level is deemed as a threat to this important national language.

As a member of the world community, Bhutan has kept the commitments to international conventions and ratified the agreements that ensure the well-being of the people. The Education for All (EFA) initiative was a force that promised access to the wealth of knowledge to all, in line with the philosophy Gross National Happiness. Today, we have achieved 100 % gender parity in primary school enrolment and gross enrolment of 95 %, two of the millennium goals achieved well ahead of the target year of 2015 (UNDP 2012).

These achievements are attributed to the generous support rendered by friendly countries, multi-national organisations, and individuals in all possible ways. This chapter is a tribute to the global community that stood by the people of Bhutan during the decades of hard work and learning, in the true spirit of Gross National Happiness.

This student shows the traditional dress of the people from Laya (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Dasho Pema Thinley, former Secretary at the Ministry of Education and later Vice Chancellor of the Royal University of Bhutan. Interviewed on June 8, 2015.

Karma Dyenka, Programme Officer for Education, Save the Children International, Thimphu Bhutan. Interviewed on June 7, 2015.

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Part II
Contemporary Issues

Rural Life and Modern Formal Schooling in Bhutan

Akiko Ueda

Abstract This chapter examines impacts of education in rural Bhutan. There is a perception in Bhutanese society that modern school education has alienated the younger generation from rural farming life, and that this is one of the main causes of increasing fallow farmland and out-migration to urban areas. The chapter re-examines the impact of modern formal schooling on rural out-migration. While the view that modern school education alienates students from rurality may reflect a degree of reality, the chapter calls for a careful examination of combined factors. The chapter suggests that modern formal schooling, through introducing new perspectives on the life and the world, is one of the main driving forces of social changes in Bhutan. Furthermore, I argue its combination with other factors, such as the recruitment system for white-collar jobs, has to be kept within the scope of examination.

Introduction

This chapter will analyse the impacts of modern formal schooling on rural lives. There have been many changes in rural areas in Bhutan as the country's social, economic, and political situation has developed since the 1960s when modernisation was systematically started with Five-Year Plans. Analysing and extracting the impact of 'education' requires caution as many of the changes in rural life are the results of a combination of elements.

Firstly, I will discuss the definition and meaning of rural life in the context of Bhutan. Secondly, in the subsequent section I will examine the impact of education on rural life. I focus upon a few of the socio-economic changes which seem to draw Bhutanese attention most – that of government officials and people in the rural community alike – and analyse the role that education might have played in those

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changes. Two specific changes are the migration from rural to urban areas and labour shortages in rural farming communities which are attributed to that.

The chapter draws on my previous research on young people's perceptions of modernity and tradition (Ueda 2003). The data this chapter is based upon are mainly qualitative, and are taken from observations and informal interviews in rural areas in Bhutan mostly between 2009 and 2014.

Rurality in Bhutan's Context

'Rurality' is a term which does not have an exact definition (Wiggins and Proctor 2001). Instead of defining it, Wiggins and Proctor point out three features of rurality. According to them, these are: (1) the relative abundance of land and natural resources, (2) significant distance between rural settlements and between the settlements and cities, which can hamper communication of materials and information, and (3) lower average income of households. Rural life in Bhutan involves a certain degree of separation from infrastructure, services, and markets.

According to the specifications of *thromdes* [urban areas] by the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement (2011), a *thromde* is characterised by population, population density, and main economic activities. The smaller *thromde* category (Class B) has a minimum of 5,000 residents, a population density of 300 persons per square kilometer, and an area of not less than one square kilometre. The larger *thromde* is Class A which has a resident population of more than 10,000 with a density of 1000 persons or more per square kilometre in an area of more than five square kilometres. In both categories, fifty percent or more of the population is dependent on non-primary economic activities, such as construction, the service sector, and the civil service. The combined total of Class A and B *thromdes* is 23 (Ministry of Human Settlement 2010).

Logically, a rural area is characterised as having less and more sparse populations, with the primary sector – i.e. mainly agriculture, livestock, and forestry in Bhutan's context – being predominant. According to the Population and Housing Census 2005 (Office of the Census Commissioner 2006), while 96.4 % of urban households use electricity as their main source of lighting, only 40 % do so in rural areas. Similarly, the percentage of households which have piped water within their houses is 53.7 % in urban areas, but in rural areas, it is only 9.2 %. In terms of infrastructure, therefore, living conditions in urban areas are generally better than in rural areas.

Rural life also has a symbolic meaning in that it is seen as the home of the Bhutanese traditional lifestyle. The formation of urban areas is a relatively new experience in Bhutan and started from the late 1960s (Kunzang Choden 1997). Life in the village is viewed as the 'authentic' Bhutanese life. In a previous study, I encountered representations by Bhutanese people of the capital city, Thimphu, in the mid-1990s not being the 'real' Bhutan, but only 'semi-Bhutan' (Ueda 2003). The rural community is generally perceived as a place where the spirit of reciprocity,

hospitality, and altruistic deeds are active and thriving. These are, at the same time, the moral values to which many people in Bhutan aspire.

Modern Formal Education's Impacts on the Current Rural-Urban Migration

This section is mainly about the impact of education on rural to urban migration in Bhutan. However, I begin with an analysis of its impact upon rural to urban migration in other countries.

Review of Literature of Other Countries' Experiences Much of the literature which examines the impact of education on rural areas tends to focus education's impact on the livelihoods made in rural areas on its own. Jolliffe (2004) for example examined rural areas in Ghana and finds, based on quantitative data, that the main impact of education is the allocation of time for on-farm and off-farm works. He concludes that individuals who reach a higher educational attainment spend more hours working in off-farm activities than those with less education. Jolliffe suggests that this is because off-farm work is more profitable than on-farm work.

López and Valdés (2001) examined the impact of education on rural areas in Latin America – especially on its impact on the alleviation of rural poverty. They found that income from agricultural activities was affected by individual educational background only to a small extent. This is because agriculture in Latin American countries generally does not require many skills, and additional schooling does not lead to an increase in farm income. At the same time, similar to the study on Ghana by Jolliffe (2004), they found that education contributed to rural non-farm income, particularly wage income. They also argued that education has facilitated the migration from rural to urban areas where people can gain a higher income for the same education level than in rural areas.

Aworemi et al. (2011) suggest a more complex pattern in their study on Nigeria, in that rural out-migration is a result of several combined factors such as employment, education, health care, family reasons, inadequate infrastructure in rural areas, and avoidance of "boredom in agriculture". In addition to these factors, Twumasi-Ankrah (1995) pointed out that Western industry, thriving businesses, and the 'bright lights' of urban areas were attracting elements. In this chapter, I focus on examining whether education is an important factor in rural out-migration in Bhutan. I argue that the impacts of modern formal education on rural–urban migration should be understood in relation to a combination of factors such as the process of recruitment for white-collar jobs which are favoured by many young people.

Rural-urban Migration in Bhutan Migration from rural to urban areas has become a major issue in Bhutan. It is manifested in more crowded urban areas and increasingly fallow farming land in rural areas. In Thimphu, it is obvious that the number of people, buildings, and cars are increasing rapidly. According to the

Human Development Report 2009 (UNDP 2009), the urban proportion of the population in Bhutan increased from 16.5 % in 1990 to 36.8 % in 2010. In rural areas, on the other hand, out-migration is high and research conducted in Khaling *Gewog* [local block] in Trashigang shows that as much as 50 % of the registered population has out-migrated (Jamyang Choda 2012). The *Kuensel* (22 October, 2009) reported that the then-Minister of Works and Human Settlement viewed education and employment as the main causes of internal migration. He said, "Success in education is the most important reason. Migrants come in search of a better life." The policy document *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness* (Planning Commission 1999) analysed that the majority of young people are inclined to regard education as a means of leaving subsistence agriculture. They aspired to white-collar jobs and the document, which was written in the late 1990s, already predicted that most of them would not succeed in finding the jobs they wanted. Other policy documents, including those on Gross National Happiness (GNH), do not specify a geographical area where people find a better life and happiness. The GNH policy is rather understood along the lines that people should find happiness wherever they are and, as the constitution states, the role of the government is to "promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness" (RGoB 2008, Article 9–2).

As anticipated in *Bhutan 2020*, unemployment among young people is a concern in urban areas. The *Labour Force Survey Report 2013* reported that the overall unemployment rate had its peak in 2009 at 4.0 %, and then decreased to 2.9 % in 2013. However, the youth unemployment rate (for those aged 15 to 24 years) in urban areas still maintained a high level at 22.8 % in 2013 compared to 4.0 % in rural areas (Ministry of Labour and Human Resources 2013). These data confirm what *Bhutan 2020* anticipated fifteen years previously. Many young people who aspire to get a white-collar job in urban areas do not realise their ambitions.

As the out-migration from rural areas continues, there is evidences that this is leading to labour shortages. Fallow land is increasing in villages. There is more damage by wild animals to crops, which further discourages people from working in the field. I observed in a village in Zhemgang, for example, that many farmers in the village do not find good reason to work on farm-land any more. Originally the staple food in this village was maize, as the village does not have suitable land to grow rice. As development projects such as construction of roads provide cash earning opportunities for farmers, the farmers tend to buy 'imported' rice from nearby shops, rather than cultivating maize in the field. In this village, almost all the children and young people of school-going age are in boarding schools, coming back to the village only during the school vacation.

Labour shortages have impacted on rural communities in two ways. One is, as pointed out already, that farm-land is increasingly left without anyone to look after it. At the same time, it is more difficult for land-owners to find tenant farmers who are willing to cultivate their land. Tenant farmers in some areas have started taking a stronger stance in demanding terms that are more favourable to them. In the case of paddy land, traditionally the harvest is divided equally in many cases between the

land-owner and the tenant farmer. These days, however, I have observed that tenant farmers ask for higher shares and that there are cases in which tenant farmers get 60–70 % of the harvest. This firm stance of tenant farmers against land-owners was already predicted in the *Bhutan 2020* document. This document says that rural-urban migration would ease population pressure on agricultural land, which is limited, and would thereby lead to favourable share-cropping arrangements for tenant farmers (Planning Commission 1999). However, whilst the out-migration might therefore in some circumstances lead to beneficial outcomes, more often the Bhutanese seem to be concerned that it is leading to harmful shortage of labour.

Out-migration from rural areas is often attributed by the Bhutanese themselves to modern formal schooling. The argument is that many young people who have gone through modern schooling do not want to be engaged in farming afterwards. In one village in Zhemgang, I interviewed a young woman who had dropped out of school two years previously at the level of Class X. She came back to her family village, and helped with the farm work but she confessed that having been in school for such a long time, she was not used to it. Her mother sometimes scolded her because she did not do as instructed, and she felt sad. It was not her fault, and actually nobody's fault, that she could no longer farm well.

During my fieldwork, while staying in the girls' dormitory of one educational institute in the late 1990s, I observed that school is a system that insulates young people from the realities of rural life. In boarding schools, students focused on study and school activities from morning until going to bed.

One former senior official of the Ministry of Agriculture said provocatively that education in Bhutan is not successful, to say the least, because "it only encourages people to leave their farm land" (personal communication, 11 May, 2007). Those young people, he continued, cannot find a suitable job after leaving school, but are not returning to their villages either and more and more agricultural land is left uncultivated. Because of mountainous terrain, arable land in the country is limited. According to the official statistics, cultivated agricultural area occupies 2.9 % of the country's entire land area (GNHC 2013).

This popularly accepted discourse about the relationship between rural out-migration and modern formal schooling should however be reconsidered. Hereafter, this chapter examines other push and pull factors of rural out-migration and their relationship to modern schooling.

Contesting the Relation Between Rural Out-Migration and Modern Formal Schooling According to the 2nd Five-Year Plan, the Bhutanese government introduced modern formal schooling originally "to develop the requisite cadre of administrative and technical personnel … to meet growing needs of the development programme" (RGoB 1966, p. 23). The employment opportunities in the government offices are closely linked to the level of educational qualification. Moreover, even before the introduction of modern formal schooling, it was prestigious to work in the government offices, including as king's chamberlains. As Zangley Dukpa (chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume) points out, such prestige was previously only available to

the graduates of monastic education. *Dasho* is a title to signify prestige, power, and respect, and is awarded to a very limited number of high officials as a mark of significant contribution to the country. As I have discussed in detail previously (Ueda 2003), modern formal schooling is virtually the only gateway to climb up this "ladder of success". Even if one does not aspire to that high level, a work in a government office is generally perceived to have job security which many Bhutanese people consider important. This, therefore, can be considered as one of the pull-factors of rural out-migration.

Apart from particular knowledge, skills, and qualifications, modern formal schooling introduces certain values of, and to, society. One of the Bhutanese high officials I recently interviewed illustrates the difference between the values existing in Bhutan since before the introduction of modern formal schooling and those which came with modern education (personal communication, 27 February, 2013). He explained that as Buddhists understand that all things in the world are related to and dependent on each other (the principle of interdependence), people need to live within certain ethical frameworks and limits. Students in school, he continued, read economics in one class, which teaches that individual achievement, including wealth-making and social prestige, individual identity and self-esteem, are important. At the same time and in apparent contradiction, Buddhist teaching is also introduced in school, and students read the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas* which tells that the "self is not important." The high official further explained that Buddhist-based education is human-centric education in which one must realise the greatest qualities of oneself, such as compassion, potential to feel happy and being moral. On the other hand, education in the modern view is that skills and knowledge must be useful for success in the job market and wealth making. The official points out that Bhutanese youth are caught up in these two seemingly contradictory world views at this moment. Karma Phuntsho (2000) argues a similar point that modern education aims at acquiring knowledge and skills to improve one's material living standard. He stated that students are often encouraged to choose professions which bring financial benefit and social status to oneself as opposed to monastic education which seeks enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Firmly related to the pull factors are push factors from the rural areas. As farming activities are not very mechanized, largely because of mountainous terrains and poverty, agricultural work means hard manual labour which many people now want to avoid. According to the survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (2014), 77 % of youth (aged 17 to 29 years) prefer desk jobs. A recollection of childhood by one government official is indicative. He grew up in a village in Trashigang and he described how hard it was for a small boy to look after the cattle. Cow dung stuck on leaves and branches of bushes spattered on his faces and clothes as he ran after the cattle. It was truly hard and miserable, especially when it rained. He said that going to school meant a release from hard physical labour. He wanted to go to school because of that. Nevertheless, this recollection of rural life should remind us that it would not be correct to understand that all young people want a job in the urban area in order to avoid physical work. Schooling itself already

means leaving the physical work behind. As I observed in an educational institute with a boarding facility, a day in the institute was largely on campus. The students walk between their hostel and classroom, and handle pens and textbooks and do not have an opportunity to look after cattle and cultivate farmland. The required skills for farming, as we have seen already, are not acquired by those students, which in turn makes them feel not very useful in the rural community.

Another push factor is that parents want their children to be successful. Some students in school would feel that they should help their parents and siblings by being successful and possibly sending money home. In one village in Zhemgang where my fieldwork was conducted in 2010, some parents told me that they sold their cattle to get enough money to send their sons and daughters to school. In Bhutan, though the tuition is free, you need some money to buy school uniforms and other necessary items. Some of the parents said that they borrowed money from relatives and neighbours. An old man in Mongar told me, without being asked, which position in which ministry his son was working, and that his daughter was working in this organisation in Thimphu, and so on. Having a family member who is successfully employed in a job in an urban area seems to have a positive impact on some parents' pride as well as potentially on the household economy in the village. It works as a safety net since the family in the village can rely on it in case of unexpected events. Moreover, it is common in Bhutan that children look after their parents when they become old. Having a son/daughter with a successful career means that the parents can rely on him/her when they need care. Furthermore, it is generally perceived as a role of elder sons and daughters to look after their younger siblings of school-going age, thereby helping to reduce the burden on their parents.

Pressure comes not only from the parents, but also from the community. The following description is informative. One senior government official recollects her younger days, when she was teaching in a training institute after completing an engineering degree in India. One day she was in her own home village and encountered an old lady who knew her since childhood. When she told her that the young woman was now teaching, this old lady said to her in a derogative manner that "you went all the way to India to become an engineer. And now you only became a teacher?!" (Ueda 2003, p. 152). This statement shows that people in a village communities are not only aware of a distinction between an engineer and a teacher in terms of professional and social prestige, but also produce a direct comment and an implication about the status of teachers in Bhutan. On "the ladder of success," figuratively *Dasho* at its top, a view that is shared widely in society and pressure regarding status produced seems to work as one of the push factors of rural out-migration.

According to my fieldwork data, rural out-migration does not happen to the same degree all over the country and it is more severe in eastern Bhutan than in the western part of the country. This is supported by data of the ratio of fallow land to cultivatable land, which were collected during my fieldwork from 2009 to 2014 in fifteen *gewogs* in eight *dzongkhags* [districts]. Information from Wangchang and Dogar *Gewogs* in the western *dzongkhag* of Paro shows almost no fallow land. Even the

less accessible community in Athang *Gewog* in the western *dzongkhag* of Wangdue Phodrang showed 25 % fallow land. In the eastern part of the country, in contrast, the ratio of fallow land ranged from 30 to 60 %. The observation indicates that labour shortages in rural areas may be less severe in western Bhutan than in the eastern part, although the western part of the country is much nearer to the largest urban areas, Thimphu and Phuentsholing. Another explanation to the low ratio of fallow land would be an access to market. In Dogar *Gewog* in Paro *Dzongkhag*, many farmers take advantage of easy access to the market in Thimphu, and earn substantial amounts of cash by selling vegetables. Their children receive education in school, but observing from the farmers' accounts and the situation of fallow land, out-migration is not as severe as in other parts of the country. Rural-urban migration has also been affected by the prospects of earning cash and viable livelihoods.

If modern formal schooling is the dominant factor of rural out-migration, the severity of rural out-migration would be higher in the areas where more people attend schools and educational institutions. However, according to the *Results of Population and Housing Census of Bhutan 2005* (Office of the Census Commissioner 2006), a comparison of the three best and worst *dzongkhags* in terms of experience of school attendance shows no major difference between western and eastern parts of the country. The *dzongkhags* where the ratio of the population who attend and attended educational institutions and schools is highest in Thimphu, Chukha, and Paro, out of which my fieldwork was conducted only in Paro.

On the contrary, the lowest *dzongkhags* in terms of educational experiences are Gasa, Samtse, and Dagana, not covered by my fieldwork. The following three *dzongkhags* ranked fourth to sixth lowest are all in eastern Bhutan, i.e. Mongar, Trashi Yangtse and Lhuentse where my fieldwork indicated the ratio of fallow land to agricultural land is between 39 to 57 %. The fieldwork was conducted only in one or two selected *gewogs* in each *dzongkhag*, therefore the ratio should be taken only as indicative. Nevertheless, it illustrates the trend and correlations between education and rural out-migration in Bhutan is evident.

Discussion

This chapter has explained and analysed some of the push and pull factors which take young people to urban areas. There is a tendency, particularly by the Bhutanese themselves, to attribute rural-urban migration purely to modern formal schooling. This, however, needed more careful examination. Karma Ura (1998) writes about the situation of rural areas about forty years ago, when the village school often had difficulty in getting enough students to keep going, because many students and parents thought that their future life would be the same as their parents and grandparents and did not find any reason to begin their studies. His analysis showed that there was a very limited possibility of one's social status changing. He said that promotion was rare and usually only happened to a small number of people who worked for the king. This description turns our attention to the importance of the

possibility of mobility in the society. In *The Hero with a Thousand Eyes* (Karma Ura 1995) at the time of the Second and the Third *Druk Gyalpo*, those people who worked at the king's chamber were more or less hand-picked. In contrast to this past situation, at present, the civil service recruitment is publicly announced, and anyone, as long as the requirements are met, can apply. The emergence of this open meritocratic system, which is closely linked with the qualifications acquired through the modern formal schooling system, has led to increased social mobility, hence migration to urban areas. In other words, modern formal schooling alone cannot attract many students if there were not a mechanism which links that education with social status and economic gain.

Karma Ura (2009) pointed out in *A Proposal for GNH Value Education in Schools* that the transformation of Bhutanese society since the 1960s – urbanisation, the emergence of commercial corporations, and the expansion of bureaucracy and law – has produced a new sense of individualism. The results of the GNH Survey 2010 (Karma Ura, et al. 2012) showed that *dzongkhags* which have larger urban areas, such as Thimphu, Chukha, and Paro, score relatively low in the domain of community vitality. Karma Ura emphasised the importance of inducing a sense of social responsibility in values education in schools to counter the tendency towards individualism. The Ministry of Education has been striving for including GNH values into schools since 2010, and guidelines, *Educating for GNH: Refining Our School Education Practice* (EGNH) were introduced in 2011 (Department of Curriculum Research and Development 2011). The EGNH initiative does not specifically discuss the impact of education on rural out-migration. It, however, wants to keep inculcating a positive sense of manual work and promoting the dignity of labour which has been in the education policy since the mid-1990s (Ueda 2003). As it will take several years until the students who are receiving the new GNH oriented curriculum to graduate from schools and educational institutions, the impact of the new policy measures and curriculum on rural out-migration still remains to be seen.

Conclusion

This chapter has been a critical examination of the impact of modern formal schooling on aspects of rurality. I argued in this chapter that rural-urban migration is a result of push and pull forces. Modern formal education has been identified as both a direct and indirect causes of these phenomena. It induces a motivation of becoming socially and economically successful. A more direct connection is a firm linkage between a qualification obtained through modern formal schooling and that which is required to get a decent office job in an urban area, and a weak linkage between the skills and knowledge learned in school and those required in farming work. Thus modern formal schooling is not of itself the only cause, but a major factor in a more complex interacting set of causes of rural-urban migration.

Students receive teachings from monks before sharing lunch together (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Conditions of Happiness: Bhutan's Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative and the Capability Approach

Pema Tshomo

Abstract The Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) initiative is viewed as one of the main frameworks for the promotion of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan. Therefore, in recent years, the nationwide implementation of the EGNH initiative has become the focal point of education reform in Bhutan. As an operational GNH framework, a primary focus of the EGNH initiative is to provide those conditions that lead to quality and equity in education. This chapter evaluates the EGNH framework to assess how the EGNH initiative can provide the necessary conditions for well-being and happiness to enable the pursuit of GNH in Bhutan. It uses Amartya Sen's capability approach (CA) perspective to emphasize that the EGNH framework needs to promote the right conditions for quality and equity in education to ensure that every student in enabled through the education system to pursue GNH. The CA brings to the forefront the need to place the immediate needs of students at the heart of the EGNH framework to provide the conditions necessary for the enhancement of capabilities of students to become the best that they can be, to lead the kind of life they value, to choose a life that leads to well-being and happiness.

Introduction

> The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness. –The Constitution of Bhutan

What are the conditions necessary for the pursuit of happiness? Who is responsible for these conditions? Many have attempted to answer these questions throughout history. Over two millennia ago, Plato and Aristotle grappled with them philosophically and, more recently, economists, educators, and psychologists have started exploring them empirically. But in 2008, one nation took the

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bold step of addressing these questions as a matter of public policy. Bhutan endorsed its first constitution in 2008 declaring the "pursuit of Gross National Happiness (GNH)" a national goal, suggesting that the state is responsible for the well-being and happiness of its people; this, however, highlights a fundamental challenge for Bhutan.

Educational settings are recognized as institutions where state ideologies are developed and implemented (Apple 1982). Consistent with this view, Bhutan's 2013 *State of the Nation Report* distinguishes education as "the glue that binds all the pillars and dimensions of Gross National Happiness and the key to their realization" (RGoB 2013, p. 39). In 2009, Bhutan launched the Educating for GNH (EGNH) initiative as an attempt to operationalize GNH. This nationwide implementation of educating for GNH is one of the most expansive attempts at the operationalization of GNH in Bhutan. The EGNH initiative has direct implications for the lives of nearly 200,000 students in Bhutan, who account for approximately 25 % of the Bhutanese population (MoE 2013; NSB 2014a). This implies that an in-depth analysis of the EGNH framework is imperative to ensure that the education system in Bhutan contributes to the enhancement of the capabilities of students who attend the schools to increase their well-being and happiness as part of the GNH goal.

In the evaluation of any GNH-related framework, an important point of focus is the promotion of the right conditions for the improvement of GNH, as specified in the Constitution of Bhutan. Thus, GNH, as a policy objective, seeks to remove those conditions that may cause harm in the political, social, and economic lives of the Bhutanese people, while promoting conditions that enable individuals to move towards the realization of their well-being and happiness (Mancall 2004). This view extends to the implementation of the EGNH framework, which signifies an important aspect of Bhutan's attempt to operationalize the overarching national philosophy of GNH in the country through the education system. This chapter evaluates the EGNH framework to address the question: How can the EGNHI framework ensure that the education system provides the necessary conditions for the pursuit of GNH in Bhutan? It examines Bhutan's current educational status to argue that Amartya Sen's (1985, 1999) capability approach (CA) provides the theoretical perspective that the EGNH framework needs to ensure that the right conditions for quality and equity in education are provided so that every student is empowered to choose a life of well-being and happiness. The CA expands the emphasis of the EGNH initiative from a pedagogical and curricular focus to address structural and systemic disparities in order to promote quality and equity in the education system.

Background

The Emergence and Spread of Gross National Happiness GNH first emerged as a developmental concept in the 1970s, when the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King], Jigme Singye Wangchuck, emphasized that as a leader of a nation he was

more concerned about the happiness of his people than the growth of the nation's economy. The concept of GNH is built on the idea that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) alone is an insufficient measure of a nation's development; development should also reflect aspects related to the well-being and happiness of the people. GNH acknowledges that emotional, social, and spiritual development of the people is just as important to a nation's development as material aspects of development (i.e., GDP). GNH contends that there are four pillars crucial to the enhancement of well-being and happiness in Bhutan. The four pillars are: 1. Sustainable and equitable development; 2. Environmental preservation; 3. Promotion and preservation of culture; and 4. Good Governance.

Since its emergence, GNH has been emphasized as a policy concern in Bhutan leading to its formal endorsement as a constitutional objective in 2008 (Karma Ura et al. 2012b). In the last two decades, GNH has gained momentum both on a national and international front. In Bhutan, since the mid-2000s research and surveys have been carried out to develop the GNH index, which measures peoples' level of happiness based on the concept of GNH (Bates 2009; Karma Ura et al. 2012a). Much of the international recognition of GNH was sparked by general interest in the world seeking alternative pathways to measure development. The United Nation's (UN) endorsement of the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 led to worldwide explorations of developmental measures that included social aspects and subjective well-being to economic development (Helliwell et al. 2013). In this light, GNH as a philosophy of development represented an appealing alternative to traditionally held views on what constitutes development. A decade after the endorsement of HDI, three international conferences on GNH brought it to the forefront of the discussion on alternative measures to development (Noy 2008). In 2011, GNH formally entered the world of international development when the UN, upon the recommendation from Bhutan, endorsed happiness as a universal goal, which also led to the annual observation of March 20 as International Happiness Day (UN 2011; 2012).

The concept of happiness, as a more accurate philosophy of well-being and development, continues to proliferate. However, acknowledgment of this rising interest in happiness in the global arena does not mean that GNH is the answer to the eternal questions surrounding happiness. Instead, it emphasizes the need for deeper analysis of the concept of GNH. For Bhutan, which has accepted it as a national policy goal, it means a clearer understanding of the EGNH framework – the first nationwide implementation of GNH in the education sector.

The Inception and Implementation of the EGNH Initiative The concept of GNH may be unique to Bhutan, but the approach of using the education sector to promote national developmental policies is ubiquitous. It is, therefore, not surprising that education is placed at the heart of Bhutan's national goal of GNH. In Bhutan, education is identified as a "pre-requisite for achieving the wider social, cultural and economic goals set for the country within the national vision" (RGoB 2003, p. 2). Education is also recognized as one of the nine domains of the GNH index, which was developed to evaluate the various conditions that contribute to GNH in the country (Karma Ura

et al. 2012a, b). Consistent with these views, in 2009, the EGNH initiative was launched at a weeklong international educators' conference held in Bhutan (MoE 2010, 2012b). Most of the major education stakeholders of Bhutan, as well as the then-Prime Minister and Education Minister, were present at the conference. The conference was used as a platform to formulate how the EGNH initiative could be implemented in Bhutan's schools to promote GNH in the country.

In the absence of an overarching national legal framework for education such as a National Education Policy or an Education Act, the EGNH initiative acts as one of the primary national frameworks for education in Bhutan, along with the *Education Blueprint, 2014–2024* (MoE 2014b). Hence, since 2010, the EGNH initiative has been formally launched as a national education movement. In 2010, three national workshops were held to familiarize all school principals or their representatives in Bhutan with EGNH (MoE 2012b). A survey was conducted during these workshops to assess principals' knowledge of practices related to GNH (Hayward et al. 2010). In order to fulfill the goal of providing every teacher in Bhutan with training on EGNH, a series of workshops on how to educate for GNH were to be provided each year (MoE 2012a). Subsequently, a one-year and three-year target was set for all school principals and teachers, respectively, in Bhutan (Coleman and Hayward 2010). In 2012, measures were also taken to infuse GNH in colleges, including the teacher education institutes (Young 2012; MoE 2014b).

In support of the EGNH initiative, the Ministry of Education (2010) developed a guideline titled *Educating for GNH: A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness* [the Guide] as one of the outcomes of the workshops. The Guide spells out the main focus of EGNH as the promotion of "ways in which GNH values and principles could be transmitted through every day school behavior" (MoE 2010, p. 6). Two years later, the Ministry of Education (2012b) also developed a manual titled *Educating for GNH:A Training Manual* [the Training Manual] to serve as a workshop manual for trainers. Similar to the Guide, the Training Manual specifies its purpose as providing training "to strengthen the competencies of teachers to infuse, integrate and promote GNH in the entire school system" (MoE 2012b, p. viii). Both official documents of the EGNH initiative specify the infusion of GNH principles and values through curricular and pedagogical approaches as the primary focus of the EGNH initiative. While both documents do not provide a specific definition for GNH values and principles, the references to GNH values and principles appear to be based on practices and concepts that relate to the four pillars of GNH.

The interest and focus on the infusion of GNH values and principles as part of the EGNH initiative continues to grow in Bhutan. In recent years, a few researchers have explored the impact of the EGNH initiative in Bhutan. Kezang Sherab et al. (2014; chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume) studied the efficacy of a school in implementing the EGNH initiative in Bhutan and found that the success of the school in promoting GNH values and principles were attributed mainly to its extra-curricular programs and not its regular curriculum programs. Similarly, Ahonen et al. (2013) explored

the implementation of the EGNH initiative by looking at teachers' perception about GNH and sustainable development in Bhutan. They found that while there were similarities between GNH and sustainable development, Bhutan has also made significant progress in promoting GNH values through school curriculum and classroom practices as part of the EGNH initiative. Both studies focused on the evaluation of the infusion and promotion of GNH values and principles in Bhutan's schools through assessments of teacher experiences, teaching strategies, and school curriculum. This focus is consistent with the purpose of the EGNH initiative highlighted in the Guidelines (MoE 2010) and the Training Manual (MoE 2012b). In this regard, it appears that there is little focus on how the EGNH framework promotes the right conditions – learning environments, access to schools, facilities available in schools, etc. – for quality and equity in education to enhance the capabilities of students to lead a life of well-being and happiness. The EGNH initiative, as an extension of GNH, should ensure that the right conditions, as stated in the Constitution of Bhutan, are promoted through the education system to enable the pursuit of GNH in society.

The Capability Approach and Education

Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's (1985, 1999) capability approach (CA) provides EGNH the theoretical lens to evaluate its gaps and inadequacies. The CA, which is viewed as a normative theory, helps conceptualize notions related to well-being, development, and justice (Robeyns 2006, 2011). According to Robeyns, the CA does not explain causes of inequality or poverty but helps conceptualize and evaluate these issues. For example, it evaluates policies and frameworks to ask whether individuals are educated or healthy, and whether conditions to be educated and be healthy such as access to a safe and healthy school, high quality education, medical doctors, and clean water, are available.

The concept of CA emerged in the 1980s after Sen introduced the concepts of capability, freedom, and equality while delivering a series of lectures in 1979 at Stanford University on the topic *Equality of What?* (Walker and Unterhalter 2007). Sen's (1999) definition of capability is rooted in the concept of freedom, which in the context of CA is not merely the absence of restrictions but also includes the possession of different capabilities to achieve valuable functionings in a society. Alexander (2008) explains Sen's notion of freedom with the following example: If a person is poor, uneducated, unemployed, or afflicted by a preventable disease, then he or she is denied freedom in the context of the CA even though restrictions are not imposed on the person. Freedom is denied in this scenario because society has failed to provide the necessary social structures to build the capability of the individual to avoid the shortfalls of deprivation and injustice. Based on this understanding, capabilities are the opportunities – i.e., freedom – individuals have to achieve valuable functionings in life crucial to their well-being and development (Sen 1999). 'Functionings' refers to beings and doings that are outgrowths of

capabilities, e.g., working, being literate, healthy, being employed, being a part of a community, and being respected (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2011). Therefore, the CA proposes that social, political, and economic resources and arrangements should be evaluated and constructed according to the capabilities people have to achieve valuable functionings in life (Sen 1985, 1999).

Education is viewed as a crucial component of the CA. Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011) identify education as central to the development of all human capabilities. Sen (1999) suggests that education could be viewed as a basic capability that contributes to the enhancement of functionings critical to the well-being and quality of life of individuals. Critical to this understanding is the idea that education, as a capability, provides individuals with the agency to be an active participant in the planning and conducting of one's life (Sen 1999). Agency, therefore, is viewed as a form of empowerment that enables individuals to pursue goals based on decisions they value to take ownership of their own lives. An essential component of this argument is that quality and equity in education lead to the enhancement of capabilities of individuals to enable them to make decisions that positively influence their personal, social, and professional lives which in turn leads to the enhancement of their overall well-being and development. Therefore, the CA provides a theoretical perspective for education by identifying larger economic, social, and political conditions that influence opportunities for education in society (Lynch and Baker 2005; Walker and Unterhalter 2007).

Several researchers in the last decade have also embraced the CA as espousing the appropriate principles to inform the purpose of education in societies. Saito (2003) contends that education expands opportunities for children and suggests that there is a strong positive relationship between the CA and education. Others (e.g., Walker 2005; Terzi 2005; Walker and Unterhalter 2007) have looked at the implications of CA in education through a social justice perspective to assess educational quality and equity in terms of educational advantages, disadvantages, access, race, gender, disabilities, and marginalization in societies. Unterhalter (2003) and Nussbaum (2011), in particular, have specifically argued in support of CA as a means to ensure gender equity in education. Similarly, Wilson-Strydom (2011) has applied the CA to support equal access to university education in South Africa. Lanzi (2007) builds on the existing arguments for the CA as a social justice approach to education by stating that the CA views education as an empowerment process. According to Lanzi, the CA states that the value of education is not defined by its ability to build human capital alone – i.e., finding a job or creating employment – but also by its contribution to the enhancement of skills and competencies that promote life-skills and life-options for all individuals in the society.

The proponents of the CA have applied the perspective to support several aspects of education based on the common understanding that quality and equity in education are instrumental to the development of valuable functionings required for the enhancement of well-being and development. Similar to the EGNH initiative, the CA positions education within a larger vision rooted in the concept of well-being, development, and justice. The relationship between CA and education, like the

relationship between GNH and education, is grounded in the understanding that education has an enormous potential to transform society and achieve larger economic, social, and political goals. However, unlike the EGNH initiative, which focuses mainly on the infusion of GNH values and principles through school curriculum and pedagogy, the application of CA in education emphasizes the need to promote the right conditions (i.e., social, economic, political, and educational) for quality and equity in education. The CA argues that educational quality and equity is a core component of the enhancement of valued functionings that contribute to increased well-being in society. In this respect, the CA offers EGNH a powerful lens to extend its focus to include issues related to quality and equity in education in addition to its primary focus of the promotion of GNH values and principles.

Before the evaluation of the relevance of the CA to the EGNH initiative, it is important to distinguish that the definition of happiness in the context of GNH is quite different from its perception in the CA. Sen (1985, 2011) contends that happiness is an inadequate measure of well-being and development since he interprets happiness in the utilitarian tradition, which focuses on happiness as a mental state that ignores other important aspects of well-being. However, happiness in the context of GNH is not related to mental states but one that focuses on sustainable living to promote human flourishing and well-being as the means to an enriched life (Karma Ura et al. 2012b). Therefore, in GNH, the concept of happiness in used simultaneously with well-being (e.g., see Karma Ura and Karma Galay 2004; Karma Ura et al. 2012b; MoE 2012b) to emphasis the synonymous relationship between the two concepts. It is this definition of happiness that is fundamental to GNH, and subsequently to the understanding of the EGNH initiative and its relationship with the CA. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the CA is not presented as an alternative to EGNH but as a framework that complements Bhutan's efforts to educate for GNH.

The Capability Approach and the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative

The relationship between the right conditions for quality and equity in education and GNH cannot be undermined. Quality education is vital to the pursuit of GNH (Tashi Zangmo 2004). According to Bhutan's *2010 Gross National Happiness Survey*, education is revealed as one of the highest contributors to unhappiness in the country (Karma Ura et al. 2012b). The survey found that 90 % of the people who identified as unhappy had no access to formal education, suggesting that access to quality education should be a primary concern for the EGNH initiative. Furthermore, according to the same 2010 GNH Survey, the not-yet-happy people also identified their freedom to pursue education as one of their highest deprivations along with living standards and time use. This implies that the EGNH initiative, as one of the main operational frameworks of GNH, should also focus on how the EGNH

initiative could contribute to the enhancement of well-being and GNH in the country. It suggests that the EGNH initiative could focus more on the conditions for providing quality and equity in education as a way to contribute to the enhancement of well-being and happiness for the people of Bhutan part of the GNH goal.

Therefore, the CA provides the EGNH initiative a theoretical perspective to address the question: How can the EGNH framework ensure that the education system provides the necessary conditions for the pursuit of GNH in Bhutan? It emphasizes that the relationship between education and larger economic, social, and political conditions in society are synergetic; education is not only influenced by socio-economic and political conditions, it also influences factors that could enhance or impede socio-economic and political developments. It is based on this understanding that the EGNH initiative is implemented in Bhutan and it is this relationship that the CA highlights as a point of focus to ensure that the relationship leads to positive developments in society. The CA expands the focus of the EGNH initiative to evaluate how the EGNH framework could contribute to the enhancement of capabilities of students to achieve GNH in Bhutan. Fundamental to this argument is the understanding that the application of the CA perspective to the EGNH initiative ensures that the EGNH framework focuses on the promotion of the right conditions for equity and quality in education in order to enhance the freedom of students to achieve valuable functionings that lead to increased well-being and happiness in society. Current educational statistics of Bhutan, however, suggests that this could be a gargantuan task for Bhutan.

The education sector in Bhutan has witnessed tremendous growth. Between 1961 and 2014, the number of schools and institutes increased from 11 to 551, with matching growth in enrollment from 400 to 172,393 students (MoE 2014a). The net and gross enrollment rates for basic education have steadily increased over the years and currently stand at 93 % and 107 %, respectively (MoE 2014a). However, similar to the findings of the OECD study (2012), which found that higher enrollments did not necessarily correspond with more learning in schools, the improvements in school enrollment in Bhutan mask the extent of disparities in the larger Bhutanese educational system. A majority of these disparities is revealed in the *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024* report (MoE 2014b). For example, according to the report (MoE 2014b), over 90 % of children with disabilities do not have access to proper educational facilities in Bhutan. Additionally, only 60 % of students in Bhutan have sufficient water for bathing and more than 30 % of toilets in schools are non-functional. Media reports in recent years have repeatedly highlighted similar issues as well as issues related to overcrowding in urban schools, repeated use of corporal punishment, long walking distance to schools in rural areas, inadequate boarding facilities, strong emphasis on competition, and teacher shortage (see Tanden Zangmo 2012; Yeshi Nidup 2013; Pokhrel 2013, 2014, 2015; Tashi Dema 2014; Dawa Gyelmo 2014; Sonam Pelden 2014; Rai 2015). These issues underscore the disparities in the provision of basic conditions for quality and equity in education in Bhutan. Moreover, the CA perspective argues that these conditions could obstruct the enhancement of capabilities of students to develop functionings crucial to their well-being and happiness. For example, proper and adequate

sanitation facilities are important for both boys and girls but more particularly for girls who menstruate as limited or lack of access to water and toilets is a factor that could force girls to perform poorly or drop out of school due to psychological distress (Unterhalter and Brighouse 2007). Similar arguments can also be made for the physical and emotional distresses students undergo when schools are unable to provide a healthy and safe environment for learning in Bhutan. In sum, the existence of such disparities in the basic conditions for quality education truly questions Bhutan's commitment to quality and equity in education.

The existing disparities in Bhutan's educational conditions also highlight disparities in educational achievements in the country. The *Bhutan Living Standards Survey Report* (NSB 2013a) showed that more than 55 % of the population over six years old does not have any formal education. Among those enrolled in school, only one in five attended Classes IX-XII and only 1 in 16 advance beyond Class XII (RGoB 2013). Another report revealed that the primary school completion rate for the poorest quintile in 2012 was 55.5 % while for the richest it was 87.9 % (NSB 2014b). Similarly, the secondary school completion rate for the same year was 19.2 % for the poorest quintile while for the richest quintile it was 69.3 %. These findings appear to have a direct correlation with statistics related to Bhutan's unemployed youth. The *Unemployed Youth Perception Survey 2014 Report* (Khilji, 2014) found that approximately 60 % of the unemployed youth who participated in the study came from families that earn less than Nu.10,000 [USD $154.00] per month. A majority of them, 34.1 %, came from families that earn a monthly income of Nu.4000 [USD $61.60] or less. Unemployment is a strong predictor of unhappiness (Putnam and Helliwell 2004). Based on the CA, unemployment also indicates failure of the education system since individuals are not provided the right conditions to achieve functionings that add to the earning potential, economic security, and thus their well-being and happiness (Lanzi 2007; Alexander 2008; Nussbaum 2011). In order to contribute positively to the overall state of GNH in Bhutan, the EGNH initiative must ensure that all students have the freedom to be empowered equally through the education system, regardless of their socio-economic background, to secure all their personal, professional, social, and political needs so that their choices add to their well-being and happiness.

Furthermore, the CA also contends that inequality in the education system points to larger economic, social, and political inequalities in the society. Poverty reports on Bhutan describe findings that are consistent with this association. The *Poverty Analysis Report* (NSB 2013b) shows that the Gini index at the national level remained relatively equal from 2007 to 2012, at 0.35 and 0.36, respectively. However, closer analysis of the index for the same years for rural and urban regions suggests rising inequality; the index increased from 0.32 to 0.35 in urban areas and from 0.32 to 0.34 in rural areas. This presents a serious challenge for the EGNH initiative and the overall development of the country since studies have shown that inequality has a negative effect on the level of happiness. This was found to be true for countries in Latin America (Graham and Felton 2006), Japan (Oshio and Kobayashi 2010), and the U.S. (Oishi et al. 2011). As a national framework for education, which has direct implications for social, economic, and political change,

the EGNH initiative must make it a priority to promote conditions that lead to equality and well-being through the education system.

The current status of education in Bhutan makes it distinctly clear that the current approach of implementing the EGNH initiative through the transmission of GNH values and principles alone is inadequate to ensure the success of GNH in Bhutan. Overall, the current educational status not only questions Bhutan's commitment to education but also, based on the CA, presents a serious challenge for the EGNH initiative in Bhutan. Given the stark realities, the EGNH framework, in addition to the infusion of GNH values and principles through curriculum and pedagogy, should also emphasize the promotion of right conditions for the enhancement of capabilities (freedom) and functionings of individuals to choose a life that contributes to their well-being and happiness. This requires a consideration of the CA perspective to address conditions that increase educational quality and equity in Bhutan by removing existing inadequacies and disparities in the system. More specifically, this means that the EGNH initiative needs to develop a comprehensive framework that not only addresses school curriculum and pedagogy but also other important aspects of education, such as the freedom to access all levels of education regardless of ability, socio-economic background, or gender and the freedom to learn in a supportive and enriching environment – i.e., enforcement of the school discipline policy to ban the use of harmful practices such as corporal punishment, safe and healthy schools, proper and adequate furniture for classrooms.

The purpose of the EGNH initiative, as an operational framework of the developmental philosophy of GNH, is to ensure that the education system contributes to the overall development and well-being of individuals in the country. The CA complements this purpose for the EGNH initiative in Bhutan by providing a conceptual framework that emphasizes the promotion of the right conditions for enriched learning and empowerment. Based on the CA, Bhutan, as a nation-state emphasizing GNH as an educational goal, needs to create within the education system the conditions necessary to provide every individual the freedom to develop to the best of his or her capabilities as emphasized in the CA. Such an approach could better guide the EGNH initiative to highlight enhancement of capabilities and freedom as a primary goal of the EGNH initiative so that individuals are empowered through the education system to choose a life that leads to well-being and happiness as part of the GNH goal.

Conclusion: Happiness Is Freedom

The CA provides the EGNH framework an enormous potential for development. It expands the scope of the EGNH initiative from a curricular and pedagogical focus to include systemic and structural educational conditions that could address existing educational disparities and inequities in the country. The CA emphasizes that a national education framework, such as the EGNH initiative, is not isolated from the influences of larger economic, social, and political conditions. Subsequently, it

Students dress up in their best ghos and kiras to celebrate Children's Day (Photo: Clint Chapman)

places the success of the EGNH initiative on the formation of a comprehensive framework that also focuses on larger economic, social, and political conditions related to educational quality and equity in the society. Therefore, the application of the CA provides the EGNH initiative a much needed focus to ensure that the EGNH initiative, as a national educational goal, creates the conditions necessary to provide every individual with the freedom to develop to the best of his or her capabilities, to enable every individual to live and choose the type of life they value, and to choose a life that leads to well-being and happiness.

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Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative

Kezang Sherab, T.W. (Tom) Maxwell, and Ray W. Cooksey

Abstract The focus on Educating for Gross National Happiness in schools is both on pedagogy and curriculum as well as extra-curricular programmes. Pre-service teacher training has been the focus of the Ministry of Education and the Royal University of Bhutan for many years now, but only recently has there been a major push to integrate pedagogical practices with the values and principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) – the Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) initiative. There is a greater awareness that both teacher-centred and curriculum-centred pedagogical practices may not be conducive to both the principles of GNH, nor to the future economic activity of the country. However, the implementation of EGNH ideas has been problematic, especially in translating them into classroom practices. Both pre- and in-service education has a big job ahead of them. This chapter explores the challenges in fully realising the potential of the EGNH initiative and plots a way forward. The authors argue that the teachers need to undergo fundamental changes to their basic assumptions, beliefs, and actions about the EGNH initiative if it is to be successfully implemented.

Introduction

The national initiative entitled 'Educating for Gross National Happiness' (EGNH) is a unique educational innovation introduced in the Bhutanese education system in the 2010 academic session to provide emphasis on values education (VE) in schools (Kezang Sherab 2013). According to the Ministry of Education, it is essential for every Bhutanese to consciously espouse Gross National Happiness (GNH) values and principles to achieve GNH (MoE 2012). His Majesty the Fifth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King], and the Royal Government, considers GNH to be the bridge between material development and the "fundamental values of kindness, equality and

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humanity" (Wangchuck 2009a, p. 6). Implementation of such a large-scale educational reform requires change-agents such as teachers to be highly efficacious, skilled, and motivated. They need to challenge their basic assumptions, beliefs, and actions through critical reflection and ultimately transform their mindset (Mezirow 1997).

However, Kezang Sherab's (2013) research has shown that the implementation of EGNH values and principles has been problematic especially in translating ideas into classroom practices. Furthermore, Pema Tshomo's (2013) research has also shown that there is generally a lack of connection between policy and the ground realities in terms of implementing EGNH in the Bhutanese classrooms. Therefore, the focus of this chapter is to present the evidence collected during the second year of the implementation of the EGNH initiative as part of Kezang Sherab's doctoral research on teacher understanding. It also plots a way forward. This chapter begins by providing a brief outline of the history and the concept of GNH followed by a justification for the introduction of EGNH in the Bhutanese education system.

Brief History and the Concept of GNH

The term 'Gross National Happiness' that was first introduced by His Majesty the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo*, Jigme Singye Wangchuck in the early 1970s first appeared in a news article in 1987 that highlighted the fundamental principle of Bhutan's development philosophy (Kezang Sherab 2013). The King's emphasis on GNH over GDP was clearly articulated in the King's words as quoted by the *London Financial Times*:

> We are convinced that we must aim for contentment and happiness. Whether we take five years or 10 to raise the per capita income and increase prosperity is not going to guarantee that happiness, which includes political stability, social harmony, and the Bhutanese culture and way of life. (Elliott 1987, para 3)

This idea directly opposed 'Gross Domestic Product' (GDP) as a frequently used measure of development in many countries.

Although the GNH philosophy has inspired much interest over the last decade, not much has been done in terms of operationalising the concept until the beginning of the twenty-first century. It had not travelled much beyond the borders of Bhutan until 2004 when the Bhutanese government organised its first international seminar on this topic in Thimphu. The attention of scholars from around the globe was sought to engage in intellectual dialogue to help Bhutan operationalise the GNH concept (Karma Ura and Karma Galay 2004; Kezang Sherab 2013). The subsequent international seminars of 2005 (Canada), 2007 (Thailand), 2008 (Bhutan) and 2009 (Brazil) produced much brainstorming and discourse at both national and international levels resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of this philosophy. To further take stock of the developments and to identify chal-

lenges, the next international GNH conference is scheduled for November 2015 in Thimphu, Bhutan.

According to His Majesty the Fifth *Druk Gyalpo*, "GNH acts as our national conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better future" (Wangchuck 2009b, p. 6). He considered that GNH was "development guided by human values". Currently there seems to be a general consensus amongst scholars from a wide range of disciplines that the traditional economic approach to development (GDP-focused) has failed to adequately measure the progress of a nation resulting in diminished happiness and well-being (Bandyopadhyay 2005; Bracho 2004; Edahiro and Oda 2008; Johnson 2004). These authors claim that too much emphasis on GDP has heightened human greed that has led to unsustainable growth. In contrast, GNH has been promoted to address the shortcomings of a western economic approach that has failed to address the "inequality of resource distribution, imbalanced human development and environmental degradation" (Bandyopadhyay 2005, p. 2) as well as to highlight essential values.

The emphasis on GNH has been considered as an alternative approach to progress and development. This is apparent from the recent acceptance of happiness as one of the Millennium Development Goals following Bhutan's proposal at the 65th UN General Assembly in New York in 2010 (BBS 2011). This is a modest accomplishment for Bhutan, but it *could* make a profound impact not only in Bhutan but, potentially at least, worldwide. The GNH approach to development is aimed at achieving economic progress in a sustainable way based on moral and ethical values (Kezang Sherab 2013).

The Centre for Bhutan Studies has now created GNH indicators to reflect and measure the Bhutan's understanding of progress (see Karma Ura et al. 2012). These indicators are important for the Royal Government as empirical evidence in designing plans and policies for sustainable development (Colman 2008) because sustainability is considered to be a cross cutting theme of GNH (Hayward et al. 2009a).

The GNH approach implies a revolution in human development thinking (Priesner 1999; Tideman 2004; Whitehouse and Windrel 2004). According to the former *Lyonchen* [Prime Minister], Jigme Y. Thinley (2005, p. 11), "GNH is a balanced and holistic approach to development." Hence, collective happiness of the people of Bhutan is addressed directly through public policies in which projects and programmes will be designed through the lens of happiness (Jigme Y. Thinley 2005; Karma Tshiteem 2008).

In order to address EGNH, it is necessary to understand the Buddhist basis for GNH. Bhutan is over 70 % Buddhist and Buddhism is the state religion (Maxwell 2008). GNH is underpinned by Buddhist philosophy. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines acknowledge the wisdom of Buddhism as applicable to all human activities, including economic activities (Bakshi 2004; Dixon 2004; Gembo Dorji 2007; Hewavitharana 2004; Horayangura 2007; Hylkema 2004; Phuntsho Tashi 2009; Tideman 2004). Interestingly, Tideman (2004) considers GNH as the Buddhist equivalent to GNP.

The core belief of Buddhism is managing one's internal mind and external conditions from which happiness is (likely to be) generated. According to Buddhist philosophy, "it is not the end which justifies the means, but rather the means which condition the end" (Payutto 1994, p. 4). Therefore, as a Buddhist, one's thoughts, words, and deeds should be directed to benefit not only the self but also all sentient beings. Good actions lead to good results and bad actions lead to bad results (Payutto 1994; Phuntsho Tashi 2004). As a Buddhist practitioner, Phuntsho Tashi (2009, p. 219) points out that "everything is dependent on the right causes and conditions to have result and outcome. When the cause and conditions are rightly met, things get activated and function as desired". Buddhist teachings indicate that one gains merit through chanting of prayers (*Drowa rig drug semchen thamchen ngi dendu 'om mani padmi hum'*[1]) for all living beings in this universe. It would be selfish to chant prayers for one's own happiness and good luck. As against conventional economics of gaining satisfaction from owning material goods, the Buddhist philosophy of gaining satisfaction from helping others is explained by Payutto (1994, pp. 4–5):

> Sometimes we can experience a sense of satisfaction by parting with something without getting anything tangible in return, as when parents give their children gifts: because of the love they feel for their children, they feel a more rewarding sense of satisfaction than if they had received something in return. If human beings could expand their love to all other people, rather than confining it to their own families, then they might be able to part with things without receiving anything in return, and experience more satisfaction in doing so. This satisfaction comes not from a desire to obtain things to make ourselves happy (*tanha*), but from a desire for the well-being of others (*chanda*).

The fundamental nature of GNH is "creation of a society in which the individual's progress toward enlightenment is not impeded by unnecessary suffering, material or mental" (Mancall 2004, p. 37). While "happiness" is recognised to be a difficult term to understand, examining the Buddhist perspective 'throws some light' on this fundamental concept of GNH. From this perspective, happiness is a quality of the mind that emanates from positive attitude and ultimately leads to positive actions (Phuntsho Tashi 2004). Discussing the Buddhist idea of happiness, Powdyel (2004, p. 735) shared a proverb "*mii tsi gaawai soenam, rta khei nga yaa baa mi thei.* Simply translated, it means that the intensity of happiness experienced is such that even a hundred horses cannot carry it. Therefore, the fundamental teaching of Buddhism is based on benefiting other beings. Gembo Dorji (2007, p. 28) used the teachings of Shantideva, the great seventh century Indian master, in which *karma*, the law of cause and effect, is explained: "all those who are unhappy in the world are so as a result of their desire for their own happiness. All those who are happy in the world are so as a result of their desire for the happiness of others." In brief, the

[1] *Om* it is blessed to help you achieve perfection in the practice of generosity,
Ma helps perfect the practice of pure ethics,
Ni helps achieve perfection in the practice of tolerance and patience,
Pad, the fourth syllable, helps to achieve perfection of perseverance,
Me helps achieve perfection in the practice of concentration, and the final sixth syllable
Hum helps achieve perfection in the practice of wisdom.

GNH philosophy has evolved over millennia and can be used to counteract the perceived shortcomings of the pursuit of GDP and individual material wealth and as a result bring more happiness and a sustainable planet.

Why Educating for GNH?

Turning now to Educating for GNH, in Bhutan EGNH represents a simultaneous focus on both inputs and outputs. Article 9 (point 2) of the constitution of Bhutan states: "The state shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness" (RGoB 2008, p. 13). The focus is also evident in the vision of a GNH-infused educational system (MoE 2010, p. 36):

> The principles and values of Gross National Happiness will be deeply embedded in the consciousness of Bhutanese youth and citizens. They will see clearly the interconnected nature of reality and understand the full benefits and costs of their actions. They will not be trapped by the lure of materialism, and will care deeply for others and for the natural world.

For a GNH-based educational system, GNH values and principles are broadly referred to as:

- a deep and genuine understanding of and care and respect for nature, for others, and for Bhutan's profound and ancient culture;
- the critical capacity to understand and see reality clearly and to see through deception; and
- the ability to manifest these qualities in action and behaviour in order to benefit Bhutan and the world, to develop the economy in a sustainable and socially responsible way, and to be 'good citizens' who can act effectively to improve well-being (Hayward et al. 2009b, p. 1).

The ultimate goal of EGNH, then, is to produce graduates who understand the interconnected nature of reality, without excessive desires and being compassionate to all the sentient beings (Kezang Sherab 2013). The visions of Bhutan's monarchs and government leaders have for some time sought to strike a balance between modernisation and preservation of its strong natural, cultural and social capital (Planning Commission 1999). Yet, there is a growing awareness that changing circumstances demand renewed efforts in the education system. For instance, recently the King expressed concern about the future of the Bhutanese education system and concluded: "We must understand that the times have changed here in Bhutan and all around us in the world. We cannot face new challenges with the same tools" (Wangchuck 2009a, p. 2). He further challenged Bhutanese to contemplate the following question, "Does our education system reflect our changing opportunities and challenges?" (Wangchuck 2009a, p. 4). Implied in this statement is a clear indication that the education system needs to undertake and implement change in the twenty-first century.

The effects of globalisation are already evident in Bhutan. Alarmed by what he termed the "self-centred culture of materialistic development" and an ever-degraded planet in the twenty-first century, the then *Lyonchen* called for "urgency about seeing GNH principles, practices and values embodied quickly and without delay in our educational system" (Jigme Y. Thinley 2010, p. 2). He considered education to be the glue that could hold the whole notion of GNH together. Anticipating the complexity that the future citizens were likely to encounter, he brought the idea of EGNH to the forefront of the education system (Kezang Sherab 2013).

The focus of EGNH is to create what are called 'GNH schools'. The Ministry of Education aims to transform all schools through a rigorous focus on innovation and improvement in:

(i) school leadership and management practices;
(ii) green schools for green Bhutan (physical and psycho-social ambience);
(iii) curriculum: strengthening teaching and classroom management practices;
(iv) continuous and holistic students' assessments (summative and formative);
(v) co-curricular activities for wholesome development;
(vi) the school-community relationship; and
(vii) qualities of a GNH school graduate (MoE 2010, pp. 37–44).

Each of these areas has several indicators that schools need to address to enable them to become a "GNH school" (see MoE 2010). Recently, the concept of 'green schools', one of the focus areas of EGNH, has been further elaborated into eight critical dimensions: environment greenery, intellectual greenery, academic greenery, social greenery, cultural greenery, spiritual greenery, aesthetic greenery and moral greenery (Powdyel 2014). Schools are urged to promote each of these dimensions in their effort towards creating a "green school for green Bhutan." These key areas and indicators are now part of the school self-assessment tool (see EMSSD 2013).

Recently, commentators have indicated that Bhutan has also been witnessing a decline in moral values, which is claimed to have a relationship to poor values education (Jigme Y. Thinley 2010; Karma Ura 2009). Discussing the importance of teaching children values, Bennett (1991, p. 133 in Milson and Mehlig 2002, p. 47) commented, "If we want our children to possess the traits of character we most admire, we need to teach them what those traits are." In a similar vein, Bhutanese leaders, experts and senior citizens argue that the type of values that adults desire to see in their children must be taught and promoted in the schools especially when children are at a formative age. Moreover, Milson and Mehlig (2002) and Srinivasan (2008) claim nurturing of essential human values and happiness skills can be taught.

Bhutan's economy is improving and happiness and development research from around the globe has also indicated that as a country's economy rises, happiness amongst its citizen decreases or remains at the same level (Brockmann et al. 2009; Duncan 2010). Furthermore, as the education level goes up – as in Bhutan – the happiness level goes down (Dockery 2010). For instance, in New Zealand, Duncan (2010) argued that such research findings are a cause of concern for the government and as such should drive policies. It can be argued that the urgent requirement of the twenty-first century education system is to create a balance amongst all facets of

human development, including character development. However, overemphasis on knowledge and skills – intellectual development – in some countries has led to the neglect of values and attitudes that results in numerous societal ills (Galloway 2007; APNIEVE 2005). This is becoming a reality in Bhutan as well (Jigme Y. Thinley 2010), hence the introduction of EGNH in the schools. It began with a week-long training of the trainers programme in 2010 for all the school principals to prepare them to implement EGNH in their respective schools. Principals in turn were required to train their own teachers back in the schools.

Teacher Understanding and Challenges of EGNH

This section on teacher understanding of EGNH in the schools has been largely drawn from nation-wide research that was carried out in 2011 during the second year of EGNH implementation by Kezang Sherab in his multi-method study. As was previously discussed in this chapter, the main goal of implementing EGNH is to embed GNH values and principles in the schools through a more holistic approach including extra-curricular programmes (ECPs) as well as curricular programmes (CPs). Kezang Sherab found that there has been some remarkable achievement in terms of infusion through ECPs. Teachers perceived themselves to be efficacious and good at influencing values such as honesty, respect, kindness, responsibility, and to be a good role model through ECPs that are mainly based on cultural, sporting, literary, campus greening, meditation and other innovative programmes such as design for change initiative, democracy in action, car free day, creation of a GNH room, plastic-free day, junk food-free day, waste management, community involvement and student-led campus cleaning initiatives (see Kezang Sherab 2013, pp. 142–197; Kezang Sherab et al. 2014). Interestingly, ECPs had been introduced more than a decade before EGNH. There is no doubt that the ECPs have become popular among the schools as the platform to infuse GNH values and principles, although the number and quality of ECPs vary from school to school. Moreover, one of the inherent problems of ECPs is its competitive nature. When ECPs are focused on competition, schools select only the skilled and competent students for participation and the others are neglected.

On the other hand, not much has happened in terms of actually infusing GNH values and principles into the lessons through both explicit and implicit teaching-learning experiences. There is a strong indication that teachers lack adequate skills and knowledge necessary to infuse GNH values and principles into their teaching subjects compared to influencing values development in students through ECPs. For instance, teachers generally exhibited lower self-efficacy to design and teach GNH values lessons. In particular, teachers were not able to design lessons that would enable all students to master GNH values, adapt GNH values lessons to the needs of students, design student-centred activities to infuse GNH values, teach values lessons as effectively as other academic subjects, find better ways to encourage development of GNH values in students, and have a good understanding of the GNH concept (see Kezang Sherab 2013).

Furthermore, teachers demonstrated considerable incongruence between their perceptions and actual classroom practices. While teachers agreed in principle with the idea of infusing GNH values and principles in their teaching subjects, the observations of their teaching lessons indicated otherwise. Most of the lessons did not discuss any values, although many lessons provided opportunities for students to explicitly learn various GNH values such as merits of compassion, trust, love and care, preservation of environment, hard work, personal hygiene, kindness, friendship, responsibility, not lying, ambition, empathy, demerits of corruption, killing, dishonesty, drug abuse, and materialism (see Kezang Sherab 2013). Besides occasional mere explanation of these concepts and values, little effort was made by the teachers to initiate in-depth discussion and exploration through clarification, analysis, using the "valuing process" and other techniques. These findings suggest the need identified by the Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) (2005) which argued that the VE process must now move from 'knowing' to 'valuing' and that the values children experience at the cognitive level have to be converted to both affective and behavioural aspects through consistent focus on interaction with others.

Additionally, Kezang Sherab (2013) argued that the lack of preparedness of teachers to move beyond their teaching comfort zone is viewed by him as one of the main stumbling blocks for successful implementation of EGNH in schools. The mandate to infuse GNH values and principles in daily lessons is a new concept for many, perhaps most, Bhutanese teachers despite their good background in ECPs. Implementation of such an educational innovation would require teachers to change their beliefs, understandings and practices as Yero (2010), for example, explains in her book *Teaching in mind: How teacher thinking shapes education*. Without significant transformation in the teachers' beliefs, assumptions, values, and attitudes through critical reflection, the implementation of EGNH in the schools is likely to remain superficial or non-existent (Mezirow 1991; Fullan 1999).

The lack of teacher understanding of the nature of EGNH values and principles was also exhibited through the hidden curriculum. Teachers who speak to students impolitely (e.g., "Tashi stand up" (sharply); "keep quiet" (shouting) and teachers providing negative feedback (e.g., "you don't know how to read; how did you reach Class XII?") to students about their efforts is against the philosophy of EGNH (Kezang Sherab 2013; Schuelka 2013). Such abrupt commands and put downs arguably lack kindness and courtesy. The students can easily absorb this negative role modeling and impolite behaviour. Such teacher practices clearly indicate a lack of understanding of the GNH philosophy, or at least its practical implications for the classroom. Discussing the significance of teacher role model for their students, Yero (2010, p. 14), in pointing to the importance of the hidden curriculum, states that, "even more than what they plan to teach, their personal values and behaviours are part of the taught curriculum". Teachers cannot expect students to be kind and courteous when they themselves lack kindness and courtesy in day-to-day interaction with students or with one another. Teachers need to understand that most often such experiences make a more enduring impact on students than from abstract teaching

of values. Overall there is a significant gap between the expectation of the government and the quality of teacher understanding in terms of EGNH initiative.

While there are these teacher-related concerns, we must also acknowledge that there are some system-related issues that appear to hamper the implementation of EGNH. For instance, the Bhutanese education system is known for its academic focus, heavy content, and rigorous examination (Maxwell et al. 2010). Teachers claim that they are not able to provide focus on anything that is not academic in nature (Kezang Sherab 2013). Obviously, discussion of values in the class takes away some academic time. At the end of the day, what counts for many Bhutanese teachers is their students' performance in their examination. Perhaps this is not surprising since the quality of a teacher is often judged by their students' examination marks. It could be argued that spending more time on each GNH value would have resulted in not covering the lesson content in time thereby impacting negatively on syllabus coverage, examination results and so on the teachers' status (Kezang Sherab 2013). Therefore, if the Bhutanese education system continues to provide rigorous focus on external examinations and regards academic performance as the priority, EGNH reform is unlikely to be successful.

Way Forward for Realising the Potential of EGNH

In any educational reform effort, teachers play a crucial role as change-agents (Fullan 1999; Fullan and Steigelbauer 1991), so we will consider teachers first. This is more so true with implementation of character education (Ampel 2009) which is of similar nature to tenets of the EGNH initiative. However, Bhutanese research in the Bhutanese context has shown that implementation of education reforms has encountered undesirable outcomes mainly because key stakeholders have not been able to consider on-the-ground realities such as preparedness of change-agents in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude, support and resources (Kezang Sherab et al. 2008; REC 2009). Lack of attention to any of these could result to failure of the noble vision of EGNH.

Currently many teachers appear to be of the opinion that they have to infuse GNH values in every lesson that they teach and in every school subject on a daily basis (Kezang Sherab 2013). It is important to understand that EGNH does not require forceful indoctrination of GNH values and principles in all the topics and in all the subjects. EGNH is about infusion of GNH values and principles in direct and subtle ways as found fitting with the lesson topic and in hidden curriculum practices rather than teaching them in isolation. It is all about enriching the teaching-learning process, "making the curriculum and learning more enjoyable, more pleasurable and much more relevant" to the lives of children (Jigme Y. Thinley 2010, p. 3). It should be recognised that many lesson topics in various subjects at various grade levels offer few opportunities to overtly teach or discuss GNH values and principles. It is imperative that stakeholders demystify the misperception by raising the level of awareness, knowledge, skills and motivation of teachers and teacher educators. But they *can* be

taught in the hidden curriculum of every lesson. Kezang Sherab (2013) argued that teacher capacity building on EGNH with a special focus on infusion in academic lessons would go a long way in fulfilling the vision of EGNH initiative. Teachers need to learn how values can be acquired, among others, through persistent instruction, modelling, analysis, clarification, valuing and doing. It is also important that teachers initiate a more in-depth analysis through critical reflection and discourse on their own values that emerge in the overt and hidden curriculum that impact on the daily lives of students and their relationship to GNH (Kezang Sherab 2013).

Given the current situation, it is important that key stakeholders design and implement efficacy-building interventions. These would be designed to address the issue of low teacher self-efficacy for infusion of GNH values and principles in the lessons. Kezang Sherab's (2013) research has shown that building teacher self-efficacy intervention should focus on:

(i) designing lessons that would enable all students to master GNH values;
(ii) how to adapt GNH values lessons to the needs of students;
(iii) designing student-centred activities to infuse GNH values;
(iv) how to teach values lessons as effectively as other academic subjects;
(v) finding better ways to encourage development of GNH values in students;
(vi) having a good understanding of the GNH concept;
(vii) using appropriate language and behavior in the classroom; and
(viii) how to provide positive and constructive feedback on students' work.

Such a process should include and encourage critical reflection that could lead to transformation of assumptions, beliefs and actions about GNH values and principles (Mezirow 1997). Unless teachers experience reconfiguration of fundamental assumptions and approaches that guide their actions, not much EGNH is likely to take place in the schools.

A wide range of GNH values and principles such as respect, caring, honesty, kindness, compassion, gratitude, equality, and empathy can be communicated to students through teachers' daily interactions with students in the form of hidden curriculum (Kezang Sherab 2013). It is very important for the teachers to be aware of what they do and say to students, whether it is in the classroom or at the playing fields or perhaps even outside the school. The hidden curriculum has the potential to make a life-long impact on students and, when aligned correctly, can help fulfill the vision of EGNH. The role of hidden curriculum has to be stressed to teachers so that they consciously model good practices both within and outside of their teaching.

A focus on ECPs to infuse GNH values and principles in the schools presents a most relevant practical implication. As mentioned above, many ECPs that are currently organised in the schools do not cater for every single student in the school. The reasons for this are varied, including a lack of resources and the competitive nature of many ECP activities where only good and capable students are selected. The result is that a small number of students benefit from those ECPs. Such practices are contrary to the nature of the GNH philosophy. Every single student in a school deserves to be provided with opportunities to participate in various ECPs and learn GNH values and principles that are likely to contribute to the achievement of the larger national goal of GNH. ECPs should therefore be broadened to include all students.

Additionally, the existing practice of relentless focus on academic performance has a negative impact on the EGNH initiative. There is both research (Kezang Sherab 2001) and anecdotal evidence – e.g., values education introduced in 1999 – in the Bhutanese context to show that many Bhutanese teachers sideline any educational reform efforts that are not directly related to academic subjects. The long history of the culture of focus upon student academic results means that achieving EGNH will be problematic unless this emphasis is changed and/or if GNH values are important, these values could be translated into examination questions. This is what has been termed "examination-led" curriculum change and would appear to have merit in a system where external examinations are so important at all levels of Bhutanese secular education. Further, ongoing assessment policy at the school could be strengthened so that teachers have the liberty to discuss GNH values through assignments, project work and class presentations. More importantly it is time now for the Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment to reflect on its rigorous examination system that promotes an academic focus. For a child as young as five or six years of age having to experience a rigorous examination system is likely to cause more harm than good.

There are teachers who do promote GNH values and principles (e.g., Kezang Sherab et al. 2014). Buddhist practices such as saying prayers before commencing teaching and also maintaining Buddhist altars in the school and classrooms are also used. However, such strictly Buddhist practices have the potential to marginalise and mark the absence of respect for others. Like other nations, Bhutan is increasingly becoming a multicultural society. Teaching of values in such multi-cultural societies has always been a contested subject and the question 'whose values are they?' is often raised by critics. Such practices have the potential to create dissonance, thereby defeating the whole purpose of the EGNH initiative and also creating complications in the system. It may be important for teachers to ensure that everyone in the class is Buddhist for such particularly Buddhist practices to be implemented. If there are non-Buddhists students, teachers need to find ways to allow respect to be shown. This would be a useful research project in and for Bhutan. Respect but also opportunities for such mutual learning experiences would help students to understand similarities instead of focusing on differences – the true essence of the GNH philosophy.

Let us now consider the capacity building of teachers. Initially the MoE followed the *train-the-trainers* model of professional development to educate teachers on the processes of implementing EGNH initiative. As discussed above, school principals were mandated to train their own teachers on what they have learnt at the week-long national level workshop. The follow-up in-service workshop for the teachers in each school was carried out ranging from half a day to about two days. From the evidence in Kezang Sherab's doctoral research, the one shot, cascading model of professional development (train-the-trainers) did not help teachers to become fully equipped with the knowledge and skills required to implement such a complex task as EGNH. Teacher professional development policy needs to be streamlined to provide depth and breadth of the content covered and also must be focused on changing teacher beliefs and attitudes in a more sustainable way. Implementation of such reform efforts needs to be continuously supported and monitored to address any

difficulties that arise in the process. Maxwell (1992, 1993a, 1993b, 2001) provides some ways forward in this regard. Given that EGNH is an important Government initiative, the current low level of teacher understanding, and especially implementation, of EGNH values and principles have immediate implications for the MoE to address the EGNH in-service of teachers. Without a significant raise in the teachers' self-efficacy levels for EGNH, not much change is likely to take place.

There are much stronger implications for the two teacher education colleges. Given all these findings, teacher capacity building through pre-service programmes on EGNH is the single most important factor the two colleges – Paro and Samtse Colleges of Education – and the Teacher Education Board and other relevant stakeholders need to consider if EGNH is to be implemented successfully in the long run. Furthermore, inclusion of efficacy building approaches in the pre-service teacher education modules would benefit other subject areas and thus the quality of education in Bhutan. Currently not much emphasis is being provided in the pre-service teacher education programmes. Overall the teacher capacity building through pre-service programme on EGNH must focus on:

- a thorough understanding of the GNH philosophy including the history and its implications;
- transforming teachers' basic assumptions and beliefs about GNH values and principles;
- understanding the important role of teachers in successfully implementing the EGNH;
- raising teacher self-efficacy beliefs for infusion of GNH values into their respective teaching subjects;
- valuing the potential of EGNH programme in producing GNH graduates (see MoE 2010);
- providing skills to infuse GNH values and principles into their teaching subjects as well as other extra-curricular activities;
- creating awareness on the importance of how teacher and principal behaviour and manner impact upon the students in the form of hidden curriculum;
- creating self-awareness through practice including reflection upon the hidden curriculum of their own classroom practices; and
- understanding the potential of EGNH as a school-wide approach to address the quality of education.

Conclusion

The Bhutanese education system has a long way to go before realising the vision of the EGNH initiative. The concerns related to the lack of values in youth were expressed again by His Majesty the Fifth *Druk Gyalpo* during the 2015 university convocation programme held at the Royal Thimphu College. This is an indication that the way forward presented in this chapter needs to be given priority. GNH has become central to policy decision-making of the Royal Government. The EGNH

initiative is consistent with both of these. However, Bhutanese teachers, in many cases, were not efficacious about implementing EGNH in their formal lessons and some appeared to be working against GNH values and principles through the hidden curriculum of their classrooms.

Extra curricula activities, initiated more than a decade ago, do provide an avenue for EGNH but they need to be rejuvenated to encompass more students, as well as to focus more closely on developing teacher self-efficacy in translating and enacting EGNH principles in effective classroom practices. The current confusions and lack of knowledge and skills need to be addressed by, for example, effective pre-service and in-service activities over time if EGNH is to become a reality in Bhutanese schools. Furthermore, a rigorous focus on examinations needs to be seriously reconsidered keeping in view the current best practices followed elsewhere. Bhutanese education system needs to understand the psychological impact of examinations for a child as young as 6 years old. As well, the congruence between the EGNH initiative and examination logic and practices need to be more closely scrutinized if the latter is not to negate the former.

If interventions to raise teacher self-efficacy for the EGNH initiative, with special focus on classroom practices, were not implemented, perhaps the consequences would likely doom the initiative. In the long run, Bhutan needs to have not only educated citizens but also citizens with human values, consistent with GNH, inculcated in them. Such an achievement would address the King's vision of GNH as "development guided by human values" (Wangchuck 2009b, p. 6).

This student shows the traditional dress of the people from Trashiyangtse (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact

Thakur S. Powdyel

Abstract The rapid growth of the formal education system notwithstanding, literacy has remained out of reach for many Bhutanese, especially among adult women and men in the less-developed parts of the country. Non-formal education in Bhutan has been a critical strategy for inclusion and empowerment of a significant population of citizens who missed the opportunity to acquire literacy due to several reasons, including social, economic, and occupational circumstances at the time of their regular schooling. Delivered through a large network of learning centres spread across the country, the programme has, over the years, gained in relevance and popularity – particularly as an enabler of learning that has exceeded the original intent of promoting the national language, Dzongkha. It has emerged as a veritable tool for self-realisation and participation in local governance in the increased space created by the advent of democracy. Non-formal education has, therefore, been a boon not only in promoting literacy and numeracy but also as an important vehicle for the communication of important messages about issues affecting people's lives and the larger concerns of the society.

Introduction

Given Bhutan's relatively late start of modern development planning and the consequent delayed initiation of formal education, compounded by the scattered nature of the population across difficult terrain and uneven endowments, large sections of Bhutanese citizens were left out of the state-supported formal system of education. The reasons for this disadvantage included absence of learning facilities in and around some settlements – especially in the far-off mountain regions – or because farming and livestock rearing occupations commanded priority, or for the reason that education didn't feature as a particularly high-priority project in the general scheme of things when formal schooling began in the country in the early 1960s.

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The result was that many young men and women of that time were unable to benefit from learning opportunities when they were of school-going age.

As a small, landlocked country not particularly well-endowed with natural resources, and with a small population, Bhutan has to make up in terms of quality what it lacks in terms of quantity. The country's far-sighted leaders long recognised the power of education as a critical instrument in the development of a deeply reflective, inward-looking people as Bhutan emerged from relativeisolation and became a member of the global community.

The dividends have been rich and rewarding as the school student numbers rose from a miniscule 400 or so students in some 11 primary schools when the country's 1st Five-Year Plan for economic development began in the early 1960s to close to 200,000 pupils studying in over 600 schools and institutions that range from extended classrooms to university in 2015, according to the latest statistics published by the Ministry of Education (2014). The country has virtually achieved the Millennium Development Goals of universal primary enrolment and gender parity, as well as Bhutan's constitutional provisions for basic education. Today, there is a written constitution that reflects the underpinning ideas of that time. Article 9, Section 15 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (RGoB 2008, p. 19) specifies that:

> The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the *entire* population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality [emphasis added].

Over time, the pace of development has been fast and, compared to the more basic needs of earlier times, priorities have been changing rapidly requiring greater awareness and enhanced skills in keeping with the spirit and warrant of the times. Those who missed out when they were young deserved a second chance, and the launch of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Programme was thus a modest response. From a mere 300 learners in six centres in 1992, the number of NFE participants was in excess of 18,000 spread across 958 centres in 2009 (NCWC 2008). So much so that, as Minister of Education on my way back from remote Merak and Sakteng in Trashigang, I was most heartened to discover that every household in Joenkhar village had been through the NFE experience. Bhutan's NFE programme also won UNESCO Literacy Awards in 2009 and 2011. The age of the learners has ranged from mid-teens to 70 years old and the NFE graduates have recorded impressive overall improvementin their quality of life and standard of living. Many graduates of the programme have assumed leadership positions in local government and made a visible difference in the gender distribution of elected leaders in an otherwise man's world. The constitutional expectation of the "full development of the human personality" is being realised, albeit modestly (Powdyel 2014, p. 69).

The Development and Progress of Non-Formal Education

What Is NFE? Non-formal education signals a critical milestone in the democratisation of education, taking learning from the classes to the masses in the literal as well as figurative sense of the term. It was not a call for "de-schooling society" in the Ivan Illich (1976) argument that advocated doing away with schools altogether and setting up "learning webs," but the success of the NFE learners and their influence on those around them have often exceeded expectations.

As outlined in the draft Non-Formal Education Policy (PPD 2005), in the broad Bhutanese context non-formal education includes all educational activities that are organized and systematic but outside the formal system, and it includes populations of all ages. Such activities usually have clear learning objectives, but vary in duration, occurrence, delivery modes, and in providing certification for acquired learning. They are marked by a diversity and flexibility of content and learning/teaching methods. NFE covers educational programmes such as youth and adult literacy, early childhood care and development (ECCD), life skills and income generation, vocational training, and rural development which are in pursuit of supporting GNH values and principles.

It may be insightful to visit a distinction, highlighted by Smith (2001, p. 3), that Coombs and Ahmed (1974) draw between formal, non-formal, and informal education where the former is characterised by "the hierarchically structured, chronologically graded 'education system', running from primary school through secondary and tertiary including , in addition to general academic studies, a variety of specialised programmes and institutions for full-time technical and professional training" (Smith 2001, p. 3). Non-formal education means "any organised educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives" (Smith 2001, p. 3). Informal education is to them "the truly lifelong process whereby every individual acquires attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educative influences and resources in his or her environment- from family and neighbours, from work and play, from the market place, the library and the mass media" (Smith 2001, p. 3).

On the other hand, Simkins (1976, in Smith 2001) contrasted non-formal education programmes with formal education in terms of purpose, timing, content delivery systems, and control. In the formal scheme, the purpose is long-term and general as well as credit-based; has a long time cycle; the content is standardised and academic, input-based with defined entry requirements; is institution-based, structured, teacher-centred, and resource-intensive; it is hierarchical and externally controlled. In contrast, to Simkins, non-formal education is short-term and specific, non-credential-based in purpose; follows flexible, short time-cycles; the content is practical, output-centred and individualised and entry requirements are defined by clientele; delivery is environment-based, learner-centred, flexible and community-related as well as resource saving; it is democratic and self-governing rather than externally controlled. The formal system is top-down whereas NFE is bottom-up.

Simkins' analysis is congruent with three of the four characteristics of non-formal education identified by Fordham (1993). Bhutan's NFE also satisfies Fordham's fourth characteristic of "relevance to the needs of disadvantaged groups" (Smith 2001, p. 3) as mentioned above.

The Early Days of NFE in Bhutan Bhutan's NFE Programme marks the third wave in the evolution of the education system in the country. The first wave of monastic education nurtured spiritual life and the second wave of modern secular education has shaped and guided the development of one of the world's smallest nations with its own unique identity and world-view. The genesis of the non-formal education programme can be traced back to the beginning of the 1980s when the National Women's Association of Bhutan (NWAB) launched a modest effort aimed primarily at promoting adult literacy and empowerment of women. A decade or so later, in 1992, the management of the programme was taken over by the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC) and the main focus of NFE moved towards the promotion of the national language, Dzongkha. To enhance the educational potential of the programme, responsibility for the overall planning and promotion of NFE was shifted to the then Ministry of Health & Education in 1996. Non-formal and continuing education have become powerful tools to build and enhance literacy and empowerment. This is especially important in an emerging democratic country that aspires to be a learning society by engaging the creative potential of its people. The success of the programme has necessitated the creation in 2006 of a fully-fledged Non-Formal & Continuing Education Division (NFCED) within the Department of Adult & Higher Education under the Ministry of Education, both seen as strategic levers of life-long-learning.

The NFE Programme Today in Bhutan As it currently stands, the NFE programme is divided into two levels, the Basic Literacy Course (BLC) and the Post-Literacy Course (PLC). The BLC begins with fresh entrants who have little or no literacy skills. They progress to the more advanced levels beyond basic literacy. The BLC is of 12–18 months duration, consisting of 2–3 h of classes per day, 5 days a week. Classes are defined by 30 texts divided into three levels, focused on the acquisition of basic literacy in Dzongkha and numeracy skills. On completion of the course, the learners are expected to be able to read local newspapers, simple letters, public notices, sign boards, labels; and write the alphabets and numbers , form words, and write simple sentences. As the learners become more confident with literacy, they are exposed to life-skills such as health, hygiene, agriculture, forestry, environment, family planning, early childhood care and development, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, democracy, elections, government, and local issues. By so doing, literacy and numeracy are further developed. The aim is to graduate learners with learning equivalent to the level of Class IV in formal education.

Learners who graduate from the Basic Literacy Course can enrol in the Post-Literacy Course. The PLC runs for twelve months, with 2–3 h spent in learning per day, 5 days a week. PLC students build on their acquisition in the BLC but take on an intellectually more advanced programme that includes health, environment,

agriculture, income generation activities, socio-cultural issues, early childhood care and development, sustainable land use, disaster management, and good governance, among others. Learning progress at this level is expected to be equivalent to that of Class VI in the formal set-up.

PLC-specific topics that are income-generating activities include kitchen gardening, mushroom cultivation, tailoring, carpentry, weaving, and toy-making, among others. Development of materials for Green Jobs for NFE, funded by the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), covers topics such as rain water harvesting, solar dryer, safety in electricity usage, and bio-gas. Under the auspices of Education for Sustainable Development, environmental, health, social, economic, political as well as human development issues are gradually being mainstreamed into the NFE programme as is done in countries like Nepal, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and others.

Provided through close to a thousand centres spread across the country's 20 *dzongkhags* [districts], the principal beneficiaries of the NFE programme have been illiterate housewives, village adults, school drop-outs and indeed anybody who missed school – ranging in age from teens to well over 70 years. The participants are

> our mothers and wives, sisters and aunts who secure our homes and tend the fields. They are our fathers and brothers, cousins and uncles who farm the lands and raise livestock. They are those who multi-task and yet find time to rush to learning centres to receive the light of literacy. (Powdyel 2014, p. 68)

NFE centres are housed in a variety of facilities including extended classrooms – extended classrooms, or ECRs, are extensions of an existing school that cater to the needs of children from far-flung communities whose children are too young to travel long distances to the nearest school – village *lhakhangs* [temples], local schools, private dwellings, and modest structures mostly put up by the learners themselves or at the behest of the local administration. The resources, particularly in those centresbuilt by the communities, are sparse as there is no designated budgetary allocation to equip the NFE centres except some learning materials supplied by the headquarters in the form of readers, textbooks, workbooks, flip charts, stationery, writing boards, and basic furniture for the instructor. Often, there is a very modest dwelling facility for the instructor built by the learners. School-based learning centres are better off by far. It is also the case that the resourcefulness and creativity of the instructors is often evident in the exceptionally welcoming and uplifting environment that some of the NFE centres present.

The NFE programme is currently delivered by NFE instructors who have completed Class XII and some who have a Class X qualification. They undergo a basic classroom management course and are conversant with the content of the curriculum. At times, these instructors are also called upon to teach in the regular schools in the event of teacher-shortages, but they receive no compensation for extra work after normal school hours, unlike regular teachers who receive an allowance for teaching NFE learners. The challenging service conditions often oblige the NFE instructors to give up teaching and look for other options or go for studies to enhance

prospects for future employment. But many have stayed on and continue to do an outstanding job despite the numerous challenges they encounter on a daily basis. What compensates the material deficiencies of the centres is the passion and dedication of the participants to learn. This is what thousands of Bhutan's adult women – mothers and sisters and aunts and cousins and nieces – are doing; and this is what the country's adult men – fathers and brothers and uncles and cousins and nephews – who missed the chance to go to school when they were young are doing today in the remote hamlets and homesteads of Bhutan: acquiring the joy of reading and writing and being empowered.

Continuing Education

Continuing Education sits alongside NFE. Continuing Education (CE) , by definition, is life-long learning in the true sense of the term. Launched in 2006 – mainly in response to the civil service requirement of enhanced qualification for promotion – CE, in the contemporary Bhutanese school education context, is a learning opportunity for people who could not continue their education in the formal system after Class X or XII. They are civil servants, people from private organizations, or individuals eager to further their learning. The CE learners take the same course as their counterparts either at Class X or XII but attend classes for 2 h in the evening after work on working days and 4 h on Saturdays, for 10 months.

Upon completion of their course, CE learners receive the Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE) in the case of Class X, or the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) in the case of Class XII. A total of 2096 learners, 962 men and 1134 women, benefitted from the programme as of 2014 (MoE 2014). Learners who achieve merit ranking at the board examinations and fulfil certain criteria are eligible for state support to pursue further studies, and many have not only availed themselves of government scholarships but excelled in their studies.

Royal Thimphu College (RTC), the country's first and only private college, launched a Continuing Education programme in 2013. It was established for working professionals as well as those who want to acquire an undergraduate degree in Business Studies, Humanities, Political Science and Sociology, and IT and Mathematics as the regular day students. Graduates receive the same award from the Royal University of Bhutan as the day students. RTC's CE programme runs for 4 years with students attending evening classes for 2 h on working days and 4 h on Saturday.

Impact of the NFE Programme

Despite many challenges, the NFE programme has triumphed. According to the national newspaper, *Kuensel* (2015, p. 3):

> There are many success stories of the programme changing lives of people, especially in rural Bhutan. While some have passed the Election Commission of Bhutan's literacy test to participate in local government elections, mothers studying with their kindergarten children are a common story. This is one programme thousands of unfortunate people will thank the government for.

Karma Jurmi (2012), drawing from Bhutan's submission to UNESCO for the International Literacy Prize 2012, summarised the major outcomes of the NFE programme since its inception by highlighting specific cases. Karma Jurmi (2012) indicated that more than 170,000 citizens out of a population of less than one million have benefitted from basic literacy and numeracy skills; 80 % have acquired life-skills education; 20 % of the NFE learners have been trained in vocational skills like tailoring, weaving, carpentry, and entrepreneurship. NFE learners in six *dzongkhags* have been trained in conducting situational analyses of farming practices and basic farming economics. Some 80 % of the community learning centres have been supplied with basic resources like sewing machines, audio-visual materials, and library books; NFE centres are also serving as Early Childhood Care and Development centres in at least two districts. Moreover, community cooperative group schemes such as in fishery, poultry, kitchen gardening, and piggery have been initiated with support from the Education for Sustainable Development project. Additionally, natural disaster-related themes like flash floods, forest fires, earthquakes, avian flu, including sustainable land management skills, have been developed and incorporated into the programme. New ground has been broken by establishing some 15 NFE centres in military barracks, and by initiating the NFE programmein Royal Bhutan Police prisons. Altogether 22 community learning centres have been established in 18 of the 20 *dzongkhags*. Ninety percent of the NFE instructors have been trained in teaching methods and life-skills education.

In a UNICEF-supported study of the impact of the NFE progamme, I'Anson (2008) highlighted several levels of benefit to the learners. The main benefits were improved functional Dzongkha literacy and numeracy skills, social and cultural competency, enhanced knowledge of the four pillars of GNH, increased self-reliance and confidence, and greater productivity and independence as a result of life-skills training and awareness. Learning of *driglam namzhag* [social etiquette] Bhutanese customs and traditions, essential cultural protocol, singing of the national anthem, reciting prayers, and learning Dzongkha songs and dances added to the repertoire of benefits that accrue to the NFE learners. Further, being able to speak, read, and write basic Dzongkha and being able to communicate at a reasonable level of proficiency in the national language placed NFE learners above their village counterparts who do not attend the programme. These achievements are particularly commendable given the fact that there are some 19 other dialects and languages, other than Dzongkha, spoken as mother tongue in different parts of the country.

During my many travels across the country, I was struck and moved as I met eager and cheerful learners of all ages as they divided their time and energy among competing claims of work and family obligations and rushed to attend class, often far away from home. And, why shouldn't they? "When I started NFE, it felt like daylight had finally arrived" – so said a PLC learner in Tamshing in central Bhutan;

and for Legpa, another PLC learner in Lhuentse, "Every new word is like gold in my pocket" (I'Anson 2008, p. 31). The power of literacy and numeracy that has accompanied the participants is visible in improved quality of life, better hygiene standards, and enhanced levels of participation in the country's newly-introduced democratic process. The truly gratifying feature of the NFE programme has been that at least 70 % of the participants in it are women and they are assuming increased leadership roles in local affairs (UNESCO 2013).

Nothing succeeds like success. Having tasted the joy and power of literacy through the medium of the national language, the learners have decided to move on – they want to learn English, the medium of teaching in the formal system and the language of popular technology and commerce. Therefore, in response to widespread demand by the NFE learners to learn English , a draft functional English Curriculum was prepared and piloted in six *dzongkhags* in 2011 with a plan to take it nation-wide in the near future.

Education ranks on the top among perceived qualities of good leaders. According to a study conducted by the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB 2014), 65.7 % men and 48.5 % women consider education an important determinant when one considers standing for election. Personal anecdotes testify to the primacy of learning as potential candidates weigh their relative strength against other hopefuls as in the case of this elected *tshogpa* [elected representative] of a *chiwog* [electoral precinct] from Samdrupjongkhar: "because I had acquired some knowledge and skill through [the] non-formal education programme, my community asked me to contest the election" (RUB 2014, p. 87). This and other examples illustrate what I identified as NFE empowering people (Powdyel 2014). It is this ability, this power that Ranjung's 28-year old Tenzin Yangden is jubilant about: "I can read the seat numbers and the sign boards on the way so I know where I have reached and how far I have to travel." So too with 70-year old Meme Karchung of Bidung, with 56-year old Ap Harka Rai of Dumtoe, and so with Saili of Mithun.

The RUB study mentioned above states that if a learner could read the label on the bottle of oil they bought, read the advertisement in the local newspaper, or the signboard of an office, the NFE programme was already a success. Moreover, the programme has become more relevant in the new democratic system. A voter who could read the pamphlet of a political party, or fill up a postal voter form correctly, will be more independent in making his or her choice than one relying on an acquaintance or a relative.

Going by the data and the examples cited above, one can obtain a fairly comprehensive view of the extent and benefits that have accrued to the participants of the NFE programme since its modest beginnings in the early 1980s. The programme has been a vital instrument in building the country's knowledge-base by reaching the unreached even in the remotest parts of the country.

Concerns These impressive achievements made under challenging circumstances seem, however, to be threatened. Drop-out numbers are significant. *Kuensel* reporter Nirmala Pokhrel (2015) wrote that as many as 1142 learners dropped out of the programme in 2014 alone, 666 of them being women. The overall drop-out rate has

been in the region of 20 % with women constituting the majority . The reasons cited range from closure of centres following the departure of the instructor, competing claims of housework, distance to learning centres, shortage of helping hands, to perceptions of gender roles. The *dzongkhags* of Samdrupjongkhar, Monggar, Chukha, Samtse, Dagana, Sarpang, and Tsirang, among others, are highlighted by Pokhrel as being most affected by drop-out rates.

The increasingly worrying state of the once-award-winning programme led the *Kuensel* editorial to comment:

> It is a shame that the education ministry's most successful programme, the non-formal education, is in dire need of attention. (*Kuensel* editorial, 2015, 21 April)

Establishing more NFE centres closer to the communities thereby reducing travel distance and time, posting more regular instructors with better incentives, allocating dedicated budget at the *dzongkhag* level, providing adequate learning resources and ensuring their timely supply, and enforcing better accountability would be some of the measures to help in reducing drop-out rates.

Discussion and Recommendations

Given the popularity and quality of learning up to this point, despite the concerns highlighted above, the NFE programme still presents much scope for expansion. One important area to consider is certification of NFE graduates at some level of equivalence with formal learning . Increased efforts could also be made to (1) enhance the participation rate, and (2) ensure completion by those who enrol by mounting effective interventions including those suggested in the paragraphs that follow. Greater flexibility in class timing and proximity to learning centres to learners are pertinent issues that would be two areas that are likely to increase the participation rate.

Key areas of the NFE programme need to be addressed. Most importantly, the allotment of increased resources especially dedicated to the NFE programme at the *dzongkhag* level is required, particularly in communities where resources are scarce. Documentation of learning progress made by the participants needs to be systematised. Vocational and technical training for students could be a strategic input given the need to develop professional capacity and address employment challenges.

An important intervention ought to be in the quality, quantity and sustainability of the non-formal education instructors. Capacity building of instructors needs to be made more regular and systematic. Additionally, the instructors must see an element of certainty in tenure and compensation to keep them motivated and make them more accountable for delivery of service. Moreover, a scheme of proper recruitment, training and retention will go a long way in attracting motivated young Bhutanese many of whom are looking for employment. This will help address not

only many of the challenges facing NFE but also help mitigate the problem of unemployment among educated youth in the country.

Equally important is the need for more accountability in the NFE programme. For example, regular monitoring and inspection of NFE centres is required along the lines of the Education Monitoring and Support Services Division under the Department of School Education in the formal education sector. Accountability at all levels – instructors, heads of parent schools, local leaders, *dzongkhag* education officers and their deputies, district administrators, and NFE officials at the headquarters – needs to be enforced. Engagement of all stakeholders is crucial for the success of the NFE programme.

A major constraint faced by the programme has been the lack of accurate data on the number of learners, including enrolment and completion rates, functional and non-functional learning centres, availability of recommended learning materials at the centres, and duration of actual attendance by learners and instructors. An important intervention to address this gap was launched in 2009 to develop a reliable NFE-MIS (NFE-Management Information System) database with support from UNESCO. In view of the lack of reliable data on all aspects of the programme, the potential of this resource ought to be appreciated and applied for proper planning, monitoring and development of the NFE programme in the country. In addition to these accountability concerns, there must be regular assessment of learning programmes. Learning standards, integrity of resources, availability and relevance of learning materials, acknowledgment of achievement and performance of successful instructors could all receive attention.

An important observation made by instructors and programme evaluators was the desire of the NFE learners to learn basic English over and above learning Dzongkha literacy. As mentioned above, a fairly comprehensive English for NFE Learners course was prepared and piloted back in 2011 with the help of a consultant from UNESCO. The draft was to be properly reviewed and necessary changes made to ensure curriculum integrity and implementation approaches. It would be useful if the draft could be revisited and its currency reviewed for possible implementation in response to an expressed need by learners. The popularly demanded but long delayed functional English course calls for due consideration to attract learners to the NFE programme. So far, the major share of support to augment the government's efforts in the promotion of the NFE programme has come from UNICEF, followed by UNESCO, with some assistance from some other agencies. Efforts must be made to expand collaboration with other relevant institutions and agencies including non-governmental organisations to stabilise the progress made and to broaden its reach.

The recommendations here are congruent with those made in the RUB study (2014, p. 139) which stated the need to:

> Link NFE with local governance training … a goal could be to incentivize community members to participate in NFE, and to increase community participation, development and learning at the local level. … if one excels in NFE, then there would be an opportunity for that community member to attend a short course in local leadership and governance skills offered by interested organizations. … enhancing the opportunity to be a capable local government leader … [supporting the] empowerment of the community to participate in community affairs.

In short, a review of NFE is needed. This includes policies , assessment of current needs, programme development, delivery including recruitment and retention of instructors, resourcing of learning centres and information gaps. The involvement of all stakeholders and accountability issues would allow the needed intervention to achieve the desired results from the NFE programme to support the country's effort to build a literate and empowered citizenry capable of participating fully in a progressive knowledge society that Bhutan aspires to be.

In conclusion, educational progress has been seen as an important factor contributing to the attainment of the country's cherished goal of Gross National Happiness. The NFE programme has certainly contributed to this. Creating enabling conditions for all to benefit from the process of learning through formal, non-formal, as well as informal modes will go a long way in advancing towards that goal. The gains made by the NFE programme for disadvantaged citizens must be sustained and enhanced by efforts made to address the challenges. Employment creation opportunities through income generation activities beyond the social, cultural, civic, and sustainability education objectives should receive due attention. The realisation of the full potential of the NFE programme requires a close assessment of the achievements vis-a-vis its intent together with a thorough examination of gaps that have hindered progress. Visible empowerment of the disadvantaged communities through literacy and numeracy as well as life-skills education , popularisation of the national language, increased participation in local governance especially by women, enhanced understanding of health and hygiene issues, deeper appreciation of environment, and land management concerns has indeed improved the standard of living and been some of the deeply gratifying outcomes of the NFE Programme.

To celebrate Teacher's Day, students parody a bodybuilding competition for their classmates and teachers (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education

Rinchen Dorji and Matthew J. Schuelka

Abstract With Bhutan fully invested in international conventions and initiatives such as Education for All and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, getting *all* children in school has recently become a priority for the Royal Government. Despite the intention, there have been many challenges around developing quality inclusive education due to teacher quality, personnel and administration, curriculum, pedagogy, and student physical access as well as a lack of resources. A new inclusive education policy is in the process of being approved by the Bhutanese parliament. This chapter will focus on the challenges and possibilities of how inclusive education can be fully realized in Bhutan through a focus on the context and history of education for persons with disabilities and an analysis of the current relevant policies. In our exploration of pre-service teacher training provision we argue that there are tangible and realistic steps that can be undertaken by the Ministry of Education and the Royal University of Bhutan to prepare Bhutanese teachers better to navigate heterogeneously inclusive classrooms. Our suggestions include a greater integration of inclusive practices across all teacher education programs and a more explicit focus on interacting with students with disabilities during pre-service teacher placement.

Introduction

> Government is bringing people from outside. They share their ideas from their country. That's how our people's way of thinking about disability … I think … is slowly changing. It will take time – many, many years – I don't know. Acceptance is there now. In the school itself, we can find out that more and more children are coming in. Parents are more accepting. *Now they know that these people can do*. – Bhutanese Special Educational Needs Coordinator (Schuelka 2014, p. 136, emphasis added).

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Given its relatively short history of formal 'modern' education, Bhutan has progressed quite rapidly from an early education system focused on human capital development to a system also aspiring to incorporate human rights, equity, cultural relevancy, and Gross National Happiness (GNH). As other chapters in this volume have discussed, this progress was not steady, nor was it inevitable. One particular area of challenge to the Bhutanese education system is how to provide a quality education to a heterogeneous group of students – those of varying ethnic groups, mother tongues, interests, and abilities. As several authors in this volume have recalled (e.g. Jagar Dorji), at the beginning of education and modernization efforts in the mid-twentieth century, many parents were fearful and mistrustful of the modern school, and kept their children from attending. Today, in the twenty-first century, sending *all* children to a school in Bhutan is almost a forgone conclusion. The epigraph, with its endearing Bhutanese-English phrasing, illustrates this point.

Even though there is now widespread acceptance of the importance and value of attending school, children with disabilities face a disproportionate number of challenges in not only simply getting to the classroom door but also in receiving a quality educational experience once there. The Ministry of Education (MoE) has been working hard on establishing inclusive policies and technical improvements, but there are still wide gaps in terms of culture and practice. According to UNICEF (2012), the disability prevalence rate for children ages 2–9 is 21 %, using the functionality survey approach. At least 5 % of school-age children are not attending school (MoE 2014a) and many of these are children with moderate to severe disabilities, disadvantaged through poverty, or extreme rurality – or an intersectionality of all of these factors.

The purpose of this chapter is to detail the challenges, and highlight the efforts to alleviate them, for students with disabilities in Bhutanese schools. First, a brief historical outline will provide the context of the progress that Bhutan has made in educating children and children with disabilities. Second, the key policies regarding inclusion and special educational needs will be explained and set within an international context. Third, the current state of educational provision for children with disabilities will be described and analyzed. Finally, the development of special education teacher training – and the challenges faced in this development – will be discussed.

A Brief Context and History

The history of modern secular educational development in Bhutan is, on many occasions, a history of small projects scaling up through Royal Government-led action (see Singye Namgyel and Phub Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume) or international support (see Jagar Dorji, chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume). Special education is no exception to this narrative.

Previous to the establishment of 'modern' secular schools in Bhutan, formal education was situated entirely in the monastic school system. Monastic education, historically, only took a small percentage of the overall population. As Zangley Dukpa (chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume) mentions, children with physical and mental disabilities were not generally accepted into monastic education centers. In the past, Bhutanese boys were sent to the monasteries mostly through a system called *tsunthrel* or *drathrel* ['monk tax']. It is unclear whether monasteries did accept boys with mild or 'hidden' disabilities, but surely some did. Today, according to Karma Ura (2014), "Preliminary vows cannot be administered to someone with defective senses, that is someone who is deaf, dumb, blind, retarded or lame" (p. 77). Setting aside Karma Ura's crude language, these are the criteria and attitudes also found by Schuelka (2014, 2015). There is at least one story known, as described to Schuelka during his fieldwork, of a very religious young man with disabilities that did try to enter monastic life, only to face ostracism and emotional and physical abuse from other monks.

Exclusion from monastic education for persons with disabilities meant exclusion from all formal education until the late twentieth century. The first special school – the National Institute for the Visually Impaired (NIVI), now called *Zanglay Muenselling* ["clearing the darkness"] or the Muenselling Institute – opened in 1973 in Trashigang *dzongkhag* [district] with support from HRH Prince Namgyel Wangchuck and a husband-wife pair of Norwegians, Einar and Reidun Kippenes. Throughout its history, Muenselling has been supported by a plethora of international organizations from Sweden, Germany, Japan, Denmark, the United States, and UNICEF (Kuenga Chhogyel 2006; Schuelka 2014). The 'Bhutanization' of education beginning in the 1980s (Singye Namgyel and Phub Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume) included an expansion of provision at Muenselling and also the replacement of a Swedish principal, Philip Holmberg, with a Bhutanese school leadership team. Gradual expansion of the number of special education schools and institutions began after that, including the addition of the Paro Deaf Education Unit (now the more inclusive Wangsel Institute). A more detailed history of the Royal Government's role in expanding and sustaining special and inclusive education will continue in subsequent sections.

Culturally, the conceptualization of 'disability' in Bhutan has been a recognition of human difference based on Buddhism and evolving interactions with global discourses (Schuelka 2015). There are both cultural challenges towards acceptance of difference – for example the belief in karma and the idea of bodily 'wholeness' – and opportunities within the Gross National Happiness philosophical framework (Schuelka 2013a, b, 2015). The epigraph to this chapter indicates that there are positive cultural changes happening. As Schuelka (2014) witnessed during his fieldwork and many visits to Bhutanese schools, students in Bhutan are friendly, gregarious, inquisitive, and naturally inclusive. The next sections of the chapter will explain how the Royal Government has fostered and, at times, hindered these attributes.

Policy for the Education of Children with Disabilities

There are several key policy documents in Bhutan that clearly acknowledge the educational rights of all children. The Royal Government of Bhutan's (RGoB) commitment to pursue Education for All by making education accessible and inclusive of all children without any forms of discrimination (UNICEF and UNESCO 2007) is explicitly proclaimed in the Constitution of Bhutan (RGoB 2007). Specifically, Articles 9.15 and 9.16 guarantee education as one of the fundamental rights:

> Article 9.15: The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality.
>
> Article 9.16: The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to the tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (pp. 19–20)

It is evident that the Constitution guarantees the provision of education for all Bhutanese. This policy covers all children, including those with disabilities and other marginalized groups, to enjoy equal "opportunity for an education that helps them to realize their full potential and excel in life" (MoE 2014b, p. 62). Two important policy statements indicate the authoritative voice of Bhutan's vision for the education of disabled and marginalized groups. The first is for "an educated and enlightened society of GNH, built and sustained on the unique Bhutanese values of *tha dam-tshig ley gyu-drey*" (MoE 2014b, p. 62). *Tha dam-tshig ley gyu-drey* in this context refers to a solemn oath or sacred commitment of an individual to the nation to engage in virtuous actions for a happy Bhutanese society (Karma Phuntsho 2004; Tashi Wangyal 2001). The second important policy statement is to "provide equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to all children and harness their full potential to become productive citizens" (MoE 2014b, p. 63). It should be noted that the Constitution provides the *right* to an education, but does not make education *compulsory*. This is an important distinction, which is especially relevant for the incentivization and utility of parents of children with disabilities sending their children to school. The Constitution also does not make explicitly clear the definition of 'inclusive and quality education' and whether this means a 'separate but equal' special educational provision or a 'one size fits all' inclusive educational provision.

The global definition of inclusive education varies widely depending on context and policy, to the point where there is not a true universal definition. Various typologies of inclusion have been proposed (Ainscow et al. 2006), along with a somewhat controversial index for inclusion (Booth and Ainscow 2011), and many academics from around the world suggest various definitions (see Giangreco 1997; Norwich 2013; Thomas and Loxley 2007). We argue that the most centralized and looked-to definitions of inclusive education and practice come from the United

Nations agencies – although even amongst agencies there is disagreement. For the sake of this chapter, we define inclusive education as meaning the following:

> [Inclusive education recognizes the] need to transform the cultures, policies and practices in schools to accommodate the differing needs of individual students, and an obligation to remove the barriers that impede that possibility … It requires that all children, including children with disabilities, not only have access to schooling within their own communities, but that they are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to achieve their full potential. Its approach is underpinned by an understanding that all children should have equivalent and systematic learning opportunities in a wide range of school and additional educational settings, despite the differences that might exist. (UNICEF 2012, p. 10)

In practice, inclusive education places students with disabilities in the general classroom and supports them through various means such as special teachers and aides, differentiated curriculum and materials, and other accommodations. As will be described below, Bhutanese educational policy and practice are challenged to consistently implement this definition of inclusive education.

Although inclusive education is a relatively new concept in Bhutan (Rinchen Dorji 2015), the principal philosophy of inclusive education is inherent and permeates across most policy documents in Bhutan. The core principles of inclusive education can be identified in the 'wholesome education' of the 1990s (Jagar Dorji 2005) and Child Friendly School (CFS) practices introduced in early 2000s (Dechen Zam 2008). Another important policy document, *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness*, also declares that "education has become the inalienable right of all Bhutanese" (Planning Commission of Bhutan 1999, p. 18). Based on *Bhutan 2020*, the Department of Education within the then – Ministry of Health and Education (2003) developed the *Education Sector Strategy: Realizing Vision 2020,* which envisions that:

> All children with disabilities and with special needs – including those with physical, mental and other types of impairment – will be able to access and benefit from education. This will include full access to the curriculum, participation in extra-curricular activities and access to cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activities. The programme will be supported by trained and qualified personnel using teaching strategies responsive to different learning styles to ensure effective learning. Teacher training will be re-oriented as a means of achieving these objectives.
>
> *Children with disabilities and those with special needs will, to the greatest extent possible, be able to attend a local school where they will receive quality education alongside their non-disabled peers.* The provision of education should not take children away from their families and local communities. Maximum participation by parents should be secured in order to achieve partnership in education. Children with disabilities who spend time away from home in educational boarding facilities shall be ensured inclusive education and safety. Institutes of higher learning will be equally accessible to disabled young people. (p. 36, emphasis added)

These statements are consistent with the proclamations made by the world leaders at Salamanca in Spain during the World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994). Bhutan's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 validates Bhutan's support to make education accessible to all children. In 2002, as a member state of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and

the Pacific (ESCAP), Bhutan also confirmed the proclamation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific as a regional policy guideline for 2003–2012. In 2008, Bhutan became a signatory to the Proclamation of ESCAP Commission on Disability and the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities (MoE 2012b) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2011 (MoE 2012b).

The Royal Government of Bhutan made special mention of the need to strengthen efforts to address the educational needs of children with disabilities in Bhutan in the 9th (2003–2008) and 10th Five-Year Plans (FYP) (2008–2013), including the creation of the Special Education Unit within the Ministry of Education. The 11th FYP (2013–2018) emphasizes the "strengthening of special education services" (GNH Commission 2013b, p. 197) as one of the core development strategies for education and has committed a total budget of about 215 million Ngultrum [USD $3,3475,500] for building and equipping special education centers. These centers are expected to serve as resource centers to promote inclusive education in all mainstream schools in the long run.

The new National Policy on Special Educational Needs (NPSEN), once officially endorsed by the RGoB, is expected to provide a significant impetus in the advancement of inclusive education efforts in Bhutan (MoE 2012a, b). The Ministry of Education (2014b) has reassured the Government's support to endorse the draft NPSEN as follows:

> Recognizing that all human beings are born with unique gifts and abilities to contribute to the development of the nation and self, the RGoB [is] committed to provide equal opportunity to all its citizens by endorsing the National Policy on Special Educational Needs. Creating an equitable provision for [a] diverse student population is a key feature of this national policy. At the centre of this lies the goal of inclusion leading ultimately to improved social cohesion. (p. 49)

Most government policy documents highlight the priority and political will of the RGoB to address the educational needs of persons with disabilities.

Several studies have critiqued NPSEN for importing foreign ideas that do not consider the Bhutanese socio-cultural context and the current realities of Bhutanese education system (Schuelka 2014; UNICEF 2014). Schuelka (2014) considers the policy overly ambitious and more written for the international community than for actual local implementation. For instance, NPSEN states that every special educational needs institute for children with severe disabilities shall be provided a teacher assistant, a care-giver, a counselor/psychologist, a sports instructor, and an occupational therapist (MoE 2012b). This is a level of professional support not even economically advanced nations with a long history of special education have succeeded in providing. Naming this policy as "Special Educational Needs" instead of "Inclusive Education" can also be misleading when the focus of the policy is inclusive education. Schuelka (2014) advises that "using the term 'inclusive education' would perhaps signal a greater philosophical shift in educational thinking that might also question the larger inclusivity of the Bhutanese school system around religion, language, culture, and ethnicity" (p. 119). Similarly, Singal (2006)

argued that 'terminological ambiguity' is a problem in several countries – particularly in South Asia – and attributes this to the conceptual confusion and lack of understanding of educators, parents and even policy makers regarding inclusive education.

Inclusive education encompasses much more than the education of children with disabilities but Singal (2006) and Ainscow (1995) uphold that in many developing countries inclusive education is understood as inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream education. If the National Policy on Special Educational Needs in Bhutan has been guided by this understanding, this needs to be clearly stated in the policy document. Adopting such a strategy would be more sensible for countries such as Bhutan at this time because "a targeted focus on people with disabilities is essential, as they have been historically marginalised from social, political, educational, and economic participation" (Singal 2005, p. 364).

The development of enabling mechanisms such as national policies on inclusion has to be done by creating the right context for the inclusion (Alur 2009). Any educational policies and interventions should provide emphasis on "developing situationally appropriate solutions, by adopting a pragmatic and strategic approach, embedded in the realities" (Johansson 2014, p. 1232). Otherwise, a national policy such as NPSEN might impede inclusive education efforts and simply be an empty form of 'policy speak' (Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe 2006).

Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and the Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative that the Royal Government of Bhutan began in 2011 (MoE 2011) offer opportunities for the development of inclusive education that are aligned with the country's development philosophy and cultural values. Inclusive education emphasizes presence, participation and achievement of all children through the effective involvement of parents, families and community participation in a barrier free learning environment (Ainscow 2005; Booth and Ainscow 2011). These are consistent with the core values of Education for GNH. Schuelka (2012, 2013b) argued that inclusive education resonates within the RGoB's developmental policies and the policies of the Ministry of Education. In the next section, we will set out the present education of children with disabilities in practice, which does not always align with intentions and policies.

Current Provision of Education for Children with Disabilities

Bhutan currently follows a continuum of provision-oriented separate and inclusive systems (Norwich 2008) to provide education for children with disabilities. Students with mild to moderate learning disabilities are integrated into mainstream schools, whereas learning for students with severe needs and other categories of disabilities such as those with visual and hearing challenges are offered facilities in segregated special schools (Dawa Dukpa 2014). However, the Special Education Unit has made it clear that it is the right of schools to refuse to serve a student with a moderate to

severe disability if they do not have the capacity, and this is also echoed by many school administrators (Schuelka 2014). The NPSEN, itself, suggests that children with moderate to severe disabilities should be placed in specialized services and institutes (MoE 2012b).

The Annual Education Statistics from 2015 (MoE 2015) show a total of ten public schools in Bhutan which openly and actively accept students with disabilities, catering to a total of 448 students served by about 369 general classroom teachers and instructors. In addition to this, Drak-Tsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, a civil society organization, has a total enrolment of about 116 children and youth with special needs. Of the ten government schools, Muenselling Institute at Khaling and Wangsel Institute at Paro are called Special Schools and the other eight are called Special Educational Needs (SEN) Schools. However, the use of 'SEN schools' is confusing and problematic. Muenselling and Wangsel Institutes may be called a 'special school' because they specifically cater to the educational needs of children with visual and hearing impairment respectively. The name 'special educational needs' for the other eight schools does not indicate inclusive education practice, even though many exemplify inclusive ideals. These schools should be called 'inclusive pilot schools' or 'integrated schools' considering the reality of the current provision of education for children with disabilities in these schools (Schuelka 2014). Moreover, the term 'SEN school' implies that other schools do not accept students with disabilities and this may have a long term impact contrary to the inclusion policy The 'terminological ambiguity' (Singal 2006) in the classification of these schools demands further scrutiny and contemplation as to whether 'inclusion' is really the goal of this two-tiered system. The overall record of student enrolments and teachers in these ten schools are shown in Table 1.

In early 2016, the Ministry of Education has identified Tsangkha Central School in Trongsa and Gonpasingma Lower Secondary School in Pemagatshel as SEN schools towards achieving the long-term goal of establishing one SEN school in each *dzongkhag*. Gonpasingma has a total student enrollment of 213 of which 13 (6 boys and 7 girls) are identified as students having special needs (Ugyen Lhamo, personal communication, 2016) and Tsangkha has 372 student enrollment overall out of which 18 students (8 boys & 10 girls) identified to have special needs (Tshering Lhamo, personal communication, 2016).

According to the MoE (2015), there are 186,964 students across all education sectors. This does not include Bhutanese students studying abroad and those enrolled in the tertiary education institutes, non-formal and continuing education programs, technical institutes and monastic schools. The percentage of these students that are noted to have a disability and receive specialized services in government schools is a mere 0.3 %. This is far short of the reported 21 % disability prevalence rate reported in a recent UNICEF disability-functionality survey (National Statistics Bureau, et al. 2012). It should be noted that many schools were found to accept students that would be considered as having a 'disability', especially in the sense of reading and learning difficulties (Schuelka 2014), but were not counted officially. Also, the acceptance of students in a school ultimately falls to school administration discretion. This would seem to suggest that there is a large proportion of children with disabilities that are not attending schools of any kind. Indeed, there are special schools and SEN schools

Table 1 Enrolment of children with disabilities by *dzongkhag*, school, type, and gender in 2015

Dzongkhag	School/Institute	Description	Enrolment of students with disabilities			Overall Enrolment of School	Percentage of students with disabilities
			Boys	Girls	Total		
Chukha	Kamji MSS	SEN School	4	12	16	865	1.9%
Mongar	Mongar.LSS	SEN School	33	18	51	801	6.4%
Paro	Drukgyel LSS	SEN School	23	13	36	638	5.6%
	Wangsel Institute	Special School	49	34	83	83	100%
Samtse	Tendruk Central School	SEN School	31	19	50	1674	3%
Sarpang	Gelephu LSS	SEN School	24	16	40	1723	0.6%
Thimphu	Changangkha MSS	SEN School	34	22	56	938	6%
Trashigang	Khaling LSS	SEN School	37	17	54	345	15.7%
	Muenselling Institute	Special School	10	16	26	26	100%
	Jigme Sherabling HSS	SEN School (unofficial)	9	5	14	496	3%
Zhemgang	Zhemgang Central School	SEN School	15	7	22	1031	2%
Sub-total			269	179	448	8620	5.2%
Thimphu	Drak-Tsho (NGO)	Vocational Training	64	52	116		
TOTAL			333	231	564	8620	6.6%

Source: MoE (2015)

in only 10 out of the 20 *dzongkhags*. The Ministry of Education plans to establish a total of 22 SEN Schools – one in each *dzongkhag* plus Muenselling and Wangsel Institutes – by 2018, which is the end of the 11th FYP (GNH Commission 2013b; MoE 2014a; UNICEF 2014). These SEN schools are expected to serve as inclusive education centers to enhance the provision of educational services to children with disabilities in the entire school system (MoE 2014a). A map of the location of the ten current schools can be found in Fig. 1.

Besides the government schools under the Ministry of Education, there are also several civil society organizations that provide education, therapy, financial, and technical support to persons with disabilities (see Table 2). All of these are non-profit organizations that are funded through philanthropic contributions and technical assistance both from within Bhutan and abroad.

Previous studies by Black and Stalker (2006) and Rinchen Dorji (2008) reported that there is still a long way to go before every child has equitable access to a quality education in Bhutan. A decade ago, inclusive education was challenged by the lack of an appropriate working policy and legislation (Rinchen Dorji 2008). Even if the draft National Policy for Special Educational Needs (NPSEN) gets endorsed, there will still be a need for practical and relevant legislation such as a Disability

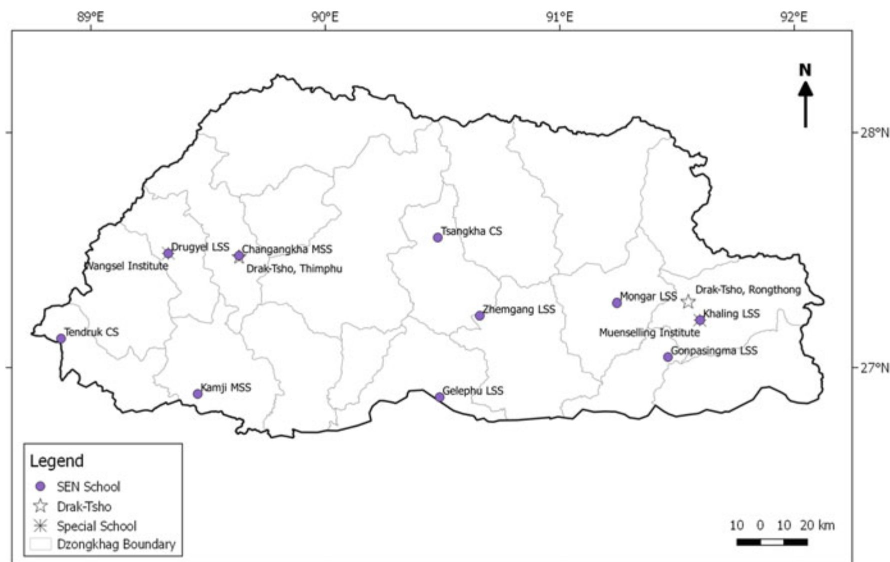

Fig. 1 Location of current SEN Schools and Institutes in Bhutan, 2015. *CS* Central School, *MSS* Middle Secondary School, *LSS* Lower Secondary School. (Source: Tiger Sangay (personal communication, 2016) & Rinchen Dorji)

Discrimination Act of Bhutan or a Bhutan Education Act that not only protects the rights of persons with disabilities but also makes education compulsory for all. There seems to be some movement on a National Disability Act, as found by Schuelka on a recent trip to Bhutan in the Summer of 2016. Other conditions such as teacher under-preparedness to address heterogeneous classrooms, a rigid curriculum, teacher-centered pedagogy, inappropriate assessment practices, ineffective teacher-parent collaboration, lack of community involvement, and lack of financial resources also impede the progress of inclusive education (Dawa Dukpa 2014; Schuelka 2014). One of the greatest areas of influence that can lead to quality inclusive education are teachers, which is also one factor that the MoE can exert much influence in shaping for the future.

Teacher Development for Inclusive Education

Teachers are key change agents in any inclusive education development. Ainscow (2005) and Forlin and Lian (2008) highlight the role of teachers as critical in the success of inclusive education. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates all professionals working in the disabilities area to be trained to work at all levels of education to ensure that persons with disabilities are effectively engaged to benefit from inclusion (Schulze 2010). The demand for pre- and in-service teacher education programs to prepare teachers with the required knowledge and competence to respond appropriately to diverse

Table 2 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that serve persons with disabilities in Bhutan, 2015

Organization	Location	Description
Ability Bhutan Society	Thimphu	Established in 2011 (supported by HRH *Druk Gyaltsuen* [Dragon Queen] Jetsun Pema)
		Provides physical therapy, occupational therapy, and behavioural therapy through in-house services, home visits, and school visits
		Provides support to facilitate inclusive practices in schools
		21 children with disabilities receive support at the centre
		3 children provided support through home visits
		22 children provided support at schools in Thimphu
		12 staff working at the centre
Bhutan-Canada Foundation	Thimphu/ Toronto	Places volunteers from mostly Western countries in Bhutanese schools, including special educators
Bhutan Foundation	Thimphu/ Washington DC	Provides financial and technical support
Drak-Tsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth	Thimphu	Established in 2001 but officially registered as a CSO in 2010 with support from the Royal Family
		Educational training and education focused specifically on souvenir making, tailoring, traditional art painting, woodcarving, performing arts, as well as basic literacy and numeracy skills, religious training and daily living skills
		48 students with disabilities currently enrolled at the institute served by about 13 staff
Drak-Tsho East	Trashigang	Branch of *Drak-Tsho* (above)
		Opened in 2010
		72 students with disabilities currently enrolled at the institute served by about 6 staff
Disabled Person's Association of Bhutan	Thimphu	Established in 2010
		Organisation run by and for adults with disabilities
		Policy and social service advocacy organization
		Supports the education of 38 students with disabilities in schools across the country
Japanese International Cooperation Agency	Tokyo	Supports Big Bakery, an inclusive employer
Special Olympics	Washington DC	Provides some funds and expertise to support athletics, disability awareness, and health programming
UNICEF-Bhutan	Thimphu/ International	Provides financial and technical support

Sources: Schuelka (2014); Beda Giri (personal communication, 2015); Deki Zam (personal communication, 2015); Disabled Person's Association of Bhutan (personal communication, 2015)

needs is also the requirement expected by the UNESCO's Education for All policy (Forlin et al. 2011). Indeed, teacher education is seen as one of the key strategies for "improving both access to and the quality of education" (Van Balkom and Sherman 2010, p. 43) in Bhutan's efforts towards reforming education.

Studies have revealed that Bhutanese teachers are not adequately prepared to face a diversity of classroom situations and scenarios (Ministry of Education 2014b; Van Balkom and Sherman 2010), which requires critical and evaluative thinking skills as not all classroom issues can be fully anticipated. The problem becomes more challenging and daunting in the case of teaching children with disabilities (Dawa Dukpa 2014; Schuelka 2013b; UNICEF 2014). Schuelka (2013b) postulates that "most [Bhutanese] teachers are under-trained, under-resourced, and under-supported when it comes to teaching a diverse range of abilities in their students" (p. 70). Van Balkom and Sherman (2010) report of the numerous challenges such as lack of teaching and learning resources, overcrowded classrooms and other basic facilities that exists in Bhutanese schools.

These challenges, among others, have led to the production of under-qualified and over-worked teachers, with low morale and attrition (Jagar Dorji 2005; Pokhrel 2015, 21 October). While teaching was traditionally considered a respectable and noble profession in Bhutanese society, in contemporary Bhutanese society it "remains relatively unattractive" (Van Balkom and Sherman 2010, p. 44). Considering the difficult working conditions such as an ever-increasing teaching workload, overcrowded classrooms, poor remuneration, poor housing particularly in rural areas, and other challenges; teachers develop low professional esteem compared to other professions. The Colleges of Education under the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) at Samtse and Paro are challenged to recruit top candidates. The mode of teaching and learning for pre-service teachers are reported to be predominantly teacher-centric (Education Sector Review Commission 2008; Maxwell and Deki Gyamtso 2012; Van Balkom and Sherman 2010) with often rigidly structured teaching that restricts pre-service student teachers from developing as reflective and enquiring practitioners capable of the independent critical thinking and flexibility that inclusive education necessitates.

This is not only an issue in Bhutan. A similar problem of inadequacy in teacher preparation to meet the increasingly diverse needs of children is reported as one of the pressing issues especially in the Asia-Pacific region (Forlin and Lian 2008). Loreman et al. (2010) contend that teacher training programs for preparing teachers to educate children with special needs is worrisome even in countries such as the Netherlands, England, Sweden, Denmark and the United States. Other studies in Australia, New Zealand and the United States have also revealed the lack of well-rounded teacher competence due to inadequate teacher training as one of the key barriers to inclusion (Pijl 1995).

To prepare teachers for teaching children with disabilities, Paro and Samtse Colleges of Education offer a stand-alone compulsory module on "Teaching Children with Special Needs" in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) for both pre- and in-service primary school teachers (Paro College of Education 2010; Samtse College of Education 2009). In addition to this module, Samtse offers an optional module on

"Introduction to Inclusive Education" to B.Ed Secondary pre-service students (Sangay Tshering, personal. communication, 2015). This is not offered at Paro College of Education (Dawa Dukpa, personal communication, 2016). Both Colleges of Education currently do not provide any specialization courses on inclusive education nor do they have the capacity to do so, in terms of funds, staff and expertise.

Bhutan needs to adequately prepare and professionalize teachers who educate children with disabilities (GNH Commission 2013a; MoE 2014b; Schuelka 2013b). There is an increasing demand to revamp the existing teacher education programs around the world to equip teachers with relevant skills and pedagogical knowledge; competent enough to provide quality education to all kinds of learners (Lewis and Norwich 2005). The Ministry of Education organizes short, tailor-made professional development programs alongside other sensitization and advocacy programs to help them teach students with disabilities (MoE 2014c). However, anecdotally, many of these in-service workshops are overly theoretical, facilitated by foreign experts with little contextual understanding, and far removed from Bhutanese practical classroom realities. The application of knowledge and learning gained through such activities are hardly supported for implementation in schools, neither are they effectively monitored or evaluated. Fullan (2007) claims that most in-service professional development is ineffective "because it is ad hoc, discontinuous, and unconnected to any plan for change" (p. 17).

To address the current gap in teacher preparation for inclusive education, RUB and the Ministry of Education are collaborating to begin award-bearing programs on Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education (Paro College of Education 2013). For instance, its plan to introduce a Master's Degree in Special Education by 2018 corresponds to the Ministry of Education's aspiration to have qualified teachers to teach children with special needs (Ministry of Education 2012b, 2014a, b). A postgraduate teacher education program will not necessarily help in preparing more knowledgeable and competent teachers for inclusive classrooms unless it is rooted in practical matters and not graduate-level theoretical concerns. In addition to introducing new awards bearing teacher education programs for inclusive education, Paro and Samtse Colleges of Education could also explore the possibility of infusing inclusive education ideas and pedagogy across the entire teacher education curriculum and not just a stand along course or module. A combination of both a dedicated unit of study on inclusion, together with an infused curricula across all programs, can be the most effective model of preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive practices (Forlin and Chambers 2011; Kearns and Shevlin 2006).

RUB's Colleges of Education can also seize the opportunity to re-evaluate their pre-service teacher education placements to ensure that they are meeting the nation's aspiration of preparing teachers for more inclusive schooling practices. Provisions may be made through school placements to the two special schools and ten pilot inclusive schools where student teachers have opportunities for direct contact with children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage to teach students with disabilities during their initial teacher education will help to lessen their concerns and improve their attitudes

towards including children with a range of diverse needs (Forlin and Chambers 2011; Forlin and Lian 2008). Teaching Practice (TP) could be reviewed to ensure that professionally-sound and committed mentor teachers are identified to guide student teachers during the practicum experience, because student teachers reported of many associate teachers lacking in commitment and doing last-minute observations or sometimes even signing off "the required number of lesson plans without any real observations" (Van Balkom and Sherman 2010, p. 52). The assessment of student teachers' Teaching Practice on the basis of a few lessons observed intermittently by the supervising lecturers, a fixed number of lesson plans, analysis reports and teaching practice reflection reports is often superficial. Often, the lesson plans and the Teaching Practice journals that the students prepare in earnest are not even assessed thoroughly (Van Balkom and Sherman 2010).

Developing a professional standards document such as the National Professional Standards for Bhutanese Teachers could be instrumental in restoring and re-creating the nobility and status of the teaching profession in Bhutan besides providing a framework of the expected knowledge, skills and competencies of teachers across the system. Fullan (2007) suggests that this can be done through "reforms in recruitment, selection, status, and reward; redesign of initial teacher education and induction into the profession; continuous professional development; standards and incentives for professional work; and, most important of all, changes in the daily working conditions of teachers" (p. 297). Fullan's suggestion appears pertinent for Bhutan to adopt because the current practice of recruiting teacher candidates for pre-service teacher education primarily based on their academic performance in the Bhutan Higher Secondary Examination Certificate (BHSEC) reinforces the vicious cycle of producing low-grade teachers. The Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative may be applied more conscientiously towards creating a conducive working environment for teachers through inclusive and GNH enabling factors such as strong school leadership, collegial working relationships with shared teaching philosophy, adequate teaching and learning resources, and an active involvement of parents and community.

Conclusion

Advocates for inclusive education – including us – argue that the experiences and social structures learned at school reflect how students will approach society in their adult lives. If students attending school do not see students with differing abilities co-existing and co-mingling successfully, we argue that they will have little expectation of an inclusive society. The Bhutanese monastic education system up to this time has made it clear that it will not accept persons with disabilities which is discursively problematic in fostering a society based on compassion and GNH values. Modern schools in Bhutan have travelled a long journey in a short time in providing a space for children with disabilities to belong although we argue that more can be done to increase the sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Policies from the Ministry of Education and the Royal Government have put inclusive education into the general educational agenda. However, as is usually the case, the gap between policy and practice remains a reality. By arguing thus, we certainly do not want to belittle the enormous contribution that many individuals have made in advancing the cause of quality educational services for children with disabilities. Educational systems are typically comprised of a vast majority of well-intentioned individuals, but collectively it is difficult to implement change. Addressing how all teachers are trained and developed in Bhutan is certainly a solid first step in crafting a more inclusive experience for *all* Bhutanese students.

The main message that we would like to convey is that inclusive education is not a foreign idea to Bhutan, nor something imposed from the outside. Rather, inclusivity is built into the very cultural fabric of the ideals to which Bhutan hopes to aspire. Gross National Happiness is most certainly an inclusive development philosophy; promoting well-being, health, education, community vitality, and diversity, among other domains. The current Bhutanese education system was not built around these ideas and current progress towards greater inclusion feels rather like trying to fit a square peg through a round hole. However, with critical reflection and hard work, an inclusive education agenda in Bhutan can bolster not just GNH for children with disabilities, but for the entire nation. As the Special Educational Needs Coordinator exclaims in the epigraph, "Now they know that these people can do."

Pre-primary students are dressed up to celebrate children's day (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)

Tshering Wangmo and Margaret Brooks

Abstract Drawing upon recent research undertaken in early childhood in Bhutan, this chapter provides a discursive account of current practices. This more personal account will connect the reader with the everyday realities of those involved; the child, the family, the community, and the school. It will make explicit some key theoretical frameworks that underpin good early childhood practices and highlight worrying discontinuities between theory and practice, as well as between theory and some of the guiding standards documents and curriculum for early childhood care and development (ECCD) in Bhutan. This chapter will take a strong contemporary socio-cultural approach to the broader nature of early childhood and will consider the important, but mostly overlooked, relationships between home and the education system in the country. It will demonstrate how the philosophy of Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) could relate to, and support, the contemporary early childhood philosophy, programming, and practices to create a strong ECCD foundation in Bhutan.

Introduction

The *Education Without Compromise* document (Education Sector Review Commission of Bhutan 2008) describes 'wholesome education' as "a goal of cultivating the personal, academic, intellectual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social and occupational dimensions of all Bhutanese children so that they grow up into well-balanced, properly integrated and sensitive human beings" (p. 12). The 27th educational policy guideline and instructions from the Ministry of Education (MoE 2009) recommends that principles of inclusiveness, parent participation in the education of their children, and enabling learning environments for effective

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teaching-learning should be an integral part of educational planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Such statements are reified in many of the Ministry of Education of Bhutan documents. However, observations in the field reveal many gaps between the rhetoric and the reality. There are gaps between theory and practice, between the home and the (pre)school, and between the vision of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and young children's everyday experiences in early childhood centres, preschool, and early years of school.

Overview of ECCD in Bhutan

Much has already been written about the beginnings of early childhood care and development (ECCD) in Bhutan (Ball 2012; Karma Chimi Wangchuk et al. 2011; Save the Children 2008). Therefore, this section will very briefly summarize a few key points, with a focus on preschool and pre-primary (PP) where much of the current development is taking place. ECCD in Bhutan comprises services like health, nutrition, parenting, and early learning for children aged birth to eight and their families. Traditionally, young children are cared for by families and extended family networks. However, in response to a population drift to urban centers, and the consequent breakdown of extended family systems, work on ECCD began during the 9th Five-Year Plan (2001–2007) when early childhood was highlighted as a national priority (Planning Commission of Bhutan 2001). While the 9th Five-Year Plan had the best of intentions, the lack of expertise in ECCD resulted in the government relying heavily on largely unregulated private operators to provide before-school care in urban areas. The 10th Five-Year Plan (2008–2013) recognized the urgent need for a national policy that would guide the development of ECCD as well as more training and materials. While the National Policy for ECCD was endorsed in 2010, it still awaits approval from cabinet ministries. The National Policy lays out a broad plan for how ECCD services might be developed and provided:

- For children birth to two years old: home-based parent education, heath outreach, non-formal education programs;
- For children aged three to six: learning opportunities through private day-care centres, workplace-based centres and community-based centres; and
- For children in the early years of formal school: an improvement of teaching and learning practices.

What is still missing is a strong national 'early years learning framework', like 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009) in Australia and '*Te Whariki*' (Ministry of Education 1996) in New Zealand, that will guide policy, programming, and practice. An early years learning framework should also be supported by a regulatory body, like the National Quality Framework in Australia, to assess and accredit quality services for young children.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education, supported by UNICEF, developed a set of Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) for the three to six year old programs to support curriculum development and provide a benchmark of attainment across six domains:

1. Physical health, wellbeing, and motor development;
2. Social and emotional development;
3. Approaches towards learning;
4. Cognition and general knowledge;
5. Language, communication, and literacy development; and
6. Spiritual, moral, and cultural development.

A close examination of these standards reveals that they are not founded on contemporary early childhood frameworks and theories. Instead they hold the potential for creating checklists of testable skills as practiced in the primary classes that do not promote good early childhood practices. They could also potentially confuse students who are being trained in contemporary theories such as the socio-cultural theories, ecological theories, post-structural and critical theories, as well as some revised developmental theories. An exploration of contemporary early childhood education theory can be found in the next section.

Currently the academic entry qualifications of ECCD facilitators usually comprise of Class XIII, X, or XII, with perhaps a thirteen-day ECCD orientation program. While some private providers send their facilitators for short trainings in India, much remains to be done to raise the academic qualifications and competencies of ECCD facilitators. Differences in program funding and training have the potential to set up a two-tier system where children from high-income families are advantaged. Such a system widens the educational, health, and social gap between children from low socioeconomic status and those from high socioeconomic status.

Non-government organizations play a critical role in the development of ECCD in Bhutan. For instance, Save the Children supports the Ministry of Education in the establishment of subsidized rural and semi-rural centres, as well as workplace centres for children aged three to six. Save the Children also delivers parenting education programs. A thirteen-day training program for ECCD facilitators was developed in 2010.

In 2011 UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education to pilot twenty community ECCD centres to find out the most cost-effective model for future centres. The Loden Foundation and the Tarayana Foundation have both also established and funded a few community ECCD centres and sent the facilitators for the thirteen-day training. They plan to slowly add more. As the following table (Table 1) illustrates, the Ministry of Education has ambitious plans for the future development of ECCD.

Such ambitious planning requires substantial investment in training programs. In 2008 the University of New England, Australia, with funding from UNICEF, reviewed the B.Ed. (Primary) course delivered at the colleges of education, under the Royal University of Bhutan. Four new modules with an early childhood focus were introduced and ten other modules were revised to make both the content and

Table 1 Ministry of Education's plan for expanding ECCD programs

	2012			2015			2020		
	Centres	Facilitators	Students	Centres	Facilitators	Students	Centres	Facilitators	Students
Community	60	60	900	200	200	3000	300	300	4500
Pvt. Day Care	60	240	3000	60	240	3000	60	240	3000
Workplace	10	20	150	20	40	300	20	40	300
Total	130	320	4050	280	480	6600	380	580	7800

ECCD & SEN Division, Ministry of Education (2011)

teaching methods more suitable for young children. It was recognized at that time that training for ECCD is a specialized field and efforts to provide special training for teachers and facilitators is underway.

For in-servicing ECCD teachers in the school system, the then-Royal Education Council, along with the Open Society Institute, developed a six-day training program based on the Step by Step model (Royal Education Council and Open Society Institute 2011) for early childhood education. A small pilot group of teachers in the field already teaching PP took the six-day course. This program is still under evaluation.

Ball's (2012) report highlighted the urgent need for more substantial training of ECCD facilitators that provided a range of professional pathways. In 2014 UNICEF again contracted the early childhood education team at the University of New England, Australia to work with a group of ten lecturers from Paro College to develop a two-year, 'made in Bhutan' Diploma of Early Childhood. This Diploma is to be offered in the distance education mode so that facilitators can both work and study. The first cohort will begin in January 2016. A framework for a further two years of training that builds on the Diploma at a Bachelor's level is in the process of being developed. In addition to these substantial training programs, and to support the teaching of ECCD, a demonstration school is currently under development. Such a facility will do much to bridge the huge theory to practice gaps.

Theoretical Frameworks

Early Childhood Internationally, there is a general movement to recognize the early years of education as a distinct phase in children's learning that should be characterized by a curriculum that focuses on whole-child learning and by teaching methods that are appropriate for young children (Walsh et al. 2010). Hedges (2012) asserts that an early childhood teachers' professional knowledge should include:

> understanding of early childhood philosophy, theories of learning and curriculum and pedagogy applicable to young children. Teachers will also need insightful knowledge about individual children, their families and the communities and cultures of each educational context; and a range of general knowledge to draw on in responding naturally during interactions with children. (Hedges 2012, p. 9)

When we discuss early childhood, it is important to understand that the theoretical frameworks and practices that underpin early childhood are unique to early childhood. Early childhood practitioners work with children, their families, and the wider community. This is very different from the traditional school model where the focus is usually on covering the subject disciplines of the curriculum. Early childhood practitioners should work in holistic ways that recognize the child as part of a complex set of social contexts that impact upon the child to influence his or her development. Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological model is one way to provide an overview of all the influences in a child's development and a way to identify the many stakeholders. Early childhood encompasses education, health, social justice, equity, employment, economics and the environment. The Scoping Study on ECCD done in 2012 by The Open Society Foundation indicates that there is as yet no central point where all the stakeholders in ECCD in Bhutan come together and no coordinated master plan. While individual organizations like UNICEF and Save the Children are developing programs and services for ECCD, these initiatives tend to be scattered and unconnected. Early childhood policies and programs need to be developed cohesively and collaboratively with all the stakeholders.

Key contemporary theories that underpin successful early childhood practice include – at the forefront – sociocultural theories, then ecological theories, post-structural and critical theories, some revised developmental theories, as well as recent brain research. Therefore it is crucial for an ECCD teacher to understand that the curriculum is not separated into subject areas but rather presented in a more integrated and holistic manner through play and in-depth projects of local relevance. Likewise, it is expected that children will work on integrated projects rather than discipline based subject areas. In early childhood, the children will spend most of their time working on their own and/or in small interest groups or focus groups rather than as a whole class.

Ball (2012, p. 30) observed that, "understandings of the nature of ECCD in Bhutan are very rudimentary and somewhat 'mechanical' (i.e. do not appear to be guided by any depth or breadth of knowledge or skills in ECCD)". Brooks and Brenda Wolodko's work with lecturers at Paro College of Education developing training materials for early childhood, and observations of early childhood practitioners in the field, also confirmed that there is a very limited working understanding of contemporary early childhood theories and how they might be enacted in practice. Instead, they observed a push down of traditional formal school practices and a strong belief that children come to the early childhood centre knowing nothing and that parents have no place in ECCD contexts. Further on-going in-servicing and local research is necessary to bring about a major shift in the theory and practice of the teachers and lecturers who work in the areas of early childhood education.

Funds of Knowledge Understanding the social, historical, political, and economic context of households is of critical importance in understanding teaching and learning. Rogoff (2003, p. 3–4) argues that, "child development can be understood only in the light of cultural practices and circumstances of their communities – which also change." Furthermore, across cultures, young children's accomplishments "are highly related to the opportunities children have to observe and participate in the activities and cultural values regarding development of particular skills" (Rogoff 2003, p. 170).

When there is a discontinuity between home knowledges and school knowledges, children and families are alienated from education and children fail to reach their potential (Moll et al. 1992). Socio-cultural perspectives of ECCD acknowledge the contexts of the child and the ways in which the child interacts with and learns from the people and artifacts in the community. Such perspectives work to bring home knowledges and artifacts into the classroom, thus honoring local ways of knowing, empowering local voices, and providing reciprocal links between home and school. Strong reciprocal relationships between home and school also work to reduce levels of illiteracy in the home. In particular, young mothers can be supported and empowered through active involvement in their children's education.

In order to develop reciprocal links between home, community and school, Louis Moll suggests that educators need to acquire an in-depth understanding and appreciation of local household knowledges, that is, 'funds of knowledge' (e.g. Moll et al. 1992). Moll and her colleagues define 'funds of knowledge' as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential to household or individual functioning and well-being" (1992, p. 133). When we are able to observe the child within a context of multi-stranded relationships with members of a community, we are better able to appreciate the rich cultural and cognitive resource the child has to draw upon. Such local 'funds of knowledge' that are embedded in the local household activities are indispensable when considering what the focus of learning might be and how pedagogical relationships might be enacted in the classroom. When we are guided by socio-cultural theory we gain a holistic view of the rich complexity of young children's everyday lives.

Developing continuity of experience, relationships, and pedagogy are at the heart of building a positive learning environment for young children. However, the relationship between (pre)school and home tends to be 'one way traffic' (Hughes and Greenhough 2006) in Bhutan at this time with a deeply embedded belief that parents and community have nothing to offer. Although *Education Without Compromise* (Education Sector Review Commission of Bhutan 2008) emphasizes the involvement of parents and communities in improving schools, the involvement could not be described as a genuine partnership with reciprocal relationships (Cairney 2000; Moll 2005).

When ECCD teachers are able to build bridges between home and school they are not only able to engage children in meaningful learning experiences but they are also able to educate whole families and their community. A deep understanding of

local contexts allows ECCD teachers to build bridges between home and school as well as advocate effectively at a policy and political level.

Early Childhood Education Begins at Home

> *Bhu khayru, famay yongten go* [no matter how smart a child is, he/she needs his/her parents' funds of knowledge].

Families and community are the child's first teachers. Bhutanese children are often an integral part of most adult activities in the households and in the wider community. Parents and kin take them along to funerals, birthday celebrations, and to community meetings . As 'third party' observers (Rogoff, et al. 2003), children are a part of everything that is said and done around them. This is not because the adults realize the essence of involving children in the daily activities as 'legitimate peripheral participants' (Lave and Wenger 1991) or understand that observation and listening-in are pervasive in children's lives and are effective (Rogoff et al. 2003); nor have they heard Vygotsky (1997, p. 105) say that, "through others we become ourselves". This way of looking after children has been a natural practice in most Bhutanese households for many decades.

Tshering Wangmo's (2015) research with families in Bhutan and her own personal experiences of growing up in a Bhutanese family and of rearing two boys of her own, demonstrate that important knowledge, skills, and strategies are not always learnt in "direct and declarative" ways (Brown et al. 1989, p. 40) and neither is teaching "possible and meaningful unless situated in a social cultural context" (Vygotsky 1986, p. 150). Children learn a great deal from being on the periphery even without much direct participation (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; Rogoff 2003; Fleer 2003). As Van Manen (1991) has observed, the power of childhood experiences has shown that we are historical beings, whose life histories provide permanence and identity to the person we are.

In order to demonstrate local 'funds of knowledge' in Bhutan, we provide a composite narrative, Bishaka, as illustrative of some of the lived-experiences of young children at home prior to formal schooling, at preschool, and beginning pre-primary. This narrative is drawn from recent research (Tshering Wangmo 2015) that examined the local 'funds of knowledge' of four young children from Paro, with different cultural backgrounds, as they transitioned from home to preschool (aged 5) and school (aged six). The narrative may not be exactly representative of all Bhutanese households, but it does provide a snapshot of many households in Bhutan.

Bishaka

> Bishaka gets up around 7 o'clock, washes her face, brushes her teeth, and joins her grandparents for the morning prayers. They then move into her aunt's bedroom to sit around the single rod heater and eat their breakfast. Bishaka helps her aunt carry the breakfast plates from the kitchen to her grandparents. After breakfast her aunt does the dishes while Bishaka sweeps the floor in the breakfast room. They then leave for their small *doma* [betel leaf, areca nut, and slaked lime; otherwise known as *paan*] shop. In the shop, while Boju, Bishaka's grandma, gets her kitchen ready for preparing the snacks for sale, Bishaka helps her aunt to clean the shop and empty the dustbins into a bigger bin outside the shop, which is collected by the municipal truck. She then climbs on a box to reach the altar and picks up the bronze container full of water and walks out of the shop. She holds the pot with both hands against her forehead and then pours out the water facing the sun. She fills the pot again with fresh water and puts it back on the altar for the next morning. Then she lights some incense sticks and swirls the smoke thrice around the altar and then sticks them on a stand to burn.
>
> These are some of Bishaka's daily routines. … I asked her, 'In case the sun does not shine do you still have to do this?' She smiled and said, 'Yes, I do because Surjay, the sun god, will be behind the clouds' saying this she looked at her grandmother and added, 'Isn't it Boju?' Boju smiled and nodded her head.
>
> Most *doma* shops in the town cannot afford to get their miscellaneous merchandise directly from India as do the bigger shops, so they buy them from wholesale dealers. Boju did the same, and most of the time Bishaka assisted her grandmother with the shopping. She said, 'I went to Pema aunty's shop to buy koka'. I asked her, 'How much did you pay?' She looked at Boju and said, '250', I, too, looked towards Boju for affirmation , and with a smile, she nodded her head. Suddenly Bishaka remembered something, so she added, 'We do not pay, they write it down'. Boju explained that this shop maintained a credit account for her, so she paid them when she had enough money.
>
> As we were talking and looking through some photographs, a customer walked into the shop and asked for something in Dzongkha with a strong *Parop* [people from Paro] accent. Boju looked at me for help. I had to ask the man again what he wanted and he said, 'Do you have *dzathi*?' I asked Boju in her language, whether they had any nutmegs to sell. She nodded and asked Bishaka to get the blue plastic container from one of the shelves in her shop. Bishaka opened the container and asked Boju, how many she should give. I asked the man how many nutmegs he wanted and he asked the price. This time no translation was required and Bishaka instantly showed five fingers to the man. Bishaka took out three nutmegs and wrapped them in a piece of paper that she tore from a pile of old newspapers under a table and then handed them to the old man with both hands, something that she was taught to do at home with elders as a gesture of respect. Boju allowed Bishaka to help her with so many things in the shop. (Tshering Wangmo 2015, p. 85)

As we can see, through participating in the everyday events of adults around her, this five-year-old child already knew a lot about mathematics, social etiquette, cultural practices, language, self-regulation, and responsibility. She has already gained a deep understanding of the repositories of knowledge in the household, despite the lack of literacy of the older members of the family. These 'funds of knowledge' were not taught, they was acquired through 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Strategies and skills of survival were prevalent in the everyday lives of Bishaka's family. Their household behaviors, practices, and ideologies manifested their

strength in sustaining the economic, social, and cultural survival of the family. Their 'strategizing skills' needed to make things work; their natural practices of interdependence, reciprocity, hospitality, responsibilities, intergenerational relationships and respect, along with their faith in destiny, religion and education demonstrated rich 'funds of knowledge' that was beyond all expectations (Tshering Wangmo 2015).

Bishaka's story gives witness to the practices and ideologies of "what people do and what they say about what they do" (Gonzalez 2005, p. 40). These practices and ideologies are related to the many values listed under the nine domains of the Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) (MoE 2010a) initiative. A close look at a day in Bishaka's life at home with her grandmother illustrated the practical examples of Gross National Happiness. EfGNH describes happiness as 'multidimensional'. It states that, "If a person got various elements under each of the nine domains of life right, the chances of happiness would be much higher" (MoE 2010a, p. 14). By this definition, Bishaka's family proved to be model practitioners of the GNH philosophy. There is still a long way to go before we can embed GNH seamlessly throughout the curriculum and practices in the education sector of Bhutan. As the Bhutanese say: *Gu tashina, ju dhendup* [If the beginning goes well, the end follows suit].

Bishaka Goes to Preschool

> The Community ECCD centre had two rooms, one was used as the classroom and the other as a store room-cum-nap room for the children. Boju and Bishaka arrived at 8 a.m with packed lunch and water bottles in a pink plastic bag. There was a timetable pasted on the door which indicated that the class began at 8:30 a.m. Bishaka sat with her grandma on a bench near the classroom and waited for the teacher to come and open the room . At 8:35, the teacher came with her two small sons and she opened the door.
>
> There were 23 children of 3 to 6 years of age. The teacher sang some songs with the children. Bishaka did not join in the songs – instead she looked at her new Barbie pencil. Seeing this, Boju peeped through the window and said, "*Nani* [child] look at the teacher and do what she does."
>
> Slowly, the parents walked further away from the room and sat on the ground in groups to chat and wait for the children's lunch time. After the songs, the teacher instructed the children to sit in groups of five to six around some low tables and she then distributed a worksheet that had an outline of an orange on it. She asked the children to colour the orange and told them not to let the colour spread out of the outline. Children took about 40 minutes to colour it. The next activity was to go to the corner of the room where different things were kept – i.e. plastic blocks, cut out cloth pieces, dolls, cooking toys, drums, etc. In groups they had to choose a set of things. Bishaka's group chose the blocks and they played with them for about 15 minutes. Bishaka tried to make a tower. However, the blocks were not enough as the five others in her group were constructing some things too. After about 20 minutes the teacher asked the groups to swap their playthings – so Bishaka now played with the dolls. Around 12 o'clock, the parents slowly started coming closer to the classroom, each took their ward and sat under the trees to eat their lunch.

> After the lunch the children went into the nap room where the teacher made them all lie down beside each other and over three children she threw a blanket. The children were in the nap room less than 20 minutes after which they came out to play on the swings and the slides . One old man helped to push all the children on the swings. At 13:00, Boju helped the other parents to put away the swings and the slides and then, biding 'goodbye' to all, Bishaka and Boju headed home. (Tshering Wangmo 2015, p. 150)

Beginning preschool, or school, is an important phase particularly for Bhutanese parents – many of whom were not educated in a formal education system. It is essential these early experiences are positive and reflect and build upon the everyday experiences of the children.

> Kindergarten is a context in which children make important conclusions about school as a place where they want to be and about themselves as learners vis-a-vis schools. If no other objectives are accomplished, it is essential that the transition to school occur in such a way that children and families have a positive view of the school and that children have a feeling of perceived competence as learners. (Dockett and Perry 2001, p. 2)

When we unpack the preschool day as described above, it is hard to find connections between home and school, while so many possibilities were missed. Parents, who were anxious for their children to sing, could have been included – thus creating reciprocal exchanges of both content and culture. If the children had been asked to draw some fruit or vegetable from home, the teacher would be able to learn much about the children; their knowledge of local fruits and vegetables, how they organize the information on the page, how they represent what they know, and what is important to them. If the children had been part of collecting natural play materials from their environment, as they do at home, they might have more easily been engaged in some in-depth play events that the few restrictive, coloured plastic toys did not allow. Colouring in a pre-drawn shape teaches the child that they cannot draw for themselves, cannot make choices, and that an orange is only ever 'orange'. There was little opportunity for the development of sustainable learning dispositions like, curiosity, exploration, problem solving and independence. Bishaka's morning at preschool does not seem nearly as rich and stimulating an environment as her home life.

A 'funds of knowledge' approach to ECCD would recognize the values and resources embedded in students, families, and communities (Rios-Aguilar et al. 2011). Such recognition could not only curb the deficit perspectives teachers have of children and families, but could be also used for pedagogical actions. Unlike learning in many formal classrooms, good preschool programming is based on children's interests. Learning in households is also often initiated by the children and based on their own interest and curiosity. Most Bhutanese children still have a chance to learn in a 'zone of comfort' (Velez-Ibanez and Greenberg 1992) that supports resilience, confidence, willingness and the ability to problem-solve. Appreciation of local 'funds of knowledge' has the potential to lessen the dichotomy between the pre/school and the families and make EGNH meaningful.

Young children need rich and varied experiences to form a foundation of everyday concepts upon which to build the more categorized scientific concepts they encounter in later schooling. Through a community of practice, the children experi-

ence learning of an informal kind that Paradise and Rogoff (2009) describe as "pan-human age-old socio-cultural practice that has evolved culturally across millennia and is well suited for human learning of all kinds" (p. 132). Children bring rich experiences from their home and these experiences could be harnessed in the schools as they attempt to educate for GNH. As the Bhutanese say: *Chunsey taa dhang madickna, bomsey gapcha chap meshey* ["If you do not have the experience of being with horses when you were young, you will not know how to saddle a horse properly when you grow up"].

Bishaka Goes to School

> When the clock struck 8.30 a.m. a bell rang and all the teachers, children, and parents walked into the assembly courtyard. After the assembly, the parents and the children poured into the PP classroom. Some parents had tug-of-wars with their children, one pulling towards the door the other pulled towards a chair in the class. The teacher tried to coax one of the crying boys into sitting at a table. However, he continued to hang on to his mother's *kira* [female tunic]. The teacher held a list of names in her hand and requested the parents to move out of the class.
>
> The teacher finally closed the door and a couple of children got up crying and ran towards the closed door. She put her arms around one of the boy's shoulders and tried to get him back in his seat, but to no avail. The parents watched helplessly through the window. The teacher called out the names of the children. Some did not respond and some responded to all names. The teacher looked amused and said, "They don't even know their names."
>
> The first lesson from the English curriculum for PP began. The teacher told the class that they should listen and watch her carefully. The first topic in the English and Dzongkha curriculum was Greetings. According to the instructions given in the curriculum documents, the teacher demonstrated both in English and Dzongkha how to greet teachers in the school. She showed repeated actions of bowing and said, "Good morning madam; Good morning sir," she did the same in Dzongkha and then asked for volunteers to do the same. Bishaka faced some problems in the Dzongkha utterances, which the teacher corrected instantly and made her repeat. For most of the children in the class, their first language was neither Dzongkha nor English.
>
> For the mathematics class, the teacher drew some objects on the green board and then circled them and said, "This is a set of stones," "This is a set of sticks," "This is a set of pencils." ("Sets" was the concept being taught during this lesson.) She made the class repeat after her the phrase "a set of…" several times, after which she distributed blank papers to the class to draw a set of sticks, leaves, or stones. The children began to draw and the teacher walked in between the tables to make sure that they were doing what was asked.
>
> Using just a corner of the paper , Bishaka drew a small bunch of grapes. The teacher came around and asked her what she had drawn. With a slight stutter, she answered in a small voice, "ang… angure" (meaning grapes in her mother tongue). The teacher looked puzzled and repeated Bishaka's words and then repeated her earlier instruction to the class, "Draw sets of stones, sticks, like that, draw, draw" and then moved on to the next table (Tshering Wangmo 2015, p 154).

Bishaka's parents are from the southern part of Bhutan where grapes are bountiful. Whenever relatives came to visit, they brought baskets full of grapes to sell. Bishaka

knew how much her grandmother charged for a kilogram of grapes, where they came from, and who brought them. Therefore, her drawing of a small bunch of grapes had a lot of meaning, not only as an item of business in her grandparents' shop but also a reminder of Bishaka's home village and the relatives who grew them. If the lesson was of "sets" as meaning "groups of similar things" as described in the curriculum for mathematics, then a bunch of grapes could be seen to form a 'set' as the child had assumed.

Many children come to school only speaking their native dialect. However, the official languages of instruction are English and Dzongkha. It is alienating and unhelpful for children to be discouraged from using their first language. It is important that basic concepts be first well understood in the child's native language before have to deal with a second language (Cummins 2000).

It is unfortunate that there is a prevailing culture in Bhutan of excluding parents from the school. Many teachers view illiterate parents as having nothing to contribute to their child's education. However, we know that the development of a child is influenced by multiple interlocking and nested variables (Bronfenbrenner 1986) and an open communication that encourages a two-way exchange of knowledge between these overlapping set of systems is imperative for the child to develop and learn. In order to empower every child and their parents, there has to be a genuine partnership between the home and the school that will weave the local 'funds of knowledge' into the educational fabric. At the moment, no such partnerships exist in Bishaka's school or in most of the other schools that we have observed. A regular adoption of such a 'zone of underdevelopment' (Greenberg 1989) can create a school culture in which a "norm of parent-teacher isolation" becomes an "accepted way of functioning" (Souto-Manning and Swick 2006, p. 187).

Conclusion

Bhutan is to be commended for its commitment to developing ECCD. So much has been achieved in a short space of time. The intention of this chapter is to highlight some critical gaps in development so that they might be addressed. In particular is the need for a well-coordinated national framework with all stakeholders involved. This needs to be supported by accrediting bodies to ensure the high quality of services for this vulnerable group. Training for ECCD facilitators is under development and cannot be implemented soon enough.

We have tried to demonstrate how very useful and necessary the recognition of the family, children, and community 'funds of knowledge ' are in regard to an education that is meant to address the wholesome development of a child (Education Sector Review Commission of Bhutan 2008). There are major gaps between teachers "know what" and the "know how" which Sugarman (2010, p. 839) describes as "what we need to have them do" and what they bring to school "that they can do." Ball (2012) chooses to call this effort a 'made in Bhutan' approach to early education. She describes this approach as "the best that global ECCD theory, research and

Students learn about other cultures in Bhutan during a lesson, such as the Lhops from Southern Bhutan (Photo: Clint Chapman)

practice models have to offer and the best that repositories of local knowledge, experience, and the policy of GNH can bring" (Ball 2012, p. 6).

When both these contexts are fore-grounded, it provides much richer zones of possibilities to maximize not only children's learning opportunities but also to provide teachers with more meaningful experiences with children and their families. As the Minister for Education in Bhutan, during the Educating for GNH, 2010 conference, rightly said:

> We already have the basic materials in our curriculum sufficient to support a Gross National Happiness way of thinking and living. What is required is a creative reorientation of attitude and approach in the way we look at ourselves and perceive our relationship with our field of work. (MoE 2010a, b, p. 105)

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Gender and Education in Bhutan

Kinley Seden and T.W. (Tom) Maxwell

Abstract There is a growing body of research on gender and education around the world, but there is little empirical evidence in Bhutan that provides a realistic status of gender circumstances in Bhutan. Following the idea that gender is socially constructed, this chapter seeks to gather gender studies and issues into a more focused perspective by combining previous work into themes focused upon education. This chapter also analyzes existing policies and major outcomes of the education sector in Bhutan. Broadly, gender issues have been largely addressed in primary and lower secondary education in terms of enrollments and achievement, but less so in higher secondary school and in the tertiary sector. However, national policies need to be followed through with the development of congruent institutional policies and practices, together with personal practices focusing on 'taken-for-granteds', to address gender inequities.

Introduction

Gender equality has become emphasized in the twenty-first century in many countries after considerable interest on feminist issues in the twentieth century (for example, Kaplan 1992). One positive outcome has been on policy development as a product of international forces – especially by the United Nations in 'developing countries'. For example, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other gender-related initiatives across the world, has brought women's issues to the fore. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) notified national governments to ensure that every woman and girl receives her rights to meaningful education where girls are more clearly disadvantaged in this area of development (Narayan et al. 2010). At least in part because of UNGEI, countries like the Maldives have enacted a host of policy interventions and measures to ensure gender equity

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(Narayan et al. 2010). The Bhutan Education Blueprint clearly indicates that excellence without equity risks leading to large economic and social disparities; equity at the expense of quality is a meaningless aspiration (MoE 2014b). Despite this, women still lag well behind men in many countries of the world, even at the level of basic literacy. Gendered literacy outcomes are not an issue in primary school education in Bhutan but there are areas of concern; for many older women, particularly in the remote areas, literacy remains a problem (see Powdyel, chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume).

Bhutan has also benefitted from international pressure in promoting gender equality. Bhutan is a signatory to key international agreements on gender (Maxwell et al. 2015). For example, Bhutan is signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Furthermore, the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan* specifies that the *entire* population should have education "directed towards the full development of the human personality" (RGoB 2008, p. 19). Bhutan has essentially achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of universal primary enrolment and hence gender parity at this level (UNDP 2015). Bhutan has a Gender Inequality Index of 0.495 (102nd of 149 countries) and this is about the mean for South Asia, including Afghanistan. While these legal arrangements are in place, and some achievements have been made, clear distinctions remain between the social roles of men and women in Bhutan and, hence, gender equity remains a problem.

In this chapter we discuss the gender background to education in Bhutan. The gender policy framework, especially as it relates to education, is analyzed . Enrolment and participation outcomes are discussed as well as achievement outcomes. We consider the impact of family beliefs and socio-cultural factors on the relation between gender and education. But first, we consider ways to understand 'gender' and 'gender equity'.

Understanding Gender and Gender Equality

To understand what is meant by 'gender equality', we first need to understand the term 'gender'. According to Reddock (2009), 'gender' is now a word that has replaced 'sex' in many situations. The former recognizes the complexity of human existence and its socio-cultural determination, whereas the latter focuses upon physical characteristics. Consistent with this distinction, the World Health Organization (WHO) has defined gender as: "the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women and to respect full equity and equality of each of the two genders" (WHO 2015, p. 1). They go on to observe:

> However, the specifics of various 'gender systems' vary from society to society, shaped by history and factors such as ethnicity, class and economics, religion and belief systems, ability and disability and so on, with all of these factors interacting with each other creating diverse outcomes. Virtually all of our actions, our thoughts and our beliefs are gendered. This is because humans are gendered beings. (WHO 2015, p. 1)

We would observe that Bhutan's society is unique in its own way and that the factors identified above, to a greater or lesser extent, similarly affect Bhutanese.

'Gender equality' means that the different behaviours, aspirations , and needs of women and men are considered, valued, and favoured equally (UNESCO 1999). However, gender equality may not often result in equal outcomes for men and women (UNFPA 2005; Jha and Kelleher 2006). For example, in Bhutan, because of the traditional beliefs that women are the primary care givers, they are often not able to take advantage of the opportunities given to them (Maxwell et al. 2015). 'Gender equity' has also been understood as the process of being fair or fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs (UNFPA 2005). The argument is that when both men and women need to be treated fairly then equal access to rights, resources, benefits, and opportunities is more likely. The notion of gender equity means that programs and activities require those formulating them to be gender sensitive.

Impact of Socio-Cultural Factors on Gender and Education

Gender is not constant but is "constantly redefined and negotiated in the everyday practices through which individuals interact" (Poggio 2006, in Van den Brink and Benschop 2012, p. 72). It is clear that a society's expectations for girls and women can limit their opportunities across social, economic and political life. "Gender inequity (is) deeply embedded in social and workforce norms, traditional divisions of labour and breadwinner roles, established family and marriage dynamics, and a strong adherence to gender stereotypes" (Fox 2013, p. 23). Maatta and Lyckkage (2011) have argued that gender differences can be seen as natural in that they are taken for granted.

In many places across the globe, women and girls still have lower status, fewer opportunities, lower income, less control over resources, and less power than men and boys. In some countries in South Asia, but less so in Bhutan, male child preference continues to deny girls the education to which they have a right. And the burden of care work that women face impinges and intrudes on their opportunities in education and work. Generally in South Asia, gender discrimination continues to remain pervasive both within and beyond the education system with the follow-on effects of deprivation evident in every facet of women's lives (Narayan et al. 2010). This is less the case in Bhutan though still discrimination exists.

Relative to other South Asian countries, the legal status of Bhutanese women is perceived to be progressive (Sonam Wangmo 2004; Crins 2004). Even though Buddhist treatises treat both men and women as equal, when it comes to many facets of society including education, they are not treated similarly. Sonam Wangmo and Gill (2011) made a persuasive argument that Bhutanese social roles and structures are influenced by Buddhist values. These can have both positive and negative effects (see Maxwell et al. 2015). Monastic education, which was the almost sole type of formal education available in Bhutan before the 1950s, has given men

a significant advantage over women in religious, political, social, and economic contexts (see Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume). Moreover, in the more recent past , families preferred sending boys to school because of the long travel distances, the lack of accommodations and hostels, and other general hardships. Sonam Wangmo (2004) pointed to educational disparities between men and women as the biggest constraint to full gender equity in Bhutan. Too often the male child is preferred, as data below will show. Traditional attitudes meant that daughters were more vulnerable. Local family structures, culture, and their work allocations meant girls were needed at home or discouraged from 'excelling' in school (Sonam Wangmo 2004; Sonam Rinchen 2001; Roder 2011). For example, "my mother's lived experience was that she was deprived of schooling because she was the youngest in the family and her parents wanted her to be with them as she was considered their special child" (Kesang Choden, personal communication, 20 May 2015). Moreover, women commonly indicate their desire to attend non-formal education (NFE) courses, but they are often unable to because of time and mobility constraints (RGoB 2001) and their dropout rate is higher than men's (see Powdyel, chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume).

As we have mentioned, studies of gender in Bhutan are not common. Sinha's study (2009) revealed that families in Bhutan particularly preferred female children to stay at home. They wanted girls to provide long-term support and care to their households and families. The study also found that, when forced to choose to send children for higher studies away from the home, boys were chosen over girls. The reasons given were physical difficulties, loss of farm labor, and the need for girls to stay behind and take care of their younger siblings and elderly members of the family. On the other hand, family norms require land and property to be inherited by their eldest daughter in some parts of Bhutan. This is in direct contrast to Hindu norms, most evident in southern Bhutan, where the son inherits all the property while daughters are under the care of their in-laws and girl children can be denied access to education (RGoB 2001; Zeppa 1999). Phuntsho Choden's (2012) dissertation is also revealing and broadly confirms and extends the Sinha data.

The Policy Framework

This section analyzes policies that exist at the national level generally and in the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors. Bhutan has always placed a high priority on investment in education (Maxwell 2008; Singye Namgyel and Phup Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume). Further, education has also been included as one of the nine domains of the policy of Gross National Happiness (GNHC, 2013). One way the Royal Government aims to fulfill the happiness of people is by investing in education. The Ministry of Education has introduced educational policies to ensure accessibility to education. Such policy is epitomized in

'Education for All' objectives and the focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to basic education of good quality (GNHC 2013). Further, the Ministry of Education has also established a vigorous programme of non-formal and continuing education to provide basic education opportunities to disadvantaged sections of the population (see Powdyel, chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume).

National Policies In Bhutan, gender equality has been prioritized in policies of different sectors, including in government policies in general and in the Ministry of Education (MoE) in particular (MoE 2012). Article 7 of the Constitution of Bhutan also grants equal rights and opportunities to both men and women (RGoB 2008). However, there are no specific laws against the discrimination of women. Like the majority of South Asian nations, as mentioned above, Bhutan is signatory to the UN's CEDAW. Bhutan is also one among 160 countries to be part of the OECD's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), where the SIGI provides a strong authentication base to address more effectively the discriminatory social institutions that hold back progress on gender equality and women's empowerment (OECD 2011). The SIGI indicators revealed that Bhutan has low levels of discrimination against women in social institutions (SIGI 2015) which largely indicated that women in Bhutan enjoy a *relatively* great degree of freedom yet, in the domestic environment – i.e., at home – women are still expected to do home chores and this hinders their educational goals as shown by the data given below.

School Education Policies In the Ministry of Education, many documents provide evidence that gender and education issues are evident, though often implied rather than made explicit. The major documents are *Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness'* (Planning Commission 1999), *Education Sector: Realizing vision 2020 Policy and Strategy* (RGoB 2003) and the 11th Five-Year Plan (GNHC 2013). The latter two translate the vision into specific educational plans and policies. *Bhutan 2020* intends to assure quality social outcomes due to widening disparities and inequities in health, education, income and employment. Promoting gender equity and gender-friendly women's participation has also been identified in the GNH policy where they have been included under the domain of Good Governance (GNHC 2013). More recently, the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024 (MoE 2014b) has given priority to girls' education which is likely to have positive effects not only on girls' educational outcomes but also on life transitions (Nima Tshering 2014). In summary, gender has been included in policies right from early childhood to tertiary levels (GNHC, 2013).

University Policies There are two universities in Bhutan. The Royal University of Bhutan came into being by Royal Charter in 2003. It is a federated university with eight colleges/institutes spread across the country, including one affiliate private college (see Schofield, chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume). Article 4 of its Charter says: "Admission to any office or appointment in the university, and the admission of students to the university shall

Table 1 School segment transition rate, 2014

	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
Primary to lower secondary	98	100	99
Lower secondary to middle secondary	86	99	92
Middle secondary to higher secondary	76	74	75

MoE (2014a)

be on merit and irrespective of religion, origin, sex, sexual orientation or race" (RUB 2003). The *Wheel of Academic Law* (RUB 2006), which governs administration and teaching and learning at RUB, mentions gender policy once only in terms of equity on committee membership. In the RUB Strategic Plan 2013–2020 (RUB 2014) 'gender' was not mentioned.

The Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan (KGUMSB) was formed in 2012 from two previous RUB entities. Its *Conditions of Service* (KGUMSB 2014) identified no discrimination, on the basis of gender only, in attending patients and amongst students (Maxwell et al. 2015). However, discrimination is evident. The Maxwell et al. (2015, p. 17) study concluded: "[Gendered] policy and practice changes are needed. Structural inequities need to be addressed."

Gender and School Enrollment

In many parts of the world, girls have fewer opportunities to enroll in schools and complete their basic education, especially when they reside in rural areas and/or come from the poorest communities of the country (Narayan et al. 2010). In contrast, Bhutan has made a dramatic improvement in primary school enrollments, especially for girls, despite the difficult mountain terrain. Rural enrollments of girls has been attributed to rapid expansions of community schools and boarding facilities (Narayan et al. 2010; Maxwell 2008) and Bhutan can be proud that its MDG for primary education has been achieved (GNHC 2013). There are high enrollments of girls in lower secondary level of schooling as shown by the transition rate (Table 1). It is higher for girls than boys from lower to middle secondary and almost equal transition to higher secondary level (74 %, Table 1). These increases can be attributed to factors such as provision of free food and boarding facilities supported by World Food Programme (WFP) and initiatives like the establishment of multi-grade schools by the Royal Government of Bhutan (MoE 2014a).

Although the percentage of girls' participation in public higher secondary schooling has risen, and despite the government's best efforts, more work remains to be done to achieve gender inclusiveness with respect to girls access to higher secondary schools. Senior secondary girls' enrolment in Classes XI and XII is

just 39.6 % in government schools compared to 51 % in private schools where lower pass rates for entry are required (GNHC/NCWC/RGOB 2008, p. 54). Although more research is needed, a recent survey conducted amongst five colleges of RUB indicated that the majority of the females revealed that they did not have enough time to devote to their studies when they were in higher secondary schools in contrast to their male counterparts The female students as mentioned earlier were expected to perform home chores and sibling caring (Kinley et al. 2015). By 2013, only 47.3 % of females were attending higher secondary schools (MoE 2014a).

Gender and Tertiary Enrollment

Access to tertiary education for both males and females is still a challenge because of the limited intake capacities in the existing tertiary institutions in the country and poor private sector participation. The limited number of tertiary institutions in the country have resulted in increased number of students pursuing higher education in India and other countries (MoE 2014a, b).

In 2014, there were 11,089 students enrolled in various degree programmes and 1405 students enrolled in technical institutes. Broadly, women are underrepresented in the tertiary sector (NSB 2010; 2011). They constitute only 44 % of students studying at university colleges (MoE 2014a). This is despite the fact that tertiary study is supported by scholarships. Furthermore, only 20 % of overseas scholarship holders were female (GNHC/NCWC/RGOB 2008, pp. 56–58). Although there has been increasing female enrollments in the lower and higher secondary level of schooling, Table 2 shows enrollments of females in some programmes at the tertiary level have been small (e.g. engineering and medical technology, *italics*) but in others they more evident (e.g., law, nursing, **bold**).

Table 3 data show that male students are much more likely to continue their post-secondary studies abroad. Study abroad, typically in India, is often chosen when a Class XII graduate does not achieve a scholarship for study inside Bhutan and the parents can afford it.

There has been increasing interest in the relation between gender development and economic and social development (for example, Klasen 2005). It is also said that participation of women in political processes and decision-making is considered as a critical factor that would significantly boost progress towards gender equality (UNGEI 2009). In this regard, leadership from amongst women is likely to come from university graduates. However, in Bhutan since fewer women are highly educated, there will be less women holding important/high positions. This results in the next generation of Bhutanese women having few role models (UNGEI 2009). However, Powdyel (chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume) indicates that many more women are taking active roles in village political life.

Table 2 Tertiary students by field of study and by gender, 2014

Field of study	Female (%)
Architecture and design	54
Commerce and Accountability	49
Education	46
Engineering and Technology	29
Forestry and Agriculture	28
Language/Literature	50
Management Studies	44
Medical Technology	45
Medicine	38
Nursing	54
Public Health	32
Law	64
Science and Mathematics	33
Social sciences	55
Total	44

MoE (2014a, emphasis added)

Table 3 Bhutanese Privately-Funded Tertiary Students Abroad by Course Level

Degree	Male	Female	Total
Bachelor	1375	998	2373
Diploma	213	71	284
Masters	75	36	111
PG Diploma	8	2	10
PhD	1	0	1
Total	1672	1107	2779

MoE (2014a, b)

Gender and School Achievement

As we have seen, to some extent the enrolment patterns at higher secondary schools reflect student success at the Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC) examination which is the important examination at Class XII (Maxwell et al. 2010). Recently, out of 8357 students who appeared for the Class XII examinations, 87 % passed: 56 % for girls in the Arts stream, 53 % for girls in commerce stream and only 39 % for girls in science (BCSEA 2014). Studies carried out worldwide indicate that boys underperform in English which is today perceived as a girls' subject (Reddock 2009). Interestingly, Chevannes (1999) argued that this lower performance in arts subjects probably negatively impacts boys much more than girls' lower performance in mathematics negatively impacts girls.

Gender differences in educational choices also appear to be related to student attitudes (motivation, interest), support and success in studying a particular subject rather than their ability and school performance (UNESCO, 2015). This is also likely to be the case in Bhutan. From a mixed-method impact study (Kinley et al. 2015), rural children receive less support and motivation from their parents unlike children in the urban areas where they are exposed to many forms of educational sites and more parental support. The study findings also revealed that female children chose not to take up mathematics and science subjects as these subjects did not interest them. Further, these were subjects taught by male teachers (Kinlay et al. 2015). In addition, Bhutanese girls, particularly in rural areas, have fewer role models (GNHC/NCWC/RGOB 2008) as compared to urban-based girls. However, there is still much research to be done in Bhutan on socio-cultural factors influencing achievement in schools and beyond.

Gender, Education, and Participation

The education sector receives a lion's share of the budget, established since the 1st Five-Year Plan (Singye Namgyel and Phub Rinchhen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume). Despite the government's concerted efforts in promoting female enrolment in education, women's participation in political and socio economic activities still lags behind. Only about 6.1 % of the female labor force have jobs as regular paid employees compared to 17.8 % of male labor force (MoE 2014a, b). Very few women occupy the highest bureaucratic posts in all agencies as compared to men in equivalent posts (NCWC 2008). Significant disparities in many important areas of development include:

- Low female representation in decision-making positions in governance (Judiciary, Executive, Legislative, and Local Governance);
- Higher female unemployment rate (urban overall: 6.8 % with female at 9.5 % against 5.3 % male; and rural overall: 2.8 % with female at 2.7 % against 2.9 % for male);
- Low female participation in economic activities;
- Low female enrollment in tertiary education, implying higher dropout rate after completion of secondary education; and
- Low female enrollment in technical and professional fields (NCWC 2008, p. 5).

This is due not only to women's lack of tertiary education success (MoE 2014a; GNHC, 2013). But, as we have discussed, also cultural beliefs that confine women and limits their potential (NCWC, 2008). Moreover, "The unequal status of women and their lack of opportunities are often taken for granted and are considered normal. The gender inequalities deeply rooted in families, communities, and individual minds, remain largely invisible and underestimated" (NCWC 2008, p. 5).

We can see that, in Bhutan, women are underrepresented in almost all areas ranging from social to political to economic spheres and over represented in unstable,

Table 4 Teacher Strength by School Level, Employer, and Gender, 2014

	Government			Private			Total		
Level	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Lower Secondary Schools	1502	867	2369	50	103	1552	1552	970	2522
Middle Secondary Schools	1034	898	1932	10	8	18	1044	906	1950
Higher Secondary Schools	1159	884	2043	41	64	105	1200	948	2148
Extended Classrooms	890	477	1367	291	132	423	1181	609	1790
Special Institute (*Muenseling*)	123	27	150	0	0	0	123	27	150
Other	10	2	12	0	0	0	10	2	12
Total	4718	3155	7873	392	307	699	5110	3462	8572

MoE (2014a)

unprotected and unregulated low paying jobs. Their opportunities and economic participation outside the household vary among communities and ethnic groups following local – sometimes discriminatory – customs and traditions (UNESCO 2015). The primary responsibility of the woman of taking care of household chores and children contributes to a lack of requisite education and skill training to get better jobs (World Bank 2013). So, despite policies that promote gender equity, there are subtle practices of gender discrimination (Maxwell et al. 2015; BBS 2015).

Returning to the important issue of role models and focusing upon young girls and adolescents, the level of employment for women in the teaching profession is lower than men ranging from about half in extended classrooms in rural areas, to 46 % in middle secondary schools (MSS) and 44 % in higher secondary schools (HSS) (Table 4). It is especially low in the special institutes. Although not present in the table, women outnumber men in the primary sector but not in remote areas.

However, it's quite interesting to see women doing better in terms of qualifications in the teaching cadre (Table 5). Considering Table 5, women in the primary sector contribute greatly to the higher qualifications.

Conclusion

Reducing persistent gender inequalities is necessary not only for reasons of fairness and equity, but also out of economic necessity. In this twenty-first century where technology is evolving, women need to come forward and take advantage of it to

Table 5 Government Teachers by Qualification, 2013

Qualifications	Teachers in Government schools			Total %
	Male	Female	Total	
PhD	2	3	5	0.1
Masters	243	591	834	10.6
PG Diploma	426	538	964	12.2
Bachelors	1699	2578	4277	54.3
Diploma	737	972	1709	21.7
Higher Secondary/Matriculation	48	36	84	1.1
Total	3155	4718	7873	

MoE (2014a)

progress economically, politically, and socially. To do so, women need to be educated as education is paramount. In this land of Gross National Happiness where Bhutan chose GNH over GDP as its developmental philosophy, education was made one of the nine domains of GNH in order to achieve GNH goals. Since the start of modern education, there has been an expansion in the student number, teachers, schools, colleges (Maxwell 2008) and Bhutan also has a university of its own and a second one came into being recently (see Schofield, chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume). Also, increased education participation is associated with better health. Investments in the education and health of children – especially among women and particularly in developing countries – leads to positive social and economic outcomes (UNESCO 2015). Educating women will give them more opportunities allowing them to feel that they are an integral part of society. This will further contribute to their happiness and wellbeing. All this will ultimately lead to the country's goal of GNH.

The RGoB is a signatory to major international gender agreements and policies. The Ministry of Education's policy includes Education for GNH and particularly with the focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to basic education of good quality. The Ministry also established a vigorous programme of Non-Formal and Continuing Education to provide basic education opportunities to disadvantaged sections of the population (MoE 2008). All these have been initiated to promote gender equity in education. Since the start of all these policies, Bhutan has made impressive growth in ensuring female's access to both primary and lower secondary level of schooling. However, higher secondary school and tertiary female enrollments are still relatively low. More broadly, women's participation in society, outside the home, is still not optimal thus reducing the number of role models available. Bhutan is slowly reducing gender inequality, including through the education system, but still further measures are required. By and large, such measures are not national policy initiatives but institutional policies and practices are needed that are congruent with national policies. Structural and personal barriers embodied in the practices of Bhutanese people need to be addressed, potentially through what Pema Thinley (chapter "Overview and 'Heart Essence'

of the Bhutanese Education System", this volume) describes as mindfulness, as part of Educating for GNH, to overcome what has previously been taken for granted (Maatta and Lyckkage 2011). In terms of the education system, gender equity is being addressed. Support for the principles of Educating for GNH will continue this trend.

In conclusion, we would recommend the following:

1. Advocate and build partners at the national level to tackle the gender equity gaps (MoE 2014a, b);
2. Create awareness in gender mainstreaming in the national, school education and university policies;
3. Strengthen and expand tertiary education and facilitate private sector participation to provide improved access especially for women (MoE 2014a, b);
4. Provide a variety of support for female students struggling in Mathematics and Science to accelerate their performance in these subjects;
5. Initiate Technical Vocational Education programmes viable for female students that facilitate their entry into the workplace;
6. Upscale provision of sanitation facilities especially needed to enhance female child's academic performance such as access water, pad and cloth changes during her menstrual cycle so her learning will not be impeded; and
7. Improve provision of education facilities on a need basis reserving certain percentage of places (slots) available to female students.

A local school crossing sign (Photo: Clint Chapman)

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Conclusion: Key Outcomes, Challenges, Ways Forward, and Future Research

T.W. (Tom) Maxwell and Matthew J. Schuelka

Abstract This chapter reviews the major outcomes in Bhutan's education system. For example, the development of the primary sector, where Millennium Development Goals have largely been met, is ahead of the secondary and tertiary sectors where considerable progress has been made in a remarkably short period of time but more needs to be done. This chapter also sets out the major challenges and points to potential ways forward. For example, several challenges are identified for the successful implementation of Educating for Gross National Happiness but we also present ways that these might be addressed. Research, and educational research in particular, is wide open for future research and some suggestions are made.

Introduction

Education has a long history in Bhutan starting from the early Buddhist scholars in classical Tibetan many centuries ago. Buddhist education established the laws, social conduct, traditions, and learned thought not just in the *lakhangs* [temples], *gomba* [monasteries], and *shedra* [monastic schools] scattered throughout Bhutan, but throughout Bhutanese society. This monastic tradition has continued alongside the secular education system, but it is the latter that has become dominant – or at least more available – to the girls and boys of Bhutan. The shift in the place of learning and the democratization of knowledge has produced fundamental changes in Bhutanese society. From the early twentieth century when the first secular schools came into existence in Bhutan, and more particularly over the last half century, there has been a revolution in the shape of Bhutanese education. This book has been about this revolution.

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What are the key outcomes? What are the challenges and potential ways forward? What research might be undertaken to shed light on the different sectors to chart new directions for development? These are the questions that we will address in this chapter.

Key Outcomes

In fifty years, Bhutan has established a secular education system. This is an extraordinary outcome given the short period of time. Schools have been built, teachers educated, curricula designed, and materials published. Moreover, the curriculum, the teaching materials, the assessment, and the staffing were 'Bhutanized' as a result of decades of careful planning guided by the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King] (Tshering Tashi and Maxwell 2015). In 1990, at the Education For All (EFA) conference in Jomtien, Thailand, universal primary education must have appeared a long way off to Bhutanese delegates. However, this EFA outcome, now a Millennium Development Goal, has largely been achieved by 2015.

> The Gross Primary Enrollment Ratio (GPER) for Bhutan has increased from 55 % in 1990 to 118 % in 2012, which shows an average growth of 4.0 % per year. Bhutan's Net Gross Primary Enrollment Ratio (NPER) in 2012 was also increased to 95.60 %. According to the Ministry of Education, around 1 % of 6–12 year old children are studying abroad and around 2 % of the 6–12 year olds are enrolled in monastic institutions. (UNDP Bhutan 2015)

The pressure is on the secondary sector to build upon the foundations provided by universal primary education in the country. It is clear that more places are needed in Classes XI and XII in government schools. However, the policy has been to allow the development of private schools to take up the slack in parents' desire for their children to have a senior high school education. Clearly parents want their children to have a quality senior high school experience. At present, government schools are preferred. This means that parents who pay the fees for tuition at private schools, and government accountability systems, need to put pressure on these schools to build the quality of their children's schooling.

In stark contrast to the present day, many Bhutanese found themselves outside the 'education system' of the early decades. This recognition led to the important non-formal education (NFE) programme. As T.S. Powdyel (chapter "Non-Formal Education in Bhutan: Origin, Evolution, and Impact", this volume) has indicated, NFE has brought much to many of these citizens. Again, it was the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* who drove this development through the articulation of the first written form of education policy in which one of the objectives was to teach as many people as possible reading, writing, and numeracy as a way to enable many more Bhutanese to participate meaningfully in all avenues of society (RGoB 1981). It seems likely that this kind of objective would have assisted the initiation and subsequent development of this internationally recognised programme.

Another group that was not given provision, in the early days of education in Bhutan, was children with disabilities. Buddhist monastic education was largely a place of homogenous student ability (Zangley Dukpa, chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume), and the type of early secular education being imported from India also promoted competitive means in which to promote homogenous ableism in schools. The rise of global discourse around EFA, human rights education, child-friendly, and inclusive schools has also permeated into Bhutan – albeit somewhat erratically (Schuelka 2013; 2015). Promoting quality education for *all* children, regardless of ability, has become a priority and is a good fit with other philosophical priorities such as Educating for GNH and the *Education Blueprint 2014–2024* (MoE 2014a). This will be challenging in many areas, not least of which is providing adequate pre-service teacher training for students with disabilities (Rinchen Dorji and Schuelka, chapter "Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education", this volume).

A third group of under-served children in the early days of education were the pre-schoolers. Early childhood care and development (ECCD) is relatively new in Bhutan. The discussions of some two decades ago have bloomed slowly with the support of the private sector such that now ECCD centres are not uncommon in most towns and cities in Bhutan. Only very recently have policies been developed and resources set aside for ECCD (see Tshering Wangmo and Brooks, chapter"Early Childhood Care and Development in Bhutan: Mind the Gap(s)", this volume).

An important outcome has been the introduction of two universities in Bhutan. There are also several private tertiary institutions. While the oldest university is only 12 years old in 2015, the tertiary tradition was started more than 40 years ago at Sherubtse College in Tashigang (see Schofield, chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume). Sherubtse College aside, the early colleges were concerned with providing workers for the various ministries to which they were attached and they did not develop research capacity. This is quite understandable given the modernization developments required of Bhutan during those times. The two education colleges in particular have worked hard to produce graduates that were essential for the development of the primary and secondary school sectors. Similarly, the education of nurses has been a priority over time and has meant the development of allopathic hospitals and basic health units. Traditional medicine has been placed upon a sound footing (see Phurpa Wangchuk, Tempa Gyeltshen, and Tashi Tobgay, chapter "Bhutanese Traditional Medical Education", this volume).

The tertiary colleges, and now the universities, and the education sector generally, have received financial and material support from outside Bhutan. India in the early days targeted basic needs in education: school buildings, teachers, and teaching materials. Subsequently, the UN and other forms of multi-lateral support have targeted areas that were needed as the system developed (see Jagar Dorji, chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume). A good example of this was the UNICEF support of the development

of the multi-grade teaching/learning strategy (Kucita et al. 2013) and the corresponding multi-lateral and community in-kind support of the building of schools and teacher housing high in the mountains (Maxwell 2001, 2012a).

However, international support has not been without its problems as outside ideas were introduced. Perhaps the best example of this was in education where the introduction of the New Approach to Education (NAPE) (see Singye Namgyel and Phub Rinchen, chapter "History and Transition of Secular Education in Bhutan from the Twentieth into the Twenty-First Century", this volume) created difficulties in the 1980s and 1990s. The progressive ideas associated with NAPE were probably introduced at least two decades too early as most in the teaching cadre were not able to implement them (Jagar Dorji 2005). There is an important lesson here: a system-wide initiative needs to be introduced at the level where the majority of teachers are able to comprehend its key ideas and be able, or be assisted, to translate these into classroom practices (Beeby 1966). System-wide pressure and support is essential (Fullan 2007). These require a commitment to change, translated into systemic funding over time to undertake the necessary materials development and teacher in-service. Moreover, not all schools are at the same stage of professional development so the initiative has to be handled carefully at the local level (Maxwell and Namgay 2014). Institutional leadership is also essential (Fullan 2014). These ideas are particularly relevant to the present introduction of Educating for Gross National Happiness where continued support will be required (see below).

Support has flowed into Bhutan since the 1st Five-Year Plan began in 1961 because Bhutan's officials have been largely un-corruptible. This is quite unusual for this part of the world. Countries and NGOs have had confidence in investing in Bhutan. Jagar Dorji (chapter "International Influence and Support for Educational Development in Bhutan", this volume) has shown how important to the development of education this material support has been from a wide range of donors. This lack of corruption is likely to remain because of the current strength of the Anti-Corruption Commission. Bhutan's education system has benefitted greatly from this situation in the past but may be less likely to do so in the future. The reason for this is simple: Bhutan has reached, or is within reach, of its Millennium Development Goals whereas many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, have a long way to go to reach theirs. This means that donors will switch their funding to needier areas if they have not already done so.

Challenges and Potential Ways Forward

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the secular education system is the integration of the Educating for GNH (EGNH) initiative into the curriculum. As Kezang Sherab, Maxwell, and Cooksey (chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume) noted, a good start has already been made in some schools. Pema Tshomo (chapter "Conditions of

Happiness: Bhutan's Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative and the Capability Approach", this volume) provided a theoretical framework for EGNH by integrating it with the capability approach. The argument of Pema Thinley (chapter "Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System", this volume) was to make mindfulness education an essential part of the curriculum. After-school activities, akin to EGNH, have been undertaken for more than a decade but they tend to be somewhat elitist, that is, for those with special talents and interests rather than for the student population as a whole.

At the heart of the challenge is the dominance of the external assessment regime in Bhutanese secular schools. Classroom teachers, it seems, are reticent to take time away from examinable subject content to focus more on EGNH outcomes. There appears to be four potential ways forward:

- Integrate EGNH outcomes tacitly or implicitly into lessons at all levels. This would mean harnessing the hidden curriculum. This would not require a policy change but rather changes in teacher practices with long term attention to related capacity building and teacher education as indicated by Kezang Sherab, Maxwell, and Cooksey (chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume). This focus on EGNH capacity building may require a policy shift where the capacity building takes place over time rather than assumed to be effective after being addressed through a single course;
- Assessment driven curriculum change. For example, Pema Thinley's (chapter "Overview and 'Heart Essence' of the Bhutanese Education System", this volume) ideas about mindfulness education could be taken to their logical conclusion: create mindfulness education as a subject included in the formal curriculum and consequently be formally assessed. To be formally assessed means that EGNH is seen to be valued. This would require a policy change by the Ministry of Education (MoE). This is an important curriculum issue: to create a new subject or not to do so. This would be a debate worth having. The Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) would then face its own challenges in implementing policy;
- Use a combination of both strategies; or
- Dismantle national assessment.

The latter would be the preference for many progressives, but the third option would be more practical and realistic.

The first option implies that teachers would become more aware of the impact of the hidden curriculum and its impact on student learning. Curriculum scholars think of the 'hidden curriculum' as learning that was not openly intended. Typically, such learning includes the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs conveyed in the classroom and the social environment usually in tacit ways. Hidden curriculum learning is not planned but students learn these outcomes through their experiences of classroom processes. Some of these were illustrated in Kezang Sherab, Maxwell and Cooksey (chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume). What we are implying here is that teachers

become aware of the impact of the tacit learning in their classrooms and translate this into positive outcomes associated with EGNH. Were teachers to attend to this issue then they would necessarily have to learn about critical reflection and/or action research on their own behaviour in the classroom and make changes over time consistent with EGNH principles.

The second option would give a strong message to classroom teachers. If EGNH is assessed then it must be important and given time in the formal curriculum. This would then tie in nicely with teachers' own learning about the importance of the hidden curriculum in teaching EGNH outcomes (option 1 above). Staff of the teacher education colleges, and teachers in model schools such as provided by The Royal Academy in Paro, will also need to address the issues pointed to above. This is especially so given their role in teacher education in the country. If system-wide assessment is to stay, and this is most likely, then the combination of options 1 and 2 provide a way forward. However, as we argued in the previous section, system-wide and institutional level leadership, pressure and support are essential if EGNH is going to have an impact.

The idea of EGNH brings with it another challenge. Zangley Dukpa (chapter "The History and Development of Monastic Education in Bhutan", this volume) pointed out: "Both Buddhism and GNH are premised on the principles of love, compassion, contentment, and also the balanced development of mind and body or harmonization of capitalism and communism economic models." The implication is clear. Secular education may have quite a bit to learn from monastic education. The challenge is for the two sectors to talk to one another. EGNH provides a bridge here and monastic education may well have a role to play in terms of the processes of learning how to operationalise EGNH, that is, of practices that assist in the implementation of mindfulness in everyday life.

There are other challenges apart from those associated with EGNH. School financing and the provision of adequate resources is a key issue. The success of enrolment in primary has meant pressure has been placed on student access, space and teachers at the secondary level. Such pressures are exacerbated by the current government's plans to enhance secondary enrolments (MoE 2014a).

Yet another challenge is in the area of language learning. Dzongkha and English are the languages of instruction. Neither of these languages is the home language for many children. They are thus at a considerable disadvantage compared to children from families who speak either language, but especially English as most subjects are taught in English. Although Dorji Thinley and Maxwell (2013) made a strong case that English can assist in cultural preservation, this is not the point. To make a simple explanation: learning generally begins with the known, and builds from that. However, what is known is articulated in words. What if the learner does not understand the words? There is little to build upon. Moreover, grammar and other features of the new language are different. An international review of second language learning by young people found:

> There is clear evidence that Indigenous children with some proficiency in English on entry to school have generally better educational outcomes than those with little or no knowledge of English. Similarly, children who commence school with a wider vocabulary and profi-

> ciency in their first language have generally better literacy development than students with less well developed early language skills (Silburn et al. 2011, p. 47).

We observe that the issues raised here are generally not well understood in Bhutan. Attention to them in terms of policy and classroom practices would address important equity issues.

Another key challenge is the common problem of aligning student outcomes with positive economic goals. Consistent with the GNH policy, and EGNH in schools, such an alignment would not want to overwhelm but rather complement EGNH outcomes. The danger is that even if the curriculum was aligned in this way the power of the external assessment system, accompanied by teacher customs and practices , such outcomes associated with economic goals will overshadow EGNH goals (see above). Nevertheless, there are strong arguments for curriculum reform recognised by the MoE (2014a), which has acknowledged that the secondary curriculum is largely academic in nature and has identified the need for vocational education. More specifically, Ueda (chapter "Rural Life and Modern Formal Schooling in Bhutan", this volume), for instance, pointed out the dislocation between the reality of students in rural areas and what they learned in school.

Supporting rural schools is another challenge. A major acknowledgement in educational development in Bhutan was the recognition in the early 1990s that access to schools had previously been denied to children in remote areas. Community schools were built and teaching carried out using multi-grade classes (Maxwell 2012a) and these were having a positive effect. Kucita et al. (2013, p. 210) showed that

> It is apparent that considerable benefits have come to rural and remote communities in terms of their children's access to education. However, consistent with the world over, there are considerable challenges to be overcome. Chief amongst these are the lack of adequate resources including the timely adjustment to the aligned curriculum and to the capacity building of the teaching cadre.

Recent developments are potentially a game changing move. Implementation of the new policy to create 24 central schools has already begun (MoE 2014b). Schools will be consolidated, others built. These central schools are intended to be four fifths open to students who board and some of those who enrol will be as young as five years-old. It is likely that some multigrade schools will go and many young children will be forced to leave their parents to undertake primary school. We wonder about this aspect of the experiment. Training of teachers and others will be required in these new central schools, especially for principals as these schools cover pre-primary to at least Class X as well as having extensive boarding facilities and extra-curricular programmes (MoE 2014b).

Generally speaking, it is clear that the Royal Government and the MoE must continue, even re-double, its efforts to build the quality of teaching. In the early decades the emphasis was upon placing teachers in front of classes. About two decades ago in-service retraining began (Laird et al. 1999) as did multi-grade capacity building. A little later, two-year trained teachers were given the opportunity to up-grade their qualifications via a mixed-mode Bachelor degree from Samtse

College of Education (Maxwell et al. 2006/2008). Pressure is now upon the MoE in more specialist areas. Two areas are those of current initiatives: EGNH and central schools (see above and Kezang Sherab, Maxwell and Cooksey, chapter "Teacher Understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative", this volume). However, as the Royal Government responds to demand for equity of access and also outcomes (MoE, 2014a), the need for more specialised areas of capacity building are becoming more obvious. For example, Rinchen Dorji and Schuelka (chapter "Children with Disabilities in Bhutan: Transitioning from Special Educational Needs to Inclusive Education", this volume) make a case for greater integration of inclusive practices across all education training programs. A compulsory module on inclusive education is taken in pre-service awards, but interacting with students with disabilities during the teacher placement would give students real-life experiences of inclusion. Going further than this, we strongly support the move to introduce an in-service post-graduate award in inclusive education at Paro. Informal inclusive education courses are also needed to support those teachers who already have children with disabilities in their classes. Such informal courses should not be 'one-off' events but rather part of a series of planned activities over time. ECCD (early childhood care and development) is an area that is just taking hold and capacity building is essential if ECCD is to go beyond mere child-minding. Kinley Seden and Maxwell (chapter "Gender and Education in Bhutan", this volume) showed that continuing work is needed to address gender inequity across the Bhutanese society and so in schools. As discussed by them, much gender inequitable practices come from taken for granted positions that need to be addressed. These 'taken for granteds' are part of the hidden curriculum and would necessarily be part of EGNH capacity building. Perhaps this is an area where the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) can take a lead. Using research to expose the hidden curriculum in Bhutanese schools and other places would assist in EGNH development. Indeed, all the areas identified as challenges are open to research.

Finally, if we assume that the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) aspires to be a university in the full sense then its academic staff need to take a stronger position on research. However, it is important to note that the amalgamation of the various colleges into RUB introduced this new element (research) into their job description (Maxwell 2012b) and this is a key challenge that Schofield (chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume) has identified. Only now are the numbers of staff with doctorates, in some of the colleges, developing such that there is a critical mass of people qualified and interested in research to take the research effort forward. Sending scholars to other countries for post-graduate research training will no doubt continue, but there are internal mechanisms that can be adopted. These include the implementation of RUB's own PhD programme, the mentoring of staff by those who are already qualified; institutional pressure for staff to undertake research, including research publication as a criterion for promotion; as well as other ideas (see Phintsho Choeden and Maxwell 2012; Maxwell 2012b; Schofield, chapter "Higher Education in Bhutan: Progress and Challenges", this volume).

Future Research

Bhutan is wide open to research, especially for the Bhutanese themselves. So little has been done, including in education. The Bhutanese socio-cultural context means that good quality studies from elsewhere could be used as the basis for studies in Bhutan, although care has to be taken in translating concepts from one cultural context to another. There is also uniquely Bhutanese research that can be done such as in EGNH , where Kezang Sherab, Pema Tshomo, and others are leading the way. Research might be undertaken in one of the challenging areas for education: the role of the community in schooling, especially including ECCD and, relatedly, what form might this relationship take? Historically, parents have had a 'hands off' approach. To some extent this is understandable since many parents and community members would not themselves have gone to school. They would likely feel that they did not know enough and/or felt it appropriate to leave major decisions to those who had more education than they. However, it is clear that there are places where this has already begun. Maxwell observed that in the 2000s at Paga Community School in Chhukha *Dzongkhag* [district], community members were regularly in the classrooms assisting with Dzongkha language development. Actually, these community members had been to NFE classes and learned their Dzongkha there. This was before a Dzongkha *lopen* [teacher] was based at the school. This would be one fruitful area of research and could include case studies of school communities that are already engaging these issues.

We believe that the issues we have raised in this conclusion can easily be addressed by researchers. For example, what are the ways that teachers are addressing EGNH in particular subjects in primary schools? What are the ways that teachers are addressing EGNH in particular subjects in secondary schools? What practices do schools use that are successfully implementing EGNH? What are some practical bridges between monastic and regular schools? How does the hidden curriculum hinder the development of EGNH goals? What is the impact upon teachers and teaching strategies of external examinations in primary schools? What difficulties do children face whose language at home is other than Dzongkha or English? In what ways can the curriculum be broadened or the schooling system re-structured in order to make schooling more responsive to economic demands of a modern Bhutanese economy? The list goes on.

Conclusion

The chapters in this volume indicate that there has been a long history of education in Bhutan but also, since the formal introduction of secular schooling, tremendous progress. This is particularly the case for the primary sector where Millennium Development Goals have largely been met. While there is still some way to go in the

A boy shows off by climbing the ruins of an old house (Photo: Clint Chapman)

secondary and tertiary sectors, considerable progress has been made in a remarkably short period of time.

Educators in Bhutan are currently challenged in a number of areas. These include finding ways to match secondary schooling, and particularly the tertiary sector, to the economic needs of the country. There are also equity issues that need continued attention – notably in the areas of gender, ECCD and children with disabilities. Researchers can play an important part in Bhutan's education systems by focusing upon research questions that can have an impact on the future development of these and other areas.

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Index

A
Academic qualifications, 201
Accountability, 69, 177–179, 222, 230
Assessments, 7, 10, 23, 26, 51, 66–70, 84, 100–103, 105, 143, 158, 163, 178, 179, 190, 194, 230, 233–235
Attitudes, 5, 64, 86, 156, 159–161, 163, 171, 183, 194, 211, 218, 223

B
Basic education, 23, 24, 28, 29, 65, 115, 146, 170, 219, 220, 225
Beeby, C.E., 27, 114, 232
Bhutan 2020, 8, 22, 23, 130, 131, 185, 219
Bhutan Board of Examination (BBE), 63, 66, 67, 70
Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE), 28, 67, 174
Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA), 68–70, 163, 222, 233
Bhutan Education Blueprint, 22, 23, 26–29, 64, 146, 216, 219
Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC), 63, 67, 174, 194, 222
Bhutanisation, 7, 10, 60, 61, 70
Boarding schools, 57, 86, 130, 131
Brooks, M., 12, 23, 24, 29, 63, 199–211, 231
Buddhist/Buddhism, 1, 3, 5–7, 9, 10, 21, 31, 32, 39–44, 53, 92, 155, 156, 183
Buddhist education, 5, 7, 39–48, 53, 229

C
Capability approach, 11, 139–149, 233
Central schools, 188–190, 235, 236
Children with disabilities, 11, 12, 46, 146, 182, 184–195, 231, 236, 238
Classroom practices, 26, 143, 154, 160, 164, 165, 232, 235
Classrooms, 7, 9, 11, 12, 20, 26, 34, 63, 86, 99, 111, 114, 119, 133, 148, 158, 160, 162, 163, 165, 170, 173, 182, 185, 188, 190, 192–194, 204, 207–209, 224, 232–235, 237
Class XII, 26, 27, 29, 50, 66, 67, 75, 79, 80, 87, 100, 117, 147, 160, 173, 174, 221, 222
Co-curricular activities, 158
College of Education, 11, 74, 76, 78, 87, 98, 120, 192, 193, 203
Community, 8, 9, 25, 28–30, 45, 58, 64, 83, 117, 122, 127, 128, 133–135, 144, 159, 170, 171, 175, 176, 178, 186, 187, 190, 194, 195, 200, 201, 203–205, 207, 208, 210, 220, 232, 235, 237
Competencies, 48, 142, 144, 175, 190, 192, 201
Competency based assessment (CBA), 67, 70
Constitution, 22, 28, 53, 68, 93, 130, 139, 140, 143, 157, 170, 184, 216, 219
Contexts, 3–6, 11, 12, 20–21, 31, 52, 58, 60, 114, 127–129, 143, 145, 161, 163, 171, 174, 182–184, 186, 187, 193, 203–205, 208, 211, 218, 237
Continuing education (CE), 28–30, 63, 67, 85, 172, 174, 188, 225

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Cooksey, R.W., 7, 9, 11, 67, 142, 153–165, 232, 233, 236
Corporal punishment, 7, 52, 146, 148
Critical reflection, 154, 160, 162, 195, 234
Culture, 2, 21, 41, 61, 74, 92, 113, 141, 154, 182, 203, 218
Curriculum, 6, 23, 45, 60, 73, 93, 112, 135, 142, 158, 176, 185, 203, 230
Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD), 60

D
Debates, 43, 48, 50, 70, 101, 233
Decentralization, 10, 24, 60–62, 66, 70
Degree, 27, 41, 43, 44, 50, 52, 62, 68, 73–76, 78, 80, 82, 84–86, 95, 98, 100, 119, 128, 133, 174, 193, 219, 221, 236
Dignity of labour, 23, 135
Diploma of Early Childhood, 202
Disadvantaged groups, 172
District Education Officer (DEO), 24
Druk Gyalpo, 3, 4, 6, 7, 19–21, 31, 35, 50, 51, 57, 61, 94, 95, 109–111, 113, 116, 140, 153–155, 164, 230
Dzongkha, 3, 20, 43, 63, 77, 98, 110, 172, 206, 234

E
Early childhood care and development (ECCD), 12, 24, 63, 171, 200–205, 207, 208, 210, 231
Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), 201
Educating for GNH: A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness, 142
Educating for GNH: A Training Manual, 142, 143
Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH), 7–12, 26, 139–149, 153–166, 187, 194, 207, 208, 232–237
Education for All (EFA), 7, 11, 62, 115, 122, 184, 192, 219, 230, 231
Education Monitoring and Support Division (EMSD), 32, 69
Education system, 1, 20, 39, 59, 81, 92, 110, 140, 153, 171, 182, 208, 217, 229
Empowerment, 11, 144, 148, 172, 178, 179
English, 3, 4, 7, 20, 25, 26, 32, 49, 52, 58, 60, 63, 67, 78, 86, 99, 100, 112–114, 116, 118, 122, 176, 178, 209, 210, 222, 234, 237
Enrollment, 51, 74, 75, 77–79, 82, 86, 100, 146, 188, 220–221, 223, 230
Environmental Studies (EVS), 25, 32, 60, 67
Equity, 11, 12, 29, 64, 140, 143–149, 182, 203, 215–220, 224–226, 235, 236, 238
Examinations, 6, 7, 41, 44, 48, 51, 66–70, 79, 81, 100, 102, 117, 118, 134, 135, 161, 163, 165, 174, 201, 222
Expatriate, 25, 61, 66, 110, 117, 119, 120
Extra-curricular programmes (ECPs), 142, 159, 235

F
Facilitates, 20, 24, 27, 28, 30, 33, 35, 41, 47, 51, 58, 61, 62, 76, 93, 97, 99, 102–104, 106, 115, 129, 133, 143, 146, 169, 173, 185, 187, 192, 202, 220, 226, 235
Feedback, 66, 105, 160, 162
First language, 3, 209, 210, 235
Five pillars, 63
Five-Year Plan (FYP), 5, 6, 20, 21, 49, 58, 59, 110, 112, 127, 131, 170, 200, 219, 223, 232
Four pillars, 8, 93, 104, 141, 142, 175
Fullan, M., 35, 193, 194, 232
Fullan, M.G., 160, 161
Funds of knowledge, 12, 204–208, 210

G
Gender, 9, 26, 122, 144, 170, 189, 215, 236
Globalization, 4, 5
GNH development philosophy, 2
Graduate skills, 10
Green School, 9, 64, 158
Gross National Happiness (GNH), 1, 20, 52, 64, 81, 93, 130, 140, 153, 171, 182, 200, 218, 231
Guru Rinpoche, 39, 40, 43, 44

H
Hidden curriculum, 160–162, 164, 165, 233, 234, 236, 237
Higher education, 10, 22, 47, 48, 74–88, 129, 172, 184, 221
History, 1–5, 10, 11, 25, 32, 39–54, 57–70, 73–75, 78, 139, 154–157, 163, 164, 182–183, 186, 216, 229, 237
Holistic education, 30–32, 35, 99
Home, 9, 110, 119, 122, 128, 133, 173, 185, 191, 200, 204–210, 218, 219, 221, 225, 234, 237

I
Ideology, 60, 140, 206, 207
Inclusive education, 35, 182–188, 190, 192–195, 236
India/Indian, 5, 20, 40, 57, 73, 98, 110, 133, 156, 201, 221, 231
In-service, 11, 26, 27, 60, 114, 118, 121, 163, 165, 190, 192, 193, 232, 235, 236
Integration, 5, 11, 58, 59, 93, 94, 103, 105, 232, 236
International influence, 11, 109–123
Internship, 95, 98, 99

J
Jagar Dorji, 6, 7, 11, 25, 26, 34, 57–60, 62, 109–123, 182, 185, 192, 231, 232

K
Kezang Sherab, 7, 9, 11, 34, 64, 142, 153–165, 232, 233, 236, 237
Kinley Seden, 215–226
Knowledge-based economy, 85, 86

L
Languages, 2–4, 7, 12, 20, 42–45, 47, 50, 58, 74, 77, 85, 86, 95, 98, 99, 110, 112–113, 116, 122, 162, 172, 175, 176, 179, 183, 186, 201, 206, 209, 210, 222, 234, 235, 237
Leadership, 19, 21, 27, 34, 35, 50, 60–62, 64, 70, 76, 77, 120, 158, 170, 176, 178, 183, 194, 221, 232, 234
Learning outcomes, 68, 69
Lecture, 81
Literacy, 1, 11, 26, 30, 32, 44, 67, 70, 116, 170–173, 175, 176, 178, 179, 191, 201, 206, 216, 235
Long walking distance, 146
Lower Secondary School Certificate Examination (LSSCE), 66

M
Manuals, 114
Marginalised, 187
Mathematics, 25, 26, 63, 67, 114, 118, 174, 206, 209, 210, 222, 223, 226
Maxwell, T.W. (Tom), 1–13, 62, 80, 101, 153–165, 215–226, 229–238
Meditation, 32–34, 48, 50, 51, 97, 104, 106, 159
Memorization, 48, 50, 81, 101, 102
Mindfulness education, 10, 31, 81, 233
Ministry of Education, 1, 24, 63, 74, 135, 142, 153, 170, 182, 199, 218, 230
Modelling, 162
Modern formal schooling, 127–136
Modernisation, 4, 58, 127, 157
Monastic education, 1, 6, 10, 20, 40, 42–52, 94, 101, 105, 110, 132, 172, 183, 194, 217, 231, 234

N
National Education Assessment (NEA), 67
Nationalization, 10
New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE), 7, 25, 60, 62, 114
Non-formal education (NFE), 1, 11, 29, 30, 170–179, 200, 218, 230
Numeracy, 67, 70, 172, 175, 176, 179, 191, 230

O
On-the-job training, 93, 94
Organisational structure, 65–66

P
Parent participation, 199
Pedagogy, 6, 7, 26, 52, 68, 70, 80–81, 98, 100–103, 145, 148, 190, 193, 203, 204
Pema Thinley, 10, 19–36, 65, 81, 99, 110, 225, 233
Pema Tshomo, 7, 11, 139–149, 154, 237
Philosophy, 6–9, 20, 21, 23, 24, 31, 35, 41, 47, 50, 60, 81, 84, 92, 122, 140, 141, 148, 154–157, 160, 162–164, 187, 194, 195, 203, 207
Phub Rinchen, 57–71, 223, 232
Phurpa Wangchuk, 53, 75, 91–106, 231
Play, 5, 9, 21, 33, 47, 48, 68, 74, 87, 96, 113, 127, 161, 162, 171, 201, 203, 207, 208, 234, 238
Policy, 2, 22, 49, 61, 79, 93, 171, 199, 200, 205, 211, 215, 230
Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), 27, 118
Potential, 9, 23, 24, 35, 52, 68, 69, 82, 87, 93, 104, 105, 132, 133, 145, 147, 148, 155, 161–164, 172, 176, 178, 179, 184, 185, 201, 204, 208, 223, 225, 230, 232–236
Powdyel, T.S., 9, 11, 29, 30, 64, 109, 156, 158, 169–179, 216, 218, 219, 221
Preschool, 200, 204, 205, 207–209
Pre-service, 12, 60, 164, 165, 192–194, 231, 236
Primary education, 77, 118, 220, 230

Private education, 28, 62
Private schools, 23, 28, 29, 62, 221, 230
Professional development, 34–35, 66, 163, 194, 232
Programmes of study, 83, 84
Purpose of education, 58, 144

Q
Quality, 9, 23, 65, 75, 98, 170, 200, 216, 230
Quality assurance, 10, 68, 84, 85, 99, 104

R
Recommendations, 46, 141, 177–180, 199, 226
Relevance, 22, 83, 145, 172, 178, 203
Research, 2, 41, 64, 76, 93, 203, 221
Rinchen Dorji, 11, 23, 29, 181–195, 231, 236
Rote learning, 26, 52, 114
Royal Education Council (REC), 31, 60, 63, 81, 86, 87, 202
Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), 19–21, 23, 76, 80, 92, 95, 184, 186, 187
Royal Thimphu College (RTC), 25, 63, 76, 78, 85, 164
Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), 10, 19, 63, 74, 96, 174, 219, 236
Rural, 9, 20, 61, 171, 201, 220, 235
Rural-Urban migration, 20, 129–135

S
Schofield, J.W., 10, 23, 29, 73–88, 219, 225, 231, 236
Scholarships, 25, 28, 79, 80, 82, 83, 112, 118, 119, 174, 221
Schooling, 1, 4–7, 9–12, 24, 25, 28, 30, 68, 79, 81, 86, 127, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 169, 171, 185, 188–190, 193, 205, 208, 218, 220, 221, 225, 230, 237, 238
Schuelka, M.J., 1–13, 23, 29, 160, 181–195, 229–238
Secondary education, 24, 27, 83, 223
Secular education, 1, 6, 10, 11, 20, 49, 52, 53, 57–70, 109, 110, 163, 172, 182, 229–232, 234
Sherubtse College, 11, 58, 73, 78, 80–81, 231
Singye Namgyel, 5–7, 10, 25, 52, 57–71, 113, 114, 182, 183, 218, 223, 232
Special education, 23, 28, 29, 181–183, 186–189, 193, 195
Special educational needs (SEN) schools, 188–190
Special schools, 12, 183, 187, 188, 193
Student-centred, 7, 9, 10, 52, 62, 159, 162
Students with disabilities, 9, 182, 185, 188, 189, 191, 193, 194, 231, 236
Support, 6, 26, 51, 60, 79, 93, 175, 218, 231
Syllabus coverage, 161

T
Tashi Tobgay, 75, 91–106, 231
Teacher-centred, 6, 7, 10, 60, 62, 65, 171
Teacher training/education, 9, 113, 117, 118, 185, 192, 231
Technical education, 22, 29, 171, 184
Tempa Gyeltshen, 53, 75, 91–106, 231
Tertiary education, 8, 10, 23–25, 28, 29, 62, 75, 76, 79–88, 104, 188, 218, 221, 223, 226
Textbooks, 6, 7, 25, 28, 60, 81, 95, 97, 110, 111, 113, 114, 121, 133, 173
Traditional medicine education, 11
Train-the-trainers model, 163
Transform, 27, 33, 49, 93, 95, 120, 135, 145, 154, 158, 160, 162, 164, 185
Tshering Wangmo, 12, 23, 24, 29, 63, 199–211, 231

U
Ueda, A., 11, 20, 127–136, 235
Unemployment, 22, 63, 87, 147, 178, 223
University, 11, 19, 41, 63, 73, 93, 170, 201, 219, 231

V
Values education, 23, 31–34, 63, 135, 153, 158, 163
Vocational education, 29, 44, 63, 226, 235
Volunteers, 111, 113, 114, 118, 119, 121, 191, 209

W
Wheel of Academic Law, 76, 85, 220
Whole-child learning, 202
Wholesomeness, 10, 60, 61, 63
Workbooks, 114, 173
World Food Programme (WFP), 114, 115, 220

Z
Zangley Dukpa, 5–7, 10, 20, 39–53, 131, 183, 218, 231, 234
Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, 4, 45