

Educating for Gross National Happiness

by

Sonam Dema

AS, Adams State University, 2004

BSW, University of Victoria, 2010

Certificate in Immigration: Laws, Policies and Procedures, University of British Columbia, 2016

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University of Victoria

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**Supervisory Committee**

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## **Abstract**

This project was pursued to study happiness as the goal of Education by looking at Bhutan and its education philosophy of Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH). First, I provide context to the topic by establishing the story of education that led to Bhutan's policy of EGNH. Then I look at the features of western capitalist societies and their education systems and review the social and psychosocial costs of a capitalist-based education system. Next I review historical Bhutanese government policies and documents to better understand the practices and current policies the government has adopted to achieve the goal of happiness in education. Recognizing that the integration of happiness into the western education system would require widespread reforms across the entire education system and all levels of government public policy, I look at how happiness could be integrated into western classrooms to complement the existing education system. Finally, recognizing the benefits of travel and exchange programs in education, I outline how educational tours to Bhutan (supplemented with a Moodle-based learning resource) could be used as a way to create and develop an awareness of happiness and bring the aims of happiness into the minds and actions of educators in the West.

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It has been a privilege to have the opportunity to study in Canada. Thank you for being a home away from home.

## **Dedication**

For Aum Ann Duffield, who passed away too soon. My education and life in Canada would not have been possible without you. I wish you were still with us.

## Chapter One

Our science — Greek science — is based on objectivation, whereby it has cut itself off from an adequate understanding of the Subject of Cognizance, of the mind. But I do believe that this is precisely the point where our present way of thinking does need to be amended, perhaps by a bit of blood-transfusion from Eastern thought.

—Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life?* 2012

We all want happiness in our lives and we want that same happiness for our children. From TED talks (Gilbert, 2006; Ricard, 2007; Steindl-Rast, 2013) to positive psychology theory to studies and literature on how to be happier (Haidt, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), it seems as though the quest for knowledge in the pursuit of happiness is ingrained in us. For Aristotle, and for A.S. Neill, founder of the Summerhill School, happiness was seen as being central and intimately connected to education. Neill (1962) explains the connection: “I hold that the aim of life is to find happiness, which means to find interest. Education should be a preparation for life. Our culture has not been very successful” (p.29). This underscores how the reality of what happiness means in terms of our day-to-day lives may be different; differences may also exist between our fundamental beliefs about happiness and what we teach our children about it. In a capitalist society, the norms and social expectations can pull us away from our pursuit of happiness. In this project, I have chosen to study Bhutan, a small country in the Himalayas which has a unique national development goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and an education philosophy of Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH).

## **Context: Bhutan and its Education History**

It is easy to lose material wealth- but not our capability and intelligence. I define progress as cultural, social, political and economic sophistication.

—Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, 5<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan (2006–present)

On a world map, Bhutan, a small kingdom with a population of 789,049 (National Statistics Bureau [NSB], 2017) and size of 38,394 square kilometers, is barely noticeable as it is sandwiched between the two major powers of Asia: China and India. Bhutan has never been colonized and its location in the Himalayas has left it isolated from the rest of the world for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bhutan is still a country unknown to many in the West. Hence, a short introduction to the country seems vital in order to provide context to Bhutan's education system.

Bhutan is unique in many ways. It is a country with impressive environmental standards; Bhutan is the only carbon negative country, absorbing over 6 million tons of carbon annually while producing only 1.5 million tons ("Bhutan: the world's first," 2017). It is a country that aims for zero net greenhouse gas emissions and zero waste by 2030. The import of chemical fertilizers, sale of tobacco and use of plastic bags are already banned. Bhutan's constitution requires that no less than 60 percent of the country remains forested and the current forest coverage is 72%. Bhutan set a world record by planting 49,672 trees in an hour in 2015 (Fenes, 2015), along with 108,000 trees to commemorate the birth of its crown prince in 2016. Social policy is a driving force in the country. Although Bhutan's economic worth as a whole, with a GDP of US\$ 2.237 Billion (The World Bank Group, 2017), is less than that of some Western individuals, health and basic education is available to all at no cost. Bhutanese culture remains strong. With its location in rugged mountainous terrain and its self-imposed isolation, there has

been a “delay” in modernization. The result is a country with a rich, flourishing culture; People wear their national/traditional dress every day, and Buddhism is very much instilled in people and plays a significant role in their daily lives. In fact Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion and about 75% of the Bhutanese population practice Buddhism (Bhutan, 2010). The national and official language of Bhutan is Dzongkha although English is gaining popularity as the language of communication.

In 2006, Bhutan’s fourth king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, abdicated his throne in favor of his Oxford- educated son, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck. After 100 years of absolute monarchy under the reign of five kings of the Wangchuck dynasty, the fourth King commanded the transformation from absolute monarchy to a parliamentary democracy, despite his peoples’ wish that Bhutan remain an absolute monarchy. With the first democratic parliamentary election on March 24, 2008, Bhutan’s system of government changed to constitutional monarchy with parliamentary form of government (Bhutan, 2010). This peaceful transition, unlike those in the neighbouring countries, came from the “top-down”, a gift from the previous king of Bhutan (the 4<sup>th</sup> king) and the present king of Bhutan to the people of Bhutan.

Bhutan’s unique development path under the leadership of its past and present kings is no different from Bhutan’s approach to educational development. Buddhist monastic education used to be the main form of schooling in Bhutan and it existed for over a thousand years. Secular education only began in the later part of the twentieth century and it is not based on Buddhism or monastic education. The first Five Year Development Plan (FYP) in 1961, which was the first in the series of national socio-economic development plans of the Royal Government of Bhutan, initiated modern/secular education. The 1st FYP focused on modernizing and monetizing Bhutan which triggered the opening of ‘modern’ schools to produce the human resources needed to

fulfill the planned development goals. 'Modern Secular Education' developed separately from the monastic education, with the importation of the British Colonial education system in India, in order to meet the immediate needs of the country. Since the beginning of this 'modern' education system about six decades ago, Bhutan's secular education system has experienced a vast array of changes. As recently as 2004, most of the school curricula was influenced by the Indian system, with public examinations administered directly by the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) in Delhi, India. Along with the Indian curriculum, which was out of context for Bhutanese students, they were also mostly taught by foreign teachers (primarily Indian teachers) (Gyamtso & Dukpa, 1998). The 'Bhutanization' of Bhutan's secular education system began in the 1980's with textbooks featuring Bhutanese worldviews. Almost half a century later, Bhutan has customized the 'borrowed' external curriculum and schooling system by integrating the Bhutanese philosophy of Gross National Happiness. Schools have been built, teachers educated, curricula designed, and materials published (Maxwell & Schuelka, 2016, p. 230). As per the National Statistics Bureau (2017), Bhutan now has a total of 558 Kindergarten, referred to as Pre-Primary, through Grade 12 schools. There are also 14 tertiary institutes, eight technical training institutes, 290 day care centres and early childhood care and development centers, 96 extended classrooms, 14 special education institutes, 7 continuing education centres, 200 monastic education and 674 non-formal centers.

### **Timeline - Development of 'Modern' Secular Education System in Bhutan**

- 1913 -----The first Modern school in Bhutan started in Haa.
- 1959 -----The number of schools increased to 11.
- 1961 -----1<sup>st</sup> 5 year plan
- 1962 -----The language of instruction was changed to English. Fr. William Mackey, a Jesuit Missionary was invited to Bhutan to set-up English medium schools. Development happened quickly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 1968 -----The first higher education began with Sherubtse School in Kanglung.
- 1972 -----Development philosophy of GNH was first pronounced by the 4<sup>th</sup> king of Bhutan.
- 1985 -----The New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) was launched and this promoted a move from teacher centric to child centric instruction.
- 1982 -----(5<sup>th</sup> FYP). Curriculum reform led to learning material based on Bhutanese context.
- 1990's ----Multi-grade teaching and in-service teacher training programmes were introduced
- 2004 -----Rewriting of the school curricula began with support from Canadian educators.
- 2010 -----Ministry of Education launched Education for GNH (EGNH) initiative

## **Gross National Happiness (GNH)**

“Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.”

—Jigme Singye Wangchuck, 4<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan (1972–2006)

Bhutan is the youngest democratic country in the world, and the only country to measure its success based on Gross National Happiness (GNH) instead of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). “Gross National Happiness (GNH) measures the quality of a country in a more holistic way and believes that the beneficial development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occurs side by side to complement and reinforce each other” (Alkire, Ura, Wangdi, & Zangmo, 2012, p. 7). All government policies are established based on the principles of GNH. Before looking at the Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) education system, it is important to understand GNH, the vision on which the EGNH education system is based.

Although Bhutan’s vision of Gross National Happiness has always existed informally, it was only first declared as an official development and policy goal in the 1970s by Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth king of Bhutan. The King has always been clear that the foremost priority of the nation must always be the happiness and well-being of its people: “Inserting *Happiness* into Bhutan’s pursuit of growth gives us a National Conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better future” (Jigme Khesar, King of Bhutan, 2013, p viii). The Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) was instituted “[to] ensure all development policies and plans are formulated and implemented in line with the principles of GNH” (Gross National Happiness Commission [GNHC], 2017)

What is happiness? We need to understand that when we say *happiness*, we are talking about well-being and happiness as a shared pursuit. It has less to do with individual happiness or individual liberty. What *happiness* means in Bhutan is well explained by Saul (2007), a Canadian author and philosopher, who differentiates 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century enlightenment theory of happiness from what he calls the 20<sup>th</sup> century's happiness, a superficial 'Disneyland-ish' concept of happiness as a bright, white smile. Saul understands happiness in Bhutan as the former, the enlightenment theory of happiness which is "...an expression of public good, of the public welfare, of the contentment of the people because things are going well" (p. 14).

It is very important to keep reminding people that in the expression "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", *happiness* is a reference to the public good, not a reference to savage individualism, meaning that you can go away and look after only yourself and make only yourself happy. It is the exact opposite of the idea which is unfortunately generally understood around the world. (Saul, 2007, p.14)

This is confirmed by Thinley, the first prime minister of democratic Bhutan when he questions how one creates an enlightened society where citizens understand that "...individual happiness is the fruit of collective action and happiness – that lasting happiness is conditioned by the happiness of surrounding individuals and that striving for others happiness is the most certain path to fulfilling experiences that bring true and lasting happiness [ ]" (2009, p.6-7). According to Thinley, *happiness* is not the same as "the fleeting, pleasurable 'feel good' moods so often associated with the term" (As cited in Alkire et al., 2012, p. 7). As we can see, the essence of GNH is development with values.

What does GNH mean to the people of Bhutan? A survey conducted to study the impact of GNH-infused curriculum gives some insight into what the concept [GNH] means to

Bhutanese people by asking participants (students, teachers, principals and parents) the definition of GNH (Zangmo, 2014, pp.31-46). The participants' responses focused on several themes including the common good, sustainability, and conservation of the culture and the environment. To Dechen, a 17-year-old student, GNH is "...first of all, happiness of the whole population....when applied to curriculum and teaching, it leads to a holistic learning. It also takes in consideration the culture and bio-diversity of the country as a key focus for proper and sustainable development". To Tsepyel, a 34-year-old teacher, GNH is

....being wise in the consumption (sustainable) so that one has a good life in the present as well as a better future for the next generation. GNH also means being content and understanding that happiness cannot simply result from the consumption or owning lots of properties, name or fame, it is a state of mind which can be trained and achieved in the way desired

For Dawa, a 49-year-old parent, GNH is "Happiness of the masses. It is a development path that judiciously balances sustainable and equitable growth with conservation of our unique culture, environment". All participants in the study acknowledged the holistic nature of GNH, where equal importance is placed on both the physical and emotional needs of the people.

Since the introduction of internet and television in 1999, Bhutan's engagement with the outside world has grown in recent years. As the world began to learn about Bhutan, its philosophy of GNH has fascinated the global community. At the same time, GNH is more than just the happiness of the people, it pursues the integrations of what is called the four pillars of GNH (GNH Centre Bhutan [GNHCB], n.d.; Thinley, 2007): (1) Sustainable socio-economic

development; (2) Environmental conservation; (3) cultural preservation and promotion; and (4) Good governance.

#### Four Pillars of GNH

1. Sustainable socio-economic development – Economic growth comes with its benefits and costs. While material security is important, we need to balance economic growth with human well-being and sustainable future, not at social and environmental cost.
2. Environmental conservation – The growth of Industry, commerce, innovation and trade are all part of the modern society that we live in. However, any development policy should take into account the environment conservation so that development does not happen at the cost of nature, environment, and other living beings.
3. Cultural preservation and promotion – strengthening customs and traditions that define ones identity as a nation. Bhutan has very distinctive culture and preservation and promotion of culture has been accorded high priority.
4. Good governance – Government providing its people with the right conditions to thrive. Where government create policies, conduct affairs, and manage public resources in a manner that best serves the happiness of its people. “GNH stresses collective happiness to be addressed directly thorough public policies in which happiness becomes an explicit criterion in projects and programmes, (Thinley, 2007, p.3)

Nine indicators are used to quantitatively measure GNH and these are referred to as *the nine domains*: Standard of living; Health; Education; Ecological diversity; Cultural resilience and promotion; Time use and balance; Good governance; Community vitality; and Emotional well-being (GNH Centre Bhutan, n.d). This pursuit of Happiness is considered the ‘middle path’

where there is a balance between modernity and tradition, material and spiritual needs, economic and social concerns, and physical transformation and ecological conservation (Wangchuck, n.d).



*Figure 1.* GNH as the Overarching Goal for Bhutan (Royal Education Council, 2012, p. 95)

Gross National Happiness as a development philosophy or paradigm has guided Bhutan's social and economic development and policy since the early 1970s, yet it is only now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that Western societies are giving it their attention and acknowledging its merits. In fact, it was only in 2012, in the wake of economic crises and the realization that material development alone does not necessarily reflect the well-being or happiness of the people, that world leaders gathered at the United Nation to learn more about Bhutan and its development philosophy of GNH (United Nations Development Programme, 2012).

## **Educating for Gross Domestic Product**

Education needs a new ethic, a civilizational ethic, if you will, to respond to the needs of our time.

—Thakur S. Phowdyel, 36<sup>th</sup> session of the UNESCO General Conference.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based policies focus on education's contribution to individuals' employability or income. With gross domestic product as the motivation for education reform, the resulting focus is more on the effects of education on income. If social outcomes are considered, then they are often discussed in terms of income and the effect of income on social outcomes rather than social outcomes as a direct result of education. In considering the emphasis on GDP, there is little in the way of literature looking directly at educational reform and its effect on happiness and life satisfaction of the individual or the influences of such things on society. Existing literature focuses mainly on the effects of secondary education reform and how it affects student achievement and entry into post-secondary education, and the consequences or results in terms of employability and income (Bridgeman, Burton & Pollack, 2008; Christofides, Hoy, Milla, & Stengos, 2015; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer & Elliot, 2002; Santos, 2012; Wintre, Dilouya, Pancer, Pratt, Birnie-Lefcovitch, Polivy & Adams, 2011). As a society, it seems that there has been an increasing focus on the effects and implications of schooling on the labour market and the creation of work force skills for that market. If you reduce the purpose of education to just GDP, I do agree with the idea that education is an important means to develop human capital and that human capital matters for economic progress, and there is certainly a substantial amount of literature focused on education in terms of its relation to economic progress (Becker, 1993; Eisner, 2001; Heckman & Masterov,

2007; Wolf, 2004). At the same time, I believe that there is more to happiness and prosperity than economic progress. Currently, the environment is characterized by growing inequality and increased concentration of wealth; those indicators and other phenomena provide evidence that the conventional indicator of economic success, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is inadequate in measuring the true success of a nation. There needs to be a better measure to provide balance.

Eisner's (2001) article "What does it mean to say a school is doing well?" voices the frustration with the education reforms that has been felt by many. At the time of the article, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) had just come about in the United States and the emphasis on creating a system driven by measurable goals and standardized testing was once again evident. He says, "Education has evolved from a form of human development serving personal and civic needs into a product our nation produces to compete in a global economy. Schools have become places to mass produce this product" (p. 301). There is an unquestioned consensus that the economy is the ultimate goal, and policy makers view education policy as an effective tool for ensuring economic prosperity. This intense economic focus can, however, have serious and negative implications on the quality of education. Wolf (2004), reviewing education and its relation to economic performance, calls for the need for policy makers to understand the importance of quality of learning. He states, "If chasing quantity reduces quality, societies can actually end up worse off than before in terms of the human capital formation they seek." (p. 330). There are various methods to cultivate different developmental outcomes. Arguments can be made about any method that might be used for education, yet there is an urgent need for truly holistic education. By looking into different principles and various methods, we can examine them and then be in a position to decide for ourselves if it will 'awaken' us in our educational practice. As we do this, we can become the resource person, the one who provide the options to

our students instead of being the ‘knower’. An additional benefit of this approach is that students will also take on a greater role in examining opportunities and making decisions for themselves.

In the contemporary standardized education system, *happiness* as an education goal seems unrealistic. How do we assess school achievement based on *happiness*? Eventually, I hope we can move away from the idea of assessment itself and away from a means-ends approach to education. For now, it could prove effective to move away from a focus on quantity, such as measured test scores being what assessment and evaluation is all about, to focus instead on quality. Of course assessing quality would be more complex and time consuming. The linear process of evaluation of quantity would also prove problematic. Eisner (2001) suggests that doing assessment as a description of learning showcases what a child has learned during their time in school. Moving away from the idea of only test scores as good representations of good quality education will result in a change in goals – a move away from emphasizing the goal of schooling being ‘doing better in school’ to schooling offering a means to enable students to ‘do better’ in their lives.

When looking at education reform, we need to understand the motivation behind the changes. For example, the addition of Indigenous perspectives into different subject areas came after political and legal recognition of the rights of Indigenous people and acknowledgment of the knowledge and contributions of the Indigenous peoples. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) examines policies and their influence on changes in public services such as regulation. The OECD promotes policies that improve economic and social wellbeing of people all over the world. A summary report by OECD (2015, October) titled “How’s Life?” looks to see if life is improving for people. While countries with high gross domestic product (GDP) per capita do well overall, the report delves further into different

populations within these countries. The analysis indicates that different populations within countries have very different experiences in terms of well-being that go well beyond household income. The social benefits of education are vast aside from the obvious benefits in terms of the increased income that is associated with the development of human capital. The OECD report of January 2013 shows there is a positive relationship between education and social outcomes such as health, political interest, interpersonal and institutional trust, civic engagement and the overall well-being of a person (2013, January). When the national goals are aligned with educational goals, policy makers are better equipped to address diverse societal challenges. This could be the benchmark to assess the extent to which government can better address people's well-being beyond economic benefits. Cognitive, social and emotional skills play an important role in explaining the effects of education on economic and social outcomes (OECD, 2010).

In Western societies, the predominant focus is on economic development; as such, not enough attention has been paid to the consequences of emphasizing and promoting growth in GDP as a primary goal. In British Columbia, the recent curriculum change, with the goal to ensure that students get the skills they need to succeed, is the latest development in the education reform (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015). Curriculum change is fluid and ongoing, and the change is usually in order to adapt to economic, global, and technological changes – basically to accommodate economic advantage. As with any education reform, we need to re-examine our motivation for curriculum change and adopt a paradigm shift which could take happiness and the wider social benefits of education into account. Discontent with the performance of our schools has resulted in many education reforms. In British Columbia, for instance, we have gone through several reforms in the last century. Unless we change the motivation, education reform will always be a game of power and politics. Broom (2016)

reviews social studies curriculum reform in British Columbia from 1920 to 2000 to find there are strong influences in power and politics involved at each time of education reform. She examines the roles that specific people played in the reform at different times and their social, economic, and political positions. At each time, the motivations of individuals with political power were the driving force of the reform. Education reform in the 21st century is focused on assisting individuals in adapting to rapidly evolving economic conditions such as multiple career changes and rapid technological change. With globalization comes increasing comparisons of different education systems and achievements, competition based on the belief that education results in economic advantages at both the individual and national levels, and beliefs that better test results mean better education systems. Education still seems to be controlled by the sole motivator, GDP. If one looks at the reforms in the United States, the same discontentment can be seen with different reforms at different stages: the first in 1983, with the 'Nation at Risk'; in 1987, with America '2000; Goals 2000'; and later, the 'No Child Left Behind' policy (Eisner, 2001). Each reform is focused on measurable goals with standardized testing and evaluation. When GDP is the motivation, money in terms of profit and resources gets debated and discussions inevitably become focused on discussions related to the funding of education reform. "Money" as an end result and dominant motivation is taken for granted. There is a need to debate the utility of GDP as the conventional indicator of economic success.

When we focus solely on GDP, which in turn focuses on assessment and results, the financial and mental stress on students can result in their dropping out. The consequences of attrition are high for students in post-secondary education who may be left with huge amounts of debt. A blog on the Guardian's Higher Education Network ([www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog](http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog)) highlights the rise in mental illness in academia due to pressures such

as job insecurity or uncertainty, the constant need to produce results, and the need to excel. In fact the authors argue that there is a “culture of acceptance” in universities when it comes to mental health issues such as depression, sleep issues, eating disorder, alcoholism, self-harming and even suicide attempts among Ph.D. students. The blog received over one hundred thousand responses; many people related with the topics it raised and described their experiences of mental illness in academic life. "This means that doctoral and early-career scholars are seldom trained in how to firmly draw that line and value themselves beyond their work," says Nadine Muller, lecturer in English literature and cultural history at Liverpool John Moores University. Another blog by the Guardian looks at mental health in academia by listening to the experiences of academics from around the world. For instance, a Ph.D. student from a Canadian university shares the story of supervisors who “publicly and proudly exchanged stories of failed marriages as if this was the ultimate proof of their devotion to research” (Shaw & Ward, 2014).

As mentioned previously, one of the main challenges or questions often raised with new curriculum in Bhutan is in terms of assessment. How is learning assessed in Bhutan when the goal is Happiness? We need to challenge this view of seeing “achievement” as a yardstick to measure success. When education is based on EGNH, it is not a commodity. Educating for EGNH successfully challenges this view. It is interesting to note that EGNH is not a new concept. Many Western educators and philosophers have emphasized the need for character education and development of virtue leading to Eudaimonia. Such virtue in children has been a topic of discourse since the time of Aristotle. Still the significance of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of morality are not all given equal importance in our current education system. Often it seems that when we talk about how something important needs to be learned, we say that it should be “learned by heart”; we do this to emphasize that this learning should become

‘all-encompassing’ and become a part of us. The reality, however, may be more that something is “learned by mind” – the cognitive aspects of such things as memory and thinking processes are seen as most essential in the learning. Looking at learning in this way highlights the true sense of transformative education. Western culture, which is dominated by reasoning, has moved the focus away from the heart and focused it almost solely on the brain. For a truly holistic education, however, we need to connect the heart to the brain to achieve what Aristotle calls the “mean” so that virtues education can take place. Happiness occurs when one engages in virtuous action and for this to happen, a movement of moral reform is necessary. Schools need to teach values and the ways to Happiness so that virtuous actions follow naturally.

When it comes to a model of moral education, theories vary. Dewey (1936) classified these theories into three categories. One places value on purpose and ends, the concept of the *Good*; Another that places value on law and regulation, the concept of *Duty* and the *Right*, and the third regards approbation and disapprobation of qualities of people as the primary moral fact, the concept of *Virtue* and *Vice* (p. 25). Since the contemporary North American education system focuses almost exclusively on preparing the student to be employable; the focus appears to be just on the *Good*, whereas the *Right* appears rather inconsequential, and at best, *Virtue* is barely touched because of its insignificance. The *Right* and *Virtue* gets conceptualized in its service and maintained in subordination to the *Good*. According to Dewey (1936), society plays a key role in what humans desire and want; usually these desires and wants are the ones to which society attributes value such as fame and power.

Educational tours to Bhutan would allow students to experience first-hand the way a society operates when government policy places importance on happiness; where leaders and citizens place importance on Gross National Happiness instead of happiness of self. This

experience of living and being in a Society that values the *Right* and *Virtue* in proportion to the *Good* could contribute to the development of students while complementing the current contemporary education in schools. It will further prepare students to become whole citizens instead of only the “productive” citizens in terms of GDP. In capitalist societies governed by the drive to maximize profits, being productive citizen means that students should become productive only in an economic sense. As a result, the focus of education turns to preparing children and youth for future careers instead of acquiring the types of knowledge about human society that could enhance ethical behavior. As per Tich Nhat Hahn,

The education that is needed for the present time is one that can wish away from the innocent minds of the young generation all the dogmatic knowledge that has been forced upon them with the pursuit of turning them into mere tools of various ideologies and parties. Such a system of education will not only liberate us from the prison of dogma but will also teach us understanding, love and trust. These qualities are the prescription needed for the revival of our society that has been paralyzed by suspicion, intrigue, hatred and frustration (as cited by Smith, p. 17).

## Chapter Two

### Educating for Gross National Happiness

If our Vision for the nation is not contained in the pages of the books that our young children hold, in the words of our teachers as they lead their classroom, and in the education policies of our government, then let it be said – we have no Vision

—Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, 5<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan (2006–present)

In his Speech at the National Graduates' Orientation (2012), the 5<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan emphasized the importance of cultural heritage, *Driglam Chhoesum* in particular, which is the Bhutanese cultural tradition of etiquette. His Majesty said, “ Driglam Chhoesum simply applies our age-old values to our daily lives and ensures that as we pursue individual goals and ambitions, we do so in harmony with others – that our individual success will build a strong, united and harmonious nation” (2012). For me, this is the essence of Happiness in Bhutan. It is not about individual happiness but rather the collective happiness of all. EGNH is the most recent initiative adopted by the government of Bhutan and based on the GNH values. EGNH emphasises the importance of developing knowledge, skills, and competencies for the twenty-first century while preserving and promoting the national culture and values and cultivating leadership of the self and care for others. It is founded on the Buddhist understanding of *Le Judrey* [law of cause and effect] and *Thadamtshing* [the commitment to others]. Since the launch of EGNH in Bhutan, two democratically-elected governments have come into power. Each government has made meeting the education goal of Gross National Happiness its highest priority and has launched different educational initiatives to meet that goal.

## **Green School for Green Bhutan**

After Bhutan elected its first democratic government in 2008, then Prime Minister, Jigme Y Thinley, a strong advocate of Gross National Happiness as a development philosophy of Bhutan, played a key role in formally bringing GNH into Bhutan's education system (Bhutan. MoE, 2010). The Education department, under the leadership of Minister of Education Thakur Singh Powdyel, aimed to realize the overall objective of the EGNH model of education and launched the Green Schools for Green Bhutan initiative in 2010. The green school concept is meant to complement the GNH-based national curriculum by addressing the physical and psychosocial climate of the schools (Brien & Drupka, 2013). It aims to prepare children for the world of work as well as life. The "green" in Green Education represents not just the color green or green in terms of the environment; it is a green philosophy that encompasses the various conditions that shape all aspects of the students' lives, expressed as eight greenery dimensions: natural, intellectual, academic, social, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic and moral (Bhutan. MoE, 2012)

Each of these eight dimensions provides guidance. *Natural greenery* means creating an environment in schools that are inviting, happy spaces for the students. *Intellectual greenery* includes using new ideas and knowledge that engages the students. *Academic greenery* means having high academic standards with deep insight. *Social greenery* means encouraging the growth of students by being inclusive and encouraging diversity. *Cultural greenery* is the promotion and preservation of Bhutanese culture, tradition and values. *Spiritual greenery* means creating mindfulness and awareness of all other beings, being more conscious, and believing in a higher power. *Aesthetic greenery* is the acknowledgement and appreciation for genuine objects,

and *moral greenery* means making sure the students are able to distinguish right from wrong, truth from untruth, and good from bad, as moral values guide students, teachers and parents (Education policy and guidelines and instruction, 2012). Along with the eight dimensions, green schools also encourage the involvement of parents and the communities in the education of their children.

The eight dimensions of Green School for Green Bhutan support the education goal of happiness and ultimately the national goal of Gross National Happiness by integrating the four pillars of GNH (sustainable and equitable economic development; environmental conservation; cultural promotion; and good governance) at the classroom level. For example, the GNH pillar of cultural preservation is brought into action in schools with daily prayers and meditation sessions in the morning assemblies, the national/traditional dress as the school uniform, and traditional music and stories as part of students' school activities. Simple actions such as ending the school day with a ten-minute walk around the school to take in the greenery is a means of instilling in children an appreciation of nature. Furthermore, these types of activities provide authentic opportunities to teach children how to identify various medical herbs in nature, contributing to the GNH pillar of environmental conservation.

In addition, the pillars of sustainable and equitable economic development and environmental conservation are exemplified in other aspects of the green school. According to Thakur S Powdyel, educating for GNH is not a new fad or fashion imposed on the system. On the contrary, Powdyel says, “[i]t is essentially a call to return to the core function, the fundamental objective, of education” (UNESCO, 2011). An example of this back-to-basics approach is the idea of “green clean”. In this case, green is used as a metaphor for cleaning. With “green clean”, not only are students responsible for keeping their surroundings clean, but they do

so using recycled materials. Students recycle bottles and use twigs and branches that they have gathered as brooms to clean their classrooms, their schools, and their communities.

Jigme Losel Lower Secondary School in the capital city of Thimphu is considered a model of the green school mindset. The school has a communal vegetable garden that teaches children basic agricultural skills, and every classroom adopts a flower garden and a tree that they are responsible for throughout the year (Kelly, 2013, January 02). The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, encourages schools with feeding programs to teach children how to grow their own vegetables and raise livestock. The production of organic foods and improvements in the nutrition of students are some of the more tangible outcomes, but the practices also instill in children the dignity of labour and an appreciation for home-grown products and farming (MoE, Annexure 7, Notice, 2012, pg. 39)

### **Bhutan's Education Blueprint 2014-2024**

Following the work of the first democratically elected government, Bhutan's second democratically-elected government started an education initiative of its own and this was implemented under the leadership of the current Education Minister, Norbu Wangchuk (2017). Bhutan's Education Blueprint was the main initiative under the new leadership and the goal is to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to raise student competencies to international standards (Bhutan. MoE, 2014b). With 95% net primary enrolment, the government is now close to meeting the quantity goal of expanding access to education to all Bhutanese children that it has been pursuing since the introduction of modern education in the 1950s (Bhutan. MoE, Annual Education Statistics, 2016). At the same time as it aims to further access to education,

with the projected goal of 100% enrolment by 2024, Bhutan's Education Blueprint puts particular focus on the quality of learning outcomes (Bhutan, MoE. iSherig, 2014)

With modernization, the technological revolution, and the development of the country came higher societal expectations in terms of the quality of education (Dukpa, 2015). As a result, an Education Review Office was established in May 2014 to lead the development of the Education Blueprint (Bhutan, MoE, 2014). A study conducted by iDiscoveri India and the Royal Education Council discovered a very substantial gap between the quality of the existing schooling system and the desired outcomes of the government and people of Bhutan (Bhutan, MoE, Education Review Office (ERO), 2014). Classroom practices and the learning environment, school process, and education support systems were recognized as some of the key issues that needed to be addressed (Bhutan, MoE, 2014).

Why was the Bhutan Education Blueprint necessary and how was it created? It was developed by the present government to radically reform the Bhutanese education system to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Bhutan by providing a clear road map towards transformation of the Bhutanese education system towards Vision 2020, a policy document which describes the goal of Bhutanese students achieving the best of indigenous wisdom and global competence (Bhutan, MoE, 2014). An inclusive and collaborative approach was employed in the creation of Vision 2020 (see Appendix A). The document was developed through nationwide consultations with different stakeholders through public consultations, focus group discussions, field surveys, online surveys, online forum discussions, one-one-one interviews, on-air consultations, and memorandums from individuals or interest groups (Bhutan, MoE, ERO, 2014. pg. 3-4)

## **Education Vision and the Challenges.**

Bhutan's Education Blueprint 2014-2024; Re thinking Education (Bhutan, MoE,2014b) outlines four thematic aspirations of the education system and the challenges faced with each aspiration. Interventions to address the challenges faced in these four thematic aspirations of the education system must ultimately contribute towards the development of the nine attributes of the student learning to meet the Education Vision of “[a]n educated and enlightened society of GNH built and sustained on the unique Bhutanese values of *tha dam-tshing ley gye-drey*”(Bhutan, MoE, 2014). *Tha dam-tshing* is the commitment to others (the king, the country, and the people) in society, and *ley gye-drey* is the law of cause and effect.

### **Four Thematic Aspirations of the Education System**

#### **1. Achieving access to [good] quality education.**

Providing access to good quality education is the aim of ensuring access to education for all Bhutanese children so that they can realize their full potential and fulfill the country's vision to become a knowledge-based society. Challenges faced in this aim are vast, such as socio-economic background, geographic location etc. As the government aims to better match knowledge and skills with market demand by expanding education to vocational and technical fields instead of purely academic programmes, it faces the challenge of overcoming society's view of these institutions as “second-class education” (Bhutan, MoE, 2014b, p. 24). Another unique challenge faced by Bhutan is the low adult literacy rate of 55% as of 2014 (p.26). With the nation's goal of full adult literacy, the need to improve the curriculum and delivery method of Non-formal Education (NFE) has been recognized. While attempting to achieve full adult literacy, the government also

aims to expand and diversify its continuing education program for those pursuing higher education opportunities. Finally, access to special education needs is one of the biggest challenges as there are only limited number of support services and facilities available for children with special needs as well as gifted children. Strengthening and expanding specialized education services is another challenge the Bhutan Education Blueprint seeks to address.

## **2. Achieving [higher] Quality of Education**

The Bhutan Education Blueprint's next thematic aspiration of achieving higher quality of education aims to provide enabling conditions in schools so that Bhutan has an education system that is innovative and creative while retaining and maintaining universal human values of peace and harmony (Bhutan, MoE, 2014b). The blueprint emphasizes student learning by focusing on school resources including feeding and nutrition programs for proper development and functioning of children, teacher competencies and deployment policy, curriculum revision, and holistic assessment to better student learning outcomes (Bhutan, MoE, 2014b). A key area identified in this aspiration is the quality of leadership in schools, including the role of principals and the effects of leadership and capacity on outcomes. The blueprint looks at policy interventions and professional development programmes to improve their efficiency (Bhutan, MoE, 2014b).

## **3. Equity in Education**

The third thematic aspiration of achieving equity in education aims to provide not only quality and excellence but equity through fairness and inclusion. Geographical location is the greatest challenge as there are many places in Bhutan that are very remote. Research shows concerning gaps between rural and urban student learning achievement (National

Education Assessment, 2011). The Blueprint recognizes the gaps and looks at fairness in resource allocation and the distribution of experienced teachers to the remote or rural areas. As teachers are one of the most important resources, improving their working conditions and providing career and financial incentives to them are some of the interventions recognized in the Blueprint. Besides geographical location, socio-economic status, special education needs, and gender are challenges faced by the Bhutanese education system. Some of the interventions recognised in the Blueprint (MoE, 2014b) include establishing central schools in rural areas to better implement school reforms, providing the right training for teachers to better assist students with special needs, encouraging private educational institutes for students with special educational needs, and focusing on the plans and programmes to reduce gender equity gaps.

#### **4. System Efficiency**

The need to work systematically, to improve system efficiency is recognized in the Blueprint. The Blueprint, with its set goals and timeline, is a start to evidence-based planning, which is critical to system efficiency. Building human resources capacity and capability, using information and communication technology to enhance communication and to make information and knowledge more accessible, improving the Education Management Information System (EMIS) for better tracking and flow of information, ensuring more autonomy at district and school levels, developing an Education Act to have one legal framework for education in the country, and fostering more collaboration and partnership between different institutions and between the public and private sectors are seen as ways to achieve this aspiration in the Blueprint (MoE, 2014b).

### **Aspirations for Student Learning.**

Nine attributes have been identified in the Blueprint for student learning so that each student can thrive and achieve his or her full potential. The Attributes are based on Bhutan's development vision of Gross National Happiness and also on examples set by high-performing and relevant systems from around the world (MoE, 2014b, pg. 65). The Attributes are focused on knowledge and competencies but also encompass identity, character building, personal and national values and physical and psychological wellbeing.

1. Knowledge and understanding – Realizing their potential to become fully literate in science, math, technology, arts and languages (Dzongkha and English) with the goal of holistic development so that each student is not only literate but also capable and willing to contribute to their own well-being along with the well-being of the community and the nation.
2. Intellectual competence – Building competence so that every student has the skills and knowledge to keep learning through inquiry; this will ensure that creative solutions and cognitive skills are well developed.
3. Communicative competence – Ensuring that students are able to communicate effectively in both Dzongkha, the national language, and English, the de facto international language of communication. Dual language proficiency will enable students to build relationships across borders and cultures. Besides the ability to understand and communicate both orally and in written form in both languages, students should also be able to communicate respectfully and with empathy.

4. Enduring habits of life-long learning – Building lifelong learning habits and the value of hard work and creating in students the ability to transfer academic learning to real world solutions by building their critical thinking and reasoning skills.
5. Family, community and national values – Ensuring that students not only recognize and appreciate the familial values, but instill in them a sense of gratitude, respect and responsibility to the community, the nation, and the global environment.
6. Spirituality and Character – Developing students’ self-esteem and self-identity in conjunction with the values of Gross National Happiness so that they are not self-centered. Ensure students value interdependence, have a sense of belonging, and are not easily lured by materialism.
7. Physical wellbeing – Providing high-quality physical education including a healthy diet is recognized as an integral part of school education in order to develop students’ physical well-being and to encourage students to lead a healthy lifestyle.
8. Leadership competence – Providing every student with the opportunity to develop leadership potential and learn leadership values while being able to work as a team. This is especially important now in democratic Bhutan.
9. World-readiness – Challenging students so that they are ready for the competitive global job market while remaining sensitive and committed to Bhutanese values and GNH.

Figure 1.4 General Education curriculum PP-XII

	SCIENCE	COMMERCE	HUMANITIES	TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL EDUCATION	RIGZHUNG
GRADE XI - XII  AGE 17 - 18	<b>Compulsory</b> Dzongkha, English	<b>Compulsory</b> Dzongkha, English	<b>Compulsory</b> Dzongkha, English	<b>Compulsory</b> Dzongkha, English	<b>Compulsory</b> Dzongkha, English, Chenju Sumtag, Kjur, Nyengag
	<b>Core</b> Physics, Chemistry	<b>Core</b> Commerce, Accountancy Business Mathematics	<b>Electives (3 - 4)</b> Geography, Business Mathematics, ICT	<b>Electives</b> 3 subjects from a pool of vocational subjects	<b>Electives (1)</b> Gyabrab, Tshi
	<b>Elective (1)</b> Biology, Mathematics, ICT Economics, TVE Subjects Entrepreneurship Edu- cation	<b>Optional</b> ICT, Economics, Rigzhung Vocational Subjects Entrepreneurship Educa- tion	<b>History, Rigzhung</b> Vocational subjects Entrepreneurship Education	<b>Optional (1)</b> ICT, Functional Mathematics Economics, Entrepreneurship Education	<b>Optional (1)</b> Nencha (Music) TVE subjects Entrepreneurship Education
	<b>Compulsory but not evaluated:</b> HPE, Moral/Values/Buddhist Education			<b>Compulsory but not evaluated:</b> HPE, Moral/Values/Buddhist Education	
GRADES IX - X  Age 15 - 16	<b>Main Stream</b> <b>Core Subject</b> Dzongkha, English, Mathematics, Science (Physics, Chemistry, Biology), History and Civics, Geography <b>Elective Subject</b> Moral/Values/Buddhist education, ICT Literacy, Music Education, Visual Arts, Media Studies, TVET subjects, International Languages, HPE, Moral/Values				<b>Rigzhung</b> <b>Core Subject</b> Dzongkha, English, Khordey Lam Sum, Ngagdroen Nyer- Khoi-Nam, Shed, Ka-Ned Selwai Melong <b>Elective Subject</b> Vocational Subjects, Music Education, ICT Literacy, TVET Subjects, International Languages
GRADES VII - VIII  Age 13 - 14	<b>Core Subject</b> Dzongkha, English, Mathematics, Science, History and Civics, Geography <b>Elective Subject</b> Moral/Values/ ICT Literacy, Music Education, Visual Arts, Media Literacy, TVET Orientation, HPE, Buddhist Studies				
GRADES IV - VI  Age 10 - 12	<b>Core Subject</b> Dzongkha, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies <b>Elective Subject</b> Moral/Values/Buddhist education, ICT Literacy, Music Education, Visual Arts, Media Literacy, TVET Orientation, HPE.				
GRADE PP - III  Age 6 - 9	<b>Core Subject</b> Dzongkha, English, Mathematics <b>Elective Subject</b> HPE, Moral/Values/Buddhist Education				

Note: The subject categories given above and offered in school Education is dynamic and subject to change as per the need and time.

Figure 2. General Education Curriculum PP-X11 (Annual education statistics, 2017. p. 11)

Note. HPE = Health and Physical Education, ICT = Information and Communication Technology, TVET = Technical and Vocational Education and Training

In consultation with different stake holders, eight shifts and forty initiatives are recognized in the blueprint to guide the transformation of Bhutan's education system. Below are the eight shifts:

1. Enhance access and equity in education
2. Revamp curriculum and assessment to enrich student learning
3. Raise learning outcomes of students to a level comparable to leading international standards
4. Transform teaching into a profession of choice

5. Ensure high performing schools and leaders
6. Leverage International Communication Technology for learning
7. Enhance values education and wellbeing
8. Implement system transformation, delivery capabilities and capacities.

The Blueprint takes into account some of the challenges that have been faced with education transformation in other nations around the world. A time-bound autonomous agency is in place to ensure the implementation of the Blueprint, and there are measures to mitigate conflict, address resistance to change, and increase commitment from leaders.

### **Transformative Journey**

Eight shifts and 40 initiatives have been recognized in the Blueprint. The initiatives have been sequenced over a period of ten years into three sections called waves so that they will be manageable in terms of time and organised such that they will not overwhelm the system in terms of time or capability. The transformation period is set to take place in three waves:

- Wave 1 (2014-2017): Lay the foundation and initiate interventions to turn around the system.
- Wave 2 (2018-2020): Accelerate system improvement and the transformation process
- Wave 3 (2021-2024): Move towards Excellence.

The following figure from the Bhutan education blueprint lists the eight shifts along with the 40 initiatives.

<b>SHIFT 1</b>	<b>SHIFT 2</b>	<b>SHIFT 3</b>	<b>SHIFT 4</b>
<b>Enhance access and equity to education</b>	<b>Revamp curriculum and assessment to enrich student learning</b>	<b>Raise learning outcomes of students to international standard</b>	<b>Transform teaching into a profession of choice</b>
* Enhance access and equity to ECCD programme	*Restructure/ Reorganize education pathway	* Transform teaching learning practices	* Raise teacher morale and motivation
* Enhance access to basic, higher secondary, and technical/vocational education	* Benchmark school curriculum to international standards	* Facilitate students' to be independent learners	* Enhance the quality of Professional Development (PD) programmes
* Enhance access to tertiary education	* Revamp assessment system	* Ensure physical and psychosocial ambiance	* Implement competency and performance-based career progression
* Enhance access to special education programme		* Recognise and reward high performers	* Raise the entry bar for teachers
* Expand access to NFE and CE programmes			* Revamp teacher preparation programmes in the Colleges of Education
* Bridge the learning gap			

<b>SHIFT 5</b> Ensuring high-performing schools and leaders	<b>SHIFT 6</b> Leveraging ICT for learning	<b>SHIFT 7</b> Enhance values education and well being	<b>SHIFT 8</b> System transformation, delivery capabilities and capacities
* Empower schools to promote good governance	* Implement the 'iSherig' (Education ICT Master Plan)	* Strengthen sustainability of Educating for GNH programme	* Reorganise the organisational and functional structures at the Ministry level/ Dzongkhag Level/ School Level
* Ensuring high-performing school leaders		* Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the Educating for GNH programme	* Establish at least 1-2 Private International Schools/ institutions
* Empower teachers to enhance student learning		* Upscale the implementation of youth education programmes	* Enhance institutional coordination and collaboration
* Strengthening involvement of parents and community			* Initiate and institutionalize Education Act
* Ensure classroom and school infrastructure meet			* Establishment of National

Figure 3. Eight shifts and 40 initiatives (MoE, 2014b, p.91)

Note. CE = Continuing Education, ECCD = Early Childhood Care and Development, ICT = Information and Communication Technology, NFE = Non-Formal Education

## **International Educational Tour**

Travel is rich with learning opportunities, and the ultimate souvenir is a broader perspective.

—Rick Steves

International educational tours will open the eyes of educators by showing them new and different ways of looking and understanding things such as ways of living, learning, and teaching. These types of tours offer students the opportunity to learn from others around the globe. Participants can become aware of their own ethnocentrism and realize that the ways things are done in one particular culture may not be the only way nor the best way. One of the most significant advantages of international educational tours is that all of this learning and realization happens “naturally”, through experiences in communities, during family homestays, during travel, etc. rather than in the “artificial” setting of an academic or classroom environment. Pelissier’s (1991) article “The anthropology of teaching and learning” identifies these former types of learning as “informal” education, where the distinction from “formal” education is based on whether activity or teaching and learning is the main goal. Students also learn to take responsibility for their own learning. They can become more self-directed and self-reflective – what they learned in class, watched on television, or read in a book becomes a lived educational experience. Students learn not only to respect others views and cultures but to understand and value diversity.

With educational tours growing in popularity in recent decades, there is an expanding body of research on the benefits of educational tours including study-abroad programs, exchange programs, field schools, and short term tours. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, borders no longer exist in many ways and the world is shrinking. The development of cross-cultural knowledge and

competencies through travel is fast becoming an essential part of academia and not just a luxury or optional experience. Many renowned schools have campuses abroad and some universities have developed entire programs focused around educational travel. For instance, Minerva Schools at KGI are based on travel; over the course of four years, students live in seven different cities around the world while learning and completing their degree program (“Global Experience,” 2017)

Similar to other travel experiences, the benefits of educational tour experiences are diverse, complex, and dependent on many variables such as the participant’s age, the destination, previous travel experience, prior experience at the destination or with the culture, etc. (Jenkins, 2010). In general, however, travel improves the student’s ability to work across nationalities but also prepares them to effectively navigate cultures within their own home country. It gives the students the experience of being ‘the other’ which is important in this global world. These skills are particularly valuable in Canada, a country where new immigrants arrive every day and that prides itself on diversity. Immersion in another culture and exposure to different ways of living develops students’ knowledge and broadens their horizons. This also results in an enhanced sense of global unity. Consequently, the benefits of these types of transformative learning provide the main impetus for the increasing number of collaborative relationships amongst universities in different countries. The international experience is now a core element of many schools around the globe. Programs where an international study program is integral have demonstrated that its transformative effects generate a level of learning that is not seen in conventional courses (Gilin & Young, 2009). Furthermore, educational tours are also shown to have benefits that align with economic and career goals by better preparing students for changing economics, increased migration and to the forces of globalization. Studies show that students

who have travelled are better prepared for global professions (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Dwyer, 2004). With the growth in international job opportunities, global thinking and cultural literacy are now seen as being essential for success.

## **Educational Tours to Bhutan**

When we are trying to learn a new topic or something that is foreign to us, a tour to the country of origin as part of the knowledge dissemination process can provide learners with opportunities for deeper understanding. Ritchie (2003) divides educational tourism within the travel market into two types. The first is education-focused travel by students where a formal educational component comes before a tourist experience, and the second is general student tours where the tourist experience is the main focus of travel. The proposed educational tour to Bhutan would belong in the first category, where the main focus is education but the tourist experience would help to further enhance the educational purposes, goals, and outcomes. While tourism is not the primary motivation, the tourist experience would be a large but still secondary part of the educational travel.

In terms of learning about Educating for Gross National Happiness, being in Bhutan would provide students with a broader understating of the culture, government policy, and systems in place which influence the education philosophy. Travel in general is educational; we know this from personal experience and literature also provides support for this (Falk et al., 2012; LaTorre, 2011). Learning (through discovery, experience and reflection), personal growth, and enrichment are key motivators for many travelers. For students, transformative learning, especially learning experiences which occur naturally outside of the classroom, have been one of the key benefits of educational tours (Werry, 2008). Although educational trips facilitate direct contact and immersed experience, there is usually less time available for instruction, which means there is a greater need for pre-trip preparations (Bitgood, 1989). A review of the literature on field trips indicates that such trips are not ideal for teaching complex or new ideas and they are best used as an opportunity for first-hand and original experiences. Consequently, there is a

need to provide a novelty space (or Familiarity Index) and ensure the presence of good quality preparation and follow-up (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). In fact, research shows that a short preparatory unit can be effective in increasing the familiarity index and can result in significantly higher performance (Orion & Hofstein, 1994).

Use of a learning management system such as Moodle, where students learn in an academic setting, in combination with an educational tour, where students learn in the natural environment, should enhance the learning experience. In this case, employing the Moodle course as a pre-trip preparation would not only familiarize students with Bhutan and the topics of GNH and EGNH, but it will also help to dispel any misconceptions about the country and set the tone for an educational tour. With pre-preparation done in Moodle, students will be in a position to take full advantage of the unique characteristics of the informal learning settings during the trip.

Two common types of educational tours seen in schools and universities are exchange programs and study abroad programs. While the length of the educational tours tends to better match with exchange programs which are usually short term programs, there is no exchange component to the program. Hence it is better aligned with the study abroad program with a good mix of tourism component in it. Study abroad has been shown to have a significant impact on change of perspective (Bachner & Zeuschel, 2009; Dwyer, 2004) and that is the main goal of the tour to Bhutan. I want the future generations to understand the happiness-based perspective of living and learning and education is one of the best ways of transmitting this. Comparing students who participated in travel programs with ones who did not, studies have found significant differences, not only in students' general skills such as independence, self-confidence, and communication and social skills, but also in cognitive growth, expanded worldview,

enhanced international perspective and cultural awareness, and even general academic achievement (Chieffo & Griffiths 2004; Dwyer, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2004). Learning outside of the classroom is one of the biggest benefits of educational tours. The cities, the villages, and the homestays all become ‘classrooms’ and students learn naturally. Not only does this make the learning process more natural, but students also retain more of what is learned or observed. For example, many students might not recall what they learned in a classroom, yet their homestay experience is something that will not be forgotten and they will carry the memories with them as they move forward in life. Moreover, the experiences can help dispel individually-held stereotypes and lead to changes in individual attitudes and behaviour. There are can also be more indirect benefits. For instance, Bachner and Zuetschel (2009), explain that one of the long-term effects of international educational travel is “the degree of which one actually has applied the results of exchange and influenced others’ attitudes and behaviors” (p. 46). As future educators, they can then go on to have greater influence on the youth they will teach.

An article related to self-assessing the benefits of educational tours (Cohen, 2016) shows the influence of government policy on programs. Being in the country will enable education students to observe how policies shape a variety of social programs including education. They will explore how values and leadership can influence the laws, policies, and practices of the country, which in turn builds or constrains the social programs of a country (Cohen, 2016). This is very important learning outcome and the education students will observe how the policies in Bhutan have shaped its educational philosophy. Since happiness is not prioritized or integrated with policy in the educational field in Western countries, the educational tour component of this program would not only contribute to the positive personal changes and growth of the education students participating but the travelers could influence peers and their future students in this

regard upon their return home. Our own language and culture tends to be the starting point of our understanding. Many expatriates living in foreign lands will attempt to gain understanding by trying to identify similarities in their own culture or language; in many instances, however, they come to realize that none exist. This realization for many in the West would be an additional and valuable learning which could assist future educators in preparing for today's diverse classrooms and providing leadership in inclusive practices.

### **Assessment of Learning**

Assessment is important, and in this course it can also provide a means of assessing the program itself and the delivery of future tour programs. The key goal of the project is to create awareness about the need to focus on happiness and that educating just for the purpose of gross domestic product results can result in too much emphasis being placed on the impact of education in terms of grades, employability, and income, and not enough on the individual's life satisfaction. While there are many methods to assess educational programs and tours, research has focused on the impact and benefits of educational tours by looking at two particular assessment methods, pre-post surveys and retrospective self-assessment.

Pre-post survey involves a researcher distributing questionnaires to participants pre and post trip and then conducting an analysis of the responses to make comparisons. In retrospective self-assessment, students are asked to reflect on the trip or journey and compare specific changes that have occurred pre- and post- trip (Cohan, 2016; Coulter, 2012; Hill & Bentz, 2005; Nosek, 2005). For the EGNH tour to Bhutan, I feel that a combination of the two methods along with reflection on practical change in pedagogy could further enhance future tours. Retrospective self-assessment could provide information about the holistic experience and the pre- and post-

surveys would assess specific attitudinal and behavioral changes. In addition, the Moodle course will support the students with pre-departure orientation and give them an opportunity to reflect upon return to their home countries. It will also give the students a platform to share their ideas on how EGNH can be applied in western classrooms and reflect upon their Bhutanese experience.

## Chapter Three

### Learning Resource: Moodle Course

#### Course Description

This course was developed to provide students in undergraduate and graduate-level teacher education programs with an introduction to Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH), a human centered approach to education that offers an alternative to the mainstream system of education focused on human capital.

Education reform is ongoing and usually any change is proposed in order to adapt to economic, global and technological changes, basically to accommodate economic advantage. Discontent with performance in North American schools has resulted in frequent and varied attempts at education reform. There is a need to re-examine our motivation for change by considering happiness and the related social benefits of education.

In the Moodle course, education students have the opportunity to explore EGNH and develop new paradigms which can be applied to improve teaching practice, revise curriculum, and foster skill-building in schools. The course also provides foundational knowledge and experience for students preparing to travel to Bhutan to participate in an educational tour

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, learners should be able to:

- Describe the philosophies of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH)
- Recognize the advantages and benefits that can be realized in moving away from means-ends approaches to education.

- Identify opportunities for including the values of happiness in making adaptations to existing curriculum

For the outcomes, all three domains of learning are targeted with emphasis on the high cognitive and affective domains and mid to high for the psychomotor domain. Following Bloom's Taxonomy, the Moodle course is organized to move the learner from simple knowledge building to applying current knowledge and new ideas/knowledge and then on towards critical thinking and action.

### **Moodle Lesson Structure**

Using the CARDS planning model, each lesson has the following sections:

- Context
- Activity
- Reflection
- Discussion/Documentation
- Summary

### **Course Design & Structure**

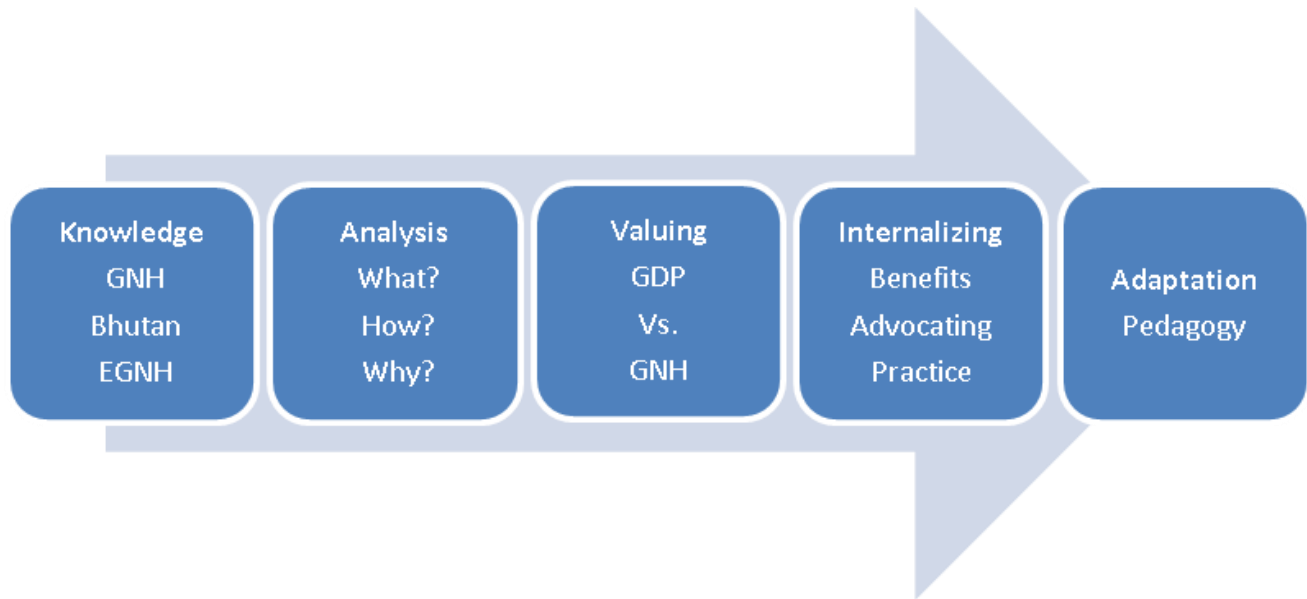
#### **Sections at the Top of the Moodle Course Site:**

- Welcome message with Instructor and Course Introduction
- Instructor contact and Virtual office hour information
- Course Documents and Resources
- Course Communications
- Course Assessments with due dates

#### **Sections at the Bottom of the Moodle Course Site:**

- Log out link
- Institution support link
- LMS support link

### Moodle Course Map



*Figure 4.* Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) course map

### Moodle Course Content

Providing good quality preparation and follow-up to the educational tour to Bhutan to enhance the overall learning was a big factor in the design and choice of content for the Moodle course. Learners' interaction with online content was considered in choosing the medium of communication for the course. Different modalities such as text in the form of readings, videos summarizing each lesson, and images have been used to create the content. Learning Management System tools were utilized to facilitate interactions virtually and face-to-face during the educational trip to Bhutan with the use of chats and forums. Finally, considering the target

audience are educators or future educators, the course lessons and assignments have been sequenced so that they are learners receiving information at the beginning of the course, and learners creating content by the end of the course.

### **Course Reading**

The reading material for the Moodle course is an article by Elliot Eisner, “**What Can Education Learn from the Arts about the Practice of Education?**” This article was selected to better assist the course in first creating awareness about current knowledge and to provide a sample framework for critical thinking and action.

In the article, Eisner proposes employing principles from the arts as inspiration for improving current educational practices. Elaborating on the different forms of thinking that arts evoke, he emphasizes the need for similar thinking in education; the result, he suggests, can be a fundamental shift in the “culture of schooling” (pg. 10).

Eisner begins by discussing the historical and social contexts of education. One of the major influences was the application of psychology to education. Psychologists in the 19th century sought to “create a science of mind” (pg. 2). This movement, along with the influences of social efficiency and rationalization in the culture, has resulted in an industrialized school culture.

Eisner emphasizes the need for a new aspiration where values and assumptions focus on the development of the individual, qualitative forms of intelligence, and intrinsic satisfaction rather than uniformity and systematic evaluation of student performance in terms of predetermined outcomes.

The article, with clear description of distinctive form of artistically-rooted thinking, would provide a good foundation for Happiness based thinking and a sample frame work for creative pedagogy, a framework that provides intrinsic satisfaction. It will help learners become aware of the focus on satisfaction that's outside oneself in the current western education system and prepare them to move towards the aspiration of Happiness in education.

### **Course Videos**

With the aim of developing and integrating an awareness of Happiness in our education system and beyond, the videos have been created to not just supplement the Moodle course but to be able to stand on their own. This was done deliberately so that viewers who are not interested or not able to participate in the Moodle course still learn about the philosophy of Gross National Happiness and Educating for Gross National Happiness.

Below is a list of the videos that are used in the Moodle course.

Course Introduction - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BFSnQay4KU>

Course Summary - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTEJkYsu\\_FM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTEJkYsu_FM)

Bhutan and Gross National Happiness - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC2GbKa60ho>

Educating for Gross National Happiness - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtfsBKxGmRk>

Course Conclusion - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqa-D1q5nN0>

## **Topic 1 (lesson 1 & 2): Bhutan and its development philosophy of Gross National Happiness**

Sub-outcome(s): Develop an awareness of the country of Bhutan and the country's history; recognize the 4 domain and 9 indicators of Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness

Learning tasks and assessment:

- Complete lessons on the history of Bhutan and the concept of GNH
- Watch a video on Bhutan and Gross National Happiness  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC2GbKa60ho>)
- Compare and contrast GNH versus GDP.
- Reflect on what you know, why you know what you know, and how you know what you know (see Appendix B and Appendix C)

## **Topic 2 (lesson 3 & 4): Lesson on EGNH**

Sub-outcome(s): Understand ENGH, the values and principles of EGNH, and the characteristics of ENGH-based curriculum and assessment.

Learning tasks and assessment:

- Complete lesson on Educating for Gross National Happiness.
- Watch a video on Educating for Gross National Happiness  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtfsBKxGmRk>)
- Complete lesson on Competency Based Assessment.
- Evaluate the GNH-based education model. Share your ideas on the forum.
- Re-examining our motivation to consider happiness

- Look at ways to integrate the aim of happiness into existing curriculum or lesson plans.  
Use the five pathways of EGNH as a guide.
- Select five key values and share them with the rest of the class.
- Review a current assessment tool or evaluation method to identify opportunities to incorporate EGNH or design new assessment and evaluation tools/methods based on EGNH assessment and evaluation methods which value quality versus quantity
- Work on a group presentation during the trip to share with the rest of the class.

## Conclusion

I hope that countries in the industrialized world might rethink their emphasis on testing and preparing students to “compete in the global economy” and, instead, give serious consideration to the holistic, sustainable model of education being developed in Bhutan. The world needs desperately needs education that fosters wholeness rather than schooling that disconnects.

—John P. Miller

According to Levin (2010), successful educational reform can only take place when educators are motivated and engaged. He also emphasizes the need for reform ideas to slowly permeate (2008). Western ideas move to the East rapidly and Eastern societies tend to accept them. What if Eastern ideas were to move to the West? What could the western education system learn from this idea of Educating for Gross National Happiness, a human centered approach to education that offers an alternative to the mainstream system of education focused on human capital? With ongoing educational reforms, there is a constant global search for “the perfect education model”, but global examples can only provide guidelines to be considered and evaluated for relevance. Western social systems would need to support the education program and with a program like EGNH, the social system in North America would not align with happiness as an aim for education. For these reasons, my project has focused on the consideration needed to establish a starting point for an education program that would provide introduction to the idea of Educating for Happiness. The Moodle course, along with the tour to Bhutan, to observe and experience a social system that supports the education philosophy would provide Canadian educators with insight into government policies, social norms and cultural

features that led to the valuing of GNH and the implementation of EGNH in Bhutan. From personal experience, I see that happiness as an aim or goal seems to be more of an acceptable topic with adults and given importance in graduate-level courses. It is not something that is usually introduced to students at the high school level. Educating educators on EGNH through a program that would combine learning about Bhutan's education model with a two-week educational tour in Bhutan would encourage future teachers to introduce teenagers to the concept of happiness as an educational goal.

As I noted earlier, one of the key factors that led to Bhutan maintaining its culture, identity, environment etc. was that the country did not rush into modernization. Bhutan has been wise to watch and learn from other countries. The same approach needs to be taken when it comes to education reform in the West. We need to look not only at what other countries are doing in terms of educational reform but also at the potential effects and consequences of education to social change or vice versa. For example, a study by Yabiku and Schlabach (2009) examining the relationship between education and employment in the Chitwan valley of Nepal shows that returns to schooling declined when the education system expanded faster than the demand for skilled labour. Considering that Bhutan is an agricultural-based country similar to the Chitwan valley, change from agricultural subsistence economy to white collar opportunities may have a similar result. While policy advancement has enabled Bhutan to make significant progress in its educational reforms, Bhutan still faces the kinds of significant educational challenges of any developing nation; this includes challenges such as shortage of qualified teachers, infrastructure needs including basic necessities such as toilets, and a lack of resources. In addition, there is a lack of resources and experience in dealing with students with different abilities (Gordon, 2013). However, just as Bhutan's development philosophy of GNH is leading

the nation on the path of socio-economic prosperity, democracy, sustainable environment and vibrant culture (National Education Framework, 2012), EGNH as a vision for its education system will provide a firm path to groom citizens “to be knowledgeable, skillful, creative, enterprising, mindful, reflective, confident, and capable of responding to the emerging global challenges and who makes a conscious effort to uphold the traditional values of the nation” (MoE, 2014, p. 10). I strongly believe that there is a lot that the Western world and its market-driven education system can learn from Bhutan and its education system based on happiness. The EGNH system goes beyond the self to include the happiness of others but also teaches to live in harmony with the nature and the environment. In the West, implanting the seed of happiness as a goal for education would shift the focus from teaching centered only on individual success and personal achievement. This goal can only be achieved if we introduce new paradigms and train teachers to shift their thinking in order to bridge the gap between our fundamental beliefs about happiness and what we teach our children in classrooms. The materialistic and consumer oriented world desperately needs to move away from GDP to focus on GNH. Education should teach our future citizens to not only understand their own happiness but also care about the happiness of others and to use resources in a sustainable manner.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

Education blueprint preparatory process.

Sl. No	Consultative Meeting	Date	Issues discussed	Member attended from agency	No. of participants	Remarks
1	Intra-inter agency Consultation Workshop	25th Aug	Country Background Report, Survey questionnaire, Education parameter mapping, Education Blueprint Framework, Consultation Methodologies, Result Framework	BCSEA, REC, DAHE, DSE, DCRD, DYS, PPD, EMSSD, HRD	25	
2	1st National Task Force Meeting	29th Aug	Education parameter mapping, Country background report, Domains and parameters & way forward	NTF members	13	
3	Consultative discussion on the questionnaire	10th Sept	Survey Questionnaire	BCSEA & REC	4	
4	Consultative discussion on the questionnaire	12th Sept	Survey Questionnaire	DCRD, EMSSD & REC	3	
5	In-house consultation meeting with DEOs/TEO, Principals and Teachers	17th Sept	Main Education Concerns; Survey questionnaire	TEO (Thimphu Thromde), DEO (Paro), YHSS, PHSS, Changzamtog LSS, Ugyen Academy, RHSS, Shaba MSS, Druk School	13	
6	Informal meeting with	18th Sept	Survey Questionnaire		1	

	Dr. Phup Rinchen					
7	Translation of the Survey Questionnaires	18th Sept	Survey Questionnaire	NFEC/EMS-SD/DCRD	3	
8	Pre Testing of the Survey Questionnaires	26th Sept	Survey Questionnaire	Kuzuchen MSS and Changzamtog LSS	72	
9	Proof Reading of the Questionnaires	27th Oct	Survey Questionnaire	PCE	2	
10	2 <sup>nd</sup> National Task Force Meeting	6th Oct			13	
11	Supervisors Meeting	6th Oct	Preparation for National Consultations	DCRD/EMS-SD/MoE/REC/BC SEA	12	
12	Training of the Enumerators	7th Oct		Graduates	68	
13	1 <sup>st</sup> National Steering Committee Meeting	8th Oct			9	
14	Field Survey	9th Oct to 7th Nov	National Consultations	Students, Teachers and Public	7667	Students = 1134 Teachers = 1095 Public = 5438
15	Online survey		National Consultations	Students, Teachers and Public	332	Students = 236 Teachers = 46 Public = 50
16	Focused Group Discussions		National Consultations	Students, teachers, public, civil servants, armed forces, business, corporate employees, NGOs,	1366	

				CSOs, Development Partners, MPs, Ncs, etc.		
17	Zomdues		National Consultations	Students, teachers, public, civil servants, armed forces, business, corporate employees, etc.	707	
18	Facebook		National Consultations		500	
19	Education Blueprint Website		National Consultations		85	
20	Consultation with Dzongdags		National Consultations		7	
21	Consultation with Dzongrab/Dr ungpa		National Consultations		5	
22	Consultation with DEO/TEO/Pr incipals		National Consultations		17	
23	One-on-one interview with eminent personalities			Distinguished Dashos, Lyonpos, Secretaries, Scholars etc	14	
24	Data Punching/Cle aning	13th Oct to 7th Nov	Data punching	NSB/ERO	10	
25	Drafting of the Blueprint	19th Nov to 9th Dec	Drafting the Blueprint	RUB/REC/BCSE A/MoE	18	
26	CWG	9 times			12	
27	ERO meeting	21 times			12	
28	UNESCO Officials visit to Bhutan	3 times		UNESCO	3	

Table A1 Snapshot of education blueprint preparatory process (MoE, 2014b, pp.129-132)

## Appendix B

### Lesson 2: Activity 1.

The Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania has developed a website called 'authentic happiness' where you can learn about Positive Psychology. For this activity, you will complete a test of happiness available on the authentic happiness site (please note that you will need to register to complete the test/questionnaire). Once completed, please complete the below exercise.

**Questionnaire** – PERMA (Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, and Accomplishment)

<https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/questionnaires/perma>

**List your scores below**

**P:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E:** \_\_\_\_\_

**R:** \_\_\_\_\_

**M:** \_\_\_\_\_

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reflection:** How does your environment (social, cultural, political etc.) effect your scores?

## Appendix C

### Lesson 2: Activity 2.

1. Prepare a list of priorities in your life (at least 10).

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2. Separate the material and non-material items are on your list?

<u>Material</u>	<u>Non-Material</u>

3. Reflect on the list and the amount of time you spend on each item on the list.

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