

Assessing Educating for Gross National Happiness in Bhutanese Schools: A new direction

Kaka, Judith Miller and Nadya Rizk

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17102/bjrd.rub.11.1.024>

Abstract

Gross National Happiness (GNH), a concept that is rooted in Buddhist philosophies, underpins a range of educational policies in Bhutan. The Educating for GNH (EGNH) initiative was launched a decade ago to promote GNH values throughout the school system. However, whether EGNH has been a success is still contested with evidence lacking to support either view. Several issues arising from the implementation and evaluation of this initiative remain unaddressed. The five pathways to the EGNH have not been effectively institutionalised. Principals and teachers still lack motivation and competency to infuse and integrate GNH values. More importantly, the Performance Management System (PMS) is questioned as a valid framework to monitor the primary purpose of providing adequate feedback into and trustworthy recommendations for promoting and improving GNH practices. Based on the review of literature and some anecdotal evidence, the authors present the Theory of Practice Architectures as a new direction for investigating EGNH practices in the Bhutanese schools as it provides the theoretical framing for interrogating and potentially transforming educational practices.

Keywords: Gross National Happiness (GNH), Educating for GNH (EGNH), GNH values, EGNH Practices, Theory of Practice Architectures

Introduction

The concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) has its origins in Buddhist philosophies and principles which were influenced by the revered Buddhist master Padma Sambhava, (Centre for Bhutan Studies [CBS] & GNH Research, 2016; Gross National Happiness Commission [GNHC], n.d.) as well as the founders of the Drukpa Kagyu Schools (Jagar Dorji, 2005). However, it was the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck who coined the term 'Gross National Happiness' as a measure of his country's prosperity, emphasising happiness of his people as more importance than Gross Domestic Product. The pursuit of GNH has since become one of the principles of state policy enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and Education was identified by the government as a principal approach towards realising happiness and wellbeing for the people of Bhutan.

Based on the review of literature and some anecdotal evidence, this manuscript presents a novel approach for interrogating the Educating for GNH (EGNH) initiative that would help enhance happiness of all Bhutanese people. To this end, we begin the manuscript with a historical overview of GNH as well as the policies governing EGNH. Next, we describe EGNH and how it has been practiced and assessed in Bhutanese schools. This is followed by a critique of these practices where the authors problematise current modes of assessing EGNH. Finally, the Theory of Practice Architectures is outlined (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Mahon et al., 2017) as a framework that sets a new direction towards evaluating the EGNH practices. This manuscript foregrounds the importance of such understanding in relation to interrogating and improving the practices of EGNH.

Historical Origins of GNH

The concept of GNH is underpinned by the profound Buddhist understanding that all beings seek happiness and that it can only be realised when every person's happiness is maximised (Jambay Lhamo et al., 2020; Pema Thinley, 2016)¹. While Buddhism does not reject the idea of possessing wealth, the doctrine suggests that living an ethical and moral life has greater likelihood of achieving genuine happiness (Tashi Wangmo & Valk, 2012).

During the 1970s, the Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, made repeated public announcements about happiness and wellbeing that resounded in all official documents and speeches (CBS & GNH Research, 2016; Karma Ura et al., 2012). While the King had not yet used the exact words 'Gross National Happiness', he noted that many developed nations at that time were overlooking the universal desire of their people to have happiness and peace in their lives. His Majesty the King first spoke about GNH (in this particular phrase) to journalists at the Santa Cruz Airport in Mumbai on September 9, 1979 on his way back from the Non-Aligned Summit in Havana (CBS & GNH Research, 2016; Correa, 2017). His statement, "GNH is more important than GDP", became a catchphrase in 1986 during an interview with a reporter from the Financial Times in London:

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 include political stability, social harmony, and the Bhutanese culture and way of life. (Givel & Figueroa, 2014, p. 2).

The following section presents how GNH is embedded in educational policy.

GNH and Educational policy

GNH has guided the development of educational policy in Bhutan. Education is viewed as one of the primary vehicles to achieving GNH (Department of Education [DoE], 2003; Pema Thinley, 2016; Pema Tshomo, 2016). The Education Policy 1974 and 1984 were the earliest policy documents that featured the essence of GNH in its aims through a focus on the preservation of the country's rich cultural and spiritual heritage. The inculcation of spiritual, cultural and traditional values in students for national and social cohesion were the foci of GNH (Pema Thinley, 2016). Beginning in 1988, the Department of Education (DoE), issued successive policy guidelines and instructions in line with the GNH values. A range of policy directives designed to instil in students the values of love and loyalty, ethics and discipline, appreciation for and pride in being Bhutanese have been formulated in policies such as: Wholesome Education; Nationalisation of the Heads of Schools; the National Identity (DoE, 1988; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016); Curriculum and Relevancy of Education (DoE, 1989; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016); New Approaches to Primary Education (DoE, 1990; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016); and, Value Education (Education Division, 1997; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016). These values are derived from the sacred traditions of Bhutan's rich religious and cultural heritage.

One particular national policy document, 'Bhutan 2020: A vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness', outlined the strategies for basic education. One of these strategies was to instil an awareness of the nation's unique cultural heritage, drawing upon sources of inspiration that date from the time of Zhabdrung (1616). This policy included the 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 (Pema Thinley, 2016; Planning Commission, 1999). In response, the DoE prepared the "Education Sector Strategy" which made the first mention of Gross National Happiness (in this particular term) as its development objective (DoE, 2003).

The Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers (BPST) launched by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019a) aims to build teachers who are knowledgeable, caring and reflective life-long learners who nurture competent, confident, creative and informed GNH graduates. One of the seven standards expected of teachers, is 'professional engagement and Bhutanese values' (MoE, 2019a). The Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 also recommends strengthening sustainability of EGNH

programme by enhancing values and wellbeing in education (MoE, 2014). The following section presents the EGNH and its practices.

The Educating for GNH (EGNH) Initiative

The vision statement of the MoE is to create “An educated and enlightened society of GNH, built and sustained on the unique Bhutanese values of *tha dam-tshig ley gyudrey*” (MoE, 2014, p. 63). According to Tashi Wangyel (2001, p. 107), *‘ley gyudrey’* “states that good begets good and vice versa. The idea of *‘tha dam tshig’* outlines the sacred commitment to others in society.”

His Majesty the Fourth King frequently used to remind teachers, to teach the children the fundamental values. Pema Thinley (2016) explains that these values are: *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 to benefit them (Pema Thinley, 2016, p.31).

The practices of these values, in turn, would bring greater peace, harmony and happiness among others around them, including themselves (Pema Thinley, 2016). These values were indeed ‘Learning to be wise’ which encapsulates the concepts on training the mind (Pema Thinley, 2016). This wisdom of Mindfulness Education is founded on the Buddhist understanding and values reflected in the vision statement towards creating an enlightened society of GNH.

Therefore, EGNH is the unique education system, suited to a truly GNH society that recognises the basic human aspiration of continued happiness and prosperity (Pema Thinley, 2016). For the past many decades, EGNH gradually evolved into a conceptual framework for education that guided the MoE in developing and implementing various educational interventions. As stated by the 28th Education Policy Guidelines and Instructions (EPGI), EGNH was not new in the education system as it was taught through wholesome education, value education, and activities that promoted hygiene and sanitation, environment conservation, scouting, and Socially Useful Productive Work among many others. (Pema Thinley, 2016; Policy and Planning Division, 2010).

In January 2009, the government provided top priority to integrate GNH fully into the educational system. With the professional support of international experts and financial support of the UNICEF, EGNH workshops were organised for all the District Education Officers (DEO) and principals (MoE, 2010; Pema Tshomo, 2016; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016). The initiative was to infuse the GNH values through the five pathways of: meditation; infusing GNH values in the curriculum; holistic

assessment of students; broader learning environment; and, media literacy and critical thinking (MoE, 2010, 2011, 2013; Pema Thinley, 2016).

Schools also pledged to promote 'Green Schools for Green Bhutan'. The pledge was to approach through the eight concepts of greeneries – environmental, intellectual, academic, social, cultural, spiritual, aesthetic and moral greeneries (MoE, 2013; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016). Furthermore, teachers in Bhutan received a five day training on EGNH to strengthen the competencies of teachers to infuse, integrate and promote GNH values. They were to employ the five pathways and the eight greeneries (MoE, 2013; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016).

As educators, principals and teachers have responsibilities to practice and demonstrate GNH values. They are expected to be: psychologically and emotionally consistent and stable; physically well dressed and presentable; morally, culturally and politically correct; exemplary in their conduct and speech; mindful and honest; and, helpful (MoE, 2013; Pema Thinley, 2018). In summary, educators are expected to present themselves well in terms of thoughts, speech, actions and relationships.

EGNH Practices in Schools in Bhutan

The EGNH initiative was implemented in schools to promote GNH values throughout the school system (Jambay Lhamo et al., 2020; Kinzang Lhendup et al., 2018; MoE, 2013; Pema Thinley, 2016). In the following, we draw on the lead authors' experiences, anecdotal information as well as scholarly and grey literatures to firstly, outline the five pathways of the EGNH programme and describe the current practices of each pathway; and secondly, briefly discuss effectiveness of the Performance Management System (PMS) to monitor and support the EGNH initiative.

The five pathways of EGNH

Meditation and Mind Training

Educators are expected to introduce meditation in all school activities and programmes of the day (MoE, 2013). According to the MoE (2013), effective implementation of EGNH in schools can only happen if school educators practice meditation themselves and are convinced of its impact before they ask students to practice it. The School Self-Assessment (SSA) - a tool used by all schools to reflect and assess their performance – stipulates that schools promote meditation as a normal part of school life (Education Monitoring Division [EMD], 2020). Meditation can bring improvements in academic performance, mental health and psychological well-beings (Pema Thinley, 2016). However, anecdotal evidences suggest that the implementation of meditation in schools may be happening as a compliance exercise, merely fulfilling the requirements of the policy directive. This may imply that neither teachers nor students have embraced

meditation wholeheartedly. As Pema Thinley (2016) pre-empted, meditation would play the most significant role in infusing GNH if it were taught by persons who seriously study and practice meditation themselves.

Infusing GNH Values in the Curriculum

Both written and taught curricula play a crucial role in education. Through the EGNH programme, principals and teachers were orientated with seven different approaches² to infuse GNH values into the curriculum (MoE, 2013). The SSA Tool offers 21 indicators to assess curriculum practices (EMD, 2020). One of these indicators is specifically designed to assess if teachers are able to relate the subject knowledge with GNH values and principles. In spite of the critical importance of planning and teaching lessons with GNH values, teachers express disappointment over the absence of proper guidelines and support materials to help them achieve this aim (Sonam Zangmo, 2014). Although, teachers have received orientation on EGNH, it appears that teachers are not confident to implement this pathway. Teachers still feel the need to receive further orientation and professional development (Kezang Sherab, 2013; Kezang Sherab et al., 2016; Kinzang Lhendup et al., 2018). Lack of preparation to teach EGNH is compounded by: teachers' requirements to cover vast syllabi; irrelevant topics; some obsolete aspects of the curriculum; teacher's extreme workload; and, the large number of students in the classes (Pema Thinley, 2018; Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016). Kezang Sherab et al. (2016) also found that the success of schools in promoting GNH values were attributed mainly to its extra-curricular programmes and not the regular curriculum programmes.

According to Pema Thinley (2016), the current EGNH initiative lacks an anchor to deepen the understandings of GNH or to infuse GNH values in students' lives. He suggests introducing a subject called 'GNH Value Education' to be taught in schools. Some teachers support the idea of teaching GNH values as a separate subject (Pema Thinley, 2018). Pema Thinley (2016) also suggests training of authentic master teachers who would continually carry out self-exploration and practice mindful living themselves. The school system would also require equally committed leaders to support this initiative which schools currently lack. Pema Thinley (2018) also argues the need for GNH teachers.

Broader Learning Environment

Families, peers, communities, the media, extra-curricular activities and school ambience are other sources of learning. Schools were introduced and advised to make use of the five dimensions of broader learning environment: community service; sports; arts / music and crafts; ambience and classroom citizenship (MoE, 2013). The School

Self-Assessment tool has four key areas out of six, designated for assessing areas of Broader Learning Domain (EMD, 2020). These dimensions of learning definitely have impacted in promoting GNH values (Kezang Sherab et al., 2016). This pathway to infusing GNH values also indicates creating 'right conditions' such as good physical ambience and other educational infrastructure and facilities. Pema Tshomo (2016) contends that the EGNH initiative appears to have little focus on promoting right conditions.

The moral, character and values development are largely influenced by the kinds of role models' students see in their teachers (Pema Thinley, 2018). It is important for teachers to use appropriate language, behaving properly and being honest and punctual in duties (Pema Thinley, 2018). Similarly, Kezang Sherab (2013) and Kezang Sherab et al. (2016) found that teachers, in some situations, speak to students impolitely and provide destructive feedback. Such use of language and putdowns certainly lack kindness, compassion and courtesy, which are the essence of GNH (Jambay Lhamo et al., 2020). Pema Tshomo (2016) contends that for EGNH to be successful, the current approaches of the EGNH which is more of curriculum and pedagogy focused should also be balanced by including other important aspects of education, such as access to education and a supportive and enriching environment. School discipline policy and ban on corporal punishment, safe and healthy school policy, proper and adequate furniture for classrooms also need to be addressed (Pema Tshomo, 2016).

Holistic Assessment of Students

Assessment practices typically drive curriculum implementation practices in Bhutan. What gets assessed receives greater attention from teachers in their classroom delivery and similarly, students pay greater attention to receive greater scores in their examination and other forms of assessment. Schools are reminded to make assessment practices holistic by including all three domains - the cognitive, the affective and the psychomotor which are deemed essential in preparing GNH graduates (MoE, 2013). The SSA tool has 'Holistic Assessment' with 13 indicators as one of the key areas of school self-assessment (EMD, 2020). However, the general assessment practices in schools are overshadowed by cognitive aspects through unit tests and examinations (Kezang Sherab et al., 2016). Value assessments appear in students' final or terminal progress report which is subjectively rated as 'poor' or 'good' or 'very good' or 'outstanding' usually conducted by class teachers just as a matter of completing the formalities. The quality of teachers is also judged by their students' academic performances which justifies why values are not as important as academic

lessons (Kezang Sherab et al., 2016). Teachers feel that some kind of authentic assessment system for values must be adopted to make EGNH a success (Kezang Sherab et al., 2016; Pema Thinley, 2018).

Media Literacy and Critical Thinking

Bhutanese students are increasingly exposed to numerous media sources that influence their personalities. Students are expected to be media literate, critical consumers and active participants of media. Therefore, there is a need for students to develop skills to access, analyse, evaluate, create and participate in media to derive positive benefits (MoE, 2013). Media literacy and critical thinking skills are essential to produce GNH graduates. However, schools have very limited opportunities to enhance media literacy skills. Pema Thinley (2018) found that due to the need for teachers to cover vast syllabus, coupled with huge workload and large numbers of students in classrooms, it is not feasible for teachers to purposely and consciously integrate a media literacy lesson within their regular lesson. The focus on media literacy in schools has remained secondary and teachers applied and practised as and when applicable, without any specific targeted outcome. Coincidentally, it is observed that the SSA Tool does not have any specific indicators to assess the media literacy and critical thinking skills directly.

Performance Management System (PMS)

The Ministry of Education (MoE) uses the Performance Management System (PMS) as one of the primary tools to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of the 'EGNH' initiative in Bhutan (Pema Thinley, 2016). The PMS is expected to provide continuous support to bring improvement in schools. The schools and districts are provided with PMS tools to manage their own performance (EMD, 2020). At the school level, PMS is used to self-assess performance against 32 indicators of the School Improvement Plan (SIP), depicted as GNH progress wheel. The 32 indicators of SIP are identified by the Ministry from the 98 School Self-assessment (SSA) indicators. At the national level, the 32 SIP indicators are divided into two score cards – Enabling Practices Scorecard (EPS) and Gross National Happiness Scorecard (GNH), each containing 16 indicators. The EPS and GNH scorecards along with the Academic Learning Scorecard (ALS) provides the annual performance score of the school (Figure 1). All schools are ranked annually using the PMS scores. Generally, PMS is designed to monitor, assess and promote GNH practices, however, anecdotally, it has not been popular among practitioners.

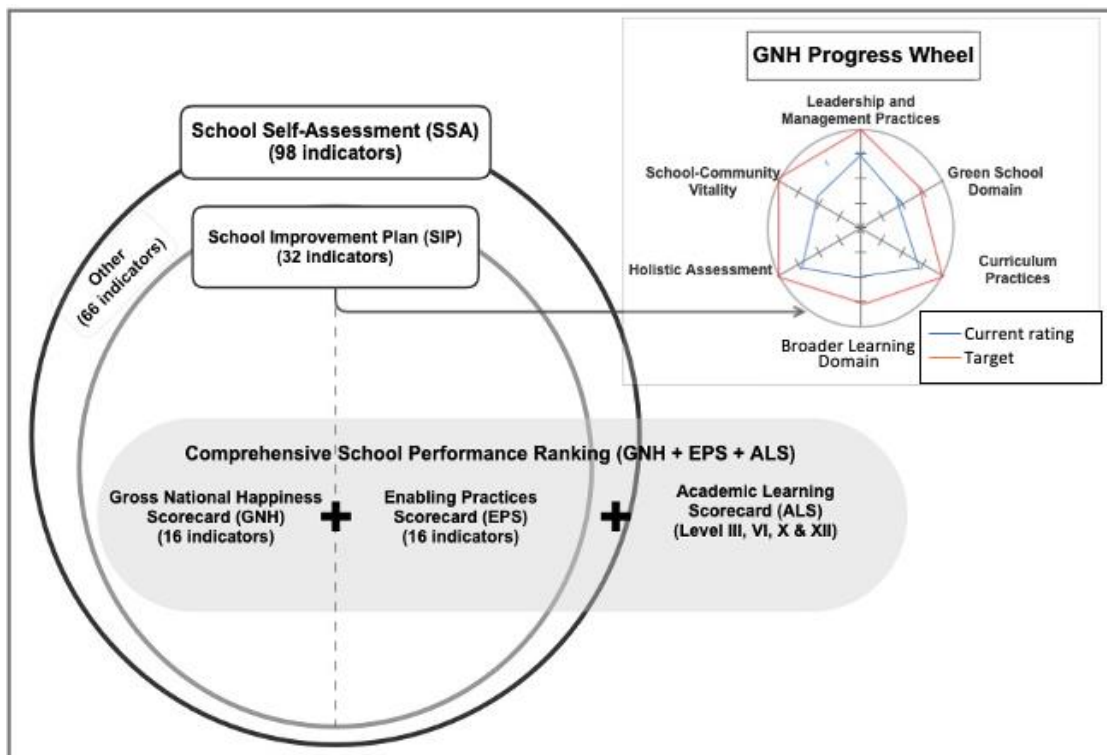


Figure 1: School Performance Management System (PMS).

The problems related to PMS are presented in the following section.

Implementation Gaps and Problems

Karma Drukpa (2016) found that EGNH has brought improvements in the school learning environment, school organisational structure, teachers’ moral ethics and student behaviour. However, he predicted that the government’s introduction of new reform initiatives like school autonomy and central school system would likely diffuse attention and interest to the existing EGNH practices, posing a threat to the sustainability of EGNH. While it is premature to draw conclusions that this has happened, there are few indicators that align with his prediction. For example, the BPST (MoE, 2019a) which aims at building teachers who nurture competent, confident, creative and informed GNH graduates, shied away from emphasising GNH values within the eight focus areas. The draft National Education Policy (MoE, 2019b) has quoted Article 9, section 15 and 16 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan as the overall guiding policy statement but has not quoted section 2 of the same article that states, ‘The state shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness’ (RGoB, 2008, p.18). The draft National Education Policy had been in draft status since 2012. It also appears that different agencies within the

MoE are not harmonised to put an impetus on the EGNH initiative. For a holistic approach to determining the degree to which schools are meeting the policy ideals of EGNH, there is value in reviewing the key areas of the School Self-Assessment, School Improvement Plan, Enabling Practices Scorecard and GNH scorecard of the Performance Management System. These aspects of school assessment practices could be aligned with the seven standards of the Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers which is the latest document approved by the Ministry of Education (Tashi Lhamo, personal communication, January 4, 2021).

The authors, therefore, question the success of the EGNH initiative as envisioned in 2009. The five pathways to EGNH have not been firmly institutionalised. The implementation of 'Green Schools for Green Bhutan' is affected by factors at the intrapersonal, interpersonal and organisational levels (Yangdon, 2019). Interestingly, 13 countries in Asia and Europe, translated 'Green School for Green Bhutan' into 17 languages to be implemented in their countries (Powdyel, personal communication, February 11, 2021).

The approaches of the EGNH initiative are more focused on teachers, teaching and pedagogy but "it appears that there is little focus on how EGNH framework promotes the conditions" (Pema Tshomo, 2016, p. 143). The motivation level of educators for EGNH is gradually declining. Kezang Sherab et al. (2016) found that teachers have low self-efficacy for infusion of GNH values and principles in their lessons. School leaders and teachers still experience difficulties in translating policy directives and profound intentions into actions. There is no specific time allotted to teach GNH values in schools. Curriculum was not designed with the focus on GNH values. The initial phase of excitement and impact of training, as anticipated by Pema Thinley (2016) seems to have faded away.

The PMS was intended to help schools improve their performance, but it did not appeal to the schools due to its focus on ranking schools. The PMS consists of three elements [School Self-Assessment (SSA), School Improvement Plan (SIP) and School Performance Scorecards] which were aimed to holistically assess schools. Some of the anecdotal information that the researcher received suggests that the PMS does not appear to fulfil the intended goal of performance improvement. From the onset, the SSA at the individual and school level was highly subjective. The verification by many DEOs were mere formalities due to limited time and subjective indicators. The PMS approach was also inequitable, and schools with modest facilities, human resources, and locations were ranked against well-resourced schools using the same criteria. To compound the situation, the School Performance scores were used by Royal Civil Service Commission to determine promotion of civil servants³ (Lhawang Ugyel, 2017).

This decision did not sit well with teachers. These challenges do not appear to be motivating for teachers.

The EGNH is an educational reform that was initiated a decade ago. Several issues have risen since and are yet to be addressed. Teachers play a crucial role as change-agents in educational reforms (Fullan, 2007). The lead author's professional experiences reinforced by literature informs us that teachers may not be prepared well enough to implement the EGNH initiative as intended. This situation certainly warrants further study to understand GNH practices those principals and teacher engage with. Kezang Sherab et al. (2016) proposed eight teacher self-efficacy interventions⁴ to make EGNH a success. The eight interventions are centred around teacher's professional, ethical, moral and behavioural practices. Furthermore, he suggests a transformation and reconfiguration of teachers' fundamental assumptions and approaches that guide their actions, through what he calls the 'hidden curriculum'. These interventions and practices associate neatly with the practices, 'sayings, doings, relatings' proposed by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) in their Theory of Practice Architectures which is introduced in the following section.

Theory of Practice Architectures

The theory of Practice Architectures is founded by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008). The theory is an account of what practices are composed of and how practices shape and are shaped by various components of the theory such as practices, arrangements, practice site, intersubjective dimensions, practice tradition and ecologies of practices (Mahon et al., 2017). Figure 2 presents how practices enable and / or constrain by the arrangements through the three intersubjective dimensions or mediums of language, activity and work, and power and solidarity.

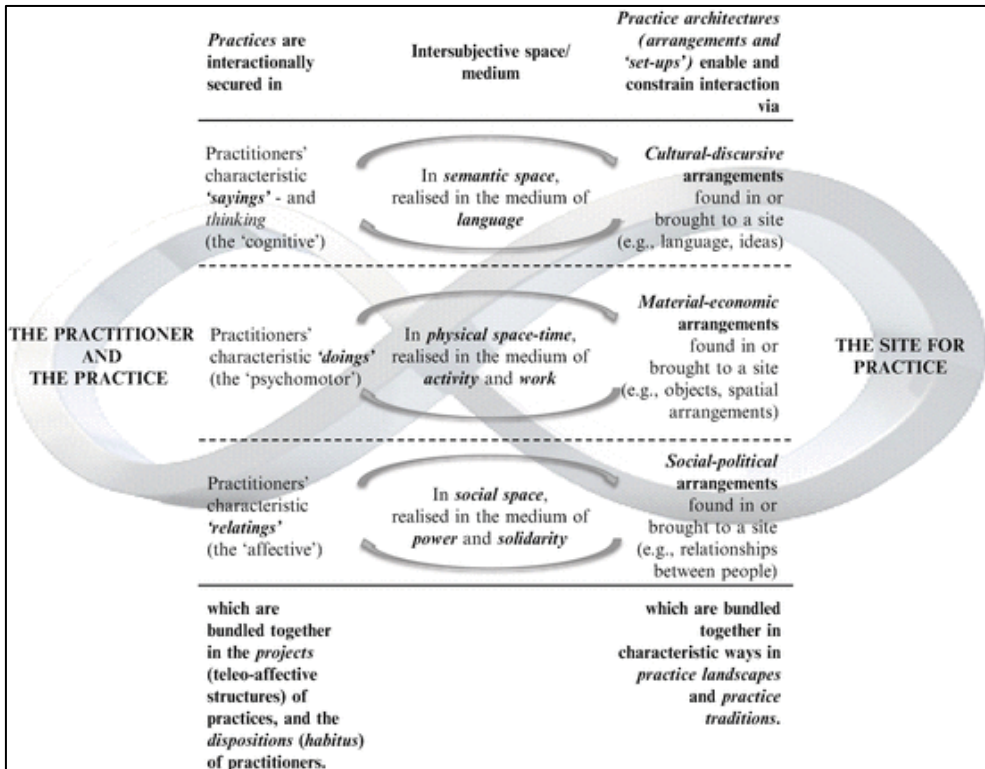


Figure 2: Theory of Practice Architectures (Reprinted by permission from Springer of Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 38)

Practices

Practices are composed of socially established activities of “sayings, doings and relatings.” The ‘sayings’ are utterances and forms of understandings; the ‘doings’ are mode of actions; and the ‘relatings’ are ways in medium which people relate to one another and the world. (Mahon et al., 2017).

Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) explains that, as human beings, we are constituted through our relationship with others – culturally, socially and economically. Our shared languages (sayings) allow us to understand ourselves, others and the world. Our shared practices and activities (doings) constitute our lives. Our groups - families, neighbourhoods, occupations - through which we form identities and take roles in relation to others (relatings), find ourselves included or excluded in those groups.

Arrangements

Practices are not dependent solely on experiences, intentions, dispositions, habitus, and actions of individuals. Human beings are social beings. As social beings, we are part of the societies that frame us and within which we have our social relations. Therefore, practices are also shaped and prefigured intersubjectively by arrangements,

circumstances and conditions beyond each person as an individual agent or actor, that exist in, or are brought to, particular sites of practice (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Mahon et al., 2017).

These ‘sayings’, ‘doings’, and ‘relatings’ are also supported and / or shaped by cultural, discursive, social and material world. They were, to a large degree, already there as actualities or as possibilities before we came upon the scene (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). The theory of practice architecture classifies these domains as three arrangements that exist simultaneously in a site of practice. They are cultural-discursive arrangements, material-economic arrangements, and social-political arrangements. Practices are shaped and prefigured by these arrangements that exist beyond each person as an individual agent or actor. (Mahon et al., 2017).

The cultural-discursive arrangement prefigures and make ‘sayings’ possible in a practice. It consists of resources that can constrain and / or enable what is relevant and appropriate to say in performing, describing, interpreting, or justifying the practice (Mahon et al., 2017). The material-economic arrangements and resources shape and make ‘doings’ possible. These arrangements and resources include physical environment, finance, human and non-human entities among others. They support or affect what, when, how and by whom something can be done (Mahon et al., 2017). The social-political arrangements and resources shape how people relate in a practice to other people and to non-human objects. These arrangements and resources are organisational rules, social solidarities, hierarchies, community, familial, and organisational relationships, that enable and / or constrain the ‘relatings’ of a practice (Mahon et al., 2017).

Way forward

The EGNH is a significant reform initiative instituted a decade ago. Transforming education and professional practices are difficult and time-consuming tasks. They require continuous revitalisation to remain relevant and responsive to ever changing circumstances (Francisco et al., 2017). The success of the EGNH is yet to be fully verified. Essential information is needed that captures the experiences of teachers and principals as they aim to promote GNH values in their schools. Such knowledge would help policy makers to review EGNH initiative that assists practitioners enhance their practices.

The Theory of Practice Architectures by Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) and Francisco et al. (2017) provides a lens for such interrogative work. It is a theoretical resource for understanding education and professional practice; an analytical resource for revealing the ways practices occur; and transformational resource of finding ways

to change education and professional practice (Francisco et al., 2017; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008). Many researchers in other countries have used the theory to study educational practices. For example, Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer (2017) have studied learning spaces and practices using the theory as the analytic mechanism that enabled deep conceptualisations of what constitutes learning practices. Green et.al. (2017) studied the teaching practices of novice Vocational Education and Training teachers in Australian schools to understand how local practice architectures shape teachers' vocation and their ways of working, the ways practice architectures constrain and enable their practices, and the ways these teachers respond to the challenges in the school. Tyrén (2017) employed the Theory of Practice Architectures to understand and interpret the teachers' situation in the school development practices, which helped her to grasp analytically how practices are constituted and interlinked, and what opportunities and barriers existed and arose in the development practice in one of the schools in Sweden.

Thus, the application of the Theory of Practice Architectures to GNH practices by principals and teachers offers researchers a promising way to capture the practices of GNH values. It is observed that all the 98 SSA indicators can be classified either as 'Practices' or 'Arrangements' that exist simultaneously in a site of practice as described by the Theory of Practice Architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Mahon et al., 2017). Therefore, the application of the Theory of Practice Architectures has the potential to outline the strengths and shortcoming for existing practices and suggest ways to transform the practices of GNH values which principally could have been addressed by PMS.

Following the theory of practice architectures, the activities that comprise a practice – namely, the sayings, doings and relatings – bear resemblance to the Buddhist practices of the three doors – *Lue* (Body), *Nga* (speech) and *Yid* (mind). Furthermore, the key premise underlying this theory and which states that practices are embedded in site ecologies and that practices shape and are shaped by other practices, also aligns with the Buddhist theory of *Tendrel* (Dependent origination) or *lay bju-drey* (principles of cause and effect). This parallelism has instigated further interest to proposing the theory of practice architectures as a viable new direction for investigating the practice of assessing EGNH, an initiative that is rooted in Buddhist philosophies.

Conclusion

There is no doubt for the people of Bhutan as to the profundity of the philosophy of GNH. Its importance and practices have reached the international arena and personifies Bhutan. A decade ago, Bhutan has made a considerable commitment and investment by instituting a reform initiative of 'EGNH'. Today, we do not see this initiative as an established success story, as anticipated. This initiative can benefit from an evaluative study. There is a timely need to review EGNH practices. There is potential value in reviewing EGNH practices through the principals and teachers of Bhutan, employing the lens of the Theory of Practice Architectures. This proposed research can potentially be helpful to identify aspects of practices that work, do not work or are absent. EGNH, if successfully implemented, can surely take Bhutan towards her vision of a happy nation.

Endnotes

1. As recommended by Schuelka and Maxwell (2016), all authors from Bhutan with Buddhist origins are cited using both the names since Bhutanese have no surnames or family names, nor are names gender-specific except for a small number of exceptions.
2. The six approaches are: 1) Direct integration / Bringing out inherent values; 2) Inter-Disciplinary integration; 3) Songs; 4) Stories; 5) Changing negatives into positive lesson; 6) Fun games; and, 7) Similes and metaphors (See Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 38)
3. Teachers in Bhutan form majority of the civil servants
See Kezang Sherab et al (2016) for the full list of eight teacher self-efficacy interventions.

References

- Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research. (2016). *A compass towards a just and harmonious society: 2015 GNH survey report*.
<https://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/a-compass-towards-a-just-and-harmonious-society-2015-gnh-survey-report/>
- Correa, M. (2017). *The history of Gross National Happiness*. Researchgate.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Monica_Correa8/publication/317151566_The_History_of_Gross_National_Happiness/links/59273fae0f7e9b99799ebc88/The-History-of-Gross-National-Happiness.pdf
- Department of Education. (1988). *First quarterly policy guidelines and instructions*.
<http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>

- Department of Education. (1989). *Second quarterly policy guidelines and instructions*.
<http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>
- Department of Education. (1990). *Fourth quarterly policy guidelines and instructions*.
<http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>
- Department of Education. (2003). *Education sector strategy: Realising the vision 2020*. <http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>
- Dorji Penjor & Sonam Kinga. (2002). *The origin and description of the national flag and national anthem of the Kingdom of Bhutan*. The Centre for Bhutan Studies.
<http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publicationFiles/OccasionalPublications/NationalFlag.pdf>
- Education Division. (1997). *Seventeenth education policy guidelines and instructions*.
<http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>
- Education Monitoring Division. (2020). School performance management system.
http://202.144.155.183/EMD/index.php/welcome/find_content/
- Edwards-Groves, C., & Grootenboer, P. (2017). Learning spaces and practices for participation in primary school lessons: A focus on classroom interaction. In K. Mahon, S. Francisco, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Exploring Education and Professional Practice* (1st ed., pp. 31-47). Springer.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2219-7>
- Francisco, S., Mahon, K., & Kemmis, S. (2017). Transforming education and professional practice. In K. Mahon, S. Francisco, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Exploring Education and Professional Practice: Through the Lens of Practice Architecture* (1st ed., pp. 257-264). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2219-7>
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*: Routledge.
- Givel, M., & Figueroa, L. (2014). Early happiness policy as a government mission of Bhutan- A survey of the Bhutanese unwritten constitution from 1619 to 1729. *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 31, 1-21.
http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publicationFiles/JBS/JBS_Vol31/JBS31.pdf
- Green, A., Kemmis, R. B., Choy, S., & Loeb, I. H. (2017). Using the theory of practice architectures to explore VET in schools teachers' pedagogy. In K. Mahon, S. Francisco, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Exploring education and professional practice* (1st ed., pp. 121-138). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2219-7>
- Gross National Happiness Commission. (n.d.). *7th five year plan*.
<https://www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/central-five-year-plan/>

- Jagar Dorji. (2005). *Quality of education in Bhutan : The story of growth and change in the Bhutanese education system*. KMT Publisher.
- Jambay Lhamo, Miller, J., Wolodko, B., & Morgan, A-M. (2020). Compassion in the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness (GNH) infused classrooms. *Bhutan Journal of Research & Development, Autumn 2020*, 18 - 45.
<https://rune.une.edu.au/web/handle/1959.11/30039>
- Karma Drukpa. (2016). *Educating for Gross National Happiness: A new paradigm for education in Bhutan*. [Doctor of Philosophy thesis, The University of New Brunswick]. The University of New Brunswick Archive.
<https://unbscholar.lib.unb.ca/islandora/object/unbscholar%3A7644/>
- Karma Phuntsho. (2004). Echoes of ancient ethoes: Reflections on some popular Bhutanese social themes. In *The Spider and the Piglet* (pp. 564 - 579). Xasia Repository. http://crossasia-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/2630/1/23_SpdrPglt.pdf
- Karma Ura, Alkire, S., Tshoki Zangmo, & Karma Wangdi. (2012). *An extensive analysis of GNH index*. Centre for Bhutan Studies.
<https://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/An%20Extensive%20Analysis%20of%20GNH%20Index.pdf>
- Kemmis, S., & Grootenboer, P. (2008). Situating praxis in practice: Practice architectures and the cultural, social and material conditions for practice. In *Enabling praxis* (pp. 37-62): Brill Sense.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087903275_004
- Kemmis, S., Wilkinson, J., Edwards-Groves, C., Hardy, I., Grootenboer, P., & Bristol, L. (2014). Praxis, practice and practice architectures. In *Changing practices, changing education* (pp. 25-41). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-47-4_2
- Kezang Sherab. (2013). *Gross National Happiness education in Bhutanese schools: Understanding the experiences and efficacy beliefs of principals and teachers*. [Doctor of Philosophy thesis, The University of New England]. The University of New England Archive. <https://rune.une.edu.au/web/handle/1959.11/16997>
- Kezang Sherab, Maxwell, T. T., & Cooksey, R. W. (2016). Teacher understanding of the Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative. In M. J. Schuelka & T. W. Maxwell (Eds.), *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness* (Vol. 36, pp. 153-168). Springer.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1649-3>

- Kinzang Lhendup, Jambay Lhamo, Kezang Sherab, & Lungten Wangdi. (2018). Experiences and efficacy beliefs of teachers and principals of a primary school in implementing the educating for gross national happiness initiative: A case study. *Bhutan Journal of Research & Development, Autumn 2018*, 18 - 29. <https://www.rub.edu.bt/images/rub/research/publications/journals/I-Autumn-2018.pdf>
- Lhawang Ugyel. (2017). A decade of performance management reforms in Bhutan: Problems and prospects. *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management, 4*(2), 185-190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2322093717736640>
- Mahon, K., Kemmis, S., Francisco, S., & Lloyd, A. (2017). Introduction: Practice theory and the theory of practice architectures. In K. Mahon, S. Francisco, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Exploring education and professional practice: Through the lens of Practice Architecture* (pp. 1-30). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2219-7>
- Ministry of Education. (2010). *Educating for GNH: Educating for Gross National Happiness workshop* [Unpublished workshop proceedings]. Paro College of Education
- Ministry of Education. (2011). *Educating for GNH: A guide to advancing Gross National Happiness* (Kinga Dakpa, A. Rai, & D. Harding Eds.). Department of Curriculum Research and Development.
- Ministry of Education. (2013). *Educating for Gross National Happiness: A training manual*. Royal Government of Bhutan
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Bhutan education blueprint 2014-2024: Rethinking education*. <http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/Bhutan-Education-Blueprint-2014-2024.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2019a). *Bhutan professional standards for teachers*. <http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/BPST.pdf>
- Ministry of Education. (2019b). *National education policy – Draft*. [http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20\(Draft\).pdf](http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20(Draft).pdf)
- Pema Thinley. (2016). Overview and ‘heart essence’ of the Bhutanese education system. In M. J. Schuelka & T. W. Maxwell (Eds.), *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness* (Vol. 36, pp. 19-37). Springer. <http://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1649-3>

- Pema Thinley, (2018). *Intended and taught GNH-infused curricula in secondary schools of Thimphu and Samtse districts, Bhutan: A mixed methods school effectiveness research*. [Doctor of Philosophy thesis, The University of New England]. The University of New England Archive.
<https://rune.une.edu.au/web/handle/1959.11/27458>
- Pema Tshomo. (2016). Conditions of happiness: Bhutan's Educating for Gross National Happiness initiative and the capability approach. In M. J. Schuelka & T. W. Maxwell (Eds.), *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness* (Vol. 36, pp. 139-152). Springer.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1649-3>
- Planning Commission. (1999). *Bhutan 2020: A vision for peace, prosperity and happiness - Part II*. <https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/national-documents/bhutan-2020-vision-peace-prosperity-and-happiness-ii>
- Policy and Planning Division. (2010). *28th education policy guidelines and instructions*. <http://www.education.gov.bt/index.php/guidelines/>
- Royal Government of Bhutan. (2008). *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan*. https://www.nab.gov.bt/en/business/constitution_of_bhutan
- Singye Namgyel, & Phup Rinchhen. (2016). History and transition of secular education in Bhutan from the twentieth into the twenty-first century. In M. J. Schuelka & T. W. Maxwell (Eds.), *Education in Bhutan: Culture, Schooling, and Gross National Happiness* (Vol. 36, pp. 57-72). Springer.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-1649-3>
- Sonam Zangmo. (2014). *A gross national happiness infused curriculum: The promise of a more meaningful education in Bhutan*. [Master's thesis, The Western Michigan University]. The Western Michigan University Archive.
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/536/
- Tashi Wangmo, & Valk, J. (2012). Under the influence of Buddhism: The psychological wellbeing indicators of GNH. *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 26, 53-81.
http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/publicationFiles/JBS/JBS_Vol26/JBS%2026%20FINAL.pdf#page=57
- Tashi Wangyal. (2001). Ensuring social sustainability: Can Bhutan's education system ensure intergenerational transmission of values? *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 3(1), 25.
https://aspace.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/227028/JBS_03_01_04.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y

- Tyrén, L. (2017). School development in tough times. In K. Mahon, S. Francisco, & S. Kemmis (Eds.), *Exploring education and professional practice: Through the lens of Practice Architecture* (pp. 151-163). Springer.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2219-7>
- Yangdon. (2019). Factors affecting the implementation of green schools in Bhutan. *Journal of Humanities and Education Development (JHED)*, 1(4), 196-207.
 doi:<https://dx.doi.org/10.22161/jhed.1.4.9>

About the authors

Kaka is a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at University of New England. Prior to pursuing his postgraduate studies, he served as a primary school teacher, Head teacher, Principal, Assistant District Education Officer, Education Monitoring Officer and Officiating Chief Programme Officer. He resigned from civil service in June 2018 to pursue an academic career. His contribution to the Ministry of Education in Bhutan includes development of concept papers for Central Schools, Autonomous Schools, Armed Forces School, and mainstreaming Technical and Vocational Education into school system among many others.

Judith Miller has been actively contributing to preservice teacher education, teaching and researching at the University of New England since the early 1990's. Judith has contributed to both collaborative research and curriculum development in Bhutan, most recently championing study programmes for young Australian teachers to experience education in Bhutan through the support of the Australian Government New Colombo Plan Scholarship scheme.

Nadya Rizk is a member of the Science Education team at the University of New England. She has been involved in various research projects both nationally and internationally. While a secondary physics teacher by training, her research interests are in the professional learning of in-service primary teachers in science.