

## **Value Education and GNH- A general Perspective**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This article is an attempt to draw the similarities of the concept of GNH educational policy introduced in Bhutan with the general view of Value Education in other countries. It also deals with some general observations of some values still practiced by the general people. Lastly a perspective of the possible consequences of the GNH educational programme is given.

### **1. Introduction**

Society today is now battling the ill-consequences of industrialization, globalization, liberalization, consumerism, economic recession along with terrorism and ethnic wars in most parts of the globe. This gives rise to a question –whether educational goals are only limited to employability and functionality of individuals and least concern for social responsibility. Many educationists view value education as need of the hour today in this context. Value education is given different terms globally as moral education, character education, citizenship education, civic education and ethics education. However the underlying theme is need for educators in incorporating societal and personal values besides the course curriculum due to weakening influence of family and religious bodies. The need is felt all the more in management education as we wake up to the reality that purse strings of all sectors of society are directly or indirectly linked to media and marketing strategies and standards which by and large becomes accepted societal standards. To ignore this fact would be blindfolding ourselves to the present realities of both developing and developed countries. It may be noted that Khurana(2007) has made an indepth analysis of both professionalization phase, managerialist phase and marketization phase of American business schools which has been pivotal in legitimizing management as socially and publicly responsible occupation ,despite later trends to capitalize more on company profits ,enhancing their respective investment and shareholder value. There are lessons to be learned about the larger role of management education from credit crunch crisis, economic recession , enronitis<sup>1</sup> and other financial crisis past and present. This brings up the question whether there is a need for value education in business schools beyond their recent trend of philanthropic practices of funding organizations, events , scholarships as practice and actions cannot be watertight compartments in context of value education.

### **2. Concept of Value Education**

Value Education, as it is generally used, refers to a wide range of learning and activities ranging from training in physical health, mental hygiene, etiquette and manners, appropriate social behaviour, civic rights and duties to aesthetic and even religious training. `Karma Ura (2010)'s GNH perspective of value education is, “The simplest idea of value education is about creating the emergence of a set of beliefs and attitudes as a person’s character and personality unfold, so that their beliefs will influence their behaviour and actions in a positive manner and direction”.

B.P. Khandelwal from a socio-cultural and pluralistic society angle views, “Value education in its most appropriate form should be related to the specific social and cultural contexts with reference to some universal and eternal standards applicable to all mankind. (B.P. Khandelwal,2001)”

‘Values education’ is broader and refers to any explicit and/or implicit school-based activity to promote student understanding and knowledge of values, and to inculcate the skills and dispositions of students so they can enact particular values as individuals and as members of the wider community. (Value Education Study, final report,Australia, August,2003)

“ Value education, its purpose being the promotion and development of values in the context of education as a lifelong process, to help individuals develop as responsible and caring persons and live as participating members of a pluralist society(Taylor,1995:24).” According to J. Mark Halstead, the core values underlying liberal education in educational institutes are the values of freedom, equality and rationality in the context of contemporary approaches to multicultural education and education for democracy. Singh, Karan (1996) in his contribution Education for the Global Society to The Delors Commission ( International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century) Report Learning: The Treasure Within. UNESCO, Paris stated that “ Holistic education must acknowledge the multiple dimensions of human personality- physical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and spiritual -thus moving towards the perennial dream of an integrated individual living on a harmonious planet.”

According to Rodney F. Allen, the objectives of Environmental Value education are Reciprocity, equality, universality, empathy, factual knowledge, social ethical principles, personal ethical principles, moral judgements and resolutions and action which are a resultant of drives to fulfill basic needs( physiological, security, belonging, love, etc) and a product of interaction with social and natural environments.

In addition to the above said definitions, there are still numerous viewpoints given by educators from varied angles. So we can conclude that it is difficult to arrive at a single specific definition as in Physical sciences or Natural sciences. Thus value education can be summarized as an holistic education which encompasses wide dimensions of human personality –physical, intellectual, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual, its objectives of developing values such as positive beliefs and attitudes, social responsibility, compassion, freedom, equality, rationality, universality, empathy, personal ethical principles, morality, spirituality ; as a result of cumulative effect of the individual’s social, natural and educational environment and its ultimate goal is the task of making individuals responsible and active contributors in nation building and a peaceful world.

### **3. GNH and Value Education, a common focal point.**

Value Education has been integrated into the education system in countries like Australia, Japan, Thailand, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom as well as some other European countries. Bhutan occupies a unique position in this context due to introduction of GNH( Gross National Happiness) Education policy and implementation.

The Concept of GNH is based on four pillars of culture, environment, socio-economic development and good governance supported by nine domains of GNH such as ecology, psychological well being, time use, education, health, community vitality, cultural diversity, standard of living and the good governance. The domain of ecology includes values of ecological degradation, ecological knowledge and afforestation. The domain of psychological well being refers to general psychological distress, emotional balance and spirituality. Domain of time use pertains to values of sleeping hours and working hours. The education domain includes values of educational

attainment, Dzongkha language, folk and historical literacy. Health domain relates to values of health status, health knowledge and health barrier. Community vitality is the domain which touches on values of family vitality, safety, reciprocity, trust, social support, socialization and kinship density. The dimensions of cultural diversity are within the context of dialect use, traditional sports, community festival, artisan skill, value transmission and basic precept. Under the domain of standard of living are values of income, housing, food security and hardship. Values of government performance, freedom and institutional trust fall within good governance domain. The objective of GNH is very much coherent with value education which works on individual all round development. The GNH values concerns with development of physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, as well as societal aspect of human being. Thus GNH is a holistic approach of implementing value education through national educational policies. GNH value promotion in educational institutes is a part of achieving GNH vision by the state. GNH values can be somewhat aligned to Buddhist philosophy of life which believes individuals should become good people, taken into consideration that Bhutan is a Buddhist Nation. The concept of happiness in Buddhism also emphasizes on benefit both for oneself and for others too.

#### **4. General Observations on GNH**

Karma Ura (2009) has given an overview on rationale of introduction of GNH concept in school system on the basis of research studies conducted on different strata of Bhutanese society and dzongkhags ( Districts). His findings bring to notice decline of values listed under nine domains of GNH among Bhutanese nationals. Thimphu fared the lowest among other dzongkhags which brings to light the impact of modern education system on Bhutanese society. He also observes its negative impact the fact that Thimphu served as a role model of Bhutanese policies in all spheres and is also the hub of policy framing and implementation. However from an Indian point of view, it is quite heartening to see that students from grade 1 to 12 in all government schools get free access to education, have adequate room for physical development, uphold cultural ( use of national /ethnic dress as school uniforms is a rare practice in Indian schools) and spiritual practices, lesser academic burden and adequate communication skills. Indian students in general are stuck up in neck to neck competition from pre-primary classes upto grade 12 which continues till higher education and has led to opening of psychological counseling cells for students. While debates for implementation of RTE ( Right to Education Act) are still on, government school students still lack access to general school facilities and thus the wide disparity between access to higher education compared to private schools students as well as their academic performance and life skills. Creation of educated elites and Pseudo-reality westernized standard of living coupled with strong marketing strategies and media hype have been one of the major contributors in creating economic, social, cultural and political imbalances. It is an accepted fact that most educational policies in most countries are facing criticisms and oppositions from different quarters despite the repeated recommendations of educationists who favour value education as one of the solutions to these multiple societal problems. The beauty of GNH values lies in its unique outline which traces from actions and practices leading to inculcation of values in individuals. It is often a sorry state in most educational policies and programmes including the Indian curriculum which leaves educators in a fix in the implementation phase due to lack of policy based on ground realities of which policy framers often make a mistake.

The immediate impact of decline of environmental values is most visible to the human eye. Like most developing countries Bhutan is becoming a victim of health hazards of plastic waste products and its careless disposal methods too. This is undoubtedly an impact of the transformation of Bhutanese people from producers to consumers in the information age. But in terms of observation of cultural heritage students are seen to carry forward the tradition even in graduation stage as evident from cultural activities of students. Spirituality and religious practices still finds place in most Bhutanese citizens. In most countries this aspect end only in paper and not practice due to arguments of value neutrality in education. Traditional sports like archery and kuru(dart) are still popular games among young and old men apart from football and

basketball. The beauty of the game is enhanced with the cultural tinge of playing in national attire, traditional tent for refreshment, targets decorated with multicoloured small flags, singing and dancing to rejoice wins. This is a common sight to see Bhutanese men playing kuru or archery within small groups on Sundays the whole day for recreational purposes. Community values like family vitality, social support, kinship density and safety are still visible when most societies are transforming to nuclear families. Safety and security is a big question mark for Indian women but it is not a uncommon sight to see women traveling alone on the treacherous highway which becomes unpredictable as road blockades at times extend to more than 2 days. In this context the patience and perseverance of Bhutanese people is worth as they have mental preparedness to face hardships of road blockades without raising their voices aloud or complaining and blaming others, rather they can find solace by taking a sip of tea or drink or making a small campfire on the highway to warm themselves.

The GNH vision has similarities with Value Education programmes in other countries. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian schools (DEST,2005) with emphasis on comprehensive student well-being was launched to build a national value education programme with important projects related to best practice in schools, teacher education, parents and other stakeholders and resources. India's National Policy on Education(NPE) and Programme of Action (1992) emphasis on value oriented education and introduced value elements in school curriculum. At the government level, governing educational bodies NCERT, NCTE and UGC along with other educational institutes are involved in curriculum reforms, teacher orientation programmes and integration in other courses including teacher education and management. What is concerning the Indian Value educationists is lack of co-ordination, consistency and uniformity of its implementation at different levels of education starting from school to university level which could dilute the essence of value education. It is mentionable that many Indian religious organizations have academic institutions based on spiritual and moral values whose network of model schools are spread across other countries. Some of them are Living Values Education Programme (LVEP) of Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, Education in Human Values (EHV) by Sri Sathya Sai Institute, The Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE), Chinmaya Society and few others are contributing to dissemination of value education. Thus, what is noticeable is lack of streamlining all these value education programmes into a single national policy of education. Sweden also makes value education part of school programme with the objective of developing democratic values in students. Thailand has also incorporated value education in the context of Buddhist Religious Education.

## 5. Conclusions

This is however an individualistic and general overview of value scenario in Bhutan. However, to arrive at any conclusions without empirical facts would be misleading. Bhutan is still in broad terms a peaceful country whose citizens have access to free school education, free health facilities, low pollution levels and low crime rates despite transportation problems due to rough mountain terrains and harsh climate. Thus there is definitely a need to assess the impact of GNH educational policies on both educators, students and professionals in the long run from different spheres of life on the basis of research findings. It may be a valuable contribution in the field of value education policy, research and practice. Thus in the advent of democratization and globalization phase in Bhutan, the introduction of GNH based education is rightly timed to prevent its ill-effects other countries faced or are facing due to lack of integration of social, cultural and materialistic values in the national development process. The success or failure of this educational project can only be answered by unfolding of the programme and evaluative study of

its impact in years to come. But it is surely a positive effort of Bhutan government to mitigate drawbacks that would result from globalization, industrialization, consumerism, information and media explosion as witnessed by most parts of the world especially in developing countries.

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