THE ROLE OF BHUTANESE FOLK LITERATURE AS A SOURCE OF CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE SECONDARY ENGLISH CURRICULUM FOR SCHOOLS IN BHUTAN

By

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of New England. School of Education

2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people I wish to thank - many who have supported this project directly, many who have had a powerful influence on the work, and many more who have wished me and this project well. Although I am unable to mention all the names here, I am indebted to them for the encouragement and inspiration I received from them. I have all of them close to my heart.

I especially owe deep appreciation and gratitude to the Ministry of Education (MoE), Royal Government of Bhutan, for giving me this scholarship to study at the University of New England (UNE) in Australia. I remain grateful to Mr Rinzin Namgay, then Chief Human Resource Officer at MoE, for all the help he gave me whenever I visited him at his office in Thimphu in connection with this project. Mr Tshering Tashi, human resource officer at MoE, has been instrumental in many ways. The managements of the colleges of education in Samtse and Paro, Royal University of Bhutan, have been extremely supportive and considerate.

I have been very fortunate to have worked on this project with my principal supervisor Associate Professor T.W. (Tom) Maxwell, and co-supervisors Dr Corinne Buckland and Associate Professor Mary Macken-Horarik, of the School of Education, UNE. I owe many thanks to Ms Glenda Kupczuk-Romanczuk for her advice and support in the initial stages of the study. This work was not possible without their expert guidance, positive criticisms, constant push for quality, and of course - and not the least - the great deal of patience and compassion they showed to me and my work. I remain ever grateful to you. Kadrin-Cheyi-La (Thank you).

Kuenga, Dechen, Yonten, and Lhadon, you have been extremely kind, understanding, and tolerant with me all these years. Without your support this work could not have been possible.
ABSTRACT

Globalization can promote cultural understanding and empathy among nations and spread the values of democracy and diversity. It also - and paradoxically so - homogenizes cultures and causes the loss and disappearance of lesser known languages and their cultures, especially those that exist in the oral form. Bhutanese society has been a largely oral society. Bhutan’s languages embody rich and diverse folk traditions in prose and verse. Its rich and diverse cultures continue to thrive in the country’s many different languages most of which are exclusively oral. Seen against the backdrop of globalization and its effect on oral cultures, it may not be very long before oral forms of folk literature in Bhutan disappear completely. It will be a loss to the rich diversity of Bhutanese culture and the world at large. Fortunately, the government recognizes the cultural value of these oral traditions and emphasizes the need to ensure their intergenerational continuity through the education of children and the catalytic role of teachers in transmitting the values these folk literatures contain.

Although important roles are attributed to teachers and students, in the absence of classroom based studies it is not known how real these roles are in terms of the importance given to folk literature in the school’s formal and informal curricula and pedagogical practice. Conducted in three stages, this study investigated secondary English teachers’ and students’ knowledge and perceptions of these issues. Data were gathered from teachers through questionnaires and interviews. Data from the students were also gathered using the same methods but in the context of an action research study aimed to improve knowledge and attitudes over time as a result of intervention.

There were a number of significant findings. First, while teachers and students recognize the cultural and aesthetic value of folk literature, their knowledge of the genres was generally low. Second, while the need to translate the oral literatures into English and revitalise them through the English curriculum is generally acknowledged, such an option also has cultural and pedagogical implications. Third, while Bhutanese folk literatures can be used as pedagogical catalysts in the English curriculum, how effectively they are used depends on a number of factors within and outside the context of curriculum. I argue that an effective way of saving the oral literatures and their cultures is by exposing children to them through the English curriculum though there are drawbacks in doing so. Based on the gaps in existent knowledge, a number of implications are drawn for educational policy and practice, folk literature education, folk literature studies in Bhutan, and further research.
CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this dissertation has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this dissertation and all sources used have been acknowledged in this dissertation.

Dorji Thinley
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<tr>
<td>BBE:</td>
<td>Bhutan Board of Examinations</td>
</tr>
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<td>BBED:</td>
<td>Bhutan Board of Examination Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPSD:</td>
<td>Curriculum and Professional Services Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPSS:</td>
<td>Curriculum and Professional Support Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERD:</td>
<td>Centre for Educational Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISCE:</td>
<td>Indian School Certificate Examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES:</td>
<td>Druk English Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDC:</td>
<td>Dzongkha Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPT:</td>
<td>Druk Phuensum Tshogpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMO:</td>
<td>Education Monitoring Officer</td>
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<td>Education Monitoring and Support Services Division</td>
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<td>GNH:</td>
<td>Gross National Happiness</td>
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<td>People’s Democratic Party</td>
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