

**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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## **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.



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Dorji Thinley

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## **ACRONYMS USED IN THE DISSERTATION**

BBE:	Bhutan Board of Examinations
BBED:	Bhutan Board of Examination Division
CAPSD:	Curriculum and Professional Services Division
CAPSS:	Curriculum and Professional Support Section
CERD:	Centre for Educational Research and Development
CISCE:	Indian School Certificate Examination
DES:	Druk English Series
DDC:	Dzongkha Development Commission
DPT:	Druk Phuensum Tshogpa
EMO:	Education Monitoring Officer
EMSD:	Education Monitoring and Support Services Division
GNH:	Gross National Happiness
GNHC:	Gross National Happiness Commission
MOE:	Ministry of Education
NBS:	National Statistics Bureau
PPD:	Policy and Planning Division
PDP:	People's Democratic Party
RGOB:	Royal Government of Bhutan
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.