

# **Preserving National Identity and Fostering Happiness in an Era of Globalization: A Comparative Exploration of Values and Moral Education in Bhutan and Japan**

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## **Abstract**

The world is witnessing an increased interest in the pursuit of psychological well-being or happiness as opposed to economic well-being, as captured by a country's gross national product. Bhutan is at the center of this drive. Despite this ideological fervor in the pursuit of happiness, few studies have explored the role of the school and the curriculum in this process. This study compares values education in Bhutan and moral education in Japan and explores how happiness is being instilled through the school curriculum. Although the histories of values and moral education in the two countries are dissimilar, both have recently carried out important political and legislative reforms with implications for education of this type. This study finds that there are similar dynamics in fortifying national identity through values or moral education in both countries, but that core concepts such as "love for family," "love for hometown," and "love for country," or "patriotism" as well as "international understanding and amity" are taught differently in each context.

## **Introduction: The Pursuit of "Happiness" in Bhutan and Japan**

Highlighting the psychological aspects of wealth or "happiness," rather than the economic aspects of wealth, has become popular worldwide, and is clearly observed in a growing literature in this area. Increased scholarly attention to the positive aspects of human lives—for example, happiness, well-being, and quality of life (QOL)—overlaps with a more human-centered development policy and the foundation of Positive Psychology, a field that began in the 1990s. Indeed, the number of papers published in these fields after 2000 far outnumbers the number of studies published during the previous 30 years.

Bhutan has been one of the most outspoken countries in encouraging and promoting policies that focus on happiness and psychological well-being. Recently the country has become widely known for its measurement of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The Bhutanese GNH encourages psychological happiness by balancing sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, cultural promotion and preservation and good governance (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011). All this

appears to have had an impact. In a national survey, for instance, more than 85% indicated that they are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their lives (Center for the Bhutan Studies, 2010). Clearly Bhutan is a country where the government encourages GNH and its people indicate a high level of happiness.

In Japan, psychological happiness has been preferred over materialistic happiness for more than two decades. According to a national survey of life satisfaction, conducted annually since 1963 by the Cabinet Office of Japan, Japanese respondents have consistently indicated the importance of fulfilling the heart or psychological happiness over materialistic fulfillment, especially beginning in the 1990s. However, unlike Bhutan, the level at which Japanese people rate their happiness has stagnated over the past 15 years (Cabinet Office of Japan, 2011).

In Bhutan, happiness enhancement is also encouraged in schools. The Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley declared recently that the government is transforming Bhutanese education to reflect GNH more directly (Coleman, 2011). Notwithstanding this initiative, few studies have actually examined how schools enhance the Bhutanese values of “family,” “friends,” “school,” “hometown,” and “country.” Similarly, in Japan, little research has examined how the concept of psychological happiness is actually legitimized and taught through moral education in Japanese schools.

After reviewing the historical evolution of values education in Bhutan and moral education in Japan, this article examines legislative developments and teaching guidelines in both countries. While other curricular subjects emphasize knowledge and philosophy—in fact, traditional values can be taught in the subject of Dzongkha (national language) class in Bhutan (see Wangyal, 2002)—lessons about values and attitudes are taught directly in classes on moral education (Matsushita, 2008) and values education. This paper conducts a documentary analysis of primary school curricular guidelines of “Values Education” in Bhutan and moral education in Japan, and compares how different types of social units (e.g., family, school, hometown, and country) have been legitimized to nurture happiness among students.

There are several reasons for comparing these two countries:

1. While Japan introduced moral education over 120 years ago, at almost the same time that primary schools were established, values education only became a regular class lesson in Bhutanese primary schools in 1999, making for an interesting comparison;
2. Although education is not compulsory in Bhutan, both countries have a national school curriculum in which values or moral education is taught for one hour each week;
3. Both countries recently carried out important legislative reforms: Japan’s Fundamental Law of Education was revised in 2006 and Bhutan’s constitution in 2008.

Furthermore, as both countries experience the impact of rapid globalization and a deluge of digital information, there is a need to understand whether values education and

moral education encourage psychological well-being, or happiness, in relation to core societal units: family, school, hometown, and country. The paper is organized as follows: it first describes the issue of psychological well-being<sup>1</sup> and its impact on education in each country; then it explores previous guidelines and textbook studies, briefly introduces the research methods used, and finally describes the historical evolution of values and moral education, followed by an analysis of the current state of values education (Bhutan) and moral education (Japan).

## **The Influence of Psychological Well-Being on Education Policies in Bhutan and Japan**

Located in a landlocked region of Central Asia, Bhutan, a Buddhism-oriented country, has an approximate population of 700,000, of which 81% are Tibetan and 18% are Nepalese (Center for the Bhutan Studies, 2010). Founded in 1907, the country was a hereditary monarchy until 2008 when it changed to a constitutional monarchy. The adult literacy rate is 58%, and the net enrollment rate in primary education is 87% (EFA Global Monitoring Report Team, 2011). Bhutan's GDP per capita is about USD 2,000 (2010 estimate). Despite low-income levels, Bhutanese adults report high levels of happiness, likely attributable to national policies prioritizing psychological happiness over material wealth.

In 1971, the notion of GNH was introduced by His Fourth King Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck when Bhutan was seeking admission to the United Nations. The Fourth King argued that economic growth does not lead to happiness among peoples, but that policies prioritizing happiness, as indicated by the GNH, do. The concept became further known in 1975 when the Fourth King discussed the importance of GNH during the Nonaligned Summit Conference (Sugimoto, 2011). The notion of GNH circulated widely throughout the 1980s in Bhutan and elsewhere. In 1999, the Center for the Bhutan Studies (CBS) was inaugurated as a national, multi-disciplinary research institute to further explore key aspects of Bhutanese society, including GNH.

In Bhutanese primary schools the concept of GNH was taught as part of subject called "Values Education" beginning in 1999. According to the official guidelines, values education is a Buddhism-oriented subject that seeks to develop "right thought and action," and encompasses five components: compassion, integrity, respect, responsibility, and loyalty (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007). In recent years, education officials have strengthened the link between the GNH concept and the school curriculum. The subject of "Values Education" is being more directly oriented to GNH since education is "considered as one of the fundamental needs required to achieve Gross National Happiness" (Zam, MoE Bhutan, 2008, p.5).

Japan has also focused on the importance of "kokoro-no-yutakasa" or "psychological

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<sup>1</sup> Well-being indicates fulfilling the conditions of a good life.

happiness.” In addition to the aforementioned national life satisfaction surveys sampling all adults, the Eighth World Youth Survey (2008) revealed that Japanese youth aged 18-24 were ranked fourth out of five countries (UK, the US, France, South Korea, and Japan) in family life satisfaction and school life satisfaction. The Central Council on Education (CCE), the official Japanese advisory council on educational matters, expressed concern over the apparent lower self-esteem of Japanese youth.

For some time the Japanese government has sought ways to encourage student well-being and happiness. Following discussions over the impact of the notorious “exam hell” and a crammed school schedule, the Japanese government implemented the policy of “relaxed education” in 2002, which cut compulsory school curricula by approximately 30% and designated every Saturday as a regular weekend. The “relaxed education” policy sought to enable students to enjoy more “relaxed” time and less psychological stress (Oshitani and Ban, 2002). Since then, national educational policies, including the relaxed education, have shifted several times due to the lower achievements of Japanese students on international assessments. Amidst these heightened and evolving policy concerns, less consideration has been given to the aim of enhancing student life satisfaction through school education.

### **International Trends in Values and Moral Education**

Unlike mathematics, English or other school subjects, there is no single definition of “moral education” or “values education,” although values education often includes religious education and moral education (Shimizu, 2008). A broad notion of values education, which includes moral education, religious education, civic education and social studies, is depicted in the research by Cha, Wong and Meyer (1988; 1992). They explored the worldwide prevalence of values (moral and religious) education and found that moral education was the *only* primary school subject whose relative emphasis changed little between the interwar period (1920-1940) and 1975-1987 (Cha et al., 1988). In a revised version of this study, Cha et al. (1992) found a negative correlation between curricular hours spent on moral education versus those spent on religious education. In these cross-national studies, culturally different nation-states—for example, the U.S. and those in Western Europe—were categorized collectively as “the West”; culturally and religiously diverse countries in South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and South East Asia were grouped arbitrarily under the category of Asia. Thus, finer comparisons within the same region appear necessary. In this regard, Bhutan and Japan, two vastly different Asian countries, provide a good starting point for more in-depth comparisons.

While these international studies explored the prevalence of, and relative emphasis on, moral education as a component of values education, the effects of moral education, per se, have been examined elsewhere. For instance, Rodrigues-Conde et al. (2011) found that conveying moral education through information and communication technologies (ICTs) increased the self-esteem of 12-16 year old students in Spain. They highlighted the

benefits of moral education though their experiments, although the nature of the content included in moral education curricula through ICT was not addressed.

Country-based curricular studies of values education and/or moral education differ in number and foci. For instance, studies of curricula and textbooks in Bhutan and Japan are less pervasive as compared to those examining the U.S. situation. The literature focusing on Japan is dominated by studies of English (including English as a second language) and history. The former examines learning and teaching methods (c.f. Weir and Ozasa, 2010; Kitao et al., 1986) or cultural influences on textbooks by the U.S. (Kitao, 1979). Studies of history textbooks tend to focus on either the “history textbook dispute” (how they portray the Korean War or the Second World War) or on the New History Textbook which only features positive views of Japan’s past and removes any references to the “darker” side of Japan’s past (c.f. Lin et al., 2009; Foster and Nicholls, 2005; Hein and Selden, 2000; Crawford, 2003). Only a few studies investigate Japanese textbooks in mathematics, science and art education.

Studies of moral education in Japan (e.g., Hoffman, 1999; Khan, 1997) have examined the historical evolution of official teaching guidelines on moral education from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hoffman (1999, p.96) argues that critical themes—humanistic moral education, patriotism and work ethics in the betterment of the state—“have remained essentially unchanged since their introduction in the Meiji era.” Khan (1997), who examined moral education curricula from their inception to the late 1990s, makes a similar point.

Following the revision of Japan’s Fundamental Law of Education in 2006, which emphasized national solidarity and patriotism, the teaching of patriotism in schools garnered greater attention (see Kawano, 2010; Roesgaard, 2011). The new official teaching guidelines (2008), which followed this legal reform, instigated a heated debate: terms such as “love of land” and “love of the country” were seen by some as a reemergence of pre-WWII “patriotism.”

Drawing on former Prime Minister Abe’s “positive” definition of these terms, Roesgaard (2011) argues that revisions to the moral education curriculum are a “*gate-keeping*” reaction to the “challenges of globalization.” Thus, in light of various globalization challenges, Japan added “patriotism” along with notions of rich learning (cognitive knowledge), rich mind (good sense of morality) and healthy body to its moral education guidelines (pp.85-103). However, a closer reading of the two sets of teaching guidelines on moral education, in 1998 and then in 2008, reveals that “love of country” or “patriotism” did not suddenly enter the moral education curriculum of primary schools in 2008. These values already existed in the earlier set of guidelines. In sum, a finer exploration of current content analysis is needed.

Studies of Bhutanese education are quite limited, partially because it was only in the past decade or so that mass schooling spread throughout the country. Education is still not compulsory. The *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, published by the Center for

the Study of Bhutan since 1999, covers social, political and cultural issues in Bhutan. Previous studies of education in this journal fall into two categories: (1) traditional versus modern arguments about education, sometimes involving studies of textbooks or teaching guidelines; and (2) studies about the “quality” of education.

The tradition versus modernity theme is observed in articles that examine “traditional (monastic) versus modern (secular) education” (c.f. Penjore, 2005; Phuntsho, 2000); English versus Dzongkha, the Bhutanese national language (Rinchen, 1999); the role of Dzongkha language classes for intergenerational values transmission (Wangyal, 2002); and the effective introduction of positive values or happiness through more resilient teaching methods (McDonald, 2008). A common theme revolves around cultural nationalism and an abiding concern over the loss of traditional Buddhist values such as “compassion, altruism, duty, responsibility and reciprocity” (Wangyal, 2002, p.126). Studies of textbooks and the curriculum in Bhutan, unlike other countries, explore many subject areas since Buddhist oriented values are embedded in language education (Wangyal, 2002) and other subjects (Ura, 2009). Many recognize that values education is taught throughout the whole curriculum. Having said that, there are no values education textbooks, which limits the documentary analysis undertaken in this study.

The topic of “quality education” represents the other dominant trend in studies of Bhutanese education. In particular, more and more studies are concerned with student learning achievement and teacher education. Judging from a recent government report (Zam, 2008), quality education is recognized as an important component of its Education for All (EFA) policy. The importance of quality education can also be observed at different levels: national, municipal, and in local schools. For instance, at the national level, “quality education” is listed in the national education plan (see Zam, 2008) and also included as one of the nine important pillars to bolster GNH in which “quality of education” “academic achievement” are listed as priorities along with “literacy in Dzongkha” and “literacy in English” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011). At the local level, for example, a principal of a lower secondary school in Paro, the capital of Bhutan, told the author of this study that “even the illiterate parents of the students recognize the importance of education so they encourage their children to study hard” (Interview conducted on 25 September 2011). This observation echoes comments made by the Director General of the Ministry’s Department of School Education, who replied that Bhutan might participate in international assessments such as PISA, as the Bhutanese seem concerned about their students’ performance as compared to those in other countries (Interview conducted on 24 September 2011). Similarly, the Secretary of Ministry of Education commented: “we are concerned that the majority of our students did not do well in Economics and English in BHSEC (Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate) and Science subjects in BSEC (Bhutan Secondary Education Certificate) examination. Therefore, all efforts must be made to improve the standards through curriculum review, professional development of teachers at all levels, School, Cluster and National based programs etc.” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2009, p.ii).



Preserving traditional values in education while valuing quality education, within a framework of modern education, are two seemingly contrasting—even conflicting—challenges that perplex the country. Sugimoto (2011) explains that contemporary education in Bhutan seems to possess two binary-oriented missions: (1) to pursue quality of education by improving the learning environment; and (2) to pursue GNH and psychological well-being through education. The most recent trends of educational research in Bhutan tend to emphasize the former aim over the latter one. This shift partly reflects the fact that many Bhutanese currently consider education as a *means* to good jobs rather than as an *objective* in and of itself, a view that had prevailed until recently (Wangyal, 2002, *emphasis added*).

## Methods

In order to analyze how values and moral education foster happiness or psychological well-being in relation to family, school, hometown, and country, this study utilizes documentary analysis, especially discourse analysis, to examine the written texts of official documents and guidelines. For Bhutan, the author analyzes the 2008 Constitution, in addition to the most recent education policy papers, such as *the Development of Education: National Report of Bhutan (2008)* and a teaching guideline by the Ministry of Education entitled *Values Education Framework for PP to XII (2007)*. *A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness (2011)* is also analyzed to present the most current policy guideline of GNH-infused education. However, the values education framework (2007) is utilized for comparison by country, as *A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness (2011)* has just been proposed by the Bhutanese MoE and discrete contents have not yet been consolidated by grade. Recall that there are currently no official textbooks on values education in Bhutan.

For Japan, the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) is examined, which has had a tremendous influence on Japanese teaching guidelines, and was revised for the first time after 58 years in 2006. Other documents analyzed include the primary school teaching guidelines of 2008 and 1998 for moral education, and an explanation of the elementary school curriculum guidelines of 2008. MEXT's official curriculum guidelines serve as the main basis to explore national education policy. In order to parallel the documentary analysis of Bhutan, this study does not employ textbook (supplementary readings) analysis for Japan.

## Historical Evolution of Values Education in Bhutan and Moral Education in Japan

In Bhutan, before the establishment of its modern education system, starting in the 1960s, monastic education was the only form of education that existed. In conjunction with the modernization policy, eleven schools were built attended by about 400 students.

These numbers have increased rapidly so that by 2008 there were over 523 schools attended by 157,000 students.<sup>2</sup> With the expansion of modern schooling, the number of students attending monastic institutions decreased while the number of students attending modern secondary schools increased (Wangyal, 2002). For instance, as of 2008, 87% are enrolled in secondary education, even though this level and primary education are not compulsory (Zam, 2008).

While the supply of schools increased rapidly since the 1960s, it was not until 1997 when the subject of values education was first proposed by the Ministry of Health and Education<sup>3</sup> (Wangyal, 2002). “Values education” literally refers to “Tsi-thong,” (values) and “Sam-Choed Shey-yon,” (thought, action, education), thus it refers to the “development of right thought and action,”—which are fundamental elements of Gross National Happiness (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, p.4). In other words, values education is defined as a training of the “sem” or “mind,” as it can be “the source of everything,” as explained, “(M)ind is the Master of all. Body and Speech are but slaves that perform good and bad deeds” (ibid, p.4).

In the first official document, *Value Education: Proposed Programme of Activities (A Discussion Paper)* (1997), two aspects are worth mentioning. First, the document emphasized the importance of collaboration (cooperation) and dialogue between school, parents, and Youth Guidance and Counseling Section of the Education Division in addition to a set of good expected moral behavioral conduct, such as, “cooperation,” “hard work,” “sense of appreciating rules and social code of conducts,” “love and respects others,” or universally common and legitimated moral norms (Ministry of Health and Education, Bhutan, 1997).

Second, the values education document recommends the carrying out of various activities both inside and outside of school, indicating that the training of “mind” goes beyond the school class hour. This explains why, in 1997 when the concept of values education was first promoted, no specific class on values education had yet been proposed. A year later though, following the decision in *the Recommendation of the 1st Annual Education Conference, Values Education to be Incorporated in the National Curriculum*, the subject of values education was allocated one class hour per week in each grade of basic education (Sugimoto, 2000). The 1997 proposal on value education makes reference only to Japan and India (see Ministry of Health and Education, Bhutan, 1997, p.4), implying Bhutan’s preferred relations to these two countries and their influence on Bhutan’s notion of values education. This narrow focus contrasts with the drafting of the 2008 constitution, for which more than 20 national constitutions were consulted. In sum, while modern schooling in Bhutan was established during the 1960s, the teaching of

<sup>2</sup> In Bhutan, the school name reflects with the highest grade level offered: community school (typically up to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade), primary school (up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade), lower secondary school (up to 8<sup>th</sup> grade), middle secondary schools (up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade) and higher secondary school (up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students).

<sup>3</sup> The proposal was from the Ministry of Health and Education.



values education has a more recent history, having been taught as a class lesson only since 1999.

Unlike Bhutan, Japan has a long history of compulsory schooling starting as early as 1886, fourteen years after the issuance of the Education Order of 1872 by the Meiji Government. Moral education, known as Shushin or the teaching of “good virtue,” was a major subject from the inception of primary schooling in Japan. This situation contrasts with the primary school curriculum of Western countries, which tended to emphasize academic subjects rather than moral education or extra-curricular activities.

Historically, schooling in Japan had two major objectives: to instill discipline and good virtue for the country and to foster economic development aiming at the modernization of the country (Hoffman, 1999). The 1890’s “Imperial Rescript on Education” was the promulgation of moral education, which became the basis of education (Hoffman, 1999). Composed of 315 Japanese writing symbols, the Rescript’s focuses on the relationship between “ruler and subjects” or the “imperial throne” (Khan 1997, p.71).

While suppressing imported Western ideologies, especially Christianity, Japanese moral education was based on Confucian principles such as “filial piety, and loyalty to unite people in one spirit” (Hoffman, 1999, p.88). The Imperial Rescript of Education (1890) explicitly mentions, in addition to piety and loyalty, the values of friendship, benevolence, sincerity, propriety, respect, courage, and modesty” as the basis for moral education (ibid, p.75). Special emphasis was also placed on the “emperor, patriotism, and responsibility to the nation-state” (ibid, p.75). Accordingly, the first national moral education textbook, which was published in 1903, focuses on “respect for one’s parents, be friendly to others, be thrifty with your money, be sincere to others, be brave, and be responsible to the nation and society” (ibid, p.88). In terms of correct attitudes, the submission of children to parents and teachers, which involved docility and conformity, were strongly recommended. As more than 98% of Japanese children attended primary schools by 1910, the impact of the school curriculum with a moral education component was immense: students were required to remember the Rescript letter by heart (ibid).

Not surprisingly, moral education received considerable attention during the political turmoil of the 1930s. After the Second World War, and following the wartime political “subjugation” period, moral education was completely abolished to make way for a democratic state under the US occupation. This lasted until 1957. While adopting “democratic” aspects of the US education system, Japanese policy makers quickly searched for the best-fitting form of moral education and borrowed the basic philosophy of “self-sacrifice for the good of others” or “conformity over individuality” from Confucianism, while changing the subject name from Shushin to Doutoku (Khan, 1997; Hoffman, 1999, p.96). Certain aspects of pre-WWII moral education in Japan were discarded—for example, the emperor-centric concept, the absolute obedience to teacher or parents and the disregard of women. Still, many aspects of pre-war moral education

remained intact due to the “absence of a replacement for discarded prewar moral virtues” (Khan, 1997, p. 206; Hoffman, 1999).

In 1958, the newly established “moral education lesson” or *Doutoku* was introduced in primary schools. According to Khan (1997, p. 105), the main purposes of these lessons are “self-awareness and the development of moral thinking.” The class hour was meant to “supplement, deepen, and synthesize desirable moral practices, feelings, and judgments” (ibid, 1997, p.105). Since then these core purposes of moral education have changed little, as reflected in the new teaching guidelines, except for the controversial additions of “love of land, and love of the country.” The next section presents a more detailed exploration of the contents of values education and moral education and by analyzing the topics relating to family, school, hometown, and country in an era of globalization.

### **Fostering Happiness and National Identity through Values Education and Moral Education in Bhutan and Japan**

Bhutan sets forth two overall educational objectives in the Constitution of 2008. The first is aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of the whole population with “education being directed towards the full development of the human personality” (The Government of Bhutan, 2008, Article 9: pp. 15-16). This aim reflects universally legitimated purposes and is very similar to the wording found in the Japanese Fundamental Law of Education (FLE, 2006), which states that the overarching objective of education is the full development of personality “*jinkaku no kansei*,” or to “foster individuals with healthy bodies and minds that are necessary as a citizen of peaceful and democratic nation-states and society.” These goals of mass schooling promoted by the nation-state are meant to contribute to national progress and development in both countries (Benavot, et al., 1991).

The second educational objective in Bhutan, by contrast, has a culturally unique purpose: the improvement of “values.” This notion is identical to the Buddhism-oriented Bhutanese values mentioned in the National Report (2008), which views values as “one of the fundamental needs required to achieve the Gross National Happiness, the framework for the overall development of Bhutan” (Zam, 2008, p.5). For the Bhutanese, education is considered as a fundamental “tool” to achieve GNH, which is deeply rooted in Buddhist values. Thus, the pursuit of GNH through values education essentially fosters the creation of Bhutanese national identity (Royal Government of Bhutan 2007; Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011).

As previously mentioned, both countries allocate one class hour per week to values or moral education. However, the position of these subjects within the whole school framework differs as indicated in the Table 1. In Bhutan, a Buddhist-oriented values education, first offered in 1999, has been taught through all school subjects, especially through *Dzongkha* classes, as Wangyal (2001, p. 115) describes: “...value education was hidden in the form of stories in the textbooks.” This tradition remains current today: values

education should “penetrate the whole school, its ethos, activities and relationships” rather than a discrete values education lesson (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, p.8).

By contrast, moral education in Japan has not been a subject since 1958 but it is a “ryouiki” or “realm,” which is taught throughout all school activities, including other subject studies, special activities and integrated learning hours. Influenced by the revision of the FLE (2006), which emphasized the importance of moral education as well as notions of “patriotism” and “love of nation” (Roesgaard, 2011), the 2008 MoE guidelines designates the moral education *class hour* as “kaname” or the “core lesson” that should outweigh the moral education learned in other school subjects or special activities (MEXT, 2008b). Thus, whereas in Bhutan whole school activities enhance Buddhist values and are more important than a single class hour of value education, in Japan, the opposite in the case: an hour-long moral education lesson has critical importance, outweighing other subjects or school activities.

Many similarities, other than full development of personality, are seen when comparing the themes of values education in Bhutan with moral education in Japan. Where they differ, however, is the grade at which each theme is taught. For example, in Bhutan there are eight themes in values education (see Table 2): relationships, health, the sanctity of life, the environment, media literacy, education for citizenship, international relations and inspiring (inspirational) people. Interestingly, most themes correspond to key categories of moral education in Japan (see Table 2). However, certain themes in Bhutan—for example, “international relations,” “love of country” or “patriotism,” binary-looking concepts—appear in the values education syllabus from the *pre-primary* level (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007, p.33, *emphasis added*), while Japanese students learn “love of homeland,” and “love of country” for the first time in the third grade and “international understanding and international friendship” in the fifth grade (Table 2). This suggests that Bhutan keeps both the “immunity” of its own culture and traditions, while at the same time preparing for “permeability” (Roesgaard, 2011) to other countries and cultures, by encouraging *Tha Damtshing*, mutual *trust*, a core philosophy of Buddhism. Coincidentally, from the pre-primary level, all classes but Dzongkha class are conducted in English in Bhutan, which may also facilitate the “permeability” process and is in sharp contrast to Japan where an hour-long English class has been established from the fifth grade only recently.

**Table 1: Values and Moral Education in Bhutan and Japan**

	Bhutan	Japan
Basic concept	Tibet Buddhism and Bhutanese two most traditional values / <i>Ley Judrey</i> , all actions have consequence; good begets good/ Life and Impermanence/ <i>Tha Damtshing</i> , mutual trust /relationship oriented	Secular, but influenced by Confucian/ self-sacrifice for the good of others
Textbook requirement	No authorized textbook. Each school develops its own philosophy of values education and includes it in a school policy along with a clear action plan	No authorized textbook, but “supplementary reading”
Class hour	1 hour per week (from pre-primary to 12 <sup>th</sup> ) since 1999	1 hour per week (from 1 <sup>st</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup> grade) since 1958
Most recent teaching guideline	2007 (Values Education Framework for PP-XII); 2011 (Education for GNH: Refining Our School Education Practices)	2008 Shin Gakushu Shidou Youryo [New National Curricular Guidelines for the Elementary School]
Evaluation	Not grade but by descriptive feedback. Guided by the end of key stage descriptors	Observations Self-evaluations

Sources: *Values Education Framework for PP-XII* (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007); *Educating for GNH: Refining Our School Education Practices—A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness* (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011); *Shin Gakushu Shidou Youryo* [New National Curricular Guidelines for the Elementary School] (MEXT, Japan, 2008b, translated by the author)

Another interesting difference between Bhutan and Japan lies in how they handle social institutions such as family, school, community, and country in the guidelines. In Bhutan, the terms, “family,” “school,” “community,” and “country” are repeated in the guidelines by adding yearly as well as cross-theatrical aspects to familiarize students with the terms and deepen the knowledge of these concepts. In Japan, by contrast, either different themes are added each year or themes are changed--e.g., one theme “family love,” is not necessarily deepened from year to year. For instance, as Table 2 indicates, while the theme *Respect for life / care for animals and plants* remains unchanged throughout six years, the unit on “love for school” decreases from two to one class at the third grade when a “love for country” unit is added. Similarly, the number of units on “family love” decreases from two to one class at fifth grade when the “international understanding” unit is added. This could also imply that in Japan, each higher grade level tends to emphasize a larger social unit, such as hometown or nation-state by self-sacrifice for the good of “minna” or “others.” In Bhutan, by contrast, small social units represented by “family” “friends” and “school” are taught continually regardless of grade level. This may provide an answer as to why in most categories (family, friends, school, living environment and the self), Bhutanese 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have significantly higher life

**Table 2: Contents Comparison of Values Education and Moral Education**

Themes of Discrete Values Education (Bhutan)	Pre-primary to Grade 3	Grade 4-6	Major Themes of Teaching Contents of Moral Education (JAPAN)	Grade 1-2 parenthesis ( ) equals to class hour	Grade 3-4	Grade 5-6
Relation-ships	Family and friends; Making time for our family and friends	Family and friends; Respect between boys and girls; Bullying	<i>About Self</i> Self-control/ Freedom and responsibility/ Expansion of individuality	Rule and moderation (4) Freedom and responsibility (0) Expansion of individuality (0)	Rule and moderation (3) Freedom and responsibility (0) Expansion of individuality (1)	Rule and moderation (2) Freedom and responsibility (1) Expansion of individuality (1)
Health	Being safe; Cleanliness	Looking after ourselves and our bodies; Personal Hygiene				
Sanctity of Life	Care of self, others and animals	Ahimsa- Practising non-violence; Karma	<i>Relations with other people</i> Courtesy/ Sympathy/ Friendship/ Magnanimity & modesty	Courtesy (2) Sympathy (3) Friendship (2) Magnanimity & modesty (0)	Courtesy (1) Sympathy (3) Friendship (3) Magnanimity & modesty (0)	Courtesy (1) Sympathy (2) Friendship (2) Magnanimity & modesty (1)
The Environment	Care of local environment	Litter; pollution; How to protect the planet				
Media Literacy	Our personal stories and their meaning; Local culture and knowledge	Stories in newspapers: Facts, bias; opinion; different versions	<i>Relations with nature and the respected</i> Respect for life/ Care for animals and plants	Respect for life (3) Care for animals and plants (2)-1 <sup>st</sup> grade:(3)-2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Respect for life (3) Care for animals and plants (3)	Respect for life (3) Care for animals and plants (3)
Education for Citizenship	Pupil charters; What we will do. How we will behave. What values we aspire to? Five Precepts	Local democracy				
International Relations	Children around the world: lives, languages, religions, what we have in common	International charities; World issues and resolutions; Poverty; Water; Aid	<i>Relation to group/society</i> Sense of public duty/ justice/ love for family/ love for school/ love for hometown/ patriotism (love for country)/ international understanding and international friendship (amity)	Sense of public duty (3) justice (0) love for family (1)-1 <sup>st</sup> grade, (2)-2 <sup>nd</sup> grade love for school (2) love for hometown (0) patriotism (love for country) (0) international understanding and international friendship (0)	Sense of public duty (3) justice (0) love for family (2) love for school (1) love for hometown (1) patriotism (love for country) (1) international understanding and international friendship (0)	Sense of public duty (2) justice (0) love for family (1) love for school (1) love for hometown (1) patriotism (love for country) (1) international understanding and international friendship (2)
Inspiring people	Whom do we respect and why? What values do they demonstrate? What can we learn from them?	Mother Theresa and Calcutta. Why is her work necessary?				

Sources: *Values Education Framework for PP-XII*, pp.32-35 (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007); *Shin Gakushu Shidou Youryo* [New National Curricular Guidelines for the Elementary School] (MEXT, Japan, 2008b, translated by the author); *Japanese Moral Education Past and Present*, pp.202-204 (Khan, 1997); *Shogakko Kyoushiyou Shidousho: Shogakko Doutoku* [Teaching Guidelines for Teachers: Primary School Moral Education], pp. 26-27, (Tokyo Shoseki 2011, translated by the author).

satisfaction levels than those of Japanese students even though Japanese students would be expected to have higher scores simply based on the country's GDP or economic living standard (see Sakurai, 2009).

Very recently, Bhutan introduced a “GNH-infused education,<sup>4</sup>” in an attempt to guarantee “the inherent values and culture that are in harmony with the natural environment along with sustainable and equitable socio-economic development guided by good governance.” The GNH-infused education, which is composed of nine discrete domains and 107 subdivisions in each domain, is considered “key to Bhutan’s success in maintain our (Bhutanese) unity and harmony—indeed our (Bhutanese) character as a nation” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011, p.1). The main difference between the older (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007) and newer (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011) values education can be seen in the contents themselves and in the process through which such education policies have been drafted.

The GNH-infused education contains very contemporary and international themes, which are not necessarily Bhutanese concepts: for example, domains such as “education” (in which “quality of education” and “academic achievement” are included) and “time use” which are inconsistent with Bhutanese traditional culture represent two out of nine important domains of GNH-infused education. In terms of the drafting process, the earlier values education guidelines (2007) were mainly written by Bhutanese Ministry of Education intellectuals with some foreign inputs from the U.K. and India. The recent GNH-infused education guideline (2011) reflects worldwide influences, and includes many foreign proverbs from Mark Twain, Anne Frank, Oprah Winfrey; having little relation to traditional Bhutanese cultures. This aspect of being “permeable to foreign cultures” was noted by the Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley of Bhutan in a 2009 speech to foreign educational specialists, when he stated that “...there is nothing in the principles of Gross National Happiness that is not fundamentally universal” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011, p.xii)

Another important issue of GNH-infused education, documented in the official guideline, *Educating for GNH Refining Our School Education Practices: A Guide to Advancing Gross National Happiness* (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2011), relates to the detailed indicators and instructions pertaining to curriculum delivery and classroom management. In the past the implementation of values education was left to the principals and teachers of each school, who, it was assumed, knew best the needs of their students and the environment (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2007). Greater specificity is found in the new guidelines of GNH-infused education. To illustrate, principals are expected to follow 17 instructions (and teachers 15 instructions) in order that their school be recognized as “GNH school.” These lists consist of attitudinal cautions, such as “teachers

<sup>4</sup> Just to distinguish the existing concept of GNH since 1970s to the very recent concept of GNH education, here the latter is referred to as “GNH-infused education.”



use morally, culturally, and politically correct in language/speech,” “teacher do not talk ill about others,” “teachers are organized, systematic, prepared and resourceful in their work”(p.p.35-36). In addition, principals are instructed that they should “take the lead role in pursuing the school vision for achieving GNH goals” (p. 35). GNH-minded teachers and a GNH-infused learning environment” are expected to be found in all schools by 2014. However, certain criticisms have already been raised about the GNH-infused education proposal. For example, Tshering (2010) argues that “instilling GNH values into the current education is foreign” and “to dismiss that current system and start another one anew could prove catastrophic, especially to students and teachers” (Tshering, 2010, Bhutan Observer, April 23rd).

Here it is worth recalling that Bhutan experienced democratization and established a constitutional government in 2008. Soon thereafter, a strong culturally uniform concept of GNH-infused education was proposed by the Ministry of Education in an attempt to secure greater psychological happiness (and GNH). Bhutan seems to be legitimating GNH-infused education in order to fortify national identity as a more cohesive nation-state. Such a process, whereby the government tries to strengthen its power over the people by giving detailed moral instructions is not unique to Bhutan. This bears striking resemblance to Japan in recent years. Important educational reforms occurred in Japan following the revision of the Fundamental Law (2006), emphasizing “tradition,” “discipline,” “morality,” and, most of all, “patriotism.” This shift represented an “intensification of control over citizens,” following a neo-liberal policy discourse, which focused on deregulation, privatization, and marketization and when “consolidated social economic and political mechanisms upon which the post-war conservative power based” were dished and so did the loss of the safety net (Takayama, 2011, p.256). Thus, to eradicate anxieties, the government became “culturally nationalist” by giving propaganda of “*the national history*, traditional gender norms, and patriotism,” so that people are given “something to cling to” or to hinge on in such an uncertain “rapidly changing socio-economic context” (ibid, p.256). Bhutan’s GNH-infused education certainly bears a resemblance to the intent of a revised FLE: both were born in the dynamics of new political regimes.

## Conclusion

This article explored values and moral education guidelines for primary schools in Bhutan and Japan and noted similarities and differences with respect to the fostering of values such as “love for family,” “love for hometown,” and “love for country—or patriotism.” Both countries emphasize many similar curricular themes in values and moral education. In Bhutan “love for family” and “love for school,” or “love for socially small unit” are taught throughout school from the pre-primary grade to the final grades; in Japan “love for family” or “love for school” are partially replaced by “love for hometown” or “love for country” in the more advanced grade levels. Other themes—such as “patriotism” and “international understanding”—are taught from the pre-primary grade in Bhutan, but

introduced at a much later point in the Japanese education system.

One striking similarity lies in the dynamics of fortifying national identity through education, and specifically through values or moral education. While Japan emphasized “patriotism” through moral education to strengthen national identity, after neo-liberal policies marred the economic safety net, Bhutan is seeking to strengthen national uniformity by an intensification of control over its citizens and through legitimating GNH-infused education, which also opens its students to outside countries and influences. These dynamics, which appeared in periods of intense political change, certainly linger in Bhutan and provide a stepping-stone for consolidating a new democratic country. Whatever the form that a GNH-infused education takes, long-standing traditions of Buddhism will remain the backbone value system of Bhutanese schools, and are expected to change very little.

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