

Response to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' Questionnaire

1. Please list existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education.

1.1. As spelt out in the Draft National Education Policy (2011), the following are the foundation pillars on which the education system rests, whereby the policies pertaining to education are being developed:

- As articulated by His Majesty the King, “a nation’s future is mirrored in the quality of her youth and that it is the Government’s sacred duty to provide a good education and a conducive environment for young people to become strong, capable leaders for the future”. Therefore, education is seen as the key to building a progressive and strong nation for the future.
- The constitution of the nation, an initiative from the throne, signed on July 18, 2008 guarantees an inalienable right for each and every Bhutanese child. The Section 15 of Article 9: principles of State Policy states

“The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality.”

- While section 15 covers an important responsibility of the state in terms of imparting education to the citizens of Bhutan, section 16 guarantees free education to all children of Bhutan of school going age up to tenth standard.

“The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education shall be made generally available and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.”

1.2. In May 1999, the Planning Commission of the Royal Government issued a development strategy document entitled Bhutan 2020: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness. This document, a statement of vision for different sectors of governance, provides the strategies to reach Bhutan to a defined state in the year 2020. While this document is not a law, it has continued to serve as a guide to our legislators and bureaucrats in the formulation of policies. In the education sector, the document stipulates;

- Achieving full high school enrolment by 2012
- Achieving full adult literacy by 2017
- Adoption of new technologies and innovation in education
- Initiation and expansion of distance and continuing education programs
- Increasing private participation in education to offer choices to those who can afford
- Providing appropriate incentives and training to teachers
- Preparing the young for work; inculcating dignity of labor
- Improving applied and practical studies in the curriculum of vocational institutes

- Preparation of Education Master Plan
- Establishment of a University

Some of the visions have already been realized, some in progress and yet those to be fulfilled serve as milestones to be reached.

- 1.3. The Education Sector Strategy: Realizing the Vision 2020 is an articulation of the goals and processes for achieving Bhutan's aspirations in the education sector, as part of the wider development initiatives toward becoming a progressive sovereign nation enunciated in *Vision 2020*.

2. Please describe briefly applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to the following:

(Please specify if there are different norms for different types of education institutions including: (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools)

a. School infrastructure

The Ministry of Education has developed minimum standard facilities to facilitate provision of quality education in schools and also to ensure equitable distribution of facilities at all levels of schools across the country. All school infrastructure is centrally designed by School Planning and Building Division. Minimum standards are set in the form of space, structure, design, material combination, earthquake resilience, safety standards etc. The district administrations are required to comply with this standard while planning facilities and infrastructure development in schools. Please refer annexure 2 in the 28th EPGI (2010) for details.

b. Class size and pupil-teacher ratio

(National Average is 1: 24) (2011 figures are below)

Community Primary School: 21

Primary Schools: 23

Lower Secondary Schools: 25

Middle Secondary Schools: 24

Higher Secondary Schools: 20

c. Teacher qualification working conditions for teachers and their professional development

Teachers in Bhutan are almost 35% of the national work force in the civil service. The Minimum qualification for teachers in Bhutan is Higher Secondary Pass (Class twelve pass with a first class) followed by Four Years of Bachelors of Education (B Ed.) at pre service level in the colleges of Education, for Primary School Teachers. The same

is true for secondary school teachers. They have to undergo four years of B.Ed. (Secondary) course before teaching in a secondary school. For Higher Secondary teachers they have to have a minimum of Bachelor's Degree in Academics followed by one year Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). For those teaching in Tertiary a minimum of Masters Degree followed by B.Ed., PGDE or M.Ed is required.

Sometimes before enrolling into teacher training course, prospective candidates are allowed to be apprentice teachers for one year.

There is no teaching licence required. However all the B.Ed Teachers will have to appear for Royal Civil Service Examinations and get selected before they can teach. For the secondary teachers they have to be selected in National Common Examination conducted by the Royal Civil Service Commission before getting enrolled into (PGDE) and teaching profession.

d. Working conditions for teachers and their professional development

Working conditions for teachers especially in remote areas are challenging. Teachers have to often walk many days to reach a school. They need to work in the absence of electricity and basic amenities like housing, high cost of living, etc. Often female teachers are reluctant to be posted to remote areas due to these problems. However, teachers are paid teaching allowance on top of their civil service salary thereby compensating teachers to provide quality education.

Teachers in Bhutan get two and half months of paid holiday during winter vacation when schools are closed due to cold weather conditions.

Teachers serving in remote areas are paid difficulty area allowances.

There are no unions allowed for teachers so far. Ministry of Education has Education Welfare Scheme for teachers in which teachers contribute small amounts monthly but are paid 'Semso' (condolences) when their immediate family members expire. They can also avail loans from the Education Welfare Scheme.

Professional Development of teachers is enhanced through teacher in-service programmes. National based in-service programmes (NBIP) are conducted in selected areas every year. The teachers receiving these trainings cascade the learning through School based in-service programmes (SBIP).

Teachers are also sent for further studies (advance degrees) in both academic and professional areas through many scholarship programmes that the government receives from its development partners and bilateral donors like Government of India, Australia, Canada, Thailand etc.

It is mandatory for all teachers to undergo eighty hours of professional development in a year and it is reflected in their Performance Report Card.

e. School curricula content and pedagogical materials

Towards enhancing quality education, major curriculum reforms have been initiated in the three main subjects of Dzongkha, English and Mathematics for all classes (PP-XII) and they have been implemented from classes PP through Class XII from 2008 academic year preceded by teacher training/orientation.

The new English curriculum focuses on practice and achieving higher levels of competency in reading and literature, writing, listening and speaking, and language through shifts in teaching and learning practices to student-centered learning in which students take active participation in their own learning. It is expected that over a period of time the new English curriculum would address the concerns that are expressed by the parents, employers and the government on the proficiency of English of our students.

The new mathematics curriculum, besides the content adjustment and contextualization of concepts, focuses on conceptual learning and understanding.

The shift in teaching and learning processes in Dzongkha are similar to that of the new English curriculum.

As outlined in the 10th Five Year Plan a major science curriculum reform is being initiated with Needs Assessment Study for Science Education in Bhutan completed. The study reveals pertinent issues with regards to efficacy of the science curriculum materials and teacher preparedness to teach science through child centered approach.

The curriculum in Bhutanese schools is still highly content-laden and little process-based. This obviously dictates the pedagogy method - being highly prescriptive teaching learning. The space offered for analytical thinking is very less. The textbook is the bible in terms of TLM. The level of dependence of teachers and the learners on the textbook is very high. This incurs huge cost every year in providing free textbooks.

f. Teaching learning processes

Ever since the introduction of New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) in mid eighties, child-centred teaching learning has taken the root. However due to large uneven teacher student ratio and shortage of teaching learning material, teachers often resort to instructional teaching where one way information flow takes place. Though teacher training focuses on activity-based learning, often the field realities dictate teachers to resort to lecture methods thereby undermining the very philosophy of child-centered teaching. This is more pronounced in higher classes. Child participation in class is often discouraged due to do the highly content-based curriculum. The learning process is largely hijacked in the drive to complete the

prescribed syllabus. With major curriculum reform, the introduction of child friendly schools (CFS) and Educating for Gross National Happiness (GNH), increasing efforts are being made especially at the primary school level to make teaching learning child centred, sharpening children's analytical skills, etc.

g. School management, including student and parents participation

Schools are managed by School Management Boards (SMBs). A typical SMB consist of representative from the local governance, municipality, parents, student's representative, senior teachers, and the Principal. The SMB meets twice a year and makes all the major decisions of the school. Schools ought to have school policies, outlining the vision, mission and goals. Student Office Bearers (Captains) are included in SMBs and students' views taken into consideration. Parental feedback is collected through Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs). Schools also take parents' views through children with the help of letters and questionnaires sometimes.

Some schools have PTAs (Parent Teacher Associations) formalized. Currently, it is not mandatory but more PTAs are being set up in schools across the county with the infusion of CFS; involvement of parents is increasing at the primary school level through the 'community vitality' approach under Educating for GNH.

h. Methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcome

Student performance is assessed through formative continuous assessment and summative assessment. Examinations are held internally and externally (National Board Examinations). At class three the National Board of Examinations sets questions during the final examinations for English, Mathematics and Dzongkha (introduced from 2011) and its assessed by respective schools. The first board examination is at class six level (end of primary cycle). The School Leaving Certificate is at class ten. The class twelve Board Examination is the final filter for accessing the tertiary level. These examinations are administered by the erstwhile Bhutan Board of Examination which has now become autonomous from the Ministry of Education. All internal examinations are conducted by the respective schools.

For Lower Classes, more weightage is given on class work, homework, project work, assignments, class participation etc. For higher classes more weightage is given in Term End Examination that is administered twice a year - mid-term and annual examinations.

To make assessment more holistic, student performance is also assessed in co-curricular, literary, cultural and sporting activities. These assessment results are not used for promotion purpose as yet. However, with the introduction of Educating for GNH, ways of conducting holistic assessment is being explored.

Character Certificate is also issued to students. Socially Useful and Productive Work is also assessed and failure to obtain a minimum of D grade could detain a child from going to the next higher class.

Fairness in conduct, administration, compilation of results and access facility to re-check answer scripts are allowed. These are some quality indicators as well in assessment.

3. Please identify the institutional mechanisms in your country used to collect and process information and to assess adherence to norms and standards established to ensure quality of education.

(Please specify if there are different mechanisms monitoring public or private institutions)

The Ministry of Education publishes and issues Guidelines four times a year. These are called Quarterly Policy Guidelines and Instructions (QPGIs). All the changes in curriculum, policies, and assessments are communicated through these QPGIs. The MoE has its dedicated website in which information is issued in the public domain. The Annual Education Conference is instituted as the highest forum to discuss issues pertaining to education. This conference is chaired by the Minister of Education and the Secretary. The Policy and Planning Division (PPD) steers the conference.

The Ministry also publishes its annual statistics in the form of Annual Education Statistics containing administrative data. Quality indicators (mostly proxy indicators) are also published in this publication.

4. Please provide information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education.

The quality of education, which is of critical importance and a national priority, has received a new impetus with the Education Ministry focusing on several areas designed to enhance the quality of education in schools. These initiatives include development of a Bhutanese learning system based on GNH principles; creating a performance-based culture (management system) in schools; ensuring an adequate teacher supply and targeted professional development of educators; creating innovative technology based teacher support mechanisms; and restructuring the ministry to increase efficiency. The Royal University of Bhutan has also increased the duration of B.Ed. in the pre-service programme from 3 years to 4 years from 2008 onwards to adequately equip the teachers to deliver quality teaching and learning in all levels of schools.

The MoE has recognized the need for quality of education and spelled out in its tenth five year plan clearly. Child Friendly Schools (CFS) was recognized as a quality improvement model and mentioned in the plan document. Under the Educating for

Gross National Happiness initiative the country has embarked upon a nation-wide drive to enrich the teaching learning experiences of children by diversifying the approaches to schooling by making it more joyful. To that extent meditation has been introduced across all schools to help children focus better and retain the information accessed. Curriculum is enriched by infusing and integrating principles of GNH, environmental values and universal human values. The learning environment is broadened to provide wider learning experiences through games, sports, cultural activities, literary activities, greater interaction with outside the class environment and with the community. Teaching learning approaches are diversified to make them more learner-centred. Positive discipline is included by providing warmth and structure to children. Life and leadership skills are promoted in schools. All the dimensions of CFS are reinforced, making education a whole school approach. Media literacy and critical thinking is promoted to make children critical consumers of various media and information. Above all assessment is being made more holistic, attributing credit to both academic and non-academic learning achievements.