Chapter 2

Bhutan Education, Globalization, and Preservation of Traditional Language: An Empirical Study with Bhutanese Educators

Miwako Hosoda
Seisa University, Japan

Midori Hosoda
Seisa University, Japan

Richard Keith Gordon
California State University, USA

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on globalization and preservation of traditional language. The Bhutanese government has promoted higher education to be taught by English; however, there are ongoing initiatives for college students to learn their major subjects not only in English but also in their national language, Dzongkha. The researchers developed interview questions, drawn from their research on Bhutanese education, education in southeast Asia, and other topical sources; this provided a contemporary framework for these educators to discuss their current perception of Bhutanese education and influences felt from external forces (e.g. global assessments) as well as internal goals and economic and political motivations. Results of
INTRODUCTION

With globalization and the increasing demand of proficiency in the international language, some countries are shifting toward English as the medium of instruction while others emphasize the need to preserve their native tongue in the learning environment. Countries such as Japan, argue that their students are not proficient enough in the international language. Other nations, such as the Philippines, claim that they are losing their national language, along with their culture and identity. However, in today’s society, it has become widely accepted that English is a necessary tool for communication in all sectors, from business to politics and academia. In that case, what is the best way to teach the English language while preserving the national language and culture? Ideally speaking, what should be the medium used in schools?

Through this chapter, the authors examine these questions and present some possible solutions. The primary focus will be on Bhutan, a country that has found a unique approach to tackling problems associated with this phenomena. Located in the eastern Himalayas, Bhutan is a landlocked nation situated between India and China’s Tibetan Autonomous Region. After its first election was held in March 2008, Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. Although modern education became an essential part of globalization to advance socio-economic development in contemporary Bhutan, “the education system pays particular attention to imparting to the students sense of belongingness and respect for the culture and tradition of their country” (Ugyen & Ulrike, 2010).

Based on the unique notion of Gross National Happiness (GNH) for the wellbeing of their people, education in Bhutan emphasizes spiritual and cultural aspects in the process of development. As a result, “education is considered as passing values” (Ugyen & Ulrike, 2010). GNH is constructed of four main pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental conservation (Four Pillars and Nine Domains). This is due to the fact that “Bhutan today is faced with the challenge of balancing the desire for the preservation of traditional values and culture with values introduced and emerging in changing socio-economic conditions” (Ugyen & Ulrike, 2010).

Bhutan’s First Five Year Plan, which began in 1961 and continued until 1966, placed particular emphasis on policies regarding education. In the Fifth Five Year
3D Multi-User Virtual Environments in Science Education: Potential and Challenges
Yufeng Qian (2015). Exploring the Effectiveness of Online Education in K-12 Environments (pp. 302-324).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/3d-multi-user-virtual-environments-in-science-education/116152?camid=4v1a