Formulation and Implementation of Education Policy as a Part of Public Policy in Bhutan: A Literature Review

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Abstract

There is a growing body of research on policy formulation and implementation around the world, but there is little evidence in Bhutan that provides a realistic status on the formulation and implementation of policy. The study attempted to understand the formulation and implementation process of education policy in Bhutan through a literature review. The findings show that most of the policy formulation practices are a 'top-down approach or technocratic manner' and a one-way system. Little attention is paid to the 'bottom-up approach' to hear the voices of stakeholders and to understand the ground realities. Education policy is more politicised and influenced by the government ideologies and promises made in the political party manifestos. There are limited wider consultations and dialogues and the use of research-based evidence to support policy formulation and implementation. Bhutanese education is more of experimentation, trial and error oriented in the name of reforms. The policymakers need to revisit, rethink, and revise the policy formulation and implementation process. The study is the first attempt to study the formulation and implementation process of education policy as a part of public policy in Bhutan amidst limited access to literature. For future research, a mixed-method approach and inclusion of relevant stakeholders are recommended.

Keywords: Bhutanese education; Education policy; Policymakers; Public policy

Introduction

The public policy shows the direction of the organisation, the future of citizens by addressing the public demand and issues of public concern. Since the Ninth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) policy formulation processes in Bhutan are aligned to GNH development philosophy. Public policy in Bhutan, except the Royal Command or national exigency, is formulated or revised, or approved and adopted in line with the protocol for policy formulation directed by the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC). The policy

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formulation and revision are classified into two stages: (i) the policy conception stage and (ii) the policy formulation and approval stage (GNHC, 2015). The proposed policies undergo a GNH screening test to confirm the GNH dimensions and to ensure that policies have no adverse impact on GNH value (REC, 2018). Although the "policy design undergoes a more comprehensive screening assessment through GNHC, implementation is still conducted in silos by government agencies without strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks" (Dorji, 2021, p.21). There is limited interaction between the GNHC, Centre for Bhutan & GNH Studies and Royal Institute of Management on policy issues (Dorji, 2016) often resulting in policy conflict or dilemma and delaying potential public policy. The development of ad-hoc policy without proper consultation with larger stakeholders might create policy conflicting with the existing policy (Dhakal, 2019).

In many cases, good policies die during the implementation process. The one-way directive communication due to the hierarchical nature of organisations can result in compromising iterative dialogue and participatory space for genuine discussion, interaction and citizen awareness. Citizen awareness is a powerful tool and means for change and increased transparency, innovation and accountability in the organisation (Dorji, 2021).

According to Ngwa and Mekolle (2020, p.187), "an education policy as a public policy enhances, authenticates and regulates educational processes in any nation". The policy formulation consists of hidden and explicit actor agendas that undergo competitive scrutiny. Many scholars consider policy formulation to be a complex, multidimensional and often contextualised process (Jones, Jones, Shaxson & Walker, 2012). Since politics have authoritative values, therefore, one can assume that politics can either bring development or impede existing good practices.

Politics and education are closely related in the Bhutanese context. The government makes educational decisions on the allocation of human resources, the appointment of educational heads, budget allocation, and the development of educational infrastructure among many others. Public policy and education policy formulation and implementation bear similar approaches and characteristics. As public policy, education policy is a designated plan of action for educational organizations formulated by education stakeholders. Ngwa and Mekolle (2020, p.196) state that "educational policies are not backward but forward-looking; they guide future actions and because the future cannot be adequately predicted, educational policies usually get characterized with uncertainties which require that they be written in a more flexible and not rigid manner". The education policy debates on school infrastructure, school value, school size, school privatization, school choice, teacher remuneration, teacher education

and certification, curricular content, pedagogy and assessments. Therefore, the education policy is known as inclusive public policy that enhances the educational process in any nation.

Bhutan, although limited with resources and economy, has put different educational policies in place. Some scholars believe that education policy has brought a significant contribution to the lives of students, parents, and teachers. Others argue that there is unclear and incomprehensive nature in education organisation and the educational reforms initiative movement is much debated in Bhutan. Where education policy is unclear the educational development would be directionless, scattered and damaged by conflicts of interests and chaos (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020). Therefore, the policy made by the policymakers and bureaucrats today will determine the kind of citizens for tomorrow. Tshomo (2016, p.50) mentions that "education, guided by the right policies, creates opportunities for all to succeed, leading to increased well-being and equity in society."

There are four processes in creating public policy, namely; (i) agenda setting, (ii) policy formulation with appropriate legal procedure, (iii) implementation and (iv) monitoring and evaluation. Agenda setting is the start process to create public policy. After agenda setting, policy stakeholders collect data on key issues through dialogues, consultation, discussion and analysis of the collected data. This is followed by implementation with appropriate legal procedures. During the implementation phase, monitoring and evaluation go together to assess its effectiveness. Further policy analysis and policy adjustment are required based on the issues found in the monitoring process (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020).

The broader concept of policy includes policy formation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in the whole policy cycle (Limbu, 2019). The formulation and implementation of policy are no longer regarded as two distinct activities because policy formulation is followed by implementation. Therefore, the main objective of the study was to examine the formulation and implementation of education policy as a part of public policy in Bhutan. The successful formulation and implementation of policy mean achieving the objective and addressing the concerns and issues of the nation (Dorji, 2016).

Since no study was carried out in Bhutan on the formulation and implementation of education policy, the study would be significant to draw policy attention and would be useful for policymakers, bureaucrats and education officials to reflect on the current formulation and implementation of education policy. A good policy needs time, dialogue, discussion, consultation, consensus, introspection on the consequences (Dorji, 2016) and constructive criticism.

The study reviewed the available education policy, journal articles and media reports on school education in both rural and urban areas after the introduction of parliamentary democracy in Bhutan.

The study focuses to answer the question- how is education policy formulated and implemented in Bhutan after the introduction of parliamentary democracy?

Methods

The exploratory study used qualitative data obtained through a literature review on the formulation and implementation of education policy in Bhutan. The qualitative data were analysed inductively to produce a grounded theory, a theory that emerged from data and not from a hypothesis (Musbing, 2020). According to Silverman (1993) cited in the University of Bradford, School of Management (n.d, p.10) there are three main features and stages of grounded theory:

(i) an attempt to develop categories that derive from the data; (ii) attempting then to give as many examples as possible in the categories developed to demonstrate their importance; (iii) Then developing these categories into more general and broader analytical frameworks (or theories) with relevance to other situations outside the research subject.

The study used Geurts (2011) and Dhakal (2019) public policy definitions. Geurts (2011, p.6) define public policies as "the decisions and actions of government and the intentions and determine those decisions and actions". Dhakal (2019, p.3) notes that "in most developing countries the national policy making structures are government bodies (state agencies) and the processes mostly include the interaction between the politicians, bureaucrats, and a few experts and/or interest groups". According to Kingdon (2010), government actors such as civil servants have more resources such as legal authority, political and technical information, publicity and longevity to interfere in the formulation of public policy.

Literature Review

Policy Formulation

The public policy formulation process in Bhutan is more politicised and is influenced by party ideas, ideology and political interest such as promises made by the party in the manifesto during election campaigns. With the start of democratic constitutional monarchy, the successive elected government has given prominence to education based on the political agenda. The education policy, teacher preparedness, textbooks and curriculum, pedagogy

and assessment, teacher salary and remuneration, and aptitude of educating future students were affected by a change in government after every five years (Chuki, 2019).

The first government Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT), 2008-2013 brought a significant change in the education system. In 2009, the DPT government carried out an international conference on 'Educating for Gross National Happiness' (EGNH) in Paro. Following this, the government introduced EGNH and 'Green School for Green Bhutan'. The DPT reintroduced teaching allowance for teachers (Chuki, 2019).

The People's Democratic Party (PDP), 2013-2018 revisions included the introduction of central schools and autonomous schools to improve the quality of education and efficiency. In 2014, the PDP government introduced Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 as a ten-year strategic roadmap (MoE, 2016). The PDP government established the College of Information Technology in 2017 with some rash decisions that converted Gyalposhing Higher Secondary school into a college. There was a shortage of infrastructure and a conducive environment for learning in the College. The PDP government initiated two national-level professional development programmes (Transformative Pedagogy and English for Effective Communication) for all teachers across Bhutan. School curriculum reforms were carried out extensively. For instance, Environmental Studies in primary schools. The concepts and themes were incorporated into Dzongkha and the English language. The classes XI and XII History curriculum was changed into textbook-less and teaching-learning were to be supported by technology and the Internet (Chuki, 2019).

Similarly, under the Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT), 2018-2023, education remains a top priority. The DNT government cancelled Saturday classes, removed the cut off points for class X students, introduced continuous formative assessment till class three and done away with the class PP-III examination, reviewed the central school system, raised the teaching allowances for teachers, implemented prioritized curriculum or Education in Emergencies, introduced Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers (BPST) and the New Normal Curriculum (NNC) in 2021.

Currently, in many nations, the government engages a wider stakeholder in the decision-making process to address public issues. The voice of participatory policy-making ensuring a wider stakeholder participant is becoming popular over the years (Dhakal, 2019). The voice of grass-root education stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, school management and the community were included in formulating education policy. Such voices would enable education policy to be grounded on the

ground realities (Dorji, 2020) and whom the policy impacts the most (Dhakal, 2019).

Unfortunately, in Bhutan, there is a lack of an institutional mechanism to engage stakeholders in the policy formulation process. For example, only a handful of teachers were involved in developing the textbooks, curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices for different subjects (Rinzin, 2021a).

The adoption of the 'top-down approach' in policy formulation is criticized across the world (Deeb, n.d). Under the 'top-down approach' top-level people make policies and implement policies downward through bargaining and negotiation among top-level people. The 'top-down approach' in many cases fails to include the wider stakeholders in policy making and understand the ground reality (Budhathoki, 2018). As a result, it is important for policymakers to first prefer the 'top-down approach' with later inputs from the bottom (i.e., first top-level people will draft policies and later drawn inputs from the bottom are incorporated with first draft policies).

The current policy formulation practices in Bhutan are more of a 'top-down' approach. Bureaucracy is the leading implementing agency of the elected government policies, strategies and reforms (Rinzin, 2021b). Little efforts are made from the 'bottom-up approach' and therefore the ground realities are forgotten. For instance, the Education City by the DPT government could not take off due to inadequately researched, incomplete planning, poor consultation, the allegation of corruption and disagreement by the PDP government. The EGNH lacked relentless policy follow up in addition to poor consultation with students, parents, teachers and stakeholders (Chuki, 2019).

In 2009, the DPT government mandatorily transferred teachers who worked in urban schools in Thimphu, Paro and Phuntsholing for more than ten years. Many teachers left the profession due to policy hip up because many urban teachers have overstayed in urban areas due to health problems, spouse or family-related issues. The policy failed to understand the ground realities and therefore policy needed to be discontinued later (Bhutan Observer, 2012).

Similarly, the introduction of the central school by the PDP government failed to understand the ground reality. The implementation of the central school faced numerous challenges from the start such as not having the required number of teachers, resources overstretched or lack of resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited boarding capacity for the sheer size of students (Chuki, 2019). Another issue is the sustainability of the central schools. Currently, the central schools are dependent on the external grants of the Government of India (Jamtsho, 2017).

The quality of education depends upon the quality of teachers. Teachers are the backbone of the education system (MoE, 2016). The delivery of quality education is a human enterprise. What goes well in the classroom determines the kind of quality of education received by the students (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). Therefore, teacher competency and professional growth can be enhanced through a continuous Professional Development (PD) program. According to MoE (2014) and GNHC (2018), all teachers are required to undergo a minimum of 80 hours of need-based PD programme annually across the nation. The 40-hour PD programme will be offered by the MoE while the rest 40 hours by Dzongkhag or Thromde, cluster and school (MoE, 2020b).

The Professional Development (PD) programmes were irregular and many teachers failed to receive 80 hours of the need-based PD programme. Teachers hardly get PD programmes on the recent trends in education pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and practices. The Transformative Pedagogy and English for Effective Communication PD programme initiated by the PDP government and Neuroscience-based Mindfulness & Emotional PD initiated by DNT failed to address the main concerns of classroom realities. The teachers display their willingness and openness to learn and seek opportunities to improve content knowledge, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation. So far, the PD suffers from content delivery resources, expertise and time. To date, the professional development programmes were less transferable to the classroom setting and practiceswith little follow up (Dorji, 2020; iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009).

The implementation of class XI and XII textbook-less history curriculum during the PDP government lacked ICT infrastructure, Internet access, inadequate digital infrastructure and library resources to support students in rural and as well as urban schools (Dorji 2021b; Dorji, 2020; iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). Some schools welcomed the initiative while others voiced the need for an adequate ICT infrastructure. However, the voice of students, teachers and the community were given less consideration.

The introduction of 'no minimum academic cut-off point' for class XI by the DNT government has increased admission pressure in public higher secondary schools. The size of the classes increased in many urban schools. The ideal class size is 24 students for primary and 30 students for secondary school (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009) for effective delivery of teaching-learning. With larger class sizes of more than 35 students in each class posed difficulties for teachers in designing a lesson, monitoring, and following up to meet the learning needs of individual students. In addition, teachers get less time for quality planning, implementing relevant pedagogy, and carrying out an authentic assessment (Dorji, 2021b).

The ad-hoc implementation of online teaching-learning during the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic made students, parents and teachers face difficulties with the knowledge and use of personal ICT gadgets and platforms. Owning a personal smartphone and computer was challenging for disadvantaged families in rural as well as urban areas. The Google Classroom was uncoordinated and fragmented. Online teaching-learning took the form of sending and receiving assignments through smart mobile phones using social media platforms-WeChat, Telegram, Messenger and Google classroom. Students, parents and teachers were frustrated for not having the computer, and digital knowledge to support online teaching-learning. The virtual teaching-learning was limited due to huge data costs and limited expertise. Students were found overburdened with assignments resorting to copying from textbooks, peers and the Internet (Dorji, 2021a; Dorji, 2021b).

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected teaching-learning all over the world. In Bhutan learning was affected as a result of nationwide school closure during the pandemic. The NNC was a mere response to COVID-19, and an attempt to transform education and learning (REC, 2021). The introduction of the NNC required all teachers to adopt NNC for classes PP-XII during the 2021 academic session. NNC aimed at going beyond the textbook, using reference books, websites and the Internet. Teachers were surprised since they were not aware that NNC was being developed let alone having to implement it in the 2021 academic session. Teachers were confused with the intentions and the implementation process of NNC. Teachers argue that they were not consulted for the development of the NNC. They recommended a need for proper consultation and review before the implementation of NNC. It was also learned that only a handful of teachers were involved in the highly rushed process of developing NNC. The teacher also questioned the teacher selection process and the credibility of teachers engaged in developing NNC. There were no proper strategies and platforms to get many views and ideas on all aspects of an NNC (Rinzin, 2021a). Education policy is inclusive. The policymaking process should involve the participation of all stakeholders and those affected by the policy should be consulted well. The policy outcomes are implemented that meet stakeholder expectations (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020).

At present schools do not have adequate ICT and internet facilities to support NNC. Teachers also shared that NNC fails to understand the ground realities such as the huge class size and the heavy teaching workload of teachers (Rinzin, 2021a) and teaching-learning resources. According to iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009, p.77) "changing one cannot happen without a plan to influence the others. For example, it may not be fruitful to raise curriculum standards alone without having a concrete plan to provide

training and learning resources to all teachers". It is time that schools across Bhutan cannot remain under deficient infrastructure due to financial or budgetary problems. Therefore, the government and the MoE need to allocate more resources for major investments of deficient resources in education (Dorji, 2021b).

One salient feature of the policy formulation process in Bhutan consists of forming committees. Nothing moves forward without committee decisions (Rinzin, 2021b). Some committee members come with personal agendas and self-interest. Some members just occupy a membership position without saying anything in decision tables. Some members also want to perceive themselves as doing something new in their respective position. Discussion among the committee exhibits poor reading culture with limited literature to make informed decisions.

The policymakers and bureaucrats failed to invite relevant and recipient stakeholders for policy discussion nor did higher education institutions consider their role in policy engagement. As a result, the aptitude of many competent civil servants remains untapped and underutilised (Dorji, 2016). The education system cannot be changed in a silo as the schools are interconnected or interdependent to multiple human actors (students, parents, teachers, school management, private sector and civil society) and interlocking processes (teaching, pedagogy, assessment, curriculum, bureaucrats, education officials, Royal University of Bhutan and Royal Civil Service Commission) as per Dorj (2021b) and iDiscoveri Education and REC (2009).

According to Ayyar (2009), the public policy formulation can be classified into the procedural due process and informal process. The formal due process consists of inviting scholars, and experts for a consultative meeting to reach a policy decision. While the informal process consists of ad-hoc, unstructured, and elitist or superclass. Very often the informal process is common in developing countries. The policymakers, bureaucrats and education officials found policymaking sensitive to stakeholders and prolong the policymaking process, therefore, shaping the public policymaking process.

In Bhutan, policy often lacks strong grounded research evidence (Dorji, 2016). Research related to education policies in Bhutan is limited due to poor academic research culture. For instance, the diversification of subjects such as Media Information Literacy, Environmental Science, and Agriculture for Food Security curriculum in secondary school was not based on extensive research, discussion, communication, dialogue and consultation between MoE, REC and RUB. Currently, many schools in Bhutan are not offering these elective subjects due to the absence or poor ability rating for higher

education admission in Bhutan (Dorji, 2021c) or mismatch of these elective subjects with the commerce and science stream. In absence of thorough research-based evidence, policies are often driven by ideology-based assumptions (Sherub & Schuelka, 2019) and political and bureaucratic interests (Pokharel, 2015).

The use of research-based evidence in formulating public policy is of global interest (Dhakal, 2019). The few publications available on the official website of the MoE are used limitedly in formulating policy because they lack substance, information and relevance (Sherub & Schuelka, 2019). The policymakers and bureaucrats not only lack the required expertise but also engage in limited extensive consultation, reflection, interactions, research and publication despite having access to information and exposure (Dorji, 2021b). They are also not voracious readers. Their poor reading culture is demonstrated (Uzochukwu et al., 2016) in events such as policy dialogues.

As per literature, the bureaucrats fail to act as intermediate policy brokers between politicians and stakeholders or interest groups (Copper & Starkey, 2010). Research culture is growing in Bhutan with organisations such as the Construction Development Board, Royal Institute of Management and Royal University of Bhutan establishing publication platforms to support research-based evidence in policy formulation. Research is only one of many things that influences the public policy formulation process (Dhakal, 2019).

Buffet table policy formulation under one roof is still found in many government organisations in developing countries (Dhakal, 2019). An evidence-informed policy with ground realities through constructive dialogue, discussion and consultation is necessary (Dorji, 2021b) to account for the voices of all stakeholders. While discussing with policymakers one will always hear that participatory policy making is time-consuming, costly, cumbersome, tiring, diverging and conflictual (Cornwall, 2008).

The lack of participatory policy has shaped current education policy without or with limited stakeholder comment on policy drafts. Therefore, the policymakers and bureaucrats need to involve more stakeholders that the policy would impact directly or indirectly. Michels (2012, p. 286) states that the main aim of participatory policy formulation is "to hear opinions or to involve people in policymaking before making decisions" and uncover concerns on the policy. For a good policy to be well formulated and implemented effectively, there is a need for wider coordination, collaboration, consultation, introspection and dialogue with stakeholders (Dorji, 2021b).

Policy Implementation

According to the iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009, p.77) "proper planning is only one-half of the reforms. The other half is how this plan is implemented". Currently, gaps exist between policy formulation and implementation. According to Dorji (2016), the gaps are found between the data collection and the data analysis.

Disengagement, disagreement and resistance of stakeholders become the number one immediate cause for the failure of well-intentioned, noble initiatives and well-resourced policy and reforms. The non-participatory causes stakeholders to feel disrespected on policy input and concern neglected and comply with passive resistance (Dorji 2021b; iDiscoveri & REC, 2009). Recently, participator management is becoming popular as a means of sharing responsibilities through dialogue, consultation and communication for enabling teamwork in the learning organisation.

The top-down command or technocratic manner to initiate policies without proper dialogues breeds resistance towards meaningful change. As a result, the policy recipient, those who are affected by the policy are frustrated, defeated and create passive resistance to change. There is a long history of teacher passive resistance to change in Bhutan (Gyamtsho, Sherab & Maxwell, 2017; Sherab, 2013) because the policy or change affects them (Dhakal, 2019).

A mindset is very crucial for change. Currently, there are many complacent civil servants in the system due to the bureaucratic system. Without changing the attitude and mindset of government officials, the whole noble purposes, initiatives and policy would get defeated (Dorji, 2021b). The policymakers and bureaucrats travel extensively on study tours, seminars, conferences, workshops, projects and professional development programmes. But it is surprising to see that the mindset of many remains the same for any change in policy formulation and implementation (Dorji, 2016).

The implementation of the BPST in 2021 was not well-grounded on an extensive literature review. There are several criticisms for classroom observation although classroom observations help teachers to enhance teaching-learning quality. According to Halim, Wahid and Halim (2018) teacher recruitment, teacher promotion and teacher termination should not be based on classroom observation and assessment. The classroom observations should not be tied to summative decisions and assessments. The classroom observations tools are useful for formative decisions. However, according to the BPST classroom observations and feedback are used as one of the major criteria to assess teachers to rank teachers: proficient, accomplished and distinguished.

All principals and a handful of senior teachers were provided with a two-day training on teacher assessment and evaluation under the BPST. Zaare (2012) states that the teacher observation and evaluation process requires a very high degree of training, workshop, professional ethics, analytical skills, and objectivity.

The study by the iDiscoveri Education and REC (2009) found that teachers lead chalk and talk to convey the textbook content. There were limited proper instructional resources, real learning measurement and authentic assessment practice to engage students meaningfully. The study also revealed that teachers lack content knowledge, pedagogical, teaching strategy, assessment and classroom management techniques. The study revealed that teachers make frequent content errors such as mispronunciation, spelling mistakes and inability to express their knowledge and thoughts. The essential infrastructure design and resources were missing in the classrooms. The teacher training colleges do not prepare teachers for effective classroom instructional practices. There were limited professional development programmes and collaborative development for teachers. However, it was surprising to see that the MoE implemented the BPST and NNC without addressing the underlying issues.

Bhutan borrowed its education policies directly from the rest of the world. The curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and evaluation of the rest of the world were transferred into the Bhutanese education system in 1960 (Zangmo, 2018). According to Dorji (2021b), the introduction of the New Approach to Primary Education in the 1980s taught Bhutanese policymakers, bureaucratic, and education officials that what works in other countries might not work in Bhutan due to differences in context and situation, teacher standards, student learning standards, technology, resources, and the overall learning culture. Although the borrowed policy might imply culture, traditions and values, Bhutan will continue to borrow, emulate, review and reform the education system from the rest of the world and international organizations (Zangmo, 2018).

Teachers in Bhutan are overloaded with academic and non-academic activities and their workload stretches beyond working hours (Namgay & Yuden, 2013). Teachers have no time to plan lessons as per the curriculum due to overburdened administrative work (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). The implementation of BPST and NNC has further increased the workload of teachers. With limited time, teachers cannot have both effective paperwork and teaching-learning instruction together. The concept of application of opportunity cost comes here and teachers might carry up paperwork as the best alternative good that is given up to produce effective teaching-learning instruction (Dorji, 2021b; Sethi & Andrews, 2018).

According to Dorji (2020), the possibility of not implementing BPST and NNC well would increase when heavy workload creeps into the personal and family lives of teachers. The BPST and NNC also require more effort, time, resources, technology and access to the Internet.

As per the literature, good policies failed during the implementation process due to a lack of initiative and consistent follow up through action (Dorji, 2016). The Teacher Human Resource Policy 2014; mandates all principals to teach at least one subject and vice-principals to teach 15 hours a week (MoE, 2014). Similarly, in the General Guidelines and School Management, Chapter 6 outlines comprehensive instructional roles and responsibilities, curriculum planning, curriculum implementation, assessment, professional development programmes, of the principal as an instructional leader. The principals are required to teach at least one specialised subject to keep abreast of recent trends in pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and evaluation (MoE, 2017). To date, the principals and teachers are paid teaching allowance alike. Similarly, the BPST also required principals to teach their specialised subjects for assessment, career development, introspection and lifelong learning (MoE, 2021; MoE, 2020a).

The study by Shaked (2018) showed that although principals were aware that they were instructional leaders, their practices on instructional leadership in schools were partial. Therefore, Dorji (2021b, p.64) argues that "while principals hold high academic expectations, in many cases, they do not teach in school due to administrative burdens". As a result, principals are not fully aware of a student learning culture, discipline issues and actual classroom practices. All principals have delegated their academic and non-academic responsibility to vice-principals, teachers and staff.

With growing indiscipline amongst students, the MoE came up with 'zero tolerance to indiscipline' without resorting to corporal punishment. The school discipline policy outlined in the 30th Education Policy Guidelines and Instructions (MoE, 2012) failed after the implementation process. It was surprising to see types of offences, sanctions and directives of what must be done to meet the goals. According to Ngwa and Mekolle (2020, p.196) "ideally, education policies are major guidelines and not directives of what must be done to meet up with goals and objectives stated in the policy. Although policies in many cases generate regulations, regulations and directives are not to be considered as policy". There are several paper tigers in Bhutan (i.e., policy remains in papers). A little reinforcement, motivation and follow up would go a long way in the policy implementation process.

The policymakers, bureaucrats and education officials need to ensure the existing policies are up and functioning well (Bhutan Observer, 2012) and

support existing policies and procedures (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020). Sometimes a lack of clear awareness campaign and weaker enforcement and monitoring make policy fail during the implementation process (Kuensel, n.d). There is a further need for public awareness in terms of understanding policy and reforms and how it addresses educational issues (Sherub & Schuelka, 2019).

The education policies in Bhutan are subjected to experiment, trial and error one after another in the name of reforms. If policy and reforms work well, then it remains in the system and vice versa. For instance, the Shakespeare drama for class IX and X was thrown out and then reinstated later making teachers and students guinea pigs and unfortunately tolerated and assumed as normal practices in education. Similarly, the Ministry of Education circular of February 26, 2019 notified all schools not to have instructional classes on Saturday with effect from the 2019 academic year (MoE, 2019). However, a recent MoE circular of May 14, 2021 notified all schools to resume half working day on Saturdays. The blame was put on the COVID-19 pandemic. The circular shows that the policy is enforced downward lacks consistent follow-up and has set a complacency in the education system. Such a complacency system might create a culture of control, command and compliance mindset that breeds passive resistance towards meaningful change in the system (iDiscoveri Education & REC, 2009). Education policy must be inclusive where all stakeholders can participate in consultation and policy development process (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020).

Accountability for what people do and say is an important area that is often ignored in developing countries. With responsibility comes accountability. Accountability is a crucial part of good governance and the essence of democracy. Fixing accountability for leaders is a common norm in many developed countries. According to GNHC (2018), the MoE is responsible for the formulation of sound educational policies to create a 'knowledge-based GNH society'. MoE is also responsible for the planning and administration of school education. The Royal Education Council is responsible for the development and review of the school curriculum. Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment is responsible for national assessments. The Dzongkhag or Thromde are entrusted with the implementation of national policies, school construction and maintenance, deployment of teachers and supply of teaching-learning materials (MoE, 2020b). Bhutan Observer (2012, p.224) states that there is a "long tradition of taking responsibility sans accountability". There is a system of blaming, shifting blame and penalising the lowest run employees. So far when policy or reforms fail in Bhutan teachers are blamed. It's time to create an evolving working culture to make responsible and accountable individual officials.

There is an absence of policy analysis and policy audits in Bhutan. The success of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation of policy depends on the policy analysis and policy audit. According to Ngwa and Mekolle (2020, p.198) "if policy implementation is to be effective and policy outcomes achieved, it becomes crucial that an audit of policy" is a must and necessary.

Findings & Discussion

The Bhutanese education system is driven by political motives with the top-down and regulatory oriented approach. In many cases, politics might become a struggle of egos and make precluding compromises for good causes (Dorji, 2016). The purpose of education in Bhutan seems timeless, not informed by educationists or practitioners but rather driven by political motives, temporal economic and social considerations (Phuntsho, 2021). A good policy takes time and requires consistent effort after serious forethought, an afterthought, and introspection (Dorji, 2016). The success of policy, strategy and reform would depend on the clarity of purpose, effective implementation and proper reporting mechanism (MoE, 2016).

Bhutanese education is more of experimentation, trial and error although education is not a lab for experimentation. It is all about the lives of students and the destiny of the nations. The findings of the study confirm that there is a gap between the formulation and implementation of policy. There is a lack of consistent follow up through action on the implementation of policy and reforms.

According to iDiscoveri Education and the REC (2009), the past attempt on reforming the education system failed due to (i) lack of clear shared goals, (ii) lack of clear objectives, (iii) command, control and compliance mindset, (iv) limited resources and, (v) poor implementation support. Dorji (2021b, p.63) states that the "top-down command in initiating policies, or involvement of personal agenda without proper dialogue and awareness of ground realities are prominent in developing countries". The ground realities were not considered while formulating the policy. Without participatory policy formulation and the use of research-based evidence, education development will be marred by chaos and conflict of interest (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020).

Literature shows that the instructional leadership roles and responsibilities are different from conventional school leadership. According to Marks and Printy (2003), instructional leadership is a shift of principal centred practice to shared collective practices. Instructional leaders shift administrators or managers to academic or instructional leaders (MoE, 2017). Under conventional school leadership, the principal adopts and practices strict

administrative duties while under instructional leadership, the principal redefines their role to become primary learners, collaborate with stakeholders, create new learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff, and provide necessary resources and support the teaching-learning process. The conventional principals focus more on repair, maintenance, revenue, administrative and bureaucratic duties, while instructional leaders give top priority to the instructional process, academic achievements (Sarikaya & Erdogan, 2016) and teaching-learning as a core business of the school (MoE, 2017).

In many cases, the principal interprets the same policy in different ways based on the situation, focus, content and intensity (Koyama, 2014) and alters policy as and when required (Diamond, 2012). The principals were often found interpreting policy and guidelines in idiosyncratic ways to suit their self-interest (Spillane & Kenney, 2012) or to remain in their comfort zone. Many studies show that a very limited amount of time was devoted by principals in instruction-related activities, failing to fulfil the role assigned under the instruction leadership (May, Huff & Goldring, 2012).

Generally, people blame education organisations entirely when the education system fails in the nation. It is important to note when education fails, the nation is failing including past and present governments. Education is a public good that requires collective and shared responsibility to prepare students nationally rooted and globally competent. It is important to work together instead of working in a silo. Working together would bring diverse knowledge, skills, value, consensus, and attention to realise better policy and reforms (Dorji, 2021b). However, working together is not easy as team building requires particular attention and agenda with special skills and profound attitude changes (Pearson, n.d).

It is not always necessary to borrow the best educational practices from the rest of the world. Bhutanese education reforms need to find the best fit practices rather than best practices. It is important to have a clear vision to create a robust education system in the Bhutanese context. With a clear vision, the policymakers, bureaucrats and government officials will know the direction where education should go.

Conclusion & Recommendation

The education policies and reforms in Bhutan are influenced by the ideology and promises made in the political party manifesto during the election campaigns. Politics have a greater impact on the existing education system. The ground realities need to be taken well into consideration before policies are formulated and implemented across the nation. There is a need for

research-based evidence supported by deliberative debate, constructive dialogue and communication on the adaptation of borrowed policies to contextualise with diverse stakeholders (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020; Tshomo, 2016).

Good policies are presented well to the concerned stakeholders and all affected stakeholders to understand the reasons and what they should do during the implementation process. In return, the affected stakeholders need to perceive that there is a need and understanding for such a policy and reforms (Ngwa & Mekolle, 2020).

An instructional leader empowers, inspires and stimulates students and teachers (Robinson, Lioyd & Rowe, 2008). All education organisations across the world demand principals to be instructional leaders (Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010). Therefore, to draw inspiration from the instructional leaders, the MoE needs to make it mandatory for all principals to teach their specialised subject. Without principals being instructional leaders, there would be no larger significant impact ensuring the quality of education. There is an urgent need to implement instructional leadership in education.

As per the literature, there are challenges during the policy implementation process. The policy needs to ensure not only on paper but in practice and implementation (Dorji, 2021d). It is crucial to close the gap between policy formulation organisations and policy implementation organisations. The policy implementation was supervised by different divisions. Therefore, there is a need to explore and create an appropriate structure to implement policy and reforms in near future. There is an immediate requirement for regulation in place and strategy to implement policy so that the gap between policy formulation and implementation can be addressed.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution and COVID-19 have demanded all stakeholders integrate technology into the teaching-learning process. Currently, Bhutanese schools are inadequate with ICT resources that can be seen, touched and heard (Dorji, 2021d). The introduction of online teaching-learning and NNC during pandemics has further created a digital divide and widened learning achievement (Lhamu, 2021). There is a need for strategies to close inequalities and the digital divide and address technological barriers for disadvantaged students. Access to and affordability of the Internet should be improved to empower teachers and students with ICT and digital skills (Dorji, 2021b).

According to Dorji (2021b), the introduction of BPST has brought a lot of paper compilation works for BPST ratings. In real terms, teachers might fill up paperwork without actual classroom practices. Therefore, to ensure and

enhance effective classroom practices, the compilation of paper works on BPST needs to be streamlined.

There is an absence of analysis of policy issues and policy audits in Bhutan. The success of formulation and implementation of policy depends on the success of policy analysis and policy audit. A good policy formulation decision cannot be separated from competent policy analysis (Dorji, 2016) and policy audit. Scholars should be involved in policy analysis and dialogues.

Long term comprehensive policies and reforms with a clear and common purpose and vision are needed to guide and continue education policy and reforms by all elected governments (Chuki, 2019). The political will on the formulation and implementation of policy is a must to serve the interest of the nation.

Limitation of the Study

The study is a first attempt to review the literature on the formulation and implementation of education policy that is currently happening in contemporary Bhutan. The study found there was limited access to the literature available for review in Bhutan. However, the literature from similar policy formulation contexts from South Asia and other similar regions made the paper insightful and provoking.

For authentic findings, future researchers are recommended to adopt a mixed-method approach comprising students, parents, teachers and policymakers. The sample for the study needs to be equally distributed in the country for better representation and findings.

Policy formulation and the actual policy implantation process are complex and evolving concepts that require diverse academic subjects therefore, further intensive and extensive study is required to make a persuasive conclusion.

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