Educational Values in Complex Systems: An Introduction to the Educational Values Evaluation and Design Framework and a Case Study of Inclusivity in Bhutan

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Education systems are complex social systems. This article argues that it in order to analyze educational values, attributes, and outcomes within a complex system, greater attention must be paid towards understanding the utility of education and the contexts, discourses, and narratives surrounding the purpose of schooling in society. An Educational Values Evaluation and Design (EVED) Framework is put forward as a means to effectively understand the alignment – or misalignment – of educational values within a complex system. This is particularly relevant for inclusion and diversity in education, in that various elements must be in place beyond legal frameworks promoting access for inclusion to be meaningful and effective. This article presents the case study of Bhutan to support the EVED Framework that was a result of two years of qualitative field research. The results of the research demonstrate that there are multiple and various actors and elements operating with a variety of intentional and unintentional goals within a complex system. Through an exploration of the value of inclusivity in Bhutanese education, we show that an application of the EVED framework can expose the alignments and misalignments that contribute towards the realization of educational values in schools and in society.

Keywords: Inclusion, Education, Bhutan, Complex Systems, Values, Utility

Introduction

Throughout the history of comparative education, there has been an attempt to compare various elements of education systems – e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, policies, national character – often in reference to normative Global North models of education (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). The march towards the scientization and quantification of education through comparison has attempted to analyze education systems according to a disaggregation and regression of various widgets, inputs, and outputs (Sobe, 2018). However, we argue that education systems should be viewed as complex systems where all elements of a system affect, and are relational to, each other. Using complexity theory as our theoretical framework, we also put forward an analysis and proactive design tool – the Educational Values Evaluation and Design (EVED) Framework – that compares elements *within* a specific complex education system, rather than *across* countries. That being said, global discourses are a factor in education systems today and they need to be understood across multiple axes (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). What we argue is that any comparative study of educational values should look first towards an education system's

own goals and objectives – which may certainly be informed through global discourse, borrowing, coercion, and transfer – and analyze these goals within the complex relationality of elements that align or misalign towards reaching these goals. In this article, we will explore educational values in Bhutan as both expressed in policy as well as how these values are interpreted and realized by teachers and students. Specifically, we will focus on 'inclusion and diversity' as an educational value.

The idea of inclusion in education is often viewed, or advocated, within a human rights framework centered around the idea of the right to equally access an education (Gordon, 2013). However, what this equal access proposition often means in practice is the perpetuation of 'special' and segregated educational provision under new names, and with similar outcomes as before (Schuelka & Carrington, 2022). Rather than a radical reimagining of how education can be transformed to be designed and have purpose for everyone, inclusion and diversity in education has become a case of trying to fit heterogenous individuals into an existing system that was never meant to be heterogenous (Varenne & McDermott, 1998). Educational systems continue to hold all students to the same standard, particularly in rigid and centralized national curriculums, which creates a zero-sum outcome of those that 'can' and those that 'cannot' (Labaree, 2010). By 'inclusion and diversity' in education, we mean the value that all children – no matter their abilities, attributes, identities, or characteristics – have a right to an education, as well as a right to a quality education that leads to quality outcomes in society. In other words, inclusion and diversity in education is simply a quality education for *all* (Schuelka et al., 2019). The manifestation of values such as inclusion and diversity in an education system are formed by complex systems with frequent misalignments of actors, priorities, incentives, resources, governance, and other societal elements.

Governments, researchers, development agencies, and non-governmental organizations focused on inclusion and diversity in education have put most of their attention on the barriers to these values and have done well to identify them but have not completely overcome them (Schuelka & Carrington, 2022; UNESCO, 2020). For an educational system to be fully inclusive, there needs to be alignment of the values of inclusion and diversity throughout its multiple elements. In particular, the societal purpose – or *utility* – of formal education needs to inform all other aspects of the educational system in regard to the types of values that the education systems wish to inculcate. The reasons for *why* we go to school and for *what purpose* – for all students – has profound implications for the efficacy of inclusion and diversity in education.

The argument of this article will be supported by recent research on educational values in the country of Bhutan, as well as recent theoretical work on complex education systems and the socio-construction of 'difference' in modern schooling (Schuelka, 2018; Schuelka & Engsig, 2020). Featured in this article is a two-year qualitative and empirical study on educational values in Bhutan. This project sought the voices of students and teachers in Bhutan in describing their schooling experiences and the purposes of attending formal school in Bhutanese society. One outcome of this project was the creation of the Educational Values Evaluation and Design (EVED) Framework, based upon an analysis of the data, which will be featured and expanded upon in this article. We view Bhutan as an illustrative case study – one that demonstrates the difficulties in designing and aligning educational values in a complex system – that has much to do with all educational systems around the world. In the next section, we will explore an understanding of education systems as complex systems, and then provide an explanation of the EVED Framework. Following this, we will then describe the methodology of the study that informs this article, and then move towards the results of the study and an exploration of Bhutan as a

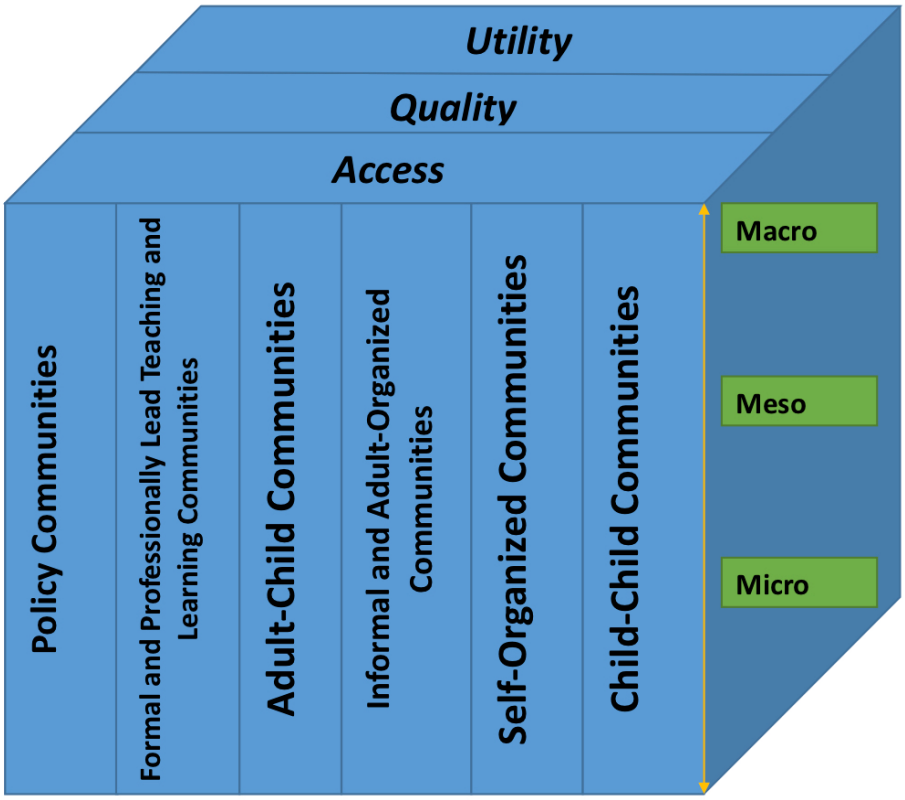
case. Lastly, we apply the EVED Framework to the Bhutan case study to illustrate how the Framework can be used to demonstrate educational values alignments and misalignments.

Complex Education Systems and Educational Values

Approaching the question of the purpose of inclusion and diversity in education helps to begin a larger exploration of the complexity of education systems. For Biesta (2015), there are three purposes, or utilities, of an education system: *qualification* (the symbolic manifestation of knowledge gained), *socialization* (the teaching of children to be a part of a society), and *subjectification* (the teaching of children to better understand their independent selves). These domains do not exactly co-exist equally in any education system, and there is often a tension between them – particularly when it comes to political ideology and orientation (Jones, 2013). Education systems often swing like a pendulum – or, if you like, ricochet like a pinball – between emphases on 'core' learning of knowledge, and emphases on promoting more 'holistic' learning. As Biesta (2015) would aver, we are certainly in a political period that is very much focused on qualification and 'learnification' above all else.

Schuelka and Engsig (2020) used the work of Biesta and others to build a theoretical model to recognize and understand complex education systems: 'Complex Education Systems Analysis' (CESA), represented in the form of a cube (CESA^3). The CESA^3 represents a three-dimensional approach towards understanding education as a complex system, which is defined as an "open system in which elements are interacting with themselves and their environment in emergent, adaptive, and self-reflexive ways" (Schuelka & Engsig, 2020, p. 6). Education can be understood as a complex system by examining and analyzing the three dimensions – across different levels of a system from micro to macro; across different community groupings and depths; and across the three attributes of access, quality, and utility. The attribute of *access* is perhaps the best understood idea as advocacy for education as a human right, and there has been greater attention paid towards increasing *quality* as a result of increasing access. However, we believe that *utility* deserves far greater attention and that it influences other attributes and dimensions. What we argue is that *utility* means more than just the end result of inputs and processes. Educational utility is a teleological question – the overall purpose and conceptualization of education in society, and for *whom* it was designed, rather than analyzing how outcomes were arrived. The visual representation of the CESA^3 can be seen in Figure 1.

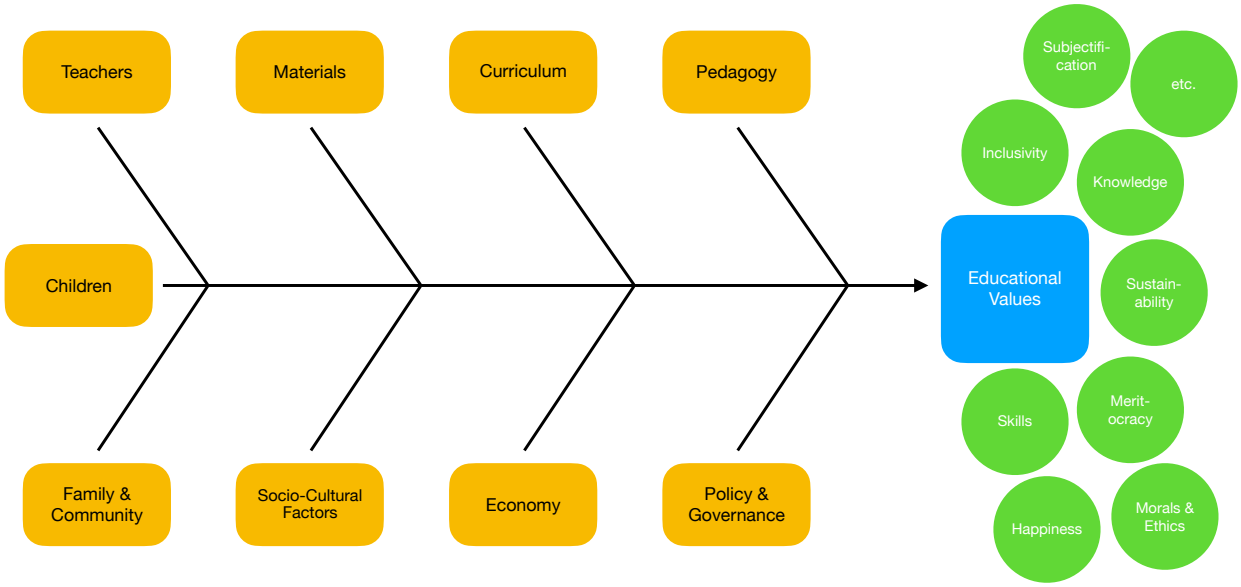
Figure 1
The Complex Educational Systems Analysis Cube (CESA³)



Source: Schuelka & Engsig, 2020, p. 6

If the CESA³ serves as a larger theoretical model for understanding complex education systems, an analytic tool developed to explore the alignment of educational values within a complex system can further ground the CESA³ in practical application. As a result of our educational values project in Bhutan, an Educational Values Evaluation and Design (EVED) Framework was created during the data analysis stage. This framework further breaks down various elements of a complex educational system and in how they inculcate – or fail to promote – educational and societal values across levels, communities, and attributes. The EVED Framework is visualized in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
The Educational Values Evaluation and Design Framework



The EVED Framework uses an Ishikawa design format to highlight various elements of a complex education system that inform how an educational and societal value is expressed. Using this framework can uncover where alignments and misalignments occur within an education system that expresses the desire to achieve certain values within itself. In Figure 2 above, some examples of educational values are presented, although this is certainly not an exhaustive list. Values such as inclusivity, sustainability, and happiness are assumed to be positive and desirable for inculcation within an educational system. Other values such as *what* and *whose* knowledge and skills are learned, morals and ethics are preferenced and meritocratically advanced through the system can be contested and assigned positive or negative connotations.

Nine element inputs are identified that inform the production of any educational value but, again, this is not necessarily exhaustive. These element inputs include children, teachers, materials, curriculum, pedagogy, policy and governance, the economy, socio-cultural factors, family, and community. Each one of these elements can further be broken down. For example, 'teachers' is a broader element that encompasses aspects such as pre-service training, in-service training, and incentivization; as well as de-/motivating factors such as stress, burden and scope of work, wages and compensation, autonomy, agency, efficacy, social pressure, and many more. Each element is interconnected and consistent with the theoretical underpinnings of the CESA[3] and other ecological and complex systems theories (Anderson et al., 2014; Walton et al., 2020). In other words, elements

should not be thought of as isolated inputs but as reflexive elements in a complex system that can only ever fully support educational values when they are collectively aligned.

If any element of the education system is misaligned with the values being purported by other elements, particularly as dictated by official policy, then the educational value will have difficulty in being effectively produced. This misalignment will be made clear in presenting the case of Bhutan in subsequent sections. However, we believe that these misalignments have been observed in education research for quite some time, usually in the guise of 'barriers' or work on the policy-practice gap. Inclusive education research and advocacy is well-aware of the gaps between policy and practice in the form of resource allocation, teacher training and incentivization, inflexible national curriculums, ableist pedagogies, and especially the socio-cultural ethos of the school environment. What the EVED Framework offers is a proactive approach towards more effectively analyzing system mis-/alignments and *designing* positive educational values such as inclusivity by understanding that it is never a single lever alone that must be pushed to make a system more inclusive. The EVED Framework invites educational reformists and advocates to actively use it to construct and enact a theory of change.

The EVED Framework emerged from our project examining educational values in the Bhutanese educational system. This project will be further explained and discussed for the remainder of this article, furthering the argument that inclusion as an educational and societal value needs to be aligned across an entire complex system to be effective.

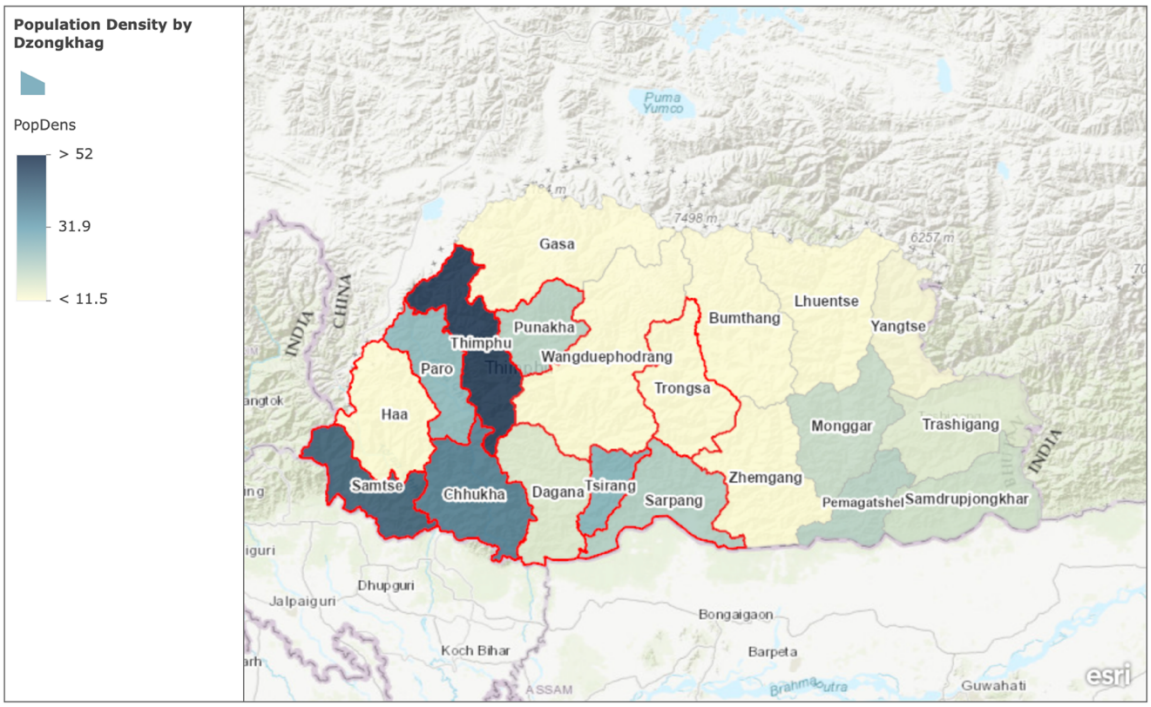
Methodology

The research that informs this article was carried out for two years from 2018–2019. We were interested in the balance of values and aims in education centered around a '4H' framework of *head*, *heart*, *hands*, and – newly introduced by us – *happiness*. A more in-depth exploration of the 4H framework and the place of 'happiness' in educational values has been published elsewhere (Kezang Sherab & Schuelka, 2021; *forthcoming*). The research design was a qualitative study consisting of focus groups and observations. In total, we conducted 24 focus groups of approximately 240 participants ranging from Class 4 students to university students; and teachers at all levels (12 out of the 24 focus groups were teachers, conducted separately from the student focus groups). We also conducted day-long observations at 12 schools. The students involved in this research were not pre-determined or selected by the researchers, and we encountered a diverse mix of genders, socio-economic backgrounds, and abilities within every focus group conducted. The participants were selected by teachers and school leadership, which we acknowledge could be a limitation to representation in the study. Nonetheless, we observed a diverse mix of participants ourselves when the participants came into the classrooms where we conducted focus groups.

Many of the school sites where we did our data collection were Central Schools, which in Bhutan means a boarding school that draws their students from both the local community and from across the country – children are essentially assigned a school to attend by the Royal Government, which could be on the other side of the country from their home. The data from the focus groups were recorded and transcribed, and both the focus group transcriptions and structured observation notes were analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), employing thematic and inductive coding (Saldaña, 2009), and triangulated via three concurrent independent researchers and a constant validity check (Bernard, 2013). Our study schools were located throughout the central, south, and west of Bhutan, representing 10 out of 20 *dzongkhags* [districts] and a significant

range of demographic (urban-rural) and geographic (high altitude-low jungle) settings. A map of our study *dzongkhags* can be seen highlighted in red in Figure 3, which also displays population density to indicate the diversity of settings. This study does not purpose to be statistically representative of the whole of Bhutan but, given the homogeneity of the Bhutanese education system across all settings, certain central themes and commonalities may be observed. In the end, each participant's voice can only be representative of their own experience and worldview.

Figure 3
A Map of Bhutan Indicating Dzongkhags Researched and Population Density



A Brief Introduction to Bhutan

Given the limited space, we will not attempt to explain the entirety of the Bhutanese socio-cultural-historical context. A more comprehensive look at the historical and contemporary context of education in Bhutan can be further explored by works from Karma Phuntsho (2013), Schuelka and Maxwell (2016), and Robles (2016). However, we will provide a brief introduction below to help understand the next section.

Bhutan is located entirely in the Eastern Himalaya surrounded by India to the south and China (Tibet) to the north. It was never colonized and remained relatively isolated – except for regional interactions primarily with Tibet, Assam, and Sikkim – until the 20th century. In the mid-20th century, a modernization and development strategy was put in place that continues forward today in terms of focus on establishing and improving infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Karma Phuntsho, 2013). In the 1970s, His Majesty the Fourth *Druk Gyalpo* [Dragon King] of Bhutan, famously called for a development focus of 'Gross National Happiness' rather than Gross National Income. This alternative focus on societal harmony and well-being has become a major source of

pride for the Bhutanese, and an inspiration for progressive development professionals and economists ever since (Karma Ura & Karma Galay, 2004).

Government-provided secular education began officially in 1959, although it did not gain much traction until the 1970s and 1980s with the formalization of a written form of the Dzongkha language and the localization of the curriculum (Singye Namgyel & Phup Rinchhen, 2016). The language of instruction in Bhutanese schools today is primarily English, with Dzongkha taught as its own subject. Across all levels of education, from early childhood to adult, there are more than 195,000 students in a form of schooling (MoE, 2019). This is approximately one-quarter of the entire population of Bhutan. Schooling is free and universal from pre-primary until Grade 10, with an upper-secondary and tertiary education provided free for students with high passing marks.

In the early days of the formal secular education system, there was almost no precedent and nearly everything – including books and teachers themselves – was borrowed from India, and presented in Hindi (Jagar Dorji, 2016). Schooling was directly and explicitly linked with human capital development, and colleges were located within their corresponding ministries. For example, the teacher training institutes were within the Ministry of Education. Formal education was viewed as a sieve to select and promote astute pupils and recruit them into the civil service. All other students failed out – or dropped out – of school and went back to farming and other manual labor work. However, this dynamic has not changed significantly today even though much in society has changed dramatically. Bhutanese schools are more inclusive, and many more students succeed, but youth unemployment is high (NSB, 2018). Those that received an education but are not accepted into a civil service office job and do not desire to enter a life of hard manual labor, are faced with an anemic private sector that has struggled to promote entrepreneurship and further technical training (Lham Dorji & Sonam Kinga, 2005). Bhutanese students express strong national pride and a Buddhist ethos and value-set, but also find that the knowledge, values, and skills that they learn in school do not align with greater society or their adult goals. This will be further elaborated upon in the next section.

Findings: "I don't think it's helping us to be a better person"

In order to understand what kinds of educational and societal values are being fostered in Bhutanese schools, we asked our focus groups fairly simple questions that elicited deep and complex answers. We asked questions such as: 'Why do children go to school in Bhutan?', 'What do children learn in Bhutanese schools?', 'How does going to school make you feel?', and 'What is an 'educated person'?' What we wanted to locate within these broad questions were different elements in the education system that perpetuated certain values. In comparing these resulting values with the explicit value aims of official educational policy and curriculum, we can better target misalignments within the system. The value of inclusion is wrapped within larger questions of the purpose and perception of school in Bhutanese society. Results will be organized and presented within the three domains of the CESA theoretical framework of Access, Quality, and Utility. Because access to schooling has been fairly established in Bhutan through policy and practice and all children in Bhutan have the right to equitable access (RGoB, 2019), we only include Quality and Utility as findings sections because this was the focus of our study. As argued by Schuelka and Engsig (2020), the theory of complex systems is that there are not rigid barriers between domains and elements, and thus the reader will note that findings in Quality and Utility will not be so cleanly divided.

Quality: What is Learned Inside and Outside of School

One aspect of quality in education systems is curriculum and what is learned (or not learned) that supports the utility of education in a particular society. There is an inherent paradox in Bhutanese culture when it comes to formal schooling, in terms of what is valued and preferenced culturally. When our participants were asked about Bhutanese culture, this was most often romanticized as being something located in egalitarian rural village settings, centered around agricultural rhythms, anchored in a local Buddhist worldview, and inculcated through *Driglam Namzha* [formal and informal Bhutanese rules for social etiquette]. However, almost none of these ideas existed in the formal school setting, further supporting long-extant theories of 'modern' schooling as representing a significant break from 'traditional' societies (Fuller, 1991; Spindler, 2000). To the majority of participants, going to school was equated with social advancement to more urban settings and jobs that required a formal education. Reaffirming previous work on non-cognitive skills in Bhutanese schools (Schuelka et al., 2019), students from this wider sample set located the actual teaching of socio-cultural values as something that occurred *outside* of the classroom, specifically in extracurricular activities. This has also been a challenge in trying to implement educational reforms in Bhutan centered around Gross National Happiness, in that teachers and school leaders viewed these as 'extra' rather than integrated in their everyday lessons (Kezang Sherab et al., 2014). Inclusion and diversity in education was also viewed as 'extra' and not within the core values of the educational institution.

The Bhutanese school system serves to self-perpetuate its own *raison d'être* by preferencing and promoting only the kinds of recognized learning that advanced students towards a qualification. This might have better served the Bhutanese educational system in the past, when its purpose was to find a narrow band of apt candidates to enter the civil service ranks while all others continued a life of agricultural subsistence. However, the changes in Bhutanese society have now rendered this kind of educational system design to be ineffective at best, and self-destructive at worse. Nearly all children in Bhutan attend school, including those labelled with 'disabilities' – and, significantly, a vast proportion of students with learning difficulties that struggle academically and drop-out thinking that *they* were the problem and not the school (Schuelka, 2018). The Bhutanese civil service cannot accept a majority of those that apply today and simply having passing marks and a qualification of learning is not enough. The young adults that simply pass out of lower secondary (Class 10), upper secondary (Class 12), university (Class 15), or are not selected based on their mark on the Bhutan Civil Service Examination (BCSE), are essential now stuck "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967). Youth do not have the knowledge, skills, or the desire for a life of farming, nor do they have many options to use the academic knowledge and skills they acquired in school. Again, this has implications for inclusion and diversity in education in that it reinforces that schooling is only effective for some and begins to call into question the purpose of schooling if it only serves as a promotion for a few.

The most glaring example of the mis-matched values of quality schooling and society comes in the form of examinations. Students must take examinations at the end of every year to determine whether or not they will advance to the next class. At the time of our field research this was for every class beginning in pre-primary, although at the time of writing this is in the process of being changed for examinations to now only begin in Class 4. There are also new policies being phased in for alternative assessments and accommodation requirements for students labelled as having a 'disability' (RGoB, 2019). There are major examination events at Class 10 and Class 12 that essentially determine a students' future advancement – and their overall future in many ways. Examinations and

examination culture are a source of immense stress and worry for students, and all of our participants – both teachers and students – expressed this. Students in Bhutan are publicly ranked, with students that passed and students that failed announced for all to know. There are clear linkages here to the Indian education system that was brought into Bhutan – with a reliance on textbooks and intense, rigid, examinations that distil the entirety of learning into one summative examination. This Indian education system, of course, was in many ways learned from their British colonizers (Gupta, 2006). Regardless of its origins, the most significant misalignment of educational values is centered on examination culture and its effect on the educational system as a whole, producing failure, 'difference,' and 'disability' throughout the system (Schuelka, 2018). Failing examinations equates to failing to advance towards the narrow future pathways that schooling has created. Both students and teachers in our focus groups questioned the purpose of examinations, particularly in their efficacy to assess learning. One teacher said, "*Students are taught to take exams, but they don't learn anything*." A student in a focus group expressed the following:

> *I guess from my point of view, examination is not like, they're not checking what we have learned. They're just checking what we have memorized from the textbook* [agreement amongst respondents]. *Examinations in Bhutan, like I don't think it's helping us to be a better person in the future. They are just checking what we have memorized.*

The teachers were frustrated with the role examinations played in narrowing the curriculum and, in particular, how they spent their time in the classroom pedagogically. A discourse of '21st century schools' and '21st century pedagogy' has proliferated in the Bhutanese educational system, with much pressure being placed on teachers to teach differently but with the same scripted curriculum and the same materials. In a focus group, one exasperated teacher stated, "*How can we teach 21st century pedagogy with 20th century curriculum?!*" This sentiment further confirms previous research that we have conducted in Bhutan, whereas teachers felt that the national curriculum was extremely over-subscribed, and they did not view their role beyond being deliverers of academic content that would be formally examined (Schuelka et al., 2019). This lessened every-day inclusive opportunities in the classroom, as teachers focused on getting through curricular learning content rather than ensuring student participation and individual learning trajectories (Schuelka, 2018).

School knowledge – i.e., what was on the examination – was viewed by our participants as something entirely separate from the practical skills and cultural knowledge needed for adult living in Bhutanese society. This sentiment is represented in the student focus group excerpt below:

Interviewer:	*Why are you going to school? For what purpose are you going to school?*
Respondent 1:	*To study.*
Interviewer:	*Why is studying important?*
Respondent 2:	*Because if don't study we will not get job in the future.*
Respondent 1:	*We come to school because to study. Because if we study, we can be a successful person and we don't have to depend on anyone.*

This is an elucidary exchange in many ways, but not least because of the extraordinary statement at the end stating, "*we don't have to depend on anyone*." A sentiment such as this goes very much against the grain of Bhutanese cultural discourse that is informed by a Buddhist worldview. The dominant message in Bhutanese culture is one of inter-dependence and inter-connectedness. However, this is not the culture that is being

inculcated in Bhutan's schools. This finding further speaks to theories on educational utility and the enactment of 'modern' schooling and a 'modern' economy on already-established socio-cultural-economic systems (Demerath, 1999; Fuller, 1991; Grindal, 1972; Katz, 2004; Schuelka, 2013; Spindler, 2000).

Utility: Why What is Learned in School Matters for Society

One aspect of the utility of education is the notion of how schooling contributes to the societal notion of 'success.' To the students of Bhutan, schooling was very much viewed as a means towards learning knowledge to eventually earn a qualification that leads to a work as an adult. Being a 'successful person' was explicitly linked to work and economic societal value. In other words, schools are inculcating children to be "preoccupied with the future" (Sherman, 1997, p. 123) and to directly equate success in school as preparation for success in adult society. However, even though the discourses and culture of schooling in Bhutan promote the notion of an "educated person" (Levinson et al., 1996) as one of academic achievement and promotion, there is still a reverence for rural agricultural life and a perceived dignity in hard farm labor and egalitarian rural village culture. Indeed, most students in Bhutanese schools come from rural agricultural settings and a vast majority of the students surveyed in our focus groups had parents/family members that were illiterate farmers. This is also reflected in the overall census statistics for the country, which finds that nearly 80% of the country are employed in the agricultural, construction, and natural resource sectors (NSB, 2018). Most Bhutanese adults and families are subsistence farmers, with a small amount of cash-cropping and goods exchange. Tellingly, there is a significant correlation between educational attainment level and unemployment, but in reverse of the mythology of human capital development – the more education one receives, the more likely they are to be *un*employed (NSB, 2018).

The narrative linkage between school success and societal success – even if it does not reflect current socio-economic reality – has profound implications for inclusion and diversity in education as an educational and societal value. If children and adults believe fully in a meritocratic system of social advancement, then those that do not excel or otherwise struggle in formal schooling lose value within the system. This is what Schuelka (2018) found in previous ethnographic fieldwork, when students labelled as having a 'disability' in Bhutan were most often associated with 'being lazy' and not working hard enough to do well. This also builds upon the work of Ray McDermott and others (1998) in articulating how schooling – and the purpose of schooling – *produces* 'disabilities' through the narratives of success and achievement.

Beyond expressing the socio-economic utility of schooling in Bhutan and the idea of a 'successful person,' there was also a strong sentiment of going to school for the benefit of Bhutan beyond just their own self-interest. One student expressed this sentiment:

> *But what we have to do is being an educated person, we have to convey the message to our own parents. We have to convey them and we have to help them. We are not supposed to go and fight with them. We have to take our culture with us because our culture is identity of our country. And it's in our hands to save it. And we have to go with the modern technologies because we have to compete with the other modern world. So it's all in our hand…it's somewhat like understanding and belief that we need to create and we must give a very strong support to our own creation.*

This expression of education for the benefit of the nation-state is an old sentiment, and one of the primary catalysts for mass education expansion in 19th century Europe that then spread worldwide (Ramirez & Boli, 1987), although not always naturally or with benevolent purpose. In Bhutan, nationalism is strongly inculcated in the educational system and embodied in the production of *tsa-wa-sum*, which is originally the Buddhist belief of the 'Three Roots' but contemporaneously has also come to mean the nationalist notion of 'King, Country, People.' This should not be considered as indoctrination, but more an emphasis on thinking beyond the self and towards contribution to the whole, which certainly sits squarely in the Buddhist worldview. This is why the sentiment expressed earlier by one student – "*we don't have to depend on anyone*" – is so extraordinary.

If we were to simply analyze the language of Bhutanese educational policy, a far different picture of Bhutan would emerge. Education policy in Bhutan is very much constructed with progressive aims, featuring an emphasis on Gross National Happiness and a holistic approach to learning (Schuelka, 2017). For example, Bhutanese national education policy has two aims, to create an education system that:

- Inculcates the principles and values underpinning Gross National Happiness, and upholds the nation's unique cultural and spiritual heritage and values; and
- Prepares citizens to become knowledgeable, skilful [Bhutanese spelling], creative, innovative, enterprising, and capable of responding to the national needs and emerging global trends (RGoB, 2019, p. 2).

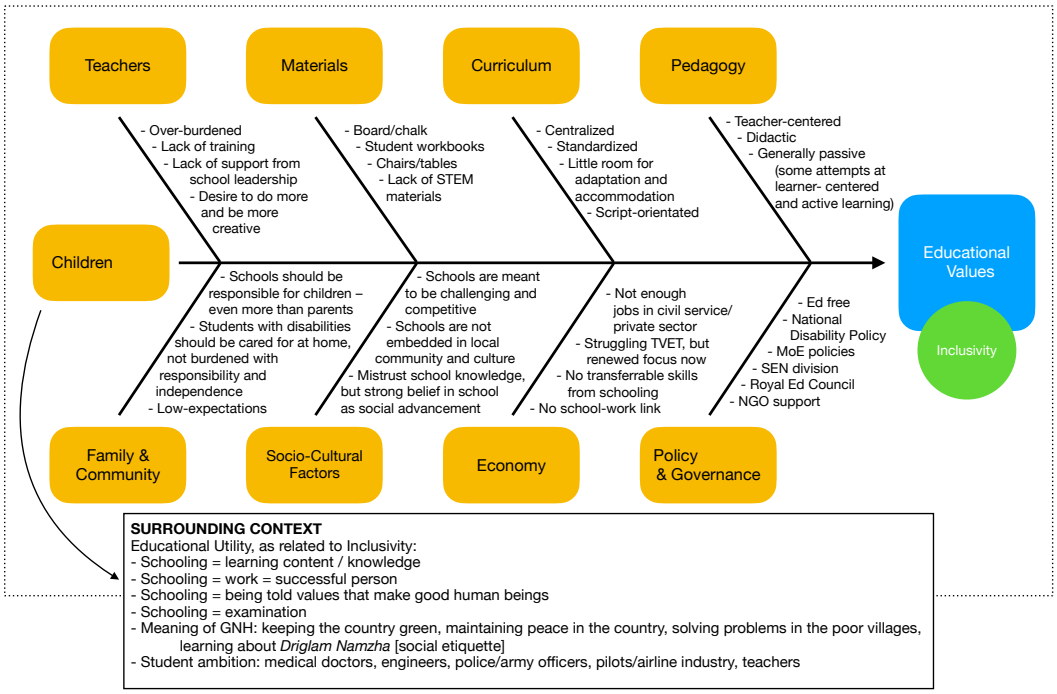
However, looking at a complex educational system from policy alone presents a very myopic and misunderstood picture of the whole. What is especially missing in most analyzes of education systems is a focus on what going to school actually *does* for a student – not only in outcomes related to learning, but also in how schooling adds value to a student's wellbeing, socialization, self-identity, and subjectification. When thinking specifically about inclusive education, there must be more attention paid towards how an educational system is cultivating *all* students' sense of belonging, self-worth, resilience, and creativity. Students must share the opinion that school is offering them utility in terms of a successful future that goes beyond economics and social status.

In the next and final section of this article, we will use the EVED framework to provide an example of the misalignment of elements in the Bhutanese education system as it relates to the values of inclusion and diversity in education. This will bring forward the discussion from this section on educational utility and values as expressed by participants in Bhutanese schools. We will then conclude the article with a suggestion as to how to apply the EVED Framework to other cases and contexts to evaluate and design better inclusive education systems.

Educational Values, Utility, and Implications for Inclusion

In this section we will present an example of how the EVED Framework can be applied to locate where the educational value of inclusivity is misaligned in the Bhutanese educational system. We could not go through all of our findings from this project in the section above, so there will be some findings in Figure 4 below that have not been discussed here. Nevertheless, we will mention them briefly in a summary of our evaluation.

Figure 4
EVED Framework Application on Inclusivity in the Bhutanese Education System



In analyzing the Bhutanese educational system via the EVED framework, the element of Policy & Governance is the most proactive in supporting inclusivity as a value in the system. There are policies in place that support educational access and inclusion for children, a holistic vision of the child centered around Gross National Happiness (GNH), and generally a discourse on a human right to education (RGoB, 2019). The National Education Policy draft is filled with assertions such as "Schools shall foster best practices and promote innovative methods to engage students and develop their full potential and life-skills," "Teachers in public schools shall be provided with appropriate and required teaching materials and stationery," and "All schools shall promote core values and facilitate productive and critical engagement in society as active and informed citizens … schools shall teach the country's spiritual and cultural heritage throughout schooling and develop civic, financial, entrepreneurial, environmental, media literacy, and provide life skills education programmes" (RGoB, 2019, pp. 4-5). However, the practices and cultures within schools work against a progressive vision of GNH Education through elements such as rigid, inadaptable, and irrelevant curriculum that has not caught up to the policy; a pedagogical style that disables many children included in the classroom (see Schuelka, 2018); a lack of hands-on and adaptable materials for learning, particularly in science and mathematics; teachers that are over-burdened, not given enough agency and ownership, and are incentivized only to 'get through the syllabus' through contradicting policy directions and incentives.

Outside of in-school practices and cultures, there are also socio-cultural factors that exert different pressures on the educational system and its values. The Bhutanese school system was designed to feed able and successful students directly into the civil service, but that is no longer the socio-economic reality in Bhutan. The educational system remains an

examination-centered qualification generator but needs to adapt to the current scenario and produce better students that can enter the private economic sector, gain skilled technical jobs, create new areas of economic opportunity, and contribute to greater Bhutanese society by inhabiting positive Bhutanese socio-cultural values. The Bhutanese place a great deal of weight on the importance of schooling in terms of social advancement and better economic opportunity, but in many ways the educational system no longer perpetuates this narrative for most of its students.

In terms of the surrounding context of educational utility, most of our focus group discussions focused on school as meaning future work, examinations, and content memorization. However, there were instances where our participants expressed the possibility of school meaning more in terms of producing Gross National Happiness and better citizens and contributing to the common good of the nation. Nearly all the children we interviewed expressed a desire to support their parents in some way and to contribute to their home village. This should not be understated or overlooked. However, children were nonetheless well-aware of the expectations of doing well at school and that socio-economic success was a vehicle for them to support their parents in tangible and material ways. The desire to do good – for their parents, for the nation – shaped our participants' understanding of success as measured through academic achievement and ability.

The understanding of educational utility in Bhutan as one of achievement and advancement towards work and 'success' has a major impact on the value of inclusivity in the educational system. Because schooling is conceptualized and designed primarily upon the ability to advance academically – to prove oneself within a narrow set of examination and book learning skills – a child that struggles with these specific skills, or progresses differently than their peers, is now 'on the outside looking in.' The utility of the educational system is one of producing a specific type of success, and many children will be marginalized and excluded as a result. The uncomfortable question here is "why would an educational system include children for which it was never designed to produce in the first place?" This is exactly why the current challenges and tensions exist within the inclusive education field.

The EVED Framework is one tool that can be used to help locate and evaluate interconnected elements within a complex educational system that can begin to be nudged in the right direction. If an educational system was only designed and narratively sustained with a purpose of academic achievement, ability, and success – with the only measurable outcomes being graduation and transition to higher education and work – then it will never be inclusive for all children. However, we believe that using tools like the EVED Framework and others can support innovation and design-solutions towards more inclusive educational systems by understanding these systems as dynamic and complex.

With a complex education system, we must be fully cognizant that it is never just a single nudge within a single element that will make the difference. In this project on Bhutan, it was found that the Ministry of Education initiative encouraging teachers to use more active learning and learning-centered pedagogy only exacerbated problems as the curriculum did not adjust to different modes of learning, nor were lessons and the school day structured differently to allow for more flexibility. Teachers did not feel that they had agency and ownership of their classrooms. Promoting learner-centered activities just became yet another thing that the teacher had to fit in as 'extra.' While they liked these activities and found that the students were more engaged, it was also something that they believed they could only do once they reached the end of the syllabus and if there was

any extra time. In other words, adding pedagogical innovation was useless when there were not changes that also happened to the curriculum, to the examinations, to the materials, to the culture of the school, to the support and incentives for teachers, and so forth.

In closing, it is important to note that the EVED Framework is meant to be situationally and contextually sensitive and specific. We are not advocating for the EVED Framework to be used as a comparison of values across nations (Lee & Manzon, 2014). This is not to ignore the fact that education is a complex globalized discourse of borrowing, learning, exchange, convergence, and coercion. In our project in Bhutan, we are careful not to project novel exogenous values and notions onto the existing educational system. As we argue in this article and others, it is the Bhutanese educational system *itself* that seeks to promote values of inclusion, happiness, sustainability, and so on. These are explicit in national policies and macro-level discourses, but not enacted and produced at the mesa- and micro-levels. In other words, the system has a values misalignment amongst its elements. Using the EVED Framework is simply a tool to support any education system in understanding how and where educational values are formed and produced within it, and to evaluate where to make better design choices to further the kinds of values that the education system desires.

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[1] A note on Bhutanese naming convention: Bhutanese names are not structured as a given name followed by a family surname. Most Bhutanese names are one or two given names, which are often interchangeable and nongendered. Thus, Bhutanese names cited in this paper are written out and alphabetized according to their first given name: a culturally-appropriate referencing convention argued by Schuelka and Maxwell (2016).

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