

Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile

(English Translation from Tibetan)

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1. Article 17 (2) of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, under *Directive Principles* states: “Towards enhancing the imparting of education, an ideal education policy meeting the real basic needs of Tibet shall be formulated.” As no such policy has yet been formulated, it is felt that the time is ripe to review the current situation of education of Tibetans in exile and to resolve upon a basic education policy that is better suited to the current needs of the Tibetans in exile and that may serve as a basis for the education policy of Tibet in future when a self-governing status is attained for the whole of the three *Cholkhas*¹ of Tibet.

CHAPTER II: THE MEANING OF EDUCATION

- 2.1 Education is to be recognised as a human quality that enables understanding of external objects and phenomena, and that leads to the awakening, maturing and completion of the potential of the inner consciousness.
- 2.2 Education is not to be recognised as merely grasping what is heard from others. Instead, it is to be recognised as realisation of what is heard through the power of self-confirmation and actualisation of what is realised through persistent contemplation. It is, thus, a process of learning through hearing from others, self-investigation and persistent contemplation.
- 2.3 Education is to be recognised as a unique inner quality in which the discriminative wisdom and mind-pacifying techniques are conjoined into close partnership.
- 2.4 Education is to be recognised as a key inner technology that transforms social and personal actions into wholesome deeds.

¹ The three historical regions of Tibet: U-Tsang, Dotod (Kham) and Domed (Amdo); popularly referred to as: U-Tsang, the Cholkha of Dharma; Dotod, the Cholkha of Man; and Domed, the Cholkha of Horse.

- 2.5 Education is not to be recognised merely as a means of livelihood. Instead it is to be recognised as a means of achieving temporary as well as long-term welfare for the self and others. In particular, it is to be recognised as a vehicle of social welfare and service.
- 2.6 Education is about recognising the undesired suffering and abandoning its cause; and recognising the desired happiness and engaging in practice of its cause. It is, thus, to be recognised as a means towards engaging in desirable actions and avoiding undesirable actions.

CHAPTER III: THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

A The Purpose of Education in General

- 3.1 The general purpose of education is to awaken and develop the human qualities of wisdom, loving kindness and compassion; their dependent virtues of right view and conduct; and the art of creativity and innovation.
- 3.2 To refine human perceptions and sensitivities and to initiate independent and valid investigation into phenomenal and ethical spheres, thus enabling the accomplishment of personal, national and universal goals;
- 3.3 To empower people and nation to become self-reliant, i.e. without the need to depend on the assistance and support of others; and to generate patriotic and dedicated persons and other resources for achieving the cherished goals of the society and nation.

B Education for Tibetan People in Particular

- 3.4 A responsibility the Tibetan people have towards the world community is to preserve and promote the unique wealth of Tibetan culture and traditions, which are of great value to the whole of humanity, through all times and circumstances. Another responsibility the Tibetan people have to the world is to promote and widely propagate the noble principle of *Universal Responsibility* as introduced and initiated by His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama. These responsibilities are to be fulfilled.
- 3.5 The ultimate goal of the Tibetan people is to transform the whole of the three *Cholkhas* of Tibet into a zone of non-violence (*ahimsa*) and peace; to transform Tibetan society into a non-violent society; and to lead other peoples onto the path of

non-violence and compassion. Thus, the Tibetan people must be made capable of correctly and fully understanding the direction, path and means to this goal.

- 3.6 Tibet is situated on the roof of the world and her wealth of natural resources has a close bearing on the well-being of all Asian nations and the world at large. Thus, it is of paramount importance that the Tibetan people should be able to preserve the natural environment of Tibet.
- 3.7 A political goal of the Tibetan people is to instill in all Tibetan races of the three *Cholkhas* the principles of unity, freedom, democracy, rule of law, non-violence, truth and justice. It must be ensured that all Tibetans irrespective of their age properly understand and live by these principles.
- 3.8 The Tibetan system of economy must also be in accordance with the aforesaid fundamental principles. The Tibetan people must therefore avoid: the two widespread extremes of capitalism and socialism; the two livelihood extremes of luxuriance and destitution; and reliance on *wrong means of livelihood*². A system ensuring self-sufficiency and right means of livelihood must therefore be followed.

CHAPTER IV: SOURCES OF LEARNING

A Traditional³ Tibetan Education

- 4.1 The principal sources of the traditional Tibetan education are the traditions of *Yungdrung Bon*⁴ and *Buddhadharma*⁵. Hence, *base, path and result*, and *view, practice and discipline* of the inner science contained in these traditions form the core of Tibetan traditional education.
- 4.2 The four other Tibetan sciences of Language, *Valid Cognition*⁶, Art and Medicine together with their branches, which have been highly influenced by *Bon* and *Dharma*, are also subjects of traditional Tibetan learning.

² *Earning living through means not in accordance with ethical and spiritual principles*

³ "Tradition" must not be understood as any custom merely perpetuated for a long time. It instead must be understood as a continuum of wisdom or science: (i) originated from a valid source; (ii) passed down through an unbroken lineage; and (iii) supported by valid reasoning. Additionally, it must be an everlasting source of benefit and happiness independent of changes of time and circumstance.

⁴ *The earliest native religion of Tibet founded by Shenrab Miwo of Shangshung, the western region of ancient Tibet; more popularly called simply 'Bon'*

⁵ The doctrine and teaching of the Buddha Shakyamuni (623 B.C.-544 B.C.)

⁶ *Traditional science of logical reasoning originated from India*

- 4.3 The Tibetan Language, which is the medium of these traditional studies, despite its long period of development has undergone very few changes. It holds great potency to communicate intended meaning. It is a great store-house of many profound sciences and arts difficult to be found in other languages. It is, in fact, the only standard base of all Tibetan studies.

B Modern Education

- 4.4 Modern Education, unlike traditional Tibetan education, does not trace its origin to a religious or ancient cultural source. It, instead, is a system that was begun and developed in recent centuries by human beings through investigation and experimentation, primarily, on external objects and phenomena. It developed further and was spread more widely in the course of time.
- 4.5 Modern Education primarily includes the study of science and technology, mathematics, social sciences, economics, management and planning, and most arts subjects which fall under the category name of "science".

CHAPTER V: THE AIM OF GIVING EDUCATION

- 5.1 Students must be enabled to fully awaken their discriminative faculty of mind to be able to distinguish right from wrong. This would empower them: to be confident to make decision with freedom of thought and action; to be self-reliant in livelihood, i.e. to live without depending on or exploiting others thereby ensuring their freedom of livelihood by right means; to be able to protect the freedom of the individual and community by non-violence thereby ensuring the freedom of security. This constitutes the principle of "*freedom*".
- 5.2 By embracing other beings as more precious than the self and sacrificing the self for the service and welfare of other persons, the noble spirit of altruism is to be generated and established. This constitutes the principle of "*altruism*".
- 5.3 For the sake of future generations, the environment and natural resources must be conserved for the peaceful sustenance of this planet, and people must be empowered to uphold their ancestral cultural heritage. This ability to preserve culture and environment constitutes the principle of "*upholding the heritage*".

- 5.4 In relation to the general well-being of the world and in accordance with the needs of time and place, we must be able to introduce new principles, systems, objects, movements and so forth. This constitutes the principle of “*innovation*”.

Raising citizens to be endowed with these four stated qualities shall be the aim of giving education.

CHAPTER VI: SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

- 6.1 A system of education having traditional Tibetan education as its core and modern education as its essential co-partner shall be implemented.
- 6.2 As nothing is more important than the teacher in the work of imparting education, a teacher-centred education system shall be followed.
- 6.3 However, when teachers actually undertake the work of teaching, the student-centred methodology shall be followed.
- 6.4 In an education system having traditional education as its core, it is appropriate to have the medium in which the traditional learning abides as the medium of instruction for general education. Hence, efforts shall be made to gradually convert the medium of instruction in all Tibetan institutions of learning from the pre-primary level up to the highest research study level, into Tibetan language.
- 6.5 Inherent to traditional as well as modern learning, is the content meaning and the vehicle that conveys it. As proficiency in the vehicle of speech is gained with the study of language and proficiency in content meaning is gained with the study of *Valid Cognition (pramana)*, the Tibetan language and *Valid Cognition* shall be taught with special emphasis at the basic school level.
- 6.6 In order to empower students to investigate and reflect on obscure phenomena and to develop confidence in presenting their findings after investigation before the world's scholars, the process of learning by *hearing* and *thinking* as indicated by *Tibetan Inner Science* shall be widely introduced and promoted.
- 6.7 In order to instill into pupils the principles of wholesome thought and conduct from the pre-primary school level, the quality and role of teachers, formation of school

curriculum, and methodology of teaching shall be framed mainly in accordance with the traditional Tibetan principles and sciences, rather than the modern system.

- 6.8 A standard system of education, in which school and university graduates can freely follow their family occupations or start a new occupation of their choice, shall be introduced. This will help prevent the situation of producing large flocks of unemployed graduates.

CHAPTER VII: THE STRUCTURE OF BASIC EDUCATION

- 7.1 Education is a life-long process to be pursued and practised by persons of all ages. Of the two systems of education: formal and non-formal, primary importance shall be given to the latter.
- 7.2 Nevertheless, since formal education has become important and necessary in the present day, the Administration shall frame a general structure covering all citizens as part of the education policy and issue directives accordingly.
- 7.3 The monastic centres and other institutions of traditional learning shall not come under the purview of the structure framed by the Administration. However, if such institutions and other societies or individuals establish schools for general basic education and desire recognition from the Tibetan Administration in exile, they must conform to the general structure.
- 7.4 The structure of the basic education shall comprise of a four-level school system: (1) three-year pre-primary school; (2) five-year primary school up to the fifth class; (3) three-year middle school up to the eighth class; and (4) four-year secondary school up to the twelfth class. Until a new system suitable for Tibetans is introduced for the three-year pre-primary level, the Montessori system shall be followed.
- 7.5 The pursuit of further secondary school education or vocational studies after graduating from Class X shall be decided by individual choice and prescribed academic requirements. Likewise, after graduating from Class XII, opportunities for the pursuit of vocational studies by choice shall be made available.

CHAPTER VIII: SUBJECTS OF STUDY

A. Tibetan Language

- 8.1 The studies of language and grammar being the basis of, and gateway to, any learning, the Tibetan language, grammar and literature shall be the main subject of study from the pre-primary level to Class XII.

B. Science of Valid Cognition

- 8.2 The ability to penetrate deeply into subjects and into the nature of phenomena through independent investigation and search, without blindly following the word of others, can be developed from the study of *Science of Valid Cognition*. The teaching of this subject up to Class XII with special stress shall therefore be recognised as one of the most important directives.

C. Other Languages & Valid Cognition Sciences

- 8.3 A three-language policy shall be adopted. Besides the primary mother-tongue language, a student should be fully proficient in any one foreign language and acquire a working knowledge of reading and writing in a third language after graduating from Class X. A second language may be chosen from among the four languages of Hindi, Chinese, English and Spanish. Depending on the availability of facilities more choices may be given. However, until such time when the medium of instruction is fully converted to the mother tongue, English will remain by necessity the second language. Hence the above stated choice of the second language cannot be implemented immediately, but such a long-term aim should be established now. The third language will be the language of the region where the school is located. If the regional language is Tibetan or the second language, any other essential language may be chosen in their place.
- 8.4 From the pre-primary level and up to Class III, no other language besides Tibetan shall be taught. Even the teaching of terms in, and songs of, other language should be avoided. The teaching of second and third languages shall be started from Class IV and Class VI respectively.
- 8.5 Suitable introductory studies of: the modern sciences of logical reasoning; experimental methodology; tenets or theories of the social sciences; and the investigative methodologies used in the study of history shall be included within the curriculum of the middle school (Class VI - VIII).

D. Art & Crafts

- 8.6 The study of any sustainable art or craft of a non-violent and environmentally friendly nature shall be made compulsory at both the levels of middle school (Class VI to VIII) and secondary school (Class IX to XII). For this purpose, a variety of traditional art and crafts of Tibetan and Indian origin and, to a lesser extent, certain modern art and crafts - suitable to our situation and qualifying the above characteristics - shall be taught in the schools. Depending on the availability of facilities and the interest of students, the study of a suitable art or craft may be included within the curriculum of the primary school level also. Similarly, for development of special talents and skills in art and crafts, language and other studies, suitable subjects of study may also be included in the curriculum according to the interest and mental disposition of the students
- 8.7 Several vocational schools shall be established for the admission of students who have graduated from Class X and Class XII. Besides the main training courses of Tibetan art and crafts, and various modern art and crafts, the Tibetan language and another additional language shall also be taught in these schools up to an appropriate level.

E. Science & Humanities

- 8.8 The introduction of general science; social sciences; history; sciences of mind; and other subjects of science and arts that are necessary shall be included in the study curriculum of the middle school (Class VI to VIII) for a length of time, and up to a level suitable for this stage.

F. Mathematics

- 8.9 Since study of mathematics is both useful in general life and essential for the study of science, adequate study of modern mathematics and an elementary introduction to traditional Tibetan mathematics shall be included in the school curriculum.

G. Principles of Non-Violence and Democracy

- 8.10 The study of the value, teachings, practices and histories of the principles of non-violence and democracy shall be suitably included within the study curricula of all three levels of school - primary, middle and secondary - in accordance with the degree of understanding of students at those levels.

H. Moral Conduct

- 8.11 Morality is not to be taught as a separate subject. Instead it is of vital importance to closely connect it to the central theme of all educational activities and especially all subjects of study to be taught in the classroom. However, excerpts from religious sources on morality; stories and tales on spiritual themes; traditional writings on social or secular ethics; and biographies of ancient and contemporary great personalities should be included within the content of school textbooks or supplementary reading.

I. Physical Exercise & Sports

- 8.12 Since school students are undergoing both physical and mental growth, it is important to dedicate equal attention and time to their health, hygiene and physical training and to their academic curriculum. Training in various forms of Tibetan traditional physical exercise; physical training of *yoga*; breathing exercises of *pranayama* and so forth should be given. Additionally, natural health treatments such as baths, massage, lotion application and so forth should be introduced from the primary school level. Similarly, manual work and walking being principal modes of physical exercise, a definite period of time should be allotted for them within the regular timetable. For diversion and recreation of students, games and sports shall also be included in the curriculum. Whilst attaching more importance to the traditional Tibetan games and sports, training in contemporary games and sports shall also be given.

J. Subjects of Study for Secondary School

- 8.13 In the common four-year study curriculum, it is necessary for the time being to retain all subjects of study prescribed for Class X and Class XII Examinations of the host country. Even after division of classes into science and other streams, Tibetan language and Science of Valid Cognition must continue to be included in the curriculum as compulsory subjects for all streams and classes of this level.

CHAPTER IX: SYLLABI & DURATION

- 9.1 Curricula and syllabi for all classes up to Class XII shall be prepared in the order and inter-related manner as required by the Basic Education Policy. For that purpose a special committee shall be established to prepare the Common School Curricula and Syllabi.

CHAPTER X: EXAMINATIONS

- 10.1 The present system of evaluation by means of a two or three hour examination shall be discarded. Promotion of students to the next class, up to Class VIII, shall be done, not on the basis of the present system of examination, but rather on the basis of the collective decision of concerned teachers through an overall assessment of student's regular conduct, level of understanding, practical skill and classroom participation. However, for the time being and until further review, the system of written examinations may continue with a 50 percent share of the overall evaluation. A new system of evaluation shall also be introduced to estimate the standard of learning for the classes of the secondary school, with the exception of those who are required to sit Board Examinations of the host country.

CHAPTER XI: TEACHERS

- 11.1 The future of any society rests on the quality of education provided, and the quality of education in turn depends on the quality of the teachers. Thus, teachers being the most important persons in society, great effort shall be made to recruit persons of highest character and learning to the profession. Legal provisions shall be put in place to ensure that due recognition and commensurate benefits are given to teachers.
- 11.2 Within the public service cadres, a separate cadre for persons in educational service shall be created. Rank and honour of this service division shall be superior to those of all other public service divisions.
- 11.3 Teachers should possess the general qualities of knowledge and experience as indicated by the contemporary educational system and inner qualities such as motivation and moral attitude as indicated by the traditional Tibetan sources. New schemes shall be devised and established to cultivate as many qualified teachers as possible on a regular basis.
- 11.4 Teachers must follow a life-long learning career and remain fully committed to the teaching profession. Resources towards the fulfillment of these conditions shall be provided.
- 11.5 All teachers employed at pre-primary to secondary school levels must have successfully undergone teacher training courses. The training should not only be on

contemporary subjects and teaching methodology but also contain instructions on the qualities and characteristics that behoove a teacher and methods of cultivation of pupils as given in the traditional sources. History of traditional Tibetan education shall also be included in the training course.

- 11.6 In order to train teachers in contemporary as well as traditional teaching courses, a scheme for training Tibetan teachers shall be implemented.
- 11.7 Clinical teaching practice for trainees for a definite period of time at any college or other teaching institution shall be recognised as a vital and important part of the training course.
- 11.8 In order to maintain proper scrutiny over the quality of teachers, it shall be made mandatory for both qualified teacher-candidates and currently employed teachers to receive a five-year teaching license from the Tibetan Council of Education. This license must be renewed every five years. During that period, it shall be required for teachers to complete a certain number of in-service training courses enhancing professional development as a pre-requisite for renewal of the teaching license.
- 11.9 Comprehensive rules and regulations governing recruitment, salary and benefits, promotion and transfer, regular and additional duties, code of conduct, welfare and accountability shall be framed.
- 11.10 Teachers being leaders of people and nation building, adequate facilities and an environment conducive to their unobstructed development in freedom of thought, power of intellect and spirit of innovation, must be provided.
- 11.11 Teachers are to be role models in character for students and should be able to instill wholesome qualities into their students. For this reason, policy shall be framed against the recruitment of persons with low moral character as teachers, even if they possess high academic qualifications.
- 11.12 Based on the importance and need of pre-primary learning, a Class XII graduate with requisite training shall be appointed as assistant teacher for each of the pre-primary classes. Priority shall be given to female candidates for the posts of pre-primary teacher and assistant. The pre-primary and primary teachers should possess the minimum qualification of a Bachelor Degree and must have completed a teacher

education course. Their salary and benefits shall be same as those of teachers of the secondary school level.

CHAPTER XII: ADMINISTRATION

- 12.1 All Tibetan schools in exile are required to uniformly implement the policies and directive guidelines on policies as and when framed by the Tibetan Administration in exile with respect to aims and objectives, structure, curriculum, evaluation, teacher and management of education.
- 12.2 The Department of Education, CTA is the highest central administrative authority in the affairs of education of Tibetans in exile. It shall implement the education policies as and when framed by the Central Tibetan Administration either directly, or principally through the medium of autonomous organisations.
- 12.3 It is emphasised that the internal management of schools shall be done principally by the local organisations and that the schools do not depend or rely on the Central Administration or their own central organisations in that matter.
- 12.4 To advise the Tibetan administration in exile on education policy; to monitor implementation of the education policy; to grant recognition and approval to rules and regulations, curriculum, textbook composition and examination system of all Tibetan schools in exile after necessary inspection; to grant recognition to all schools including pre-primary schools after necessary inspection; to issue and renew teaching licenses; and to monitor and oversee educational affairs as a whole, a permanent body '*The Education Council of Tibetans in Exile*' shall be established.
- 12.5 For the construction of plans on teacher education system; school curriculum and text books; teaching methodology; and other teaching resources, committees and task forces of scholars and experts shall be established and appointed as necessary from time to time.
- 12.6 Autonomous and private schools may seek and receive recognition for their schools from the Central Tibetan Administration. The Department of Education shall lay down provisions and frame regulations for granting recognition to such schools.

- 12.7 All schools recognised by the Central Tibetan Administration shall abide by the provisions of structure and mandatory curriculum as framed by this policy. However, the autonomous and private schools may decide independently as to how the details of the policy are implemented.

CHAPTER XIII: RIGHT TO EDUCATION

A. Basic Education

- 13.1 All Tibetan citizens performing citizen's duties shall have the right to basic education up to Class XII free of tuition fee and without any discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, place of origin, being rich or poor, being ordained or lay.
- 13.2 No Tibetan parent shall have the power to prevent a child between the ages of 6 and 16 years of age from attending school. In order to maintain good relationship between parents and children, special emphasis shall be laid on children staying with their parents and on not admitting young children to boarding schools.
- 13.3 In order to facilitate the completion of studies up to Class X by all children, opportunity for re-admission to school shall be given to the students who were obliged to leave their schools before finishing Class X.
- 13.4 Only those Class X graduates with promising academic records - to be determined by a thorough assessment of teacher's evaluation report, examination results and interest and intelligence of individual students - shall be admitted to the secondary school education.
- 13.5 The remaining Class X graduates may be allowed to pursue vocational training courses for two years according to their wish. All Class X graduates shall have right to follow these training courses.

B. Education through Self-Learning

- 13.6 Students who have failed admission to the secondary school after Class X can however continue the secondary school studies through self-learning during or after their vocational training. Necessary provisions for such modes of learning shall be made.

C. Students with Special Needs

- 13.7 Best efforts shall be made to educate students with special needs in regular schools together with other students. All schools must therefore make provision for all necessary facilities to meet the needs of such students. Teachers must also be provided with standard in-service training both physically and mentally for education of students with special needs.
- 13.8 One or two special schools with complete facilities shall be separately established for the students who cannot be admitted in regular schools due to serious physical and/or mental disabilities. These schools shall be equipped with teachers and staffs who are fully trained in special education. Provisions shall be made for students in these separately established schools to maintain close contact with their family and community.

CHAPTER XIV: INTERIM PROVISION

- 14.1 It is difficult to immediately accomplish the provision of all teaching and non-teaching personnel as required by the new policy. For this reason, there is no doubt that the complete implementation of the above stated policies will take a considerable period of time. Therefore, to the end of achieving the ultimate aims of these policies in a gradual manner, a definite action plan shall be drawn after adoption of this policy in order to effect organised and gradual changes in the existing system and to implement the new policy.
- 14.2 To serve as model and for gathering experience, one or two new schools shall be opened as soon as possible wherein the provisions of the new education policy shall be fully implemented.
- 14.3 A committee shall be established for the functions of: selection of teacher candidates; conception of training schemes for such candidates; prescription of curricula and text books; and the drawing up of other academic plans. The above work plans (*mentioned in this chapter*) shall be started within the calendar year of 2005.

CHAPTER XV: REVIEW

- 15.1 A committee of scholars and experts, to be appointed by the Department of Education, shall periodically review and reevaluate the plan of action for implementing the policy.
- 15.2 Articles of this policy may be reviewed whenever necessary.

NOTE:

This document has been originally prepared in the Tibetan language using several technical terms and styles of traditional composition. Great effort has been made in this translation to communicate the full and correct content-meaning of the original document. However, in the event of any doubt or difference in interpretation, the Tibetan version of interpretation shall be regarded final.