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Women’s Leadership Journeys in Bhutan: A longitudinal Study

Jamba Tobden

Abstract

While much has been said and discussed about questions concerning Bhutanese electorate and increased participation of women in leadership roles, both in the national parliament as well as in the local governance, a lot of what is discussed, published and informed often comes in the form of general commentaries without practical projects. This study is a longitudinal design narrative of implementing this significant agenda seriously, through a real project with impact pathways and targets set. This was done in collaboration with people in professions that are engaged in helping and supporting women, such as, government institutions, research institutions, policy makers, parliamentarians, Civil Society Organizations, UN systems, International and National Non-Governmental Organizations, Election Commission of Bhutan, etc. The research question seeks answers to the serious decline in the number of women representatives both in National Council and National Assembly from the first elections in 2008 to the second elections in 2013. Will the local government elections in 2016 not repeat this scenario? Seeking what is to be done and how it is to be done.

Keywords: Women, leadership, elections, happiness.

Introduction

The Royal University of Bhutan: The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) is an autonomous public higher education institution in the Kingdom of Bhutan. A key mandate of the university is “to promote and conduct research, to contribute to the creation of knowledge in an international context and to promote the transfer of knowledge of relevance to Bhutan” (The Royal Charter of the Royal University of Bhutan, 2003, p. 3). As an autonomous knowledge institution, RUB is poised to become a leading research institute in Bhutan’s knowledge-based society and
fortunately, the policy environment for the university to take on this role is conducive. The government expects that RUB should “work towards initiating key policy debates and formulation of government policies in future” (Mid Term Review Report, 2011, p. 68) providing ample political will and support.

The institute for Gross National Happiness Studies (iGNHaS): The extent to which the holistic and sustainable approach to development that aims to enhance the wellbeing of the people in relation to the nine domains of Gross National Happiness (GNH) will be determined by the extent to which independent ideas, analyses and informed opinions influence and shape policymaking in Bhutan. Therefore, the institute for Gross National Happiness Studies (iGNHaS), established as an integral part of the Royal University of Bhutan is an ideal organizational response to this situation. More importantly, women’s participation in governance and political leadership is one of the eleven thematic areas iGNHaS identified as priority research areas of research in Bhutan.

Women: At the time this project was conceived and implemented in 2014, various institutions have placed priorities in support of women’s leadership positions in Bhutan. The Royal Government of Bhutan’s 11th Five Year Plan, under the Good Governance pillar, has one of the National Key Results Area (NKRA) as ‘creating a gender friendly environment for women’s participation’, with four Key Performance Indicators (KPI), targeted towards women’s participation in elected offices including the local governments; Output 4.3 of UNDP’s “one program indicators”, highlights that, “Women and youth have increased opportunities to participate in leadership as well as in policy making, planning, and implementation of development plans”. These indicators enforces the institutions to focus on implementation of activities to achieve increased percentage of women in parliament, and percentage of elected women in local governments; The Swiss Development Cooperation’s (SDC) Local Governance Initiative and Network (LOGIN); HELVETAS’s transversal themes of gender, governance, knowledge and capacity development; The Liaison Office of Denmark’s (LOD) interest in governance and democracy are indicative of how important this issue is.
In light of the role of RUB and iGNHaS to engage in research, and the priorities set by these institutions in empowering women, this project titled, the Women’s Leadership Journeys was implemented with much curiosity and enthusiasm. The table below describes the stages of the longitudinal milestones of this research:

**Table 1: Stages of the longitudinal milestones of this research:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no</th>
<th>Program/activity/research</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Study on Improving Women’s Participation in Local Governance: An Explorative Study on Women’s Leadership Journeys in Bhutan</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Women Leadership Journeys Training</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Impact Assessment of the Training</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Local Government Elections</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Impact Assessment of the Intervention on the Intended Results</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Literature Review**

Gender equity is an unfinished business of our time. The full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women begins with the landmark declaration of 1948 (UN General Assembly, 1948). Since then, 143 countries have guaranteed equality between men and women in their constitutions as of 2014, and in 2016 the number increased to 184 (UN Women, 2019). Yet discrimination against women persists in areas of laws and policies, gender-based stereotypes, and social norms and practices (UN Women, 2019). Besides the establishment of several institutional arrangements, and commitment to research and funding, both by the international institutions as well as the national governments, gender-inclusive language guidelines were also developed. However, women represent two thirds of the 750 million illiterates globally, are found three times more than men in unpaid work, and occupy only 24% of parliamentary seats worldwide (UN Women, 2019).
Bhutan, a country that has always taken pride in being a matriarchal society, now seems to be failing its women. Special measures have comparatively advanced women’s representation in some countries, as demonstrated by the percentage of women in national parliaments in Timor-Leste (38.5%), Nepal (29.6%), Afghanistan (27.7%) and Pakistan (20.6%). In South Asia, women’s representation in national parliaments is otherwise extremely low, with the following representation in India (11.8%), Sri Lanka (5.8%) and the Maldives (5.9%), (IPU, 2015). Bhutan is among the bottom of pyramid, with only 8% and 8.3% of representatives in the upper house and lower house respectively. Correspondingly, Bhutan’s 11th Five Year Plan (2013 – 2018) has incorporated priority indicators for women’s participation in elected offices including the local governments.

Women’s leadership and political participation are restricted from the local to the global level, and face several obstacles to participate in political life. This is evident from the UN General Assembly (2011) resolution which notes that, ‘Women in every part of the world continue to be largely marginalized from the political sphere, often as a result of discriminatory laws, practices, attitudes and gender stereotypes, low levels of education, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women.” (p.2). Literature review and reports published by UN supports this statement. On the contrary, as a result of training female candidates and encouraging voters to vote for women, number of women legislators doubled in Kenya in 2003 elections. This is a good illustration that the issue of women leadership is not an intractable problem and specific, targeted support for women’s political engagement can make a real difference. Towards this end, the UN women is increasingly engaging in providing training for women political and leadership positions candidates to help build their capabilities.

If this has worked well elsewhere, why does Bhutan not do it, more precisely in the Bhutanese way? This question inspired iGNHaS to undertake a research project to explore the conditions that enables women to participate in leadership positions in Bhutan in 2013. The findings from the study revealed that
feelings of incompetency, rather than any socially accepted view that women are not as capable as men, is the reason why women do not participate in leadership positions. The study recommended that women should be empowered through training programs focusing on areas such as effective oral communication skill, knowledge and skill of Bhutanese cultural and traditional protocols, cultural competencies, mediation skills, knowledge of current issues of national concern (for example Anti-corruption Laws, the Tobacco Act, Electoral Laws, Rural Urban Migration) and knowledge of government policies, among others (Thinley, et al, 2014). Bhutan’s lack of women in government is reasonably easy to solve, unlike in other countries where challenges cited were of discriminatory laws, practices, lack of access to health care and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women (UN General Assembly, 2011). The findings of the research were so intriguing, that iGNHaS decided to implement its findings in practice.

**Methodology**

Exploratory sequential mixed method design was applied for this longitudinal research. The mixed methods research which is the integration of qualitative and quantitative data yields additional insight beyond the information provided by either the qualitative or quantitative data alone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Further, the purpose of longitudinal studies is to gather and analyse data which is quantitative, qualitative or both, on growth, change and development over time (Lavrakas, 2008). The intent and scope of this research is to engage in multiple follow-ups on the same subjects (respondents) over time to study their behavior, attitude, performance and achievements, with intervention. In this design, the findings of the 2013 research on Women’s Participation in Local Governance in Bhutan was implemented through training and advocacy programs in 2014, followed by the quantitative survey on the impact and effectiveness of the training in 2014, and followed by qualitative interviews after the 2016 Local Government Elections in 2016.
The longitudinal research is best suited for this study as it involves social inquiry with time as an important dimension of enquiry, with emerging transitions and causality (Neale, 2011). This longitudinal research spreads over a period of four years from 2013 to 2016. For the quantitative part, survey design was applied to provide numeric description of growth, trends, development, attitudes or opinions of the respondents, from the target sampling of the 34 women who participated in the Women’s Leadership Journeys Training program. Structured questionnaires were used, to address the descriptive questions. For the qualitative part, in depth interviews (to explore individual experiences and perceptions in rich details), was conducted with these participants. The questions were semi-structured open ended, non-directive, and probing. Qualitative data were collected from the same respondents used for the quantitative data, through telephone calls for 26 participants, and face-to-face interview with 8 participants. For ethical reasons, respondents who provided qualitative data are acknowledged in the presentation of results as P1, P2 and so on. Further details on the sampling, data collection, data analysis and findings are discussed in detail in the results and discussion section below.

**Results and discussion**

Stage 1: Study on Improving Women’s Participation in Local Governance: An Explorative Study on Women’s Leadership Journeys in Bhutan in 2013.

The institute for Gross National Happiness Studies (iGNHaS), Department of Research and External Relations (DRER), Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) identified eleven thematic areas of research, one of which is Women and Leadership (iGNHaS Strategic Plan, 2014). iGNHaS, soon after its establishment engaged in its first research project titled, ‘Women’s Participation in Local Governance in Bhutan’, funded by UN Women, SARO, New Delhi, and supported by UNDP Bhutan. The study was intended to see the enabling conditions for local women to participate in leadership positions. The findings of the research recommended interventions in the form of training opportunities on various
educational programs and building confidence for aspiring women candidates. The entire recommendation of the research was implemented in stage 2 below.

**Stage 2: Women Leadership Journeys Training in 2014**

iGNHaS initiated the program S-STAR (Strengthening Support to Analysis and Research) to implement the findings of the research. A documentary analysis was carried out to find out the hard facts and figures, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1: Percentage of Women representatives in the parliament in Bhutan (ECB, 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year (Election Cycle year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Women representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.2: Percentage of Women representatives in Local Government 2014 (ECB, 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positions in the Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. and Percentage of Women representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the figures above, iGNHaS argued as follows:

“While much has been said and discussed about questions concerning Bhutanese electorate and increased participation of women in leadership roles, both in the national parliament as well as in the local governance. However, a lot of what is discussed, published and informed often comes in the form of general commentaries without practical projects. Hence there is need to take-up this significant agenda seriously, through real project with impact pathways and targets set, in collaboration with people in professions that are engaged in helping and supporting women, for example,
government institutions, research institutions, policy makers, parliamentarians, Civil Society Organizations, UN systems, International and National NGOs, Election Commission of Bhutan, etc. Do we have the right answers to the serious decline of women representatives both in National Council and National Assembly from the first elections in 2008 to the second elections in 2013? Will the local government elections not repeat this scenario?”

Accordingly, iGNHaS organized several rounds of stakeholders’ consultative meetings and agreed to train 40 women (two from each district) for seven weeks. The participants were selected based on their interest and commitment to contest in the 2016 local government elections. The theme of the training was, ‘Women’s Leadership Journeys training program: ‘Me-dhey Gakid GiTswa Sheywen’, loosely translated as, ‘knowledge, the key to community happiness’. The training was conducted in partnership with Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW), and Labshey-Ngenshey (a private institution), and the program was executed in partnership with all the relevant partners. A two-pronged approach to training was designed; A class room based training program from Monday to Friday, to equip the participants with knowledge and skills required of a local government leadership; and a confidence building program where the participants make presentations and debate live on the national television on Saturdays and Sundays. This was critically designed to build the confidence of the participants to stand for election, and also to build the confidence of the general public in women’s leadership.

In-house Training: The relevant organizations/institutions, such as Bhutan National Legal Institute, Election Commission of Bhutan, Department of Local Governance, Anti-Corruption Commission, Royal Audit Authority, Anti-Corruption Commission, NCWC, and the relevant Ministries were training the participants. On-Air Shows: The participants appeared on the National TV BBS over the weekends (Saturdays and Sundays) from 5 PM to 8 PM to debate, discuss and deliberate the subjects of relevance. A total of 15 episodes were broadcast LIVE.
Stage 3: Impact Assessment of the Training in 2014

To assess the impact of the training on the participants, the feedback of the participants on the trainers and training was collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions of which four were open ended. Including the demographic data, the questionnaire addressed 17 variables. The first eight questions focused on confirming their level of agreement with the training program on three attributes. Factor analysis of the eight items was conducted to reduce the dimension of the data into one or two variables. The result of the factor analysis is presented in the following Table. Although the items were grouped into four factors, the values of the loading on factor 3 and 4 are not shown as values below 0.4 were suppressed. Since factor two had only 2 items, the factor was not considered for further analysis.

**Table 3.1: Factor analysis of the 8 items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Factor1</th>
<th>Factor2</th>
<th>Factor3</th>
<th>Factor4</th>
<th>Uniqueness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>q1</td>
<td>0.4145</td>
<td>0.5049</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.7996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q3</td>
<td>0.4339</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4768</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q5</td>
<td>0.6967</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q6</td>
<td>0.8044</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.3052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q7</td>
<td>0.5585</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.5774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q8</td>
<td>0.6986</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Blanks represent abs (loading)<.4)

Since the 6 items correspond to quality of training, a new variable using simple aggregation method of the six items was created. In order to check the internal consistency of the items grouped in factor 1, reliability test of the items was conducted. The test showed Cronbach's alpha of 0.75 indicating a high reliability. The inter items covariance of the 6 items were also conducted to test the relationship between the items.
Table 3.2: Cronbach’s alpha of the 6 items

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average inter item covariance:</td>
<td>0.492432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of items in the scale:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale reliability coefficient:</td>
<td>0.7465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A summary of the new variables on quality of training was conducted. Since the maximum attainable is 5, the mean of 4.9 is high indicating the quality of training was very high. This can be further validated through the frequency tables on each question which is provided as Annexure. The standard deviation is 0.25 indicating that the quality of training ranged between 4.40 and 5 at 95% confidence level.

Table 3.3: Summary statistics of quality of training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>obs</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tra</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>4.892157</td>
<td>.2568297</td>
<td>3.333333</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of variance was conducted to see if the quality of training differed among the training in the opinion of the participants. One-way ANOVA was conducted and the resulted in the shown in the following Table. The p value is less than .05 indicating that there is difference in perception among the trainers and the training module.

Table 3.4: ANOVA for the trainer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis of Variance</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>ss</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Prob &gt; F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1.1520158</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.230402516</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.0028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>8.87413152</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>.060368242</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10.0261441</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>.065961474</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The summary statistics of quality of training by Trainer and the Topic is given in the following Table. Although the significance level is in the acceptable region, the difference on closer inspection is not much. The average score for the trainers is above 4.7 indicating high quality of training. It may also be worth noting that the minim for DLG and NEWC is 3.33. On the whole it may be concluded that
the overall quality of training, according to the participants was excellent given that the overall average is 4.8 and the lowest average for a trainer or the topic is 4.7.

**Table 3.5 Quality of Training by stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trainer</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Std</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan Opportunity and Information Centre &amp; Ministry of labor and Human Resources</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzongkha Development Commission</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Culture</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Local Governance &amp; National Commission for Women and Children</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iGNHaS &amp; LorigMunsel</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.6 Quality of training by topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Row Labels</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Std</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National and International Policies and Programs</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience, Employment and Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labshey Nyenshey skills (Comprehension)</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The impact assessment indicated that the training program was timely, relevant and functional, and that the participants are, as a consequence, better educated, highly motivated and have the required confidence to contest in the upcoming local government elections in 2016.
Stage 4: Local Government Elections 2016

The Local Government (LG) Elections was held in two phases (January 2016 and September 2016). The first and the second phases of election called for 1499 posts for various local government positions. A total of 3391 candidates contested the elections, from which, 1439 contestants have been elected. The results of the elected positions show that 65% were men elects, and 35% were female elects. Out of the 492 women who contested, only 164 won the elections, as compared to 1275 men elected out of 2900 contestants. The details of the election results are illustrated in table 4 below:

Table 4: Second Local Government Election results (ECB, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male Elected</th>
<th>Female Elected</th>
<th>Total positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gup</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangmi</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gewog Tshogpa</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrompon</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thromde Tshogpas</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thromde Ngotshabs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few months after the elections, in December 2016, a qualitative in-depth interview (to explore individual experiences and perceptions in rich details with semi-structured open ended, non-directive, and probing was conducted to investigate the performance of women contestants in the elections. Given the complex phenomenon, broad questions, and diverse background of the respondents, requiring different forms of exploration and measurement, a qualitative inductive approach was designed, to address the social constructivism philosophical perspective (Mertens, 2014).
Stage 5: Impact assessment of the intervention on the intended results in 2016

In the second Local Government Elections (2016) a total of 113795 female voters and 110892 male voters turned out to vote. There were around 3000 more female voters than male voters. A total of 3391 participants contested against 1499 seats. However, 1439 candidates have been elected, since there was negative voting in ten seats. This is a scenario, where a lone candidate is received a greater number of ‘no’ votes (Election Commission of Bhutan, 2016)

In the first local government elections held in 2011, 166 women contested in the LG elections, out of which 76 were elected (Election Commission of Bhutan, 2011). Where as in the second Local government elections 492 women contested, out of which 164 were elected. It is evident that the number of women who contested in the Second LG Elections increased by three times, and the number of women who were elected increased by more than two times, as compared to the first LG Elections held in 2011. The survey reveals that the interventions provided, particularly that of the Women’s Leadership Journeys’ programme had created an impact both on the voters as well as on the voted. The multi-perspective findings were recorded as follows:

Thirty-four (34) Women who attended the Women’s Leadership Journeys, confirmed that they were feeling highly competent after attending the training to stand and compete with the men competitors, and that they voted for women candidates who were contesting for any other positions in the Local Government functionary, as against men competitors. About 20 respondents (more than half of the respondents) claimed that they campaigned, supported and voted for Women candidates, considering the national effort to increase the participation of Women in elected office. The training programs run by iGNHaS is an effort to change the mindset of the voters and recommended similar programs to be implemented on a continual basis. About 30% (10 respondents) claimed that women do not support
women, and that until females begin understanding their need to support each other, ‘politics will be a male dominated arena’.

The data analysis was done based on data-driven emerging themes. One of the most intriguing themes that emerged from the interview was the significant success of the current women leaders. The respondents (P1, P5, P6, P11, P12, P18) questioned, that the future success and succession of Women in leadership will depend significantly on how the current batch of Women in leadership positions deliver. Are these Women capable of delivery, and an example for upcoming and future Women leadership? If so, the inspiration and political culture for Women is being built on a stronger foundation. If not, why even discuss empowering Women.

Further, some respondents (P4, P23, P31, P33) feel that the nature of women having to engage in household matters, including caring for children hinders their commitment and confidence to deliver while serving in leadership positions. While there are no studies done on the effectiveness, challenges and opportunities, and barriers of women versus men leadership, Appelbaum (2003) states that women leaders are more considerate, transformative, participative, socio-expressive and people oriented, while men leaders are generally structural, authoritative, transactional, instruction giving and business oriented.

Some respondents even cited the lack of support from the men leadership towards women leadership. Men leaders and management in big organizations as well as in political environment believe that women do not fit the image of the ideal leader (P11). However, several studies suggest that there is no difference between women and men leadership (Ciolac, 2013; Powel, 1990). Therefore, it would be worth taking up a separate study on this believe and see if it exists in the Bhutanese social fabric?

Conclusion

The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Index ranks Bhutan at a mere 132 out of 144 countries, with a political empowerment index of only 0.056, where a score denoting parity is 1 (Cited in IPU, 2015). Indeed, women’s representation
is only 8% and 8.3% in the National Council and National Assembly respectively. A mere 11.5% of representatives in local government elected offices are women.

With the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, governments unanimously agreed that advancing women’s political participation and representation is crucial for delivering on the SDGs. In recognition of the limited number of women in political leadership, the government, through the NCWC has developed “Bhutan’s National Plan of Action for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Elected Office” (NPAPGEO) through a process of broad stakeholder consultations. The question is, is this enough? While this may enhance women leadership friendly programs and budgeting, this is yet another bureaucratic argument for women’s participation. Through the entire project, from conducting research, to providing training and educational programs, to participation process, and evaluation, what is missing is a stronger, more ethical one that; 1. Women are entitled to take part in leadership by virtue of being human; 2. Harnessing the capabilities of women in all regards, including but not limited to leadership, is good for the country as a whole?

Therefore, it is all the more relevant for higher institutions like the Royal University of Bhutan to engage in research and promote women’s leadership journeys in Bhutan. It is evident from this study that such interventions have significant influence on increased women participation in elected positions. The emphasis, however, must be more on election cycles, and not a one-time intervention as run-up to the elections. It may be noted, that the very foundation of upcoming and aspiring Women for leadership positions both in elected positions as well as in public service, depends largely on how the current batch of Women in leadership positions deliver. In addition, research institutions such as the Royal University of Bhutan should conduct research on a stronger, more ethical element in our own social fabric that harness the capabilities of women in all regards.
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Compassion in the Bhutanese Gross National Happiness (GNH) Infused Classrooms

Jambay Lhamo, Judith Miller, Brenda Wolodko and Anne-Marie Morgan

Abstract

There is a growing interest in research on the role of compassion in the fields of positive psychology and social psychology. Compassion in the educational setting is focused on well-being and relationship-based approaches to support students to flourish academically, emotionally and socially. This paper is a review of compassion in the literature and provides a foreground of future research on compassion in the Bhutanese classroom. It also presents a discussion on compassion in relation to benefits for self and others, compassion fatigue and self-compassion. More importantly, this paper provides a deeper understanding of the role of compassion in education in building the teaching-learning process and foregrounds the need for further investigation into compassionate teaching and learning for a range of school-based curriculum subjects.

Key Words: compassion fatigue, self-compassion, well-being, education.

Introduction

Compassion is one of the core values of Bhutan’s developmental philosophy called ‘Gross National Happiness’. It is a concept that is deeply rooted in Bhutanese society and a fundamental principle of Buddhism. In fact, the cultivation of compassion into Bhutanese society as a Buddhist nation has stemmed from the ancient wisdom of Bhutan’s historic legal code of 1629 (The GNH Centre Bhutan, 2019) which was established by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Most importantly, the constitution of Bhutan (article 9: Section 20) emphasises the need to create a compassionate society. It reads:
The State shall strive to create conditions that will enable the true and sustainable development of a good and compassionate society rooted in Buddhist ethos and universal human values. (Government of Bhutan, 2008, p. 20)

The extent to which Bhutan’s aspiration to become a compassionate society will depend on the knowledge, capability and character of its citizens. This requires a system of education that empowers citizens to become compassionate (Zangley Dukpa, 2016). This paper, therefore, provides an outline of the construct ‘Compassion’ from a range of literature to provide a deeper understanding of this concept and its relevance in the educational setting.

Inspired by the UNESCO’s vision-mission of “Peace for Development and Development for Peace”, a non-profit organisation called Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) was created as a follow-up to the 44th Session of the ICE (International Conference on Education in Geneva, in October 1994) (UNESCO, 1998). The purpose is to promote and develop international education and values education for peace, human rights, democracy, and sustainable development through networking and cooperation among individuals, groups and institutions working on these fields in the Asia Pacific and the rest of the world (UNESCO, 1998).

UNESCO-APNIEVE emphasises the importance of living together through caring for each other and sharing. It stresses quality relationships at all levels through the integration of contemporary and traditional humanistic values in education in the development of the whole person. In view of the vision of UNESCO-APNIEVE, it is critical that in the 21st Century, education has a fundamental role to play in personal and social development. Achieving this vision will require participatory teaching and learning methods that focus on the values, attitudes and behaviours that enable individuals to live together harmoniously and make decisions in a collaborative way. In 2010, the Ministry of Education of Bhutan implemented ‘Educating for Gross National Happiness’ (EGNH) programme with
the aim of infusing GNH values into the teachers and students of Bhutan and create
GNH inspired classroom. Discussing the importance of integrating values into the
education system, the Ministry of Education of Bhutan (2014) stresses:

There is a need to scale up support to schools in integrating values in
curricular and extracurricular contexts in the development of student
responsibility, social skills, resilience and well-being. This will help in
personal development of students through the inculcating values and well-
being in education. It is a common belief that character is the most ‘precious
gift of education’ that is essentially shaped and built through values
education (p.84).

The focus on EGNH in schools is both on pedagogy and curriculum as well
as extra-curricular programmes (Kezang Sherab, Maxwell & Cooksey, 2016). The
role of pedagogical practices in developing enabling social environments that have
the strongest influence on students’ cognitive and emotional engagements is
essential for students’ deeper learning (Pietarinen, Soini & Pyhalto, 2014). Such
positive social learning environments allow learners to flourish by feeling safe,
secure and valued to participate in classroom activities with increased well-
being (O’Brien & Blue, 2017).

Discussing the importance of creating an enabling social environment for
learners, Hart (2004) posits the view of a compassionate classroom as a non-
threatening environment where students feel they belong by sharing ideas and
opinions and interacting in social and intellectual ways without fear. This kind of
classroom is founded on the principle of a quality relationship that exists between
the teacher and students. Compassion is at the heart of this quality relationship
(Day, 2004).

Teachers have an important role to play in nurturing a quality relationship
with students (Boorn et al. 2010) and the quality of what teachers know and can
do, and how they do it, has the greatest impact on student learning (Fitzgerald &
Smith, 2016). The compassionate teacher develops a true understanding of the
students (Choden, 2003; Miller, 1981). The genuine feeling is associated with concern for students’ suffering and, as such, desires to enhance students’ welfare and well-being are developed by building positive relationships (Bankard, 2015).

The positive relationship establishes conditions for optimal learning by fostering an environment of safety, trust and respect (Kauffman, 2013). The caring attitude of the teacher nourishes an emotionally safe learning environment by building trust and respect. This kind of learning environment safely opens students’ hearts and minds to learning and growth where academic excellence thrives (Feldman, 2006; Glaser, 2005; Weaver & Wilding, 2013).

The following section of the paper starts with the definitions of compassion from various perspectives. This is followed by the benefits of compassion particularly in relation to the teaching-learning process. Finally, the paper provides recommendations for the way forward for cultivating compassion into Bhutanese classrooms.

**What is compassion?**

The value of compassion is recognised in many parts of society. Most of the world's religious traditions place compassion, as a humanistic value, at the centre of their belief systems. International professional bodies in healthcare, education and the justice system also accentuate the importance of compassion, drawing on similar understandings of the term in relation to an emotional response (Strauss et al., 2016). Scholars from a variety of disciplines including nursing and education have shown an interest in compassion research that has led to a dramatic increase in research focused on compassion over the last decade.

The word ‘compassion’ comes from the Latin ‘compati’, meaning ‘to suffer with’ (Gilbert, 2015). Compassion is a fundamental tenet of Buddhist philosophy and Buddhist perspectives on compassion have been given greater prominence in the psychology literature (Strauss et al., 2016). Compassion in the Buddhist sense means a motivation to take responsibility to alleviate the suffering of others (Dalai
Compassion is known by the term ‘Karuna’ in Sanskrit (Augustine & Wayne, 2019), and ‘Nyinjay’ in Dzongkha (Dorji Wangchuk, 2018) which is generally understood as a wish for all living beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2003) compassion is the wish for another being to be free from suffering. It is a wish for the well-being of another. Compassion is also referred to as a feeling of concern that arises in oneself when confronted with the suffering of others, generating a feeling of motivation to relieve that suffering (Keltner & Goetz, 2007; Kimble & Bamforde-Wade, 2013). Furthermore, compassion is also described as an inner resource to connect with others (Tierney et al., 2017; Von Dietze & Orb, 2000).

Other definitions of compassion have broad agreement with a multiset of components that is comprised of a combination of cognitive, affective and motivational components (Gilbert, 2015; Goetz et al., 2010; Jazaieri, 2018; Lazarus, 1991; Lilius et al., 2011; Strauss et al., 2016). The cognitive dimension relates to noticing the suffering of others. The affective component is the empathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by others’ suffering. The motivational dimension is described by the responsiveness or readiness to ease others’ suffering. Thus, the term compassion refers to the ability to notice or witness the suffering of others, that motivates a subsequent desire to help or act. Noticing involves awareness and consciousness. This insight is confirmed by the words of Miller (1981), who states “compassion is a state of consciousness in which benevolence is primary and where a state of grace is established within ourselves” (p. 14).

Compassion involves not just alleviating others’ immediate suffering but also to prevent future suffering in order to thrive and flourish (Gilbert, 2015). The term ‘suffering’ refers to a wide range of unpleasant subjective experiences and
emotions including: emotional pain; psychological distress; hardship; and, existential anguish (Driver, 2007). The complex multidimensional construct of compassion reveals that compassion is basically a caring motive that requires competencies like: awareness; intention; empathy; sympathy; generosity; openness; courage; distress tolerance; persistence; and, commitment to release the sufferings of others (Castano, 2012; Choden, 2003; Dalai Lama, 2003; Strauss et al., 2016).

**Benefits of compassion**

A good number of studies have shown that compassionate people experience a wide range of positive emotions themselves, including love, joy, gratitude, hope, warm-heartedness, lower stress, and less worry (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Jazaieri et al., 2013). These positive emotions and effects are linked to an increase in a variety of inner resources including mindfulness, healthy relationships with others, and self-acceptance. These findings indicate that compassion is an extremely valuable and indeed necessary skill for teachers, to foster healthy relationships, and to be able to observe and, act on ameliorating students’ needs (broadly ‘suffering’, but in an educational context the learning students need to engage with), and to create a classroom environment that will be more conducive for students’ learning. Unless the teachers feel what their student is going through, it is difficult to connect and understand students’ needs (Hanson & Mendius, 2009). Similarly, a study carried out by a Bhutanese teacher educator, Sonam Rinchen (2014) revealed that it is imperative for the teachers to acquire skills to understand the emotions experienced by the students in order to create a positive emotional classroom, conducive for students’ learning.

Teaching is a profession that presents many opportunities for the teacher to practice, teach and model compassion (Albrecht, 2018; Kernochan et al., 2016). Compassion can be integrated while teaching and interacting with the students. For example, when the teacher engages in compassionate listening, students feel heard, validated, and understood. Compassionate listening implies listening to
students with the capacity to acknowledge their sufferings (Kimble & Bamforde-Wade, 2013). It is a way of hearing in which the teacher is fully present with what is happening in the moment without trying to control or judge (Jambay Lhamo, 2018; Kimble & Bamforde-Wade, 2013). Jazaieri (2018) describes compassionate listening as listening with undivided attention and without interruptions. Compassionate listening is at the heart of every communication and helps the teacher to connect and develop a positive relationship with the students (Kimble & Bamforde-Wade, 2013; Pianta et al., 2014).

Furthermore, a compassionate teacher has prosocial behaviour and intends to create a prosocial classroom (Bankard, 2015). ‘Prosocial behaviour’ is generally understood and defined as voluntary behaviour that benefits others or promotes harmonious relations with others (Bergina et al., 2003). The study conducted by Leiberg et al. (2011) concludes that the cultivation of compassion through loving-kindness meditation (LKM) significantly increased participants prosocial behaviour. Their findings support the connection between enhanced feelings of compassion and increased prosocial behaviour.

In recent times, students’ well-being has generated increasing international concern and is now widely viewed as integral to education. There is a growing interest in research on how the education system contributes to promoting students’ development and quality of life when student well-being is incorporated into education policy (Anderson & Graham, 2015; Bradley et al., 2018; De Jong, 2007; Engels et al., 2004; Sangay Jamtsho, 2017; Van Petegem et al., 2007). ‘Well-being’ is generally understood as a positive emotional state that is the result of a harmony between the sum of specific context factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectation towards the school on the other hand (Engels et al., 2004). Well-being is further described, and in reference to the Bhutanese context, as a quality of life, characterised by sound health, peace of mind, positive relationships, prosperity and contentment (Sangay Jamtsho, 2017).
Interestingly, most of the research studies revealed that the well-being of students in the classroom is largely dependent on the teacher. The kind of relationship the students have with their teacher influences student well-being. The study carried out by Van Petegem et al. (2006), for example, suggests that a teacher who is perceived by students as helpful, friendly and supportive contributes to increasing students' well-being through a positive relationship.

A number of longitudinal studies provide evidence that a teacher’s supportive relationship with students has positive effects on primary school students’ behavioural and academic adjustments (Curby et al., 2009; Hagenauer et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2012; Meehan et al., 2003). Empirical research has begun to show further support for this claim (Bradley et al., 2018; Engels et al., 2004). Students who are not emotionally well regulated have a higher tendency towards developing disruptive behaviours, and they are in the greatest need of a supportive relationship with their teacher. Teacher’s genuine care and concern for their diverse students is necessary for students to succeed academically as well as socially and emotionally (McAllister & Irvine, 2016; Kinzang Lhendup et al., 2018).

Teachers well-being is also noted as a significant factor in cultivating students well-being. Research suggests that socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone for positive and supportive relationships between teachers and students. These supportive relationships promote students’ well-being and learning, with teachers more attuned to assessing students’ emotional and learning needs (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Similarly, Kidger et al. (2009) assert that when a teacher’s emotional health is in jeopardy, the ability to support and respond to students appropriately is reduced. One such phenomenon that is most likely to affect teacher’s emotional health is ‘compassion fatigue’.
Compassion fatigue

The term compassion fatigue was first used in the literature in 1992 in the United States by a registered nurse, Carla Joinson. In the nursing literature, it was initially referred to as a unique form of burnout that affected the caregivers and resulted in a loss of the ability to nurture, due to physical and emotional exhaustion (Ledoux, 2015).

Compassion fatigue can grow through the stress of wanting, but not being able, to help individuals in distress (Figley, 1999). This could suggest that teachers who are working with traumatised students may be more at risk of developing compassion fatigue. Similarly, Robinson (2005) warns that compassion fatigue may be a growing concern within the school settings as the teachers are more likely to encounter traumatised students on a regular basis. Koenig, Rodger and Specht (2017) describe compassion fatigue in educators as the natural emotional and behavioural reactions stemming from exposure to students who are experiencing a traumatic event, combined with the stress caused by the desire to help the traumatised students.

Teachers with compassion fatigue are reported to feel a loss of control, empathy and responsibility (Hoffman & Palladino, 2007). These unpleasant experiences and emotions cause suffering and negatively impact teachers as well as student motivation and attitude towards learning (Koenig et al., 2017). This can finally rob classrooms of caring and committed educators. With reduced capacity for compassion, teachers with compassion fatigue may not be able to relieve the suffering of their students. More importantly, if left unrecognised and untreated, compassion fatigue can lead to serious health outcomes.

Self-compassion

To alleviate one’s suffering and heal oneself with kindness, Neff (2003) discusses a powerful inner resource termed ‘Self-compassion’. ‘Self-compassion’ is defined as extending compassion towards self when faced with the experience of suffering.
It involves opening to and embracing one’s own suffering; not avoiding or disconnecting from it (Neff, 2003). It is an ability to be aware of one’s own pain and suffering and generating a desire to alleviate one’s suffering (Neff & McGehee, 2010). The vast majority of research on self-compassion has been carried out using the Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) developed by Kristin Neff in 2003, which assesses trait levels of self-compassion.

Self-compassion is found to have a direct association with the individual’s emotional well-being. For example, studies have shown that higher scores on the Self-Compassion Scale have been associated with greater levels of happiness, optimism, life satisfaction, body appreciation, perceived competence, and motivation (Neff & Germer, 2017). Similarly, the research conducted by Beaumont et al., (2016) in the United Kingdom has revealed that student counsellors and student cognitive behavioural psychotherapists with higher levels of self-compassion experience greater well-being and reduced burnout.

Self-compassion is also related to lower levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and fear of failure (Finlay-Jones et al., 2015). Furthermore, the study conducted by Neff and Vonk (2009) revealed that self-compassion is reported to make individuals feel better about their abilities and is associated with more stability in feelings of state ‘Self-worth’. It is interesting to note that self-compassion also nurtures one’s ability to support and encourage interpersonal trust. For instance, research has found that college students with higher levels of self-compassion tend to have more compassionate goals in relationship with friends and roommates (Crocker & Park, 2004).

Studies have revealed that self-compassion can be used as a coping strategy to mitigate the prevalence and levels of compassion fatigue (Beaumont et al., 2016; Finlay-Jones et al., 2015; Upton, 2018). More importantly, self-compassion has the ability to promote emotional self-regulation and increase teachers sense of well-being as well as their capacity to manage classroom behaviour by maintaining supportive relationships with students.
Compassion and Education for Gross National Happiness (EGNH)

The nation-wide reform initiative called Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) was launched in the year 2009 by the Ministry of Education in Bhutan. EGNH was primarily aimed at encouraging schools in Bhutan to teach GNH values and principles in the classroom, and through both curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The essential idea was to make teachers GNH minded. The reform initiative was focused on infusing GNH values, including compassion into their everyday teaching in the classroom and more importantly, promote a GNH inspired learning environment for the students. GNH inspired learning environment allows the teacher to model compassion to students and encourage students to be compassionate. Kezang Sherab (2013) advocates the importance of teachers to consciously model good practices to communicate a wide range of GNH values including compassion to their students in the form of the hidden curriculum. Furthermore, the findings of the study (Kinzang Lhendup et al., 2018) have revealed that Bhutanese teachers play a critical role in developing compassion in students by being positive role models.

The teaching profession allows teachers to model compassion to the students and with each other (Jazaieri, 2018). In the words of Goleman (1996):

There is perhaps no subject where the quality of the teacher matters so much, since how a teacher handles her class is in itself a model, a de facto lesson in emotional competence – or the lack thereof. Whenever a teacher responds to one student, twenty or thirty others learn a lesson. (p. 279)

When a teacher practices and models compassion in the classroom, staffroom and schoolyard, positive interactions are experienced (Kezang Sherab, Maxwell, & Cooksey, 2016), supported with genuine care (Castano, 2012), and there is the demonstration of respect for each other (Conklin, 2008). This kind of learning environment not only support students’ academic achievements but, most importantly, it encourages students to cultivate compassion in themselves. This indicates that compassionate teachers are needed more than ever to cultivate
compassionate values in students to realise the vision of a GNH-infused education system to create a compassionate Bhutanese society.

The insight of GNH-infused education system resonates well with the Bhutanese researcher Kezang Sherab (2013), who argued that the ultimate goal of EGNH in Bhutan is to produce school graduates who understand the interconnected nature of reality, without excessive desires, and being compassionate to all beings. Other scholars, outside the Bhutan context, echo the importance of compassion in educating children. For instance, Miller (1981) argued that compassion is a basic source for a child’s development, and should be included in every teacher’s repertoire.

While much educational research has been conducted on the Bhutanese education system and EGNH, (for example Deki C Gyamtso, Kezang Sherab, Maxwell, & Boylan, 2017; Kezang Sherab, 2013; Kezang Sherab et al., 2016; Pema Tshomo, 2016; Schuelka & Maxwell, 2016), there is a paucity of research focused on compassionate teaching and learning of any curriculum subject in the classroom and its influence on positive student-teacher relationship through an increased well-being of the teacher and student. Studies on these topics might help in informing how education plays a role to build compassionate citizens that would ultimately help to achieve the national aspiration of creating a compassionate society and achieving GNH.

**Recommendations for cultivating compassion in the classroom**

It is evident from the various literature that compassion is a necessary skill for the teachers in making learning more enriching and meaningful in the classroom. In Bhutan, EGNH emphasises that cultivating GNH values and principles including compassion in students has the aim of producing a GNH graduate. In order to achieve this objective, a teacher’s role in the lives of the students remains critical.

Embodying the skill of compassion helps teachers to reach out to students with compassionate acts. Kezang Sherab (2013) argued that if teachers need to
teach GNH values to students, it is critical that teachers initiate a more in-depth analysis through critical reflection and discourse on their own values. Similarly, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck spoke to teacher educators of Bhutan on leading by example,

“… You cannot tell children to be strong if you are not strong yourself. If you don’t know anything about the subject that you are teaching how much of it are you going to give to your students, you cannot give what you do not have …” (Bhutan Broadcasting Service of Bhutan (BBS), 2014).

This is a powerful insight that invites all the stakeholders responsible for providing education in Bhutan to contemplate on how to encourage teachers to become compassionate if they are to cultivate compassion in the students. Having understood the importance of a teacher’s role in cultivating compassion in students, the following recommendations might help inform the way forward:

- Research on compassion in Bhutan will contribute to the understanding of the status of compassionate classroom teaching and learning process.

- The Ministry of Education in Bhutan could design evidence-based professional learning programmes for teachers and students related to compassion to raise teacher’s self-efficacy for integrating compassion with a special focus on classroom practices.

- Teacher education colleges may offer programmes and courses related to compassionate pedagogy in the classroom.

- Finally, the Royal Education Council (REC) of Bhutan can consider integrating compassion related subject matter into the curriculum across all levels without any impact on the content and time of the specific school subject.
Conclusion

The construct ‘compassion’ is already deeply ingrained in Bhutanese society. The national aspiration of creating a compassionate society is enshrined in the constitution of Bhutan. However, there is a paucity of research on how this national aspiration could be achieved through education. Therefore, work that is more empirical is needed to examine how and what Bhutan is doing to create a compassionate society in realizing the national goals of GNH.

Research on compassion in various settings particularly in the education sector might help the relevant organizations to initiate and design professional programmes for the teachers in the classroom. This is because teachers need compassionate pedagogy and self-care to make teaching and learning in the classroom more effective. Moreover, pre-service teachers need pedagogy infused with compassion to become compassionate teachers. This will ultimately contribute to achieving the national aspiration of creating a compassionate society in fulfilling the goals of GNH.
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Anne-Marie is Professor and Dean of the College of Arts, Society and Education at James Cook University. Previously Head of School of Education at the University of New England, she has over 25 years’ experience in educating teachers and has a deep and active interest in the work and wellbeing of teachers. Her research and publication interests include languages, literacy, social sciences and arts education. She is currently lead investigator of an Australian Research Council project on languages education in the early years and is contracted by the Australian Government to develop a National Languages Education Plan and Strategy.
Investigating Grade Nine Students’ Preferred Learning Styles Using a Kolb’s Model

Dumcho Wangdi, Sonam Tshomo, Pema Choden and Pem Tshomo

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate grade nine students’ preferred learning styles based on the Kolb’s model. A Learning Style Inventory adapted from the Kolb’s model of learning was administered to 201 students selected through maximum variation sampling method. The students’ preferred learning styles were categorized into four learning styles namely i) accommodator, ii) diverger, iii) assimilator and iv) converger by calculating their mean and standard deviation. An ANOVA test and Scheffe multiple comparisons were performed to examine the relationships between the students’ preferred learning styles and their grade as well as gender. The results indicated that a majority of male grade 9 students preferred assimilator learning style (M=3.37; SD=1.13) while the female students’ preferred diverger learning style (M=3.49; SD=1.18). An independent samples t-test revealed that there was a statistically significant mean difference between male (M=30.29: SD=4.99) and female (M=32.58; SD=5.16) students for only accommodator learning style (p=.002) at .05 significance level. An analysis of variance showed that there was a statistically significant difference between students’ preferred learning styles. A post-hoc analysis using Scheffe multiple comparison indicated that the mean score of accommodators was significantly different from diverger, assimilator and converger learning styles. However, the mean score of diverger did not differ significantly from assimilator and converger while the mean score of assimilators did not differ with converger learning style.

Key words: Kolb’s model, learning style, grade nine, learning style inventory
Introduction
All students learn but not all of them learn in the same way (Novin, Arjomand, & Jourdan, 2003). For learning the same concept, some students may prefer listening or reading while others may learn better through reasoning or discovering through a hands-on experience. Within that complex social environment – the classroom, many of the mechanisms by which the students learn are still unknown to us. A plethora of learning style studies assert that there is an involvement of complex physiological, psychological and social processes in every learning situation.

One significant learning model proposed by Kolb (1984) is a well-known theory, which proclaims that learning occurs from our experiences of life through ‘reflective observations’. He believes that the effective learning is observed when the learner progresses through a cycle of four stages namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation of such experiences.

While Kolb’s learning cycle has gained critical acclaim in exploring the preferred learning styles of the students and in developing appropriate learning opportunities, there is no study conducted to explore the students’ preferred learning styles based on the Kolb’s model in the Bhutanese school settings. This research was therefore, designed to fill this gap of literature by investigating the preferred learning styles of grade nine students based on the Kolb’s model. By identification of their lesser preferred learning styles and strengthening them through the application of the experiential learning cycle, the students would be facilitated to perform better in their academics.

Research objectives
This study was guided by the following objectives:

i) Investigate the preferred learning styles of grade nine students using Kolb’s model.
ii) Examine the relationship of students’ preferred learning styles based on gender.

Literature Review

Learning Styles

Each learner has individual needs and characteristics because of their different prior knowledge, cognitive abilities, learning styles and motivation (Graf, 2007). Such individual differences are crucial that it has a bearing on their learning process and preferences. All students learn but they all learn in a different way. These different ways of learning referred to as learning styles (Novin et al., 2003) thus, influences the learners in perceiving and processing the information.

Recent educational studies have emphasized the significance of discovering and understanding the preferred learning styles of the learners. Knowing the preferred learning styles can be beneficial in terms of employing methods that can further improve the rate and quality of learning. When the teaching style does not match with their learning styles, the learners find it challenging to adjust with the dominant kind of learning style they possess. However, learning is much easier and efficient if the learning styles of students are incorporated in the learning environment (Graf, 2007). On the contrary, learning styles which are not supported by the learning environment may experience problems in the learning process (Felder & Brent, 2005).

Kolb’s Experiential Learning Style

One of the most influential learning style in the field of education is Kolb’s experiential learning style. A typical presentation of Kolb's learning model is conceived as a four-stage cycle (see Figure 1). Kolb’s model considers concrete experience as the basis for observations and reflections (Baker, Robinson, & Kolb, 2012). These observations are used to form abstract concepts and generalizations, which further becomes the basis for testing implementations of concepts in new
situations. Testing implementations results in concrete experience, which closes the learning cycle.

Kolb's learning model comprises of four learning styles: a) diverging, b) assimilating, c) converging and d) accommodating (Joy & Kolb, 2009; Kolb & Kolb, 2005, 2008).

**a) Diverging (feeling and watching)**

Divergent learners prefer to watch rather than do but use imaginations to solve problems. Being sensitive, they view concrete situations from several different perspectives and viewpoints. Divergent learners are better in situations that needs generation of ideas, brainstorming or gathering information. Such learners prefer to work in teams, listen with an open mind and accept personal feedback.
b) **Assimilating** *(watching and thinking)*

The learners with an assimilating preference are guided with logical and concise approach of solving things. They are interested more on ideas and concepts than people. Such learners are attracted to logically sound theories than approaches based in practical workings.

c) **Converging** *(doing and thinking)*

The learners with a converging learning style can solve problems or use their learning to find solutions to solve practical issues. They prefer technical tasks over social or interpersonal matters. Such learners are fond of experimenting with new ideas and work with practical applications.

d) **Accommodating** *(doing and feeling)*

The Accommodating learning style is ‘hands-on,’ and relies on intuition rather than logic. These people use other people's analysis, and prefer to take a practical, experiential approach. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans. They employ less of logical analysis because they depend on others for information. Accommodator refers to a person who favors Concrete Experiencing and Active Experimentation learning dimensions (i.e., a person who prefers to perceive information from feeling and process it by doing) (Novin et al., 2003).

*Educational Implications of Learning Styles*

Learning styles research has given educators new directions in redesigning the classrooms to better meet the needs of the students. One effective way to do so is by learning about different learning styles. The more teachers understand their students learning styles, the better they can be at helping them learners. The teachers can be able to create learning activities to suit their students’ preferred learning styles only if they really know about how their learners learn (Novin et al., 2003; Buaraphan, 2015).
Kolb’s (1984) learning model is largely employed in education to critically evaluate the learning provision typically available to students and to develop more appropriate learning opportunities. It allows the classrooms to be open to more than one approach to intellectual work. With such constructivist student-centered approach-based model, any activities designed and carried out in the classrooms are in ways that engages each learner in the manner that suits them best. In such situations, students can be substantially helped to learn more effectively by the identification of their lesser preferred learning styles and strengthening the dominantly preferred learning style.

When individual differences in perceiving and processing information is not considered using the learning approach they prefer, at any one point in time the students in a class may experience some amount of discomfort, disinterest, or anxiety (Felder & Spurlin, 2005; Novin et al., 2003). Students who face difficulty in learning may give up on putting efforts for learning and thus become so disenchanted and failure-prone (Novin et al., 2003). But once the teacher master the ways to appeal to the needs of all learners, it can not only improve the learning environment but can also help in boosting the confident of the learners by making the learning easy. Teaching and learning process can be dialogic and communal including a variety of active learning techniques (Montgomery & Groat, 1998). In general, the application of learning styles in education has been to improve the immediate and long term results of general teaching-learning episodes (Curry, 1990).

Methodology

Sampling

Using a maximum variation sampling method, 201 (male=87, female=114) grade nine students studying in one of the higher secondary schools in western Bhutan were involved in this study.
Instruments

The data was gathered using the Learning Style Inventory modified into Likert scale-based items. The Kolb learning style inventory is an instrument ‘designed to measure the degree to which individuals display different learning styles’ (Joy & Kolb, 2009). The inventory required the respondents to rank four sentence endings corresponding to the four learning modes – accommodator, diverger, assimilator and converger.

Data collection and analysis

Following proper research procedures and clearance such as seeking approval from the head of the school to conduct the study, the participating students were asked to complete the informed consents forms on a voluntary basis. The students were made to respond to the items included in the Kolb’s learning inventory designed in the Likert scale format. The items were rated as ‘never’, ‘rarely’, ‘sometimes’, ‘often’ and ‘always’ corresponding to the scores as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The data obtained from the study was analysed using a descriptive statistic such as finding the mean, and standard deviations for each learning styles in terms of gender and grades. The relationship between students’ learning styles based on their grade levels and genders were examined using the one-way analysis of variance and t-tests. The mean difference between students’ preferred learning styles based on their grades were also tested using the Scheffe multiple comparisons at the statistical significance level of .05.

Results and Discussions

The results of this study are presented into two sections: 1) grade nine students preferred learning styles using a Kolb’s learning model and 2) relationship between students’ preferred learning styles with their grades and gender.
Grade nine students preferred learning styles using a Kolb’s learning model

The values reflected in the Table 1 indicate the means and standard deviations of the students’ preferred learning styles. The findings indicated that a majority of male grade 9 students preferred assimilator learning style (M=3.37; SD=1.13) over accommodator (M=3.03; SD=1.04), diverger (M=3.36; SD=1.14) and converger (M=3.27; SD=1.11) learning styles. The female students were inclined more towards diverger (M=3.49; SD=1.18) kind of learning styles over accommodator (M=3.04; SD=1.05), assimilator (M=3.33; SD=1.14) and converger (M=3.36; SD=1.13). This finding was in keeping with the study by Morris (2010) which conducted with 123 students in Nebraska, Lincoln. The female students specifically preferred the diverging learning style than males (Morris, 2010).

Table 1: Students’ preferred learning styles based on Kolb’s learning model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Accommodator</th>
<th>Diverger</th>
<th>Assimilator</th>
<th>Converger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dissimilarities in the mean score of different learning styles for both the gender highlights the fact that different students prefer learning uniquely (Munir, Ahmad, Hussain, & Ghani, 2018). In other words, in the process of learning, different styles or ways are used by the students in receiving and managing information (Leasa, Batlolona, Enriquez, & Kurnaz, 2018). A study by Morris (2010) further corroborates the findings that, of 123 student participants, a majority of the students were observed to be accommodator followed by diverger, converger and assimilator learning style.

The variations in the students’ preferences of learning styles may be accredited to several reasons such as environmental factors or the personality of the teacher. Because of our hereditary makeup, the past life experience as well as the demands of the present environment, learning styles that put emphasis on some learning abilities over others are developed (Kolb, 1981; Nulty & Barrett, 2018).
Learning environments relevant to the students’ learning process motivate their learning and thus develop appropriate learning behavior (Leasa et al., 2018).

Relationship between students’ learning styles based on gender

The null hypothesis ($H_0$) for this study assumed that the mean score of the students’ preferred learning styles based on gender would be the same i.e. $H_0 = \mu_1 = \mu_2$ where, $\mu_1$ and $\mu_2$ are the population means of the male and female group respectively.

At the significance level of .05, the independent-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant mean difference between male and female students for accommodator learning style at $t(199) = -3.161, p< .05$ as shown in Table 2. Hence, the null hypothesis for this learning style was rejected. An examination of the group means for the male and female students for other learning styles observed that there was no statistical significant difference. For these learning styles, the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 2: Students’ preferred learning style based on gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning style</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodator</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>30.29</td>
<td>4.995</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>32.58</td>
<td>5.166</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverger</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>33.56</td>
<td>5.020</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>32.52</td>
<td>5.772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>33.70</td>
<td>5.859</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>32.32</td>
<td>5.352</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converger</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>32.71</td>
<td>4.324</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>.148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td>5.202</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Findings similar to this study were also reported in several other studies that are conducted under varied contextual settings and conditions. Although they have used different learning style inventory, the major findings of the study by Munir, Ahmad, Hussain and Ghani (2018) and Natsir, Yusuf and Huri (2016) have also measured a gender-wise difference in the students’ preference of learning
styles. In the study which engaged 745 secondary students, Munir, Ahmad, Hussain and Ghani (2018) observed that male and female students preferred different learning styles which was of course, not statistically significant to their academic achievement. Similarly, Natsir et al. (2016) reported that male students’ language learning styles differed from female students.

*One-way analysis of variance with post-hoc tests*

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was performed to examine the statistical significance between the students’ preferred learning styles. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p<.05$ level for the mean scores of the students’ preferred learning styles [$F(3, 800)=23.589$, $p=.000$] as indicated in the Table 3.

There is indeed significant evidences in the literature that suggest the variance of students’ preferred learning styles and approaches to study (Kolb, 1981). While students learning styles are determined by the specific learning environment that they are engaged in, it is largely influenced on how stable or dynamic the factors are in that learning context. Studying behaviours influenced by relatively stable factors such as students’ personal attributes, some characteristics of environment or continual exposure to particular modes of discourse are stable. Conversely, students’ studying behaviours are transient when they are influenced by transitory environmental demands or short-term objectives such as the examination burden felt in the school. Since the concurrence of both stable and transient influences are inevitable, the choice of students’ learning behaviour at any specific time is influenced by the balance between the different factors and the students’ individual preferences (Nulty & Barrett, 1996).
Table 3: Analysis of variance test for the students’ preferred learning styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of variance</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1818.279</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>606.093</td>
<td>23.589</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>20555.343</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>25.694</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22373.622</td>
<td>803</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe multiple comparisons indicated that the mean score of accommodator was significantly different from diverger, assimilator and converger learning styles as shown in Table 4. The mean score of diverger did not differ significantly from assimilator and converger while the mean score of assimilator did not differ with converger learning style.

Table 4: Scheffe multiple comparisons of the students’ preferred learning styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level (I)</th>
<th>Grade level (J)</th>
<th>Mean difference (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodator</td>
<td>Diverger</td>
<td>-3.995</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>3.159</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Converger</td>
<td>2.856</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverger</td>
<td>Accommodator</td>
<td>3.995</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>.836</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Converger</td>
<td>1.139</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>Accommodator</td>
<td>3.159</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diverger</td>
<td>-.836</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Converger</td>
<td>.303</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converger</td>
<td>Accommodator</td>
<td>2.856</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diverger</td>
<td>-.1139</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assimilator</td>
<td>-.303</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Conclusion

Understanding how students learn in the classroom must be a fundamental part of any educational enterprise. Apart from facilitating the teacher to adopt appropriate
pedagogic strategies, it also assists the students to understand the individual and better approach to learning that are potentially built on their own strengths, weaknesses and most importantly the preferences.

Besides helping them identify their preferred styles, it is equally pertinent for the teachers to comprehend the implications of uncovering students to diverse learning styles. While some may prefer learning to their best by feeling, few may favor learning through watching, thinking or by doing. However, in all of these approaches, students require to commit their abilities to retain the information into their memory for a long duration. While some learning styles are typically stronger and prominent in one area than the other, drawing up the right and preferred modality of learning and capitalizing on its strengths must be a prerequisite for any educational venture. Even by identifying the students’ lesser preferred learning style, it would considerably enable teachers to figure out some approaches in strengthening them through the application of the different learning styles or modifying the modus operandi to perform academically better.

Critical to the students’ academic success and achievement is diagnosing the contributing factors that are perilous to them in any magnitude. By considering only the students’ preferred learning style – a trend that is still existent in our classrooms, it connotes to the fact that teachers are directed towards reinforcement of the students’ strength and approaches that they are good at. Indeed, an equally damaging fact is that we are ignoring the students’ weaknesses – areas in which it is imperative that they progress significantly. Such educational endeavors would facilitate students better prepare for accommodating and adjusting to any learning environment that may demand learning styles that they are weak at.

This study investigated grade nine students’ preferred learning styles using Kolb’s model and also examined whether it was influenced by their gender. Although four learning styles as delineated in the Kolb’s model was revealed, a majority of the grade nine students demonstrated diverger learning style over
accommodator, assimilator and converger learning styles. Findings such as this accentuates the importance of considering pedagogic strategies that can encompass varied learning styles even for a single grade category. Most specifically, in the context of this finding, it draws an attention on providing learning experiences for students’ that capitalize on diverging learning style.
References


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The Interrelationship Between Environment and Human Rights: An Overview on Legal Context

Kudrat-E-Khuda

Abstract

Every year more than two million people met the tragic end of their lives across the world for different causes. Thousands of individuals suffer from pollution-related illnesses. Ecosystems, for water scarcity, improper management of natural disasters, and disposal of toxic and hazardous products are degrading across the world due to environmental pollution. Climate change has an adverse impact on human health. These facts indicate that environmental and human-rights are closely related. The UN attempts to tackle environmental issues—the Stockholm and Rio Declaration—illustrate the importance of the link between human rights and dignity, and the environment. Already 69 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been passed but human rights are till facing serious crisis. This crisis impacts on environment and human right to the environment. The article aims to focus the environmental concerns in human rights discourse; to explore the relationship between human rights and environmental rights in light of the worsening global environmental situation, and to encourage the excellent practices pertaining to implementation of human rights obligations and responsibilities for informing and strengthening the development of overall environmental issues. The article makes use of secondary data i.e. books, articles, different national and international law reports.

Keywords: Environment; Human Rights; Environment Protection; Human Health, Pollution
Introduction

There is a strong and undeniable connection between surroundings and human rights. The survival of people relies on a healthy and secure system. For example, serious pollution of the environment may influence the well-being of people and can stop them from enjoying their fundamental rights. Melissa Thorm (1991), an author has indicated this symbiotic relationship as follows:

‘Human life and the human environment are inseparable. To survive, humans must have air to breathe, water to drink, foods to eat, and a place in which they can live and sleep. If these elements become polluted, contaminated, or eliminated or destroyed, life will cease to exist. To protect human life, our environmental life support system must be maintained and protected. One way to accomplish this protection is through the enactment or recognition of a legal human right to environment’.

In global legislation, the relationship between the environment and human rights is now well created. Actually, human rights cannot be protected without the protection of the environment in which people live, and environmental rights can often be properly implemented only if human rights have been respected at the same time (Lador, 2004). Thus, the two regions inherently connected with human rights and environmental rights should be approached in a consistent manner. The right to a healthy environment is essential to the right to life and the integrity of people.

Importance of Human Rights Approach to Environment Protection

There are two primary approaches to the strategy of human rights in terms of environmental protection. The first is to protect the environment as a means to meet human rights standards. Since, degraded physical environments directly lead to human rights violations of life, health and living conditions, acts leading to degradation of the environment can represent an instant breach of globally recognized human rights. Secondly, the legal protection of human rights is an
efficient way of attaining the objectives of preservation and protection of the environment. Thus, it can only be feasible to achieve full human rights in culture and politics where environmental rights are more like to be respected (Anderson, 1996, p. 3). Two primary reasons for an independent right to a good setting are: Firstly, the improved status be given to the quality of the environment and the greater government attention be given to protect the environment, and secondly, the essential nature of the climate be acknowledged as a fundamental condition for life which is essential for promoting. Besides, the essential character of the setting would be recognized as a fundamental condition for life which is indispensable for promoting human dignity and welfare and the satisfaction of other types of human freedoms (Birini and Bolyel, 2002, p. 255).

However, there has been a wise discussion about the nature of relationships between human rights and the environment. The right to the environment is placed by various academies in various classifications of human rights (Thorme, 1991, p. 301). It is a basic human right for some academies (Weiss, 1987, p. 347). Others have regarded other requirements, like food, water, air, housing, apparel etc, as fundamental human requirements (Falk, 1981, p. 116). The right to a secure setting is also seen as a right of the third generation of 'solidarity', referring to the development of the freedoms in terms of their historical source (Meron, 1986). The most recent acknowledged category of human rights includes the so-called third-generation rights, including the right to health, peace and a good environment. However, according to Birnie and Boyle, such categorization is misnomer and environmental rights straddle all three of the above categories. Environment rights can thus serve three functions: first, to use current civic and policy rights to provide access to data, judicial remedies, or political procedures to people, organizations and NGOs. Secondly, by treating environmental rights as financial or social rights, the environmental quality will offer similar status to other social economic rights. Third, to treat environmental quality as a solid right is to obtain the funds, abilities and technology required by
governments and international organizations for the fulfilment of environmental goals (Birnie and Boyle, 2002, p. 253).

**Rights to Safe Environment as a Human Right**

The recognition of the right to the environment has two significant objectives: firstly, to enhance the life quality and secondly, to provide the remedy to people suffered by pollution (Gormley, 1988, p. 10). The breach of both types of civil and political rights, and financial, social and cultural freedoms could be related to the environmental degradation according to Phillippe Sands. According to Philippe Sands, environmental degradation could be linked to the violation of both categories of rights - civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights.

As per the opinion of Phillippe Sands, the right to the environment in the context of the achievement of financial, social and cultural freedoms relates to the right to a standard of living suitable for health and well-being; the right to health; the right for everyone to free access to their natural assets; safe and healthy working conditions; protection of children against social exploitation etc. On the other side, certain civil and political freedoms can also create practical and enforceable environmental and associated commitments. The rights to life, freedom, right to property etc. are the most significant civic and political rights relating to environmental protection (Sands, 2004). There are three wider categories of rights articulated by academics in the expansive exposure to the environment: substantive rights and environmental law, eco-centric rights and procedural laws. Thus, the substantive elements of the right to the environment as well as the procedural safeguards given by recognized environmental rights are covered in the expansive formulation of human rights to the environment.

**Substantive Right to Environment:** There have been many adjectives used for describing and providing the word 'correct' to the environment with a substantial quality standard, which humans are entitled to live in accordance with global and national legislation (Thorme, 1991, p. 309). Safe, satisfying,
healthy, decent, proper, tidy, pure, natural, feasible, ecologically sound and environmentally balanced adjectives are the most common (Thorme, 1991, p. 309). The right to the environment as a human right means the right to live in a minimum quality setting that enables a life of dignity and well-being to be achieved.

What are the contents of the right to environment? The determination of such a precise minimum standard of environmental quality is often a difficult task. According to Birnie and Boyle, the right to environment includes the following elements:

1) Freedom from pollution, damage to the environment and activities which influence or threaten the environment, life, health, livelihood, well-being or sustainable growth;

2) Protect and preserve the fauna, flora and wildlife of the atmosphere, water, sea ice and all required procedures and regions for preserving biological diversity and ecosystems;

3) The highest achievable health level,

4) A safe and healthy environment for food, water and work;

5) Adequate housing and land tenure in a safe, healthy and environmentally sound setting and living circumstances;

6) Ecologically sound access to nature, and natural assets preservation and sustainable use;

7) Distinctive site preservation;

8) Traditional life and livelihood should be enjoyed by native people (Birnie and Boyle, 2002, p. 255).
The Right of the Environment: This philosophic concept articulates that the environment has privileges based on its own inherent value, which is separate and different from those which it can be ascribed to by human use (Rivera, 2006, p. 282). It implies that if a product is worthy and not merely for its uses, it has an intrinsic value (Jardins, 2001, p. 133). Many environmental concerns have a moral, spiritual, symbolic, esthetic or cultural meaning (Jardins, 2001, p. 133). The two competing concepts -

The human right to the environment and the right to the environment are hard to balance as the former is anti-prop-centric and the latter is environmentally friendly. Professor Kiss and Shelton, however, resolved this issue by suggesting that environmental right is, in reality, a key component in the building of environmental rights: "Intrinsic value" can be grasped in this respect. Viewing people and nature as interrelated enables us to conclude that both of them have to be preserved. The right to the environment as a substantive part of the expanding right to the environment should, therefore, be incorporated (Kiss and Shelton, 1991, p. 23).

Procedural Environmental Rights: The procedural environmental rights are the precondition for the realization of substantial elements of the extensive right to the environment. They refer to human rights procedures or proceedings that are essential to implement efficiently the substantial elements of the extensive right to the environment. Access to environmental data, involvement in decision-making of environmental policies and the accessibility of legal remedies in order to compensate the environmental damage are among the acknowledged procedural environmental rights. Access to environmental data is commonly acknowledged as a precondition for the efficient leadership, security and collaboration of the environment at domestic and international level (Sands, 2003, p. 826). The accessibility and access to data also make it possible to take preventive steps and mitigate them, guarantees citizens' involvement in domestic decision-making procedures and enables the global community to determine whether the states meet their legal requirements or not (Sands, 2003, p. 826).
Public involvement in the environmental field is viewed as an instrument that individuals can use in choices on environmental protection policies. In the environmental sphere, public participation is considered as a tool, which people can use in making decisions on measures relating to environmental protection. Involvement of everyone in the decision-making process of a project implies the participation of the public. The participation of stakeholders in environmental issues is progressively recognized as a way to enhance the value of decision making and assist environmental initiatives to address local requirements and priorities. In brief, as demonstrated by several treaties and non-binding documents, the concept of public participation has discovered expression and is already deeply rooted in civil and political rights (Fitzmaurice, 2003). The right of the stakeholders to participate in decision-making and environmental impact assessments usually involves public involvement in environmental issues (Pring and Noe, 2002, p. 13).

There are two significant components to the demands for public participation in environmental issues: First, the EIA legislation, which typically requires government consultation as an essential element. Second, public participation is not an environmental impact assessment but in the decision-making process (Pring and Noe, 2002, p. 38).

Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration provides that "effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided." Agenda 21 needs that governments introduce legal redress processes for judicial and administrative measures in order to resolve problems caused by unwise environmental behaviour.

Linkages Between Human Rights and the Environment

Shelton finds four 'primary and complementary methods' that define the human rights-environment relationship:

1) Selected human rights, such as the emphasis on procedural rights (freedom of association and right of access to data on the future environmental threat)
are used by global legislation on the environment for the protection of the environment;

2) Human rights regulations interpret human rights to include environmental protection if environmental degradation prevents human rights, including the right to life, health, culture, a family and personal life, from being exercised;

3) A fresh substantive human right is now emerging to a secure and healthy setting;

4) As a matter of human responsibilities rather than rights, environmental protection has to be resolved (Shelton, 2004, p. 129). Connections have been created by domestic and international courts and tribunals under foreign soft law standards, treaties on human rights, environmental conventions, domestic constitutions and judicial interpretations.

(A) International Soft Law Norms

Many UN resolutions and works have discussed and developed linkages between human rights and the environment. The 1972 Stockholm Declaration was created at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which acknowledges the environment as a human rights element.

According to Principle 1 of that Declaration (See Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment, 1972):

"Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and wellbeing, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations."

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992 followed up the Stockholm Declaration with the Rio Declaration which declares "Human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature".
In 1990, "All people are entitled to live in a setting appropriate for their health and welfare" was specifically acknowledged by the General Assembly (1990). In the same year, Resolution 1990/41, reiterating the link between environmental protection and the realization of human rights, was approved by the UN Commission for Human Rights (1990). In 1994, The United Nations Special Reporter Fatema Zohra Ksentini produced a study on the issue titled, "Human and Environmental Rights" which provided for the environmental aspect of basic human rights - to life, health and culture and for a powerful and thorough connection between human right and environment (ECOSOC, 1994). The Ksentini Final Report showed that there is "universal acceptance of the environmental rights recognized at the national, regional and international levels." The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 addressed further links. The right to the environment was implicitly related to the wider right to developments included in the Johannesburg Implementation Plan (Perrez, 2003, pp. 12-22). An International Seminar on the Right to the Environment, released the Bizkaia Declaration on the Right to the Environment, was arranged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1999 (See draft Principles of Human Rights and the Environment, 1994). According to Article 1 of the Bizkaia Declaration, "Everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to enjoy a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, which may be exercised before public bodies and private entities, whatever their legal status under national and international law."

(B) Human Rights Treaties

In International Human Rights Instruments, the right to the environment is not explicitly acknowledged. The International Human Rights Instruments have made only some implicit references. The Universal Statement of Human Rights, for instance, declares that: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing and housing." The term 'standard of living' also means the presence of environmental quality that is vital to every individual's life. The International Pact on Economic,
Social and Cultural Rights 1966 offers for the right to 'improving the environmental and industrial hygiene in all aspects of health rights' as set out in the reference to human rights to the environment [Article 12 (2)(b)].

Some regional human rights tools specifically include the right to a secure setting. Article 24 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights 1981 for instance states, "All people shall have the right to a general satisfactory environment favorable to their development". The African Charter acknowledges the right to a good setting as a third-generation category or a right to solidarity. Initially, the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights made no reference to environmental rights but in its 1988 Additional Protocol, Article 11 states, "Everyone shall have the right to live in a healthy environment. The States Parties shall promote the protection, preservation, and improvement of the environment."
The 1950 European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms does not include the right to the environment, but some civil and political rights to safeguard against environmental damages have been interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights. For instance, the Court has creatively interpreted the right of the House to remediate the extreme pollution with respect for life (Bell and McGillivray, 2000, p. 55). In some worldwide human rights treaties, unique groups of individuals have reference to the right to the environment. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, for instance, deals with the protection of the environment in relation to the right of the child to health. Article 24 offers for the fake of suitable actions against disease and malnutrition by States parties. Article 4 of ILO Convention No 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Independent Countries (1989) says that States shall take unique steps to safeguard native peoples' environment in accordance with their free expression.

(C) Constitutionalization of Environmental Rights

In the constitutional regulations on the right to the environment, there is a further link between the environment and human rights (Sabsay, 2004, p. 155). The constitutions of 118 countries around the globe recognize the right to a healthy environment.
environment in different formulations. For example, Article 24 of the Constitution of South Africa states that, 'Everyone, by means of reasonable legislation and other actions to prevent pollution and degradation, has the right to an environment that is not detrimental to health and well-being, and to have an environment safeguarded in the interests of the present and future generations.' Moreover, the right of all citizens to "a good, equitable setting appropriate for human development and productive activity that is capable of meeting current requirements without compromising that of the future generations" are provided for in Article 41 of the Constitution of Argentina. However, some environmental constitutional provisions stay mainly inspiring and express domestic objectives rather than legitimate rights. The Constitutions of nations such as Cameroon, Ghana, Namibia and Tanzania, for instance, have clauses of this kind that are laws and policy goals rather than enforceable laws. 'Constitutionalization' can be seen as a more effective manner of environmental protection (Marrani, 2009). In addition to the right to the environment, the constitutional regulations may impose on the public to avoid environmental harm or to protect the environment.

(D) Judicial Interpretation and Environmental Rights

International and national authorities and courts have freely interpreted the current human rights corpus to include the right to a secure setting. In 1997, the International Court of Justice specifically acknowledged the human right to environmental protection in line with contemporary international law as regards the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia). The International Court of Justice in the 1997 Case Concerning the Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary/Slovakia) expressly recognized the existence of a human right to environmental protection under modern international law (See Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project).

The distinct view presented to the International Court by Judge Weramantry indicated the following:
The protection of the environment is...a vital part of contemporary human rights doctrine, for it is a sine qua non for numerous human rights such as the right to health and the right to life itself. It is scarcely necessary to elaborate on this, as damage to the environment can and undermine all the human rights spoken of in the Universal Declaration and other human rights instruments.

Justice militancy continues a significant avenue at domestic level for interlinked innovative aspects of human rights and environmental protection (Faruque, 2010, pp.57-68). If the Constitution expressly guarantees the right of the indispensable judiciary, these Constitutional provisions have not been reluctantly interpreted and enforced by a country. On the other side, Constitutional rights such as the right to life have become a significant interpretative instrument for expanding environmental law if the Constitution of a country has not affirmed the right to the environment. The significance and scope of this clause have been widely explained so that in a multitude of factual contexts, the right to a secure setting is implied.

Justice activism helps to properly apply environmental legislation and gives backwards-looking access to the justice system to the vast majority. The 'right to environment' was expressly recognized as a consequence of a progressive interpretation by the judiciary in respect of certain clauses in the Constitution and law (Chowdhury, 2015).

Climate Change and Human Rights

Nothing better expresses the connection between human rights and the environment than the effect of climate change (Raworth, 2008). The UN Human Rights Council in its resolution 7/23, in March 2008 entitled "Human Rights and Climate Change" emphasized that "climate change poses an immediate and far-reaching threat to people and communities around the world and has implications for the full enjoyment of human rights (See Human Rights Council report, 2008). Climate change's adverse effects are widely known and can include rising sea levels, forced mass migration, increasing incidence of diseases, shelter
destructiveness and landslides. Clearly, rising global temperatures will boost poverty and social deprivation, the vulnerability of the world's poor people. In the near future, forced migration can lead to millions of being "environmental migrants". We are now well aware of worldwide warming which may lead to water shortage, floods, droughts and livelihood losses. This puts a broad variety of widely acknowledged fundamental rights, including the freedoms of life, food, appropriate housing, health and water, under direct threat from climate change. In specific, those sections of the population which are already susceptible because of variables such as poverty, gender, age, minority status and disability will be the most sensitive to the impacts of climate change. The harmful effects of climate change are especially susceptible to women, kids and indigenous peoples. Indigenous people have, by reason of their proximity to the environment and different livelihoods depending on access to soil and natural resources, in multiple regions of the globe, already been disproportionately impacted by climate change. The environmental strategy continues a traditional approach to climate change, which sees climatic change mainly as an economic and ecological issue of environmental pollution and ecosystem degradation. But the strategy of human rights also points to an issue of human protection and safety that must be solved from a wider socio-economic standpoint.

Until now, although the human cost of climate change threatens numerous fundamental human rights such as freedoms to life, to food, to a location to live and to work, the human rights impacts of climate change have not been investigated. Unless the state acts efficiently to limit global change, these human rights may be widely violated. State reactions to climate change threat must guarantee the protection of human rights. The human rights strategy has become one of the most efficient approaches to combat the impacts of climate change. This strategy is normally based on global human rights standards and is practically geared to human rights promotion and protection (Lankford, 2009, pp. 431-437). Three components of such a strategy based on Human Rights can be recognized: firstly, the argument for powerful mitigation and adaption measures may add
significant normative importance. Secondly, a strategy based on human rights can help modify and improve international law in appropriate fields. Thirdly, it will certainly help create domestic climate policy, including adaption measures and connecting climate change to a human rights view. Climate adaption is the method by which individuals decrease their harmful health and well-being by reducing their climate vulnerability and requires changes.

**Right to Environment (Based on Few Judicial Cases): Bangladesh and Global Context**

The judiciary has embraced a liberal and harmonious interpretation of some fundamental rights to guarantee environmental protection in the lack of express constitutional provision on environmental rights in Bangladesh (Razzaque, 2000, pp. 1-27). At the moment, most Bangladeshi environmental activities are covered by the Bangladeshi Constitution on the right to life. The method of writing is preferred rather than the standard case because it is quick, fairly cheap and gives immediate access to the highest judiciary of the country. In the case of Dr. Mohiuddin Farooque Vs. Bangladesh and others (See 48 DLR), judicial recognition for protection of environment was first recorded by the High Court in a case that challenged nuisance during election campaign. The judiciary disposed of the case on assurance from the Attorney General to take measures against defacing of public and private property in the name of election campaign.

In the case, Hatton and others v. the United Kingdom (Bhardwaj, 2108, p. 100) the European Court of Human Rights was asked to decide whether the government policy on night flights at Heathrow airport gave rise to a violation of the applicants’ rights under articles 8 and 13 of the Convention. In its judgment of 2 October 2001, a chamber of the Court noted that a fair balance had to be struck between the competing interests of the individual and the community as a whole and that in both contexts, the State enjoyed a “certain” margin of appreciation in determining the steps to be taken to ensure compliance with the Convention. (Commission on Human Rights, Science, and Environment, 2005). However, the
chamber underlined that in striking the required balance states must have regard to the whole range of material considerations. Further, “In the particularly sensitive field of environmental protection, the mere reference to the economic well-being of the country is not sufficient to outweigh the rights of the others” (para. 97). Therefore, the Court found that in the absence of any serious attempt to evaluate the extent or the impact of the interferences with the applicants’ sleep patterns, the United Kingdom had failed to strike such a balance, in violation of article 8. (Commission on Human Rights, Science, and Environment, 2005). The judgment was appealed to the Grand Chamber of the European Court, where it was overturned by a judgment of 8 July 2003. Reiterating the “fundamentally subsidiary role of the Convention” (para. 97), the Grand Chamber reaffirmed that it is essentially for the State to strike a fair balance between the economic interest of the country and the conflicting interests of the persons affected by noise disturbances. The Court found that the United Kingdom authorities had not overstepped their “wide” margin of appreciation by failing to strike a fair balance between the right of the affected individuals and the conflicting interests of others and of the community as a whole, and concluded that there had been no violation of article 8 of the Convention.

A tannery waste treatment plant was opened in Lorca, Spain, in July 1988 (Bhardwaj, 2108, p. 100), without the required license. The plant malfunctioned. When it began operations, releasing gas fumes and contamination, which immediately caused health problems and a nuisance to people living in the district. The applicant lived next door with her husband and two daughters, one of whom suffered serious health problems as a result of the pollution. After the Lorca residents complained of stinking smells, fumes, and contamination, the municipal council relocated them for three months. They also ordered the cessation of one of the plant’s activities the settling of chemical and organic residues in water tanks but permitted the treatment of wastewater contaminated with chromium to continue. When the applicant and her family returned to their flat after the relocation, there were continuing problems. The applicant applied to the district
administrative court for protection of her fundamental rights, including those related to the unlawful interference with her home and her peaceful enjoyment of it. The applicant made a complaint under the European Convention, Article 3 (inhuman and degrading treatment), and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), based on Spain’s failure to take measures to remedy the smell, noise and contaminating smoke from the plant. The Court considered that the determination of whether an Article 8 violation had occurred should be tested by striking a fair balance between the interest of the town’s economic well-being and the applicant’s effective enjoyment of the right to respect for their home, private and family life. In doing so, the Court found that the “margin of appreciation,” which allows the State certain discretion in determining the appropriate balance, had been exceeded (paras. 52-58). Lopez Ostra v. Spain was the first major decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the relationship between the right to a healthy environment and the Article 8 right to respect for private life and home and family life. It also confirmed previous decisions on third party accountability, opening the door to findings of State accountability for (polluting) actions by private companies in its jurisdiction.

Under the Bangladesh Constitution, there is no right to the environment. But the protracted movement of civil society and environmentalists has led to the incorporation by the 15th amendment of provisions relating to conservation and growth of the environment in the basic principles of the State Policy of Bangladesh. This evolution is obviously welcomed. But this clause requires the state to safeguard and develop its environment and to guarantee preservation and safety of natural assets, biodiversity, of wetlands and of the wildlife. It, therefore, does not lay down the right of people to a secure setting but is declared to be one of the basic principles of the state policy that can be taken as a guideline when interpreting (See Article 8(2) of Bangladesh Constitution). The government, its organizations, people and legal entities can bear this constitutional obligation to safeguard the environment. The government of Bangladesh lost the chance to make the right to the environment as a basic right that was set up by the judiciary.
Conclusion

Although the discourse on human rights cannot include all environmental issues, at least environmental protection should be based on a right-based strategy. This trend is also indicated by the current global standards. However, insufficiencies in the existing worldwide system of human rights to tackle the problems of the environment, the right to a secure environment, and access to human rights tribunals and processes should be explicitly integrated into the international tool of human rights such as ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) or ICESR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) in order to agree to environmental allegations. In such cases, an existing structure can be used to implement the right to environment. The development of a new environment protection scheme is another proposal for better environmental protection. To this end, a distinct convention could be enacted which would include environmental freedoms both substantive and procedural. The principal reason for the adoption of a distinct tool is that the right to the environment is classified as a right of solidarity and consequently, must be improved by its own oversight and enforcement structures and mechanisms.
References


See, Resolution 1990/7, 30 August 1990, Available at: 


See, Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, 169, available at: 


See, Gabcikovo-Nagymaros Project (Hung.v.Slovk.), 1997 ICJ.7, 78 (Sep.25). Available at


See, 48 DLR (Dhaka Law Report), 434 HC (High Court, Bangladesh).

See, Article 8(2) of the Constitution of Bangladesh.


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Dungkhar Ugyen Choeling Gonpa: A Temple that was Built with Gifted Stones

Dorji S & Dorji Phuntsho

Abstract

Bhutan is blessed to have historically significant temples and monasteries that are centuries-old. Such religious infrastructures play a vital role in the social, religious, and cultural identities of the community around and all over Bhutan. As such, Pemagatshel has both recent and ancient Gonpas (མགོན་པ - mgon pa), which are very sacred and culturally poignant to the community though not known to many. One such is Dungkhar Gonpa which is in Khar Gewog. Therefore, this paper attempts to narrate the oral accounts of the Gonpa, its histories and anecdotes for the benefit of people with similar interests and, of course, posterity.

Keywords: History, Saints, Temple, Myths, Legends, Festivals, Culture, Tradition

Introduction

During the early 12th to 17th century C.E., there was an influx of Buddhist saints and masters belonging to various sects or schools from Tibet to Bhutan. According to Dargye (2008), they were attracted to Bhutan either by the great pilgrimage sites of Padmasambhava or by the search for local patronage and recognition, while some intruded into the sacred valleys of Bhutan to escape the turmoil of Tibetan politics. Bhutan then in any circumstances was very fortunate to have been blessed by many renowned masters and saints, like Phajo Drugom Zhigpo (ཕ་ཇོ་འབྲུག་སོམ་ཞིག་པོ phajo 'brugsgomzhigpo, 1184–1251/1208–1275), Kunkhyen Longchen Rabjam (ཀུན་མཁྱེན་ཀོང་ཆེན་རབ་བྱམས kun mkhyen klongchen rab 'byams, 1308-1363), Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (ཞབས་དྲུང་ངག་དབང་རྣམ་རྒྱལ zhabdrung ngagdbang rnamrgyal, 1594–1651), etc. All of the saints and masters had some impact on the religious, social, cultural, and political developments in Bhutan. Most of these saints, masters, and
Iamas came to western Bhutan but few have travelled to the far east of Bhutan and established seats. They also founded temples and monasteries in a number of their destined places.

One of the masters and a great Buddhist luminary, who made immense contributions in eastern Bhutan was Yab Tenpai Nyima (ཡབ་སྱེན་པའི་ནི་མ - yab bstanpa’i nyi ma, 1567–1619) also known as Mipham Tenpai Nyima (མི་ཕམ་སྱེན་པའི་ནི་མ - mi phamb stanpa’i nyi ma). One of the prominent places in the east was Dungsam (དུང་བསམ - gdung bsam) present day known as Pemagatshel (པད་མ་དགའ་ཚལ་ - pad ma dga-tshal). The word ‘Dungsam’ was recorded and widely used since the time of the First Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (Wangdi, 2003). Some of the sacred monasteries and temples of Pemagatshel (Dungsam) region are Yongla Gonpa founded by the great Nyingmapa Master, Jigme Jangchub Gyeltshen also known as Kheydrup Jigme Kuendel, KheriGonpa and Dungkhar Gonpa. Most of the temples and monasteries of the region later gave rise to ruling families and occupied an important place in the Bhutanese history-politically, socially, and even culturally. Amongst the many temples and monasteries, Dungkhar Gonpa is believed to be the oldest and built by an important figure, Yab Tenpai Nyima from Tibet. The Gonpa is located on a ridge measuring about 6800 feet above sea level in a secluded place called Dungkhar. It is a day’s walk from the Khar village under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag1 (District) in eastern Bhutan and it’s about an hour’s walk from the recently constructed farm road. The very name of the Gonpa must have given the name "Dungsam" to the region as it is still known to the people but tradition maintained in the villages does not conform to the conclusion.

Brief History of Dungkhar and Dungsam

What makes Dungkhar Gonpa very sacred and different is the right whorled Conch, which according to the belief is very rare and precious to possess. In Sharchokpa

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1Bhutan is divided into 20 Dzongkhags for administrative convenience. Pemagatshel is one of the smallest Dzongkhags (Districts) in Bhutan and it has 11 Gewogs (Blocks).
(Easterner’s) dialect or sometimes known as Tshangla, conch is called as Dungkar (གདུང་དཀར - gdungdkar). This sacred and precious Conch is believed to have been discovered like a treasure from the very lake (མཚོ - mtsho) Dungtsho Karmathang by treasure discoverer, Terton (གཏྱེར་སོན་, gter ston) Pema Lingpa (པདྨ་གིང་པ་ pad ma gling pa, 1450-1521). Aris (1979) has also mentioned the arrival of Pema Lingpa to Dungsam during his journey to the east as far as Tawang in modern day Arunachal Pradesh. He travelled to the east in 1507 on the invitation of the King of Shar Dongkha. Aris (1979) has also quoted from the biography of Pema Lingpa that he met the king of Dongkha with fifteen horsemen and soldiers wearing armour at Dungtsho Karmathang after thirteen days of the journey. King Jo phag Darma of Shar Dongkha first met Pema Lingpa in 1504 while the former was constructing the Tamzhing temple in Bumthang.

Although this temple is situated in the Dungsam region, there is no tradition conforming to the name of Gonpaas Dungkhar as per its location - Dungsam. It is conclusive that the name of the Gonpais derived from the sacred and precious conch which is preserved dearly in the Gonpa. But on the origin of the name Dungsam, two different traditions are passed over generations. One tradition maintained in the region tells that three ridges in the area resemble a conch (གདུང་དཀར - gdung dkar) in shape. According to Wangdi (2003), a conch is called 'Dung' in the region and 'Sam' means three and so the name as Dungsam (Three Conches). The other tradition mentions that long ago there was a lake called Dungtsho Karmathang over a hill overlooking the Khar village. Once the lake began to dry up, there appeared settlements on the very place of the dried lake. The people who settled at the dried lake were called Dungtshopa- people of Dungtsho and Dungsampa is a corrupted form of ‘Dungsapa’ which is also a corrupted form of Dungtsho (Wangdi, 2003). Community believe that the name of Gonpa is a corrupted form of Dungkar. However, the name of Gonpa may have derived after

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3Descendents of Tsangma, who founded ruling clans in the east are considered as speakers of Tshangla
3One of the five sovereign Tertons and born in the Nyo family of Bhel region, in Tang, Bumthang
4Arunachal Pradesh is one of the states of India situated towards the North-Eastern part of Indian Sub-Continent
combining ‘Dung’ and ‘Khar’ (མཁར- mkhar) the name of the adjoining village. Whether the name originated from the three conch-shaped hills or the settlement upon the drying of the lake is difficult to ascertain in the absence of literature and scanty oral traditions.

Another luminary who visited the eastern region was Lhasay Tsangma⁵ (ལྷ་སྲས་གཙང་མ། lhasrasgtsang ma). His descendants started many ruling families or clans in eastern Bhutan. The palaces or castles built for Lhasay Tsangma were called “Khar”⁶. One of the Khars built for Tsangma was Jamkhar in Trashi Yangtsi. According to Aris (1979), clan principalities had had well-recognized borders (samtshams) and kings of these principalities ruled their territories from defensive buildings called ‘Royal Castles’ (rgyal-mkhar). In both versions, khar connotes their capitals or centre of administrations. Most ruling chieftains that descended from Tsangma lived and commanded their territories from the Khars. The village name with Khar suffix conforms the visit of Tsangma and the establishment of a local chieftain in the Dungsam region.

Journey of Yab Tenpai Nyima to Bhutan

When Dungtsho Karmathang lake dried up and settlements began, it is believed to be blessed by the visit of Yab Tenpai Nyima. He was a son of Mipham Chogyal (མི་ཕམ་ཆོས་རྒྱལ- Mi-pham chosrgyal- 1543-1604) the 17th Prince-Abbot of the Drukpa (brugs pa) school based at Ralung (ར་ལུང- ra lung) in Tibet. Yab Tenpai Nyima was married to Sonam Pelgi Buthrid (bSod-nams dPal-gyi Bu-khrid) and they had a son Ngawang Namgyel, who was recognized as the reincarnation of Kuenkhyen Padma Karpo⁷ (ཀུན་མཁྱེན་པདྨ་དཀར་པོ་ kun mkhyen pad ma dkarpo 1527–1592 CE).

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⁵Son of King Thrisong Detsen of Tibet who was exiled to Bhutan by his brother Langdarma as part of his plan to take over the throne
⁶Legends maintained in Trashiyangtsi district today say that people of Jamkhar (byams mkhar- easy castle) built a castle for Tsangma in agreeing to be their rulersaying it is easy (byams) to build
⁷He was a greatest Drukpa school saint-scholar and was recognized as the reincarnation of Tsangpa Gyaray, the founder of Drukpa School in Tibet
According to Aris (1979), Ngawang Namgyel was born in 1594 at the ancestral monastery of Gardrong (mGar-grong) in Tibet near the oldest foundation of his school at Druk Jangchubling (བྲུག་བྱང་ཆུབ་གིང- brugbyang-chub-gling). Ngawang Namgyel came to Bhutan in 1616 and unified the country under the centralized rule of the Drukpa School, defeating all other rival sects in Bhutan. There is little or no information about Yab Tenpai Nyima perhaps because his father Mipham Chogyel always looked upon to his grandson Ngawang Namgyel as successor than his son. In the absence of records, his reasons for his coming to Bhutan and particularly his visit to Dungsam region remain obscure. The oral tradition maintained by the people in the Dungsam region only tells of his visit to the place. In such ambiguity, assumptions that Mipham Chogyal may have also left for Bhutan along with his son Zhabdrung on the issue of real reincarnation of the omniscient Padma Karpo. In Tibet, there was a controversy in the recognition of the reincarnation of Kuenkhyen Padma Karpo. Although Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was recognized as the true reincarnation and was contested by a rival claimant. Yab Tenpai Nyima was even invited by the rival claimant’s parents, the hereditary prince of Chong Ja (phyong-rgyas) to give recognition. He conducted various tests but failed, yet he gave polite tonsure and named him as Pagsam Wangpo (Aris, 1979, p.206). But, taking into consideration of Zhabdrung’s half brother, Tenzin Drugdra’s (discussed below) birth year (1602) to the actual escape year of Zhabdrung in 1616 loosely indicate that Yab Tenpai Nyima’s coming to Bhutan much earlier than hitherto assumed. And these need thorough research and study.

It is conclusive that Yab Tenpai Nyima did not live long in Bhutan and went back to Tibet because records mention of his passing away in Tibet. This can be corroborated from an account of Zhabdrug Rimpoche’s episode of the plan in bringing the holy remains of his father to Bhutan. There is an account where Zhabdrung heard of his father’s death in Tibet and he secretly prepared to bring his father’s corpse (སྐུ་གདུང - sku gdung) to Bhutan. He built a Cheri (ལྕགས་རི - lcags ri) Monastery in the valley of present-day Thimphu District to preserve the ashes of his father. So, from this very account, it is logical to conclude that Tenpai Nyima
has returned to Tibet. The assumption of his travel back to Tibet could have been to continue the legacy of the Drukpa school and take the reins in his hand of the Drukpa seat at Ralung, he being a son of Mipham Chogyal.

![An Old Picture of Temple](https://dungkhar.weebly.com/gallery.html, dated 22/4/2019)

**Fig. An Old Picture of Temple**

**Fig.2. Gangtey Trulku**

(Foto Credit: [https://dungkhar.weebly.com/gallery.html](https://dungkhar.weebly.com/gallery.html), dated 22/4/2019)

**Founding of Dungkhar Lhakhang**

There are different accounts on the founding of Dungkhar Gonpa. The first oral account tells us that the youngest son of Lhasey Tsangma has founded the temple. The other account mentions that a person named Norbu, who was the great great grandson of Pema Lingpa established the temple upon his being appointed as the lama. The third account is that Yab Tenpai Nyima, during his visit to the Dungsam Region particularly (Dungtsho Karmathang) founded the temple. He not only founded the Gonpa for the people but also fathered a son in a local lady, Ani Choney Wangmo, a sister of Norbu’s - the grandson of Khedrup Kinga Wangpo, one of the sons of Terton Pema Lingpa. A son, whose name was Tenzin Drugdra born to a local lady, is mostly mistaken by the Bhutanese as Tibetan. He was born in 1602, corresponding to the 10th Rabjung of the Water Tiger year of the lunar calendar. In most accounts, there is a mention of Tenzin Drugdra as an illegitimate son of Yab
Tenpai Nyima. In Lopon Pema Tshewang’s History of Bhutan-Druk Selwai Dron Me (འབྲུག་གསལ་གབིའ་སོན་མྱེ - bruggsalb’Isgron me), there is a mention of Tenzin Drugdra having a facial resemblance with Zhandrung Ngawang Namgyel (ཞབས་དྲུང་ངག་དབང་རྣམ་རྒྱལ, zhabsdrung ngagdbang rnamrgyal, 1594–1651). Tenzin Drugdra is believed to have gone to Tibet at a very young age because by then Tibet had been considered a destination to undertake religious studies. Dorji (1994) rather tells that he was taken to Tibet particularly to Druk Ralung at a young age to study under his ancestors. So, it reasonable to say that he has gone to Tibet and later returned to Bhutan. Tenzin Drugdra occupied a very important post and steered the loosely confederated nation as second Druk Desi (འབྲུག་སྲིད, 'brugsde-srid) from 1656 till his sudden death in 1657.

An oral account maintained in Dungsam (གདུང་བསམ, gdungbsam) region tells that when Yab Tenpai Nyima thought of settling in one of the places in Dungsam region. However, he decided not to settle as he was disheartened because there was no water around. As he was planning to leave the place, he saw a blackbird flying over him and the bird dropped some water droplets. Taking that as a good omen, he followed the bird and reached a place that resembled a conch. He also found a lake in the valley that resembled a cauldron. By then Dungtsho Karmathang has started drying and settlements have begun. It is believed that during his visit and time, there were only a few settlements. It is in this place that Yab Tenpai Nyima has constructed a small temple. Local tradition says that the present structure of the Gonpawas not built by Tenpai Nyima. It is believed that he only built a small temple on the remaining lake by filling with soil and then with flat stones. Initially, his structure was reinforced with another layer that was thicker and ultimately with a structure that looked like a wall on four sides. He also kept a small hole in the centre for the people in the years to come to make people believe that there exists a lake right under the Gonpa. These developments under him have earned him as the founder of Dungkhar Gonpa. People also say that vapour from
the Dug-khang\textsuperscript{8} (བསྡུ་ཁང - bsdukhang) or the same hole kept by Yab Tenpai Nyima can be felt even today. Eight decades later, settlements increased and they say it was because of the descendants of nine sisters of Gongkar\textsuperscript{9}.

**Myths and Legends around Dungkhar Gonpa**

There are interesting anecdotes connected to Dungkhar Gonpa. One of the oral accounts passed down generations is that the Gonpawas built from stones gifted by Khandoms (མཁའ་འགོ - mkha gro) or Dakinis [in Sanskrit]. According to one account, the mason had retired to his home after having dug the foundation of the temple. When he came to the worksite next morning, he saw stones being piled up. He started the work with those stones and not trying to figure out who could have collected all those stones. Similarly, when he came for work in the next early morning he saw more stones being kept ready. When the Gonpawas on the verge of completion, mason gave a thought that the stones are enough and don’t need anymore. The next morning there were no stones piled up. But stones were not sufficient when it progressed to the final floor (top) layer of the Gonpa. As a result, the mason had to find stones from the nearby area and completed the Gonpa. Today, one will notice different types and sizes of stones being used at the top level of the temple as compared to two lower floors. Locals attribute it because of the very reason for the mason being judgmental of the sufficiency of stones.

**Sacred Relic and Statues of the Gonpa**

The main relic of the Gonpais right whorled Conch (གདུང་དཀར་གཡས་འཁིལ - gdung dkar yashkhyel) and the lake right under the altar (Choeshum རྒྱུན་ཕྲུལ་ - mchodb shams) of the Gonpa, which locals say it can be seen even today. Every year people come during the annual Tshechu (Festival) of the Gonpato seek blessings from the sacred relics and the lake. It is believed that whoever receives blessings are

\textsuperscript{8} Dug-khang is a sacred hole under Choesham (alter) of DungkharGonpa where Dungtsho lake is still seen today and women are forbidden to enter inside it.

\textsuperscript{9} Gongkar was an old name of present day Khar.
cleansed from all defilements. Another relic that adds to the sacredness of the Gonpa is the human skull used a bowl for preparing Duetse (ཉིད་རྒྱུད་ - bdud rtsi). This skull bowl is no ordinary skull, it has a letter 'AH' (ཨ), imprinted and such miraculous appearance is very rare and it is considered very sacred in the Bhutanese tradition.

Besides these relics, Gonpa has other items of venerations such as statues, images, religious items, and also other antiques adding value to its unique and sacredness. As one enters the Gonpa visitors will notice the ‘Wheel of Samsara’ or Sidpa Khorlo (སྲིད་པ་འཁོར་ལོ - srid pa khor lo) and Chok Zhi Gyalpo-King of Four Directions (ཕྱོགས་བཞི་རྒྱལ་པོ - phyogs bzhi rgyalpo) -King of the East (ཤར་ཕོགས་རྒྱལ་པོ - shar phyogs rgyalpo), King of the South (ལྷོ་ཕོགས་རྒྱལ་པོ - lho phyogs rgyalpo), King of the West (བྱང་ཕོགས་རྒྱལ་པོ - byang phyog srgyalpo) and King of the North (པོགས་བཞི་རྒྱལ་པོ - phyogs rgyalpo). The Gonpahouses statues of Guru Rimpoche in the centre and Yab Tenpai Nyima to the left and Terton Pema Lingpa and Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel to the right side of Guru statue. In addition to these statues, there are statues of local deities and other nearby region regions such as Mamo Eka Dzati (མ་མོ་ཨ ྱེ་ཀ་ཛ་ཏི - ekazati), Damchen Dorji Lekpa (དམ་ཅན་རོ་རྱེ་ལྱེགས་པ - dam chan rdorje legs pa), Dzachok Rahula (གཟའ་མཆོག་རྡ་ཧུ་ལ - gza mchog rahu la), Namsey Tsheringma (རྣམ་སྲས་ཚེ་རིང་ - rnam sras tshe ring ma) and Maning Nakpo Pekar Kuenzangmo (མ་ཅིང་ནག་པོ་པད་དཀར་ཀུན་བཟང་མོ - ma ning nag po pad dkar kun bzangmo).

Frescoes include Kagye Lhatshog (བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ལྷ་ཚོགས - bkabrgyud lhatsogs), Tsheyi Lhatshog (ཚེའི་ལྷ་ཚོགས - tshe-ilhatshogs), Zhelgi Lhatshog (ཞལ་གི་ལྷ་ཚོགས - zhelrgi lhatsogs), Rigsum Goenpo (རིགས་གསུམ་མགོན་པོ - rigs gsumm gonpo), and TenpaYabyumMengiLha (སོན་པ་ཡབ་ཡུམ་སྨན་གི་བླ - stan pa yab yum smanrgilha), Guru Tshengye (གུ་རུ་མཚན་བརྒྱད - gurum tshan brgyad), Jangchub Tungshag Lhatshog (བྱང་ཆུབ་སྟུང་བཤས་ལྷ་ཚོགས - byang chub stung bshags lhatsogs), Jetsun Dolma (རྒྱུན་གློ་མ - rjebtsunsgadrol ma), Kagyudpa masters (བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པ - bkabrgyudpa)-TshangpaGyareyYeshiDorji- གཙང་པ་ཡས་སྨན་གི་ཕྱེ་རུ་ལྡོམ་པ་ - gtsang pa rjaras ye shesrdorje, 1161 - 1211), Tilopa (ཉིལ་པ - ti lo pa, 988-1069), Naropa (སྡྲ་བྲལ - naro pa, 1016-1100),
Marpa (ཐུར་པ། mar pa, 1012-1097), Jetsun Milarepa (ཐེ་ཐུན་མི་ལེ་བོ ja las pa, 1052-1135), Gampopa (ཧི་ཐོ་པ་ sgampo pa, 1079–1153), Phagmodrugpa (ཕག་མོ་གྲུ་པ་རོ་རྒྱལ་པོ phagmogru pa rdorje rgyal po, 1110-1170), and Lingrepa Pema Dorji (གིང་རྐྱེ་རས་པ་བདེ་རྒྱལ་པོ glingrjeras pa pad ma rdorje, 1128-1188), Pema Lingpa, LhaseyTsangma, local deity Khar Kebu Dagtschen (སྡེ་ཁུ་སུབཙན skid bus grabtsan). The mural in the ceiling is of Dorji Sempa (ཐེ་ཐུན་སྤེ་མཱ་ sdo rje sems pa). The Gonpa also has Thankas (Scroll Paintings) of Avalokiteshvara (སྤྱན་རས་གྱིགས spyan ras gzigs) and Kuenkhyen Longchen Rabjam and Four Harmonious Friends (མཐུན་པ་སྤུན་བཞི mthun pa spun bzhi). The other items of the Gonpa include two ancient Sergi Bumpas (Gold plated vase), Gold religious texts written in gold called ‘Serbum’ (གསེར་འབུམ gser bum), two Dungkhars (Conches) and large and long trumpets (གདུང་ཆེན gdungchen). The religious text called ‘Serbum’ is believed to have been brought from Lhasa Potala later by nine sisters of Dungkhar family during their pilgrimage.

Myths and Accounts

Settlement continued for many years but disappeared later in the years because of reasons unknown. Most people share about the end of settlement because of the acute shortage of drinking water (at least for the recent past it holds to be true). On a visit to the site, authors noticed acute shortage of water even for basic purposes drinking and cooking. And there are even legends surrounding this end of settlement in the past connecting to reasons for water shortage. According to one account, there wasn’t any water problem in the place before the visit of Tibetan Lama called Sopchee (སོབ་ཆེི sop chi) because the settlement is believed to have evolved on the surface of a lake that had nine water sources. The lake dried and people attributed tolama Sopchee as very much responsible for the drying. The

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10 Serbum is a religious text and is considered as the main relic of Gonpa (མགོན་པ mgon pa) beside the Conch

11 Meme Nyer, who is 96 years old now say that Lama Sopchee visited and stayed there during his grandfather’s time. It is approximately in the early 20th century.
oral tradition maintained in the villages around the Dungkhar Gonpa gives insight that Lama reached in Dungkhar during the time of nine sisters of Dungkhar family. One of the respondents who belonged to the Dungkhar family says that they fall within the social group called Draps (གྲྦཔ - sgrap, the upper class of the society). Today, social class divisions are not prevalent in Bhutan vis-à-vis Dungsam. It was completely abolished with the issue of a royal edict by Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Lama Sopchee was very cruel and proved powerful than other lamas. He washed his face and body most often with milk offered daily by 'nine sisters'. He dug a channel from a lake towards his toilet so that he could keep his toilet always clean. The lake water supposed to be kept pure and clean flowed to his toilet and as a result of contamination and defilement, it soon dried up. Lama then is believed to have left the place for Punakha after the lake has completely dried. The lake is still there in Dungmin Tomey in Pemagatshel which people of Tomey consider as Dungkhar Lake. According to the Bhutanese myths and legends, some accounts tell of the lake being possessed by certain deities and it would move to a different place once they are defiled. So, the very lake defiled by Lama Sopchee is believed to be the lake that is still there in Dungmin Tomay. This is the reason why locals even today consider it as Dungkhar Lake.

Another tradition (also recorded by Wangdi, 2003) attributes the decline to a mysterious epidemic that struck the settlement of Dungtsho Karmathang. All died except two Khoche brothers who escaped to a place called Khala Tsho (not to be confused with lake-Tsho in Tshangla dialect). The ruins of Dungtsho Karmathang can be still seen submerged beneath the earth today (Wangdi, 2003). One of the oldest respondents recollects a tale that was shared by a grandmother about the epidemic that struck the settlement. This epidemic made people suffer from rashes and his description is similar to smallpox from a layman’s knowledge of diseases. He also narrates an epidemic that stuck during his time. This killed all the people of the settlement around Dungkhar Gonpa. He escaped because he had gone to the lower valley particularly to Khar and returned many years later to the original site and started the Nagtshang (གནག༌ཚང - gnag tshang) near to Dungkhar Gonpa.
The actual epidemic occurrence needs proper study and periodization. Today, few of the people have come back and settled. The number of households has increased to four. They came and settled at the very site the settlement affected by the epidemic and so it is called as Dung man ma (གདུང་མན་ - gdung man ma, old Village in Tshangla dialect). Another oral account which is quite recent tells that settlement has disappeared because of the heavy taxation imposed by the regional rulers. Taxation included long hours of work especially corvee labour for various constructions that included bridges and also grain collections. Most of the people migrated to the outside of the country like Pedong in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Gangtok in Sikkim, all in India. Some even migrated within the country particularly to places like Daliphangma and Rangshikhar in Trashigang District. The other factor that people ascribe was the internal strife for supremacy amongst the regional rulers and it affected the people one way or another. But this lacks information.

**Dungkhar Choeje to Dungkhar Gonpa**

Until the supremacy of power was overtaken by the Drukpa forces in the early 18th century, most of eastern Bhutan was ruled by different clan-based local chieftains. Most of these ruling families emerged or descended from the noble families, important saints and Buddhist masters. Some of them traced their origin to Tsangma while others to different great personalities. Dungsam region has their version of the origin of ruling families or clans that traces their origin to Yab Tenpai Nyima.

During the early part of the 17th century, there were three Drukpa Choeje (ཆོས་རྱེ། chosrje) families in Pemagatshel and there are two different versions of its origin. According to one tradition, they were the descendants of Tenpai Nyima, the father of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, who had travelled throughout eastern Bhutan. The three choeje families were Khar (མཁར - mkhar) Choeje also known as Dungkhar (དུང་མཁར - gdung mkhar) choeje, Chungkhar (མྱུང་མཁར - gchung mkhar) also known as Khardung Choeje, and the Sharlikhar (ཤར་ི་མཁར - shar li mkhar) Choeje.
Among these family lineages, Dungsam Dungkhar Choeje (Khar) was dominant. They were the ones who took care of the temple called Dungkhar Gonpa and carried out all the functionaries. It is believed that the half-brother of Zhabdrung, Tenzin Drugdra belonged to the Dungkhar Choeje family founded by Tenpai Nyima and was responsible for the continuity of the Dungkhar Choeje lineage in the region (not to get confused with the Dungkar Choeje of Kurtoe). The other version of the origin states that the Dungkhar Choejewas established by Tsangma the grandson of King Trisong Detsen (ཁི་སྲོང་ལྱེ་བཙན - khrisrong Idebtsan, 742 – 797 CE) when he came to Bhutan as a royal refugee when exiled by his brother Langdarma (བྱང་དར་མ་ - glangdar ma, 799 – 842 CE). He was banished by Langdarma in his effort to become the king after assassinating their elder brother Thri Ralpachen (ཁི་རལ་པ་ཅན་ - khri ral pa can, 802 – 838 CE) of Tibet. He mostly travelled around Eastern Bhutan and his descendants have founded different family lineages. Although Tsangma is said to have stayed mostly at Trashiyangtse and Trashigang regions in places like Tshenkharla, Bengkhar, Yonphula, and Kanglung, he is also believed to have visited Dungsam region. During his visit to Dungsam region, it is said that he stayed and blessed Dungtsho Karmathang. There is no account mentioning Tsangma building any castles or Khars but it is from this very historical understanding that people say why the place is called Khar and they believe his descendants have founded a family lineage. The ruling families that emerged in Dungsam region are believed to have descended or branched from the clan established by Tsangma’s twin grandsons called Bjar (རྒྱ་ - bjar-joined). Therefore, people believe that one of the Choejes was Dungkhar Chooeje and traces their origin to Tsangma. Some of the families who have branched out from this noble lineage can be found even today in the villages viz: Khangma, Yurung, Chimung, and Dagor. Although they all trace to noble birth none today occupy upper rungs of the society and they are commoners like any other.
Dungkhar Tshechu-A Yearly Festival

Despite fewer households, Gonpa draws lots of people from the Khar villages down the valleys once in a year. This is because of its annual socio-religious festival of Dungkhar Gonpa conducted on every fifteenth day of the third month of the lunar calendar. Although, the pattern of performance and certain aspects have changed, however, the festival is conducted without fail. There is no information on the origin of this festival and most believe the practice has been there from time immemorial. The festival takes place for four days and it is considered one of the most sacred and blessed festivals of the Dungsam region. The festival is usually performed in line with the Peling tradition, a branch of the Nyingma (རིང་མ་ - mying ma) sect of Buddhism. This four-day festival is conducted by people of Khar, Labar, Bongman, Yegyur, and Khengzor villages. During the festival, all support comes from these villages. In the past, it was compulsorily for each household to contribute in kinds, but these days even cash is also accepted as contributions. But certain necessary items like flour for the making of ritual cakes (Tormas) are still collected from households. During these festivals, it not just attracts people from nearby villages, hundreds of people from other villages like Yurung, Chimung, Tshebar, and Mikuri come to witness religious dances and receive blessing from the sacred lake.

What makes this festival unique is anyone found copulating or sleeping with the opposite sex is punished. To keep an eye on such obscene activities, during the festival, a minimum of two nightguards are appointed. They go around especially at night and if they find anyone sleeping together, they mark their clothes in white colour. Next morning, they will be reported to the Thri Lama (Head Lama) and as a punishment for the defilement of the festival sanctity, culprits were made to carry a mask around the Gonpa. It is believed that carrying a mask will indirectly reduce their merits of evil deeds. It is only during these festivals that people are given the blessing of the lake. It is believed to have been said by Yab Tenpai Nyima that such blessings were very rare and it should be kept pure and in the holy state. As indicated earlier, women were not allowed to enter the Dugkhang.
Interestingly, Nalu Thoepa, the local deity of the Khar village has to be propitiated and offering has to made to honour the deity. It is believed that if they defy paying obeisance to Nalu Thoepathe deity would not protect the people, as a result, there would be natural calamities such as heavy rains and storms. People also believe that Nalu Thoepa keeps a watch over the opposite sex sleeping together especially during the festival time. If people do not adhere to this rule, he brings rain and storm usually after the festival. Such rain and storm are called as 'Mi-Tsang-ri' - 'water to cleanse the defilements'.

**Conclusion**

This Gonpa is one of the oldest lhakhangs in the Dungsam region and has withstood all the natural calamities. But over the years it has shown signs of dilapidation. Wooden structures have lived its life and it needs immediate replacement and renovation. Although, it was renovated by local people of Khar, Khengzor, and Labar on their initiatives there is a lot to be done. Recently, the caretaker at his initiative supported by a few villagers has extended the Gonpa but nothing major is done to preserve this sacred and ancient Gonpa.

This Gonpa is certainly the oldest and has lots of history woven around it. The history of Gonpa predates the state formation under the Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and it is founded on a place that has historical significance. This Gonpa stands on a place the most blessed by various important figures of Bhutanese history. Because of the very ancient in nature and sacredness, it is comparable to most other similar temples and monasteries of the eastern region and in Bhutan. One of the pillars of Gross National Happiness is the preservation of culture and tradition and time has come for the people and government to protect, safeguard and preserve this historic pillar through major renovations as it needs attention to save it from the verge of dilapidation.

However, much to the relief of the community members, under the wise patronage of former Chief Justice of Bhutan, His Excellency Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye, and the community contributions, the Gonpa has been revived to its
erstwhile glory with the construction of new Drasha and Shedra in 2014. His Eminence the Gangtey Trulku Rimpoche, body emanations of the 16th century King Terton (Treasure Discoverer) and Patron Saint of Bhutan, Pema Lingpa solemnized to ordain monks on 12 and 13th October 2014.

With the institution of shedra, 24 monks have started their monastic education. It has not only provided opportunities for the youth and children from economically disadvantaged families to continue their education but also provided a place for the old aged people to practice religion in the Gonpa.
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The relationship between school climate, student engagement and academic achievement in higher secondary school

Ugyen Phuntsho and Rinchen Dhendup

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between higher secondary school students’ perceptions of school climate, student engagement and academic achievement. The sample of 212 (108 girls, 104 boys) students from grade nine to twelve from one of the higher secondary schools in central Bhutan participated in this study. The descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient and mediation analysis using PROCESS in regression was used to analyzed the obtained data. The analysis of the data supported the theoretical conceptualization of the components of school climate and the domains of student engagement. The result revealed a significant correlation between the components of school climate and student engagement, and the domains of student engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, the analysis of the single mediation model indicated the student engagement to be significantly mediated the relationship between school climate and student academic achievement. Based on the findings from this study, implications for managing the school climate positively and enhancing the student engagement are elucidated in the paper.

Keywords: academic achievement, school climate, student engagement, students

Introduction

Over the past decades, many researchers, educators, psychologist and policymakers around the globe have increasingly recognized the importance of school climate and student engagement in the school (Thapa et al. 2013). There is a growing interest in school climate reform and visible appreciation as a data driven school improvement strategy that promotes safety, healthy relationships, school connectedness, engaged learning and teaching, dropout prevention and
school improvement efforts (Thapa, Cohen, & D’Alessandro, 2012). Moreover, the student engagement in the school as the key to addressing problems of low academic achievement, high levels of student boredom, alienation, and high dropout rates (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). The student engagement in school is necessary to their academic achievement because of the co-productive nature of learning and contribution to overall achievement and moreover provides a lens for schools to measure how well the school is motivating the student energy, interest and self-regulation (Wylie & Hodgen, 2012; Gettinger & Walter, 2012; Reyes, et al., 2012). The general appeal of student engagement is underscored by high school reform efforts that explicitly address students’ motivation to learn and engage with school (National Research Council & the Institute of Medicine [NRC and IoM], 2004).

Engaged students are more successful by any measures in the school (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). Student, who attend school regularly, adhere to the rules of the school and avoid disruptive behaviors, concentrate on learning and perform better on regular tests (Caraway et al., 2003; Finn & Rock, 1997). Moreover, the engaged students do more than attended and perform academically high (Chrietenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012).

On the contrary, students who are not engaged in the school are more passive learners and report being anxious, bored or even angry about being in the classroom (Li & Lerner, 2011;). They are also most likely to misbehave and engage into substance abuse (Li & Lerner, 2011; Patton, et al., 2006) and leaving the school without qualification thus, failing in life ahead for meaningful employment and further education opportunities (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2011; Cornell, Shukla, & Konold, 2016). The similar reason was also established with Bhutanese student drop out, the lack of interest in school as one among the many other reasons was reported for student dropping out of school (Dorji, Dema, & Penjore, 2005). The decline of students’ interest in the school and engagement has been attributed to a social developmental change that interacts with a new and more challenging secondary school climate (Eccles, 2008). The problem of decline in
academic motivation and engagement in school work is apparently noticed during middle and high school years (Wigfield et al., 2006). The noticeable worrisome has come to the surface in news reported in Kuensel (2020, July 30) that, 210 high school students dropped out the school within the span of first six months in 2020. It was reported that, the lack of student engagement among many other factors were attributed to student dropping out of school, however, dropping out of school is not a new. The annual education statistics of 2019 (MoE, 2019) reported the declining drop out rate, but still, the drop out rate remains not negligible.

Anticipating to enhanced school climate, students engagement and learning infused with values of interconnected nature of reality and belongingness, there are exciting developments taking place in the educational system in Bhutan. Ministry of Education has launched a nation-wide reform initiative called Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) in 2010 with the intended goal of embedding the Gross National Happiness (GNH) values and principles in the schools through a more holistic approach including extra-curricular programmes and curricular programmes (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010; Sherab, 2013). Latter, the adoption of “Green Schools for Green Bhutan” emerged from the concept of ‘Green schools’ and through elaboration and promotion of its eight critical dimensions: environment greenery, intellectual greenery, academic greenery, social greenery, cultural greenery, spiritual greenery, aesthetic greenery and moral greenery (Powdyel 2014). These dimensions are now seen as a part of the school self-assessment tool.

The nationwide reform initiative of EGNH and Green School for Green Bhutan, one of the focus areas of EGNH, has anticipated in creating school atmosphere that provides respect, care, support, warmth, and delight in the school (Powdyel, 2010). These school atmospheres are achievable with the infused GNH principles and values in the school curriculum at all levels, and through conserving and learning from the environment that facilitate children to grow and develop “green” intellectually, spiritually, culturally, aesthetically, academically, morally, and socially (MoE, 2012).
The initiative of EGNH across schools in the country and emphasized for continuity in the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024: Rethinking Education has helped not only to rethink educational policies and programmes, but it has also expected to enhance the quality of education for children, especially the attainment of the nine learning attributes (Thinley, 2016).

As desired, EGNH initiative is reported to have contributed to improving the physical and educational ambiance of the schools and brought positive behavior changes in both teachers and students (MoE, 2014). However, there is still need of subsequent studies that substantially examine the desired outcomes of the initiative on the prominent features of our school system such as school climate, student engagement and academic achievement of the student. For example, Sherab (2013) suggests a series of case studies in schools to document exemplary EGNH practices; to determine salient features of EGNH, and its desired success in the school.

Although research elsewhere (e.g., Cohen & Geier, 2010; Wang & Holcombe, 2010; Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Thapa, Cohen, & D’Alessandro 2012) has recognized the impacts of distinctive culture of school climate on the students engagement and their academic achievement in the school, there is no clear studies in Bhutanese context that substaintally examined the relations among school climate, student engagement and students academic achievement. Moreover, based on the observers’ recommendations on the existing climate of the school, engagement of the student, and the current academic learning score of the school where this study was conducted, this study was conducted to understand the students’ perceptions of the current school climate that best support student engagement and academic achievement, further it explored the relations of school climate on engaging the students behaviorally, affectively and cognitively and their later influence on the students’ academic achievement.
Objectives of the study

This study aimed to explore the relationship between school climate, student engagement and academic achievement of higher secondary school.

Main research question

What is the relationship between school climate, student engagement and academic achievement of higher secondary school?

Sub-questions

1. How do students’ perceptions of current school climate components correlate with student engagement?
2. How do student engagement influence their academic achievement?
3. How significant is the school climate a predictor of student academic achievement?
4. Does student engagement mediate the relationship between student perceived school climate and their academic achievement?

Literature review

In this section, the review on the conceptualization of the school climate and student engagement, the relations between school climate and student engagement and their influences on the students’ academic achievement were presented.

School Climate

School climate has a profound impact on students’ mental and physical wellbeing (Thapa et al., 2012). However, there is still little consensus about which dimensions are essential in measuring school climate validly and often being used to encompass variant aspect of school environment (Thapa et al., 2013). The review of literature on the aspects of school climate by Wang and Degol (2015) categorized school climate into four dimensions: (a) structure of learning- which
focuses on the overall quality of the academic learning, including curricula, instruction, teacher training, and professional development; (b) student-teacher relationships which stresses the quality of interpersonal relationships within the school (student and teacher, among students); (c) Safety- represents the degree of social, physical and emotional wellbeing provided by the school, and the presence of effective, consistent, and fair disciplinary practices; and (d) physical environment refers to a school’s physical layout, geographic surroundings, and the internal and external resources available to support the school. These four dimensions of school climate, which is also called school climate components directly affect different dimensions of engagement in separate and dynamic ways (Ortega, et al., 2011; (Wang & Eccles, 2013) and it has direct relations to high school students’ academic achievement (Stewart, 2008).

As school reform initiatives around the globe explicitly focus on improving academic and social climate as a prelude to enhancing student academic and psychological wellbeing (Durlak et al. 2011), the malleability of school climate has become target for intervention to understand the students’ experiences of school life and to frame interventions subsequently (Maxwell et al., 2017; Wang & Degol, 2015). A critical goal for effective school reform is to identify features of the school climate that can be altered to improve student psychological wellbeing, engagement, and their academic achievement. As desired, MoE has initiated many exciting reform initiatives, launched of EGNH, Piloted School Autonomy School, Reform Programme and establishment of Central School, and Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024, to mention a few. Moreover, under its department and division has developed a series of policy framework and guidelines towards promoting the learning environment and students’ psychosocial wellbeing at school such as Curriculum Framework for School Guidance and Career Education, and Educating for Gross National Happiness: Refining Our School Practices, Guidelines for School Discipline Policy, A Guide to School Self-Assessment Tool and School Improvement Plan.
The initiation of these milestone have given impetus to the recognition of the importance to spiritual, environmental, social, and emotional wellbeing as integral to learning (Jamtsho, 2015), and some change and progress were noticed on enhancing school climate, learning atmosphere, students’ behaviour, and teachers’ moral ethics since the implementation of the initiative (MoE, 2012). While the momentum and progress were noticed as an outcome of the MoE initiative, subsequent to it, little is known about how this enhanced school climate has relationship with student engagement and leads to other distal outcomes of interest, such as academic achievement.

**Student engagement**

From the two decades to the recent studies on the student engagement, the theoretical and research literatures on student engagement generally reveal little consensus about definitions and contain substantial variations in how engagement is conceptualized and measured (Lam et al., 2014). However, the current study conceptualized the construct by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) that defined engagement as the multidimensional construct composed of three components: behaviour, affective and cognitive. Behavioral engagement refers to the practices that draw the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes. Emotional engagement covers both positive and negative affective reactions (e.g., interest, boredom, anxiety, and frustration) to activities, as well as to the individuals with whom one carries out the activities (teachers, peers). It also comprises identification and belonging to school. Cognitive engagement means willingness to apply the mental effort and the use of self-regulatory and other approaches to learning. These three components are dynamically interrelated within individuals and provide a rich characterization of how students feel, think and act (Wang & Peck, 2013). Research indicates that student engagement is also self-reinforcing, engaged students will demonstrate facets of each dimension (Appleton et al., 2008). Highly engaged students can be characterized as being interested in learning, relatedness with school, involved in
a variety of school curricular and extra-curricular activities, interconnected and belongingness with school, and generally well behaved (Fredericks et al., 2004).

Although research literatures has evidence that student engagement and its components are potential predictor and mediator between the school climate and desired learning outcome across academic, social, and emotional domains (Christenson & Reschly & 2012; Lawson & Masyn, 2015; Wang & Eccles, 2013), it is critical to understand the potential factors of student engagement as broadly put into two types by Skinner and Pitzer (2012), personal factors and social factor. They defined, personal factors are students’ self-perceptions or self-system processes which refer to durable assessments of multiple features of the self, such as self-efficacy or a sense of belongingness in school, social factors, also referred to as social contexts are supportive interpersonal relationships with teacher, adult and peer, and include their quality and nature, such as whether they are warm, dependable, or controlling. Previous studies have found out that student perceptions of their school climate are associated with their engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2013). From the disadvantage urban school sample, they have observed several aspects of school climate were related to student engagement in the school. Particularly, they highlighted the need for schools with aspects of emotionally supportive and caring school environment to influence student engagement. Similarly, other personal factors include socioeconomic status, indigenous status, speaking a language other than English at home, the number of work hours outside school and family structure (Gemici & Lu, 2014). The social factors such as supportive student-teacher relationships and safe learning environment was found to have significant relation with student emotional engagement (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Earlier studies have shown that students who have high levels of engagement have better grades and conduct at school, as well as higher levels of self-esteem and socially appropriate behaviors (Fredricks et al., 2016). As a result, the emphasis of educational system around the globe at present has been placed on student engagement in the school (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Reyes, et al., 2012).
along with the school climate, that is regarded as a system of school characteristics that influence both student engagement and their academic achievement (Wang & Eccles, 2013; Cornell & Huang, 2018).

Alike elsewhere, MoE commitment in promoting the positive learning environment, achieving quality and equity education, health and wellbeing, cultural diversity, and traditional knowledge and shared responsibility, aspiration for students learning, student engagement through values infused extra-curricular programmes, to mention a few, resonate in educational policies and programmes and it is also evident in Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024: Rethinking Education. However, having all these educational policies and programmes, it is vital to study the how the system of school characteristics interact each other towards achieving its desired outcomes, as it guides school authorities to gauge the impact of their school environment influences on the desired outcomes and frame intervention accordingly (Konold et al., 2018).

**School climate and student engagement**

While numerous studies elsewhere (eg., Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Thapa, Cohen, & D’Alessandro, 2012; Wang & Eccles, 2013) has recognized the distinctive climate of school impacts the students engagement and learning in the school, it is also vital to understand the degree to which students perceived school climate and its contextual factors meets those psychological needs to determines the level of students’ engagement in school (Wang & Holcombe, 2010).

Based on the existing research literatures from Thapa, Cohen, and D’Alessandro (2012); Wang and Degol (2016) and from context of the study, we have focus on for facets of school climate: student–teacher interpersonal relationship, structure of learning, school safety and physical environment. For example, supportive atmosphere as a result of student interpersonal relationship with teachers and peers were perceived to facilitating students’ identification with the school group, as well as positive feelings and behaviors regarding the school’s prevailing norms and values, which together promote student engagement (Fatou
Wang and Holcombe’s (2010), longitudinal study on effects of school climate on student engagement found teacher social support to be most strongly linked with student’s emotional engagement for middle school students. Similarly, Gauley (2017) found supportive relationships with adults were significantly associated with a middle school student’s emotional, but not cognitive school engagement.

The safe school physical environment, free of bullying, and opportunities for students to actively participate in their own learning are commonly associated with elevated levels of student attachment and engagement in school (Wang and Eccles 2012). Gauley (2017) using regression analysis and mediation tests to study effects of the school climate on school engagement showed that, student’s sense of feeling safe was directly associated with their level of their emotional engagement. The students’ perceived quality of instruction was also found to enhance the student engagement at a given school (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). The quality of instruction through which teachers make use of structuring and scaffolding strategies during their lessons is more likely to enhance their student engagement with school. The use of these learning structure is potentially reflective of teachers’ active interest in their students’ academic performance, which in turn motivate students to become more behaviorally engaged in their school work (Gemici & Lu, 2014).

There are also outside school factors that influence the student engagement in the school. For instance, gender and student’s socioeconomic status factors such as income, race, however, the socioeconomic factors were found to be having less impact on student engagement as compared to school climate. When coming to gender as a factor for student engagement, male students were found to be more emotionally engaged than females, but less cognitively engaged (Wang et al., 2013).

The student engagement as a desired outcome of school climate and facilitating the valuable link between school climate and student academic outcome
In keeping pace with educational reforms, the MoE initiated various reform initiatives, to mention few, New Approach to Primary Education (NAPE) in 1990s to recent EGNH, piloted school, and school reform program and establishment of central school. These initiatives have served unnoticeably as an effective strategy among many in managing the school climate and promoting students’ wellbeing and student engagement in the school. Through these initiatives, it is anticipated to have influenced the components of school climate and promoted the student engagement and academic achievement. The substantial literature appeared from the case study by Lhendup et al. (2018) learned that GNH values teach students the skills for wellbeing, positive emotion, a supportive relationship, and purposeful engagement in the school. They also found that, GNH values such as, ‘sense of responsibility’ helped students to become more responsible in completing their academic tasks on time, that further contributed to improved academic achievement.

**Student engagement and academic achievement**

Student engagement has long been recognized as one of the important factors in student learning and academic achievement (Lei et al., 2018; Fredricks et al., 2016; Lawson & Masyn, 2015), and high student engagement is consistently associated to academic outcomes such as course grades and achievement test scores (Fredricks et al., 2016). It was also found to be positively mediating between school climate and student academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Konold et al., 2018).

Many research literatures has reported the positive correlation between the dimensions of engagement and academic achievement. At the sametime, variation of magnitude of each dimension of engagement on academic achievement were also
reported in many studies. For instance, a meta analysis study by Lei et al. (2018) on relationships between student engagement and academic achievement have reported the highest average effect size between behavioral engagement and academic achievement, followed by the effect size for cognitive engagement, with emotional engagement being the lowest. A study by Patrick et al. (2007) examined relationships among classroom social environment, engagement, and achievement among early adolescents and found that, classroom climate was positively related to cognitive and behavioral engagement, in turn, behavioral engagement positively influenced the student math grade. Similar finding was observed in the study by King (2015) and concluded that academic achievement was positively correlated with behavioral and emotional engagement. Further, the evidence of effect size variation was found in a short longitudinal study by Wang and Holcombe (2010). Their study found that school climate was positively correlated with all dimensions of engagement, in turn, emotional engagement was significantly found to be correlated to student academic achievement as compared to other two dimensions. These studies provide how the school climate directly or indirectly predict the student academic achievement through influencing the student engagement. It also draws the mediating role of student engagement between school climate and student academic achievement.

However, other studies (eg., Appleton et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2013; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008; Shernoff, 2010) did not reach to similar conclusion and in some studies researchers have not even found any significant correlation between student engagement and academic achievement. This inconsistency relationship between the domains of student engagement and academic achievement seek more studies in different context.

Method

This study employed a quantitative research method using survey research design. The quantitative analysis of nationally representative data sets, regional data sets, or local data sets where school climate surveys are given, provide a understanding
of the relations of school climate influencing student engagement and academic achievement of the schools (Davis & Warne, 2015). The survey research design often based on survey questionnaire are relatively unbiased representation of population and responses, have uniqueness since information gathered is not available from other sources (Owens, 2002). Moreover, using survey research design in this study will avoid the social desirability bias (Nancarrow & Brace, 2000) while participants respond to the questionnaire.

**Participants**

Participant for the study were 212 (108 girls and 104 boys) students of grade 9th to 12th studying in one of the higher secondary schools in central Bhutan. The sample consist of 50.9% girls and 49.1% boys. The majority participants were from grade 11th to 12th (52.8%) as compared to grade 9th to 10th (47.2%). The sample is broadly representative of different socioeconomic levels, parent’s education background and the mixed-ability. In this study, only students were surveyed as they were consulted as “knower” in this process, and as valuable informants of when they are truly engaged, and of what they deem as conditions influencing their engagement (Bishop & Pflaum, 2004). The participant sampling from each class were done using formula to have fair samples from each class. \( n_Y = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \)

\[ n_Y = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} \] where \( N \) = population size, and \( e \) = alpha level, i.e. \( e = 0.05 \).

**Instruments**

Participants completed the two sets of self-report survey questionnaire that were adapted from the relevant literatures. A survey questionnaire on student engagement in the school was adapted from Lam et al. (2014), and this adapted questionnaire items on the student engagement have shown to be both reliable and valid in prior research conducted in 12 countries (Lam, et al., 2014). A questionnaire for school climate survey was adapted from La Sall et al. (2018) and have clear coverage on all dimensions of school climate. The variables that measured the school climate and student engagement were rated on five point-scales (one to five) with one being the lowest score and five being the highest with
three as neutral. The five-point scale was used, as it is readily comprehensible to respondents and increase the response rate (Devlin et al., 1993; Hayes, 1992). The data for academic achievement were obtained from their recent examination result in percentage. The adapted questionnaires were submitted to three subject experts for content validation and contextual appropriateness and applicability. Upon suggestions from the expert, the items were further simplified and some inappropriate items to our context were excluded. The reliability of both the instrument was established through pilot test involving 80 participants from the focused school. The internal consistency of alpha .935 was obtained indicating the items were valid for implementation.

**Procedure**

The student participants were recruited based on their consent and with the approval from the head of the school and their parents. Prior to the survey, the participants were briefed on maintaining confidential of their responses and safe storage of data obtained from them. They have completed the two set of self-reported survey questionnaires after the end of their annual examination. Questionnaire items were also explained in Dzongkha during the survey time to avoid discrepancy between intended measure of the items and participants understanding of it.

**Data Analysis**

The data obtained were all analyzed using SPSS (version 22.0). Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were first calculated for the components of both school climate and student engagement. Pearson correlation coefficient was then computed to examine the correlation between the components of school climate on student engagement, and domains of engagement on academic achievement. Mediation analysis using PROCESS in regression was conducted to examine the relations between school climate and student academic achievement mediated by student engagement. The bootstrapping coefficient interval was used to examine the mediation effect and its statistical significance as
it has received the standard recommendation for this test (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

Results

The perceived school climate

The descriptive analysis on the current school climate components perceived by the participants is presented in Table 1. The student perceptions on student-teacher relationship (M = 21.34, SD = 4.77) appears to be on higher side as compared to other components. The findings show that, of the four components of school climate, student exhibit much higher perception that they have good relationship with their teacher - followed by structure of learning (M = 20.10, SD = 5.06), school safety (M = 14.60, SD = 3.44) and physical environment (M =13.08, SD =3.70).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the student perception of components of school climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-teacher relationship</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of Learning</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>20.10</td>
<td>5.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Safety</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student engagement variation

Table 2 presents the student perceptions of their engagement across three domains of engagement in the school. The examination of their means across the cognitive engagement had significantly higher mean (M = 43.39, SD = 9.07) while compared to behavioural engagement (M = 41.33, SD = 7.20) and emotional engagement (M = 31.70, SD = 6.32). The student perceptions in relation to
emotional engagement was found to be significantly low as compared to other domains of engagement.

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics for student engagement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Engagement</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>31.70</td>
<td>6.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Engagement</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>41.33</td>
<td>7.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Engagement</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>43.39</td>
<td>9.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation between school climate and student engagement**

One of the main questions of this study was to examine the relationship between their perceptions of their current school climate and student engagement. The correlation analysis illustrated in Table 2, showed a significant correlation between the overall school climate and the student engagement ($r = .595$, $r^2 = .354$, $p < 0.01$). Although there was a significant relationship between the variables, it is important to note that the correlation coefficient was not too high but $r^2$ value (.354) shows that the school climate components has correlation with student engagement, and explain 35.4% of the variance in student engagement.

The correlational analysis between student perceptions of the components of school climate and student engagement showed that the physical environment ($r = 0.392$, $r^2 = 0.281$, $p< 0.01$) had significantly higher correlation with student engagement while compared to school safety ($r = 0.529$, $r^2 = 0.278$, $p < 0.01$), student - teacher relationship ($r = 0.485$, $r^2 = 0.235$, $p < 0.01$), structure of learning ($r = 0.443$, $r^2 = 0.196$, $p < 0.01$). The least correlation was found between the student perceptions of structure of learning and student engagement.
Table 3. Correlation between school climate components and student engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. School Climate</td>
<td></td>
<td>.813**</td>
<td>.855**</td>
<td>.781**</td>
<td>.817**</td>
<td>.751**</td>
<td>.595**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Student-teacher Connection</td>
<td></td>
<td>.658**</td>
<td>.624**</td>
<td>.547**</td>
<td>.428**</td>
<td>.485**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Structure of Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>.622**</td>
<td>.656**</td>
<td>.476**</td>
<td>.443**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td>.554**</td>
<td>.443**</td>
<td>.529**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Physical Environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>.581**</td>
<td>.392**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Student Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlation between student engagement and academic achievement

Table 4 indicate the correlation analysis between the domains of student engagement and academic achievement. The correlation of emotional engagement was significant with academic achievement \( (r = .182, r^2 = 0.033, p< 0.01) \), similarly with the cognitive engagement and academic achievement \( (r = 0.155, r^2 = 0.024, p< 0.05) \) at confidence interval of 95%. However, no significant correlation was observed between the behavioral engagement and academic achievement.
Table 4. Correlation between student engagement components and academic achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emotional</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.583**</td>
<td>.493**</td>
<td>.182**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Behavioral</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.674**</td>
<td>.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cognitive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.155*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Academic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Relationship between school climate and academic achievement mediated by student engagement

Mediation analysis using PROCESS macro for SPSS 22 was run to explore the student engagement mediating the relation between perceptions of school climate and academic achievement. Figure 1 shows the relation of school climate (X) with academic achievement (Y) was mediated by student engagement (M).

In the mediational model using regression as presented in Figure 1, the regression on student perceptions of school climate significantly associated with student engagement, \( b = .64, t(210) = 10.72, p = .000 \). The \( R^2 \) value show that school climate explains 35.4% of the variance in the student engagement, and the fact positive value of \( b \) shows that the relationship is positively significant. The student engagement for academic achievement in presence of school climate was found to be significant, \( b = .108, t(210) = 3.112, p = .002 \). The \( R^2 \) value of 0.44, which explain 44.1% variance in the academic achievement by the student engagement. However, the school climate was not significant predictor of academic achievement after controlling the mediator, student engagement, \( b = .027, t(209) = .689, p = .492 \) and misses the statistical significance of \( p < .05 \) with the 95% confidence resides somewhere between -.0515 and .1069. The analysis
of the regression of academic achievement predicted by the student perceptions of school climate in presence of student engagement revealed significant relation, $b = .090$, $t(209) = 2.089$, $p = .038$.

Fig 1. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between school climate and academic achievement mediated by student engagement. $p < 0.05$.

The most relevant to the mediation hypothesis was the estimate of the indirect effect of school climate ($x$) on academic achievement ($y$) via student engagement ($m$) (Hayes, 2009). To examine the mediational role of student engagement on the school climate and academic achievement, the indirect effect of school climate on the academic achievement via student engagement was tested using a percentile bootstrap estimation implemented with the PROCESS macro (version 3.4) with 5,000 bootstrap. If the bootstrap-confidence interval (CI) for the product of school climate and student engagement does not include zero or integrate different sign, it will provide evidence of a significant indirect effect of school climate on academic achievement through student engagement, thus having mediational role (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Hayes, 2009). The results indicated an indirect coefficient, $b = .018$, SE = .032, 95% CI [-.075, -.015] with the confidence interval integrating same sign. The result showed that, there was
significant indirect effect of school climate on academic achievement via student engagement, thus, it is concluded that there is compelling evidence of mediation effect of student engagement between school climate and student engagement.

Discussion

The findings of this study corroborated the theoretical conceptualization of the components of school climate, domains of student engagement and student academic achievement. The correlational analysis shows the positive correlation between the student perceptions of school climate and student engagement, and between the domains of student engagement and academic achievement. Single mediation model in regression analysis indicates the student engagement positively mediated the relationship between the school climate and academic achievement of the student.

Although contextually different, the correlational analysis of the study supports the past studies in revealing the positive correlation between the high school student perceptions of their school climate and student engagement in the school (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Wang & Eccles, 2013, Wang & Holcombe, 2010), and between the high school student engagement and their academic achievement (Lei et al., 2018; Fredricks et al, 2016; Lawson & Masyn, 2015).

The result of the study showed a significant correlation between the all the components of school climate and student engagement. However, when analyzing the correlation between each component of school climate and student engagement, of the three components of school climate, physical environment was appeared to be significantly higher in correlation with student engagement compared to other components - school safety, student - teacher relationship and structure of learning. This finding was consistent with findings of earlier studies by Wang and Degol (2015); Wang and Eccles (2012); Wang and Holcombe, (2010) that, safe physical environment, free of bullying, and supportive student and teacher relationship elevated the levels of student attachment and engagement in school. Despite the studies in different contexts, the consistency of this study
finding with past studies could be of the common psychological aspects of the student attributed by the safe physical environment, supportive student and teacher relationship and school safety. For instance, safe physical environment and supportive student and teacher relationship maintains the students’ emotion, safe and secure in learning activities and thereby instilling high engagement in the school (Gemici & Lu, 2014; Gauley, 2017). The other plausible reason for indicating significant correlation between the components of school climate and student engagement in the present study context could be enhanced emotional wellbeing and engagement (both curricular and extra-curricular activities) through MoE initiative of EGNH and through green school initiative across the schools anticipating in creating school atmosphere that provides respect, care, support, warmth, and delight in the school (Powdyel, 2010). It is indicative that, this possible reason for this finding of the study is revealing the impact of EGNH and green school initiative in the school. Earlier it was also reported to have contributed towards improving the physical and educational ambiance of the schools and brought positive behavior changes in both teachers and students (MoE, 2014).

Although there are numerous researches on the relationship between the dimensions of school climate and the student engagement, the results so far have found to be inconsistent (Lei et al., 2018). For instance, the academic achievement was positively correlated with behavioral and emotional engagement (King (2015); with cognitive and behavioural engagement (Patrick et al., 2007); with only behavioral engagement (Lei et al., 2018), and only emotional engagement (Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The other studies (eg., Appleton et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2013; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008; Shernoff, 2010) did not have even found any significant correlation between student engagement and academic achievement. Taken together, the findings in these studies indicate that different domains of student engagement have differing correlations with academic achievement. Similarly, the finding of this study is inconsistent with the findings of earlier studies. The study revealed that, academic achievement was significantly correlated with emotional engagement and cognitive engagement (see Table 4). The indicated higher mean
(M = 21.34, SD = 4.77) for the student and teacher relationship had possibly influenced the student academic performance. For instance, the supportive relationship from teacher can enable students to share their personal problems to teachers without fear; this in turn will help teachers to respond appropriately to students with timely counselling and support that are crucial for improving students’ academic performance. Other plausible contextual reason for the positive correlation could be due to enhanced wellbeing of students through the implementation of EGNH that promotes the GNH values such as, ‘sense of responsibility’ that helped students to become more responsible in completing their academic task that further contributed to their academic achievement (Lhendup et al., 2018). It is surprising to note that, the relationship between student behavioral engagement and academic achievement was not significant. On other hand, the indicated mean for student perceptions of behavioral engagement (M = 41.33, SD = 7.20) was not at the least compared to other dimensions of student engagement. A possible explanation for this result could be that students who get poor grades do not have a good foundation of skills that help them learn, so they have difficulty getting good grades even when they attempt to engage more in behavioral engagement.

For the main proposition of this study, single mediation model was tested for relationship between student perceptions of school climate and student academic achievement mediated by student engagement. The tested model indicates the significant direct effect of the school climate on the student engagement. Similarly, the significant direct effect of the student engagement on student academic achievement was observed. After controlling the student engagement, there was no significant effect of school climate on the academic achievement. Interestingly, there was significant indirect effect observed for school climate on the student academic achievement through student engagement. This indicate that there is mediation effect of student engagement between school climate and student academic achievement. This findings are substantially consistent with previous studies focused on intermediary role of student
engagement in relationship between the student perceptions of school climate and their academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Konold et al., 2018; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The plausible reason for this findings could be due to having supportive student and teacher relationship, and having quality learning structure as indicated in higher mean (see Table 1). The supportive relationship with teacher creates positive emotional climate for learning and demonstrate that the classroom is a safe and valuable place of learning (P. A. Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). As a result, students feel more connected and engaged in learning, and become more successful academically. Similarly, the quality of instruction through which teachers make use of structuring and scaffolding strategies during their lessons is more likely to enhance their student engagement and become more behaviorally engaged in their academic task (Gemici & Lu, 2014).

Implications and conclusion

The current study examining the relationship between the student perceptions of school climate, student engagement and academic achievement of higher secondary school will help teachers to better understand the students’ school experiences and their engagement in the school. It will also provide direction for teacher in striving for positive school climate that promote the student engagement and academic achievement. The following implications are discussed based on the findings of the study.

First, finding from this study indicate relatively low level of student perceptions of the physical environment of the school, and student engaged least in the emotional engagement. This relatively low perceptions of the school physical environment and their low involvement in the emotional engagement will adversely affect the student engagement in other domains of engagement and their academic subsequently. Therefore, it is important for the head of the school and teachers to understand the existing climate of the school to develop the physical environment of the school that promote students’ emotional wellbeing and student engagement across the domains of engagement.
Second, the correlation between the structure for learning and student engagement was observed least as compared to other components of the school climate. This indicates teacher lacking the efforts in providing the quality teaching and learning experiences to students. Student perceived that the quality of structure of learning at given school enhance their behavioral engagement. Students who are competent but either alienated from school or less intrinsically motivated may need more support in the form of more interesting and relevant activities in order to become engaged with learning. On the other hand, students who are passive about attempting academic tasks may need more structured and scaffolding, more guidance, and more clear instruction in teaching. Thus, teacher to be proactive and resourceful in providing quality structure of learning and scaffolding of task to the students. Moreover, this finding recommends to school to frequently conduct professional development course for teachers to keep them practically rich in providing quality teaching and learning experiences to the students.

Third, the correlation between student behavior engagement and academic achievement was found not significant. This result indicates low level of student engagement in activities that includes both curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school. When students who get poor grades do not have a good foundation of skills that help them learn, it will be difficult for them to get good grades even when they attempt to engage more in behavioral engagement. As some researchers have found the positive correlation between behavioral engagement and academic achievement (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Moreover, students are likely to participate in school and bond with school when teachers create a caring and socially supportive environment, because such school contexts meet students’ needs for relatedness. Therefore, it is important for school to create a caring and socially supportive environment, and conduct both curricular and extra-curricular activities to keep the students behaviorally engaged. At the same time, student should also actively participate in learning activities to keep them behaviorally engaged in the school.
Fourth, the student engagement has positively mediated the relationship between school climate and student academic achievement. It was also observed that, the student engagement is consistently associated to higher academic outcomes. Research has shown that student engagement is dynamically interrelated to school climate and student academic achievement (Fredricks, Filsecker, & Lawson, 2016). However, the school without appropriate and separate tools to monitor the school climate and student engagement, as a result, their influences and association with the student academic achievement may not be appreciated in school reform decision making. Therefore, it is important for school to monitor and keep the timely documentation on events happening in the school, so that later decision making and intervention program for the school climate and student engagement will be data driven one.

Limitations

The current study has several limitations. Firstly, the data for this study was mainly rely upon the self-reported information from the students on their school climate and engagement in the school. Their response to questionnaire may be influenced by their individual behavior or as socially desired. Thus, this limitation seeks multiple sources of data in future research to establish the validity of the study. Secondly, the student perception on school climate and their engagement in the school might be affected by others unobserved factors, the limitation of exogenous variables suggest future studies to examining the relationship with unobserved variables through empirical and longitudinal studies. Thirdly, the study did not examine the mediation role of each domain of the student engagement on the relations between school climate and academic achievement score of the students. The mediational result will be interesting if the future studies could examine the mediation role of each domain of student engagement on the relations between school climate and academic achievement. The context of this study was in one of the higher secondary schools in central Bhutan, therefore, findings are limited only to the school recruited in this study and generalizing the findings to rest of the schools in Bhutan may not be appropriate.
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A case study of professional development programs: Perspective and practices of Bhutanese ESL teachers and pre-service teachers

Tshering Tshomo

Abstract

Quite recently, the Ministry of Education, in Bhutan has introduced several steps to enhance teachers’ knowledge and competency through intensive and extensive professional development programs. Such programs are aimed at curbing the deteriorating quality of education in the nation. Although teachers are trained through various programmes, no empirical study has been done so far to provide information on how teachers perceive these programs. Therefore, this paper highlights Bhutanese teachers’ practices of professional development programs and how they perceive these practices. The findings of the study were collected through a semi-structured interview with three in-service ESL teachers and two pre-service ESL teachers. The study revealed that the teachers in Bhutan experience professional development programs at various levels- national, district and school. All these programs benefitted teachers since the content of the programs aligned with teachers’ classroom practices. These programs benefitted teachers in teaching effectively to better their students’ learning outcomes. However, effective implementation of the Professional Development (PD) programs is determined by teachers’ willingness to implement and process the change. Also, to have an effective implementation of programs there is a need of a policy that mandates teachers’ active participation and implementation of the program, and leaders’ support and guidance.

Keywords: Professional Development, Professional Learning Communities, ESL, ESL Teachers, Teaching and Teacher Education, Teachers’ Perception, Pre-service ESL teachers
Introduction

Quality education in schools is paramount for the future success of any nation and teachers play the pivotal role to ensure that children in schools receive an education that is relevant and realistic in the 21st century and beyond. In order to improve the quality of the education, Ministry of Education (MoE), (2014) had developed Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024. The blueprint was intended to examine current challenges and required reforms for the betterment of Bhutan’s education system to ensure that Bhutanese students not only receive best of nation’s wisdom but also global competence.

According to Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (2014), one of the issues was about the competency and classroom practices of teachers in Bhutan. The written essays of teachers as sample for the blueprint survey raised a concern on English language competency of the teachers after looking at their language structures. In addition, classroom practices of the teachers were observed to be mostly didactic and teacher centered in nature. In order to overcome these issues in the school, the blueprint recommended a mandate which required all the teachers in Bhutan to avail themselves of this 80 hour of professional development (PD) program in a year.

Aligning to the recommendation of the blueprint, at an Annual Education Conference (PPD, 2018), the MoE has resolved that all the teachers will have to avail themselves of the 80 hours of PD programs in a year with an expectation to improve teacher quality which would achieve the goal of ensuring a quality education. Nevertheless, MoE had envisioned the challenges for the teachers to do so at an individual level, therefore the conference further had a resolution that stated 40 hours of PD to be provided by MoE at national level for teachers and the remaining 40 hours to be provided at the district and school level.

Accordingly, the MoE provided 40 hours of PD to teachers nationwide starting from 2016. So far almost all the teachers are expected to have attended two Nation Based In-service Programs (NBIP) in the years 2016 and 2017. In 2016,
teachers across the nation were trained on “Transformative Pedagogy” which focused on Kagan’s Cooperative Learning Structures to transform teachers’ teaching practices inside the classroom. Later, in 2017, teachers were given a workshop on “English for Effective Communication” to improve their communication skills and language competency. These NBIPs were of 40 hours duration each.

In addition to these NBIPs, teachers in the schools were aware of achieving additional 40 hours of PD programs through District Based In-service Program (DBIP) and School Based In-Service Programs (SBIP). Teachers who had availed themselves of PD programs at national and district level further disseminated the information in the form of SBIPs at the school level. Hence, it was noticeable that various forms of PDs were administered across the nation at various level: national, district and school.

Since 2016, teachers have been availing themselves of PD programs at various levels to fulfil the mandate of the Annual Education Conference that states the requirement of 80 hours of PD to be availed by each teacher in a year. However, little is known about the PD practices in the schools of Bhutan and how teachers perceive these PD practices. Surveying and collecting information from all the school teachers in regard to this subject is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, current study is limited to one school practice and specifically the practices and perceptions of the English teachers of that school.

This paper focuses on teachers’ perception on the PD programs from two perspectives. The first involves English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers’ perception of the two NBIPs of 40 hours each that they had attended in 2016 and 2017. The second underpins the perception of ESL teachers and pre-service teachers on the current practices of carrying out PDs in their schools and the impact of the program on their instructional practices and the students’ learning outcomes. Thus, the study intends to answer the following research questions:
Research Questions

1. How do Bhutanese ESL pre-service and in-service teachers perceive professional development program practices?
2. What challenges do teachers face while implementing professional development programs?
3. Is there a change on teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs after implementing the professional development programs?
4. What factors need to be considered in implementing effective professional development programs?

This study aims at providing Ministry of Education, Bhutan, with data on the effectiveness of professional development practices in the schools. At a broader level the study would enable the ESL teachers to learn about teacher education that would improve the quality of their language, their practices to improve staff collegiality and the learner outcomes.

Literature review

Most teachers see professional development programs as the source of their growth to become a better teacher. Most teachers define their competency and efficiency in terms of their students’ outcome. Teachers believe that the PD programs not only impart knowledge and skills to enhance the students’ outcomes but also gain concrete and practical ideas to operate their classroom teaching and learning. It enhances both competency and satisfaction. (Guskey, 2002)

Also, professional development of the teachers is essential “to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persona toward an articulated end.” (Guskey, 1986, p. 5). The end here refers to the improvement of learning outcomes of the students. Teachers’ efficiency is determined by the outcomes related to both behaviors and activities of their students.

Most PD programs attempt to change teachers’ beliefs, attitudes and perceptions as these changes are presumed to help teachers alter their classroom
practices to improve their students’ learning. The PD programs should have practical ideas that enhance the learning outcomes in the students as targeted by the teachers. Nevertheless, Guskey (1986) hypothesises that the ineffectiveness of PD is the result of PD programs not being able to motivate teachers’ participation in such activities or they provided lesser or no practical applicability to teachers’ classroom practices.

Guskey (1986, 2002) proposes an alternative model for implementing effective professional development programs. An alternative model namely the ‘Model of Teacher Change’ focuses on three major outcomes of professional development: change in teacher’s classroom practices, change in student’s learning outcomes, and change in teacher’s beliefs and attitudes.

Firstly, any change from new PD programs is hard to exist without anxiety, time and effort. Therefore, teachers need to know that change is a slow and challenging process. Teachers cannot expect a positive result of the new program overnight in a short span of time without hardwork and some hurdles.

Secondly, teachers need to develop a procedure to collect feedbacks and evidences regarding students’ learning on a regular basis to sustain the PD programs which have been implemented. There will be a noticeable change in teacher’s beliefs and attitudes if they gain positive evidences in students’ learning from the program they have implemented.

Finally, it is crucial to pressure teachers to implement the new program even though their past program was successful since change in their beliefs and attitudes is expected after its implementation. Therefore, Guskey (2002) states that continued follow up, support and pressure provide ‘...the encouragement, motivation, and occasional nudging that many practitioners require to persist in the challenging tasks that are intrinsic to all change efforts.”(pg. 388)

Some aspects for effective professional development as recommended by Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011) are related to the content of the
programs, school culture and practices, and policies. The content of the PD program includes what teachers know, what they want to learn, and apply and practice what they have learned to their classroom practices. School needs to have a culture that promotes collaboration and collegial learning and problem solving amongst the teachers with sustained, continuous and intensive practices.

Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin (2011) also state significance of having following three features of policy for effective PD programs. There should a be a policy that firstly creates opportunities for teachers to practice through developing curriculum and assessment, setting standards, and evaluating practice. Secondly, fundings should be provided for professional infrastructure that support teacher participation and learning in collaboration and collegial manner within the school and with other schools and organizations too. Thirdly, policy must focus on enhancing PD programs that would nurture outstanding learning community of teachers rather than institutionalizing ideas that could be irrelevant and obsolete in the real field of teaching and learning.

Prior study of Borko (2004) indicate that developed country like USA too put teacher professional development as top priority to enhance the quality of students’ learning and promote teachers’ content knowledge and teaching practices. Study examining effectiveness of PD programs found that teachers need to be involved in the planning process of the PD programs since teachers shall have in mind their outcomes. All these PD programs need to be coherent and this can be done by knowing what teachers already know and what they need to know (Lee, 2005).

Another component that enhances effective PD is teacher collaboration. Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher (2007) state that professional development activities can be more effective when teachers collectively embrace the idea. In their study, teachers reported collective participation in PD lead to positive teacher change. Teacher collaboration for PD programs helps develop trust, support relationship and collegial interaction amongst the teachers. This
collegiatiy enhances effective implementation of the program to better students’ outcomes.

In regard to exploring perception on the continuing professional development program Grieve & Mcginley (2010) investigated Scottish teachers. The program engaged teachers in collaborative learning and sharing on their practices linking with scholarly theories. Participating in this PD program had enhanced teachers’ practices through constant reflection and self-evaluation. Teachers became more creative and innovative in imparting knowledges to students of varied abilities including special needs. The program undertaken by the teachers had positive impact on them since it boosted their self-confidence and esteem to teach better by reflecting critically on their practices by aligning to the scholarly theories. Therefore, their study showed that PD programs that were aligned to their knowledge of teaching practices was perceived positively by the teachers.

Avalos (2011) reviewed research manuscripts of ten years starting from 2000 to 2010 on teacher’s professional learning and its impact on teacher and student change. This review revealed that PDs involving teachers’ reflective experiences and collaboration resulted into positive teacher change and school culture. This is further supported by Ortactepe & Akyel’s (2015) study that explored effects of a professional development program on Turkish English as a foreign language teachers’ self-efficacies and classroom practices. The study found that teachers’ classroom practices improved and were more student centered with various enthusiastic activities after teachers had attended the PD programs. These teachers were noticed to have developed constructively through the PD process.

Another study (BABA, 2017) investigated the nature of professional development programs in Libya, and how effective they were through a qualitative study of four English teachers. The study asserted that PD programs targeted towards achieving quality teaching and learning were favored by the teachers. Teachers enthusiastically got involved into various kinds of PD programs to
enhance their teaching process since the PD programs helped them to not only teach but also collaborate with other teachers. Finally, school leaders could be the main stakeholders in fostering teachers to implement the programs successfully after discovering the relevant programs for the teachers to improve their teaching practices and student performances.

In a nutshell, common aspects of implementing effective PD programs as recommended by above scholars and researchers are that, while designing the program, one need to know teachers’ prior experiences and knowledge and what they need to know. The content of the program need to be coherent and aligning towards teachers’ teaching and learning practices. Another significant aspect to have a successful PD programs is through teachers’ collaboration amongst themselves and with other teachers and organizations. Such kind of collaboration can be fostered by the school leaders.

**Participants’ background and data collection methodology**

The study explored the beliefs of ESL teachers on PD programs. Data were obtained from a semi-structured interviews with three regular and two pre-service ESL teachers. The regular teachers have been teaching English to students of Lower Secondary School students for 15 to 26 years. The other two preservice teachers were on their teaching practicum of six months in the school. They taught English to students of grade four and six for six months. They were third year preservice teachers of Paro College of Education, Bhutan.

Unlike the pre-service teachers, the three regular teachers have attended two NBIPs in 2016 and 2017. In addition to these NBIPs they have attended numerous SBIPs and sat in their subject groups every week for their PD programs called Time-Tabled-Time (Triple -T). The pre-service teachers have attended two SBIPs and all the Triple-T programs during their six months’ practicum at the school.
Teachers met in their subject group for an hour every week to discuss on the PD topics. In the beginning of the term, teachers planned their Triple -T topics according to their needs to improve their daily teaching practices. Since the program is scheduled on a particular day at a specific time on a planned topic, it is called Time-Tabled-Time by the teachers of the school. Nevertheless, some topics popped up ad hoc according to teacher’s need in the midst of their daily teaching process. For this English subject department, teachers met every Thursday for an hour and some of the topics discussed were on continuous assessment, writing processes, cooperative learning structures, competency based test development and Bloom’s taxonomy.

Findings

In tune with the research questions, the findings generated from the semi structured focused group interview with three in-service and two pre-service teachers are categorized into four broad categories: (a) In-service and Pre-service Teachers’ Perception on their PD Practices and Most Effective PD Program, (b) Change on Teachers’ Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Teaching and Learning Outcomes, (c) Factors Affecting Effective Implementation of PD Programs, and (d) Aspects Needed to Consider for Effective Professional Development Programs.

While reporting the findings, the researchers have used pseudonyms Teacher 1, Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 for the three in-service teachers, and PT 1 and PT 2 for pre-service teacher participants to hide their identities.

a. In-service and Pre-service Teachers’ Perceptions on Their PD Practices and Most Effective PD Program

Under this category the participants have revealed how the PD programs have enhanced their instructional practices, and which kind of instructional practice was the most effective. Some of these are listed below:
Professional development practices and their impacts on teachers’ instructional practices

Bhutanese teachers have availed themselves of various kinds of PD programs starting from school to national level. All the three in-service teachers have the experience of attending all forms of PDs such as NBIPs, SBIPs and Triple-T. They have mentioned the positive impacts of these programs on their teaching practices inside the classroom.

Teacher 1 stated, “I have attended numerous workshops and PD programs at the national level, school level and I also have been attending Triple-T programs in schools. I see a lot of improvement in my own teaching practices.” Similarly, Teacher 2 asserted, “For me NBIPs, SBIPs, and Triple –T have tremendously helped me to mold myself as a better and effective teacher for my students.” Teacher 3 supported, “I have learned numerous strategies and skills and it have helped me in teaching and learning processes inside the classrooms.”

Professional development to update teachers’ instructional practices.

Professional development programs not only improved teachers’ instructional practices but also helped them in updating their practices in line with curriculum paradigm shift. Teacher 1 asserted, “Children then and now are different. So, we cannot go on resorting to the same old tools, strategies. With time we have to try and improve with the things we do inside the classroom through the PD programs.”

Impact of professional development programs on pre-service teachers

The pre-service teachers had no experience of attending PD programs at national level other than the course they had undertaken at the teacher education college. They had the experience of attending SBIPs and Triple-T programs at the school while undergoing their teaching practicum. These teachers found the programs beneficial for their teaching practices as beginning teachers.
PT 2 said, “After attending SBIPs and Triple-T in the school, I am able to improve myself in terms of classroom management, assessment tools and carrying out activities in the class.” PT 2 added, “These PD programs helped me to teach better in the class.”

PD programs have helped pre-service teachers to teach effectively and boost their teaching confidence. PT 2 said, “When we first came here, we did not know how to go about our teaching. PD programs have helped me a lot.” PT 1 further stated,

“I feel blest that I am here especially when I talk with friends in other schools. They do not learn and receive support from regular teachers and school administration like we do here. We are mentored and trained well to teach effectively through such programs.”

• **Most effective PD program**

Amongst the three PD programs- NBIP, SBIP, and Triple-T, both in-service and pre-service teachers found Triple-T the most effective program since the topics discussed in the program mostly aligned to their teaching practices inside the classroom.

PT 1 stated, “Triple-T is more beneficial since it helps us to focus on all the aspects of effective teaching skills and discuss on teaching process to improve my teaching.” Teacher 1 agreed,

“I agree with PT 1. Triple-T is effective compared to NBIP and SBIP.” Further, PT 2 asserted, “Triple-T is effective since it enabled me to implement the topic discussed. We discussed about assessment and I implemented it in my classroom. I have noticed that my students were able to focus and carry out their task well.”
Teacher 1 reported,

“I feel Triple-T gives room for English teachers to focus on developing four skills. At times we tend to divert our focus on teaching the literary text rather than focusing on the language skills. Triple-T programs remind us to not only focus on developing students’ language skills but teach students systematically and in an organized manner.”

She further added,

“Triple-T helps teachers to share their practices and allows other teachers to learn and implement some effective activities in their class too. They learn from each other through discussions. These discussions are all fruitful since it is all about classroom practices.”

Although NBIPs were found beneficial for the teachers, Triple-T was found more effective comparatively. Teacher 2 stated, “NBIP on 21st century transformative pedagogy has helped me teach language effectively.” Teacher 3 too reported, “NBIP on 21st century transformative pedagogy was beneficial but Triple-T was more beneficial.”

b. Change on Teachers’ Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Teaching and Learning Outcomes

In this section of the findings, the researcher have presented relationship between effective implementation of PD programs and teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs, and result of effective PD programs to better teachers’ instructional practices and students’ learning outcomes.

- Professional development and teacher’s self-efficacy beliefs

Teachers believed that PD programs could be effective and bring change in teachers if they have willingness to implement the programs. Teacher 1 reported, “Effectiveness of PD programs would depend on an individual teacher. If the
teacher tries to implement whatever is being learnt from the programs and follow-up them into their teaching process, I think the program can be effective.” Teacher 2 and 3 agreed with Teacher 1 and stated, “We also agree to Teacher 1 that effectiveness of PD programs would depend upon the attitude of the teachers.” To sum up, teacher 1 stated, “If the teacher is enthusiastic about learning, it makes all the difference.”

- **Professional development for self-improvement as a teacher**

Professional development was found effective for teachers to be knowledgeable and reflective teachers. Teacher 1 said, “I have become much experienced teacher through PD experiences. It has given me knowledge to improve my learning and reflect on my teaching experiences.”

In addition, PD programs were helpful for beginning teachers to teach effectively. Teacher 2 asserted, “At the beginning of my teaching career, I had a tough time teaching students and difficult time finding support from my colleagues since we hardly met in such PD programs. These programs are needed to help teachers teach effectively.”

- **Professional development improves students learning outcomes**

Teachers were able to notice positive changes and improved results in the students after they had implemented the PD programs in their classrooms. Teacher 1 said, “I taught my students since their Pre-primary and by the time they were in grade IV, I saw progress in terms of their academic achievement. Use of CL structures provided opportunities for my students to share and learn from each other.”

Teacher 2 supplemented, “I saw my students speaking out and volunteering to share their opinions which I think is the result of implementing the CL structures I have learned. I have implemented them after attending
the PD program and it helped in improving my students’ performances.”

PD program on Cooperative Learning (CL) structures had helped pre-service teachers in creating an effective lesson despite having attended the program for two hours as a Triple-T program. PT1 shared, “CL structures helped me in creating a fun-learning environment, in a way it helps in creating a comfort zone between the teacher and students. They get rid of hesitation and participate actively in the teaching and learning processes.” PT2 added, “And the program helped me in making my lesson very interactive since children felt free to interact with their teacher and friends.”

Further, PT1 reported, “I learned about writing process in Triple-T and implemented that in my class. I compared the work of my students’ present work from the beginning and found there was an improvement and quality was better.”

c. Factors Affecting Effective Implementation of PD programs

Despite effective implementations of PD programs, teachers face challenges in regard to time, resources, and receiving cooperation from the students while carrying out the program. Another factor that affects the successful implementation of the programs is the teachers’ resistance to change.

- Time and resource constraint, and students’ cooperation

Teachers face various kind of challenges such as time and resource constraints in implementing the PD programs. Teacher 2 said,

“Not all programs could be implemented easily. For example, following all the steps of writing process was time consuming. Another issue is the lack of resources. Most students do not bring in the resources and teacher needs to provide them with it.”
Similarly, the pre-service teacher faced challenges in gaining cooperation from the students. PT 1 said, “I have learned about creating conducive learning environment using ‘Cheers’ but students were hesitant to use them.”

- **Teachers’ resistance to change**

Conversely, most challenging task in implementing PD programs was teachers’ willingness and fear of change. Thus, they took time to accept the change and implement it in their classrooms. Teacher 1 reported,

> “Whenever we want to implement new things, it is always uncomfortable. So people don’t want to come out of their comfort zones. If we have to grow and change, we have to come out of the comfort zone. People do not want to accept change. They want to keep doing what they have been doing. So change is always hard because people face difficulties in implementing the new things in the class. We were not comfortable implementing the structures we have learned at ‘21st century transformative pedagogy training’ at the beginning. But accepting it as an effective teaching tools and practicing it persistently made it easier to use. Now the structures have become part of me and I don’t feel that I am doing something different.”

d. **Aspects Needed to Consider for Effective Professional Development Programs**

In order to have successful implementation PD programs in schools, there should be a strong policy that requires active participation of all the teachers and the school leader’s support.

- **Policy that mandates teacher’s active participation**

Teacher 1 stated, “Each teacher should come up with a topic for discussion so that it helps that particular teacher to reflect on their teaching processes and find a
solution to challenges they face inside their classroom.” PT 2 agreed and supplemented, “Also a mandate should be made for every individual teacher to share their expertise.”

PT 1 added, “At times teachers fail to implement the programs. Therefore, the coordinators must make mandatory for all the teachers to implement what was being learned and share about their experiences after the implementation.”

- **School leader’s support**

Support from the school leader was considered vital to implement PD programs effectively. Teacher 1 stated, “There should be support from the leaders. They are the main support. Our principal immensely support his teachers in developing themselves which helps in implementing the programs effectively in the school.” PT 2 supplemented, “Teachers cannot develop themselves where they do not have their leaders’ support. And then students do not learn ultimately.”

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Corroborating prior studies (Lee, 2005; Grieve & Mcginley, 2010; Ortactepe & Akyel, 2015; BABA, 2017; and Sener & Cokcsliskan, 2017), the ESL teachers - both in-service and pre-service have positive perception of the PD programs since the programs improved their instructional practices which ultimately improved their students’ learning outcomes. The PD programs enhanced experiences of senior teachers, beginning teachers and pre-service teachers to improve their instructional practices. The programs benefitted them in acquiring knowledge and keeping themselves updated with trending teaching practices.

Through the interview with the teachers, it could be concluded that PD program that met ESL teachers’ immediate need such as Triple-T were effective and beneficial for them as they mostly aligned with teacher practices. Poskitt (2005) posits that different teachers have different needs of PD programs therefore it is recommendable to have PDs that suit content and pedagogical needs of the teachers and schools. Moreover, such programs benefitted novice teachers to
receive support in their subject areas from their senior teachers teaching similar subjects. Avalos (2011) asserts that beginning teachers are at complex stage of learning as a teacher and they need mentoring from experienced teachers.

Conversely, Triple-T could have been effective as the program provide teachers to work collaboratively to better their students' learning outcomes. Penuel et al. (2007) assert such teacher collaboration for PD programs are helpful in developing trust, support relationship and collegial interaction amongst the teachers. In line with Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011), the program provided opportunity for teachers to support each other on their subject matters, pedagogical issues, or school reforms and finally it enabled them to practically apply theoretical knowledge gained into their classroom practices.

However, the effective implementation of the PD programs requires longer time span for teachers to process the programs. This study attests Lee (2005) and Bayar’s (2014) recommendation that school needs to give teachers ample time to implement the program learnt into their classroom practices and follow up on the program through feedback and evaluation since most teachers do not get enough time to implement the program.

Most challenging factor in implementing the PD program is the teachers’ resistance to change. Guskey (1986, 2002) states that any change is difficult to be implemented. Thus, the policy developers should develop policy that mandate teachers to implement the programs. Unless they implement the programs and experience positive outcomes, it would be hard to change teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs. While implementing, teacher should be mindful that the programs need to be implemented as a continuous process for longer span of time as recommended by Bayar (2014).

Also, school leaders’ support is vital in having an effective implementation of PD programs. As stated by Moore, Kochan, Kraska, & Reames (2011) school leaders determine the effectiveness of PD programs. Hence, they need to be more
aware of the significance of high quality PD and its planning and implementation with adequate skills, knowledge, and resources.

The study concludes that the PD programs benefit both pre-service and in-service teachers despite their number of years in the teaching field. Effective PD programs provide opportunity to novice teachers to interact and work with experienced senior teachers while these senior teachers renew their experiences as they play the roles of experts, mentors and teacher leaders (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 2011). The PD programs allow teachers to exchange the ideas they know and what they want to learn, and apply what they have learned to the classroom practices. Thus, there could be a policy requisite that provides incentive, grants, and resources for teachers to anticipate their needs for strong teacher community and collegial learning network amongst themselves.
Reference


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