

Pay Raise for Teachers in Bhutan: Impacts on Teachers' Morale, Motivation and Professional Practices

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Abstract

The study explored the Bhutanese education stakeholders' perceptions of the impacts of the pay raise on teachers' morale, motivation and professional practices. Pay is among the most important factors for teachers' morale, motivation and professional practices. The study collected quantitative data through questionnaires from 701 teachers and qualitative data through four focus group interviews with teachers and one-on-one interviews with four principals and one officer from the Ministry of Education. The findings revealed that teachers are partially happy with the pay revision. While teachers agreed that the pay raise has made their lives more comfortable and financially secure, the study pointed out that pay increase alone cannot raise teachers' morale and motivation and improve their professional practices. Other equally important factors include facilities, training opportunities, school environment, workload and school leadership. The study recommends that the government adopt a holistic approach that will raise the morale, motivation, and professional practice of teachers and ensure the achievement of quality education in the country.

Keywords

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Introduction

The Royal Government of Bhutan has increased salaries to motivate teachers and to reduce teacher attrition. In 1996, the Ministry of Health and Education took the initiative to offer a 15 to 45% teaching allowance to teachers on their basic pay depending on the three levels of professional qualification they possessed (Singye & Rinchen, 2016). The three levels included Primary Teaching Certificate (15%), Bachelor of Education (30%), and Postgraduate in Education (45%). The initiative aimed to attract better-qualified candidates into teaching (Kharka, Dema & Tshering, 2019) and to motivate the existing teachers. Further, over the years, teachers have been provided with salary increases whenever there was salary revision for other civil servants.

The government believes that classroom teachers are the major agents in changing the lives of Bhutan's children (Royal Education Council, 2010). Recognising the need to address the challenges and sacrifices teachers face, as well as to compensate for other shortcomings in

their professional environment, the government of Bhutan decided to make teaching a highly paid profession (Lamsang, 2019; Pem, 2019; Kharka, Dema & Tshering, 2019). The government endorsed a 35 to 55 per cent salary increase and a five to 15 per cent teaching allowance on the basic pay for the teachers in Bhutan in June 2019 (Ministry of Finance, 2019). This pay package is expected to motivate the teachers and reduce the teacher attrition rate (Pem, 2019). Further, Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers [BPST] recommends an additional allowance of 10 per cent for those categorised as proficient, 15 per cent for accomplished, and 20 per cent for distinguished teachers on their basic pay (Rinzin, 2019). In 2023, there was a national pay raise, and the teachers benefitted in the form of an increase in allowance.

Problem Statement

Teachers in Bhutan have always suffered low morale and motivation in the eyes of society. Low morale and motivation result from heavy workloads and poor working conditions (Kaka, 2017). In addition, the current trend in Bhutan suggests that graduates see teaching as the last option (Lamsang, 2019) in contrast to high-achieving students opting for teaching in some developed countries such as Finland and Japan. Teachers' morale and motivation are further aggravated by the limited professional training opportunities and low financial incentives. As a result, several experienced teachers leave the profession (See Table 1). They seek other job opportunities within or outside Bhutan to attain better social recognition, job satisfaction, and salaries that reflect their efforts (Marinette, 2019; Waiba, 2016). Other factors include lack of job satisfaction, school leadership, inadequate infrastructure and security measures (Aslami, 2013; Changying, 2007; Wangchuk & Dorji, 2020). It is also generally observed that early career teachers are enthusiastic and energetic, however, over time, they lose morale and motivation, especially when they see other civil servants do much better in life. The pay raise seems to have temporarily helped to retain teachers, as evidenced by a lesser number of teachers leaving the system in 2020 (See Table 1). However, while fewer teachers resigning in 2020 could be attributed to the salary raise for teachers, it can also be the result of the closure of international borders due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Table 1

Number of Teachers Leaving the Teaching Profession

| Year | Number of teachers leaving the system (Tshedup, Oct. 2021; Lamsang, Jun. 2023) |
|--------------|---|
| 2016 | 271 |
| 2017 | 299 |
| 2018 | 322 |
| 2019 | 464 |
| 2020 | 163 |
| 2021 | 353 |
| 2022 | 868 |
| Total | 2740 |

Aims of the Study

The study aimed to investigate the education stakeholders' perceptions of the impact of the 2019 salary raise on their morale, motivation and professional practices. Despite numerous factors, the Education Ministry sees salary as a morale-raising factor. Therefore, the salary raise for teachers came following a deep thinking and understanding that it is an investment and not an expense (Lamsang, 2019). It is generally understood that an increase in salary boosts teachers' morale and motivation. Therefore, this study aimed to authenticate such conceptions and explore alternatives, if any, that will help motivate teachers. The study also aimed to make recommendations that can assist in lifting the morale and motivation of teachers and encouraging them to serve the nation's children with increased dedication and commitment.

Literature review

Teachers play an important role in shaping human history through their influence on the achievement of teaching-learning activities (Can, 2015). Teachers are architects of students' behaviour, ensured through the provision of motivation, support and guidance that students need to succeed (Başaran, 2000). Like any other professionals, teachers also need motivation to continue to have psychological ties to their school, students and subjects. The various factors for teachers' motivation include compensation, job design, working environment, performance management system, school leadership and training opportunities (Tshedup, 2021) that are commensurate with the qualifications, abilities, experience of teachers and the market rates. On the contrary, low salary and a lack of respect for teachers negatively impact their morale (Willis & Varner, 2010). For instance, Reid (2010) found that American teachers' morale in Lodi Unified School District was low because they felt undervalued as professionals during the district's salary bargaining and negotiations about compensation.

Rewards and incentives for teachers influence teacher recruitment, retention, morale and motivation. Although pay levels do not directly determine teacher performance, they are generally viewed as the key to improved education. For instance, Indonesia raised salaries by more than a quarter for a subset of teachers (Evans, 2019). They randomised the roll-out across schools, which allowed the researchers to compare schools that got the raise early on with the schools that got the raise much later. The finding showed that the former group of teachers was happier and less likely to hold a second job (Evans, 2019). Similar studies were conducted in Uruguay (Cabrera & Webbink, 2018), Gambia and Zambia (Evans et al., 2022), where teachers' salary was increased by 25 per cent, and the result was consistent with the above finding.

Improving teachers' morale has many benefits. It can help teachers maintain a positive attitude and be happier at work. According to Govindarajan (2012), improvement in teachers' morale is important to develop a positive attitude to their profession. Teachers' higher morale forms a better environment for students' learning. Moreover, teachers' morale, motivation and performance are a reflection of the many dynamics within an organisation. UNESCO (2014) found that the quality of education improves when teachers receive the necessary support, with pay raises being one important form of this support.

Motivation is necessary for teachers to achieve their goals (Harmer, 2001). Studies have revealed that motivated teachers are more apt to persevere, work harder, and produce high-quality work (Fieldman, 1996). In intrinsic motivation, people participate in an activity for their enjoyment, not for the reward it will get them. However, in extrinsic motivation, people participate for a tangible reward (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). Pay raise is an extrinsic motivation. However, despite the types, motivation helps teachers to become efficient, zealous, high-performers, problem solvers, high-perceivers, effective communicators, and contribute to society (Eryaman & Riedler, 2010). On the other hand, low job motivation causes stress and increases ineffectiveness by depressing teachers' psychology. Good education is possible only with good teaching, which largely depends on teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Safari & Rashidi, 2015).

Pay raises can motivate teachers to improve and innovate their teaching practices, which can lead to an improvement in students' achievement. Pay raises are also likely to encourage teachers to alter their teaching approaches, which include changing the way they teach, modifying the content of their curriculum, working longer hours, and undergoing more professional development. These efforts help enhance students' achievement (Milanowski, 2003; Wiley et al., 2010).

Pay increases for teachers have other benefits. The benefits include improved teacher retention and student performance, a larger percentage of high-achieving college students taking courses in education, and an increased likelihood of hiring teachers who earned top scores on their educator certification exams. The salary raise seems to have helped in the retention of teachers in Bhutan. Until 2019, there was a steady rise in teacher attrition (Table 1). In contrast, following the pay raise in 2019, 2020 saw the lowest teacher attrition. A total of only 163 teachers left the profession, of which 112 teachers voluntarily resigned (Tshedup, 2021). It is likely that the pay raise has a positive impact on teacher attrition in the country. However, other factors, such as the Coronavirus pandemic, would have contributed to the decrease in teacher attrition. Regarding the high achieving students joining teaching, the colleges of education shortlisted high achieving class 12 graduates to enrol in Bachelor of Education (Primary and Secondary). The marks for Bachelor of Education shortlisted applicants ranged from 74% to 87% (Paro College of Education, 2021; Samtse College of Education, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

While there are several theories of motivation related to pay raises and financial incentives, this study considered three theories. The theories include Herzberg's Two-factor theory (Herzberg, 1959), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory (Maslow, 1943), and Adam's Equity theory (Adams, 1963). These theories, directly or indirectly, consider salary as one of the important elements that impact teachers' motivation, morale and professional practices. In Herzberg's theory, the two factors are motivation and hygiene. The pay raise appears in the form of wage and security under the Hygiene factor and as recognition under the Motivation factor. In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory, pay appears in most of the hierarchies, such as

an enabler for food, clothing and shelter in physiological needs, as financial security in safety needs, and as acceptance and recognition in love and social needs. Generally, people earning higher pay are accepted and respected more. Another element common in the two theories is working conditions and safety. Presently, there are concerns in Bhutan regarding working conditions, such as teachers being overworked with minimal facilities and safety for their health and life (Tshedup, 2021). Salary is the cornerstone of the two theories but not the most important factor for teachers. There are other elements, such as relationships, belongingness, and advancement. Adam's Equity theory suggests that if teachers undergo heavy workloads, they should be compensated with proportionate pay. The theory emphasises the balance of contribution and benefit received or effort and output. A better-performing employee should get better pay than an underperforming employee. With this understanding, teachers deserve higher pay as they are understandably working more hours, considering both academic and non-academic functions teachers perform.

Methodology

Research Paradigm, Approach and Data Collection Methods

This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm that focuses on the interpretation of individuals' understanding of an issue in a variety of ways (Sheppard, 2006). It is possible that teachers and principals understand and interpret the salary raise and its impacts in a number of ways. To understand this subjective meaning, the study considered teachers' and principals' perspectives and co-created their subjective knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Adopting the explanatory mixed methods approach, the study administered 15-minute online surveys using 5-point Likert scales (1 indicating strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree) to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in a two-month period. The survey items were designed based on the three theories of motivation and the existing literature. Following the findings of the quantitative data, the qualitative data was collected through four focus group discussions with teachers and one-on-one interviews with four principals through face-to-face and online mode due to the restrictions posed by the Coronavirus pandemic. In addition, an interview was conducted with a relevant officer at the Ministry of Education. The interview questions sought respondents' perceptions on the pay raise and its impact on teachers' moral motivation and professional practices. There were some questions seeking their views and observations on the factors and trends of teachers leaving the profession.

Sampling and Data Analysis Methods

Voluntary sampling was used to collect data through an online questionnaire, with 701 teachers from various school levels across all 20 districts responding. The location of the schools was also considered, as it is likely that urbanity or rurality may impact the morale, motivation and professional practices of teachers. A total of 324 rural and 377 urban teachers responded to the questionnaire. There were more respondents from urban schools, possibly due to a greater number of schools in urban areas and better Internet connectivity (Figure 1). Further, the gender of the study participants was also taken into consideration. It is possible that different genders may perceive the pay raise and its benefits differently. The online questionnaire participants consisted of 428 male and 273 female teachers (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Location of Schools

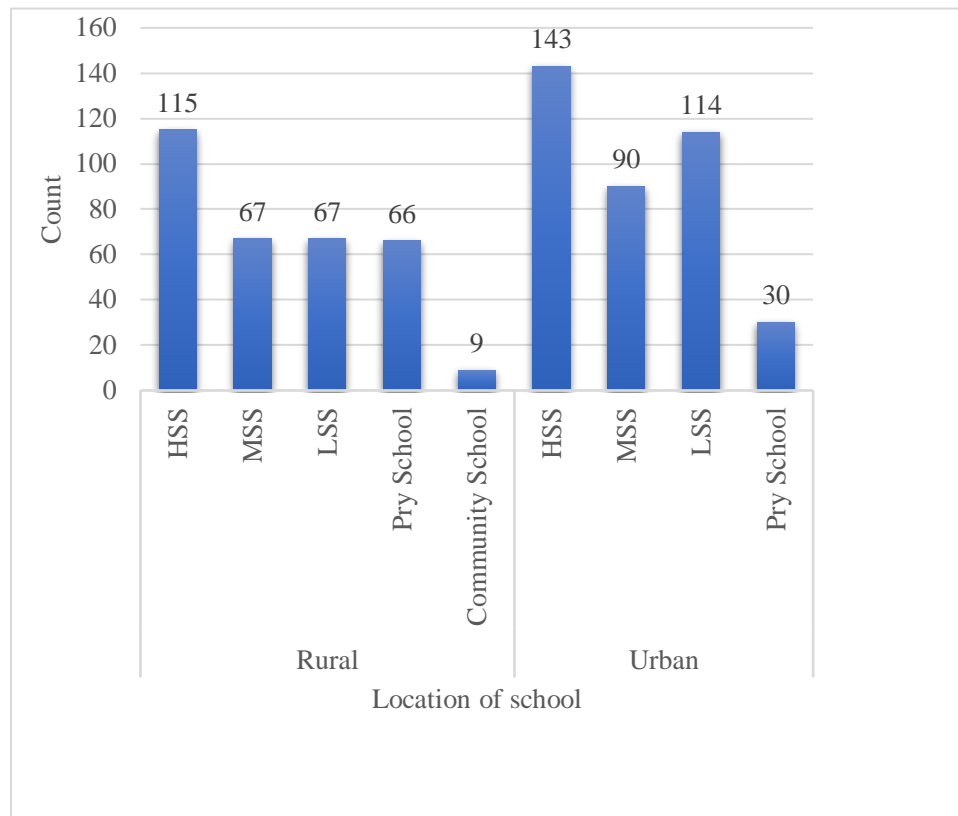
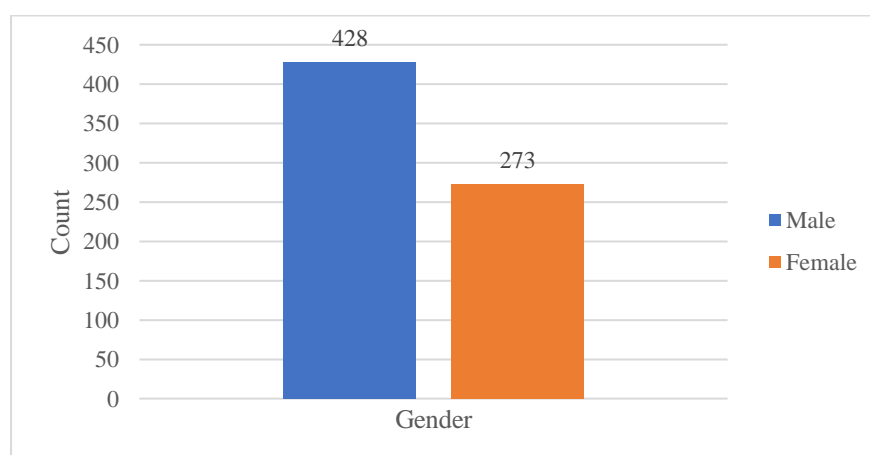


Figure 2

Gender of Teachers Who Responded to the Online Questionnaire

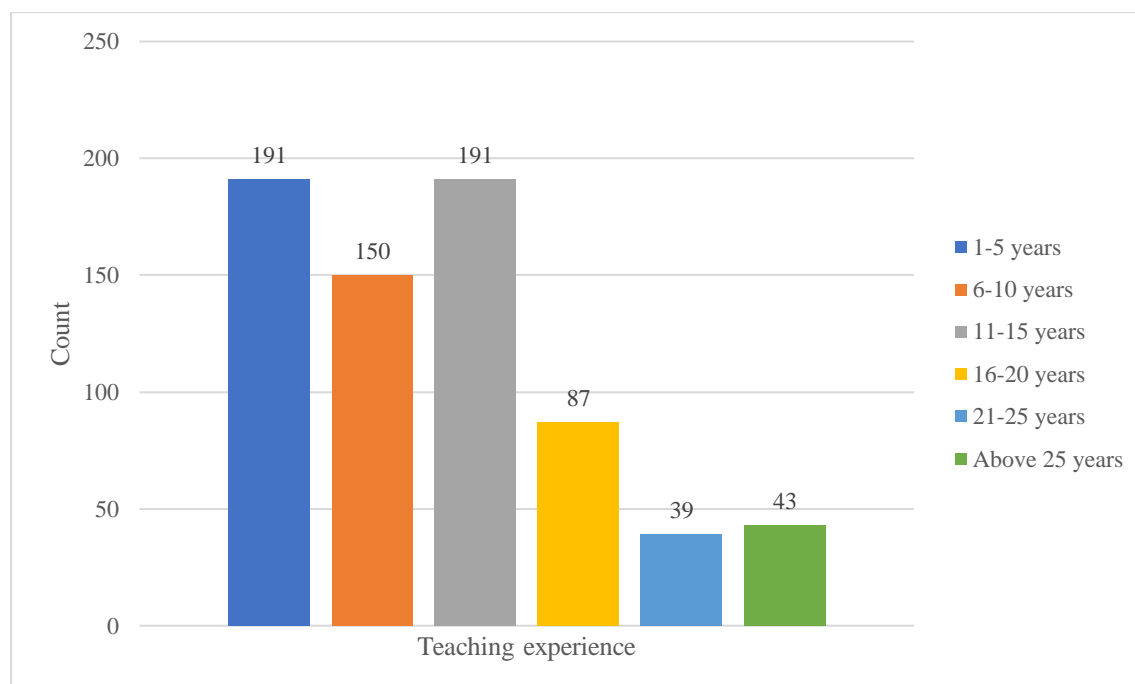


The study also considered the number of years the survey respondents have served as teachers. Figure 3 shows that more younger teachers, that is, less than 15 years of teaching experience, have responded to the questionnaire. There were 191 respondents for 1 to 5 years,

150 for 6 to 10 years and 191 for 11 to 15 years of teaching experience. On the other hand, there were comparatively fewer respondents from the senior category of teachers (16 to 25 years plus). This could be due to the smaller number of senior teachers in the system and the lack of access to the online survey facilities.

Figure 3

Number of Teachers by Teaching Experience



Convenience sampling was used to select participants for the focus group discussion and one-on-one interview, as shown in Table 3. There were almost equal numbers of male and female teacher interview participants. However, all the principals and the Ministry of Education [MoE] official interview participants were male.

Table 3

Number of Focus Group Discussions and One-on-one Interviews

| Interviews | Numbers of interviews | Male | Female |
|--|-----------------------|------|--------|
| Focus group discussion with teachers | 4 | 11 | 9 |
| One-on-one interview with principals | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| One-on-one interview with MoE official | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Quantitative analyses were undertaken with version 28.0 of the statistical software package SPSS. Percentage, mean, standard deviation and Pearson's correlation were used to analyse survey data. On the other hand, interview data were analysed thematically as seen as appropriate to the interpretivist paradigm. The findings from the two sources were triangulated to gain a clearer and more holistic perception of teachers' morals, motivation and professional practices.

For the purpose of identification, teacher participants for the interview data were coded as DT1, DT2, ..., PT1, PT2, ST1, ST2, ..., TT1, TT2, ... for teachers; SP1, DP1, PP1, TP1 for principals, and EO1 for the education officer. The alphanumeric codes suggest the location of the schools and their profession, that is, whether they are teachers, principals or officers at the Ministry of Education.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented in themes such as the level of teachers' happiness, motivation, morale, quality of teaching, attraction and retention, commitment, and financial security.

Level of Teachers' Happiness

The mean for the item on teachers' happiness on the current pay package is 3.98, which falls in the Agree category. This indicates that teachers agree that they are happy with the current pay package. A low standard deviation (0.933) indicates that teachers have similar opinions toward the item on happiness. Similarly, the qualitative data suggests that teachers are happy with the pay raise and noted that it was a great initiative by the government. PT2 pointed out that if teachers are happy with their profession, they are more productive. EO1 believed that teachers are happy, especially due to the enhancement of their economic and social status. However, both the data sets showed that teachers are not extremely happy, the reason for which is discussed under the section on Motivation of Teachers.

Table 4

Happiness Level of Teachers with the Current Pay Package

| Item | Participants | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|--------------|------|--------------------|
| I am happy with the current pay package | 701 | 3.98 | 0.933 |

Interview participants view that the pay rise is fair and timely. Further, the pay raise compensates for the training opportunities and financial benefits officials in other ministries and organisations get.

Before the pay raise, teachers often got disappointed about the very few training opportunities and financial incentives compared to the people in other professions. We hardly go for tours and training. After the pay raise, I feel that this lack of opportunities and training is compensated for. (PT1)

Regarding the happiness level between the genders, quantitative data reveal that there is a difference in the level of happiness between the two genders on the current pay raise. The mean score of the female teachers on the item, I am happy with the current pay ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .783$), is statistically significantly higher than male participants on the same item ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.001$); $t(699) = -4.219$, $p = 0.01$. This indicates that the female teachers are happier with the pay raise compared to the male teachers.

The independent sample t-test on the item, I am happy with the current pay, and the location of schools show that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). This indicates that there is no difference in the level of happiness of teachers in the rural and urban schools as a result of pay raises. However, the interview data indicate that teachers in rural schools are less satisfied than their urban counterparts, largely due to the heavy workload resulting from teacher shortages.

The number of calories we burn here is much higher than the number of calories burnt by teachers in urban schools. Location really matters. (DT2)

If a teacher in Thimphu has 27 periods a week, we have 35 to 37 periods a week. (DT5)

Motivation of Teachers

As shown in Table 5, the teachers rated the three items on motivation in the Agree category ($M=4.01$, $M=3.93$ & $M=3.94$). This indicates that the pay raise has motivated teachers to work harder and rededicate themselves to teaching. The interview data suggest a variety of views on the motivation level of teachers following the pay raise. While some teachers asserted that the pay raise has motivated them to work harder, others claimed that they are either partially motivated or not motivated.

The pay raise has definitely motivated me to work harder. What really counts at the end of the day is the remuneration. We are getting higher remuneration now. It has really motivated me to work harder. (PT2)

On the other hand, some of the participants shared that the pay raise has not motivated them.

My motivation to teach doesn't have anything to do with the pay raise. Yes, I put extra effort into teaching, but that doesn't come from the pay raise. It's because of other factors like my interests and my conscience. (PT1)

Similarly, as a response to the open-ended question in the questionnaire, respondents said:

I have been motivated, dedicated and enthusiastic even before the pay raise. Thus, there is no change in me.

After taking the oath of allegiance as a teacher, I was giving my best to inspire and spread more love. Therefore, I have responded to the Disagree item with regard to the change in my teaching initiatives.

In general, most teachers are partially motivated by the pay raise. The realisation of full motivation is impacted by other factors such as lack of facilities and resources, pay raise in the form of allowance (not merged with the basic pay), lack of students' positive attitude towards learning, school leadership, heavy workload and teacher protection.

Table 5

Participants' Response on the Theme "Motivation of Teacher" as a result of the Pay Raise

| Sl. No. | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------|---|------|--------------------|
| 1 | The pay raise motivated me to improve my teaching. | 4.01 | 1.031 |
| 2 | The current pay motivated me to work hard. | 3.93 | 0.985 |
| 3 | The pay raise encouraged me to rededicate myself to teaching. | 3.94 | 1.009 |

Morale of Teachers

As shown in Table 6, the ratings for items on morals and self-esteem after the pay raise incline toward the Agree category. Similarly, in the qualitative data, SP1, PT2 and PT4 indicated that the pay raise had boosted teachers' morale and lifted their social status. PT3 shared that before the pay raise, society looked down on teachers. However, with the pay raise, society's respect for teachers has increased. PT1 echoed:

The pay raise has helped me to become a prouder teacher now. Wherever I go, I can proudly say that I am a teacher because I am now paid handsomely. (PT1)

This pay raise has definitely made me feel an inch taller. (PT3)

Further, EO1 noted that the pay raise has provided economic and social benefits to the teachers.

Table 6

Participants' Response to the Morale of Teachers

| Sl. No. | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------|---|------|--------------------|
| 1 | The current pay raise elevated my morale as a teacher | 3.82 | 0.998 |
| 2 | The current pay raise has up-lifted my self-esteem | 3.83 | 1.015 |

Quality of Teaching

The mean for the item, The pay raise helps me to become more innovative in teaching, has a comparatively lower mean (M=3.45). This indicates that teachers are not sure whether the pay raise has helped them to become more innovative in teaching. The interview data also suggests a similar finding. While some participants said that they have become more innovative, others said there was no change in their teaching. The ratings for the other three items (Table 7) were in the Agree category (M=3.65, M= 3.92 & M= 3.99), indicating that the pay raise has improved their teaching, enabled procurement of teaching-learning materials and timely pay raise is necessary to enhance the quality of their teaching.

Table 7

Participants' Response to the Theme "Quality of teaching" as a result of the Pay Raise

| Sl. No. | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------|--|------|--------------------|
| 1 | The pay raise helps me to become more innovative in teaching. | 3.45 | 1.144 |
| 2 | The pay raise encourages me to improve my classroom practice. | 3.65 | 1.086 |
| 3 | The pay raise enables me to procure materials/equipment required for my teaching. | 3.92 | 1.019 |
| 4 | Teachers' compensation in the form of a pay raise is necessary to enhance the quality of teaching. | 3.99 | 1.023 |
| | Average | 3.75 | 1.068 |

Regarding the procurement of teaching-learning materials, interview participants shared that, with the pay raise, they can help students buy materials such as chart papers and

marker pens and procure resources, especially when the syllabus is textbookless. ST1 stated that she pays for printing notes for her students. This is possible when they have a sound balance in their bank account. ST3 shared an instance where teachers have bought personal LCD projectors for use in the classroom.

With the increase in salary, I'm able to afford teaching resources for my students. In 2020, when we had to do online teaching, we were also able to provide some students money for mobile data top-up for their studies. (PT1)

ST1 stated that there are smart televisions in their classrooms. Teachers use their mobile phone data to connect to the television through hotspots.

In our school, we have a one-teacher-one-child adoption policy. Starting last year, we have had proctorships in which teachers are assigned to a certain number of students. A proctor teacher is responsible for the student's academic, financial and emotional support. We also bought a mobile phone for a student to enable effective e-learning. (TT3)

PT3 summed up that with the pay raise, classrooms have become digitalised. Teachers use their mobile data to browse the Internet, download worksheets and assess the students through Google Sheets. Furthermore, the interview data revealed that teachers render financial support to economically disadvantaged students, especially when their parents are not able to provide the money and materials necessary for their children's education.

Teacher Attraction and Retention

The average mean for the items under attraction and retention of the teacher as a result of pay raise is 3.715, which falls in the Agree category. This shows that the pay raise has attracted and retained teachers in the school systems. At the same time, they feel more secure as teachers ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.134$), and most of them see themselves continuing to work as teachers in the next five years ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.974$).

The mean score of the female teachers on the item, The current pay raise will attract competent teachers in the future, ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .925$) was statistically significantly higher than the male teachers on the same item ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.119$); $t(699) = -2.882$, $p = .004$. This indicates that female teachers perceive that the current pay raise would attract more competent teachers. Similarly, the mean score of the female teachers on the item, The pay raise will help in retaining teachers in the schools, ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .1010$) was statistically significantly higher than the male teachers on the same item ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.144$); $t(699) = -2.851$, $p = .004$. This indicates that female teachers perceive that the current pay raise would retain teachers.

Table 8

Participants' Response to the Theme Teacher Attraction and Retention

| Sl. No. | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---------|--|-------|--------------------|
| 1 | The current pay raise will attract competent teachers in the future. | 3.89 | 1.053 |
| 2 | The pay raise will help in retaining teachers in the schools. | 3.63 | 1.099 |
| 3 | I feel more secure working as a teacher after the pay praise. | 3.53 | 1.134 |
| 4 | I see myself as a teacher in the next five years. | 3.81 | 0.974 |
| | Average | 3.715 | 1.065 |

While most of the interview participants look forward to continuing to work as teachers, a few shared that teachers may leave the profession. PT1 shared that in the past, many teachers left the profession, especially due to low pay and heavy workloads. However, with the pay raise, she believes that the number of teachers leaving the profession would reduce. In addition, PT2 stated that, with the pay raise, more graduates would be interested in joining teaching. PT3 cited the recent example of many academically high-performing graduates who have applied for the teacher training course at the colleges of education. Additionally, DT5 shared:

Most of our friends joined the Royal Institute of Management, and some became officers. A few of us had to join the teaching profession. We were quite disappointed because we could not get into other professions. But halfway through the teacher training, we heard about the increase in salary for teachers. Now I feel very fortunate that the pay increased. It really motivates me. I will continue to be a teacher.

SP2 argued that teachers have been leaving the profession even in the past. The number of teachers leaving the profession looks alarming as teaching has the largest workforce. Even if a small percentage of teachers leave their profession, it would result in a larger number. However, with the pay raise, he is positive that fewer teachers would leave the profession. The pay raise is likely to help retain good teachers and encourage energetic youths to take up the teaching profession.

General findings regarding teacher retention suggest that most questionnaire respondents and interview participants look forward to continuing as teachers. DT 4 affirmed: I really haven't thought of leaving teaching. No matter how much I complain about this profession, at the end of the day, teaching what I have chosen with all my interests and passion. DT 5 added:

I will continue teaching. It is not that I joined the teaching because I didn't have any other opportunities. It is because of my genuine interest in teaching.

Similarly, PT4 emphasised:

For me, with a pay raise or without a pay raise, I was a teacher, I am a teacher, and I will be the teacher. My motivation doesn't come from pay raises or other factors. It is from my passion for teaching.

On the contrary, EO1 argued that pay raise is not the sole determining factor for teacher retention.

Referring to the data for teacher attrition for 2019 and 2020, pay raises do not seem to have made much difference to the teaching professionals. However, the senior group of teachers tend to stay longer in the teaching profession considering the job security, satisfaction and a few years left to superannuate. But younger and mid-level teachers are indifferent about the pay raise. They keep exploring to work outside the teaching profession. (EO1)

Similarly, TP1 observed that the pay raise cannot completely combat the teacher movement. Even after the pay raise, teachers explore avenues to move out or pursue academic courses. He observed that some teachers are attending online courses or preparing for online language tests to facilitate them to pursue ex-country academic programmes. He felt that not many teachers resign or seek extraordinary leave because the Coronavirus pandemic has discouraged many universities from enrolling students on their courses. He also stated that, despite the pay raise, teachers feel apprehensive about the changes that are coming into the education system. The changes, such as the emphasis on digitalised teaching, have brought apprehension, especially to the pre-digital generation teachers. They find it difficult to cope with the change. In addition, the transformations mandated by the Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers [BPST] worry teachers. Such challenges impact the teachers' job security and their decision to remain in the profession. EO1 noted that the teacher attrition rate is on the decline. However, he explained that the lowering teacher attrition rate cannot be fully attributed to the pay raise. It could also be due to the Coronavirus pandemic, which led to the closing of international borders.

Commitment of Teachers

As evident in Table 9, the mean for the items on teachers' commitment and extra effort as a result of the pay raise are 3.53 and 3.54, respectively. This shows that teachers agree that they are committed to teaching and putting extra effort into enhancing students' learning following the pay raise. However, they have rated the other two items on productivity and encouragement to work beyond office hours in the Not Sure category ($M=3.36$ & $M= 3.45$).

The interview data suggested that the pay raise has no visible impact on additional commitment, being more productive, putting in extra effort and working beyond office hours by the teachers. However, the principal participants pointed out that the pay raise has made it easier for the management to bestow additional tasks on teachers. For instance, DP1 feels that, following the pay raise, the teachers are more committed to work, especially when teachers are asked to work extra hours. Similarly, TP1 feels that the pay raise is a point to remind the

teachers to be more committed and put extra effort into their work. At the same time, teachers are aware of society's expectations that teachers should be more committed and work extra hours as a result of the pay raise.

Society thinks that teachers should do more work, that is what teachers are paid a high salary for. They make us feel guilty. (DT5)

Table 9

Participants' Response to the Theme "Commitment of teachers" as a result of the Pay Raise

| Sl. No | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------|---|------|--------------------|
| 1 | I am more committed to teaching after the pay raise | 3.53 | 1.197 |
| 2 | I am more productive after the pay raise | 3.36 | 1.161 |
| 3 | I put extra effort to help my students enhance their learning following the pay raise | 3.54 | 1.193 |
| 4 | The pay raise encourages me to work beyond office hours. | 3.45 | 1.203 |
| | Average | 3.47 | 1.189 |

Financial Security of Teachers

For both the items under this theme (see Table 10), teachers' ratings fall in the Agree category (M= 4.04 & M=3.90). They agree that the pay raise has strengthened their financial status and brought happiness to their family.

Table 10

Participants' Response to Financial Security and Happiness as a result of the Pay Raise

| Sl. No | Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------|---|------|--------------------|
| 1 | The pay raise has strengthened my financial status. | 4.04 | 0.880 |
| 2 | The pay raise has brought happiness in my family | 3.90 | 0.905 |

The interview data supported the quantitative findings. TP1 and DP1 shared that the pay raise has made the teachers' lives secure and comfortable. DP1 cited an example that if teachers' pay is not adequate, they may engage in side business and family business. However, presently, as they earn enough, they do not look for additional income-generating activities. Therefore, this has enabled teachers to focus on teaching. PT2, PT3, PT4 and ST3 noted that

with the pay raise, they feel financially secure. They shared that they are able to make ends meet and make some savings for the future.

I'm a single mother of two children, and I am paying my late husband's bank loan, I have a little savings for the two children. (ST1)

There are not many who have not availed of bank loans. After the deduction of the monthly loan instalment, the balance in our account used to be small. Now, after the deduction of the bank loan and the household expenditure, there still is some balance. (TT2)

Earlier, even if teachers wanted to do things, our hands were shorter than our sleeves. There were times when we used to pretend or find some pretexts to escape a social gathering. Now, with this pay raise, we can socialise and integrate with people. (TP1)

Due to the improved financial status, teachers can bring happiness to their families. For example, PT1 and PT2 shared that they can financially help their relatives and family members and give better education to their children.

Discussion

Effective teaching and learning in school depend on teacher efficiency, morale, motivation and happiness. One of the ways by which teachers become motivated is through the provision of appropriate incentives such as adequate salary. Herzberg's Two-factor theory and Adam's Equity theory consider salary an important factor. However, salary is not the most important factor in teachers' life and profession. While the current findings suggest the teachers' morale has been lifted, the teachers rated their happiness and motivation in the Agree category. Their level of happiness is not in the Strongly Agree category because of other factors such as lack of facilities and resources, heavy workload, inadequate training programmes and inequitable teacher deployment.

Teachers' morale, motivation and professional practices are impacted by various factors. The literature identified compensation, job design, working environment and training opportunities as some of the important factors (Willis & Varner, 2010). The current study also agrees that teachers need to be provided with adequate compensation in the form of pay and facilities, create a conducive environment for teaching and learning and make provision for adequate training opportunities. The compensations need to be worked on criteria such as teaching experience, qualification and abilities (Adams, 1963). The findings show that there are certain criteria used while deciding teachers' pay raises. The current pay raise was calculated based on a fixed percentage of the teachers' basic pay, which automatically takes care of teachers' experience. In regard to teachers' qualifications, this study agrees that teachers' pay is commensurate with their qualifications, whereas the study is not sure if teachers' abilities and initiatives are considered while deciding the pay raise. However, BPST

has a provision for teachers with greater ability to climb the career ladder faster and achieve higher monetary compensation (Ministry of Education, 2019).

On the other hand, low salary for teachers impacts their morale and motivation (Willis & Varner, 2010). The current study's findings agreed that the teachers in Bhutan were seemingly looked down upon by society before the pay raise. At the same time, teachers were not highly motivated and happy with their profession. However, following the pay raise, teachers could raise their heads, and society started to respect them.

Appropriate rewards and incentives for teachers are crucial in enhancing the quality of education (Evans, 2019). The findings of this study confirmed that the pay raise improved their teaching and facilitated the procurement of teaching-learning materials, thus making teaching more effective and meaningful. Teachers are also able to buy personal electronic equipment, such as LCD projectors, for use in the classroom and buy mobile phones along with data top-ups for needy students for online classes during the lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the findings suggested that teachers are not sure how the pay raise has helped them to bring innovation in their teaching. Probably, teachers were not able to innovate their teaching methods due to heavy workload, lack of facilities and adequate training. To solve the problem of teacher shortage that contributes to a heavy workload for teachers, the government is initiating to recruit substitute teachers to fill up the gap due to voluntary resignation, death and contract termination of teachers and to recruit teachers on consolidated contracts to replace the teachers on maternity leave and extraordinary leave (Choden, Lhaden & Pem, 2021). Appropriate incentives for teachers have helped the retention and recruitment of high-performing teachers. The findings confirm that study participants will continue to work as teachers. The percentage of teachers leaving the profession has decreased after the pay raise. The average teacher attrition rate for five years before the pay raise was 3.6%. However, after the pay raise, the percentage has dropped to 1.9%, which is the lowest so far (Pem, 2020). At the same time, the reduction in the percentage of teachers leaving the profession can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings agreed that the pay raise attracted high academic achievers. The teacher training colleges can recruit many teacher candidates with higher academic scores.

Paying teachers adequately is likely to bring several personal benefits besides academic benefits. The findings revealed that the pay raise has brought financial security and comfort to teachers, enabling them to meet their household expenditures and to make some savings, leading to a more comfortable life. When teachers are financially secure and can lead a comfortable life, they do not look for other income-generation initiatives. Evans (2019) supported the findings that if teachers are paid adequately, they are less likely to hold a second job, which otherwise would impact teaching.

Conclusion

The pay raise has impacted teachers' morale, motivation and professional practices. The study observed that with the pay raise, teachers are more motivated to teach and continue

to work in the profession. The pay raise has boosted teachers' self-esteem and morale as they are more financially secure, and society has started respecting them. Further, the pay raise has enabled teachers to procure teaching-learning materials to enhance students' learning. However, teachers are unsure whether the pay raise has visibly impacted innovation in their teaching. This could be due to the lack of adequate professional development training and other impeding factors such as heavy workload and lack of facilities.

The pay raise has also benefited schools and students. Besides teachers' additional initiative to teach well, they are ready to work extra hours in the school. At the same time, the pay raise has enabled teachers to invest in their students. While some teachers have adopted and proctored students, others have bought teaching-learning materials required in the classroom or needed by the students. A few teachers have bought mobile phones and provided data top-up for students. Such initiatives have benefited students in both in-class and online learning.

In conclusion, teachers are happy with the government's pay raise initiative. The pay raise has motivated teachers and made their lives more comfortable. Teachers can fulfil most of their wants and needs as they have become financially secure. Furthermore, they can help their family and relatives and provide better education to their children. However, teachers would have been happier if their basic pay was raised pay raise and not given as an increase in allowance.

Recommendations

The study recommends the adoption of a more holistic approach to improving the quality of education in the country as a result of teachers' improved morale, motivation and professional practices. Though pay raise is an important factor, there are other equally important factors, the non-fulfilment of which could hinder the performance of teachers. Some of the factors that need consideration for the holistic approach include improvement of infrastructure, provision for required facilities and resources, adequate and relevant professional development training, equitable and reasonable workload for teachers, efficient school leadership and protection act for teachers. The study believes that implementation of such an approach can bring long-term benefits to teachers, students and the nation as a whole.

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