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Building a Culture of Teaching and Learning Excellence: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach

Clare Myers, Choney Dorji, Jigme Wangdi, and Karma Yangden

Abstract:

This paper describes the use of an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach to building a culture of teaching and learning excellence in higher education in Bhutan. Drawing on the work of David Cooperrider (1987) and other AI practitioners, it outlines the philosophy, principles and process of the AI approach and its use in higher education contexts. The "story" of how the College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS) at the Royal University of Bhutan implemented the four stages of the AI methodology in a college-wide professional development initiative to create an academic culture change, is recounted through the lens of participating faculty. The positive impact of the process of moving the college towards its vision of teaching and learning excellence suggests that an AI approach holds promise for organizational change initiatives in other colleges in Bhutan.

Keyword: *Appreciate inquiry, organizational change, academic culture, higher education, professional development initiative*

Background to the Inquiry

The College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS) situated in Trongsa, Central Bhutan, is one of the eight constituent colleges that make up the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). From its traditional roots as a semi-monastic Rigney institute founded in 1961, CLCS has emerged as a modern and recognized leader in the preservation and promotion of Bhutan's cultural heritage. The college offers degree programs and specialized courses in the fields of Bhutanese language, literature and culture, Buddhist studies, Himalayan studies, Human Values and GNH studies. It now has a student body of over a thousand learners and an academic faculty of approximately sixty (TESS, Ministry of Education, 2017).

Historically in Bhutan, the predominant mode of teaching at the college level was largely teacher and content centred (Gyamtso & Maxwell, 2012). Very few faculties had advanced degrees or formal teaching qualifications and most taught using the traditional methods they themselves were schooled in and accustomed to. However, with the introduction of RUB's learning-centred Wheel of Academic Law, and the establishment of the Centre for University Learning and Teaching (CULT) in 2008, awareness and support for a more learning-centred approach in higher education gained momentum in Bhutan. For lecturers at CLCS, the shift from a teaching to a learning centred model of college instruction has been an ongoing and incremental one, requiring new understandings, increased confidence, and innovative teaching skills.

The need to support faculty in teaching skill development became a priority for CLCS in 2016. At that time, a Faculty Development Coordinator position was established at the college and an intensive four -day training program entitled "Educating for GNH: Creating a Learning-Centred Community in the College Classroom", was developed and launched. The training was designed to help college lecturers understand and apply a learning centred approach in the context of their classroom planning, teaching and evaluation. All CLCS faculty participated in this mandated training which was delivered face-face over the semester, to small, interdisciplinary learning cohorts. Face-face training was then followed-up with opportunities for intensive one-on-one coaching, to ensure practical and immediate application in the classroom.

Faculty response to the learning-centred training and mentoring initiative at CLCS was overwhelmingly positive. At the same time, the ineffectiveness of the "one-shot" approach to training, well documented in professional development literature, soon became apparent. Generally, "what goes on in training, stays in training" and while the exposure to new knowledge and skills was helpful to CLCS lecturers in the short term, it was clear that any long-term impact on student achievement would require a more sustainable professional development approach. Not only did faculty need more opportunities to practice, reflect and engage with peers, but support for such activities needed to come from an organizational culture that championed excellence in teaching as the key to student success. Recognizing this reality, a team of interested and committed faculty members, including the Academic Dean, met to explore ways to create a unifying vision and organizing framework for academic culture change. Out of this exploratory dialogue, there emerged a commitment and plan for using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to building a culture of teaching and learning excellence at CLCS.

Appreciative Inquiry: Overview

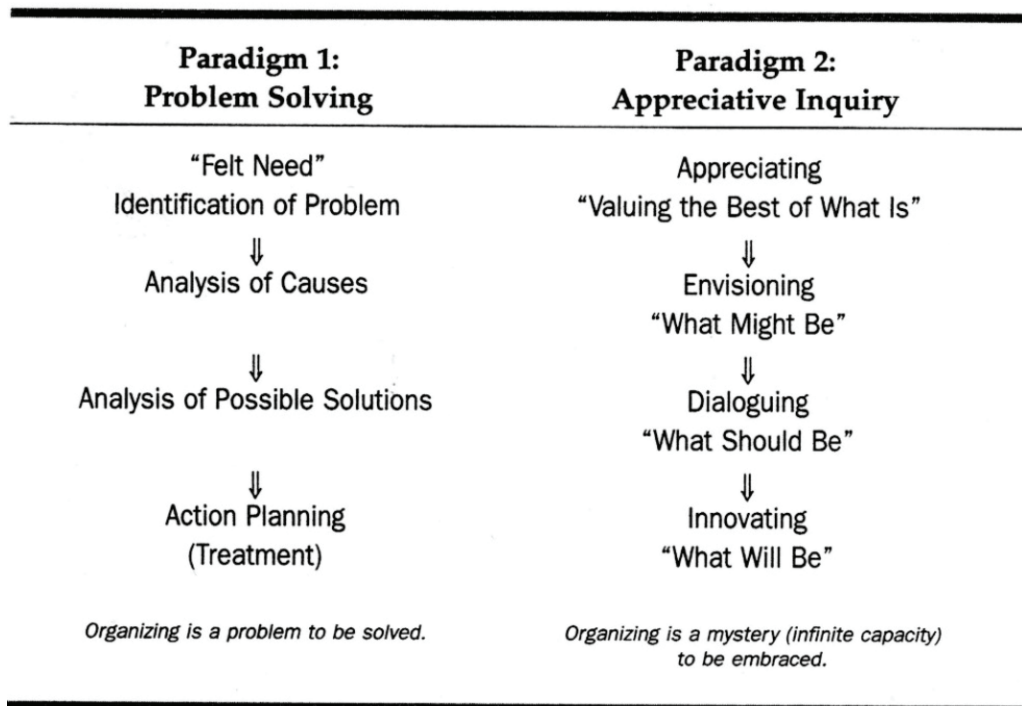
Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is both a philosophy and a process for facilitating positive change in people, organizations and communities. From its beginnings in the organizational development research of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva at Case Western University in Ohio (1987), AI has now become a well -established and widely applied method of change management in organizations of all types- government, corporate, academic and non-profit, all over the world.

The assumption underlying Appreciative Inquiry is simple: begin with the positive and build on that "positive core" to visualize possibilities and generate change. AI starts by engaging people in asking questions and telling stories about "what's working well" in their organization, the "things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways" (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003, p.xvii). From this starting point of appreciating, AI leads people to inquire into how the energy of that positive core can serve as the building block for visioning, designing, and implementing desired change.

AI Paradigm Shift

The strengths-based nature of the Appreciative Inquiry approach represents a fundamental paradigm shift in how an organization approaches change. As illustrated in Figure 1, the traditional paradigm of organizational change is a problem solving one; it begins with a deficit assumption and asks the questions: "What's wrong? What are the problems and how can we fix them?" The problem -solving paradigm engages people in a linear process of describing problems, determining causes, developing solutions and delivering results. By focusing on what's wrong and what's missing, the problem-solving paradigm often leaves people feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and "stuck" in the change process. Appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, starts with the possibilities and asks affirmative questions: "What's going well? What are our strengths, assets, resources and successes, and how can we build on these to create a preferred future?" The AI process is open-ended and reflexive; it engages people in a cyclical, reiterative process of appreciating, visioning, dialoguing and acting. AI does not ignore problems; rather, it recognizes the roots of problems as "the desire for something else". The AI process works to uncover or surface this "something else", and reframes the problem from the point of view of what is wanted (Cockell & McArthur Blair, 2012). The attention paid to focusing on "What is it we do want?" creates goodwill, creative energy and the necessary momentum for positive change.

Figure 1. Two Paradigms for Organizational Change



Source: Cooperrider et al. (2003), p.15.

AI Principles
The following is a brief explanation of the five interrelated and overlapping theoretical principles underlying the AI approach.

The CONSTRUCTIONIST Principle
At the heart of Appreciative Inquiry is the assumption that when people, for example, faculty in a college setting, come together and share positive stories of themselves and their institution, the positive image they "co-construct" will drive positive action towards their desired future; in other words, "we create what we imagine" (Watkins, Mohr, & Kelly, 2011, p.72).

The SIMULTANEITY Principle
The principle of simultaneity recognizes that "inquiry creates change" and the nature of the first question asked is "fateful" because the organization will "turn its energy in the direction of that first question, whether positive or negative" (Watkins et al. 2011, p.72). When faculty, for example, begin with the positive question "What's going well in our college?" rather than "What's the problem?" they are predisposed to take the best of what is into their vision of the desired future.

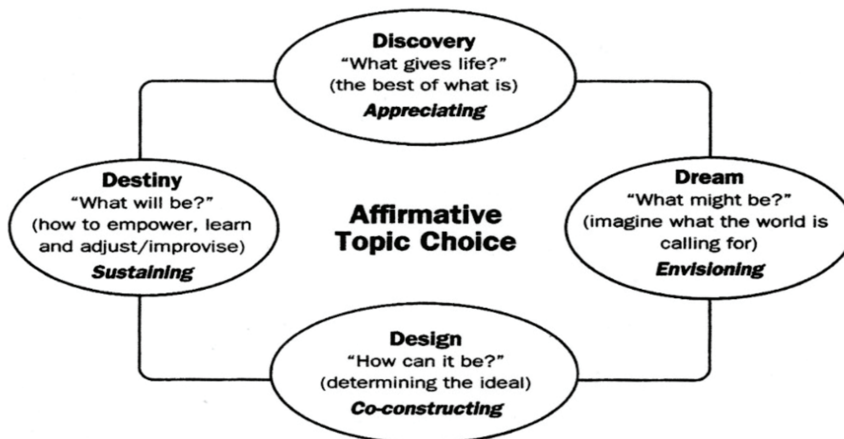
The POETIC Principle
Just as the reader brings their own lens and meaning to a piece of poetry, AI assumes that people can "author" stories about their organization, they can choose what to study. When faculty at a higher institution, for example, choose to switch from a negative, "problem-centred" story and start with an appreciative, strengths-based lens, the "story" of their institution changes for the positive.

The ANTICIPATORY Principle
The anticipatory principle suggests that the image people hold of their organization's future will inspire and guide their actions in the present; "the more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present day action" (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p.54). In a college setting, for example, faculty who hold a positive and hopeful vision of the future, are likely to work effectively for positive change.

The POSITIVE Principle
This principle, the most basic and fundamental of AI principles, holds that positive questions are vital to the process of positive change; when faculty, for example, start organizational change efforts with an inquiry into their "positive core", they will generate positive feelings of hope, inspiration, camaraderie and commitment that will fuel a desire for positive change.

AI Process: The 4-D Cycle
Discovering and building upon the "positive core" of an organization- its strengths, assets, resources, values, and traditions –is central to the AI approach. The energy and vision of this positive core are woven into the four-stage process of AI, known as the 4-D cycle and illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle



Source: Cooperrider et al. (2003), p.5

Before the AI process begins, an affirmative topic or question is chosen as the focus of the inquiry. For example, at CLCS the topic of our inquiry was phrased as "How can we build a culture of teaching and learning excellence at CLCS?" The affirmative question then guides the inquiry through the 4-D cycle of Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver as outlined below. (Cooperrider et al.,2003).

Discover is the first and most critical stage of the AI process; it starts the art of appreciation by engaging people in the key question "What gives life to our organization?" Through interviewing, storytelling and dialogue, the "best of what is", the positive core, is illuminated and celebrated

Dream, the second stage of the 4-D cycle, takes the stories of the positive core, "the best of what is", and builds on them to inquire into "the best of what might be." Again, the process

is an experiential and collaborative one that uses storytelling, visualization, and dialogue to create a shared image of the preferred future.

The Design phase of the 4-D cycle moves the inquiry from the imagined- “What might be?” to the concrete and practical- “What should be?” and “How can it be?” (Cooperrider et al., 2003). Common themes from the Dream phase are translated into “provocative propositions”, or vision statements that form the basis of action planning.

The final Deliver or Destiny stage of the 4-D cycle aims to innovate ways to create the preferred future. This stage of the cycle is ongoing and shaped by contextual factors such as the nature and purpose of the inquiry, the time and resources available, and the capacity of the organization to mobilize its people (Mohr & Watkins, 2002).

Cooperrider’s 4-D cycle provides a minimal structure that facilitates an emergent design. Because of the engaging and collaborative nature of AI, opportunities exist at every stage of the 4-D process for people to imagine, dialogue, create and innovate together. Thus AI “follows the energy of the group and flexes and evolves as the process continues” (Cockell and McArthur-Blair, 2012, p.23)

AI in Higher Education

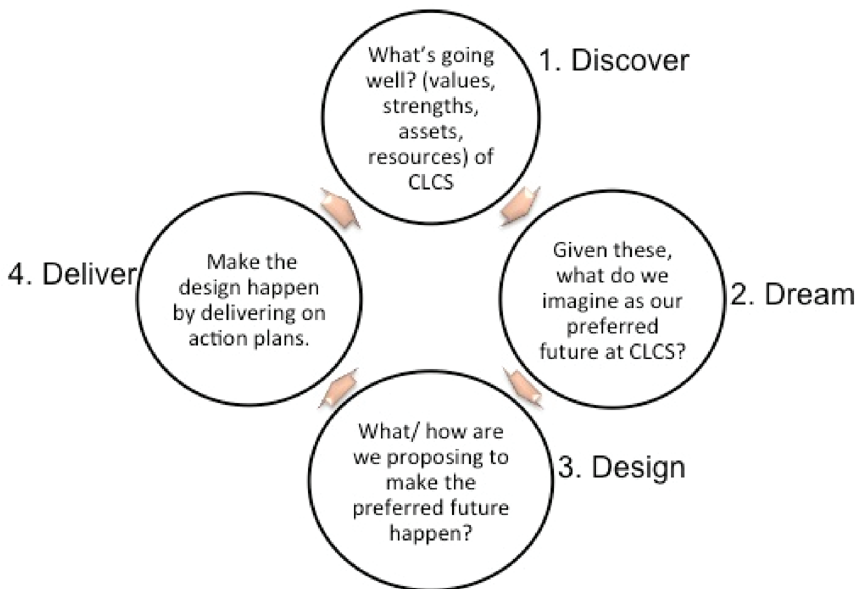
While Cooperrider’s (1987) seminal work in AI originated in business contexts, a growing body of research on the application and implications of AI in education shows the positive results of this strength-based, appreciative approach in the context of higher education. AI has been used as a basis for improving teaching practice and evaluation (Giles & Kung, 2010), developing and implementing professional development initiatives (Goldberg, 2001), creating academic culture change (Head & Young, 2001), building effective interdisciplinary teams, and conducting college-wide strategic planning summits (Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012). In sum, the collaboration, dialogue, group building and relationship strengthening characteristics of an AI approach make it, “a powerful and transformative tool” for higher education practitioners engaged in work that “focuses on the positive core of higher education and pushes that positive core to its highest reach”(Cockell & McArthur-Blair, 2012, p.1).

Case Study: The “Story” of AI at CLCS

In June 2016, the College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS), embarked on a visionary effort to build a culture of teaching and learning excellence at the college, using an appreciative inquiry approach. A leadership team including six college lecturers, the academic dean, and a faculty developer, was established to coordinate the initiative and facilitate the design and delivery of the 4 -D cycle (Figure 3).

The entire AI cycle, including development, design and delivery, unfolded gradually at CLCS, over a period of three semesters (June 2016- December 2017). Each of the four phases (Discover, Dream, Design, and Delivery) was completed through half –day, interactive, dialogue-based workshops involving faculty and college management, and facilitated collaboratively by the AI leadership team. Following each workshop, efforts were made to compile and share data, summary analysis and feedback in order to maintain continuity and commitment to the AI change process.

Figure 3. 4-D Cycle of AI at CLCS



Adapted from Cooperrider et al., 2003

The following section recounts the "story" of the AI initiative at CLCS as told through the lens of three Bhutanese lecturers, members of the AI leadership team. The anecdotal, story-telling style of this section seeks to capture the essence of the AI process as it was experienced in the unique cultural context of a higher education institute in Bhutan.

Stage 1: Discover

The Discovery stage of the AI process started with a focus question: "How can we create a culture and climate at CLCS that values and supports teaching and learning excellence?" The key words in this question focused on the positive and made us think of the good that could come out of this. In other workshops I have attended, things start by naming the problem, and the process revolves around solving it. Comparing my experience of 'problem-solving' with the AI approach, I learned that having a positive mind and perspective is more effective in bringing out ideas.

In the Discover workshop, faculty were arranged in pairs for an interactive story sharing session. They were asked to tell the story of a time when they felt "most excited" to be a faculty member of CLCS. The main focus was on sharing all the aspects of their positive experience and the kind of emotions it evoked. I realized that the mood of the room was different when people were talking about their best experiences. Listeners were paying more attention and the ones who shared stories were genuinely telling them. You could see the passion in the way participants told their stories. After sharing the stories with each other, the positive qualities and common themes in the stories were identified and listed as strengths. From this, we were able to identify one core theme as the strength of CLCS and unsurprisingly it was the sense of 'family'. CLCS is a closely-knit society where we take pride in our society and the people around us. There is a sense of respect for colleagues and the institution that we work for. Most of the participants were proud to be associated with an institution that works to preserve the traditions and culture of the nation, and the unity and closeness of the 'family' members of the college were seen as a big strength. You can always see the faculty and staff of the

college working closely together for professional, cultural and social events alike. "Inclusion" was another theme that repeated itself in the stories; right from the beginning of joining the CLCS family, faculty said they felt right at home and sensed a genuine care for their personal wellbeing.

After sharing our "best experience" as a member of the college, the next step in the Discover workshop was using our stories to identify some core values, assumptions and beliefs that govern the behaviour of people at CLCS. Participants shared their ideas in new pairs, and then our collective ideas were listed on chart paper. The participants were very forthcoming with their views; perhaps this ease at communication might be attributed to our cultural preference for "good" things. As Bhutanese, we seldom talk negatively about others for fear of these people being reprimanded. Acceptance and tolerance of people's mistakes also keep us in the positive. This cultural tendency sometimes stops people from sharing opinions even if it is for the communal good. Since the AI process was all about the positive, however, the participants were eager to share their opinions. Core values that emerged out of this exercise were openness; team work; care for people, community and environment; and a commitment to promote and preserve human, cultural and religious values. Overall, our values indicated how much we value community well- being over individual success.

In the third round of the Discover phase, participants were invited to find a new partner and start thinking about the future by sharing three "best wishes" for the college. This phase built on the foundation of strengths and values identified in the previous stages; participants looked back at these ideas to come up with their wishes for the future. These wishes were then shared and categorized under wishes for students, for faculty and teaching, for administration, and for resources and the learning environment. The common wishes that arose out of this dialogue were for the students to be enthusiastic and responsible, for the faculty to be internationally recognized with continuous professional development opportunities, for the college to have excellence in teaching and research, and for the management to be effective in creating an environment conducive for teaching and learning.

The discovery phase of the AI process highlighted the "positive core" of our CLCS family. In the small community of our college, everyone relies on one another, and there is a positive relation amongst the people. Deep Buddhist and human values drive the individuals, and the college depends on the relationships between people and on who they are for its success. There is a respect among individuals and perhaps even a natural positivity, as we do not like to point out mistakes and bad things. The word 'family', which is often used to describe the college community, is indicative of the relationship between the faculty and staff. This image of 'family of CLCS' is used repetitively and widely because we see ourselves as a part of a real family. This might be attributed, in part, to the geographical isolation of the college; we are a small community that is removed from other bigger influential communities. This inaccessibility to other places makes us depend on each other more often, and our shared traditions, culture and human values contribute to a strong sense of family.

Stage 2: Dream

After the storytelling of the Discover phase, we moved into the Dream phase of AI. The dream phase took faculty from appreciating and recognizing their strengths in building on them by visualizing "the best of what might be" for the future of our college. Faculty were first asked to read and reflect on the compiled strengths, positive values and best wishes for the college, and use these as stepping-stones for imagining our brightest future. The key here was for faculty to focus on their positive desire to grow and "appreciate" what they had discovered about the organization they are a part of. They were asked to close their eyes and visualize a future where they returned to CLCS after being away for some time. When they returned, it was 2021 and the college had successfully built on the strengths, values and wishes they had identified. The participants were asked to visualize what they saw and heard, what the faculty

and students were talking about, what changes had taken place and what pleased them most about what they had seen and heard. They were asked to immerse themselves in the given scenario by incorporating all the positives that came out of the Discover phase, write down their answers and share their dreams to the eagerly gathered.

The collective result of our "dreaming" in the future was this: " We are a faculty that is highly qualified, continually engaged in research and active in professional development. We are internationally recognized and are motivated to teach. We have adequate resources for teaching and are provided good incentives for our work. In the future, our students are loyal, committed, dedicated and inspired. They are satisfied with what they have learned and are independent, self -directed and critical thinkers. They are engaged in learning, use the latest technology, and take part in decision-making. In this desired future, the administration of the college is working on diversifying programs, providing adequate resources for the staff and students, collaborating with other universities and colleges, including everyone concerned in decision making, and striving to support the college in achieving excellence.

The AI process of Discover and Dream took faculty on a positive journey where they discovered the best of what they already had (the positive core of CLCS), and came up with a detailed vision of what could be possible in the future. If the focus had been placed on problem-solving rather than building on the positive core, our ideas for our future might not have been so varied.

The underlying value that connected all the ideas emerging through the Discover and Dream phase was respect and care for our Bhutanese values, traditions and culture. This care for our culture and tradition was central to what we wanted for the future. Our dreams were centred on the need for the college to become the "premier institute" for culture, cultural studies and Dzongkha in Bhutan by incorporating the best of what technology and the world has to offer.

The most striking feature of the whole process was the energy that was generated and the desire of participants to contribute more. I learned that positive energy, when allowed to flow, has the nature of spreading itself like wildfire. Since everyone was focused on the positive, the best of what is, and the best of what might be, sharing ideas was not stopped by the fear of hurting others. There was a free flow of opinions and a feeling of ease and this led to the diversity and richness of the compiled data at the end of the Dream phase. Bhutanese core values that we all hold dear emerged as the guiding light for the road ahead.

Stage 3: Design: Part I

By the end of the Dream phase of AI, we had basically "dreamed" how CLCS might look in 2021 and grouped these dreams under the banners of Faculty, Students, and Admin and Resources. In this next stage of AI, we needed to design a plan of action to guide us in achieving these aspirations. However, drawing a plan to achieve everything raised by all the faculty members would have been near impossible and unrealistic; we needed to pull out and prioritize the aspirations that would take CLCS into a brighter future, but at the same time, keep grounded in the things from our past, our core Bhutanese values, that had good bearing on us all.

We began our design workshop by asking faculty to collaborate in small groups and identify one dream under each of the three categories (Faculty, Students, Admin and Resources) that was directly related to our teaching-learning culture, connected to the best of what we already have, and doable in the short term. Faculty wrote these themes on sticky notes and pasted them to our "Learning Wall". We could now see commonalities and create a narrowed down version of the wide range of aspirations we had earlier. Some examples of these themes were: "Faculty are continuously upgrading their knowledge."; "Our library has more resources, is used more frequently and has a pleasant environment conducive to learning", and "Students are independent and self-directed learners." Then, by doing a kind of "Gallery Walk" around the room, faculty placed themselves in the area they were most interested in and formed new

sub-groups. Each sub-group then chose one theme to develop into a "vision" statement, or what AI calls a "provocative proposition". These statements would provide a vision for CLCS to move forward on and strive for.

Writing vision statements in such a short time frame was a real challenge for our faculty. Even though participants had the choice of writing in Dzonghka (national language of Bhutan) or English (an additional language), developing the vision statements took time, thought and effort. However, with follow up refinement from the facilitators (AI leadership team), we succeeded in articulating five mission statements as seen in Figure 4 below.

The most interesting part of the design process was how writing vision statements helped us capture the aspirations of the majority. The process was collaborative, with lots of opportunity for conversation and sharing, so our statements were a collective representation of the honest and earnest wishes of all present. I'm not sure if our typical formal ways of convening and "discussing" in general meetings at CLCS would have produced such an inclusive view!

Figure 4. CLCS Vision Statements 2021

CLCS Vision 2021: Aspiration/Possibility Statements				
Faculty (Pedagogy)	Resources	Students: Bilingual	Students: independence and critical thinking	Admin and Program Support
Faculty at CLCS are dedicated and well trained; they are competent in their subject matter and committed to improving student learning outcomes through teaching approaches that are innovative and learning centered.	CLCS supports a culture of teaching and learning excellence by ensuring faculty and students have access to adequate, high quality, and up-to- resources and teaching materials.	CLCS supports all learners in acquiring bilingual proficiency in Dzongkha and English.	CLCS creates learning environments that assist and guide students in becoming self motivated learners and critical thinkers.	Decision making processes at CLCS are inclusive, consultative, transparent and accountable.

Design: Part II

At this point in the AI process, we had discovered our strengths, dreamed about building on those assets and created vision statements for a brighter future. Now, what remained was to design an action plan to help us achieve the vision of a culture of teaching and learning excellence at CLCS.

There were a number of ways to go about designing an action plan: one was the conventional formal way of gathering in the CLCS conference hall; another was to depend on the college leadership team solely; or, a third was to adopt something less formal. The first, we thought, would be a little restrictive for the participants, considering the cultural factors of power relations and the need to maintain formality in such gatherings, and of course the fear of speaking up; the second presented the possibility of viewing the design of the plan as an exclusive and top-down approach rather than a collaborative effort. The last one, on the other hand, would allow faculty to talk about serious matters in a very relaxed, interactive and informal setting, thereby generating a wide range of honest views on how to get the things done. So, we said, "Yes, we need something like that, something informal, a process that will enable the participants to talk…freely". So, we chose a method called the World Café- a simple, creative, and effective way of hosting a large group dialogue.

For our World Café, we needed a space where we could create an ambience akin to

that of a café, one that would lighten the mood and allow for an informal discussion, more like a conversation, on how to achieve the vision statements we had developed. In the end, we opted for the college cafeteria as the venue. There, we put up decorations, such as banners and flowers, brought in a music system and even had snacks on the table to add to the café ambience. Based on the number of faculty attending, we set up 10 tables, each accommodating a maximum of five people (the optimum for small group discussion) and posted our 5 vision statements around the room. We also had a “Harvest Wall” at the front of the room, where all the outcomes emerging from the process were displayed and presented.

Before starting the World Cafe, we shared a set of principles to guide the process, including: “Focus on what matters”, Contribute your thinking”, “Speak your mind and heart”, “Listen to understand”, “ Link and connect ideas”, and “Have fun!” We then assigned a vision statement to each table and appointed a table “host” whose responsibility was to draw out ideas arising from the conversations and write them on the chart paper provided. The entire dialogue process was expected to last about an hour, with three rounds of conversation, each round lasting 20 minutes. To help focus these rounds of dialogue, we encouraged participants to name the action they were proposing, decide who needed to be involved, identify what resources were necessary and state what the timeline would be.

At the end of each round, the members of a group were allowed to choose a new table and vision statement that was of interest to them. At this new table, they were greeted by the host and briefed on the results of the previous round/s, allowing them to build on their colleague’s ideas and introduce ideas of their own. So by the end of the discussion, each faculty member had participated in three different tables and contributed their thoughts and ideas for action on three different vision statements. At the end of an hour of animated conversation, the table hosts collated the ideas emerging from the discussion/conversations at their respective tables and pasted them to the Harvesting Wall. After a tea break, the hosts reported the results to the gathering and invited discussion.

The World Café generated a wealth of ideas and actions for each of our five “CLCS 2021” vision statements. Recommended actions for developing excellence in teaching included providing more and equal opportunities for faculty members to engage in subject-related training, professional development activities and language proficiency development. In terms of resources, recommended actions addressed improving Internet connectivity, building the college reference library, and using more technology in the classroom. To improve the language proficiency of students, most conversations pointed toward creating learning environments where students would feel comfortable using English both inside and outside the classrooms, involving lecturers in enhancing student participation and activities, and ensuring modules in English were actually taught in English. Faculty also suggested how critical thinking could be improved by working on the language proficiency of students and introducing students to “schema” or theoretical frameworks for interpreting information from other sources. In the area of program support and administration, recommended actions included more systematic appointment of members to various committees and positions, setting out clear terms of reference, more timely dissemination of information, and consultative decision- making.

So, one might wonder, “What’s the big deal here?” Well, consider this: would you be able to engage a huge congregation of people in such an interactive manner at your institution and generate such an honest and diverse range of feedback and opinions? More often than not, in our [Bhutanese] context and college setting, it’s the few ‘vocal’ and ‘authoritative’ people who dominate the meetings while others simply sit and listen - or pretend to listen - disgruntled that their views are not taken into account.

For me, the World Café process introduced a “never-thought-of” way of soliciting feedback and opinions regarding our organisation and championing change without fear of rejection and reprisal. Unlike formal college meeting settings, where people tend to be passive observers, I witnessed how CLCS faculty in the World Café passionately opened up about the things

they cared about and wished to have at the college. What was also interesting to me is that we were not talking about problems (what we didn't want at CLCS), but rather, focusing on what we did want to see in the college. The positive rather than "problem" way we approached the issues made a huge difference in our attitude and mood. You could tell from the long list of recommendations made at each table how actively engaged and open the participants were. I personally feel this level of engagement would not have happened in a formal meeting setting in our context. We might have gathered a few ideas but no one would have dared to point out what needed change, removal or improvement. The openness of the World Café presented CLCS with opportunities to take the level of the services a notch higher and to bring in numerous changes that might not have been possible otherwise.

Another thing I observed from the World Café was the level of commitment faculty members had with respect to improving the teaching and learning culture at CLCS. While some were confident in their expertise, many still felt the need to enhance their teaching skills and proficiency through training opportunities and workshops. As an organization, our college had a lot to learn from this process; our action plans pointed out what CLCS as an organization needed to do more, and differently, in order to achieve our vision of teaching and learning excellence.

Destiny/Deliver Stage

A small group of faculty agreed to act as AI "jabdchorwas" or helpers, to oversee the follow-up of the World Café action plans and liaise with senior leadership. The following is drawn from the account of one jabdchorwa who participated in the first follow-up meeting, held five months after the Word Café.

We (the jabdchorwas and AI leadership team) came together to "take stock" of the actions that had taken place towards achieving our vision of a culture of teaching and learning excellence. We could see results in a number of different areas. Under Faculty and Professional Development, for example, an action taken was the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs). Our faculty was now divided into multi-disciplinary cohort groups that met once every three weeks to explore strategies for improving classroom teaching. Another area of action was student bilingualism. When we shared stories of what was now going on in the college in terms of language classes, tutorial classes, and literary activities, both in Dzongkha and English Language, we realized our students were being better supported in becoming bilingually proficient. We could also come up with many smaller and positive changes that had taken place in the area of resource availability and administrative procedures.

There was a lot of positive energy as our small group brainstormed actions taken to achieve our Vision 2021 statements. However, because so much time had passed since the World Café, we realized delivering on action plans was not going to be easy. We felt that without better coordination, more involvement, and a renewed commitment by all stakeholders- senior leaders, faculty, the AI team and jabdchorwas, our dreams for CLCS might not get realized.

Learnings

Using an AI approach to building a culture of teaching and learning excellence at CLCS was essentially a "pilot" initiative. As such, it resulted in numerous positive, insightful, and sometimes unexpected and challenging learnings.

Focusing on the Positive

For most faculty, starting from an "appreciative" and positive lens, rather than a "problem solving" stance was something new and different from the established cultural norm. In the words of one lecturer:

> *"When I was involved in the AI process, it gave me a new perspective. Basically, it was like putting on a new lens because before I had that problem lens of looking at things, and now with AI suddenly I changed – I'm looking at the good things of what I want- and that has really changed how I feel about solving a problem. I'm more eager, more willing to take part in this (AI) rather than feeling demotivated and sad about the problems that we have."*

While some faculty were sceptical, especially at first, about the effectiveness of solving problems through the AI process of positively "reframing" them, others experienced the permission to be positive as a new kind of freedom:

> *"I got to focus on the positive side rather than the negative- I had this opportunity where I got to share my experiences and got to talk about what I wanted by focusing on the positive core. That was not something that was regular for me because we usually don't t focus on the positive; we look at the problem and try to solve it- so AI gave us this opportunity."*

By starting with the positive core of the existing culture at CLCS -"the best of what is", and "the best of what might be", rather than focusing on all that was missing (time and resources, training and infrastructure etc.), the faculty were predisposed to developing the positive mindset required for creating a unifying vision and action plan for change. In Cooperrider's terms, "the positive generated the positive".

Constructing a Shared Vision

The consultative nature of the AI process created a unique opportunity for CLCS faculty to be "listened to" and "heard" in a way that was somewhat different from the cultural norm. Generally, in Bhutan, higher education organizations are governed by hierarchical communication norms. As one CLCS lecturer observed:

In our culture [Bhutanese] we do have this system of going along with our seniors and our boss…our culture never taught us to be vocal about our opinions and all, so even speaking up at meetings, especially when you are new, it takes a lot of courage.

The participatory, dialogue-based methodology of AI brought faculty and administration together and opened up a safe space for sharing thoughts, ideas, experiences, stories and feedback. The process "invited" people to participate in the dialogue of inquiry but in their own time and way; some were more committed, engaged, and enthusiastic than others, but all had the opportunity to be listened to regardless of their position in the social/ organizational hierarchy.

> *"If we have a problem [in the college] and the solution is provided by our boss, we generally tend to agree to whatever they have said but with AI- here we are just sharing what we want, our dreams and aspirations and we are more free in sharing them because we don't feel our seniors or our boss mind our sharing- it's just opinions, it's just a different way of seeking opinions…"*

Through the AI process, faculty and administrators came together, voiced their own realities, and then began to co-construct a "shared" vision. This is evident in the feedback of a lecturer talking about the process of the Discover and Dream phases:

> "*So we all identified our own stories, future prospects, so we were gradually coming closer and closer, we came closer, we realized which ones were more appropriate, which ones are the most priority for the college. Immediately two of these things were identified*

this made us realize the things we want to do in immediate future, so that was really a great session."

Even within a single college campus like CLCS, multiple "cultures" created by differences in subject area, work responsibilities, backgrounds of faculty etc., exist as separate realities. The AI initiative at CLCS was proof that very different groups can come together and co-exist across these differences. The very intentional participatory design of the World Café, for example, encouraged diverse faculty and administrators to interact, converse, and work on tasks together, giving rise to thoughtful and extensive action plans. Commenting on this collaboration through a cultural lens, one lecturer wrote:

> *"The formal setting [of CLCS general meetings] can be restrictive, and as such may not really generate many or as honest opinions as an informal setting … We have seen [in the World Café] that our faculty members prefer to be heard, to be included, and they do contribute their fair share of ideas and opinions [when] an appropriate setting is created."*

Building Relationships

While the social culture of CLCS is an active and inclusive one, there are perhaps fewer opportunities, outside of formal general meetings, for faculty to gather and talk professionally about their work- their teaching, their wishes for students and their dreams for the college future. Through their interaction with each other, in storytelling, dialogue, and action planning, faculty had a chance to get to know each other in a different way, to see themselves as part of a larger professional community (the "CLCS family") united around a shared image of a culture of teaching and learning excellence. Cooperrider (2003) maintains that having a positive image of the future will guide positive actions in the present and evidence of this could be seen in the image used by one lecturer in describing the feeling of unity and closeness experienced in the Discover and Dream phases of AI: "People in this college are like the roots of a tree spreading into different directions, but connected to the same trunk of the tree, supporting it, nurturing it, and strengthening it." As an image of the college culture, this was a powerful and positive one for CLCS to carry forward into the process of visioning and action planning.

Losing Momentum

The Delivery phase of AI continues on after the event and while commitment to delivery on action plans may be high at the start, sustaining momentum for change over time is challenging. Members of the AI team realized the difficulty of carrying the AI initiative at CLCS over a period of a year; "People want to know what is next very immediately; we took almost a semester to come up to that third stage [Design] so people were like "When do we have that fourth stage Delivery?". The general consensus was that "AI would have been far better if it was carried out at the beginning of the semester and continued till the end of the semester". Numerous situational and cultural factors such as a focus on the "Now", heavy workloads, time management, and the commitment of senior leaders to the process, can directly impact faculty motivation, engagement and support.

Implications

The Appreciative Inquiry approach served as a helpful framework for moving CLCS closer to its vision of teaching and learning excellence. Through the stories, information and data collected throughout the process, CLCS, as an organization, reaffirmed its core values, developed a shared vision of a positive future, formulated aspiration statements, and designed long-range action plans. This is a valuable process in and of itself, one that other colleges in Bhutan may wish to "reinvent" in the context of their own change initiatives.

While the AI process, as piloted at CLCS, was a "focused" inquiry involving only college

faculty and administration, the methodology and philosophy of AI lend itself well to college-wide strategic planning. The 4-D appreciative inquiry cycle can be in the background, used as a methodology within the larger strategic planning process, or it can be used in “full immersion” manner. An example of the latter would be an AI summit that takes place over 3-4 days and brings everyone in the organization together, in one room, to collectively go through all phases of the 4-D cycle (Cooperrider et al., 2003: 415). While there is no “right” way to move from collecting stories, dreams, and wishes to producing and implementing a final action plan, the experience of AI at CLCS does suggest that completing the process over a shorter period of time, whether that be a full day, a couple of days or a semester, is ideal.

In addition to its usefulness as a tool for strategic planning, the AI methodology can be helpful for small-scale planning at a department, team or committee level in any area -whether it be program planning, IT, library services, or human resources. The starting point for AI is always the same- discover what works, create the desire for more of that, and open up the space for imagining potential not yet realized.

As a philosophy and change method, the collaborative and “emergent” design of AI is well suited to the rapidly changing context of higher education in Bhutan. The concept of a “preferred future” is never fully arrived at in any organization; it is a shifting, dynamic vision that is continually revived and enlivened through processes that are ongoing, iterative, not static or fixed. When viewed as an attitude towards change, rather than a “one-time” event, AI encourages and facilitates ongoing reflection on what’s working well, what’s imaginable, what’s realistic and what’s possible. In this sense the 4D cycle is a structure that can be continuously “reinvented” in higher education contexts; as the needs and aspirations of an institution change, so too will the positive core need to be revived, dreams re-imagined, action plans re-visited, and the implementation process redesigned.

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Experiences and Efficacy Beliefs of Teachers and Principals of a Primary School in Implementing the Educating for Gross National Happiness Initiative: A Case Study

Kinzang Lhendup, Jambay Lhamo, Kezang Sherab, and Lungten Wangdi

Abstract

This paper reports a case study conducted at a primary school in Bhutan on implementing Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH), a programme initiated since 2010 by the first elected Government with a vision to create a GNH-infused educational system. This study aimed to explore and document some of the good practices initiated at the case study school by employing a sequential mixed methods approach beginning with the survey of the entire teaching faculty (n=32), the Principal and Vice Principals (n=3), followed by in-depth interviews and teaching observations of teachers (n= 6), who were selected based on the survey findings. It focused on understanding the self- and collective efficacy beliefs, perceptions of importance, support systems, actions and impact of EGNH. The findings indicated that the school had dedicated, through a collaborative effort, an enormous amount of time, energy and resources to infuse Gross National Happiness (GNH) values and principles into their school environment. While the school had displayed some exemplary efforts, there is still room for improvement in realizing the vision of EGNH. Recommendations are provided for further improvement.

Keywords: *Educating for Gross National Happiness, self- and collective efficacy beliefs, case study, implementation.*

Background of the study

Educating for Gross National Happiness (EGNH) initiative was an educational innovation implemented across all schools in Bhutan in 2010 with a vision to infuse Gross National Happiness (GNH) values and principles in every aspect of school life (see Sherab, 2013). Since its inception, the ministry has been working on developing a country-wide rich and rigorous curriculum founded on GNH values and principles, making learning more relevant, thoughtful and well aligned with the ideals of sustainable practices (Riley, 2011). EGNH is an ambitious, yet profound vision showing conviction to affirm and assert the claims of a nation's dream through its educational system (Powdyel, 2009).

In its desire to quickly realise its mission, the education ministry aimed to achieve an education system with GNH-minded teachers and a GNH-infused learning environment that is accessible to all children and youth. The intention was to train all teachers and principals in EGNH by 2012. With this initiative deeply ingrained in the Bhutanese education system, it is envisaged that the process of cultivating GNH values and principles in school students would have already begun taking root.

In its endeavour to create a unique and dynamic education system, the government has made huge investments both material and human resources. The effects of such huge investment should be researched to ascertain its impact in achieving the intended goals and aspirations. Very few researchers have studied EGNH (e.g., Sherab, 2013). For example, Sherab (2013) suggests a series of case studies in schools to document exemplary EGNH practices; to gauge its desired outcomes, and to determine the salient features of EGNH. This paper presents a case of a school that was deeply involved in implementing the initiative.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

- explore the level of self and collective efficacy beliefs of teachers;

- examine the perceptions of teachers and principals in terms of importance, support system, actions, and impact of EGNH;
- examine GNH values students and teachers have inculcated through EGNH;
- document EGNH initiatives the school has implemented.

Literature Review

This case study is an exploration of self and collective efficacy beliefs of school teachers and principals and their perceptions of the importance, support systems, actions and impact of the EGNH programme. While efficacy belief is a fairly new research area in the Bhutanese context, its usefulness in the educational settings worldwide has been widely accepted (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, 2001; Pajares, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). Self-efficacy can refer to personal judgments of one's competence related to a particular task at hand (Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2007). Research has consistently shown that both self and collective efficacy beliefs have strong predictive potential, where individuals and organisations with a higher sense of efficacy beliefs are more likely to execute the task in hand successfully and vice versa (Bandura, 2000; Knoblauch, 2004; Pajares, 2007; Sherab; 2013). While these evidence are mainly from the Western context, it is imperative to understand the efficacy beliefs of people involved in implementing a particular task in the Bhutanese context and accordingly nurture their beliefs, so that they feel capable and confident to successfully implement the task at hand.

Teacher efficacy has been defined as a teacher belief in their ability to influence students' behaviour and their academic achievement, irrespective of student abilities or motivation levels (Friedman & Kass, 2012; Henson, 2001). Sherab (2013) found that teachers in Bhutanese schools were efficacious in implementing EGNH through extra-curricular activities but doubted their efficacy of infusing GNH values and principles in their teaching subjects. Due to lack of further research, it is difficult to ascertain if this is still the case or there has been any progress made. However, existing literature, both international (Fullan, 1996; 1999; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991) and national (Sherab, 2001; 2013) maintain that educational reform efforts take time as the change agents need to make some fundamental shift in their beliefs, assumptions, and practices.

Considering EGNH was initiated eight years ago, this study proposed to explore the teachers' and principals' self and collective efficacy approach in integrating GNH values and principles in one primary school. It also aimed at exploring their perceptions of importance, support systems, actions and impact of EGNH.

Research question

What are the experiences and efficacy beliefs of teachers and principals of the case study school implementing EGNH values and principles?

Research approach

This study employed a sequential multi-method paradigm (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Cooksey & McDonald, 2011; Creswell & Clark, 2011) using a case study design (Yin, 1981; Stake, 1995, Merriam, 1998) to explore and understand the efficacy beliefs and experiences of the school that was generally perceived to be successful in implementing EGNH. The study began with a survey of the entire teaching staff (N=32) and the Principal/Vice Principals (N=3) to explore their self and collective efficacy beliefs, perceptions of importance, support systems, and actions and impact of EGNH. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews, observation of teachings (n=6) and review of documents were carried out. All ethical norms were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Data analysis

A mean score for each respondent was computed for all the 13 measurement scales. All 35 respondents were ranked in order of their mean z-scores from largest (M= 1.59- slightly more than one and a half standard deviations above the sample mean) to the smallest (M= -1.79 = more than one and three-quarters standard deviations below the sample mean (see Table 1).

Table 1: Interview and teaching observation participants

SURVEY RESPONDENT ID	Z-SCORE	MEAN RANK (N=35)	EFFICACY LEVEL
23	1.59	1ST	EFFICACIOUS
29	1.46	2ND	EFFICACIOUS
16	-0.11	18TH	MEDIUM
17	-0.14	19TH	MEDIUM
8	-1.54	34TH	INEFFICACIOUS
27	-1.79	35TH	INEFFICACIOUS

During the first phase, survey data were gathered and analysed using descriptive statistics to examine the level of self and collective efficacy beliefs, perceptions of importance, support systems, actions and impact of EGNH. In the second phase, in-depth interviews and observation data were analysed in relation to the themes for each of the 13 measurement scales. Multi-paradigm triangulation (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011) was carried out to compare and contrast data collected through various sources including the available document.

Findings and Discussions

Data from the survey, interviews, and observations are presented in the form of nine predetermined themes: i) self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH values lessons; ii) self-efficacy beliefs to influence values development in students; iii) school collective efficacy beliefs to promote values through role modelling; iv) school collective efficacy beliefs to create appropriate context for EGNH; v) importance of EGNH in terms of student learning; vi) Importance of GNH values for students' academic education and societal impact; vii) Teacher perceptions of EGNH impact on students; viii) Perceptions of impact on teachers through EGNH; & ix) Perception of teacher actions to implement EGNH.

First, a brief overview of the school setting and findings from the survey are presented.

School setting

The case study was conducted in a day school, situated in the heart of the capital city (Thimphu) and is home to about 1000 students and 35 teachers (Male=6 & Female= 29). Established in 1990 the school has classes from Pre-Primary-VI. A senior female principal with two female vice principals, all with master's qualification and many years of teaching experience run this school. Almost half of the teachers only have a certificate in teaching and their teaching experiences ranged from 1-35 years. The school's vision was "Learn, Value and Practice".

Plantation of ornamental plants, fruit trees, and potted flowers alongside neatly paved footpaths, a variety of medicinal herbs and lush green ivy blanketing the retaining walls made it a welcome sight to visitors. Alongside footpaths were also benches aesthetically located under tall trees that provided ample shade. These were favourite spots for both teachers and students.

Adjoining academic and classroom blocks were numerous beds of all shapes and sizes growing a variety of vegetables. The yield from these gardens went to the school feeding

programme. This school is home not just for the students and teachers but also for parents, especially of younger children. These parents, predominantly women were observed sitting in small groups under shades of trees, waiting to serve lunch to their little ones. Teachers usually joined students for lunch except when the school had over-the-lunch meetings.

Overview of the survey data

A total of 13 measurement scales were borrowed from Sherab (2013) to measure different aspects of EGNH. Each of the items was measured using a five-point Likert type scale – 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neither disagree nor agree, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree. The mean and standard deviations for each of these scales are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of different themes

SCALE/COMPONENT/THEME	MEAN	SD
Self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH values lessons	***3.94***	.49
Self-efficacy beliefs to influence values development in students	4.32	.46
School collective efficacy beliefs to promote values through role modelling	4.33	.51
School collective efficacy beliefs to create appropriate context for EGNH	***4.55***	.54
Importance of EGNH in terms of student learning	4.29	.48
Importance of EGNH in terms of academic and societal impact	4.36	.59
Importance of EGNH in terms of providing support for 4GNH pillars	***4.47***	.49
External support for the school to implement EGNH	***3.34***	.65
Internal support in the school to implement EGNH	***4.44***	.49
Support provided by EGNH workshop/s to implement EGNH	***3.86***	.67
Impact of EGNH for the students	4.04	.47
Impact of EGNH for the teachers	4.37	.56
Teacher actions to implement EGNH	4.29	.55

As shown in Table 2, the means for all the scales are above average to agree and very close to strongly agree indicating that the principals and teachers of this school had much higher self and collective efficacy beliefs to implement EGNH and higher perceptions of importance of EGNH, support systems, impact and teacher actions to implement EGNH. However, comparative analysis of the 13 scales indicated that external support by various stakeholders had the lowest mean (M= 3.34; SD= .65) followed by support provided by the EGNH workshop/s (M= 3.86; SD= .67) and self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH lessons (M=3.94; SD= .49). On the contrary, the three topmost scales were - school collective efficacy beliefs to create appropriate context for EGNH (M= 4.55; SD= .54), perceptions of importance to provide support for 4GNH pillars (M= 4.47; SD= .49), and internal support system within the school to implement EGNH (M= 4.44; SD= .49). Each of these measurement scales is further elaborated in the next section along with interview and observation data.

Presentation of themes and discussion

This study was guided by the 13 predetermined themes. Data from the survey, interviews, school documents and observations were analysed based on these themes that are presented in the following sub-sections. Teacher respondents are referred to as T1, T2… and T6.

Self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH values lessons

Of the 13 themes measured through the survey questionnaire, the teacher self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH values lessons was the third lowest (M= 3.94; SD= .49) indicating that teachers and principal/vice principals doubt their self-efficacy in designing student-centred activities for GNH lessons, lessons that help students master GNH values, GNH lessons to gain and retain students' interest, lessons integrating values into academic lessons, and lessons to help reduce negative student behaviours. This corroborates with the earlier findings of Sherab (2013) that teachers showed lower self-efficacy to design and teach GNH values.

However, participants believed that EGNH will instil peace, harmony and justice and promote happiness. Teachers expressed that a GNH classroom, free of corporal punishment should encourage students to express their thoughts, opinions and problems without any fear. According to T1, "GNH classroom should allow students to share and interact freely". Correspondingly, observation data showed teachers using a variety of instructional approaches such as cooperative learning, group discussions, and think-pair-share to promote active learning. For instance, it was noted:

> During the activities, teachers sat with students who worked in groups. They actively interacted with the group, encouraging everybody to share their thoughts. There were also presentations, sharing of individual perspectives, debates and discussions. During these activities, teachers played the role of a facilitator. (Field notes)

Evidence showed that teachers strongly believed in creating a classroom culture that promoted critical thinking and deeper learning skills in students. Students were encouraged to think about and evaluate their own thoughts and behaviours on issues related to their life. A teacher illustrated an engaging classroom activity that promoted critical thinking as stated:

> I was teaching my students about Taktsang Monastery. We had a discussion about Guru Rimpoche flying on a tigress. One of the students asked how that was possible and that led to an interesting debate in the class. Students were engaged in deep thinking and the learning was meaningful.

This is an interesting development in the Bhutanese context that is worth emulating as traditionally, Bhutanese classroom teachings are known for being teacher-centric (REC, 2009; Sherab, 2013; Sherab & Dorji, 2013). Such teaching approaches are likely to promote values such as teamwork, collaboration, sharing, and creativity.

Self-efficacy beliefs to influence values development in students

The findings from the survey indicated that teachers can influence values development in students by being good role models (M= 4.32; SD: 0.46). Being a good role model was seen as a positive trait to help students to be honest, responsible, kind, and also facilitate open discussions.

Interview findings further substantiate the survey results on the importance for teachers to be good role models for values development in students. For instance, T2 stressed, "the way teacher dresses and talks in front of the students influence values development in students. Teachers are observed as exemplars by students". Another teacher commented, "Our school's motto is 'Learn, Value and Practice'. Teachers have to model hard work and humbleness so that students learn these values from the teachers" (T1). Furthermore, interview findings also affirm that nurturing and caring classroom climate promoted social and emotional bonding between teacher and students. The teachers believed that any child who is loved and cared for is likely to care for others and any child whose perspectives are appreciated is likely to appreciate other perspectives.

Additionally, findings from observational records show that teachers consciously exhibited the right values and attitudes in front of the students. They mindfully created classroom environments that offered student support, comfort, and reassurance by providing attention to all students through appropriate eye contact and behavioural gestures. It was observed that:

> Before the start of the lesson, the teacher makes sure that all students are comfortable and ready for the lesson. She then starts the lesson. While she is teaching, she suddenly spots a student who seems little distracted. She paused to attend to that student by asking whether the student requires any help. (Field notes)

Observation also revealed that the school strongly believed in creating a positive classroom environment that reflects GNH values. Classrooms were neatly maintained with books tidily shelved. All such practices by the teachers are a part of positive development in the Bhutanese classrooms that must be cherished and emulated. Findings highlight that these teachers are mindful of what they say and do in front of their students, which can have a powerful impact on students in the form of the hidden curriculum (Bandura, 1997; Yero, 2010: Sherab, 2013).

The findings also revealed that the classrooms were equipped with basic utility equipment that intended to promote values in students, related to health and sanitation.

The basic utility equipment such as nail clippers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, Dettol soaps can be seen neatly stored in improvised containers made out of used cellotape frames or tissue rolls. Water filters and water bottles are filled with clean water and are made available to students by placing them on the tables. (Field notes)

Morning assembly speeches on health and hygiene were often delivered by the Principal and further reinforced by teachers in their respective classrooms. One classic finding was that students were made aware of the importance of drinking water and were always encouraged to drink plenty of water to maintain a healthy body. Although the traditional Bhutanese etiquettes do not allow students to eat or drink during the class time (Sherab, 2013), because of the healthy practice this school has introduced, the students in this school were found frequently drinking water during the class. These young students are likely to pick up such healthy practices into their adult life, promoting health and happiness. An example promoting hygiene and sanitation was through the use of the programme called 'use of tippy taps to wash hands'. "Many tippy taps filled with water are arranged neatly in front of every classroom block. Students washed hands frequently" (Field notes).

School collective efficacy beliefs to create an appropriate context for EGNH

The school's collective efficacy beliefs in creating appropriate contexts for EGNH scored the highest mean (M= 4.55; SD= 54) indicating that the school had a clear vision for implementing EGNH. The participants believed that they have the responsibility to model appropriate behaviour and make the school a safe place for all. This finding was echoed in both the interview and observation data. The school had developed a wide array of programmes with the objective of promoting GNH values in students. Some of these programmes were; 'morning assembly performance', 'mid-day meals' for the financially disadvantaged students, 'house parents' during which older students took care of the younger ones, 'sharing time' where teachers and students discussed students' problems and issues and 'the eightfold path.' During 'sharing time' some parents were involved in giving talks to the students on various topics like selflessness and self-esteem. During morning assemblies, the Principal delivered talks on various topics and issues related to values development. The observation data also illustrated how Principal's morning assembly speech on values drew the attention of the students.

> …Soon after the prayer, the Principal informed the students that she was going to tell them a story. The story had important moral values about having to wash hands with soap. The genuineness of the advice on the need to wash hands through the story was

> well authenticated by the school's initiative by providing necessary support. Such enabling conditions portray careful planning and implementation of happiness values. (Field notes)

Some other programmes that promoted GNH values in students included cultural shows, traditional dances, and prayer recitation on Fridays. These programmes were carried out with the objective of developing cultural and spiritual values in students. The mid-day meal was one of the most appreciated and unique programmes initiated by the school. It immensely benefited 25 students from poor families. This feeding programme was solely supported by the teachers and parents of other students. It was observed that the school respected these students by not revealing their identity. Observing the 'mid-day meal' programme, a researcher noted:

> What is interesting about this arrangement is that other than the beneficiaries no other students knew about it. This has been intentionally kept confidential to avoid the beneficiaries from being stigmatized. In the morning, as soon as these children reach school they deposit their empty lunch boxes at the kitchen. During lunch, school staff bring their lunch boxes to the class where they eat together with their classmates. (Field notes)

Importance of GNH values in terms of student learning

Both the survey (M= 4.29; SD: 0.48) and the interview data revealed that the school strongly felt the importance of embedding GNH values into the daily education practices. They strongly believed that EGNH has the potential to help students avoid greed and selfish desires, become aware of democratic principles, become critical thinkers, help and support others, become ecologically literate, and show a caring attitude. Teachers shared a feeling that embedding GNH values in the curriculum contribute to a more holistic view of education and to making education more meaningful and wholesome. For example, GNH values such as compassion imparted through programmes such as morning speeches by the Principal and 'sharing time' and 'house parents', and sharing of the 'eightfold path of Buddhism" help students to be compassionate towards each other. The culture of older students from the higher classes taking care of the younger students and the academically high achieving students providing peer support students facing difficulty in academic performance were deeply grounded.

Genuine care for nature and others were some of the important values that the school emphasised to build in students. The school surrounding showed strong evidence of the ethos adopted to engage students in the conservation of the natural environment that provided an increased sense of connection to nature and understand the concept of interdependence, eco-consciousness and sustainable living. The observation evidently revealed the beautiful natural environment of the school (see School Context).

Importance of GNH values for students' academic education and societal impact

As indicated by a much higher mean (4.36; SD: 0.59), and further supported by the interview data, teachers appeared to consider GNH values important in terms of improving students' academic education and making a positive impact in the society through the development of moral values and addressing youth issues. GNH values teach students the skills for well-being, constructive emotion, a better relationship, and purposeful engagement. The school believed that the increased well-being of the students had a positive impact on their academic achievement. For example, a positive teacher-student relationship plays an important role in academic performance. The findings maintained that there were instances when students shared their personal problems to teachers without fear; this helped teachers to respond appropriately to students with improved counselling and mentoring services that are crucial for enhancing students' academic performance. The findings also revealed that GNH values such as, 'sense of responsibility' helped students to become more responsible in completing

their academic tasks like writing homework regularly, which further contributed to improved academic competency.

One interesting finding from the interview data was that when teachers appreciated and encouraged poor readers during 'Buddy reading', students showed tremendous improvement in their reading ability and language competencies. The importance of encouraging students to read was also clearly documented in a school record, The school's reading programme, at home and school, is a supplementary series to facilitate the holistic learning which aligns with the plan of EGNH (CSS, 2016). Furthermore, the interview data revealed that GNH values like interpersonal relationships and compassion fostered healthy and effective interactions amongst students during teamwork activities, enhancing their academic excellence.

Teacher perceptions of EGNH impact on students

Teacher perceptions of the impact of EGNH on students scored a relatively high mean (M= 4.04; SD: 0.47). This means that EGNH had been able to help students change some of their own beliefs and assumptions about values. This result supports the interview data, which suggested that the EGNH had helped students develop GNH values. According to many teachers, students exhibited GNH values in the way they behaved in the class as well as outside. One respondent passionately remarked, "Some of the values I observed in my students are: they are truthful, do not litter the classroom, have strong team spirit, respect each other, responsible and accountable and follow certain etiquettes while doing their presentation". This is an indication of the teachers' competencies and effectiveness of infusing GNH values as an integral aspect of their classroom instruction.

While it was encouraging to note how students have learnt many happiness values, the most profound impact that teachers have been able to create was students' love for nature, exhibited through their caring attitude to plants and nature.

Perceptions of impact on teachers through EGNH

The mean score showed much higher perceptions of how EGNH positively impacted teachers (M= 4.37; SD: 0.56). They perceived that in the process of teaching GNH values, they have been able to change some of their own beliefs and assumptions about values and as a result, changed their own actions and practices. Interview data also showed that EGNH had positively impacted on the lives of teachers. They have experienced transformation in their thoughts, feelings and actions. Speaking about such personal transformation, T2 asserted:

> I have observed that I learned to trust my students, my colleagues and the students' parents. I also learned to control my temper and develop good relationship with my students. I can empathize with my students now. I have become more receptive. I see willingness in myself to share my knowledge as well as teaching learning materials with my colleagues.

Similarly, T5 commented, "I seem to be a better human being, changing my behaviour for the pluralistic world." This is an indication that reflection exercises must be a regular feature when teaching GNH values. Such experience strongly depicts a teacher's realisation about the challenges in the world and how one has transformed one's thoughts and behaviour instead of being one like any other people. Teacher impact is also visible in other themes.

Perception of teacher actions to implement EGNH

Perceptions related to teachers' actions to implement EGNH scored a high mean (M= 4.29; SD: 0.55). This may be attributed to the School-Based In-service Programme the school teachers must have received regarding the implementation of EGNH because this school has established a high priority for promoting GNH values in all school activities. The teachers

showed much passion and devotion to include values teaching in their academic classes; have experienced some success in teaching GNH values; and were able to critically reflect on their values lessons.

The most outstanding result of this study was that many data sources indicated that the thoughts and aspirations of both the principals and the teachers in the school aligned with the larger national goal of providing value-laden lessons to the students. This was well authenticated by teacher respondents' aspirations to transform their school into a GNH model school.

Triangulating the interview data with observation records and school documents confirmed that the teachers were fully inspired towards supporting the broader national goal of implementing EGNH in their school. For instance, "The school principals and teachers made sure all students were in the shade while sharing a moral laden story during the assembly" (Field notes). This was a good example of GNH practice impacting on teachers' behaviours and ultimately on the students. This is an indication of teachers being mindful of their actions and how it impacts their students. This is a positive development as many other teachers in most cases could be quite oblivious of the impact their actions have on their students' wellbeing. Anecdotal evidence showed that many schools in Bhutan conduct morning assembly and other activities such as class tests in the scorching sun that often goes on for hours sometimes knocking down students on the ground due to heat stroke. The other extraordinary transformation in the teachers' action is the initiative to provide mid-day meals mentioned earlier. Such generous acts from the teachers could be emulated in other schools because such noble initiatives have tremendous potential to contribute towards fulfilling the national aspiration of achieving GNH. Students in other parts of the country that come from disadvantaged families would benefit immensely from such acts of kindness and generosity.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed that might be of interest and use for other schools and relevant agencies across the country.

First, findings from this study showed relatively much higher self and collective efficacy beliefs, higher perceptions of importance, support system, actions and impact of EGNH in the school. There is evidence to show that the school had dedicated much time and effort to operationalise EGNH with a goal to help make educational experiences meaningful to every individual child. GNH related programmes such as the 'mid-day meals', 'sharing time', 'morning assembly performance', 'house parents', and 'the eight-fold path' exhibited high potential to promote GNH values and happiness skills. Such practices are worthy to be emulated in other schools considering the positive impact such practices have on school leaders, teachers, students, and the overall school community.

Second, the findings from this study corroborated earlier findings of Sherab (2013) that school teachers comparatively showed weaker perceptions of external support and support provided by EGNH workshop, and lower self-efficacy beliefs to design and teach GNH values. This has implications for various stakeholders. A good support system from key stakeholders such as the Thromdey Education Office, the Royal Education Council, the MoE, teacher education colleges amongst others needs to be instituted. Furthermore, teachers have to be provided with continuous professional development programmes on EGNH with more focus on helping them enhance their self-efficacy to infuse GNH values and principles into their teaching subjects. Such opportunities might provide a huge morale boost to these teachers who are so motivated and determined to advance EGNH practices in schools. Therefore, investing in carefully planned continuous professional development programmes to address the self-efficacy needs of teachers to infuse GNH values and principles as the heart essence of the Bhutanese classroom is paramount in fulfilling the vision of EGNH - 'producing a GNH

graduate.'

Third, under the dynamic leadership of the principal/vice principals, this school had initiated numerous GNH practices which have the potential to raise the sense of self-efficacy of teachers and ultimately make a life-long impact on the students (see themes above). Perhaps other schools might send observers to learn from this school. Such practices can serve as bedrock to address the problem of the perceived deterioration of human values amongst Bhutanese youths. This in effect, would help to address one of the primary concerns of His Majesty the King (2009).

Fourth, this school, particularly the management needs to be lauded for promoting the kind of team spirit, unity, and collaborative working environment within the school. During the research period, no signs of disagreement and tension amongst the staff were noticed. Furthermore, the school was able to garner the required support of the parents for the benefit of the students. Such positive working culture within the school with effective parental involvement is quintessential in the overall realisation of the EGNH goals. It is recommended that schools in Bhutan promote such harmonious and collaborative working environment.

This study had to limit the participation of students and parents due to time and resource constraints. It would be interesting to follow these students as they progress to the higher levels of schooling to see how they are able to maintain and apply these values learnt in primary school to steer their lives into adulthood. Perhaps taking on board parents in such study would also provide more insights.

This study has been able to generate preliminary evidence to show the impact of EGNH not only on students but also on teachers, principals and parents. This school has a huge scope to offer to other schools in Bhutan in the effective implementation of EGNH initiative. The collaborative working culture of this school needs to be further developed and tended to create a GNH brand education that can be showcased as the defining character or the core essence of Bhutan's education system.

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Assumptions of Bhutanese educational policy developers and their impacts on school education environment

Gembo Tshering

Abstract

A school education system of a nation must respond to its needs, but the capacity of the former to be responsive depends upon the kind of policy environments the latter provides for it. Underpinned by social constructivism, the study employed phenomenology and focus group interviews to explore the elements of the policy environments in which the Bhutanese school education system is situated. With data collected from key stakeholders in the policy environments, the thematic analyses of the data showed that the beliefs and perspectives of educational policymakers were different from the policies that they developed, and the difference resulted in the emergence of educational environments that discouraged a student-driven or market-driven school education system.

Keywords: *Student achievement, policy, phenomenology, learning environment.*

A school education system comprises contextual environments, schools, classrooms, and students as layers. Drawing its forms from educational policies, the contextual environment, equivalent to macrosystem in the theory of ecology (Bronfenbreener, 1979), determines the interactive, symbiotic relationship among the layers (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Schreens, 1992; Tshering, 2012). The attitudes, perspectives, and practices of educational policy developers are likely to influence the contextual environment. Therefore, it might be helpful to explore the policy developers' lived experience of making educational policies and their relationship to the contextual environment (Tshering, 2012; Tshering, 2014; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Schreens, 1992). A brief information about Bhutan follows next.

Bhutan is a small, landlocked country with a population of six hundred thousand people. Its school education system ranges from early childhood care and development centres to higher secondary schools. Children below six years go to early childhood centres to become school ready. Children's progress to higher grades is determined by the combined performance scores on formative and summative assessments. Children must take a national competency test in literacy and numeracy at Grade 3. Likewise, children must take national, standardized examinations at Grade 10. Depending on their performance in Grade 10, the children are ability-tracked into different streams, such as vocational, arts, commerce, and science in Grade 11. They study the same stream until Grade 12. All schools follow the national school education curriculum.

Review of the literature

For a nation's education system to meet national goals, it requires enabling education policy environments. It was rightly claimed that an education system is mainly driven by teaching and learning practices, education policy evaluation culture, and national education policies (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008). In addition, two sets of compelling elements of the enabling education environment of a national education system were presented by Schreens (1992). The first set comprises the composition of the school population, the denomination of the school, and the geographical setting of the school. The second set constitutes reward structures, assessment-centred government policy, parental involvement, demands made by educational consumers, and cultural values. In sum, a nation's education system is multi-layered with student, classroom, school, and context as the layers.

The multi-layered nature of a nation's education system aligns with Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology (1979) when student, classroom, school, and context layers are mapped

with its microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem respectively. The similarity among the positions of Creemers and Kyriakides (2008), Schreens (1992), and Bronfenbreener (1979) on a nation's school education system shows the importance of the overall educational environment in shaping the other layers which are proximal to students. However, no studies, especially about the Bhutanese school education system, reported how policymakers' beliefs and experience inform their policies on the overall educational environment. Therefore, this study will address this gap in the research.

Conceptual framework

A nation's education system is multi-layered and the layers are linked to one another by the proximity of their roles in students' education, with the most proximal layer being the classroom and the most distal layer being the context (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008, Schreens, 1992). The contextual layer provides enabling environment to the layer below it which in turn should enable the layer below it, and similar role pattern continues until the layer that is more proximal to students (Bronfenbreener, 1979). The contextual layer is formed by national education policies relating to teaching and learning, infrastructural facilities of schools, demographic profiles of teachers and students, denominations of schools, geographical settings of schools, structures of reward, culture of assessment and evaluation, parental involvement in school management, consumer demands on schools, and cultural values (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008, Schreens, 1992). Because attitudes, perspectives, and cognitions of policymakers influence the policies they develop; an understanding of these personality traits of the policymakers will provide greater insight into the contextual layer of the education system.

The study used a social constructivist worldview (Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to enable its participants to engage in interactive discourses on the context of the Bhutanese Education System. Because the meaning of the context that the study explored had to be derived from the lived experiences of the participants, the study used a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007; Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004).

Method

Sample

A purposive sample (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1988; Morgan & Scannell, 1998) of six men with more than five years involvement in developing and implementing educational policies participated in this study. The participants were selected based on their (a) involvement in making educational policies and (b) representation of more than 80% of the personnel responsible for educational planning and policy development. All six participants signed the consent forms as part of the research ethics requirement.

Data collection

The study used focus group interviews for collecting data because it is a method of choice for collecting data about attitudes, perspectives, and cognitions when researchers require group synergies about a topic rather than investigating individual participants about individual views about a topic (Mugwagwa, Edwards, & de Haan, 2015; Wilkinson, 1998; Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1988; Morgan & Scannell, 1998).

Procedure

The participants were approached for their informed consent to participate in the study. As agreed in the consent forms with ethical approval of the Ministry of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan, the participants reported to a pre-arranged venue. A few pleasantries

between the participants and the moderator were exchanged to relax the former before the interview. Next, the focus group interview was initiated in line with the moderation guidelines recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009). Table 1 presents the key focus group questions.

Table 1: Interview schedule

How would the publicity of students' achievement results, post-school enrolments in colleges, and receipt of scholarships affect school performance?
What are some of the potential benefits of allowing students and parents to select schools?
How important is it for schools to have freedom in procuring teaching and learning resources?
How important is it for schools to have freedom in selecting, appointing, and terminating teachers and other staff?
How important is it for schools to be able to use its budget according to their needs and priorities?
If you had the authority to relate school performance to school financing, what would be your primary recommendation?
How would you relate the elements of education-friendly atmosphere to student performance?
How many times were you involved in evaluating educational policies?

Some disconfirming statements and non-verbal behaviours were clarified though probing remarks during the focus group interview. The group members were asked if they had something they wished they could have shared with the group before ending the focus group interview—a process that is often used to attain data saturation during interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Mugwagwa, Edwards, & de Haan, 2015; Wilkinson, 1998; Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2017; Krueger & Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1988; Morgan & Scannell, 1998). The interview lasted for over two hours and it was recorded with a digital recorder and later transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis

The data was analysed using Moustakas's (1994) method. Accordingly, significant statements were identified from the interview transcripts, which were then clustered into meaning units and themes. Then, the meaning units and themes were synthesized into textual and structural descriptions. Finally, a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the lived experiences of the participants were constructed by using the textural and structural descriptions; resulting in thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Creswell, 2007).

Results and Discussion

From verbatim transcripts, 37 significant statements were extracted; resulting in 13 formulated meaning units, and three themes. To attain thick, rich description and audit trails, the significant statements, the meaning units, and the themes were critically analysed side-by-side. The themes, meaning units, and evidence in participants' statements are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes or meaning units and participants' statements

Themes or meaning units	Evidence in participants' statements
Achievement stimuli: Parents knowledge about the performance of prospective schools for their children	• Parents should play a role of equal partner to teachers or anyone involved in their children's education. • Parents should be involved more in their children's physical, moral, and academic developments…
Achievement stimuli: Information for parents about prospective schools for their children	• School magazines, school brochures, school calendars, school performance reports, league tables, and newspapers inform parents about their children's schools.
Achievement stimuli: Publicity of student achievement	• SCholarship is one of the main incentives for students to work hard.... • Scholarships foster competition among schools and students. • Private schools are judged based on the number of students who qualify for further education in colleges. • Too much focus on students' performance in examination often results in neglecting other aspects of wHOLESOME EDUCATION OR HOLISTIC EDUCATION.
Achievement stimuli: Students and parents selecting schools	• Making parents satisfied with why they want to send their children to a school. • Solve parents' socio-economic problems. • Parents tend to opt for schools near to where they live. • Giving choice to parents will result in concentrating students in high performing schools and fewer enrolments in low performing schools. • Parents must comply with educational goods and services pROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING IN WHICH SCHOOL THEIR CHILDREN SHOULD ENROL.
Achievement stimuli: Teaching and learning resources	• IT IS very important, especially for result-oriented management or outcome-based financing model. • It is very important and critical that schools have autonomy in procuring teaching and learning resources. • Due to some constraints, such as inadequate staff for, and right expertise in, dealing with procurement matters, the Ministry of Education has decided not to grant such autonomy to schools.
Achievement stimuli: Schools' freedom to Recruit and terminate teachers and staff	• IT is one of the highest degrees of autonomy. If it is doable, it is good and very important, but is it very practical now? • These [freedoms indicating school autonomy] are possible in Bhutanese schools if all schools have minimum facilities already in place so that they have a level playing field. • If the schools select, deploy, and terminate teachers, they will feel accountable to schools. • This kind of autonomy will broaden the rural-urban divide. • With government policy interventions, such a rural-urban divide can be avoided and a uniform socio-economic growth can be achieved by allowing parents with equal access to uniform educational faciLITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Achievement stimuli: Schools' freedom to use their budgets	• IT is very important for schools should use their budgETS WHERE MOST NEEDED AND GIVE THE BEST RESULTS.
Achievement stimuli: Performance-based funding	• I WOuld not really have a lopsided recommendation that relating school performance to school financing is good. • Examinations might not actually tell you what the status of education or the quality of education is in schools, thereby [limiting the whole range of] the school performance. • We do not want teachers conducting examinations with answers written on the board because of performance-based funding. • We want to finance schools based on their achievement targets, rather than basing the finance on thE RESOURCES RELATED TO INPUTS ONLY.
Enabling learning environment: Attributes of an effective learning environment	• TEAching and learning materials; career counselling; electricity; road access; the Internet; water supply; library books; teacher-pupil ratio; classroom size; school leadership; and health facilitIES.
Enabling learning environment: Education friendly atmosphere in schools	• CLassroom climate should be conducive, encouraging enquiry, not rote learning. Children should be encouraged to stand up and ask questions when they have doubts, rather than holding back. EDUCATION SHOULD BE CHILD-CENTRED.
Enabling learning environment: Education-friendly atmosphere and student performance	• … CHildren… a school will learn with enjoyment which will have a positive and direct impact on their learning, and hence their school performance.
Policy evaluation: Approaches to formulating educational policies	• ...IDEntification of issues or problems is very important. • ...next is getting budgets for solving the problem. • ...getting to solve the problem and involving stakeholders from various agencies are other steps. • ...we invite people from various departments to identify issues or problems related to their goals and needs and relate their problems to policy guidelines and then frame programmes for them
Policy evaluation: Frequency of education policies	• I Do not remember being involved in evaluating education policies". • ...being POLICY DEVELOPERS, HOW RELEVANT IT IS FOR US TO EVALUATE THE POLICIES WE MAKE?

Textual and structural descriptions of meaning units or themes

This section presents textural and structural descriptions of the 13 meaning units or themes in Table 1. The meaning units were grouped into three categories, namely, achievement stimuli, enabling learning environment, and policy evaluation for the purpose of achieving coherent descriptions. The descriptions of the themes in each one of these categories are followed by a discussion.

Achievement stimuli: Parents knowledge about the performance of prospective schools for their children

Overall, the participants perceived that the parental involvement in children's education was minimal and that the parents viewed the children's education as the responsibility of schools. Member B states, "Parents feel that once their children are in schools, it is the responsibility of the schools to take care of their children". Overall, the participants emphasized the need for policy interventions aimed at increasing parental involvement in children's education.

> There should be a model shift in the way parents are involved in our schools. Parents should be involved more in their children's physical, moral, and academic developments than their current way of involving only in procuring children's stationery and participating in school management board meetings and other non-academic activities (Member B).

Member A recognized the importance for parents to be aware of the performance of the schools their children were going to attend, "Very important and there is no doubt about it". However, another member revealed the challenges in making information about the performance of the schools accessible and comprehensible to the parents:

We have not reached that situation where parents can assess how schools are performing. Some schools provide information through school calendars and school magazines, which is neither sufficient nor comprehensive for judging the school performance (Member A).

Achievement stimuli: Information for parents about prospective schools for their children

One of the participants pointed out a range of sources as stated in the statement below:

> The likely sources of information are school magazines, school brochures, school calendars, school performance reports, and examination topper list. The Ministry is also in the process of finalizing management of information systems that will provide comparative information on school performance. Other sources of information are newspapers (Member D).

Despite a range of potential sources of information available for the parents, the focus group was sceptical about the parents' ability to use them for evaluating the quality of their children's prospective schools. Member A states, "All parents cannot read the information provided by schools because most of them are illiterate".

Achievement stimuli: Publicity of student achievement

The participants had positive views about the ways of recognizing students' academic achievement. The following comment highlights this view:

I think for class 12, scholarships make students work hard. In fact, a scholarship is one of the main incentives for students to work hard.... Scholarships foster competition among schools and students. This may make schools and students work hard. At times schools, especially private schools, tend to be judged based on the number of students who qualify for further education in colleges (Member C).

However, the participants were mindful of the adverse effects of an excessive emphasis placed on student achievement, "... too much focus on students' performance in examination often results in neglecting other aspects of wholesome education or holistic education".

Achievement stimuli: Students and parents selecting schools

The participants perceived parents' satisfaction and easing parents' socio-economic concerns as a couple of benefits from allowing students and parents to select schools:

The potential benefits will be making the parents satisfied with why they want to send their children to a particular school. Behind the satisfaction, there must be a variety of reasons, such as social and economic ones. Therefore, allowing students and parents to select schools will solve parents' socio-economic problems (Member A).

This view is further supported by Member C:

In the past, many students from Thimphu used to seek admission in Zemgang High School, although the school was located in a socially backward part of the country. The reason for such interest in Zemgang High School was that the parents of those students hoped to solve some of the urban-related problems picked up by their children.

Parents' desire to get their children admitted in schools closer to their residence also featured as a benefit, as implied by the comment (Member B), "Parents tend to opt for schools near to where they live; therefore, parents often do not think about how schools are performing". Although Members C and D differ in their views, both emphasise the importance of parents being able to choose schools for their children.

Notwithstanding the perceived benefits from parents being able to choose schools for their children, Member A raised some negative or troublesome consequences of allowing parents to choose schools, "Giving choice to parents will result in concentrating students in high performing schools and fewer enrolments in low performing schools".

In addition, the parents in Bhutan had little control over which school their children might attend as indicated by Member B, "There is an assumption that parents have a choice of schools, but it is not like that. It is largely related to what District Education Officers plan and decide".

Achievement stimuli: Teaching and learning resources

In principle, the participants recognised the benefits of granting autonomy to schools in procuring teaching and learning materials. Member B comments:

It is very important, especially for result-oriented management or outcome-based financing model. If schools were made totally responsible for holistic development of students, it is very important and critical that schools have autonomy in procuring teaching and learning resources.

However, what was considered potentially helpful for the schools in principle was not applied in the schools. A comment from the group confirms this (Member B), "...due to some constraints, such as inadequate staff for, and right expertise in, dealing with procurement matters, the Ministry of Education has decided not to grant such autonomy to schools".

Achievement stimuli: Schools' freedom to Recruit and terminate teachers and staff

The participants recognised the importance of autonomy to schools for selecting, appointing, and terminating teachers and staff. Member A states, "It is one of the highest degrees of autonomy. If it is doable, it is good and very important, but is it very practical now?" Alternatively, "These [freedoms indicating school autonomy] are possible in Bhutanese schools if all schools have minimum facilities already in place so that they have a level-playing field".

The participants also raised some additional benefits from granting autonomy to schools:

If we look at it positively, one of the major headaches that the Ministry has is the deployment of teachers. Every year we get hundreds of requests for teachers. These teachers, as they work for the Ministry, feel more accountable to the Ministry than to their schools. If the schools select, deploy, and terminate teachers, they will feel accountable to schools (Member B).

However, the group was quick to point out that school autonomy would lead to social inequalities by way of creating a rural-urban divide among students:

... this kind of autonomy will broaden the rural-urban divide. With government policy

interventions, such a rural-urban divide can be avoided and a uniform socio-economic growth can be achieved by allowing parents with equal access to uniform educational facilities across the country (Member B).

Achievement stimuli: Schools' freedom to use their budgets

The participants indicated that it was up to schools to use their budgets in accordance with their plans:

It is very important. Schools should use their budgets where most needed and give the best results. Schools have to find out the factors related to the desired results and the budget should be used in developing these factors. It is up to the schools to take decisions on how they use their budgets (Member A).

Achievement stimuli: Performance-based funding

The possibility for financing Bhutanese schools based on their performance is unlikely for a number of reasons:

I think we should have the balance of head and heart. The heart may say this is good and go ahead, but is this practicable in the present situation? We need to be rational. I would not really have a lopsided recommendation that relating school performance to school financing is good (Member A).

A reason for the performance-based financing being disproportionate was the lack of comprehensive and reliable assessment practices that take into account students' socio-economic backgrounds, school resources, schools' locale, and students' holistic development:

Schools differ in terms of infrastructural facilities, teaching and learning resources, and communities from where students come. Most of the parents in urban schools are literate, while most of the parents in rural places are illiterate. Examinations might not actually tell you what the status of education or the quality of education is in schools, thereby [limiting the whole range of] the school performance (Member A).

The participants also feared the prospect of malpractices by schools to raise their performance to secure financial rewards (Member B), "We do not want teachers conducting examinations with answers written on the board. If school finance is linked to school performance and teachers conduct examinations, it is obvious that such negative behaviours are bound to happen".

However, output-based financing is largely viewed as more efficient than input-based financing; and consequently, the participants outlined their preference for the former.

We want to finance schools based on their achievement targets, rather than basing the finance on the resources related to inputs only. Targets would be based on students' all round development and their post-school achievements. We are planning to develop outcome-based financing in the near future (Member B).

Achievement stimuli and discussion

In line with the literature (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey, et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997; Jeynes, 2007; Ritblatt, et al., 2002; Yan & Lin, 2005), the results highlighted the need for schools to connect with parents by sharing information about their children's performance and by involving them in school activities. Such a relationship between parents and schools has the potential for the latter to get greater support from the former in areas related to student learning.

With school magazines, brochures, calendars, student performance reports, and media referred to as popular sources of information for parents about their children's schools, the participants perceived that the majority of parents might not be able to absorb this information because of Bhutan's low national literacy rate. The inability of most parents to use available print materials limits communication between parents and schools to oral communication. As

reported in Ritblatt, Beatty, Cronan, and Ochoa (2002), the lack of proper communication seems to be a key barrier to parental involvement in the activities of Bhutanese schools. The reliance on oral communication also raises doubts about the parents' ability to assist their children with homework and other academic activities, which is a challenge being faced by parents with a low SES and less formal education (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2006). However, because the parental involvement in school activities or children's learning spans beyond academic activities in the forms of parenting, volunteering, decision making, and collaboration with communities (Epstein & Sanders, 2006), alternative school outreach programmes should be able to involve parents in school activities.

The group perceived that the publicizing of student achievement results, post-school enrolments in colleges, and receipt of scholarships would make students work harder as they compete for scholarships. The group believed that hard work by students would improve their achievement. However, the group was aware of the negative aspects of school accountability when it is driven by school league tables, as reported in Goldstein and Leckie (2008).

As reported in Waslander, Pater, and Weide (2010), parents' satisfaction and reduced socio-economic concerns were the two benefits that the participants felt would ensue from allowing parents to choose schools for their children. However, the group mentioned that allowing parents to choose schools for their children would result in high-performing schools having more students than the low-performing schools, a perspective similar to the findings reported in the literature (Gibbons, Machin, & Silva, 2008; Gibbons & Telhaj, 2007).

Despite its perceived benefits, the schools were not granted autonomy because of the perception that schools were not ready. Given the perceived benefits of granting autonomy to schools in procuring teaching and learning materials, which is also in line with the literature (OECD, 2010; West, Allmendinger, Nikolai, & Barham, 2010), studies ought to be initiated to evaluate the feasibility of granting such autonomy to schools.

The focus group felt that the teachers and the staff would be more accountable to schools than to the Ministry of Education if the schools were empowered to recruit and terminate teachers and other school staff. However, the group was mindful of fostering inequalities between urban and rural schools because only a few good teachers would prefer to work in rural schools, resulting in differentiated learning opportunities in the two sectors. As suggested by Grauwe (2005), policymakers may grant autonomy to schools in conjunction with supportive strategies to develop the capacities of principals, teachers, and communities with a clear focus on autonomy as a tool for improving school performance and establishing equity in the school education system.

The group underlined the importance of schools being able to use their budget where it is most needed, noting that it was up to the schools to decide how to use their budget. However, an examination of a school budget plan reveals that schools had little discretionary power in using their prescribed budget because of its strict bureaucratic clearance compliance and mandatory audit trailing requirements. Such elements in a budget have been known to obstruct schools in carrying out educational innovations, especially improving the performance of the at-risk students (Timar & Roza, 2010).

The group did not favour the idea of performance-based funding because the Bhutanese education system did not have the capability to develop a comprehensive list of school performance indicators other than the examination-oriented ones. This statement is difficult to interpret, but it reveals a gap between the school fiscal policies and school performances. In addition, the statement seems to overlook some of the well-established aspects of performance-based funding in the Bhutanese education system such as career ladder, meritorious promotion, master teacher, and in-service training (Foster & Marquart, 1984). The gap, if it existed, would mean that the preceding aspects of performance-based funding are followed as routines (e.g., promoting teachers based on some kind of periodic schedule) in Bhutanese schools rather than as tools for improving student outcomes (Foster & Marquart, 1984). Because there was

a desire for performance-based funding of the schools, the Ministry of Education may care to explore suitable models for instituting performance-based funding.

Enabling learning environment: Attributes of an effective learning environment

The focus group raised the following as the attributes of effective learning environments: teaching and learning materials; career counselling; electricity; road access; the Internet; water supply; library books; teacher-pupil ratio; classroom size; school leadership; and health facilities.

Enabling learning environment: Education friendly atmosphere in schools
The participants stated that the elements would foster a child-friendly school environment and child-centred teaching and learning activities in schools (Member B). “We would want the classroom climate to be conducive, encouraging enquiry, not rote learning. Children should be encouraged to stand up and ask questions when they have doubts, rather than holding back. Education should be child-centred”.

Enabling learning environment: Education-friendly atmosphere and student performance

The participants perceived a positive relationship between attributes and student performance.

If you have got a classroom where we have good student and teacher interactions, minimum class size, motivated teachers with good content knowledge and pedagogical skills, good leadership, a school with such classrooms will be a very happy place to be for children. The children in such a school will learn with enjoyment which will have a positive and direct impact on their learning, and hence their school performance (Member B).

The group also raised the importance of career counselling services in schools (Member B), “Career counselling or school-life linkages play a very important role. If a child is educated at the right age on what their aptitudes, goals, interests, and efforts are, the school can become more meaningful to the child’s future employment”.

Enabling learning environment and discussion

As expected, physical infrastructural resources are viewed as important for developing enabling learning environments in schools. However, equally important, are some intangible constructs such as school climate and student engagement. The focus group overlooked the intangible constructs in its list of the attributes of enabling learning environments in schools. This finding indicates that the Ministry of Education did not have a comprehensive policy on the attributes of enabling learning environments in schools.

The focus group’s perspective on the relation between an enabling learning environment and student achievement suggests that adequate physical infrastructural resources would develop enabling learning environments in schools, and eventually result in child-centred education. However, the literature reports that physical infrastructural resources and other intangible attributes of enabling learning environments are not always compensatory, but are rather disjunctive, indicating the need for national educational policies to have equal emphasis on physical infrastructural resources and other intangible attributes of enabling learning environments (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

Policy evaluation: Approaches to formulating educational policies
Most of the standard steps involved in formulating policies were inherent in the group members’ experience with policy formulations:

“...identification of issues or problems is very important. ...next is getting budgets for solving the problem. ...getting to solve the problem and involving stakeholders from various

agencies are other steps. ...we invite people from various departments to identify issues or problems related to their goals and needs and relate their problems to policy guidelines and then frame programmes for them" (Member A).

Policy evaluation: Frequency of education policies

Few group members had experience with evaluating educational policies, "I do not remember being involved in evaluating education policies". On the other hand, Member B contested the validity of the evaluation if policy developers were involved in evaluating policies that they developed, "...being policy developers, how relevant it is for us to evaluate our own policies is another issue".

Policy evaluation and discussion

The experience and the mentioning of the sequential steps of standard mechanisms of policy formulation (Bridgman & Davis, 2007) are indicative of the mechanisms being followed in developing national education policies in Bhutan. However, the lack of experience of the focus group in evaluating national education policies indicates that the policies were not evaluated. As stated by Bridgman and Davis (2007), not evaluating the policies would result in the lack of knowledge about: (a) how the policies have achieved their objectives; (b) who to hold accountable for the implementation of the policies; and (c) the directions and clues for future policymaking. These implications are serious because they suggest the lack of policy analyses and the loss of opportunities for policy learning, which need to be addressed in formulating national education policies and their later development.

The limited scope available with the Ministry of Education to demand quality teachers from the colleges of education is a concern because it is likely to shield the colleges from the consequences related to inadequate readiness of the teacher graduates for the teaching profession. As a result, the Ministry of Education seemed to aspire for the use of market mechanisms to exert pressure on the colleges to produce quality teacher graduates. Similarly, the group highlighted the need for the monitoring agency to be autonomous from the organization it monitors, indicating a systemic flaw as it is a conflict of interest.

Policy implication and further study

The participants recognised the importance of disseminating adequate and proper information to parents about prospective schools for their children. However, the value of such information was perceived to be contentious because of Bhutan's low literacy rate. A policy implication from this might be to explore alternative ways of disseminating information. The alternative ways might include the use of Dzongkha Language as the medium and Bhutan Broadcasting Services News in regional languages.

Focus group data revealed the significance of publishing student achievement results, post-student enrolments in colleges, and receipt of student scholarships. The analyses also revealed that programme officers were intrigued by the possible adverse effects of student achievement-oriented publicity. This finding suggests that relevant policies might be formulated on student achievement-oriented publicity that encourages learning and discourages malpractices in schools.

The benefits of school choice were contested because of rural-urban enrolment imbalance. However, school choice may be viewed from an accountability aspect and that mechanisms to prevent the rural-urban enrolment divide be explored through relevant studies.

The participants recognised the importance of granting autonomy to schools in the areas of procurement of material and human resources. A policy implication from the finding is that studies be initiated to explore a range of workable options for operationalising school autonomy in the areas.

The future implementation of output-based financing in Bhutanese schools is unlikely, as the participants viewed it as a dubious challenge rather than as a means of improving school accountability. This suggests the need for a feasibility study on the prospect of introducing output-based financing in Bhutanese schools.

The participants were aware of the complementary relationship between an effective learning environment and student learning. Further, the participant endorsed the importance of having positive learning environments in schools. This finding suggests that proper monitoring and assessment tools be developed to monitor and evaluate the health of the school environment.

The participants had considerable experience in formulating policies and they had little experience of evaluating them. Therefore, a mechanism may be developed that extends policy formulation to policy evaluation.

Conclusion

This study used a focus group interview to study the beliefs and experiences of the policymakers of the Ministry of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Generally, the policymakers were aware of the context-level factors of the overall school education environment, namely, achievement stimulus, enabling learning environment, and policy evaluation culture. However, they were cautious when responding to situations which required them to connect their beliefs and experiences with the application of the context-level factors in schools. Given that educational policymakers and their policies shape the macro-level, as claimed in the ecological theory, which facilitates the smooth functioning of the other levels, the dilemma is a policy liability that may be countered with the use of research-driven evidence.

It is likely that this study was affected by some limitations. First, its findings should be understood in light of the number of participants; only six policymakers participated in the focus group. Therefore, the findings may be used as starting points for formulating education policies rather than as conclusive evidence for directing policy outcomes. Second, only one focus group interview was used in the study; depriving it of group-based comparative analyses.

Finally, future studies about educational policymakers' beliefs and experiences and policies may include participants from different levels of the ecological theory to facilitate group comparative analyses and an understanding of cross-level perspectives about educational policies.

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Using the Virtual Learning Environment to support the teaching of Action Research to enhance the Learning Achievement and Learning Participation of Bhutanese undergraduate students

Sangay Wangchuk

Abstract

The study explored the use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in teaching action research to enhance the learning achievement and learning participation of undergraduate students in Bhutan. The study pursued a quantitative approach, adopting a quasi-experimental study with an experimental pretest-posttest control group design. A sample of 68 B.Ed second-year students was selected to participate in the study by clustered random sampling. The participants were divided into two groups, namely control and experimental group. The experimental group received VLE aided instructions while the control group received instructions through the traditional lecture method. Instruments such as achievement tests and questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data. After performing satisfactory validity and reliability checks, the quantitative data assembled from achievement tests and questionnaires were analysed and interpreted using inferential statistics t-test with $p<0.05$ level of significance, mean, standard deviation and descriptive statistics frequency. The post-test achievements scores of experimental and control groups had increased by 16.2 and 8.41 respectively. Students in the experimental group were highly involved in active learning participation while they were taught with the support of VLE. The findings emphasize that teaching action research with the support of VLE enhances the students' learning achievement as well as learning participation.

Keywords: *Learning achievement, learning participation, virtual Learning environment, action research, undergraduate students, traditional lecture method.*

Action research has become very important in the world today. The main goals of action research are to determine ways to enhance the lives of children (Mills, 2011) and to enhance the lives of those professionals who work within the educational system (Hine, 2013). It provides practitioners with new knowledge and understanding about how to improve educational practices or resolve significant problems in classrooms and schools (Mills, 2011; Stringer, 2008). Similarly, McCallister (2008) claims that action research is of overriding importance in the field of education because there is always room for improvement when it comes to teaching and educating others. There is growing interest in action research in Bhutan and it is gaining in importance as confirmed by Maxwell (2003). "Prior to becoming part of the University, the role of academics had been to teach yet the University's Charter identified research as one of its key functions and this called for some action" (Maxwell & Choden, 2012, p. 187). Therefore, action research is taught at the two colleges of education as a part of an Introduction to Research Methods in Education module.

The International Monetary Fund (2016) reports that, in Bhutan, there is currently little incentive for the academic staff to carry out research since it is not a specific part of their duties and does not critically affect their career progress. The report further states that the facilities for conducting research are generally not available and the libraries and laboratory material support are not adequate to assist undergraduate research. However, a few years ago, the Ministry of Education started prioritizing professional growth and development in the field of education and teacher development in Bhutan. VanBalkom and Sherman (2010, p. 1) confirmed that "Bhutan is embarking on a comprehensive education reform process, with teachers and teacher education at the centre of a number of initiatives." Starting from 2016, the Ministry of Education in Bhutan has encouraged the teachers to undertake action research in order to improve their classroom teaching and to pursue professional growth and development.

Considering its immense importance, the teaching of action research can be highly effective if students are taught this module through the VLE as demonstrated by Khlaisang and Mingsiritham (2016). They reported that the use of VLE in higher education has continually expanded because it helps in enhancing students' capacities via attractive technology and challenging tools appropriate for the digital generation. According to Nwabude (2012), VLE is a set of teaching and learning tools designed to enhance a student's learning experience by including computers and the internet in the learning process. Similarly, Chou and Liu (2005) contend that VLE is a computer-based environment that has a relatively open system, allowing interactions and knowledge sharing with other participants and instructions, thereby providing access to a wide range of resources. Alves, Miranda, and Morais (2016) assert that VLE has become increasingly important within the context of higher education, mainly due to the tools which compose them and the support they provide to students, teachers and institutions.

Similarly, Chakraborrty and Nafukho (2015) claim that the online learning environment like VLE has become an indispensable part of modern educational systems that stimulate innovative approaches to teaching and learning. VLE improves the educational interaction between the teachers and the students with the aid of digital resources that endeavours to enhance the learning achievement of the students (Sneha & Nagaraja, 2013). Numerous research, in varied approaches, has been done to assess the effectiveness of VLE and many have proven to be effective. Results indicated that the majority of students ranked VLE as being more effective and desirable compared to the conventional didactic lecture in delivering information (Goldberg & McKhann, 2000). VLE develops students' independent learning and thereby encourages students' motivation to learn (Barker & Gossman, 2013).

Wells, De Lange, and Fieger (2008) carried out research on 'Integrating a virtual learning environment into a second-year accounting course: determinants of overall student perception' in a New Zealand university. The purpose of the study was to identify the impact of VLE as a study tool or as effective learning materials replacing previous traditional approaches of teaching and learning accounting. The study also sought to provide a platform for evaluating the pedagogical effectiveness of a VLE by ascertaining how students used this learning tool and identified student perception of the VLE as a learning tool. In order to collect data, the researchers used a survey questionnaire to second-year accounting students. 206 students filled up the questionnaire; however, the researchers used 166 questionnaires for the data interpretation. The authors concluded that the use of the VLE had been a rewarding experience and that the integration of computers into the learning process aided student learning, staff and students became more accessible to each other, and there was a high level of support for the use of the VLE in other courses.

However, in Bhutan, VLE is fairly a new concept. The status of ICT-integrated pedagogy, including VLE, in higher education in Bhutan, is in its infancy and affected by the lack of adequate resources as well as training in ICT-integrated pedagogy (Choeda, Penjor, T., Dukpa, D. & Zander, P., 2016). VLE is significantly associated with the provision of lecture notes, bulletin boards, online assessment and other tools such as chat and video summaries (Lange, Suwardy, & Mavondo, 2010). However, in Bhutan, VLE has been confined to the use of very few features such as sharing of work plans, module descriptors and uploading assignments (Choeda et al, 2016). Therefore, this study has also initiated the integration of more features of VLE, for example, online quizzes, online discussions and guidance, online assessments and feedback, collaborative blogs, bulletin boards, chat and video sharing, with a purpose to assess the effectiveness of VLE in enhancing the learning achievement and learning participation of the students.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the learning achievement of undergraduate students using VLE in teaching action research
2. To examine the learning participation of undergraduate students using VLE in teaching action research

The first objective of this study was to examine and compare the learning achievement of the students between a traditional lecture group and a VLE classroom. The second objective was to examine the learning participation level of students in the VLE group. The topics and objectives for both the experimental and comparison group are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Specified Action Research Topics and Objectives for the Learning Achievement

Topics	Specified Action Research objectives for the experimental teaching
1. Introductions and definitions of action research 2. Action research: What, Why, How, When and Who? 3. Advantages/ disadvantages of Action Research 4. Spiral of action research 5. Significance and characteristics of action research 6. Reconnaissance for action research 7. Steps Involved in Writing Literature Review 8. Key Questions to be considered while writing Literature Review"	At the end of the experimental teaching adhering to the action research, students were expected to: • Explain the meaning of action research • Write down the spiral of action research • Explain the benefits of action research • Explain the reconnaissance for action research • Explain the significance of action research • Explain the characteristics of action research • Write down the three types of research approaches • Write down the characteristics, purposes, advantages/disadvantages of the three types of research approaches • Write down the key questions to be considered while writing the literature review • Write down the steps involved in pursuing literature review • Explain the benefits of literature review

Methodology

Research Design

The study pursued a quantitative approach, adopting a quasi-experimental study which aims at assessing the effectiveness of using VLE while teaching action research in enhancing the learning achievement and learning participation of the students.

Sampling

The researcher adopted cluster random sampling to select 68 students out of 193 students i.e., two sections out of the five sections of B. Ed 2nd year students. One section of B. Ed 2nd year students (experimental group) was taught using VLE and another section (comparison group) was taught through the traditional lecture method.

Research Instrument

Learning Achievement test: The quantitative data adhering to the first objective of this study was collected by conducting achievement tests with the participants. The pre-test and post-

test of 30 multiple choice questions were developed from the eight topics. The pre-test and post-test questions were administered to assess and compare the achievement level in the experimental and control group before and after the intervention. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the study and later was used to compare with the post-tests administered at the end of the experiment.

Learning Participation Test: The researcher developed 20 items using a five-point Likert scale. It was administered after the intervention to find out students' participation level with the learning action research module with the support of VLE.

Lesson plan: A total of eight lesson plans for two hours each were used. Four lesson plans of two hours each were used for the comparison group using the traditional lecture method and four lesson plans of two hours each was used for an experimental group that adopted VLE in assisting the teaching and learning program.

Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity: The research instruments were validated by three experts including a Professor from Rangsit University, a Professor from the Royal University of Bhutan, and an expert in action research from the Royal University of Bhutan. Item Objective Congruence (IOC) of the instruments was calculated to see if the items aligned with the learning objectives. IOC was computed for the lesson plans, participation questionnaire and the learning achievement tests.

IOC result index ranges from -1 to +1. A rating of +1 indicates that the item clearly matches the stated objectives. A rating of 0 indicates that the item is unclear or not sure whether the measures meet the objectives or not. If the rating is -1, then that item does not match the stated objective, or it ensures that the measures do not meet the objectives. The value for any item should range from 0.67 to 1.00. Each item is acceptable and considered valid when the index in the IOC range is 0.67 to 1.00 and unacceptable if the range is below 0.67 to -1. The formula for calculating the IOC is where; 'r' is the sum of the scores of individual experts and 'n' is the number of experts.

Reliability: The achievement test was piloted with a section of B. Ed 2nd year students (35 students) who had already studied the topics before they were taught to the experimental and the comparison group. Reliability of the achievement test consisted of 40 multiple choice items prepared from four lesson plans consisting of eight topics. The students for the practice test was neither part of the control group nor the experimental group. Kuder-Richardson formula KR-20 and Cronbach's alpha were computed to determine the reliability coefficient of the learning achievement test and participation questionnaires.

Research Procedures:

After performing satisfactory validity and reliability checks, a pre-test was conducted for both the experimental and control groups. The experimental group was taught with the support of VLE while the control group was taught through the traditional lecture method. In the experimental group, varied features of VLE such as online quizzes, online discussions and guidance, online assessments and feedback, collaborative blogs, bulletin boards, chats and video sharing were improvised. At the end of the intervention, post-tests were conducted for both groups. However, the questionnaire was administrated only to the experimental group in order to study the level of participation after they were taught with the support of VLE.

Data Analysis

Achievement Test

A comparative statistical analysis using paired sample t-test was done within the group i.e.,

analysis of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group as well as the control group. The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups was calculated by conducting independent t-test to assess and compare the learning achievement of second-year students in action research after using VLE and the traditional lecture method. The Inferential statistics t-test with $P<0.05$ level of significance, mean and standard deviation were used to examine the results.

Questionnaire:

The data analysis of student's participation questionnaire was done by tabulating the standard deviation and mean from all the 20 items in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were completed at the end of the intervention by the experimental group. The total average mean and the standard deviation was also computed and presented through a graphical presentation.

Results and Discussions

Analysis of Achievement Test

To examine and compare students' learning achievement among control and experimental groups, pre-test and post-test with the same questions were administered in both the groups at the beginning and end of the study. The questions consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions and each question carried 1 mark. The pretest was administered at the beginning of the study, before any intervention, to assess whether the learning ability and background knowledge of the students in both the groups were similar or not. The post-test was administered in the end, to assess the differences in the learning achievement after the intervention. A comparative statistical analysis was done using paired sample t-test within the group (i.e., analysis of pre-test and post-test of both the groups within itself) to determine the difference in the learning achievement within the same group. The comparison of pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control group was done by using independent t-test (i.e. analysis of pre-test and post-test between the groups) to find out the difference in the learning achievement of the control and experimental group. The comparisons were done based on mean, standard deviation and inferential statistics t-test with $P<0.05$ level of significance.

Comparison of pre-test and post-test result within the group (Paired sample t-test).

Table 2: Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test within the group (Paired sample t-test).

Group	Test	Mean	Mean difference	Standard deviation	Sig. (2 tailed)
Control	Pre-test	6.38	14.79 – 6.38 = 8.41	1.95	0.00
	Post-test	14.79		2.07	
Experimental	Pre-test	6.74	22.94 – 6.74 =16.2	1.97	0.00
	Post-test	22.94		1.01	

*Significance level: $P< 0.05$-significant

The comparison of pre-test and post-tests within the group was done by comparing the mean, standard deviation and significance level P-value. Table 2 indicates that the mean of the pre-test and the post-test scores of the control group were 6.38 and 14.79 respectively. The mean of the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group were 6.74 and 22.94 respectively. The mean difference of pre-test and post-test of the control group was 8.41 and the mean difference of pre-test and post-test of the experimental group was 16.2 resulting to the significance value (p) 0.00 which indicated there was a statistically significant increase in

the students' scores in the post-test when compared to their pre-test in both the groups.

Comparison of pre-tests and post-tests result between the groups (Independent sample t-test).

Table 3: Comparison of pre-tests and post-tests between the groups

Tests	Group	Mean	Mean difference	Standard deviation	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pre-test	Control	6.38	6.74 – 6.38 = 0.35	1.95	0.46
	Experimental	6.74		1.97	
Post-test	Control	14.79	22.94 – 14.79 = 8.15	2.07	0.00
	Experimental	22.94		1.01	

Table 3 illustrates the means and the standard deviations of pre-tests and post-tests of both control and experimental groups. The mean difference of pre-tests of the control and experimental groups was 0.35. Table 3 indicates that the mean score of the experimental group was slightly higher than the control group. However, because of the negligible difference (0.35) of mean scores between the groups the calculated significance value (p) was 0.46, which was greater than significant value $P<0.05$. This indicated that there was no significant difference in the pre-test scores between the groups. Hence, it can be concluded that the students in both the groups had homogenous learning ability. The result was as expected by the researcher as it was mandatory to have equal or similar learning ability in both the groups at the beginning of the study.

The mean difference of the post-tests between the control and experimental group was 8.15. The significance value (p) of the post-tests was 0.00, which was lower than the significant value $P<0.05$. This indicated there was the statistically significant difference in the post-test scores between control and experimental group. The result showed that the students in the experimental group had significantly higher scores than the students in the control group. The result was as anticipated by the researcher - a better performance from the students who were taught with the support of VLE than the students who were taught through the traditional lecture method. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison of mean scores of the pre-tests and the post-tests of the control and experimental group

Figure 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test

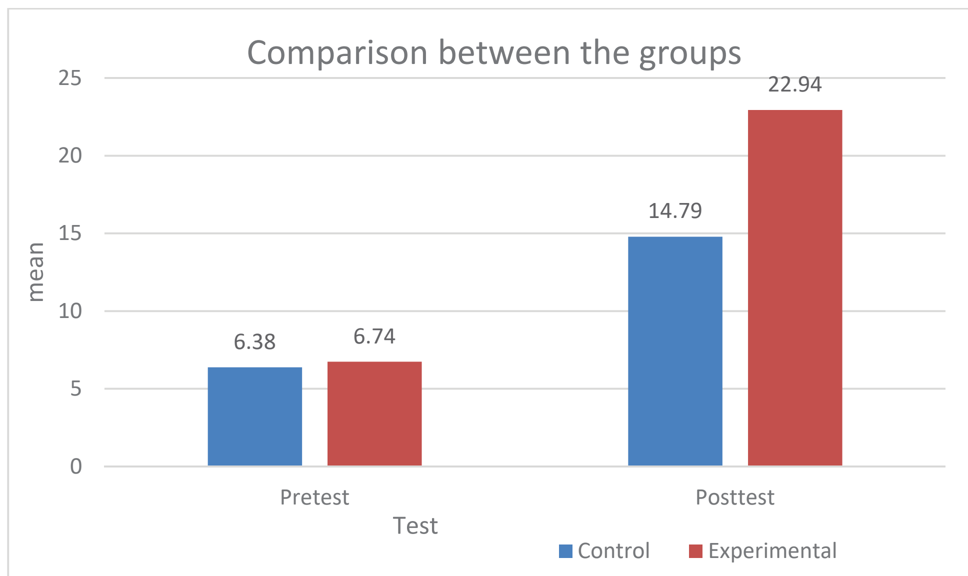


Figure 1 demonstrates that the pre-test mean of the control group was 6.38 and the pre-test mean of the experimental group was 6.74. It was noted that as they were almost equal, and the 2-tailed significance value was 0.46, this indicated that there was no significant difference between the pre-test means of the two groups. The post-test mean of the control group was 14.79 and the post-test mean of the experimental group was 22.94. The 2-tailed significance value 0.00 indicated that the mean of the post-test of the experimental group was significantly higher than the mean of the post-test of the control group. The mean difference was 8.15 which showed a huge difference in the learning achievement of students instructed with the support of VLE and the traditional lecture method.

The standard deviation is a statistic that describes the amount of variation in a measured process characteristic. Specifically, it computes how much data are concerted from the mean on average. A smaller standard deviation means greater consistency, predictability and quality (Wachs, n.d., Dorji, 2017). The standard deviation of the means of the pre-tests were 1.95 and 1.97 in the control and experimental group respectively as shown in Table 2. Although the standard deviations were slightly different between the groups, because of the negligible difference (0.02) it indicated that the level of variation in scores of both the groups was almost similar. This further indicated that the learning ability of the students was similar in both the groups.

The standard deviation of the means of the post-tests were 2.07 and 1.01 in the control and experimental group respectively as shown in Table 2. The standard deviation of the post-tests of control group has increased by 0.12 when compared to the pre-test. This indicated that the scores of the students in the control group were scattered away from the mean, and the traditional lecture method was not that effective in narrowing the gap in students' learning ability. However, the standard deviation of the post-test of the experimental group has decreased by 0.96 when compared to the pre-test. This showed that the scores of the students in the experimental group were more concentrated around the mean, which further indicated that the learning ability of the students in the experimental group was almost same, revealing greater consistency and better quality. The variation of the standard deviations among the groups may have been caused by the types of treatment given. Examination of this result demonstrated

that the integration of VLE in teaching was better than the traditional approach.

The findings of this study were similar to the findings of Barker and Gossman (2013), Choeda, Penjor, and Dukpa (2016) and Chou and Liu (2005) who concluded that VLE had a positive effect on students' learning thereby encouraging students' motivation to learn. Similarly, the result also supports the conclusions made by Koskela et al (2005) on 'Suitability of a Virtual Learning Environment for Higher Education,' and Merchant et al. (2014) on 'Effectiveness of virtual reality-based instructions on students' learning outcomes in K-12 and higher education: A meta-analysis.' Their main purpose was to examine the overall effect as well as the impact of VLE. The common key findings suggested that the VLE was suitable for higher education programs and had a positive impact on the learning achievement of the students.

Similar results were obtained from the following research. Goldberg and McKhann (2000) compared the effectiveness of the conventional lecture hall with that of a VLE for the presentation and dissemination of an introductory neuroscience course. A comparative achievement test between the two groups of students using VLE and a conventional approach indicated that the raw average scores on weekly examinations were 14 percentage points higher for students in the VLE compared to the conventional lecture presentation.

Analysis of the questionnaires on students' learning participation

The second objective of the study was to examine whether teaching action research with the support of VLE would increase students' learning participation level or not. Hence the researcher administered a 20-item questionnaire to the students in the experimental group. Five Likert-type scales were used to assemble the data. Based on the experiences gained after learning action research with the support of VLE, students were asked to read the statements carefully and check (√) the statements from 1 to 5, where "5 meant strongly agree, 4 meant agree, 3 meant neutral, 2 meant disagree, 1 meant strongly disagree." The structure of the statements was made to the level of B. Ed second-year students' standard and the researcher explained the statements before proceeding. A total of 34 students from the experimental group participated. Table 3 illustrates the result of students' learning participation level while learning action research with the support of VLE. The means and standard deviations were used to determine the result.

Table 3: The Mean, Standard Deviation and Level of Students' Learning Participation

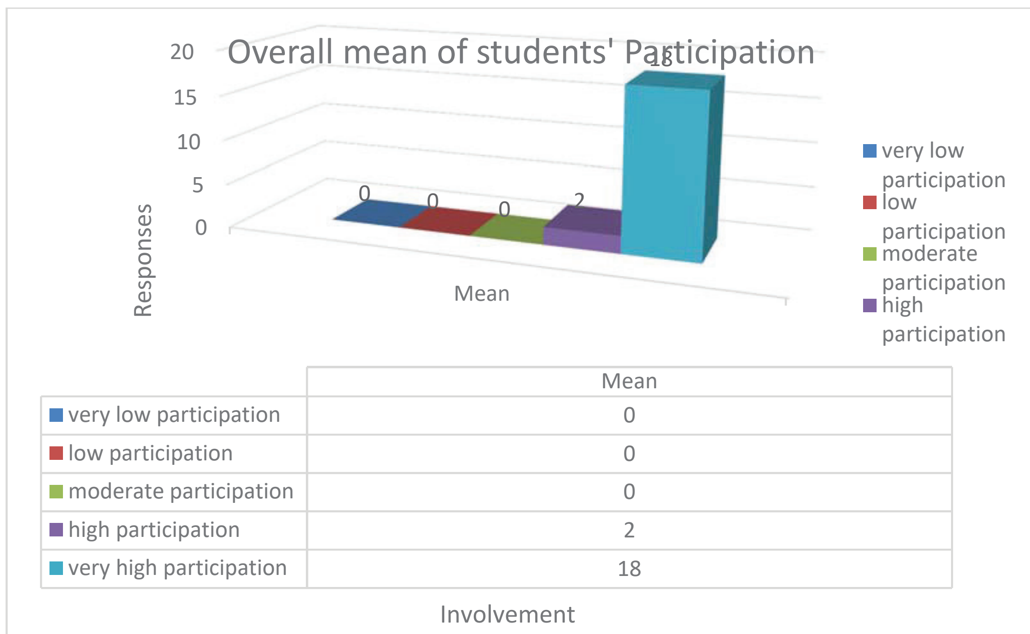
Sl No.	Learners' Participation Level		S.D	Degree of Participation
1	I love participating in VLE discussion and chat forum	4.88	0.33	Very high
2	I participate more in the class when I am taught with the help of VLE	4.32	0.59	High
3	I like to participate in the online quiz conducted on the VLE	4.71	0.46	Very high
4	The VLE activities involve us in active participation	4.76	0.43	Very high
5	Action Research module becomes more learner-centred when taught through VLE	4.35	0.54	High
6	Students who miss few classes can also learn through VLE	4.82	0.39	Very high
7	I enjoy submitting assignments and receiving feedbacks through VLE	4.56	0.56	Very high
8	Use of VLE is easily accessible and efficient	4.76	0.43	Very high

Sl No.	Learners' Participation Level		S.D	Degree of Participation
9	VLE helps me to develop interest towards learning Action Research module	4.71	0.46	Very high
10	More information and learning materials can be accessed through VLE	4.79	0.41	Very high
11.	I learn more through VLE than regular classroom teaching	4.91	0.29	Very high
12	I love learning action research module through VLE	4.71	0.46	Very high
13	Learning through VLE prepares me to be successful ICT user	4.62	0.49	Very high
14	Learning through VLE helps me to retain the learned information for a longer period of time	4.82	0.39	Very high
15	I have no doubt that with the help of VLE I can score higher marks in Action Research module	4.82	0.39	Very high
16	I never get bored in learning Action Research module when I am taught using VLE	4.62	0.55	Very high
17	All activities were carried out effectively	4.82	0.39	Very high
18	VLE keeps us updated with the latest information and learning materials	4.94	0.24	Very high
19	It is easier to submit assignments and test answer sheets through VLE than in hard copies	4.76	0.50	Very high
20	VLE can help us become confident learners	4.59	0.50	Very high
	Total	**4.71**	**0.44**	**Very high**

**Note: 0-1.50= very low participation, 1.51-2.50= Low participation, 2.51-3.50=Moderate participation, 3.51-4.5=High participation, 4.51-5= Very high participation.*

Table 3 shows that for the 20 statements of the learning participation questionnaire, the mean rating was 4.71 out of 5 on a Likert scale. This indicates that the learning participation level of learners while learning action research module with the support of VLE was rated as very high participation. The highest mean of 4.94 was rated by the participants for one statement with its standard deviation of 0.24 and the lowest mean of 4.32 was rated for the statement with its standard deviation of 0.59. Therefore, the data analysis indicates that the class experienced a high level of learning participation when the VLE was integrated into the teaching and learning of action research module. The overall learning participation level of the students with the support of VLE is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Number of questionnaire statements rated on Likert Scale.



	Mean
very low participation	0
low participation	0
moderate participation	0
high participation	2
very high participation	18

Figure 2 illustrates the overall learning participation level of the students with the use of VLE in the teaching and learning action research module. The data represented in the above graph is the mean of the ratings on the Likert scale by the respondents in the questionnaire. The average data analysis showed that the participants responded above 3 on the Likert scale for all 20 statements. The graph indicates that on the Likert scale for the 20 questionnaires, the participants did not rate "very low participation," "low participation" and "moderate participation." Two of the questionnaire items were rated "high participation" and remaining 18 of the questionnaire items were rated "very high participation." Therefore, the researcher concluded that when the VLE was used as a supporting tool in teaching and learning of action research module, students exhibited a high level of learning participation. This result supported the second research objective that "students taught using VLE will be more involved in learning participation compared to the control group."

The result supported the findings of Xu, Park, and Baek (2011) who conducted a research on digital storytelling through VLE and reported that students were engaged in active participation when they pursued digital storytelling through VLE. VLE is seen as a high motivational factor in digital storytelling. Similarly, Lange, Suwardy, and Mavondo (2010) concluded from their findings that VLE which is significantly associated with the provision of lecture notes, bulletin boards, online assessments and other tools (chat and video summaries) had a positive impact on students learning motivation and participation. The VLE provisions of Lange, Suwardy, and Mavondo are similar to the researcher's VLE provisions as the researcher also provided lecture notes, online quizzes, online assessments and other tools like online chat forums and video sharing. Both research studies had similar working principles and purposes. Participants in both the cases were undergraduate students and similar data collection approaches were used. Both the research findings showed similar results.

The findings also supported research by Khlaisang and Mingsiritham (2016) and Dutton, Cheon, and Park (2004) who concluded that students' participation in learning increased when VLE is properly managed and improvised. Also, Chou and Liu (2005) in their research

on 'Learning effectiveness in a web-based virtual learning environment: a learner control perspective' observed that students were involved in active participation when they were taught with the support of VLE. They further reported that students in the VLE group report higher levels of satisfaction than students in the traditional environment. In fact, several research studies had similar findings. The overall result from the questionnaire on learning participation showed that the students in the experimental group were actively involved in a learning action research module with the support of VLE. The researcher concluded that the participation level of students increases when they are taught with the support of VLE

Conclusion

The learning achievement tests revealed that the students who were taught with the support of VLE outperformed the students who were taught through the traditional lecture method. There was a difference in their performance as the average score in the VLE group was higher by 8 marks compared to the control group who was taught without VLE. This revealed that students taught with the support of VLE had better academic achievement compared to the students in the control group. This result was further reinforced by the students' questionnaire which exhibited that students who were taught with the support of VLE were greatly involved in active learning participation. For example, the students had a very high level of participation under the two statements "VLE activities involve us in active participation" and "VLE keeps us updated with the latest information and materials" with respective means at 4.76 and 4.94, which showed that students were not only involved in active learning participation but also remained updated with the latest information and learning materials. The questionnaire further revealed that students enjoyed accessing other features of VLE such as the online quiz, submitting assignments and receiving feedback through VLE.

The effectiveness of VLE was further endorsed by an achievement test carried out through a comparative statistical analysis using independent t-test between the groups. The mean difference of the post-tests between the control and experimental group was 8.15, as shown in Table 2. The significance value (p) of the post-tests was 0.00, which was lower than the significant value $P<0.05$ and this indicated that there was statistically significant difference between post-test scores of the experimental group and the control group. By looking at the mean difference of post-test scores between the groups as shown in Table 2, it was clear that the scores of the students in the experimental group were significantly higher than the students in the control group. Therefore, based on the result of means, standard deviations and significant P-values generated by computing paired sample t-test and the independent t-test, a conclusion was made that teaching with the support VLE was more effective in this study in enhancing the learning achievement of students than the traditional lecture method.

Since the research demonstrated that teaching action research with the support of VLE enhanced learning achievement as well as learning participation of the students, the RUB (Royal University of Bhutan) lecturers should consider using VLE in teaching other subjects. The features of VLE such as online quizzes, online discussions, chat forums, announcements, online assessments, sharing videos, uploading learning materials and feedback proved to be effective in the teaching and learning program. Apparently, the RUB is moving forward in promoting VLE in all the colleges. It would be useful if the lecturers at RUB were provided with the skills to use the various features of VLE so that they will be able to incorporate them in their teaching. Most importantly, there should be free Wi-Fi connection for all the students so that they can have access to VLE throughout the day.

However, due to the limitations of time, the study was conducted within one month of experimental teaching, at one of the teaching colleges at the RUB. The results of the study cannot be generalized and do not represent all the undergraduate students at RUB. It is recommended that further research be carried out for a longer duration with a larger sample

size. Moreover, as the study was conducted at the undergraduate level only, future research can include postgraduate students and high school students.

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Minding the Gap: Migration of Indian English Errors to Bhutan

Jude Polsky

Abstract

This paper explores the migration of English errors from India to Bhutan by first examining the Indian foundation of Bhutan's higher education system, then analyzing the colonial basis for the colloquial type of English spoken and written in India. Data gathered from oral and written samples of 470 students at the College of Language and Culture Studies, a member college of the Royal University of Bhutan, provides the data for further analysis of many fundamental errors in English, with the research demonstrating that the errors are shared by both India and Bhutan. Although many errors in Bhutanese English likely have some basis in translation from mother tongue, this research finds that the vast majority of the more persistent and egregious errors are a result of influence from India, where the complexities of British colonization have left an indelible mark on the English of today.

Keywords: *Higher education, language migration, English in Bhutan, Indian English, language studies*

Bhutan's higher education system is still in its youth, with its first college opening in Sherubtse only in 1983 (Bhutanese students were previously sent to Indian universities). At that time, most of the teachers were from India, and degrees were granted by the University of Delhi. 2003 saw the establishment of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), comprising Sherubtse, the College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS), and six other constituent colleges. RUB is currently attempting to distance itself from the Indian style of education that has dominated the country's schools. This style, which Mark LaPrairie (2014) refers to as the "didactic 'chalk and talk' teaching" approach of the traditional monastic schools of Bhutan and India, is slowly being replaced by learner centered, active, critical thinking based methods (p. 11). As Bhutanese nationals attain higher degrees, Indian instructors are also being replaced by Bhutanese teachers.

Even with a surge in qualified Bhutanese teachers and new teaching methods, however, the legacy of decades of Indian education lives on in Bhutanese English (BE). Indian teachers who taught in Bhutan were generally not first language English speakers, and many brought with them significant grammar and pronunciation errors and idiosyncrasies that are common across both the Indian subcontinent and Bhutan. It is not a simple task to change language styles and habits that have been employed since the introduction of English in Bhutan, particularly since students have been subject to this type of language since their first days in school.

Adults, especially, can experience more difficulty than youngsters in incorporating change in their language skills, as their language can become "fossilized," a linguistic term explained by ZhaoHong Han (2013) as "an interlanguage-unique phenomenon in which a semi-developed linguistic form or construction shows permanent resistance to environmental influence and thus fails to progress" (p. 133). Selinker (1972) says that by adulthood, second language learners tend to retain both their accents and errors. It is not impossible to learn or improve a second language in adulthood, but altering habits can prove difficult and challenging, and many idiosyncrasies can be resistant to change.

This fossilization seems to be evident in adult learning at CLCS, where 470 students were studied for this research and over 200 surveyed to determine their common errors and difficulties, as well as their first, second, and third languages. Only 14% of the students identify English as even a second language, 74% as a third, and for the remaining 12% it may be a fourth or even fifth. This complicates teaching and explains some of the convoluted speech patterns that are evident in the classroom, as both mother tongue and second languages interfere with English. Cultural norms also play a part in students' difficulties in adopting English

standards, most evident in their use of third person pronouns in place of second (e.g. “Madam, I didn’t understand Madam; would Madam please explain?”).

Most of the fundamental and profound errors and idiosyncrasies common in the university English classroom, however, were determined to have migrated to Bhutan from India. Present day Indian teachers do not appear to be at the root of the problem, so a much longer view on the issue is required, with a look back at the historical origins of the errors. This paper focuses primarily on analyzing these Indian English (IE) errors and difficulties with pronunciation that present the more pernicious problems at CLCS. Central to this study are the errors that render speech and writing difficult for native English speakers to comprehend, as well as those that are the most resistant to change and may hinder Bhutanese university students’ future opportunities for employment and advancement and will likely be an obstacle to acceptance in universities abroad.

Method

The initial impetus for this paper was borne out of the experience of the author during a four-year teaching stint at CLCS and as an editor of the Bhutan Cultural Atlas. The author noticed that many of the difficulties and errors in English were evident across the spectrum of writing, not only in students’ work, but also in that of staff and faculty members. The author began collecting anecdotal evidence to try to understand the source and nature of the errors in order to create effective teaching techniques. This proved to be a difficult task, as many of the errors did not seem to stem from a particular region or mother tongue. This anecdotal evidence is cited throughout the paper to illustrate the widespread nature of the issues and to suggest that many of the more problematic errors are common across the educational divide and are symptomatic of Bhutanese English in general.

Initial research was conducted on the history of English language education and the present role of English in Bhutan; language acquisition and the phenomenon of fossilization; followed by an investigation of a variety of world Englishes; the history of English in Southeast Asia; and linguistic peculiarities and irregularities of IE.

Quantitative data used to assess English grammatical and pronunciation errors were collected from samplings of CLCS students’ work in various types of communications. The data comprise work from first, second, third year, and fourth year honours students in the BA in Bhutanese and Himalayan Studies, BA in Language and Literature, and Diploma in Language and Communication Skills programs. The types of tasks performed by the students and the surveyed student numbers for each task are as follows:

Task	Student #
Short essay	13
Test paragraph	39
Survey	209
Letter	112
Oral presentation	97
Total students:	470

Short essay: In a informal manner, students introduced themselves to a new instructor, describing their backgrounds, thoughts about studying at CLCS, and dreams for the future.

Test paragraph: The sample paragraph was the final exam question for a first year communications course. Students wrote a marketing description of an imagined entrepreneurial product.

Survey: Students in all years and programs were surveyed on their first, second, and

third languages, and they wrote one paragraph on whether there is a need in Bhutan to speak English well. Also noted was the use of a leading 'e' in words beginning with the letter 's.'

Letter: Linguistics students wrote a leave application in both Dzongkha and English, with a warning not to translate from one language to another but rather to consider the proper way to write in each language.

Oral presentation: Bhutanese history students in a course taught in English presented their research findings on a final project.

Specific errors were examined and placed in such categories as lexical errors, which include wrong word choice, archaic or overly formal language, and redundancies; grammatical errors: poor sentence structure, improper use of verbs and pluralization; and pronunciation errors, with a focus on a lack of diphthongs and stress.

Various CLCS lecturers gathered the data explored in this study. They requested student consent to use the work for research purposes, but they did not give their students any specific grammar criteria so that the speech and writing would reflect a somewhat natural, albeit academic, state.

English in Bhutan

English has become a major medium of instruction in Bhutan's schools, as well as the primary language in government meetings and documents and the script of the country's important newspapers. Many reasonably argue that Dzongkha should retain its standing as the primary language of Bhutan, but few disagree that English has infiltrated all sectors of the country. According to Dr. Karma Phuntsho (2000), this infiltration became cemented when modernization brought about a shift from Choekey and Dzongkha to English. During the 1980s, "To a large number of the modern educated Bhutanese, literacy came to be equated with knowing English, and education and scholarship came to be judged by western standards" (p. 112). Indeed, Phuntsho says, educated members of Bhutanese society are far more at ease in English than in Dzongkha (p. 115). Many lecturers use English as their mode of instruction, even when they find the language challenging and the subject is traditional.

But what of the time before the 1980s? Choekey was employed in the monastic schools, but for many years Hindi served as the chief language of instruction. George van Driem (2000) says that although Hindi is not a native language anywhere in Bhutan, it was the easy choice of instruction medium to jumpstart Bhutan's new secularized education system, with materials on hand just across the border and plenty of available Indian teachers willing to use them. Examinations were written and graded, and certificates and degrees conferred, in India. Unfortunately, though, along with the materials and teachers came the Indian "didactic" style of educating in which students learned by rote, simply repeating what the teacher said, with critical thinking and questioning clearly discouraged (p. 95).

After 1964, when English replaced Hindi as the language of instruction, many Indian teachers remained in Bhutan, where they, and those whom they taught, continued to model the traditional Indian style. As these teachers have been the main source of foreign teachers and teaching methods, their influence on the style and form of English spoken in Bhutan remains. Mark LaPrairie (2014) explains: "[M]any of [the Indian teachers] viewed student participation as a loss of teacher control in the classroom. They encouraged the memorization of large amounts of vocabulary, including antiquated words and phrases" (p. 20). LaPrairie suggests, moreover, that the problems of teachers delivering rote lessons and failing to engage students in oral practice is still hindering students' full understanding of how to speak and interact in English. This viewpoint is confirmed in one of LaPrairie's interviews, in which a Bhutanese curriculum specialist states: "Secondary schools used to [be] dominated by Indian teachers. They are not so flexible or open to outside ideas. Most of us are products of that" (p. 87), suggesting that these "products" continue to teach the way they were taught.

Couple this style with a manner of English that is sometimes antiquated and grammatically obfuscated, and we get a form of BE that is difficult to understand beyond SE Asia. Students may listen to English music and occasionally watch English movies, but a deeper understanding of the language is rarely there. In contrast, literary studies often expose students solely to the work of the centuries old English canon – Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Keats, etc., and we regularly see student work that mimics these poets, with little awareness of the archaic nature of the speech.

So what is wrong with Indian, and by extension Bhutanese, English? IE has picked up its own flavour, but even in its "purest" form, English is already an amalgam of German, Latin, French, Italian, and many other languages (Richa, 2010, p. 245). English in India, however, is rarely a first and native language, so those Indians who taught, or still teach, English in Bhutan may themselves have difficulty with its structure. At the heart of the problem is the taint of its origins in India, its "colonial hangover," as Richa calls it (p. 249). Because Indian English in is fraught with its history of imposition by the British, its use and importance is a source of unending controversy. Bhutan, on the other hand, was never colonized, but even so, it bears the burden of colonization through its association with IE.

English in India

According to Kachru (1995), the South Asia region – Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Maldives – is linguistically diverse, with a wide variety of languages and dialects on the Indian subcontinent. He adds, however, that "there are many underlying shared linguistic, literary and sociolinguistic characteristics among the South Asian states," due to the shared history of culture, politics, and traditions and the common bases of Sanskrit, Persian, and English in the spoken languages (pp. 497–8).

It is English, however, that has become the region's linking language, with India exerting the greatest influence on the language. Consequently, this shared language now carries the weight of the British colonizers who entered India in the early 1600s. The East India Company was initially chartered as a trading company, but it eventually held strong political power and initiated British colonization of the country (Parasher, 2003, pp. 29–34). In the 1800s, the company began to establish English language education in missionary schools, and incentives were given to junior clerks to study English. The British wished to promote "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Sharp, as cited in in Parasher, 2003, p. 33). The British began this method of classifying Indians according to the service they could give to the Crown, and the English they taught served this end.

The British taught a rudimentary type of English, dubbed "Butler" English, to Indian servants so they could communicate with and attend to their British masters (Hosali, 1999, p. 2). One step up is what has disparagingly been called "Baboo" English, the language of mid-level workers, which Sandyal (2006) characterizes as a "ludicrously flowery, deferential, and indirect style" (p. 36). The third level is the language of the elite upper and educated classes, such as journalists, politicians, and lecturers.

By the early 1900s English was firmly entrenched in this latter class – in education, politics, administration, and the culture of the upper classes. It had become the language of power (Parasher, 2003, p. 29–34). When India gained independence in 1947, English remained an official government language, albeit carrying along with it the baggage that can make it difficult to decipher outside the country. Richa (2010) explains Kachru's view of the pragmatics of this language legacy:

This Indian flavour […] is a kind of device of the Indianness of the nativized variety of English which has been used by Indians to serve the typically Indian needs in distinct Indian contexts for almost two hundred years. These Indianisms in IE are […] culture bound and

language bound. […] These are linguistic manifestations of pragmatic needs for appropriate language use in a new linguistic and cultural context. (p. 250)

Indians were taught the English that was required of them according to the role they played in assisting, serving, or entreating the British. The idea was not that Indians use the language to communicate amongst themselves, but that they understand solely what was required to satisfy the colonizers, thus creating a unique melange of a language that remains today. Nigel Grant (2007) explains Sanyal's (2006) view of this melange:

Pre-independence English, the language of official control, was old-fashioned in contemporary England sixty years ago, but formed the standard for decades to come in India. Over-formality and the curse of East India Company commercialese, inherited from generations of Indian clerks and their ill-educated English masters, still characterise much official IE. (p. 35)

Modern IE is still often written in a style reminiscent of Victorian attitudes of subservience and adherence to a form devised for employees who needed only to send out stock letters and responses. Although the language of India's elite adheres more to present day British style, the language of the masses harks back to more submissive times.

Sanyal (2006) says that IE was devised in a way that was more "to serve commerce, trade and law than everyday human needs" (p. 20) and that now the language has become a way to avoid thinking or questioning the conditioning of days long gone (p. 79). For example, common phrases in IE letter writing remain: "Kindly please advise me […] I invite your kind attention [… and] I respectfully submit the following few lines for favour of your kind consideration" (Parasher, 2003, p. 23). A common letter writing style in IE circumambulates the point, only suggesting its subject toward the latter end.

The British created a psychological burden that still bears today on the English spoken and written in India. These "Indianisms," as Kachru calls them, should not be present in Bhutan, however, a country that does not share India's history of colonization. Yet upon examination, there are many IE language idiosyncrasies that appear to be the source of some of the greatest complications in BE.

Analysis of Migrated Errors

Redundancies and overly formal language

Redundancies make up one of the larger categories of errors in BE, with most of the formal and redundant words and phrases shared with IE. In Indlish, Sanyal (2006) exposes many misused words, phrases, and styles of IE that at worst can render journalists' language unintelligible and at least obfuscate the meaning. He relates the problems in IE to that of the early business conducted by the East India Company, with commerce the end goal and human connection unimportant (p. 20). The problem with overuse of stock phrases, or "automatic expressions," is that they become meaningless if the speaker has no connection with them. These are "phrases borrowed from legalese, unintelligible in native English, but used in IE formal correspondence (pp. 44-5), the "beg phrases of commercialese" (Fowler, as cited in Sanyal, 2006, p. 79). In the 1800s and early 1900s, there was some meaning in, or at least reasons for, this manner of speech in formal writing, but nowadays these phrases are puzzling and hollow.

CLCS students regularly use such stock phrases as "this much only," "on top of that," and "moreover" in their presentations, with no connection between their speech before and after the self-styled transitions or "wasteful words" (Sanyal, 2006, p. 36). Students also commonly use "pleonasms," repetitive and overly wordy phrases, often created from two or more words that mean the same thing but are meant to emphasize an argument (p. 36); e.g. "and/or," "in and around," "each and every," "until and unless," "out and about," "null and void," "ways and means," "by and large," "today itself," and "I myself."

Much of CLCS students' written language falls into Sanyal's (2006) description of IE's

overblown style that harks back to "Baboo" English. These overly formal phrases pepper letter writing in both India and Bhutan: "humble submission," "kind consideration," "thanking you," and "lay down some few lines." A CLCS student's leave application demonstrates this use:

Respected Sir,

With due respect and humble request under your kind consideration and sympathetic action please.

I […] of […] would like to request your good office to grant me leave for a week for checkup in JDWNRH.

I would be very grateful for your kind consideration and necessary action please.

Thanking you

Yours faithfully

[…]

This is typical of the letters studied for this research, using what students consider stock and appropriate phrases. Indeed, approximately 70% of the 112 letters studied for this research reflect this florid style. Parasher's (2003) descriptions of overly formal IE are strikingly similar:

'With due respect I beg to inform' 'I submit the following few lines for favour of your kind consideration and early favourable orders' 'I request your goodself to provide me with such an opportunity by favouring me with a transfer.' (p. 288)

Grammatical errors

While many of the errors in BE reflect the East India Company legacy, others have their genesis in translation from Hindi and other Indian languages. In Bhutan, a statement such as "I'm going to Trongsa" will often elicit the response "Is it?" instead of "Are you?". The common Bhutanese tags "no ma'am" and "isn't it?" or "is it?" most likely have their origins in Hindi, the former in the phrase "bolo na?" and the latter in "anda na?" (Sanyal, 2006, p. 215). Kachru (1986) explains the confusion that results in translation of a difficult English construction such as "You're going tomorrow, aren't you?" and "He isn't going there, is he?" when the speaker is of Hindi or Urdu origin:

In English, the structure of tag questions is composed of a statement and a tag attached to it. In such structures there is contrasting polarity; a positive main clause is followed by a negative tag and vice versa. In Hindu-Urdu, the parallel structure consists of a single clause with a post-posed particle which is invariably na. Transfer thus results in South Asian English constructions such as you are going tomorrow, isn't it? and he isn't going there, isn't it? Many other phrases seems to arise out of this 'over-generalization of rules' that make their way into an 'interlanguage' of sorts. (p. 40)

The polarity of English tag questions is confusing to many non-native speakers of English, but in both India and Bhutan there is not so much a sense of confusion but rather a standard and confusing manner of construction.

BE also borrows many words and phrases from IE that are often unrecognizable to native English speakers: "bunk" (skip classes); "pass out" (graduate; in native English, "pass out" means faint or collapse, usually due to heavy drinking); "good name" (first name); "downlook" (look down or frown upon); "expired" (died); "prepone" (opposite of postpone – move a meeting up, a very useful term for both Indians and Bhutanese); and "at the rate of" (for the symbol @ in email addresses, pronounced in native English solely as "at").

Another commonly misused term in Bhutan with its origin in India is the word "different" to mean "various" or "a variety," as in the student's sentence: "We plan to use different spices in our food." Sanyal (2006) also finds the root of the common South Asian phrase "today itself" in the Malayalam emphasis; the tag "this much only" in the Tamil emphasis (p. 200); and the use of the stress "even" in the oft used CLCS student's phrase "Even I want to go" in the general "flexible" syntax of the Indian languages systems (p. 259).

Parasher (2003) identifies the following prevalent IE errors, which align closely with some of the more persistent BE grammar problems:

a. Tense usage: present perfect for simple past (has written —— wrote)
   [BE example: "I have watched the football match last week."]
b. Article usage: 'one' for indefinite article (one – a)
   [BE e.g.: "I want to borrow one [or one number of] stapler."]
c. Article usage: definite article not used (ICMR – the ICMR)
   [BE e.g.: "I live with friend in Taktse."]
d. Lexis: 'back' for 'ago' (p. 166)
   [BE e.g.: "I went to Samtse long time back."]

Transitive / intransitive verbs. Many transitive verbs are misused similarly in both BE and IE: tell (e.g. "He told that he would come"); reach (e.g. "When did you reach?"); wish (e.g. "Thank you for wishing me"), pick (e.g. in answer to the question Did you pick up your daughter? "Yes, I picked"), and take (e.g. "Can I take?"). Kachru (1983) finds transitive verbs used intransitively one of the "major deviations" in IE, exemplified in the commonly misused words: "avail, inform, assure and request" (p. 171).

Continuous / progressive verb. A habit in both IE and BE is overuse of the continuous (progressive) verb. Common among CLCS students are the statements "I am not knowing the answer," "I am having a car," or the common closing to letters: "Thanking you." Melchers and Shaw (2011) describe the problem as the use of "the progressive with certain verbs that are stative verbs [state of being, rather than dynamic verbs] in other varieties, so that I am knowing is possible" (p. 148–9).

Question formation. There is a common mispositioning of the subject and auxiliary in question formation in both IE and BE, in which a question such as "When are you coming?" becomes "When you are coming?" in BE and "What are you doing?" becomes "What you are doing?" Kachru (1986) describes this problem in IE as "a tendency to form interrogative constructions without changing the position of subject and auxiliary items. (p. 40). The difficulty in this construction is that without the voice rising at the end of a question, as is the case with many students' flat pronunciation, a question becomes a statement. Compound the difficulty in the common question: "Where did you reached?" that brings together an error in question formation, one in transitive verbs, and another in past tense formation.

Countable / non-countable nouns. Common in BE are errors in number: e.g. staffs, faculties, moneys, inputs, luggages, and stuffs. Parasher (2003) identifies other common noun errors in IE: "informations" and "clarifications, garbages, trashes, works" (p. 167) that are also persistent in BE. Parasher describes the countable noun problem as "[o]ne of the major sources of deviation in the noun phrase [.… C]ertain non-count nouns such as equipment, evidence, bread, advice are treated as count and therefore pluralised to convey the plural meaning" (p. 166).

Prepositions. The following preposition constructions, where a preposition is added to an –ing verb, are the norm in BE: e.g. "I am going for shopping" or "We are going by walking" or "We will go by walk." Sanyal (2006) attributes the same construction in IE as a "dependence on the noun in all Indian languages" (p. 198). Prepositions are also added in the BE statement: "It is nearby to the park." According to Melchers and Shaw (2011):

In South Asian English one can fill up a vacancy, start with the lesson, show up the main point, or shirk away one's responsibilities, where British or American speakers would do without the particle/preposition. On the other hand one can side someone, or grapple a problem, where

other varieties require with. (p. 148)

Subject–verb agreement. One of the difficulties in English construction lies in the rules of the plural noun adding an ‘s’ and the associated verb dropping the ‘s’ in the same sentence: “Many apples fall from the tree,” while the single noun drops the ‘s’ and the associated verb adds an ‘s’: “An apple falls from the tree.” The subject–verb problem persists in both IE and BE in such sentences as “I doesn’t want to go” and “He don’t like it.” According to Sanyal (2006), proper subject–verb agreement is a major problem in IE (p. 56).

Pronunciation

Lack of stress. A BE speaker’s lack of stress and diphthongs are arguably the main barriers for communication between native English and BE speakers. Native English speakers use a schwa – a dropped vowel sound – in almost every word, which reduces unstressed syllables and allows for greater emphasis on the important, stressed syllable.

Many of the BE pronunciation difficulties can likely be traced to translation from a mother tongue that does not include strong stresses or diphthongs, but Melchers and Shaw (2011) also see these as common features of IE, which is “broadly syllable-timed, so that unstressed syllables are not much reduced and word stress is not very prominent” (p. 147).

Diphthongs - A commonly mispronounced phrase in BE is “black necked crane,” which often sounds like bleck neck cren. Melchers and Shaw (2011) say IE commonly employs monophthongs in place of the common English diphthong, as exemplified by the pronunciation fes in place of face and got instead of goat, with the monophthongs pronounced as short vowels instead of the longer diphthongs (pp. 147–8).

Leading ‘s’ - 50% of the CLCS students surveyed had difficulty with a leading ‘s’ in their speech, with the variation crossing all first language lines, suggesting that the issue may not stem from a student’s mother tongue, but rather from the student’s education. Kachru (1986) describes the placement of a vowel sound in front of a leading ‘s’ in IE thus:

The consonant clusters sk, sl, and sp […] do not occur in word initial position in, for example, Hindi-Urdu. Therefore there are differences in regional South Asian English pronunciation in the following lexical items: [□skul] school, [□ste□an] station, [□sp□t□] speech, and [□sloth] sloth. (p. 39)

Mispronunciation. There are many mispronunciation errors that are shared across the Indian subcontinent. The following is a short list of some of the words commonly mispronounced in both IE and BE:

Pizza:	□p□ze□ (rhymes with “is a”) instead of □pi□ts□ (rhymes with “eats a”)
Flour:	fluor (rhymes with “doer”) in place of the diphthong □fla□□r (homonym of “flower”)
Plumber:	□pl□mb□r (‘b’ is pronounced) instead of □pl□m□r (“plummer”; ‘b’ is silent)
October:	□k□tomb□r (an ‘m’ sound is added before the ‘b’) instead of □k□to□b□r
September:	s□k□t□mb□r (a ‘k’ sound replaces the ‘p’) instead of s□p□t□mb□r
Wednesday:	w□d□n□zdi (an extra syllable is added in the centre of the word) in place of □w□nzdi (two syllables; the first ‘d’ is silent)
Ask:	æks (pronounced like “ax” with the ‘s’ and the ‘k’ sounds reversed) instead of æsk
Bear:	b□r (homonym of “beer”) instead of b□r (homonym of “bare”)
Yellow:	□w□lo□ (a ‘w’ sound replaces the ‘y’) instead of □j□lo□

Conclusion

This paper explores the migration of English errors from India to Bhutan by first examining the Indian foundation of Bhutan's higher education system, then analyzing the colonial basis for the colloquial type of English spoken and written in India. Data gathered from oral and written samples of 470 students at Bhutan's College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS) provides the foundation for analysis of many fundamental errors in English, with the research demonstrating that the errors are shared by both India and Bhutan. Although many errors in English may have some basis in translation from Dzongkha, Tshangla, and other Bhutanese languages, this research finds that the majority of the more persistent and egregious errors have their foundations in India, where the complexities of British colonization have influenced today's English language use. Numerous other challenges likely trace back to primary schools, with many English teachers teaching the errors they learned during their own school days, when rote teaching, often by Indian teachers, was common.

The crux of the Bhutanese education system's problem is markedly similar to that of India:

> In acquiring English, a student is generally presented with [an Indian] model [….]. The number of schools, colleges, or universities where a native speaker of English teaches, or where technological aids are available, are negligible. [… Another] factor which contributes to the 'South-Asianness' of South Asian English is the fact that English is taught through the written medium. […] The curriculum does not make any special provision for spoken English. (Kachru, 1986, p. 38)

Kachru points out a number of problems that also exist in Bhutanese schools, where there seems to be a wide spread of standards among educators, few native English teachers, and a focus on written communication. CLCS students can sit through entire classes – indeed sometimes more than a week of classes – saying not a single word in English.

In the Bhutanese context alone, however, all seems well. Bhutanese people have little trouble understanding one another's English, and they also seem comfortable with the way Indians speak it. The problem lies more in the international context, where native and even second language speakers have difficulty understanding Bhutanese speakers for three main reasons: grammatical errors, difficulties with pronunciation, and odd lexical choices.

Before any definitive solutions can be posited regarding the migration of Indian English errors to Bhutan, we must ask ourselves: Why are we teaching English? What do we see or desire as our outcome? Are we meant to aid students in communicating with one another, with native English speakers, or with those in countries in which Bhutanese people most often travel or work? Many CLCS students sampled for this research presented the idea that knowing English would open doors and present opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

In The Alchemy of English, Kachru (1986) explains this desire, saying English equals "linguistic power," giving people "material and social gain and advantage. […] [K]nowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science, and travel" (p. 1). The present standards of Bhutanese English, however, could prove to be problematic in a cross-cultural context and may hinder students' chances of excelling in TOEFL and other tests that are requirements for overseas education and work.

The vast majority of difficulties CLCS students have with English grammar, pronunciation, and word choice seem to be part of a larger pattern that exists not only in the whole of Bhutan, but across SE Asia. Sanyal (2006) elaborates:

Thanks to the East India Company, we [Indians] absorbed commercialese and officialise first, legalese later and fuddy duddy literary Victorian English thereafter. The gross defects

of English, therefore, became the essence of Indian English, and most of us accept without question precisely what is an aberration. (p. 95)

Many of the IE idiosyncrasies are rooted in a system that was in place over a century ago, when the British taught their employees a specific type of English to suit specific tasks. Not only is the language now outdated in India, but there is no connection to this past in Bhutan, where many of the errors migrated. Perhaps a knowledge of the sources for the idiosyncratic style of English in Bhutan will provide an entryway to new teaching methods that target common Indian errors and their origins.

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Qualitative Study Factors Affecting Teaching and Learning English in Minjiwoong Central School

Sherab Jamtsho, Jigme Tshewang, Yenten Choda, Nima Tshering and Shiva Kumar

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that were affecting the teaching and learning of English language in Minjiwoong Central School (MCS) and to suggest ideas to improve the standard of English language in the school. The total of 30 participants was selected randomly from the school, comprising of 10 teachers and 20 students teaching and learning English in various classes ranging from VII to X. Amongst 10 teachers, 3 were English language teacher and rest were the teachers who used English language as a medium of instruction. The study used semi- structured in-depth interviews to collect data. Data analysis was done thematically and coding the interviews to gather meanings. The findings revealed that the factors affecting teaching and learning of the English language in MCS were mainly due to its geographical location and cultural background of the students and teachers.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, peer pressure, cultural, competency, remote school*

Since the inception of modern education in the country, English has been given equal importance like Dzongkha, the national language (Curriculum Guide for Teachers, 2006, p. 5). Though the schools in Bhutan use the English language as a medium of instruction to teach the majority of the curriculum, it has been a concern of the Ministry and the public as its quality has declined over the years (Curriculum Guide for Teachers, 2006, p. 5). Therefore, a research on Quality of Learning English in Minjiwoong Central School has been selected.

Miniwoong Central School is one of the oldest schools in Bhutan locked by ridges, unreliable road and technological facilities which separates the school from the reach of the Dzongkhag during summer. Despite these shortcomings, the school is driven by its goal and guiding school policies. Ever since the establishment of the school in 1992 as Community Primary School (Minjiwoong Central School, 2015), it has seen major development in infrastructure. The school was upgraded to Lower Secondary School in 2000 (Minjiwoong Central School, 2015).

The first batch of grade eight graduates from the school were sent to Orong Higher Secondary School, Nganglam Higher Secondary School and Karmaling Higher Secondary School, the distant Middle and Higher secondary school which evoked the instinct of threat to parents care, for children had to cross risky border (Assam and Bengal) especially money problem for the parents and fear of robbers and insurgent's during the journey. This inconvenience forced students to drop the school and parents to raise the concern of threat and money constraints to educated their children. Considering the possible risk and economic background of parents, the school was upgraded to Central School in 2015 without enough boarding facility and physical ambience (Minjiwoong Central School, 2015).

One of the teachers in Minjiwoong Central School said that the students in this school are less informed about the IT world, and a countable number of students has access to social networking sites confirming the lateral cultural impact onto children in learning English language. Lately, the school has four trained and one contract English teachers who affront the students with English Language learning disabilities daily. One of the teachers informed that the effort to better the students in four strands of English has remained linear and static in the face of constant feedbacks and language policy.

The third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck's (1952-1972) decision to end the self-imposed isolation policy embraced a modern approach to socio-economic development by using the system of English Education in Bhutan (Namgyel, 2003). Since then it has aided Bhutan to

interact with the international community globally. Therefore, the need for the people of Bhutan to be competent in the English language led to the advent of using English as a medium of instruction for subjects taught in the schools (CAPSD, 2005). Furthermore, in the year 1961, a royal decree by the third King established "Dzongkha" as the national language and English as the official language of communication (Driem, 1993, Phuntsho, 2000 in Thapa & Nidup, 2015). This further highlighted the importance of using English in Bhutan.

The English Language has been playing a dominant role in Bhutanese Education system whereby students have to learn all the subjects in English except Dzongkha (National Language of Bhutan). "There are many local languages but the national language is Dzongkha and the medium of instruction is English" (Maxwell, 2015, p.2). Bhutan's history, culture, tradition and every walk of life is engraved in English letters but the native language and societal influence have formed a strong base that they shy away from English if not taught in Dzongkha. "The Bhutanese are interested in development but not at the expense of their own culture" (RGOB, 1999 in Maxwell, 2015). Students and villagers find speaking English out of the world and land up making fun, except in the class.

The researcher has explored the standard of English in Minjiwoong Central School and has provided necessary finding(s) to the school. It was the concern of the school as well the researcher is one of the English teachers in the school.

Problem Statement

It is of a great concern that English Language being a second language to most of the Bhutanese students and learning English for more than a decade has possibly made a little impact onto the students of Minjiwoong Centre School in learning the English language.

Research objective(s)

To find the gap in teaching and learning the English language at Minjiwoong Central School.

Research question(s)

Main Research Question

What are the Factors that Affect the Quality of Teaching and Learning the English Language in Minjiwoong Central School?

Sub-questions

a. How does the bilingual policy of Dzongkha and English affect learning the English Language?
b. How does students' cultural background affect learning the English Language?
c. How does the English Language teacher's competency affect learning the English Language?
d. What are effective methods can be used to impart learning English Language?

Literature Review

Maxwell (2015) states that Bhutan Education system is relatively new. Its secular education really began in the 1950s (Bray,1996 in Maxwell, 2015) and the multigrade teaching was the only strategy to impart education in the remote schools in Bhutan. It was mainly because of the short supply of the trained teachers in Bhutan. The availability of the space and infrastructure are also being questioned for it could not provide a conducive learning environment for the students. In the same vein Maxwell (2015) presents (Laird, Maxwell, Tenzin & Jamtsho, 1999) stating compared to Western traditions, the teaching service is relatively poorly trained and

educated. The need for education in rural Bhutan was evident but quite demanding. The teacher-student ratio was high enough, the size of the classroom small, lack of teaching-learning materials, electricity to be dreamed of and English being a medium of instruction toughened students learning. (Maxwell, 2015).

Maxwell and Thinley (2015) emphasise the importance of learning English as is preserves the history and tradition and culture of the country. Gyatso (2005) states "….there has been a general perception that the standard of English in the country has declined over the years" (CAPSD, 2007, pp. v-vi). To widen the interest in English Language learning it was found that many folk song and stories translated into English language and incorporated in Bhutanese English curriculum. Hakuta (1976) finds that the syntactical difference in the language makes it difficult for children to learn English. He is also of the view that external and internal factors do contribute to language acquisition.

Bolton (2008) in his study explores that the standard of English to be relatively low in children of Asian countries. He picks that the cultural and linguistic influence, in particular, is the greater contributing factors which make students learn and understand less of English. McCue (2005 in Bolton, 2008) maintains that only a small percentage of the two million English –speaking graduates turned out each year by Indian universities have good enough skills to work in customer-facing operations. Minjiwoong being in the remotest part of Bhutan has more challenges to produce English proficient students.

Thapa and Nidup (2015) in their report (A Case Study on English Language Proficiency of the Pre-Service Teachers) find that the quality of the teacher is directly proportional to the quality of the students learning. They further state that the teachers deployed were found not able to communicate effectively in a varied situation nor could they speak a grammatically coherent sentence. A study conducted to assess the quality of student learning in Bhutan in 2008 also reported that English in the lower classes was a major area of weakness (REC, 2008).

The United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) describes (UNESCO, 2004) five dimensions of quality education: "healthy learners; conducive environments; relevant curricula; child-friendly pedagogy; and useful outcomes" (p. 31). These factors are leading contributors to the quality of a child's education. The teacher should have the mastery of the subject he or she is teaching (Sherab, 2013). Sherab unpacks that the pedagogical use also determines the quality of students' learning. He finds that teachers use less of child-centred tools to teach and the students have a notion of a teacher being the source of all knowledge hence slowed up learning.

Minjiwoong located in the remotest part of the south-west part of Bhutan has the traces of Multigrade teaching and its impact still revolves around today. Despite the training given to the teachers in Multigrade teaching, it was found that the teachers lacked in practice (Kucita, Kayini, Maxwell & Kivunja, 2012).

Wangchuk (2016) finds that bilingualism approach is a meaningful resource in teaching English in the classroom though it impedes the learning of the second language. He finds that most of the Bhutanese teachers are acquainted with using bilingualism as it helps the student to understand the intended lesson taught by the teacher. He further states that the students in primary school lack interest in reading English books.

Methodology

The research used qualitative design as it is subjective in nature. The research question addressed was: What are the Factors that Affect the Quality of Teaching and Learning the English Language in Minjiwoong Central School?

A semi-structured interview was prepared based on the literature. 20 students and 10 teachers participated in the interviews. The students were from different grades and age ranging

from 13-17 years and 10 teachers using English as a medium of instruction were selected. From each grade minimum of 3 students with different levels of proficiency were interviewed. The choices of the participants were considered to have variety in the data collected and to meet the desired objectives of the research. Therefore, at least 12 participants who have scored fewer grades in English subject were chosen to get the authentic data.

The data were thematically analysed and coded. The interviews were conducted in secluded places to avoid distractions during the narration of their stories. The participants interviewed were selected from the different grades without gender bias so that the standard of the English could be generalized for both the genders. To ensure operational validity, the interviews were recorded using smartphones and prior permission sought from the participants. The research was subject to ethical requirements as required.

Study Limitations

This study is limited in that it is conducted in one of the Central Schools in the country and the findings cannot, therefore, be generalized to other Central Schools. The other limitation is the size of the population being small and may not present the bigger picture of the standard of English in Miniwoong Central School. Furthermore, investigation of classroom practices by way of lesson observations would have provided valuable insights, and strengthened the findings of the study.

Results

Demographic information of the participants

The following tables show the demographic characteristics of the student and teacher participants involved in the research.

Table 1.1 Profiles of Teacher Participants

Gender	Teacher	Percentage
Male	6	60%
Female	4	40%
Total	**10**	**100%**

Table 1.2 Profiles of Student Participants

Gender	Grade	No. of students	Total No. of Students	Percentage
Male	VII	3	11	55%
	VIII	3		
	IX	3		
	X	2		
Female	VII	2	9	45%
	VIII	2		
	IX	2		
	X	3		
TOTAL		**20**	**20**	**100%**

Table 1.3 Profile of Teacher-Student participants

Gender	Student	Teacher	Total	Percentage
Male	11	6	17	56.67
Female	9	4	13	43.33
TOTAL	**20**	**10**	**30**	**100%**

As presented in Table 1.3 the sample constituted 30 participants of which 20 participants were students (56.67 %) and 10 (43.33%) teachers those who use English as the medium of instruction while teaching their subjects.

Participants' perception about the English language

During the interview, each participant were asked how he/she perceives English language as a global language, to connect with the world. What some of the participants reported are:

In any context to compete nationally and internationally English language is must and important.

English language is very essential for me as it is an international language to connect with the world.

English language is important in everybody's life as it is used as lingua franca .

From the responses, it is evident that English is regarded as an important language although, the majority of the participants were found less competent in English in spite of its importance being felt.

Factors affecting the learning of English Language

The study found the following factors affecting the learning of the English Language in the school.

Location of the School and infrastructure

Location of the school in one of the remotest part of eastern Bhutan and poor infrastructure has played a critical role in limiting students' ability to learn English proficiently. The common factors reported were:

Location of the place and lack of exposure towards the modern facilities are the two major factors affecting learning English.

Due to its remote location, the school is deprived of modern amenities and lack of exposure to the other cultures.

Makeshift classrooms have also reportedly compromised the quality of learning English language.

Lots of disturbances while teaching as other class teachings can be heard and students are unable to concentrate.

Therefore, as students being from remote places like Lauri, Monmola, Shingkhar where they are acquainted with their mother tongue Sharchopkha, they usually speak in it at home, with family and friends. Moreover, the parents are mostly illiterate thus making it difficult for the students to practice learning English outsides their classrooms.

Cultural Background

Language is a reflection of culture and has a strong hold on the students' life, how they think, do certain things, express feelings, moods, ideas, information etc. Findings from the study

show that students were seldom found speaking English and do not want to move out of the comfort zone. From the languages used, mother tongue was most commonly used, followed by Dzongkha and then English which was marginally used. The reasons shared by participants were:

> I feel shy speaking English and my friends make fun out of me while speaking English to them.
> Speaking English is very rare because it feels uncomfortable to both speaker and the listener.
> We talk English only in class and outside Sharchopkha
> I rarely hear students talking in English maybe they are too shy to make mistakes and fears to be humiliated in front of everybody.
> I find English being spoken mostly while in the classes, once they are out of the four walls, the intensity falls down.
> I usually talk in Dzongkha with my students.
> I don't really see my friends talking in English with teachers and friends, the reason could be they lack confidence to speak and ultimately resort to speaking Sharchopkha and Dzongkha.

From the responses, it becomes evident that both the teachers and students' are not comfortable using English frequently and would rather converse in Dzongkha or Sharchopkha in the classrooms, except when otherwise required. Therefore when a language is not spoken or heard being used in the school compound, it naturally leads to poor English language acquisition among the students.

Using English for teaching and learning

All subject are taught in English except Dzongkha. However usage of English is hindered as students do not understand it as seen from this typical example: A primary class student said that since they do not understand English, they ask the English teacher to use Dzongkha language.

The study also found that the bilingualism is common among both the students' and teachers i.e. using English and Dzongkha/Sharchopkha languages in the classrooms:

> While teaching English the teacher often uses language when they are stuck in between and they use Dzongkha mainly to let understand the concept taught.
> I found that the teachers are using both Dzongkha and English language while teaching English medium subjects.
> As an English language teacher we also use native language in English medium classes because it helps us to express clearly when we lack certain concepts. Sometimes I find teachers using bilingualism and I think it is not good to learn English since we are not able to connect the words and don't know how to construct a sentence while speaking and writing.
> Students understand better while explaining in Dzongkha language.
> My friends are Sharchopks and even if I want to speak in English I cannot because I feel uncomfortable.
> I have this feeling of inferiority and fear of speaking (in English). As I usually write grammatically wrong sentences, I resort to copying others work.

Explaining the concepts in Dzongkha language in English Medium classes can be a help to understand the lessons but it has serious implications on the students' English language. Students are also unable to write grammatically correct sentences and cannot express their points of view in the classrooms:

I can understand better when teachers teach in Dzongkha language but I cannot express my understanding in English language.

I like Dzongkha more than English language as I don't understand English.

It is effective method to share the intended information by expressing in different languages. However, I can say it is not a good method to be applied for the higher classes.

The participants shared that the school lacks trained English teachers so the other subject teachers have to teach English subject though not competent enough. In the pre-primary classes, the general teacher takes up the role of English teacher compromising the quality lesson to the student as some of the participants pointed out: "We did not have enough English teachers in 2015 and 2016 and role of the English teacher was given to other English related subject teachers.

In a casual conversation, one of the teachers mentioned that the school does not have a teacher trained to teach Primary English. This clearly compromises the quality of language learning as there is a significant advantage in learning English from a trained teacher.

Participants' opinion on Learning English effectively

The participants were asked to share their views explicitly on what could be done to improve the quality of learning English in the school. Their suggestions included several policy interventions such as the following:

a. The library to be kept open during the off school hours so that they can utilise their leisure hours reading the books as it is necessary to read the books to improve English and it is even convenient as it is the central school.
b. The school has library periods for each class and section once in a week and there is no doubt about the schools' services to the students. However, students seem to feel one period is not adequate to improve English language as desired. For that matter, participants believe that introduction of the open Library during the off hours could be an immense help in gearing up of learning English.
c. Some participants have identified that while teaching English medium class only to use English language even in the primary class for it will be benefitting both student and the teacher.
d. Another common suggestion was English teachers, except Dzongkha teachers to use English while conversing to students in the school campus with which they are positive to improve spoken English. They even pointed out that the language policy once maintained in the school to be revived creating no room for other languages except English and Dzongkha.
e. Some of them even said that more of writing activity to be given to them so that they can improve their writing skill through the feedbacks provided to them. Some participants expressed that most of teaching are lecture method and teacher-centred in which they get less opportunity to speak in the class they believe that could do better than what they were doing in English language if provided a chance as the passage of time.
f. The participants were to have more literary activities in the school to encourage public speaking. This is being carried out by the literary club coordinators according to their club plan but it seems more needs to be conducted. Further, some of the participants mentioned that most of the primary students are left out without opportunity.
g. Some children specifically suggested that to strengthen and expand the love of learning English students should be taken care of from the pre-primary classes itself.
h. Some of the students also reported that they are not good in English subject because they were taught by Dzongkha teacher in primary schools. They suggested that English subject to be taught by English teachers only.

From these responses shared it is evident that both the teachers and students are keen to use English thereby helping in improving its usage. However, they have not suggested personal initiatives wherein students can take responsibility to improve the language on their own.

Recommendations for future research

The present study is on the factors affecting in learning the English language in a Central School in Bhutan and can therefore not be generalised to all the schools in the country. Some of the factors are specifically related to Minjiwoong Central School due to its location and cultural settings and may not be applicable to urban schools which are well linked and located.

Therefore, further research should be conducted on a wider scale to validate the present findings.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to address questions related to factors affecting learning the English language at a central school. The analysis was based on in-depth interviews of carefully selected 30 participants (20 students and 10 teachers). The study concludes that geographical location and cultural background (mother tongue) influences learning English in school and that both students and teachers have a vital role in improving the standard of English language. Teachers' complacency in preparing teaching-learning materials, conversing in another form of languages, not doing follow up on the feedback that they have given and using bilingual in the English classes are issues that need attention. Students need to be taught by the English teacher, not by the others subject teachers and learning opportunity should be created through literary activities. Library room to be kept open during the off-duty days, student and teacher should be speaking English with English teachers were some of the suggestions in the study.

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