School Principals' Perceptions on the Conducive Learning Environment and Their Current Practices: An Exploratory Study at Trashigang District, Bhutan

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore principals' perceptions and current practices in schools to build conducive learning environment. The study employed qualitative research method guided by the constructivist paradigm. The study was conducted in Trashigang District, Bhutan, with 22 principals from February 2022 to July 2022. This study was purely exploratory, and the findings were broadly categorized into six themes: perceptions of a conducive learning environment, current practices in creating a conducive learning environment, managing students' behavior, organizing the physical ambiance, and managing academic activities. Further, this study presents issues and challenges faced by school leaders. The study's findings showed that school principals have positive perceptions of a conducive learning environment. The school principals in the study had given some methods to tackle academic, behavioral, and social issues. The study findings will help newly recruited principals create a conducive learning environment. Further, the study's finding recommends Ministry of Education (MoE) and relevant stakeholders provide professional development to school leaders on behavioral management and enhancement of students' academic performance. Moreover, the study recommends MoE to see if financial autonomy can be provided to the school. However, study's finding is from the schools of one District and cannot be generalized. Therefore, future researchers can find the attributes of a conducive learning environment with a more excellent sample to validate the findings.

Keywords: Conducive, Principal, School leaders, Environment, Professional development

Introduction

Background

There is a growing concern in Bhutan over the need to raise the quality of education (Waiba et al., 2021). Further, during the auspicious occasion of the 113th National Day in Punakha Dzong on 17th December 2020, His Majesty the King of Bhutan issued a historic Royal Kasho (Royal Decree) on Education Reform. The Royal Kasho emphasizes the contribution made by education in nation building over the last decades and envisions the future of education for Bhutan (Ministry of Education, 2021). Therefore, among many factors that affect the quality of education, the leadership role of school leaders' is one of them. Past studies have indicated that School leaders supported students' learning by creating favorable learning environment. On the other hand, a study by Dutta and Sahney (2016) found out school leaders' direct influence on student achievement was statistically insignificant. For instance, instructional leadership by a school leader influence student accomplishment positively, while the distribution of leadership is negatively related to student achievement (Tan, 2016).

As per the current Annual Educational Chart, Bhutan has 605 schools. Each school in Bhutan has a Principal, officiating principal, or vice-principal who is the head of the school. These school leaders make decisions and policies to build a conducive learning environment. The need to create a supportive school learning environment has been articulated in the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 (MoE, 2014), a seminal planning document in education formulated by the MoE. The MoE also highlighted the criticality of school leaders in students learning by creating supportive learning conditions in schools. School Performance Management System Operational Guidelines emphasized the importance of school leaders' roles (MoE, 2022). Most of the parameters to build conducive learning were discussed in the guidelines. The MoE offers professional development programs to school leaders on instructional practices. However, there is no study to date in Bhutan on school leaders' roles in the learning environment. Therefore, this study aims to explore the views held by Bhutanese school leaders on the learning environment and the roles they play in creating a conducive environment in school to facilitate student learning. In this study, the terms principals and school leaders are used interchangeably.

Statement of the problem

According to Ahmad et al. (2015), conducive attributes of the physical learning environment of school plays a dominant role in the successful delivery of lessons for slow learners. On the other hand, Velrade et al. (2020) stated that building a conducive learning environment is challenging for school leaders, particularly in managing individual differences and conflicts that hinder achieving organizational goals. Similarly, schools in Bhutan have students from different cultural and social backgrounds hindering school leaders from building a conducive learning environment. Farid et al. (2018) found that a conducive school environment directly relates to students' achievements and intellectual capabilities. School leaders should have enough knowledge and skills to build conducive learning environment to make school a better place to learn. However, the school leaders rarely get any training or

professional development program on building a conducive learning environment. However, the researchers attended SLDP (School Leadership Development Program) initiated by RIGSS (Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies). RIGSS is a premier institute based in Phuntsholing, Bhutan. It initiates and works to promote excellence in governance, leadership, and strategic studies; it was established under the patronage of His Majesty the King in 2013. Further researchers have undergone 1-year training on Nurturing Leadership Program (NLP) initiated by The Royal Civil Service Commission of Bhutan in collaboration with the Ulrich Allen Leadership Capital Service. After undergoing these programs, researchers learned that the school leaders are indispensable for the success of students, teachers, and school. However, the researchers felt that creating a conducive learning environment takes time and effort. Therefore, the researchers want to explore school leaders' perceptions of building a conducive learning environment and its challenges.

Research questions

Since the study is to find out the current leadership practice in building a conducive learning environment, this study aims to address the following research questions:

a) What are the school leaders' perceptions of building a conducive learning environment?

b) What programs do school leaders conduct to build a conducive learning environment?

c) What do school leaders face the issues and challenges in creating a conducive learning environment?

Literature review

Leadership: definition and theories

Successful school leaders employ personal and professional experiences to frame a vision for their school (Dema, 2021). Further, Dema (2021) stated that leaders influence the achievement and outcomes of the organization. Bush and Glover (2003) have defined school leadership as a process of impact from the distinct values and ideas that shape the school's vision. Leaders in the school ensure that staff-and students collectively achieve the school's shared vision. The school's philosophy, organizational framework, and programs focus on achieving the same goal (Bush and Glover, 2014).

In Bhutan, school leaders transitioned from managers and administrators to the instructional leaders in 2010 (Wangdi, 2021). This was done primarily so that principals would ensure the efficient administration and delivery of curricula and enhance students' success. The one key element for effective schools that impacts teaching and learning is instructional leadership (Grobler, 2013; Hallinger, 2005). The concept of instructional leadership originated in the 70s and 80s when studies were conducted on effective schools. Instructional leadership prioritizes effective teaching and learning and focuses on teachers' behavior that impacts students' achievement (Hallinger, 2003).

Learning environment: definition

According to Anyaogu (2016), learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn. Wangchuk (2018) asserted that schools in Bhutan create and develop a conducive learning environment by confirming the instructional time, awarding incentives to teachers, promoting professional improvement, and giving incentives for learning. However, due to differences in geographical location, infrastructural facilities, and size of the students and staffs, school leaders must use different strategies to build a conducive learning environment.

A study by Nasreen (2019) emphasized the importance of school leaders in creating a conducive teaching and learning environment by equipping schools with professional and modern teaching methods and resources. The study further mentioned the teachers' and children's physical, social, and emotional health, where individual differences are taken care of, and why principals should know the children's psychology to create an effective learning environment. Similarly, with implementing the Bhutan standard for teachers in Bhutan (BPST), principals, as an assessor for teachers, ensure the creation conducive teaching and learning environment and cater individual differences of students through differentiated instruction by teachers.

Practices of principals in creating a learning environment

The school leaders are the one who creates a conducive learning environment, and link teaching and learning with organizational goals and results (Agasisti et al., 2012; Leo, 2015). Similarly, schools in Bhutan frame different academic and non-academic plans to be achieved at the end of each academic year. Fourie (2018) shared that managing goals, processes, and results affects goal orientation, process orientation, and results orientation. Accordingly, Fourie (2018) further emphasized that principals focus on making a conducive teaching and learning environment during goal orientation. Secondly, during process orientation principal leads the teaching and learning process by visiting, supervising, and providing feedback to the class. Finally, during result orientation principal links students' result with teaching and learning. Farid et al. (2018) found that a conducive school environment directly relates to students' achievements and intellectual capabilities. Their study focused on three school environment areas: physical, social, and academic climates. Therefore, this study also discussed literature based on physical, social, and academic has been discussed in this study

Practices of principals in managing academic activities

Principals in the schools are responsible for managing myriad academic activities in the school. They perform different practices to manage academic activities. The school's professional head supervises the teachers and provides positive feedback for developing and improving the learning strategy (Andriani et al., 2018). The supervision orientation helps teaching and learning circumstances for better conditions, and examinations are conducted to gauge how activities have fulfilled the goal (Renata et al., 2018; Murtiningsih, et al., 2019). A study by Karnati (2019) noted that teachers' performance improves when the principal practices academic supervision and when the principal advances professional competencies. Further, academic performance by students can be influenced when the principal monitor

students' academic performance, and testing regularly improves students' academic performance (Samoei, 2015). Similarly, to improve teachers' academic practices, lessons are observed by principals, vice-principals, and assessors for the respective subjects as mandated by Bhutan Professional Standard for Teachers (BPST).

Practices of principals in managing the psychosocial environment in the school

Schools adopt diverse practices to boost the school's psychosocial environment which ultimately contributes to better learning. The study conducted by Shulhan (2018) explored leadership practices that enhanced teachers' performance and revealed that students were motivated to perform better in academics by inviting motivators. In addition, motivating teachers and students by awarding good performance improved the learner's academic results, and enhanced the teaching and learning morale (Maponya, 2020).

The Philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) dramatically influences the Bhutanese education system. To fulfill the objective of educating for Gross National Happiness, there has been the adoption of projects such as 'Green Schools for Green Bhutan' (Dema, 2021). The concept of green schools is encouraged to create an atmosphere that provides respect, warmth, care, and support (Yangdon, 2019). According to Wang and Degol (201g), people residing in a safe environment effectively interact and communicate with a wide range of people. Hence principals are responsible for creating a safe psychosocial environment for fostering learning. Literature is abundant on the role of the principal in creating a conducive learning environment in the school. However, the literature review revealed that there need to be studies conducted on the role of principals in creating a conducive learning environment in Bhutan.

Methodology

World view and research design

Worldview is the perspective, thinking, school of thought, or set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The constructivist paradigm guided this study. The constructivist philosophical paradigm yields benefit when implemented in research in the diverse field of study and in undertaking teaching and learning activities at any educational level (Adom et al., 2016). Further, Akpomi and Kayii (2022) stated that constructivism is an approach to learning that believes in the personal construction of knowledge through the interaction of prior knowledge to form a new experience. Researchers have been in the school system for more than 2 decades, and this paradigm has helped understand school leaders' role in building a conducive learning environment.

The researcher employed a qualitative research method for this study. Peck and Mummery (2018) proposed constructivism as one approach to redress this problem within many qualitative frameworks that make a person's experience possible at a deeper level of abstraction. Further, Mohajan (2018) stated that qualitative researchers are interested in people's beliefs, experiences, and meaning systems from the people's perspective. Further, Haven and Grootel (2019) proposed that qualitative research tries to reveal the perspectives of

the subjects or patients that the research question regards. Therefore, the researcher had to investigate the school leaders' views on the learning environment and, their organization's current practices; this method was most suitable for the conduct of study.

Research instrument

Braun et al. (2021) stated that qualitative surveys consist of open-ended questions, crafted by a researcher and centered on a particular topic. The survey questionnaire is self-administered and presented to all participants in a fixed and standard order. Similarly, in this study, the researcher used an online qualitative interview questionnaire to collect the data from the participants. Taherdoost (2016) stated that the main objective of a questionnaire is to obtain relevant information most reliably and validly. The instruments used were an open_ ended online survey questionnaire comprising 25 items with fewer than 6 pre-determined themes (See Appendix A). The themes were broadly classified as 1) perceptions of a conducive learning environment, 2) current practices in creating conducive learning environment, 3) managing students' behavior, 4) organizing the physical ambiance, 5) managing academics, and 6) issues and challenges, and some direction for future.

Population and sampling

When conducting research, collecting data or information from the entire population is often impossible when the population members cannot be individually identified or contacted or the population is too large (Stratton, 2021). Due to this, sampling is done, which represent, the entire population. According to Lee and Landers (2022), sampling refers to the process used to identify and select cases for analysis to draw meaningful research conclusions. The study of Young and Casey (2019) suggested that qualitative researchers often make decisions about anticipated sample sizes in advance of data collection for resource planning purposes.

For this study, 22 out of 46 school principals of Trashigang District participated in the online survey. The researcher used a simple random sampling strategy under probability sampling. Every member of the population has a chance to be selected for the sample. Acharya et al. (2013) stated that in a random sampling, every individual has an equal chance of being selected in the sample from the population. The researcher circulated the online survey through Google forms and declined to accept the response after reaching the required sample. The details of the sampling are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sampling size

HSS	MSS	LSS	PS	Technical school	Total
6	4	5	6	1	22

*HSS-Higher secondary school. MSS-Middle Secondary School. LSS-Lower & PS-Primary

Data analysis

In qualitative data, Lacey and Luff (2007) stated that researchers develop the relationships between various themes that have been identified, or related behavior or ideas to biographical characteristics of respondents such as age or gender. Further, Peterson (2017) stated that the thematic analysis involves reviewing the data, making notes, categorizing data into basic themes, searching for developing patterns or broader categories, and assessing the applicability of findings to the questions posed in the study, which is standard data analytic process for qualitative research. For this study, data was analyzed thematically based on the research questions and objectives. Thematic analysis analyzed classifications and presents themes (patterns) related to the data (Alhojailan, 2012).

Result and discussion

The results and discussion of this study were made thematically. Similar words and phrases were colour coded. For presenting the interview data findings, the "P" is used for principals. The acronym is used for easy reference and understanding. Five major predetermined themes and a sub-theme were identified based on interview codes for result interpretations.

Principal's perceptions of a conducive learning environment

To create conducive learning in school, the principal should have a positive perception of the learning environment. A study conducted by Agustina et al. (2021) found that school principal leadership significantly influences school climate and teachers' work productivity. Similarly, this study revealed that most principals consider the school environment as essential for academic growth and healthy learning. The items, "What is a conducive learning environment to you?" and "Why is conducive learning is so important?" revealed that principals are positive towards creating a positive learning environment. School leaders believe that a conducive environment will enable children to become enthusiastic learners and promote the general well-being of the students and teachers. Further, finding also showed that a conducive school would have positive disciplining, no bullying, and sharing common goals, and be equipped with the required facilities to make learning meaningful. The following excerpts are extracted from the interview responded to by the school principals:

> A conducive learning environment to me is a school environment strategically planned and designed to provide safety and well-being to promote the children's physical, mental, and emotional growth. Conducive learning will also be heavily attributed to the prioritized learning opportunities provided to every child based on the back story of the child and help her/him actualize the innate potential. Promoting a of conducive learning environment for the students has a direct inclination towards the professional fluency of the teachers and staff in the school. The school will only be able to promote conducive learning if the teachers and staff of the school are professionally competent. All these factors

must weave neatly to form a spectrum for a school to be defined as a home for life-long learners and global citizens. (P21)

Conducive learning is a pleasant atmosphere that allows for a free exchange of ideas, thoughts, and skills with a good feeling and emotional intensity among the teachers and learners to achieve set goals by considering the physical, psychological, and cultural needs of all the learners. (P2)

The majority of the principals pointed out similar opinions. Further, principals added that they lead in searching the fund to make a conducive learning environment through infrastructure development. Some also stated that they initiate the creation ventilated classrooms, ensure any programs conducted in school benefits teachers and, students and institute mentorship programs. Mendell et al. (2013) proposed that a well-ventilated classroom improves attendance and decreases absenteeism in the school. A teacher's statement clearly illustrates the item "How a principal should help create a conducive learning environment?"

As a Principal, I always try to build a collaborative working atmosphere. Motivate and encourage them for their work. Act as a role model to students, teachers, and the community. Manage resources and other facilities. Institute culture of mentoring and feedback system. (P20)

As a principal, one should address student needs and try to fulfill the individual need of our learners first. Know about our students, such as their cultures, interests, curricular activities, learning styles, mindsets, personalities, ambitions, or goals in the future. Talk to them in person and note them down for future reference. (P5)

These statements made by the principals indicated that they are aware of the importance of creating a conducive learning environment. Moreover, principals believed they must plan and facilitate the programs articulating the school mission and common goals.

Current practices in schools in building a conducive learning environment.

To explore the current practices by principals to create conducive learning environment in their schools, the participants were asked about the trend, initiatives, and unique activities in their schools. Most of the principal participants expressed that they practice a variety of activities such as the counseling program in the school, instituting a mentor and mentee system, set school free of bullies with rules and regulations in place, and consistent monitoring of the safety of the children. According to Liaqat et al. (2020), mentoring is a process for the informal transmission of skills and shared interaction for professional maturity. Their study found that mentoring plays a very vibrant role in student's academic development. Similarly, this study, showed that school leaders instituted mentor and mentee systems to create a conducive learning environment. This is evident from the following statement made by principals:

There is no physical or verbal punishment in the school. Initiated a mentor-mentee program in the school. (P14)

We provide professional development activities for teachers. Provide 24 hours Wi-Fi facilities on the school campus. There are safe and accessible games and sports facilities on the school campus. (P7).

Further, participants shared that they give their teachers and students constant guidance and moral support. They impart value lessons and life skills education to the children.

Table 2 Current practices in building a conducive learning environment

Activities
Collaborative working
Being transparent
Designing and initiating diverse recreational activities for students and teachers
Equip the school with relevant teaching-learning materials
Promote Bhutanese etiquette and values
Setting clear directions
Make school free of bullies
Involve students in decision making
Constant monitoring and feedback session
Designing the classroom as per the 21st century pedagogy
Value education

On the item "what are the current practices that help your children to value Bhutanese etiquette?" Most participants expressed that they annually conduct Driglam Namzha (Bhutanese Etiquette) during value class and Phob-Toray (Bhutanese dining decorum) program Moreover, a few participants have spelled out that their school invites guest speakers from other sectors to give talk on discuss Bhutanese Etiquette.

Managing students' behavior

To create a conducive learning environment in school, one of the most important factors is managing students' behavior. Nooruddin and Baig (2014) reported that school leadership influences students' behavior management through policies and procedures. Their study found that school leaders influence student behavior through classroom observations and by providing feedback to improve their behavior management skills. Similarly, in this study, most participants expressed that student behavior is managed through positive disciplining, counseling, advocacy program, and through sanctioning methods. Few participants stated that they discuss the issue with class teachers, the students' affairs coordinator, and the discipline committee if any problem arises within the school. To curb students' behavior problems, Table 3 shows some. Further, participants stated that having a mentors-mentees system in the school and providing clear roles and responsibilities to their help in managing student's behavior. Through the mentor and mentee system, each member in the group consider their members as family members. A similar study conducted by Tzani-Pepelasi et al., (2019) showed that the

buddy approach helps support students in promoting friendship and protection, while also building a sense of responsibility, satisfaction, and pride.

Table 3 Current practices in managing student behavior

Activities
Use zero tolerance policy
Counseling Program
Listen to the children's back story
Conduct a life skills program
Involve students in decision making
Dividing students into different collaborative groups
Let students frame their norms
Coaching and mentoring
Maintaining individual anecdotal records
Sanctioning methods
Institution of the feedback system
Decentralization of responsibilities
Being a firm and role model
Buddy system
Provide school level discipline policy
Peer helpers
Refrain from physical and verbal punishment

School leaders also shared the issues and challenges while managing student behavior. Some principals in this study shared that they lack parental support to curb disciplinary issues. On the other hand, the study by Yulianti et al. (2021) showed that school leadership could reinforce teacher invitations for parental involvement in children's education. Further they stated that school leaders must identify ways families and schools can work together to engage youth in their education. However, in this study, the principals expressed that some parents bring unnecessary complaints to the school, and dealing with them takes much work. This was evident from the statements given by the principals:

> Reaching the information to parents is difficult. Many of the students are staying as a boarder. (P2)
> One prominent challenge is handling the issues related to critical student behavior, which contradicts what child does and parents think. There is also an issue of meeting legal requirements, which school principals face criticism. (P21)
> Parents are not cooperating. (P3)
> We lack parental support. (P6)

On the other hand, few participants expressed that teachers do not have the skills to handle students' misbehavior. On this ground, they spelled out that they have to give sanctions to the students. The Following statements say it all:

> Most parents do not cooperate with the school, the school requires trained counselors. Teachers are bogged down with other activities. (P13)
> Some students repeat the same offenses leading to long suspensions and even termination. (P7)

For the item, "How do you manage working with different personality types of teachers and students?" participants shared that they use differentiated methods to deal-with individuals, study students' diverse backgrounds and provide positive feedbacks. Some participants also stated that they conduct awareness and develop policies. The following are the statements shared by the principals.

> Meet them personally, talk about them, appreciate them, allow them to exchange ideas freely, use their expertise well, and talk and solve problems together. (P9)
> We need the developed policies. Often conduct meetings with teachers and students. Providing positive feedback and awareness program. (P10)
> Apply different leadership traits like being firm and open. (P6; P12)

Organizing the physical ambiance

The participants have highlighted the importance of physical ambiance for students learning. The principals pointed out that stakeholders are appointed in different areas, such as the hostel, classroom, sports fields, and dining room. These appointees are responsible and accountable for the child's safety. Ramos (2022) found a learning environment was critical in teaching-learning Similarly, for the item, "How do you maintain the classroom arrangement and hostel room that consider safety issues?" The participants pointed out that hazard hunts and mock drills are conducted frequently. Some also pointed out checking the electrical appliances frequently and setting classroom norms. **T**able 4 shows some of the main activities conducted by the participants in their school for the safety of classrooms and the hostel.

Table 4 Practices to maintain classrooms and hostels conducive

Activities
Avoiding crowded classrooms
Arranging classroom as per Kagan CL structure
Grouping students with different abilities/heterogeneous group
Frequent monitoring of school furniture
Contingency plan
Set classroom norms at the beginning of academic sessions
Proper handing and taking of furniture and any classroom materials
Hostel management with maximum free space

Another important aspect of the physical ambiance interviewed was on availability and utility of sports facilities. Singh (2018) pointed out that games and sports keep our bodies healthy and teach the importance of discipline, friendliness, punctuality, responsibility, team spirit, and respect. Most Bhutan schools, initiate outdoor sports such as volleyball, basketball, and football. This study discusses on activities other than football, volley, and basketball. This study's finding revealed that current school principals encourage students to participate in various games and sports activities. It is apparent from the participant's statement for the item "What are the unique practices you initiate in your school to promote games and sports activities in the school?

> We conduct a cross country race, Paralympic, to disable students beside basketball, football, volleyball, and other indoor games. (P2)
>
> My school, has activities and implementation of indigenous games like archery and dart tournament. (P3)
>
> In my school, I let students participate in various activities, be it sports or literature, as per their interests. After school, there is 1 hour for games and sports. (P8)

Further, a participant shared that they involve teachers and students in games and sports activities. This is to make interaction among the mentors and teachers.

Managing academic activities

Some participants stated that they frequently monitor then plan and assessment records of teachers and students. Few participants shared that they keep abreast with the changing curriculum. The participants also shared that they conduct small classroom action research and maintain a reflective journal. This was evident from the following statements:

> I keep abreast with the changing curriculum. Read books online to accelerate your knowledge. Further, I maintain a reflective journal and conduct professional development for teachers. (P20)
>
> We often engage in the professional matter in the school. Teachers have to make a daily lesson plan, and sometimes I suggest what pedagogy would be befitting to teach the content. (P4)

Another important point was about the assessment. The participants shared that they often check teachers' assessment records. Moreover, they conduct frequent classroom observations while teacher teachers. This is done as the rubrics developed as teacher assessment evaluation form consulting with teachers. Further, they collaborate with teachers for professional growth and provide feedback wherever necessary. There are several possible explanations for this result. For example:

> We do frequent monitoring of plans and assessment records. We also do frequent classroom observation and coordination meetings monthly. Further, academic activities are spearheaded by the head of different departments

(HODs) after conducting professional development on assessment modalities and updated national school curricula. (P13)

I maintain assessment criteria for teachers with rubrics. Prepare a schedule to check student's notebooks to verify the notebook evaluation by their teachers. Any assessment should have an impact and outcome. (P20)

From these findings, the researcher concluded that school leaders manage academic activities to their best potential. A similar study conducted by Waiba et al., (2021) found that teachers and schools have been very proactive in assisting and helping students in need with error_ free services to the children. Moreover, participants expressed that they allow their teachers to be updated to date with changing pedagogy and assessment. This was evident from the following statement:

I encourage my students and teachers to avail online resources and conduct a School_ Based In-service Program for others (SBIP). (P8)

I mandated that teachers conduct at least one action research to improve themselves and share their findings. (P18)

Issues and challenges, and some direction for the future.

The challenges and issues were discussed in the above themes. This theme is purely focused on general challenges and issues that the school leaders are currently facing. The Table 5 shows some of the major challenges faced by school leaders. Most respondents stated that, the first is a financial problem among many challenges. A leader, they plan and develop many activities to build a conducive learning environment, but they need to execute them properly. While the ability to provide quality education for all and to respond to new priorities depends on the availability of adequate funding for education, the mechanisms through which school funding is governed, distributed, and monitored play a key role in ensuring that resources are directed to where they can make the most difference (OECD, 2017). Accordingly, OECD (2017) stated that a school system that lacks quality teachers and school leaders, adequate infrastructure, and textbooks would have more difficulties promoting a conducive learning environment by affecting quality education. Similarly, some participants pointed out that their schools do need more resources such as ICT tools, teaching- learning materials, and infrastructure facilities. The participants suggested that if financial autonomy is given to the school, it will benefit the school for resource management.

The second issue was on managing students' behavior. The participants reported needing more support from some parents while dealing with students' disruptive behavior in school. Kumalasari and Sugito (2021) stated that the parents are considered the most important socialization agent a child's life. Hence, the family has a significant influence on shaping the character of early childhood. Similarly, few participants stated that school leaders need support from parents and the community when dealing with children's disruptive behavior. In line with this, few participants shared that they resort to call the parents of those students who repeatedly causes a problem in the school, and a few principals propose a change of schools. On the contrary, a few participants stated that the school experienced a drastic drop in behavioral

issues as each student had a mentor to guide them. In addition, they shared that schools strategize different methods such as U-turn talk, involvement in decision-making, sanctioning, coaching, and through policy development. Students can be motivated with the help of different teacher behaviors such as guidance, enthusiasm, sincere praise, reinforcement, and interest-induction (Joshi et al., 2012).

The third issue was academic related. The study findings revealed that participants need help to get relevant resources for academic enhancement from the school library. A study by Lumadi (2014) revealed that in most schools, teaching and learning takes place in the most unconducive environment, needing more basic materials, which helped the fulfillment of educational objectives. Resources are crucial for them to exhibit expertise in their teaching subjects. Without resources, the learning content will likely be presented haphazardly, and learners will not benefit as teaching becomes less effective. Further, a few participants expressed that teachers' have a heavy challenging workload. Apart from teaching in the classroom and assessing students, school leaders must look after clubs, scouting programs, cultural activities, and bulky syllabi. Another important issue was managing time for the professional development program completing the syllabus on time, and giving an authentic assessment of students' work. Further, principals have to look after non-academic activities such as games and sports and attend other functions in the school.

Table 5 Challenges and issues to build a conducive learning environment

Challenges and Issues
Lack of resources in terms of infrastructure facilities and workforce
Students are not opening/expressing
Heavy teacher's workload
Students not performing well despite teacher's hard work
No support from parents
To identify the needs of individual
English speaking skills are poor
Too many non-academic activities
Weak internet signal
Insufficient computer and projector

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, following conclusion has been drawn.

i. School leaders currently have positive perceptions of creating conducive learning environment.

ii. School leaders used variety of activities to motivate in building the students to be a good citizen. However, some leaders faced difficulty in handling the children's negative behavior. The possible reasons for facing this problem, as mentioned by the participants, are parents not cooperating with them, repeated misbehavior by the children, children easily dropout from school upon small sanction given by the school, and children do not fear from the school policy.

iii. School leaders work hard to organize physical space and develop infrastructure facilities in the school. However, the study revealed that they often remain disabled without financial assistance.

iv. School leaders found out that the mentor-mentee system has uplifted not only the academic achievement of a child but also the behavior and positive conduct.

v. School leaders knew the importance of the school's monitoring, collaboration, observation and feedback system.

vi. Teachers have a heavy workload as teachers have to attend and coordinate both academic and non-academic activities.

vii. School leaders need help in enhancing academic score of the students. Due to time constraint, teachers need help initiating media programs for underperforming students. The study also concluded that students need a better English language to learn further. On top of this, the books in the school library are old and irrelevant.

viii. Schools initiated indigenous activities to build conducive learning that promotes and preserves Bhutanese etiquette. However, they proposed that due to time constraints quality has been compromised.

Recommendation

The conduct of the present study and the literatures has led to point out following recommendations:

While much research has been carried out concerning a conducive learning environment in schools that supports this study's finding, empirical studies have yet to be conducted in Bhutan to see the role of the principal in creating a conducive learning environment that covers all aspect. If additional studies are undertaken, this will validate the findings of this study, thereby allowing school principals to explore more strategies to help build conducive learning.

The study concluded that principals must have financial management and budget autonomy authority. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education work and plan on providing financial autonomy to the school, which can help the school to build a conducive learning environment.

The study also found that teacher-student interaction through the mentor-mentee system is a vital cause of students' better performance in learning and ultimately minimizing the school's disciplinary issues. Every teacher should create and maintain an encouraging learning environment through positive interactions with students.

Despite the limited professional development program, school principals used their personal experience to build a conducive learning environment. Despite their effort, the study found that principals still need to work on managing student's behavior. The study recommends that MoE and relevant stakeholders provide extensive training on the aforementioned issues.

One of the challenges that predominantly occurred in the study was principals' and teacher's heavy workload and inability to manage time. School leaders were bogged down with both academic and non-academic activities. The study recommends that the policymaking bodies and relevant stakeholders see how these issues can be resolved to positively impacts our students.

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Abbreviation
DCPD-Department of Curriculum and Professional Development
MoE-Ministry of Education
HSS-Higher Secondary School
MSS-Middle Secondary School
PS-Primary School
SLDP -School Leadership Development Program
NLP-Nurturing Leadership Program
Royal Institute for Governance and Strategic Studies

Appendix-A
Interview Questions
Part-A: Creating a conducive learning environment. (General Perceptions)
1. What is "Conducive learning Environment" to you?
2. How do you think that the Principal should help in creating a conducive learning environment?
3. What are some of the important things you think of when you hear the word "conducive learning environment"?
4. Among the list above, which one do you think is lagging in your school? Why?
5. What practices does your school implement/ use to build a conducive learning environment that you think is not there in other schools?

Part-B: Managing Student Behavior (Behavioral)
1. How do you make sure that your teachers and students maintain standards for behavior? How do you maintain the record(s)?
2. Given any situation when student behaviors do not meet the standards, how do you decide to intervene? What does the teacher do? When do you involve?
3. How do you help all students learn to participate in decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution?
4. How and when do you involve other stakeholders to maintain standards for student behavior?
5. How do you manage to work with different personality types?
6. What are the challenges and issues while employing the aforementioned practices?

Part-C: Creating an Environment to Support Learning (Psychosocial)
1. How do you model and promote equity and respect?
2. How do you encourage teachers and students to interact with each other in a respectful manner?
3. How do you encourage teachers and students to take risks and to be creative, critical thinkers and problem solvers?
4. What are the encouraging practices that foster positive disciplining in your school?

5. What are the current practices that help your children to value Bhutanese etiquette?

Part-D: Organizing Physical Space (Physical)

1. How do you maintain the classroom arrangement and hostel room that take into account safety issues?
2. How do you design/arrange the space in classrooms/hostels for students to interact and discuss?
3. What are the unique/new practices that you initiate in your school to promote games and sports activities in the school?
4. How do you help your teachers and students arrange the classroom to accommodate individual and group learning needs?
5. How do you help your teacher to involve the students in the development of classroom procedures and rules?

Part-E: Managing academic activities. (Academic)

1. How do you ensure the required competency in content by the particular teachers?
2. How do you create a hospitable environment to improve instructions by the teachers?
3. How do you encourage teachers to employ the latest and research-based strategies while teaching?
4. How do you evaluate and ensure that the teacher do effective assessment for the students' work?
5. What are challenges and issues while employing aforementioned practices?