

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF BHUTAN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (BPST) FOR TEACHERS IN BHUTAN

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers in Bhutan is a key impetus for teachers across the country to enhance impeccable teacher competency. Studies on teachers' attitudes towards professional standards show a positive as there was a significant correlation between teachers' competencies, learners' academic achievement, and the quality of education. However, Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers is relatively new and there is little study exists relative to Bhutan. The study on Teachers' Attitudes to the Implementation of Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers in Bhutan aimed to explore and get a snapshot view of teachers on Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers. Through a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 155 participants using the Five-Pointed Likert Scale and two open-ended questionnaires. The descriptive analysis revealed that teachers have fairly positive attitudes toward the implementation of Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers. Associated challenges, the implication of the findings, and recommendations are also discussed.

Keywords: Bhutan, Professional Standards, Teachers, Competencies, Quality of Education

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INTRODUCTION

The education system in Bhutan like any other country has been in perpetual reform. Bhutan has been able to navigate from a handful of monastic education through a couple of schools with a few hundred students to an enviable system of modern education. The navigation of its educational opportunities has been intended to retain time-tested traditional values while providing free basic quality education (Gyamtsso, 2020).

Similarly, teacher education in the history of the Bhutanese education system has come a long way. It has been shown that teachers were recruited from India as very few trained Bhutanese teachers met the human resources before Bhutan's early modern education system (Gyamtsso, 2020; Mackey, 2002). However, the institutions of Teacher Education such as Samtse College of Education (SCE) and Paro College of Education (PCE) which were established in the 1960s and 1975 respectively under the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), continue to train teachers with diversified subjects of specialization. Today, there are 9185 teachers in 569 public schools and 717 teachers in 36 private schools with 168,324 students across the country (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2022).

The Bhutanese education system has seen rapid growth both in numbers and quality. Nevertheless, the quality of education has become the subject of public scrutiny. In recent years, several studies have indicated that there is an overall decline in the quality of education in Bhutan (Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, 2019; Dorji et al., 2018; Sherab & Dorji, 2013; Sherab, 2008; Lham, 2008; Tenzin, 2008). It is argued that the decline in the quality of education is due to the classroom teaching pedagogy in schools (MoE, 2014; Sherab & Dorji, 2013; Husband & Pearce, 2012; Sherab, 2008) which is a critical attribute in achieving quality of education.

Generally, teachers play a crucial role in ensuring quality learning. This is attributed to the fact that teachers are one factor in shaping the country's future citizens (Dorji & Giri, 2022). With current education reforms in Bhutan, the teaching profession has been the subject of scrutiny, and greater accountability for learners' learning is inextricably tied to teacher quality. The MoE has started several initiatives such as the National Based Inservice Programme (NBIP), Cluster-Based Inservice Programme (CBIP), School Based Inservice Programme (SBIP), workshops, seminars, short-term and long-term training for teachers to upscale their professional skills (MoE, 2021). In addition, MoE launched the Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers (BPST) on May 2, 2019, to enhance teacher quality in the country (Drukpa, 2021). These initiatives for teachers' professional development indicate the importance the MoE places on teachers' quality. It is deduced through the several initiatives by MoE that the quality of education cannot exceed the quality of our teachers. BPST is one of the major initiatives by MoE to induce a change in the teaching trend both at the policy level as well as at the field in implementing to enhance the teacher quality in the country.

Background on Professional Standards for Teachers

Many countries around the world have been implementing professional standards for teachers (PST) to gauge their professional competencies and evaluate teachers against those standards to ensure the quality of teaching in schools (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2016; Mockler, 2020; Sachs, 2003; Zions et al., 2006). Additionally, Mayer et al., (2005) have indicated that PSTs are important mechanisms to improve the quality of education as the quality of a teacher cannot exceed the quality of learning by the learners. Similarly, another study has shown that the development and implementation of PST is an indicator of increased emphasis by the government and relevant stakeholders on the quality of education, quality of performance, and professionalization of teachers (Ceulemans et al., 2012).

For Bhutan, BPST is relatively new and was launched only on May 2, 2019, by MoE to establish a teacher ecosystem that is knowledgeable, caring, reflective, and lifelong learners. The BPST represents a specific policy response to enhance the quality of teaching and the status of the teaching profession in

Bhutan. In addition, BPST is principled within the framework of a child-centered approach, inclusive education, lifelong learning, and core Bhutanese values of allegiance and cause and effect (MoE, 2020). The MoE explicate that the quality of teachers is articulated with the framework of seven standards (refer to Table 1) which includes both professional and personal practices. The standards outline certain knowledge, skills, and values required by the teacher to fulfill his or her professional competencies. Structurally, MoE (2020) indicates that:

The BPST has seven standards, which define the knowledge, skills and values expected of teachers. The seven standards are elaborated in 37 focus areas, which refer to specific dimensions of teacher practices. These are further illustrated as indicators at four career stages: Beginning, Proficient, Accomplished, and Distinguished (p.33).

Further, the standards and focus areas are bifurcated and illustrated in the form of indicators in the continuum of teachers' careers stage of beginning, proficient, accomplished, and distinguished (refer to Figure 1) in a progressive level of effective professional service delivery.

Table 1. Seven Standards and 37 Focus Areas of Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers

Standards	Focus Areas
1. Diversity of Learners	1.1 Language, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds 1.2 Physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development 1.3 Learner's gender, needs, interests and abilities. 1.4 Learners with disabilities, giftedness, and talents
2. Learning Environment	2.1 Safe and protective learning environment 2.2 Fair and respectful learning environment 2.3 Management of classroom settings and activities 2.4 Support for learner participation 2.5 Promotion of independent learning 2.6 Management of learner behavior
3. Content and Pedagogical Knowledge	3.1 Content and pedagogical knowledge 3.2 Research-informed practices 3.3 Positive use of ICT 3.4 Literacy and numeracy strategies 3.5 Higher-order thinking skills 3.6 Communication strategies 3.7 Medium of instruction
4. Planning and Teaching	4.1 Learning outcomes aligned with learning competencies. 4.2 Teaching learning plans and processes 4.3 Teaching learning resources including ICT. 4.4 Linking assessment to learning 4.5 Community contexts and learning
5. Assessment and Reporting	5.1 Design and utilization of classroom assessment strategies 5.2 Monitoring and evaluation of learner progress and achievement 5.3 Feedback to improve teaching and learning. 5.4 Design and utilization of a variety of testing strategies 5.5 Use of assessment data to enhance teaching practice. 5.6 Communication of learner needs progress and achievement
6. Personal Growth and Professional Development	6.1 Philosophy of teaching 6.2 Dignity of the teaching profession 6.3 Professional reflection and learning 6.4 Professional development goals 6.5 Professional networks with colleagues
7. Professional Engagement and Bhutanese Values	7.1 Engagement of parents and community 7.2 Professional ethics and conduct 7.3 School Policies and procedures 7.4 Bhutanese culture and values

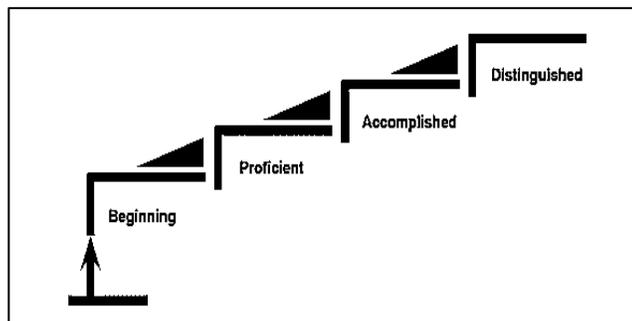


Figure 1. Career Stages of Teacher

To simplify and make teachers easily understand BPST, the MoE has developed BPST implementation guidelines describing the alignment of BPST with the continuum of teachers' career stages, mechanisms, criteria, and processes for monitoring, evaluation, and planning (MoE, 2021). It is also indicated that the implementation manual guides the individual teacher in preparing their documents such as classroom observation tool (COT), lesson plan (LP), observation records (OR), annotations, the individual development plan (IDP), and keeping the portfolio. Likewise, the implementation manual helps the assessor (e.g., Principals, Vice Principals, and heads of Departments (HoDs) from the schools) to conceptualize assessment tools and mechanisms to support the teachers. Similarly, to understand the intent of the BPST, MoE developed an illustration of practices for each standard and focus area suggesting possible ways on indicators that are realistic, meaningful, and workable in achieving the indicators (MoE, 2022).

In an attempt to orient all teachers, principals, and vice principals across the nation, MoE developed several resources related to BPST such as a reference book for BPST, a revised BPST implementation manual, an illustration of practice for BPST, and videos such as BPST explainer, BPST, standard explainer (volume I-VII), BPST orientation (volume I-III), and an explainer on the integration of BPST into MaX (Teacher Professional Support Division (TPSD), 2022). Similarly, several rounds of orientation to teachers and training for the assessors (e.g., principal, senior colleagues, subject heads, and department heads who will observe the classes and provide feedback) were provided as part of the professional development programme in implementing BPST.

In a nutshell, it is deduced that the BPST is the basis for determining teachers' professional competencies in Bhutan as teacher quality is one of the most important school factors influencing students' academic achievement. MoE has started multiple platforms to orient all the teachers in Bhutan since the inception of BPST.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Professional Standards for Teachers

Generally, it is accepted that the attitudes of teachers can either reinforce or deter learning outcomes and thus the quality of education (Adoniou & Gallagher, 2016). It is inferred that the teachers' attitudes towards professional standards can be either positive or negative based on conceptualization and personal disposition. The literature relating to the professional standards of teachers indicates that teachers around the world have mixed attitudes. For example, a study in Australia by Adoniou and Gallagher with 36 sample sizes over 12 months indicated positive attitudes toward professional standards. Similarly, Zionts et.al., (2006) have also shown that many teacher participants in the study expressed that professional standards are very important in professional and personal development as teachers. Likewise, a study on assessing teachers using Philippine Standards for Teachers in the Philippines by Gepila Jr. (2019) has also indicated positive attitudes.

Despite positive attitudes toward professional standards by the teachers, there are also certain concerns and issues expressed by the practicing teachers. According to the study by Barry et al., (2020), the teacher professional standards intend to improve teacher quality and there is still much speculation about what quality teaching looks like. Further, Collins (2011) claims that there is no disagreement that teachers' quality matters in improving the quality of education, nevertheless, quantifying teacher quality and classifying the teachers using professional standards are still contentious. Likewise, Fitzgerald et al., (2003) have indicated that the increased level of bureaucratic control of teachers' professional work is a disadvantage for teachers, which may affect the work quality and learning outcomes. This is because professional standards are viewed as accountability mechanisms largely for administration rather than professional development. In addition, Leiber et al., (2021) argue that teachers are not able to interpret the professional standards as intended and there is a lack of evidence-based performance indicators while evaluating.

Although extensive research has been published on how teachers perceive the implementation of professional standards, the concept is relatively new in Bhutan. There is very little literature relative to Bhutan on Teachers' attitudes towards professional standards. Nevertheless, it is presumed that teachers across the schools in Bhutan possess their dispositions towards BPST. This is because similar to the global context, implementing BPST has induced a change both at the policy level as well as in teachers' mindsets in Bhutan.

Though the BPST has been implemented for Bhutanese teachers since 2019, it has not been able to be fully executed in the field practically due to several transformations in the education system. For example, the framework for teacher development was integrated with the Managing for Excellence (MaX) systems in November 2020 (Dorjee, 2020). Similarly, on 9th February 2021, MoE issued an executive order emphasizing the implementation of BPST with effect from the 2021 academic year vide letter no. MoE/EO/2021/2639 (Rai, 2021). The executive order also states that teachers' competencies and quality will be assessed based on BPST with effect from the 2022 academic year to determine the career stages and incentives.

On the contrary, BPST could not implement as indicated in the executive order. There were several other circulars and notifications on the change of modalities in implementing BPST. For instance, RCSC notified of changes in the Performance Assessment System for a civil servant in Schools dated March 31, 2022, vide letter no. RCSC/PPPD-08/2021-22/3797 indicating the different modalities for assessing schools using the Motherboard System of Druk Gyalpo's Institute (Mishra, 2022). In addition, on 19th May 2022, MoE notified the 583 schools across the country about the conduct of virtual conferences with Principals, Vice Principals, and assessors with regards to changes in the assessment process and tools in implementing BPST for teachers. Further, MoE notified on the deferment of career stage assessment for teachers due to several other education reform initiatives vide letter no. MoE/DSE/T2/2-22/3690 dated April 1, 2022 (Galay, 2022).

While the purpose of the BPST is to articulate teachers' knowledge, skills, and values to achieve the highest professional competency among Bhutanese teachers (MoE, 2020), it also provides an avenue to establish a common understanding of effective classroom facilitators for 21st-century learners (Gepila Jr., 2019). With a clear expression of what teachers are expected to know across the career stages, schools around the country are now using BPST as a mechanism to conduct methods of teacher evaluation such as passing a judgment on individual teachers' professional and personal practices. Therefore, there is a need to conduct a study and establish baseline evidence by generating empirical data to evaluate the teachers' attitudes to the implementation of BPST when used as part of the evaluation process. In addition, the study was aimed at exploring the attitudes of Bhutanese teachers toward the implementation of BPST relative to seven standards, career stages, and assessment tools and techniques. It is anticipated that this study helps teachers reflect on and assess their personal and professional development practices.

Research Questions

Overarching question: What are the attitudes of Bhutanese school teachers towards the implementation of BPST?

Sub questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Bhutanese school teachers regarding the Seven Standards, Focus Areas, and Indicators in BPST?
2. What are the attitudes of Bhutanese school teachers regarding the Career Stages in BPST?
3. What are the attitudes of Bhutanese school teachers regarding the Assessment tools and techniques in BPST?

METHODOLOGY

The ontological and epistemological aspects of the study to explore the teachers' attitudes to the implementation of BPST for teachers in Bhutan were addressed through a quantitative approach. Guided by the positivist paradigm, this cross-sectional study on the attitudes of Bhutanese teachers to the implementation of BPST was to get the nationwide snapshot view of teachers on BPST.

Research Participants

In this study, the data were collected from five major regions of Bhutan based on Dorji et al., criteria (2022, p. 5). In an attempt to get responses from the heterogeneous group, the chain-referral sampling method within the cluster (regions in this study) was employed in the study. The questionnaires were developed in Google form and circulated amongst the teachers online and data were collected through the mail. The response was collected on a first come first basis and the response was closed with 200 respondents. Out of 200 respondents, 45 were found incomplete and only 155 responses were taken for the study.

Research Instruments

In this study, five-pointed Likert scale items survey questionnaires exploring teachers' attitudes toward implementing the BPST in Bhutan were designed. The questionnaires comprised demographic information, attitudes towards standards, focus areas and indicators, attitudes towards career stages, and attitudes towards assessment tools and techniques. Each of the 20 items in the questionnaires was rated on a 5-pointed Likert scale that ranged from "Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The items negatively worded were reverse coded and the higher scores were considered to show more positive attitudes towards BPST while items with lower scores were indicated with negative or less positive attitudes. The 20 items were bifurcated into three themes of attitudes towards BPST (refer to Table 2).

Table 2. Items per Themes

Theme	Items
Attitudes towards Standards, Focus Areas, and Indicators	1,2,3,4,5,6,7
Attitudes towards Career Stages	8,9,10,11,12,13,14
Attitudes towards Assessment Tools and Techniques	15,16,17,18,19,20,

The items were developed and validated for both content and reliability. For content validity, Yusof's (2019) content validity index (CVI) was used and achieved a satisfactory level of CVI with a score-CVI average = 0.98, score-CVI Universal Agreement (UA) = 0.95, and score CVI average based on proportion relevance = 0.98. Similarly, for the reliability of the test item, a pilot test was conducted with 30 participants who were not involved in the study. The result of the pilot test was then computed by Cronbach Alpha coefficient to check the reliability value. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), the acceptable alpha value ranges from 0.79 to 0.95. The alpha value of this study based on the pilot test was

0.85 which was a highly acceptable score. Thus, the instruments were reliable and valid for the current study.

Similarly, two open-ended questions were employed with survey questionnaires addressing general perceptions and attitudes to the implementation of BPST. This was appropriate to collect factual data that participants may have missed during the structured questions.

Addressing Ethical Issues

All the participants were notified and informed that their participation in this study was voluntary and when the participants chose to complete the form, participants agreed to participate in the study. Further participants were informed that the return of the survey to the researcher indicates the participant's consent for their responses to be compiled.

Data Analysis

The data collected from survey questionnaires were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2021, and Statistical Package for Social Science. Through descriptive statistics, the data were computed for frequency trends, means, and standard deviations (SD) for Likert scale responses to 20 survey items. This was presented for teachers' responses to the survey questionnaires under the following broad themes guiding this study:

1. Attitudes of teachers towards standards, focus areas, and indicators in BPST.
2. Attitudes of teachers towards the career stages in BPST.
3. Attitudes of teachers to the assessment tools and techniques in BPST.

Similarly, for the open-ended questions, the concept of content analysis (Fraenkel et al., 2012) was employed and responses were thematically categorized and quantified to provide perspective to the data generated from survey questionnaires.

RESULTS

The result of this study is presented in two sections. The first sections outline the demographic information of the participants for fair distribution of the sample while the second sections outline the descriptive analysis of teachers to the implementation of BPST.

Demographic Information of the Participants

The participants of the study constitute both male (n=110) and female (n=45) Bhutanese teachers from five regions of Bhutan (refer to Table 3). The age range was from 21 to 40 years and above with teaching experience ranging from 0-26 years in their subject of specialization. It was interesting to observe the trend that most of the participants were from HSS (n=51) and MSS (n=50). There were also participants from LSS (n= 15), PS (n=37), and ECR (n=2). Likewise, there were participants from all categories of school locations in Bhutan such as urban (n=45), semi-urban (n=41), rural (n=34), and semi-rural (n=35). Similarly, the participants were from all regions of Bhutan such as east (n=34), west (n=40), central (n=20), north (n=5), and south (n=56) as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Information of the Participants (n=155)

General Information of the Participants		Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	110	71
	Female	45	29
Age	21-25	3	1.9
	26-30	35	22.6
	31-35	34	21.9
	36-40	37	23.9

General Information of the Participants		Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
40 Above		46	29.7
Teaching Experiences	0-5 years	35	22.6
	6-10 years	32	20.6
	11-15 years	37	23.9
	16-20 years	29	18.7
	21-25 years	15	9.7
	26 years above	7	4.5
Subject of Specialization	Humanities	28	18.1
	Science	39	25.2
	Mathematics	33	21.3
	ICT	5	3.2
	English	28	18.1
Category of School	Dzongkha	22	14.2
	HSS	51	32.9
	MSS	50	32.3
	LSS	15	9.7
	PS	37	24.5
School Location	ECR	2	0.6
	Urban	45	29
	Semi-urban	41	26.5
	Rural	34	21.9
Regions	Semi-rural	35	22.6
	East	34	21.9
	West	40	25.8
	Central	20	12.9
	North	5	3.2
	South	56	36.1

The descriptive result analysis was carried out for teachers' attitudes to the implementation of BPST. Means and standard deviations for each theme were computed to examine the attitudes of teachers toward BPST. The theme-wise responses of the teachers were analysed to compare the mean difference based on each item in a theme. The overall teachers' attitudes to the implementation of BPST are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Overall Mean Score from Survey Items -Attitudes towards the implementation of BPST (n=155).

Themes	Mean	SD
Attitudes towards Standards, Focus Areas, and Indicators.	3.34	0.73
Attitudes towards Career Stages.	3.44	0.64
Attitudes towards Assessment Tools and Techniques.	3.36	0.63
Average	3.38	0.67

As indicated in Table 4, the overall average mean value of teachers' responses to the survey items related to the theme of attitudes toward standards, focus areas, and indicators was 3.34 (SD=0.73). Similarly, the overall mean value of teachers' responses to survey items related to theme attitudes towards the career stage was 3.44 (SD=0.64). Further, the overall average mean score of teachers' responses to the survey items related to theme attitudes towards assessment tools and techniques was 3.36 (SD=0.63).

Analysis of Open-Ended Response Questions

The responses to the two open-ended questions were thematically analysed and quantified to provide perspective to the results from survey data. A total of 139 respondents out of 155 have responded to open-ended questions accounting for 89.7% response rate of the sample.

The content analysis results based on the question “How do you feel about the teacher evaluation using BPST? Share your views” indicated that 45% of the participants have positive attitudes while 44% of the participants indicated negative attitudes. Some of the participants chose not to comment on the questions (refer to Table 5).

Table 5. Response to Question “How do you feel about the teacher evaluation using BPST? Share your view” (n=139).

Attitudes	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Positive	63.00	45%
Negative	61.00	44%
Cannot Comment	15.00	11%

Similarly, content analysis results based on the question “Do you think the BPST can improve the teacher’s competency and thus the quality of education? Please explain why or why not” indicated that 44% positive attitudes and 40% negative attitudes. Likewise, 16% of the participants indicated it is too early to comment (refer to Table 6).

Table 6. Response to the Question “Do you think the BPST can improve the teacher’s competency and thus the quality of education? Please explain why or why not” (n=139).

Attitudes	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Positive	61.00	44%
Negative	56.00	40%
Cannot Comment	22.00	16%

DISCUSSIONS

The current study on Teachers’ Attitudes to the Implementation of Bhutan Professional Standards for Teachers in Bhutan revealed an insight into how Bhutanese teachers view BPST as a tool to enhance professional competency. The analysis of participants’ responses from survey questionnaires revealed that Bhutanese teachers have fairly positive attitudes towards BPST. For instance, the theme on attitudes towards standards, focus areas, and indicators of BPST has a mean value of 3.34 with an SD of 0.73. Similarly, the theme on attitudes towards career stage in BPST and attitudes towards assessment tools and techniques in BPST has shown positive attitudes with a mean score of 3.44, 3.36, and SD of 0.64, 0.63 respectively (refer to Table 4).

The overall mean value of 3.38 with SD 0.76 depicts fairly positive attitudes to the implementation of BPST by Bhutanese teachers. Although the findings do not show strong agreement, it can be deduced from Table 4 that all three themes (e.g., attitudes towards indicators, focus areas, and indicators, attitudes towards career stage, attitudes towards assessment tools and technique) are between agree and strongly agree.

This finding is consistent with the aspirations of MoE (2020) that BPST will measure the competencies and practices of teachers to improve the quality of education in Bhutan. The positive attitudes of Bhutanese teachers towards BPST further validate the report by Drukpa (2021) that the implementation of BPST is to enhance the quality of teachers in Bhutan thereby improving the quality of education. In addition, the finding also corroborates a previous study by Adoniou and Gallagher (2016) that many teachers consider that professional standards can determine individual teacher competency as well as the quality of learning and teaching in school settings. Hence, Bhutanese teachers hold dispositions that BPST can scaffold capacity building in enhancing professional competency, thus improving the quality of education in Bhutan.

It was interesting to note that the majority of the participants in open-ended response questions have indicated positive attitudes showing congruency in findings with survey questions. For instance, 45% of the participants on the question “How do you feel about the teacher evaluation using BPST? Share your

view” have shown positive attitudes (refer to Table 5). Teacher T62 has mentioned that BPST is a timely and important policy change in the education ecosystem when the education system is undergoing a major transformation. The teacher further states “BPST provides support to enhance the teacher’s capability through professional development programs, training, and other enrichment programs for the underperforming teachers”. In addition, teacher 137 reported that BPST intends to recognize the performing teachers and motivate underperforming teachers through various enrichment programmes. These findings are parallel to several other studies and claim that implementation of professional standards for teachers not only helpful for individual professional accountability, it also improves educational performances by improving the practice of teachers in classrooms (Drukpa, 2021; Koster & Dengerink, 2008; Mayer, et al., 2005).

Similarly, 44% of the participants on the question “Do you think the BPST can improve the teacher’s competency and thus the quality of education? Please explain why or why not” indicated positive attitudes (refer to Table 6). Teacher T76 has reported the BPST can improve the teachers’ competency as its emphasis on teacher quality by showing the way forward in being professionals. The teacher further posits that BPST provides clear guidelines for adapting to the rapid evolution of the education system. Similarly, another teacher T83 have reported that BPST seeks to improve the competencies of teachers in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, classroom management strategies, relevant teaching and learning materials, and integration of ICT in teaching and assessment methods. The findings are concurrent to Zionts et.al., (2006) who have shown that many teachers expressed that professional standards are very important in professional and personal development as teachers. Likewise, the findings are also parallel to Gepila Jr. (2019) in the Philippines in which the teachers have indicated positive attitudes toward PPST.

Although the study revealed no negative attitudes towards BPST by teachers in survey questionnaire responses, there was a trend of least positive attitudes from the analysis of open-ended response questions. For example, the study has shown 44% of the participants on the question “How do you feel about the teacher evaluation using BPST? Share your view” negative attitudes. Similarly, 40% of the participants on the question “Do you think the BPST can improve the teacher’s competency and thus the quality of education? Please explain why or why not” have indicated negative attitudes.

The first plausible reason for revealing negative attitudes in open-ended response questions could be associated with the level of confidence that teachers place in assessors in schools. This is because many of the participants have shared their concerns about how competent are the assessors to assess the teachers’ lessons. For instance, teacher T2 has shared that the overarching goals and intentions of BPST are very profound, yet the integrity and professionalism of the assessors are questionable. Similarly, teacher T67 wrote, “The aim and objectives of BPST are noble but the method of assessment and competency of assessors need to be considered”. Likewise, teacher participants T15, T43, T58, and T66 mentioned that when the assessors are insiders, there is a conflict of interest in evaluating the teacher using BPST. These untoward situations in school settings have been seen as one of the impeding factors in the practical implementation of BPST. Therefore, some participants (e.g., T4, T130, T90 etc.) have suggested managing the assessors from different schools or Dzongkhag, or from MoE to minimize the existing biases and favoritism at the school level. This finding is inclined towards the claims by Leibur et al., (2021) which posits that teachers lack a clear understanding of professional standards and lack evidence-based performance while evaluating.

The second probable reason for revealing negative attitudes in open-ended response questions could be associated with the changing trend of teaching during the observation by assessors and observers. Many participants (e.g., T15, T35, T107, T125) have indicated that BPST promotes artificial teaching for teachers as they prepare and teach exceptionally well during the observation. Further, it was reported (e.g., T9, T120, T130) that teachers even re-teach the lesson fearing that the observation for evaluation might affect their career. Teacher T70 also reported, “The lessons that are prepared for

observation and those that happen daily are not always the same. One can perform better or worse in that particular observed lesson only". Additionally, the study revealed that BPST invites a fairly good amount of time in documenting the means of verifications (MOVs). Several participants (e.g., T151, T58, T51, T43, T31, T17) in this study have expressed that any teacher can maintain the documents in the way an individual aspire as required by BPST. Such practices are seen as unanticipated and unprofessional as it deviates from teaching to documentation with a heap of manipulated documents. It shows that BPST instils fears in teachers' minds as it attempts to quantify the teachers' quality. This finding is parallel to a previous study by Collins (2011) that quantifying teacher quality and classifying the teachers using professional standards are deemed naïve and contentious.

The third conceivable reason for negative attitudes could be associated with the workload of teachers. This is because many of the participants perceive that the implementation of BPST has further increased the workload as it demands documentation on an almost daily basis. For example, T63 has labelled BPST as "hectic" indicating that documenting the means of verifications is time-consuming. Similarly, T101 expressed that "I think it requires lots of time and we have to do a lot of parenting work other than teaching. We prepare lessons but lack time to assess the child and vice versa because we have to take lots of subjects". Further, T113 said, "lots of documents required, thus its time consuming". This finding validates Sachs's (2003) claim that teachers are already intensified with a host of administrative and other non-academic responsibilities in the school. Although Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024 has indicated the importance of reducing teacher workload to enable sufficient time for academic rigours (Ministry of Education, 2014), teachers in the field are reportedly engaged in managerial tasks delegated by school administration as in charge, coordinators, and committee members and non-academic activities such as literary, games, sports, social work, cultural, scouts, etc. which are not included in instructional timing (Kaka, 2017). Kaka has further shown that on average, HSS teachers spent 41% of their total time in school-level meetings, while MSS and PS teachers spent 31% and 28% respectively. This results in teachers expressing the inadequacy of time in school. Thus, the implementation of BPST in addition to teachers' already heavy workload makes the task of teaching even more demanding.

CONCLUSIONS

The focus of the current study was to explore the attitudes of Bhutanese teachers towards the implementation of BPST relative to seven standards, career stages, and assessment tools and techniques. The study further aimed to establish baseline empirical shreds of evidence on teachers' attitudes to the implementation of BPST when it is devised as part of teacher evaluation processes. The study confirmed that Bhutanese teachers have positive attitudes towards BPST. This was evident from the computation of survey questionnaires responses which showed a mean score of 3.38 with an SD of 0.67 for all the three themes such as 'Attitudes towards Standards, Focus areas and Indicators', 'Attitudes towards Career Stages', and 'Attitudes towards Assessment Tools and Technique'. In addition, these findings were further validated by the response to two open-ended questions. 45% of the participants have indicated positive attitudes to BPST on the question "How do you feel about the teacher evaluation using BPST? Share your" and 44% of the participants indicated similar views on the question "Do you think the BPST can improve the teacher's competency and thus the quality of S? Please explain why or why not". Therefore, it is deduced that BPST is a powerful tool in determining teacher quality thereby enhancing the quality of education in Bhutan.

This study also has several implications for the future practical execution of BPST. Although the survey confirmed that Bhutanese teachers take BPST positively, there are a few considerations that require an immediate policy response. The study confirmed that there is competing interest among the assessors at the school level which has led the teachers to question the competency of the assessor. In addition, the study also shows that BPST promotes artificial teaching due to the fear of assessment and passing judgment on teachers by assessors. This has been seen as an unprofessional practice that deviates from

delivering the intent of the curriculum within the instructional time frame. Further, the study confirmed that BPST has increased the workload of teachers as it demands heavy documentation consuming time thereby making the task of teaching even more demanding. This implies that there is a need to create enabling conditions for the effective practice of BPST in schools to fully uncover the profound intent of implementing BPST in schools of Bhutan.

In summary, from this study, the argument is that the Bhutanese teachers have positive attitudes towards BPST, and it could be nourished by creating enabling conditions in terms of the integrity of the assessors and teachers' workload. This is because BPST itself is not a silver bullet as it is challenging to solve the current problems such as the workload of teachers and lack of social support systems for teachers from the head of the schools, teacher colleagues, and children.

While this study has established the baseline data on professional standards for teachers relative to Bhutan, further systematic and empirical research is required to understand the impeccable impact of BPST in improving teacher competencies and the quality of education in Bhutan. Therefore, future study is recommended with a more comprehensive approach using multiple research methodologies and instruments.

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