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Pedagogical Leadership in Bhutanese Schools

Tandin Wangdi

Vice Principal, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Chapcha Middle Secondary School

Abstract

This study investigates the decentralization of pedagogical leadership and its enactment as praxis within Bhutanese schools, with a specific focus on Chapcha Middle Secondary School in Chhukha Dzongkhag. Grounded in contemporary theories of distributed leadership and pedagogical praxis, the research addresses the gap between policy intentions and school-level leadership practices. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating quantitative data from survey questionnaires administered to 26 school principals with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews with 8 teachers and focus group discussions involving 16 students.

The findings reveal that pedagogical leadership practices are implemented at a very high level, with strong emphasis on instructional improvement, professional development, and collaborative engagement. Decentralization of leadership was also rated highly, indicating that teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes and instructional leadership roles. Furthermore, the study highlights that pedagogical praxis characterized by reflective practice, collaboration, and innovation is well embedded in the school culture, although inconsistencies in structured reflection remain.

Importantly, the results demonstrate a significant positive relationship between decentralized leadership practices and improvements in teaching quality and student learning outcomes. Students reported increased engagement through learner-centered strategies, while teachers emphasized the role of leadership in fostering professional growth and instructional innovation. The study contributes to the limited empirical literature on educational leadership in Bhutan and provides evidence based insights for strengthening pedagogical leadership through collaborative and reflective practices.

Keywords: pedagogical leadership, distributed leadership, praxis, Bhutan, instructional leadership, teacher collaboration.

1. Introduction

Educational leadership has undergone a significant transformation globally, shifting from hierarchical and bureaucratic models toward collaborative, learning centered approaches that prioritize teaching quality and student outcomes. Pedagogical leadership as a critical driver of school effectiveness, where leadership is directly connected to classroom practices and student learning (Hallinger, 2020; Robinson et al., 2008). Similarly, the concept of distributed leadership has gained prominence, advocating that leadership responsibilities be shared among school leaders, teachers, and stakeholders rather than concentrated in formal positions (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2020). Further, it demonstrates that such collaborative leadership models enhance teacher agency, professional learning, and instructional innovation (Lin, 2022).

Bhutanese education system, reforms guided by the philosophy of Gross National Happiness emphasize holistic development, learner centered pedagogy, and reflective practice. The Ministry of Education and Skills Development has introduced initiatives such as professional learning communities, competency based curriculum reforms, and teacher development programs aimed at strengthening teaching and learning processes. However, emerging evidence from leadership studies and policy reviews suggests that school leadership practices in Bhutan remain predominantly administrative and compliance driven, with limited emphasis on instructional leadership and teacher empowerment. Studies indicated that excessive administrative workload constrains school leaders' engagement with pedagogical processes (Leithwood et al., 2020; Harris, 2020).

Furthermore, while distributed leadership is widely discussed, research on its implementation in Bhutanese schools remains limited, particularly in relation to how leadership practices influence classroom teaching and student learning experiences. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of praxis the integration of reflection and action (Freire, 1970; Kemmis, 2012) offers a powerful framework for rethinking pedagogical leadership. When leadership is enacted as praxis, it becomes a collaborative, reflective, and transformative process involving teachers, students, and school leaders.

Problem Statement

Despite ongoing educational reforms in Bhutan that emphasize learner centered pedagogy and professional collaboration, pedagogical leadership in schools remains largely centralized and administratively oriented. Educational leadership suggest that centralized leadership structures restrict teacher participation in decision making and reduce opportunities for collaborative professional learning, ultimately affecting teaching quality and student outcomes (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). Therefore, school leaders often prioritize managerial responsibilities such as reporting, compliance, and institutional management, which limits their engagement with instructional improvement processes.

Preliminary observations indicated that teachers have limited roles in instructional leadership and curriculum decision making, opportunities for reflective dialogue and collaborative pedagogical practice are constrained, and leadership practices are insufficiently aligned with pedagogical improvement goals. Furthermore, research strongly supports the effectiveness of distributed leadership in improving teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2020; Lin, 2022), there is a lack of empirical evidence examining how such practices are enacted in Chapcha.The critical gap between policy intentions and school level practices, necessitating systematic investigation. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how pedagogical leadership can be decentralized and enacted as praxis in the Chapcha MSS, with particular emphasis on enhancing teacher participation, reflective practice, and instructional improvement.

Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to examine how pedagogical leadership can be decentralized and enacted as praxis in Chapcha MSS.The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the current practices of pedagogical leadership in Chapcha MSS.
2. To explore how pedagogical leadership can be decentralized among school leaders and teachers.
3. To analyze the role of pedagogical praxis in shaping educational leadership practices.
4. To investigate the relationship between decentralized leadership practices and improved teaching and learning processes.

Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the current practices of pedagogical leadership in Chapcha MSS?
2. How can pedagogical leadership be decentralized among school leaders and teachers in Bhutanese schools?
3. What role does pedagogical praxis play in shaping educational leadership practices in Bhutanese schools?
4. What is the relationship between decentralized leadership practices and improvements in teaching and learning processes in Bhutanese schools?

Scope of the Study

This study is confined to selected Chapcha Middle Secondary schools under Chukha Dzongkhag, Bhutan. It focuses specifically on pedagogical leadership practices, decentralization of leadership roles, and their impact on teaching and learning processes. The findings are context specific and are not intended for broad generalization.

Significance of the study

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge in Educational Leadership by expanding the understanding of pedagogical leadership through the lens of praxis and decentralization. It integrates concepts from distributed leadership, reflective practice, and pedagogical praxis to develop a conceptual understanding of leadership practices within school contexts. Similarly, the study enriches existing literature by providing empirical insights from the Bhutanese educational system, which remains underrepresented in global educational leadership research.

Additionally, the findings of this research can inform school leaders, teachers, and policymakers about effective approaches to decentralizing pedagogical leadership within schools. The study may support the MoESD in designing leadership development programs that promote collaborative instructional leadership. Furthermore, it may help schools establish professional learning cultures where teachers actively participate in decision making processes related to teaching and learning, ultimately improving classroom practices and student outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Current Practices of Pedagogical Leadership in Schools

In recent years, educational leadership research has increasingly emphasized the role of pedagogical leadership in improving teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Harris, 2020; Hallinger, 2020). Pedagogical leadership focuses on guiding instructional practices, supporting teacher professional development, and fostering learning-centered school cultures. Contemporary studies suggest that effective school leadership goes beyond administrative functions and actively engages with the pedagogical processes that shape classroom learning (Hallinger, 2020; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Recent empirical research indicates that pedagogical leadership is often intertwined with broader leadership frameworks such as distributed leadership, which emphasizes shared responsibility among teachers and school leaders (Spillane, 2006; Harris, 2020). According to Lin (2022), distributed leadership practices significantly influence teacher innovativeness by enhancing teacher autonomy and professional

collaboration within schools. This indicates that when leadership responsibilities are shared, teachers are more likely to engage actively in instructional decision-making and professional learning communities (Lin, 2022).

Similarly, research on school leadership practices in different educational contexts demonstrates that distributed leadership promotes collaborative cultures and strengthens professional relationships among teachers (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). Leadership is therefore conceptualized as a network of interactions rather than a role confined to the school principal. Such collaborative leadership structures encourage teachers to contribute to school improvement initiatives and curriculum development (Harris & Jones, 2020). Furthermore, contemporary studies highlight that school leaders who emphasize instructional guidance, classroom observation, and professional mentoring contribute significantly to improving teaching practices. These leadership practices strengthen teachers' pedagogical capacity and help align classroom instruction with broader educational goals (Hallinger, 2020; Robinson et al., 2008).

Decentralization of Pedagogical Leadership among Teachers and School Leaders

The decentralization of pedagogical leadership has become a key focus in modern educational leadership research (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). Traditional leadership models often positioned school principals as the primary decision makers, whereas contemporary frameworks emphasize collaborative leadership and teacher empowerment (Harris, 2020; Gronn, 2002). Research suggests that distributed pedagogical leadership allows teachers to take on leadership roles in curriculum design, instructional improvement, and professional learning communities (Spillane, 2006; Harris & Jones, 2020). Studies conducted in teacher education contexts demonstrate that distributing leadership responsibilities among principals, teacher leaders, and educators enhances both teaching practices and leadership capacities within schools (Harris, 2020; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Moreover, distributed leadership has been found to foster teacher innovation and collective responsibility for school improvement (Harris & Jones, 2020; Spillane, 2006). When teachers are empowered to participate in decision-making processes, Scholars also argue that decentralizing leadership supports a culture of trust, mutual respect, and shared accountability within schools. By distributing leadership roles across multiple actors, schools can mobilize collective expertise and create more adaptive learning organizations capable of responding to complex educational challenges (Gronn, 2002; Harris & Jones, 2020).

Pedagogy as Praxis in Educational Leadership

The concept of praxis provides an important theoretical lens for understanding pedagogical leadership in contemporary education systems (Freire, 1970; Kemmis, 2012). Pedagogy as praxis refers to the dynamic integration of reflection and action in educational practice, enabling educators to critically examine and transform teaching and learning processes (Freire, 1970; Kemmis & Smith, 2008). In leadership contexts, pedagogy as praxis emphasizes reflective collaboration among educators, where teachers and leaders engage in continuous dialogue about instructional practices and student learning (Kemmis, Wilkinson, Edwards-Groves, Hardy, Grootenboer, & Bristol, 2014). Through reflective practice, educators can identify challenges in teaching, experiment with innovative approaches, and refine pedagogical strategies to improve learning outcomes (Schon, 1983; Kemmis et al., 2014).

Research on distributed pedagogical leadership suggests that when leadership practices encourage reflective dialogue and collaborative inquiry, teachers become active contributors to knowledge

production within their professional communities (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). Such environments promote critical reflection on teaching practices and foster transformative learning experiences for both educators and students (Kemmis et al., 2014). Furthermore, pedagogical praxis encourages teachers to move beyond routine instructional practices and engage in critical thinking about curriculum, assessment, and student engagement. By integrating reflective practice with collaborative leadership, schools can develop more responsive and innovative teaching practices that align with contemporary educational goals (Freire, 1970; Kemmis & Smith, 2008).

Relationship between Decentralized Leadership and Teaching Learning Improvement

A growing body of research indicates that decentralized leadership practices positively influence teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes (Harris, 2020; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2020). Distributed leadership creates opportunities for collaborative professional learning, which strengthens teachers' instructional competencies and enhances classroom practices (Spillane, 2006; Harris & Jones, 2020).Studies using large-scale international datasets show that distributed leadership significantly influences teacher innovation, professional collaboration, and instructional improvement. These factors collectively contribute to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes (Lin, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2020).

Additionally, systematic reviews of distributed leadership research highlight its role in fostering innovative teaching practices and improving school performance. When leadership is shared among multiple actors, schools develop stronger professional communities that support continuous improvement in teaching and learning (Harris, 2020; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). Furthermore, collaborative leadership practices promote greater stakeholder engagement in school decision-making processes, leading to enhanced curriculum management and stronger institutional development. Such participatory leadership structures create an environment where teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders work collectively toward achieving educational goals (Leithwood et al., 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020).

Taken together, these studies suggest that decentralized leadership practices play a critical role in strengthening pedagogical innovation, teacher professional agency, and student learning outcomes (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). However, despite the growing recognition of distributed pedagogical leadership globally, empirical research examining its implementation within the Bhutanese educational context remains limited. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how pedagogical leadership can be decentralized and enacted as praxis in Bhutanese schools.

3. Methodology

Research Approach and Design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), mixed methods research allows researchers to combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Therefore, this study employed a mixed-methods research design (see Figure 3.1), integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate pedagogical leadership practices in the schools.

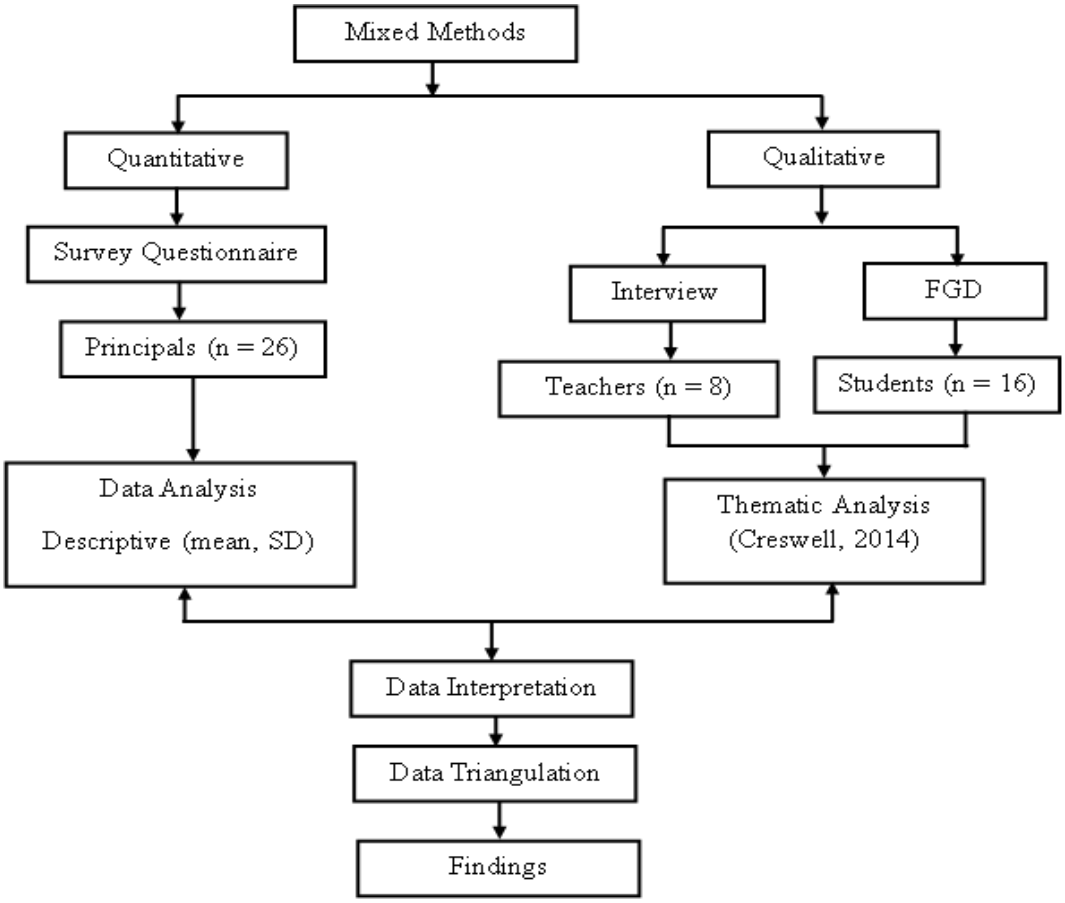
The quantitative component of this study involved a survey questionnaire administered to school principals of chhukha Dzongkhag to assess the current practices of pedagogical leadership and the extent to which leadership responsibilities are distributed within schools. The qualitative component included semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with students of chapcha

MSS to explore how leadership practices influence classroom teaching and learning experiences. The use of multiple data sources enhances data triangulation, which improves the credibility and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Research Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study comprise three key stakeholder groups within the school community: school principals, teachers, and students. These participants were selected since they play significant roles in the implementation and experience of pedagogical leadership practices within schools. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to identify information rich participants who can provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al., 2015). Therefore, the study employed a purposive sampling technique, which allows the researcher to intentionally select participants who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to pedagogical leadership and teaching learning processes.

Figure 3.1: Sampling Plan



The sample included 26 school principals under Chhukha Dzongkhag, who participated in a survey questionnaire designed to examine current leadership practices and the distribution of pedagogical leadership within schools. In addition, 8 teachers were selected for semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences and perspectives regarding decentralized pedagogical leadership and pedagogical praxis in classroom practice. Furthermore, students were participate in 4 focus group discussions, with each group consisting of 4 students (see Figure 3.1), to gain insights into their learning experiences and

perceptions of teaching practices influenced by leadership approaches. Participants were drawn from multiple sections in order to capture diverse perspectives and enhance the credibility and representatives of the research findings.

Data Collection Tools

According to Simplilearn (2022), data collection is the process of gathering, measuring, and analyzing accurate data from a variety of relevant sources to find answers to research problems, answer questions, evaluate outcomes, and forecast trends and probabilities. In this study, the researcher deployed Five Likert-scale survey questionnaires associated with principals' practices of pedagogical leadership tools for collecting quantitative data. Additionally, the researcher also used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) for the collection of qualitative data.

Survey Questionnaire

A survey questionnaire is a type of research tool used to gather data from participants and consists of several questions and other prompts. It can assess educational initiatives and supply information to curriculum designers and other influential decision makers (Creswell, 2014). Thus, quantitative information were gathered from principals via a survey questionnaire to gain a comprehensive understanding of pedagogical leadership towards teaching and learning. The survey form were created and distributed to the principals in the telegram group.

Each item in the questionnaire were rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." The items were coded from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The Likert scale is an evaluation scale used to assess perceptions, attitudes, or actions that allow one to quickly operationalize character qualities or perceptions (Bhandari, 2020). The participants' ratings on the agreement and frequency were grouped into distinct levels employing Pimentel's criteria for survey data. Pimentel (2019) suggested that each grouping needs to maintain an interval width of 0.79. For clarity, the mean scores of the agreement were interpreted in terms of the ranking (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Criteria for Interpreting the Means of the Perception Level

Likert-Scale	Likert Scale interval	Level of Interpretation	Level of Agreement
1	1.00 – 1.79	Very low	Strongly Disagree
2	1.80 – 2.59	Low	Disagree
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	Neutral
4	3.40 – 4.19	High	Agree
5	4.20- 5.00	Very High	Strongly Agree

Note. Adapted from Pimentel (2019, p.188).

Interview

The interview provides information that may not be necessarily obtained through a survey questionnaire. However, interviews provide a useful way for the researcher to learn about the world of others (Qu & Dumay, 2011). In this study, two sets of semi-structured audio recording interviews were conducted for the selected students and teachers to collect data and were used in addressing the research objectives. The semi-structured interview is more of the flexible version of the structured interview, where

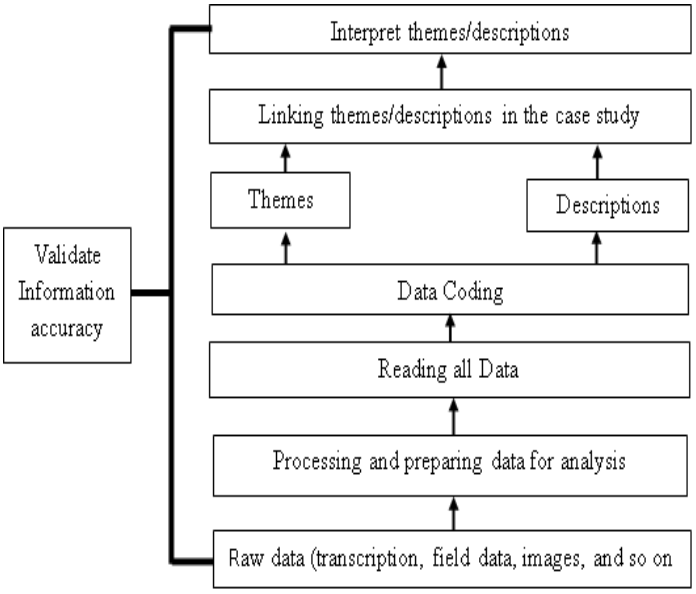
the researcher prepares a limited number of questions in advance and plans to follow up questions during the interview which is more convenient with sample selection (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Similarly, Dawson et al. (2012) claims that the interview needs to be flexible where other important information can still arise. The interview questions will contain both open ended and closed ended questions as it helps to get a deeper understanding of the study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data gathered through survey questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics using features of Jamovi such as mean, standard deviation, and graphical representation. To analyze the data, the scale for the score range were adapted from Pimentel (2019), to find the level of perceptions on the educational leadership. In this, the score range was divided into 5 categories: Very Low (1-1.50), Low (1.51 - 2.50), Moderate (2.51 -3.50), High (3.51 4.50), and Very High (4.51 -5.00). The lowest possible mean score will be 1 and the highest score will be 5.

For qualitative data analysis, the participants' responses to semi-structured interview and focus group discussion were obtained using audio recording. By listening to the audio based data repeatedly, the data were transcribed for analysis. Further, the transcription were read line by line and coded the relative words for categorization as the main aim of the interview question is to obtain in-depth information. The categorization of qualitative data were analyzed thematically following the sequential steps suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2014) (see figure 3.2)

Figure 3.2: Thematic analysis steps



Note. Adopted from the book by Creswell (2014, p. 247)

Reliability and Validity of Data Collection Tools

Reliability and validity are the two utmost significant and ultimate features in the evaluation of any measurement instrument or tool for worthy research (Mohajan, 2017). To establish the validity and reliability of the research instrument of the survey questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot test for Principals at Trongsa Dzongkhag. Before the distribution of the survey questionnaire, a short orientation were given to participants regarding the process to complete the questionnaire. The reliability test was

conducted using Jamovi upon survey questionnaire resulting in Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient value of 0.91 (see Table 3.3).

Table 3. 3: Reliability Statistics of the Survey Questionnaire

Sl.No	Theme	Numbers of items	Cronbach's alpha
1	Overall items	20	0.91

Similarly, for language appropriateness, clarity, content coverage, and content relevancy of the questionnaire and interview questions tools were checked by at least two experts. Member checking were done after the transcription of data collected through the interview. Moreover, the researcher ensured that the elements in the questionnaire and interview questions have all components that enable answering all the research questions.

Ethical consideration

The researcher is committed to upholding the code of conduct and ethics of research throughout the study. This research were conducted with integrity and without violating any ethical standards. Prior to commencing the study, the proposal were submitted to the Dzongkhag HR for the approval. The entire research process were presented clearly and transparently to the HR.

Ethical considerations, especially during data collection, were given utmost importance. Participants were treated with respect and dignity, and informed consent were obtained before any data is collected. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, their role, and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences. Permission were sought from relevant authorities and individuals to ensure voluntary participation.

To protect participant privacy, confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. No identifiable information were shared in any form of reporting or publication. Codes were used where necessary to protect identities. All ethical protocols and consent procedures were adopted from A Guide to Action Research: Enhancing Professional Practice of Teachers in Bhutan (2023), published by the Teacher Development Division, Ministry of Education and Skills Development, ensuring alignment with national standards and best practices.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 4.1: Current Practices of Pedagogical Leadership

Statement	N	M	SD	Interpretation
I regularly monitor classroom teaching to support instructional improvement	26	4.19	.749	High
I provide feedback to teachers regarding their teaching practices	26	4.46	.706	Very High
Professional development programs related to teaching are organized in the school	26	4.42	.578	Very High
Staff meetings include discussions on teaching and learning strategies	26	4.31	.471	Very High
Improving classroom instruction is a priority in school leadership decisions	26	4.54	.582	Very High
Overall	**26**	**4.38**	**.617**	**Very High**

The current practices of pedagogical leadership (see Table 4.1) are implemented at a very high level, represent the average mean (*M=4.38, SD=.617*), indicating a strong and consistent emphasis on instructional leadership within the school context. The highest rated indicator, *"Improving classroom instruction is a priority in school leadership decisions" (M=4.54, SD=.582)*, underscores the centrality of teaching and learning in leadership processes. Other indicators, including feedback provision (*M=4.46*), professional development (*M=4.42*), and instructional discussions in staff meetings (*M=4.31*), were also rated at a very high level, demonstrating strong leadership support for teacher development and collaborative engagement. Although classroom monitoring (*M=4.19, SD=.749*) was comparatively lower, it remained within the high category, suggesting consistent but slightly less emphasized practice. The low standard deviations across items reflect strong agreement among respondents, reinforcing the presence of well established and institutionalized pedagogical leadership practices.

Initially, interviews reported that some teachers were uncomfortable with the pedagogical leadership enacted in practice. However, over time all teachers expressed proactive and supportive of this approach. For instance, T_1 stated, "*My leader support me through mentorship, providing constructive feedback, and provision of adequate teaching and learning materials*." which echoes evidence of Hattie (2009), who identified feedback as one of the most powerful influences on teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Similarly, this approach allows teachers to explore reflective teaching practices, and a strong commitment to professional growth and instructional improvement. For example, T_2, T_3, and T_4 stated, "*I got opportunities to attain the PDs including instructional strategies, digital tools, and action research to make teaching and learning more effective.*" These findings align with studies indicating that effective school leaders place teaching and learning at the center of their leadership practices (Hallinger, 2011).

Additionally, focus group discussion also reported that teachers employ a range of learner-centered strategies to enhance understanding and engagement in the classroom. FGD_1, FGD_2, and FGD_3 shared that "*Teachers use group work, multimedia, discussions, and practical activities help us understand better and engage in the classroom*." The results were consistent with Robinson et al. (2008), who found out that leadership practices are effectively translated into classroom practices that promote active learning. However, it was noted that systematic instructional monitoring and collaborative reflection is required.

For instance, FGD_4 stated, "*active and participatory learning approaches should be continue to have both robust and impactful.*" These findings support the work of DuFour and Fullan (2014), who argue that sustained school improvement is driven by varied instructional methods characterized by a strong focus on instructional improvement, and enhanced student learning outcomes.

Table 4.2: Decentralization of Pedagogical Leadership

Statement	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Teachers are encouraged to take leadership roles in instructional activities	26	4.42	.643	Very High
Decision-making related to teaching and learning is shared among staff members	26	4.77	.430	Very High
Teachers participate in curriculum planning and instructional improvement initiatives	26	4.23	.908	Very High
Collaborative teaching practices are promoted within the school	26	4.12	1.071	High
Leadership responsibilities related to pedagogy are distributed among teachers	26	4.50	.583	Very High
Overall	**26**	**4.40**	**.727**	**Very High**

The decentralization of pedagogical leadership (see Table 4.2) is implemented at a very high level, represent the average mean (*M=4.40, SD=.727*), suggesting that leadership responsibilities related to teaching and learning are widely shared within the school. The highest rated indicator, *"Decision making related to teaching and learning is shared among staff members"* (*M=4.77, SD=.430*), highlights a strong culture of collective decision making. This is followed by *"Leadership responsibilities related to pedagogy are distributed among teachers"* (*M=4.50, SD=.583*) and *"Teachers are encouraged to take leadership roles in instructional activities"* (*M=4.42, SD=.643*), indicating that teachers are actively empowered to assume leadership roles. Additionally, *"T*eachers participate in curriculum planning and instructional improvement initiatives*"* (*M=4.23, SD=.908*) was rated very high, reflecting meaningful teacher involvement in instructional processes. However, *"Collaborative teaching practices are promoted within the school"* (*M=4.12, SD=1.071*) was comparatively lower, though still high, with greater variability suggesting inconsistencies in collaborative practices across the school.

Interviews reported that, decentralization of pedagogical leadership is actively practiced through shared roles, collaborative initiatives, and participatory engagement.

For instance, T_5 stated, "*We used to take up many leadership responsibilities to exercise ownership, contribute to decision making, and voice our perspectives on school matters*." A similar result was also identified by Spillane, (2006); Harris, (2008), a shift from traditional hierarchical leadership models to more inclusive and participatory approaches, recognized as effective in enhancing school performance and student learning outcomes.

Similarly, focus group discussion also reported that collaborative and interactive classroom practices enhanced instructional practices and student engagement. For instance, FGD_2 stated, "*Group activities or projects help us to learn, sharing ideas, build teamwork, and increase confidence.*" These findings align with the principles of distributed leadership, which emphasize shared responsibility and collective capacity building (Fullan, 2014). Therefore, decentralized pedagogical leadership foster a

collaborative culture that supports instructional improvement and contributes positively to student learning outcomes.

Table 4.3: Pedagogical Praxis

Statement	N	M	SD	Interpretation
Teachers engage in reflective discussions about their teaching practices	26	4.08	.560	High
Teachers are encouraged to experiment with innovative teaching strategies	26	4.23	.652	Very High
Reflective teaching practices are supported by school leadership	26	4.50	.510	Very High
Teachers collaborate to solve instructional challenges	26	4.38	.637	Very High
Professional learning communities are encouraged in the school	26	4.50	.510	Very High
Overall	**26**	**4.34**	**.573**	**Very High**

The pedagogical praxis is implemented at a very high level (see Table 4.3), represent the average mean (*M=4.34, SD=.573*), suggesting that reflective, collaborative, and innovative teaching practices are strongly embedded within the school . The highest rated indicators, "*Reflective teaching practices are supported by school leadership*" and "*Professional learning communities are encouraged in the school*" (*M=4.50, SD=.510*), highlight the active role of leadership in fostering a culture of reflection and collaborative professional learning. Other indicators, including "*Teachers collaborate to solve instructional challenges*" (*M=4.38, SD=.637*) and "*Teachers are encouraged to experiment with innovative teaching strategies*" (*M=4.23, SD=.652*), were also rated at a very high level, reflecting strong emphasis on collegial problem solving and instructional innovation. Although comparatively lower, "*Teachers engage in reflective discussions about their teaching practices*" (*M=4.08, SD=.560*) remains within the high category, suggesting that reflective dialogue is present but may be less consistently practiced. The relatively low standard deviations indicate a high level of agreement among respondents.

The interview results revealed opportunities for structured collaboration and reflective dialogue are not uniformly experienced. However, majority of teachers understand the pedagogical praxis enacted in classroom and professional contexts. For instance, T_1, T_7, T_5, and T_8 stated, "*Teachers were engaging in reflective practices, lesson observations, post-conference, and analysis of student performance, departmental meetings and professional learning communities*." This is in accordance with theoretical perspectives of Schon (1983), who conceptualizes reflective practice as a critical component of professional growth, enabling practitioners to learn from experience and continuously refine their practice.

Similarly, focus group discussion showed that use of interactive and learner-centered teaching strategies such as group work, projects, discussions, and multimedia tools demonstrates that reflective and innovative practices are effectively translated into classroom instruction, enhancing engagement and understanding. These findings align with the work of DuFour and Fullan (2014), who argue that collaborative learning structures are essential for sustained school.

Table 4.4: Impact on Teaching and Learning

Statement	N	M	SD	Interpretation

Distributed leadership improves the quality of teaching practices	26	4.42	.578	Very High
Collaboration among teachers enhances classroom instruction	26	4.62	.496	Very High
Students are more engaged when teachers use innovative teaching strategies	26	4.81	.402	Very High
Leadership practices in the school contribute to improved learning outcomes	26	4.73	.452	Very High
Leadership practices in the school contribute to improved learning outcomes	26	4.69	.471	Very High
Overall	**26**	**4.65**	**.479**	**Very High**

The perceived impact of pedagogical leadership on teaching and learning is at a very high level (see table 4.4), represents average mean (*M=4.65, SD=.479*), suggesting that leadership practices significantly enhance instructional quality and student learning outcomes. Among the indicators, "*Students are more engaged when teachers use innovative teaching strategies*" recorded the highest mean (*M=4.81, SD=.402*), highlighting a strong consensus on the role of instructional innovation in promoting student engagement. This is followed by "*Leadership practices in the school contribute to improved learning outcomes*" (*M=4.73, SD= 452; M= .69, SD=.471*), both rated very high, indicating a robust perception of leadership influence on student achievement. Additionally, "*Collaboration among teachers enhances classroom instruction*" (*M=4.62, SD=.496*) and "*Distributed leadership improves the quality of teaching practices*" (*M=4.42, SD=.578*) were also rated at a very high level, with low standard deviations reflecting strong agreement among respondents.

The qualitative findings from teacher interviews demonstrated that pedagogical leadership influences teaching and learning. Teachers emphasized that effective leadership provides a clear vision, continuous professional development, constructive feedback, and a supportive environment, all of which enhance instructional practices, teacher motivation, and classroom management. Leadership was also perceived to foster collaboration, accountability, and teacher well being, thereby creating conditions conducive to improved student learning. This result corroborates with a prior finding by Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that leadership influences student learning indirectly by shaping the conditions under which teaching occurs, including teacher motivation, professional development, and school culture.

Students' perspectives further validate these findings, as they identified effective teaching as characterized by clear explanations, use of visual aids, responsiveness to learners' needs, and engaging instructional approaches such as group work, projects, and multimedia integration. These findings were congruent with previous study suggesting that collaborative professional cultures, particularly through professional learning communities, are essential for improving instructional practices and sustaining school improvement (DuFour &Fullan ,2014).

Conclusion

This study concludes that pedagogical leadership in the Bhutanese context, particularly in Chapcha Middle Secondary School, is transitioning from traditional administrative models toward more collaborative, decentralized, and learning-centered approaches. The integration of distributed leadership and pedagogical praxis has contributed significantly to improving teaching practices, enhancing teacher agency, and

fostering student engagement. While leadership practices are largely effective, the study identifies the need for more consistent and structured opportunities for reflective dialogue and collaborative inquiry among teachers.

Recommendations

First, it strengthen professional learning communities for reflective dialogue, lesson study, and peer observation. Next, it reduces administrative burden to focus more on instructional leadership by minimizing excessive managerial tasks. Then, provide capacity building programs emphasizing pedagogical praxis, distributed leadership, and instructional coaching. After that, It enhance collaborative practices across departments to ensure uniform implementation. Finally, policy alignment to integrate decentralized pedagogical leadership frameworks into national leadership development programs.

Limitations

The study is limited to selected schools in Chhukha Dzongkhag, which restricts generalizability. Similarly, the relatively small number of teachers and students may not fully represent broader perspectives. Moreover, survey and interview responses may be influenced by participant bias or social desirability. Additionally, the study captures leadership practices at a specific point in time without examining long-term impacts.

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