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## Teachers' Perspectives on the Conduct of Post-Pandemic Professional Development Program in Pema Gatshel District

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### Abstract

*This study explored the current practices, impacts, needs, and preferences of professional development (PD) programs of Bhutanese teachers in Pema Gatshel District. A mixed-method convergent parallel research design was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. For qualitative data, open-ended questions and comment sections for collecting additional insights were included in the questionnaire. Using a simple random sampling technique, ninety-one teachers from four different schools were chosen for the survey. The study focused on four themes: instructional development, scientific field development, personal development, and organizational development. The data were analyzed descriptively using R Statistical Computing Software. The findings indicate that an increased number of hours spent on PDs had positive impacts during the post-pandemic period. The majority of participants expressed a need for PDs in instructional technologies, research development and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. Future PD providers should tailor PD programs to cater for the specific needs of teachers with practical sessions and follow-up activities for effectiveness.*

**Keywords:** professional development, professional development needs, PD preferences, Bhutan

## Introduction

The significance of enhancing education in Bhutan has been emphasized as a matter of utmost national importance. This critical stance was clearly articulated in the Kasha (Royal decree) delivered by His Majesty the King during the auspicious celebration of the 113th National Day at Punakha Dzong on December 17th, 2020. His Majesty stated “To ensure that teachers are not disconnected from their students, the professional development of teachers should integrate technology, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and automation.” (The Druk Gyalpo, 2021, Royal Kasha on Education Reform, para. 7)

This statement conspicuously expresses visionary King’s deepest conviction about the irreplaceable role of education and in particular teachers in the process of nation building. Drawing from the author’s own experiences as teachers and school leaders, it is clear that Bhutan’s education system has undergone significant enrichment. Over the past two decades, as both teachers and school leaders, we have personally witnessed numerous changes in the education system, including continuous advancements in curriculum and instructional strategies. Now, we have updated textbooks that infuse the elements of Educating for Gross National Happiness launched in 2009 into the fabric of these educational resources (Drukpa, 2016; MOE, 2020). Recognizing the important role of teachers and school leaders in shaping the educational reforms and journey of students, the Ministry has taken proactive measures to boost their professionalism by institutionalizing continuous professional development (PD) programs.

For example, the Bhutan Education Blueprint (BEB) 2014-24 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2020) has set forth a mandate requiring every teacher to participate in at least 80 hours of in-service PD programs each year. PD programs here in this study refer “to *activities or opportunities* for teachers’ professional learning, growth or development” (McChesney & Aldridge, 2019, p. 1). The BEB 2014-2024 oblige schools, school districts, and the Ministry of Education to jointly provide 20, 20, and 40 hours of PD programs to fulfill this requirement. Additionally, to achieve this, Ministry introduced Master Lead Teachers (MLTs), Cluster Lead Teachers (CLTs), and School Lead Teachers (SLTs). These teachers were appointed as focal

persons in their respective regions, clusters, or individual schools to facilitate and enhance teacher development, thereby supporting and strengthening the overall professionalism of educators (MOE, 2020).

Disconcertingly, research (e.g., Royal Education Council [REC], 2013) has revealed that the current PD initiatives in Bhutan have not exerted a substantial influence on teachers' professionalism or enhanced students' learning outcomes. One of the key issues identified was the predominantly top-down approach followed in the design and implementation of these initiatives. This study emphasized that the existing PD programs in Bhutan have primarily relied on one-size-fits-all PD models, overlooking the unique circumstances and challenges faced by teachers (REC, 2013). The findings of this study bring forth a critical question that warrants attention: What are the specific challenges and barriers faced by teachers in Bhutan when it comes to the current PD initiatives? Understanding these challenges is crucial to identify the gaps in the existing system and developing more effective and relevant strategies for enhancing teachers' professionalism and ultimately improving student learning outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2022).

As teachers are the change agents in educational reforms (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) gaining their perspectives can provide insights into their professional needs, interests, and preferences. By exploring their perspectives, educational policymakers and administrators can tailor PD programs to meet their unique requirements (Archibald et al., 2010). This customization enhances the relevance and applicability of PD (Analytics, 2023), leading to improved instructional practices (Zein, 2017) and student outcomes (Barlow et al., 2014).

Many studies (e.g., Analytics, 2023; Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995) also highlighted the significance of including stakeholders and fostering dialogue to enhance the success of reform initiatives in educational systems. These studies showed that the successful implementation of reforms in educational systems is significantly influenced by the degree to which all the stakeholders are included in the process and the level of dialogue among the parties involved. According to Analytics (2023), by leveraging perspectives from the grassroots, planners can develop more effective and sustainable strategies that address the genuine needs of the community, thereby leading to improved outcomes.

Worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the education sector, leading to the widespread adoption of new teaching methods and technologies (Abdulla & Ma, 2022; Clift & Assiouras, 2022; Hartshorne et al., 2020; Moser & Wei, 2023). Likewise, in Bhutan, the post-pandemic period ushered Bhutanese teachers with a melange of PD programs to keep them updated with the latest trends and best

practices (e.g., digital communication, integrating technology tools, and designing effective online instruction), aimed at facilitating a seamless transition into the traditional classroom setting and ensuring optimal learning experiences for students.

Against this backdrop, this study investigated the perspectives of Bhutanese teachers, particularly teachers from the Pema Gatshel District, regarding the conduct of post-pandemic PD workshops and training programs. This study's result will inform the design and implementation of effective PD initiatives that meet the evolving needs of educators in Bhutan. To achieve this objective, a mixed-method convergent parallel research design was employed in this study. This design allowed for the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the research questions at hand. For qualitative data, open-ended questions and comment sections for collecting additional insights were included in the questionnaire. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the professional needs of Pema Gatshel District teachers?
2. What are teachers' opinions towards teacher PD provided by the school, Dzongkhag, and the Ministry of Education in the post-pandemic era?
3. What challenges do teachers face during and after attaining PD?
4. How do teachers perceive PD programs in terms of the delivery mode, schedule to attend, and resource person(s)?

### **Significance of the Study**

Addressing the research questions posed in this study can provide valuable insights into the specific needs of Bhutanese teachers, particularly teachers from Pema Gatshel District, their satisfaction with existing PD initiatives, and the effectiveness of different modes of delivery, venues, time schedules, and resource persons. This information can aid stakeholders like the Teacher Professional Support Division (TPSD) or district education office in refining and enhancing PD strategies at the schools, school districts, and Ministry of Education levels, leading to more meaningful and engaging professional growth opportunities. Moreover, the findings of this study can inform policy decisions, educational programs, and resource allocation to enhance the professional growth and effectiveness of teachers, ultimately benefiting the quality of education in the region.

### **Need of PD for Teacher**

Generally, PD “refers to the development of a person in his or her professional role” (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 11). The PD of teachers refers to activities or opportunities that contribute to the growth and development of an individual as a teacher, fostering the enhancement of various essential aspects such as skills, knowledge, expertise, and other defining characteristics (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Mc Chesney & Aldridge, 2019; OECD, 2009). Diaz-Maggioli (2004) defined PD for teachers “as a career-long process in which educators fine-tune their teaching to meet student needs. As such, it directly tackles teachers’ teaching styles, the patterns of decisions teachers make when mediating their students’ learning” (p. 5).

Furthermore, there is a widespread consensus that PD has led to improvements in teachers’ knowledge, instructional practices, and students’ learning outcomes (Hills, 2009). Thus, it is vital to invest in PD workshops and training programs that can enhance teacher quality and effectiveness (Hills, 2009; Sydow, 2000). The PD programs provide opportunities for teachers to refine their instructional techniques, deepen their content knowledge, and adopt evidence-based teaching practices (Nguyen et al., 2022; Smith, 2014; Whitcomb et al., 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Teachers gain access to the latest research and best practices in education through such initiatives (National Education Association, 2017), allowing them to stay up-to-date with the advancements in their field (NEC, 2007; OECD, 2020).

### **COVID-19 Post-Pandemic PD Programs**

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about hitherto unheard-of challenges for educators worldwide (Almazova et al., 2020; Hartshorne et al., 2020), forcing them to adapt and deliver high-quality education to students through remote and hybrid teaching methods (Almazova et al., 2020; Mora et al., 2021). To effectively navigate the challenges of the new normal, teachers need relevant and high-quality professional support and training in various areas (Schildkamp et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020). These areas include incorporating technology in the classroom (using digital tools and platforms), implementing remote and hybrid teaching, and cultivating social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies to address the mental health and well-being of students (Almazova et al., 2020; Bergdahl, 2022; Daniel, 2020; Hartshorne et al., 2020; Jen et al., 2022; Moser & Wei, 2023; Schildkamp et al., 2020). By doing so, they will be able to adapt to the rapidly evolving educational landscape and ensure the success of their students in this new paradigm (Almazova et al., 2020).

### **Characteristics of High-quality PD for Teachers**

Literature suggests that high-quality PD for teachers relies on personalized and relevant content, active learning strategies, sustained support, interactive and engaging, collaboration and reflection, alignment with school goals and priorities, and outside facilitator or staff developer (Archibald et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone & Garet, 2015; Guskey, 2003; Hills, 2009; Matherson & Windle, 2017; Richardson, 2003). When these factors are integrated into PD programs, teachers are empowered to enhance their instructional practices, promote student learning, and contribute to continuous improvement in education (Archibald et al., 2010; Matherson & Windle, 2017; Richardson, 2003). Additionally, they provide a platform for teachers to collaborate and exchange ideas with their peers, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth (Archibald et al., 2010). By investing in high-quality PD for teachers, Ministry, school districts, and schools can create a culture of lifelong learning and foster excellence in teaching, ultimately benefiting both teachers and their students (Matherson & Windle, 2017). OECD (2009) provides a detailed account of what constitutes effective PD:

Effective PDs are ongoing, include training, practice and feedback, and provide adequate time and follow-up support. Successful programs involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students and encourage the development of teachers' learning communities. There is growing interest in developing schools as learning organizations, and in ways, for teachers to share their expertise and experience more systematically. (p. 49)

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) study emphasized that teachers can enhance their connection to their work through PDs, gaining a deeper understanding of their daily responsibilities. Working in an environment where there is no opportunity for daily learning is undesirable for everyone. According to Mizell (2010), teachers who engage in daily, weekly, and yearly PDs consistently bring innovation to their work. Personalized PDs are most effective for helping faculty and administrators grow in areas where they can have the greatest impact on student success. It is understood that effective PD for teachers should involve targeted focus, ongoing support, coaching, and practical application. An effective PD program should move away from the traditional "drive-by" workshops.

and "sit and get" experiences (NEC, 2017). Nguyen et al. (2022) suggested that "PD programs which are designed in response to teachers' actual needs and interest can help the participating teachers enhance their professional knowledge, their self-efficacy beliefs, and their willingness to develop their profession" (p. 2). Otherwise, it will perpetuate teachers' reluctance to participate in PD programs (Hill, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2022) adversely affecting their professional performance and potentially exacerbating the issue of teacher attrition (Daniel & Percy, 2014). As stated by Tshomo (2020), the Education Ministry has implemented intensive PD programs at national, district, and school level to enhance teachers' knowledge and competency. However, no empirical study has been done so far to elucidate teachers' perspective on these programs.

### **Research Design**

A mixed-method convergent parallel research design (Creswell, 2013) was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. For qualitative data, open-ended questions and comment sections for collecting additional insights were included in the questionnaire. This design enables the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, resulting in a robust and comprehensive understanding of the research problem and enhanced validity of findings (Creswell, 2013).

### **Sampling**

This study was conducted in Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag. The target population for this study was all K-12 grade teachers in four schools (described below) in Pema Gatshel. There was a total of 138 teachers in these schools. To calculate the representative sample, the freely available web calculator (<https://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>) was used. Using  $N = 138$  as population size, at a standard 95% confidence level and 5% confidence interval, the sample size required for this study was 102 teachers. To select 102 teacher participants from the four schools, a probability-stratified simple random sampling technique was used. Stratified simple random sampling is a method where the population is divided into distinct subgroups (strata) based on specific characteristics, and then random samples are drawn independently from each stratum (schools) (Taherdoost, 2016). From Yurung Central School, Yelchen Central School, Pemagatshel Middle Secondary School, and Nangkor Central School 27, 30, 22, and 23 teachers were selected respectively as participants for this study.

## **Research Instruments**

The survey questionnaire adapted from the Teacher Professional Development Survey (Sogolytics, 2023) is retrievable at <https://www.sogolytics.com/survey-templates/school/teacher-professional-development-survey/>. The validity of the survey questionnaire was assumed high due to its extensive usage, with over 93,000 instances (Sogolytics, 2023). The questionnaire was constructed using both open and closed-ended questions.

The survey questionnaire contained four distinct sections. Part A consisted of six items that focused on gathering demographic information about the teachers. These items included inquiries about gender, level of education, years of teaching experience, subject areas and the schools in which they are currently working. Part B consisted of two items designed to explore teachers' experiences with the PDs offered in the last 18 months, taking into account the impact of the pandemic. Part C consisted of three items designed to identify the PD needs of the teachers for the future. This section sought to understand the areas in which teachers felt they required further development and support. Part D consisted of four items that explored teachers' PD preferences. These items explored aspects such as preferred PD delivery formats, schedule, and the desired resource persons for facilitating the PD sessions.

## **Ethical Clearance**

The Ministry of Education and Skill Development approved the research. Before their participation, participants were provided with an informed consent form, which was included as an attachment to the questionnaire. The consent form communicated the objectives of the study and assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses.

## **Data Collection and Statistical Analysis**

A total of 102 questionnaires were sent out to the teachers. A total of 91 questionnaires, 23 (25.3%) male and 68 (74.7%) female teachers were returned, accounting for 89.2% return rate. Data from 91 respondents were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics using R Statistical Computing Software, version 4.3.0. For demographic and closed-ended questions, we reported descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were analyzed independently. Finally, the findings of quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated to interpret by relating and comparing the findings between them.



## Results

### Descriptions of the participants

**Table 1:** Demographic information of the sample (N = 91)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	68	74.7
Female	23	25.3
Qualification of Teachers with B.Ed		
qualification	58	63.7
PGDE qualification	21	23.1
Masters qualification	12	13.2
Teaching Experience0-2		
years	13	14.2
3-5 years	18	19.8
6-10 years	29	31.8
> 10 years	31	34.1
Teaching Subject		
General	20	21.9
English Dzongkha	11	12.1
Mathematics	13	14.3
Science	13	14.3
History and Geography	16	17.6
Computer Studies	11	12.1
	7	7.7

### Relationship between teaching experience and number of PDs attended in the last 18 months during pandemic

Table 2 illustrate the relation between the number of years in service and the corresponding days of PDs attended in the last 18 months.

From Table 2, it is clear that one teacher has never attended any type of PDs while the remaining 90 teachers have attended PDs on different occasions and dimensions in the post-pandemic. It reveals that the maximum number of PDs attended is highest for the group with the most teaching experience (i.e., greater than 10 years) and lowest for the group with the least teaching experience (i.e., 0-2 years) in the last 18 months in Pema Gatshel.

**Table 2:** Relationship between teaching experience and number of PDs attended ( $N = 91$ )

Teaching Experience	None	1-5 Days	6-10 Days	>10 Days	Total Days Attended
0-2 Years	1	7	3	2	13
3-5 Years	0	5	5	8	18
6-10 Years	0	6	9	14	29
> 10 Years	0	14	7	10	31

**Teacher’s professional development provided by the school, Dzongkhag, and Ministry of Education in the post-pandemic**

Table 3 depicts an overview of the PD attended by the teachers of Pema Gatshel District in the past 18 months, during the post-pandemic era. The PD opportunities offered by the Ministry, school districts, and schools were organised in four key areas: instructional development (instructional-focused/ job-embedded), scientific field development, personal development, and organizational development.

**Table 3:** An overview of the PD attended by the teachers of Pema Gatshel District ( $N=91$ )

Types of PD Attended	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
1. Instructional Development (instructional-focused/ job-embedded)		
A. Technology and Instruction Integration (ICT skills for teaching)	77 (84.6)	14 (15.4)
B. Teaching strategies	62 (68.1)	29 (31.9)
C. Lesson planning	81 (89.0)	10 (11.0)
D. Classroom management	58 (63.7)	33 (36.3)
E. Student participation and Engagement	57 (62.6)	34 (37.4)
F. Assessment and Evaluation	69 (75.8)	22 (24.2)
G. Special Education or Differentiated Instruction	59 (64.8)	32 (35.2)

H. Curriculum Mapping	55 (60.4)	36 (39.6)
I. Formative Assessment and Development of Grading Rubrics	61 (67.0)	30 (33.0)
J. Development on Subject or Content Areas	52 (57.1)	39 (42.9)
<hr/>		
2. Scientific field Development		
K. Research methods	79 (86.8)	12 (13.2)
<hr/>		
3. Personal Development		
L. Career Planning	41 (45.1)	50 (54.9)
M. Communication skills	47 (51.6)	44 (48.4)
N. 21st Century Skills	62 (68.1)	29 (31.9)
O. Personal Management (time management, stress reduction, balancing work and family)	49 (53.8)	42 (46.2)
<hr/>		
4. Organizational Development		
P. School management and administration (Instructional leadership)	57 (62.6)	34 (37.4)
Q. School or District Policies and Ethics	64 (70.3)	27 (29.7)
R. Understanding the State Education Standards	50 (54.9)	41 (45.1)

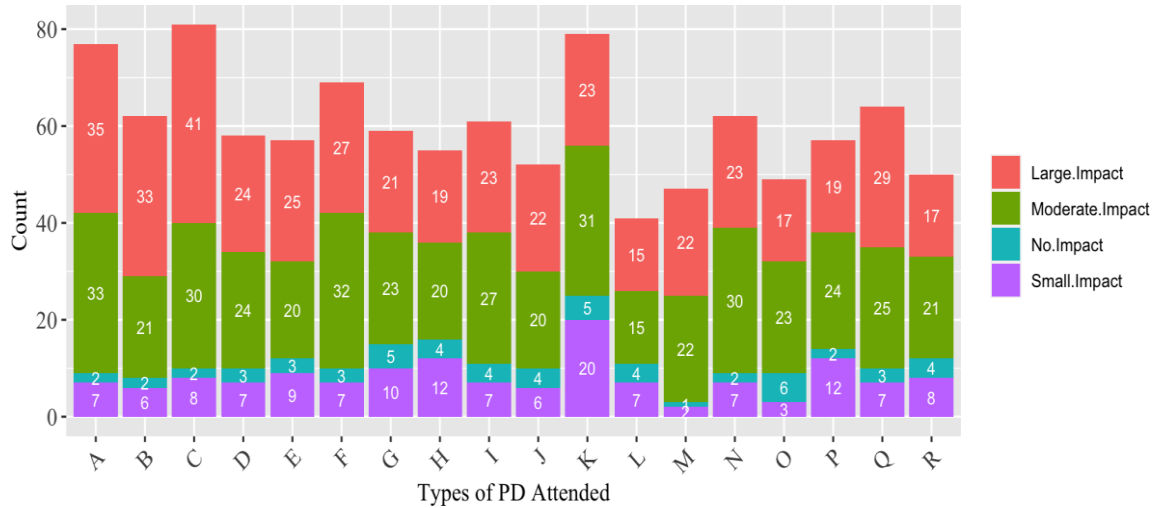
From Table 3, it is understood that the majority of the teachers attended PD on lesson planning, research methods, and technology and instruction integration (ICT skills for teaching). The data suggest that the Ministry of Education, school districts, and schools are placing significant importance on enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills, keeping them informed about research methodologies, and supporting the integration of technology in their teaching methods, as these aspects directly impact their effectiveness in the classroom. Conversely, the data indicate a relatively lower occurrence of PD in career planning, communication skills, and personal management, which include time management, stress reduction, and balancing work and family. This suggests that the PD providers are not giving adequate attention to these areas.

The impact achieved was not always directly linked to the specific PD program attended. Participants mentioned that “*some of the PDs were conducted by teacher colleagues in schools on limited time with very limited knowledge and skills*”. Additionally, the organizers did not take into consideration the real needs of teachers because “*of mandated hours of PD in school assessment process*”.

Figure 1 portrays the impact of PD sessions attended during the post-pandemic period (within the past 18 months) as expressed by the teacher respondents included in the sample.

Figure 1

Impact of PD sessions attended during the post-pandemic period. (Here, the letter A to R used in the figure corresponds to the different types of PD for teachers, as depicted in Table 3).



The participants were affected in different ways by the PDs they have attended. No Impact (3.3), Small Impact (8.1), Moderate Impact (24.5), and Large Impact (24.2) are the average impact levels. This suggests that the majority of PDs have a modest to significant effect on participants' PD. On average, the PD program had a moderate impact level, with an average impact score of 24.5. This suggests that the PD programs, on average, had a meaningful effect on the participants' professionalism in Pema Gatshel District. PD programs such as lesson planning, technology and instruction integration (ICT skills for teaching), teaching strategies and assessment and evaluation had notable impact levels on teachers.

**Professional needs of teachers in Pema Gatshel District**

Figure 2 portrays teacher participants` interest towards different types of PD. Among the various PD topics, there is a noticeable variation in interest levels expressed by the participating teachers from Pema Gatshel District. Teachers have a strong interest in attaining PD on topics, such as “Technology and Instruction

Integration”, “Research Methods” and “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills” with high counts for the Strong Interest category (70, 62, and 60 respectively). This indicates that technology and instruction integration, scientific research methods and 21st Century skills are the dimensions that teachers aspire to attend as PDs training programs currently.

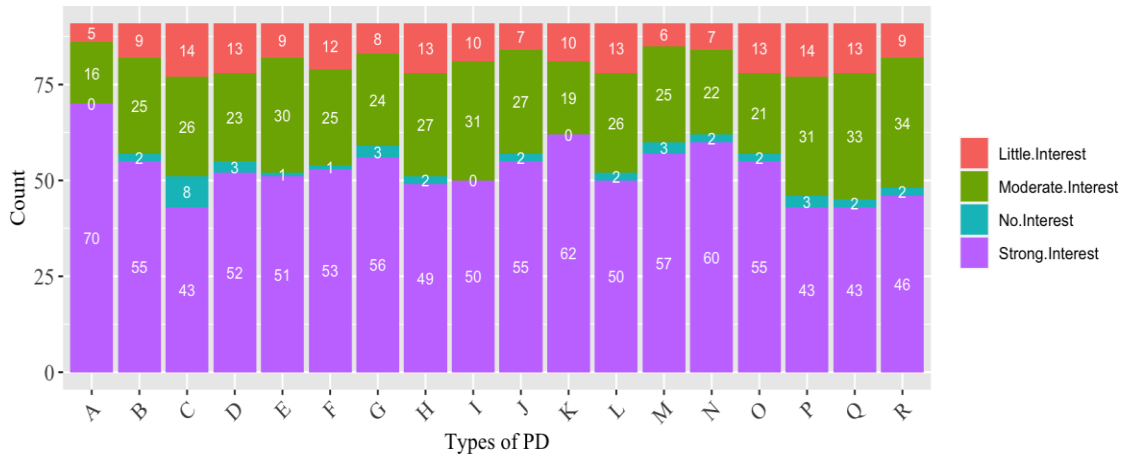


Figure 2. Different types of PD teacher participants are interested to attain. Here, the letter A to R used in the figure corresponds to the different types of PD for teachers, as depicted in Table 3.

Disconcertingly, the PD topic “Lesson Planning”, which is very important for teachers, stood out with a relatively higher percentage of respondents who showed lower levels of interest, with high counts (i.e.,20) for the No Interest category. Overall, it is clear that teachers are most interested in PD topics related to technology, research techniques, instructional leadership, and communication skills.

In addition to the PD needs mentioned above, several teachers have also expressed a desire for PD in various other areas. These include addressing issues related to student discipline, formulating competency-based questions, managing work-related stress in schools, creating assessment tools utilizing ICT, conducting test item analysis, fostering parent involvement in school activities, embracing 21st-century pedagogy and utilizing ICT tools effectively, as well as incorporating mindfulness practices into their teaching approaches.

### Challenges teachers face during and after teacher professional development

Participating teachers faced multifaceted challenges regarding access to high-quality PD programs. One challenge expressed by the participants is that their learning preferences and PD needs were not accommodated in the past PD programs. To cater to the specific PD requirements of teachers, it was recommended

by teacher respondents that PD providers gather a list of desired PD topics beforehand from the intended participants (those teachers who are scheduled to take part in the PD programs).

Another challenge faced by the majority of teachers is their inability to participate effectively in PD sessions using digital tools and platforms effectively. Due to this, one criticism received from Teacher 1 was, “No *more virtual PDs*.” This suggests that teachers, in general, do not possess very good skills in computer and internet-related programs. The participants suggested that PD providers should incorporate “technology in PD programs in a way that is accessible and user friendly.” Additionally, teacher participants expressed criticisms like, “*no verbal or theoretical PD programs, big group size, no practical session, and not on need basis*”. Furthermore, a recursive sentiment expressed by Teacher 2 was “*I think there should be certain follow-up procedures by school administration or management body to check the effectiveness of the PD course given.*” Teacher 2 expressed that the outcomes of the past PD programs provided by the Ministry, school districts, and schools are not adequately evaluated and effectively communicated to other teachers, ultimately leading to a significant gap in understanding the true impact and effectiveness of such programs. The participants suggest a need for improved evaluation practices and better dissemination of knowledge within the teaching community.

Furthermore, Teacher 3 expressed “*Parents’ involvement in students learning, competency-based questions, stress management, purposeful and new PDs were never concentrated.*” They expressed that past PD programs heavily favored the facilitator's role, and lacked proper resources, collaborative opportunities, and flexibility. Participants also expressed that past PD sessions were excessively lengthy and boring. Regarding resources, Teacher 4 expressed that “*Saturday to strictly keep for PD and there should be timely intervention from the headquarters and it is better if PD programs are outsourced.*”

### **Mode of delivery**

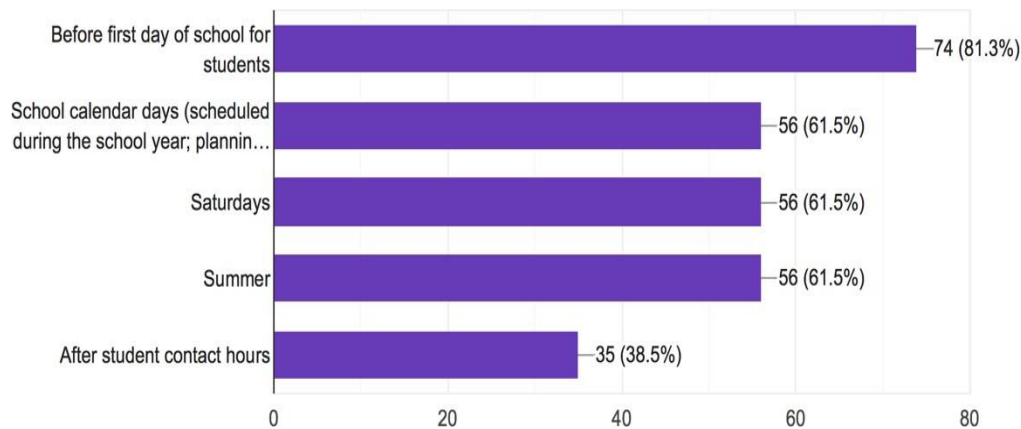
Data reveals that the best choice among the listed modes of delivery is "Hands-on participation," while the worst choice is "Lecture" mode. This finding highlights the importance of incorporating more active learning strategies, such as hands-on participation and workshop-style sessions in future PD programs, because it will make the process of learning more active, interesting and enjoyable, and enable a higher degree of interactivity and collaboration among teachers.

### **Preferred time for PD programs**

Figure 3 shows the respondents’ preferred time for receiving the PDs programs. Regarding the preferred timing of PD programs, the majority of the teacher respondents (n = 74) expressed a preference for PD sessions

to be conducted ‘before the first day of school for students.’ On the other hand, a smaller group of respondents (n=35) indicated ‘after student contact hours’ as the least favoured schedule for PD programs. Another teacher, Teacher 5, mentioned that “workshops during school calendar and on Saturday or even on short summer breaks have direct implications to instructional hours”.

Figure 3. Preferred schedule or timing for PD programs



### Preference of resource person(s)

The data indicate that the majority of the respondents (95.6%) expressed a strong inclination towards receiving PD from expert educators affiliated with the Ministry of Education. while a significant portion of the respondents (76.9%) showed a preference for PD delivered by professionals within their school's district, such as education officers, teachers, and principals.

Teacher 6 expressed a desire for diverse perspectives by suggesting the inclusion of foreign educators or professionals from other countries, enabling a broader global outlook in their PD experiences.

### Discussions

Several reasons were identified to explain the impact of PD in post-pandemic. It was identified that there were no common criteria utilized in the planning of the variety of PDs activities offered over the past 18 months. This lack of consistency in planning may have contributed to differences in the outcomes and

effectiveness of the PDs. The requirement to fulfil mandated hours of PD, as part of the school assessment process, sometimes overshadowed the actual needs of the teachers. Regarding this, Diaz-Maggioli (2004) stated, “By muffling the teachers’ voices and placing priority on administrative needs, these programs become a burden to professionals instead of a welcome solution to classroom problems” (p. 2). The lack of alignment with teachers' needs and preferences could have contributed to the perceived low impact of certain PDs. This indicates that there is a lack of a standardized framework specifically designed to align with the desired goals and educational needs. Consequently, it is not feasible to apply a single model of PD to all teachers, considering the diverse dynamics of each subject. However, a useful approach suggested by respondents can be “*employed by piloting a needs analysis survey*”. Such exercise will identify the needs and desired strands of teacher PDs that will be then conveniently tailored to meet the defined goals. One study conducted on a similar topic by Yenen and Yontem (2020) opined, seminars, workshops and short-term training activities are at the heart of the traditional PD models. However, these types of PDs organizations have been criticized for being too short, and not seen as effective for teachers. They further emphasized that an effective PD activity increases the commitment of the teachers to the processes of motivation and teaching-learning. It can positively affect the job satisfaction of the teachers and increases the possibility of staying in teaching. Another study by Hunziker (2011) and many other studies underlined that the importance of keeping professional knowledge and skills up to date is widely recognized. However, traditional workshops that involve passive learning are becoming less effective in today's busy world. The information gained in such workshops is often forgotten and rarely applied in daily routines. To address this, it is necessary to re-conceptualize PDs into effective PDs. In Bhutan, most Bhutanese PDs are based on Training of the Trainer (TOT) model. TOT refers to a sustainable approach where individuals are trained to become trainers themselves within an organization, allowing knowledge and expertise to be disseminated widely. Effective PDs should engage teachers in supportive, job-embedded, instructionally focused, collaborative, and ongoing learning activities (Mizell, 2010). This approach ensures that teachers find PDs relevant and authentic, leading to improved teaching practices. Supportive PDs consider individual needs and interests, while job-embedded activities are relevant and integrated into daily responsibilities. Instructionally focused-development emphasizes student learning outcomes and differentiation based on individual factors. Collaboration and ongoing engagement are essential for active and interactive learning experiences (Mizell, 2010). When these characteristics are present, PDs become effective in enhancing teacher learning and



practice. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Baker, 2014; Patton et al., 2015). Currently, teachers' development processes at school, for the most part, are designed according to an educational reform that imposes the same course of PDs on all teachers, individually or as a team. Many PDs provided to teachers follow a one-size-fits-all approach, which is detrimental. Instead of expecting uniform PDs, encourage each teacher to create a personalized plan for their professional growth, focusing on how each activity contributes to improving student learning (Lunenberg et al., 2014; OECD, 2009; Yenen & Yontem, 2020). Action research becomes particularly useful in this context. By incorporating action research into the personalized PD plans, teachers not only engage in meaningful PD but also contribute to the body of knowledge within their educational community. Action research encourages a reflective and evidence-based approach to teaching, fostering a culture of continuous improvement (Edwards, 2021).

According to Diaz-Maggioli (2004), the lecture-based delivery mode is considered one of the cheapest modes for PD delivery that does not yield the desired outcomes. To truly support teachers' growth and enhance their instructional practices, PD providers should move away from lecture-based PD delivery and explore more interactive, differentiated, effective and engaging modes that cater to the individual needs of teachers. Findings from this research further support this notion, as the majority of the participants expressed preferences for interactive and hands-on approaches that require them to actively participate. On the other hand, traditional lecture-based methods are less favoured. In this era of high-stakes testing and increased accountability, it is necessary to reposition professional development so that the collective efforts of teachers, students, and administrators result in enhanced learning for all members of the teaching community (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004, p. 1). The lack of systematic evaluation of PD programs has also been identified as a challenge in the existing literature on PD programs (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). In Bhutan, PD programs are widely implemented in education sectors, using the foregoing ToT model. These programs aim to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of teachers to improve overall performance and contribute to the development of the country. However, similar to the global trend, to our knowledge, the systematic evaluation of these PD programs in Bhutan is also limited.

## **Conclusion**

Determining the characteristics of effective PD programs poses a significant challenge due to the absence of a single correct answer. To explore the impact of PD in the post-pandemic era, as well as the needs and

preferences of teachers, this study aimed to compile a diverse range of perspectives. The findings indicated a demand for training programs focused on instructional technologies, research methodologies, and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. Moreover, it was evident that PD should encompass various aspects of teachers' daily activities, including personal management. Personalized PD approaches were found to be the most effective and aligned with the expectations of grassroots teachers, who preferred face-to-face interactions over virtual or lecture-based training sessions.

The participants' experiences with the PDs they have attended varied due to a lack of standardized planning criteria, the discrepancy between intended impact and actual outcomes, the limited expertise of some PD facilitators, neglect of teachers' actual needs, and various constraints such as time and finance. Addressing these issues could potentially enhance the impact and effectiveness of future PD initiatives.

### **Limitation**

The sample size used in the study was relatively small; therefore, future research efforts should aim to replicate the study with a larger sample size and integrate in-depth interviews alongside surveys to thoroughly investigate the impact, needs, and preferences of teachers regarding PD in greater detail. Although the participants in this study encompassed teachers from different subject domains, further investigations could target the specific PD requirements of teachers based on their respective subjects. It is worth noting that this study primarily focused on the upper Pema Gatshel district region, but since the issue of PD is a matter of national concern, future studies should consider nationwide representative samples to capture a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. Future study should incorporate

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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