



## JEAR: The CERD Educational Journal

ISSN 2957-8019(Online)|ISSN 2077-4966(Print)|8(1) 16-31

Journal homepage: [Journal.pce.edu.bt](http://Journal.pce.edu.bt)



---

### **Building Teachers' Capacity through the Capability Approach to Advance Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Bhutanese Schools**

Author: Kinley Seden and Tshering Om Tamang

*Samtse College of Education, Bhutan*

Corresponding author: [kseden.sce@rub.edu.bt](mailto:kseden.sce@rub.edu.bt)

---

<http://doi.org/10.17102/jear.25.07.125569> | Accepted March 2025 | Published November 2025

---

#### **Abstract**

Teacher capacity building activities play a crucial role in developing educators' knowledge, skills, and values to promote children's valued educational capabilities. Using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this study organised a capacity-building workshop for teachers in five schools under Samtse Dzongkhag (district), Bhutan. The workshop aimed to enhance teachers' understanding of the Capability Approach (CA) and its application in advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in schools. A total of 267 teachers participated in the intervention. Findings indicated that hands-on and reflective activities effectively strengthened teachers' conceptual understanding of CA, and its relevance to inclusive education. Participants demonstrated notable growth in knowledge, confidence, and readiness to integrate capability-based teaching practices in their classrooms. The results also indicated that the workshop fostered greater empathy, respect, and awareness of inclusivity, equipping teachers with practical strategies to nurture students' creativity, socio-emotional skills, and sense of belonging in their own classrooms. These outcomes suggest that sustained follow-up support and school-based professional learning initiatives are essential to maintain the positive impacts and embed GESI principles meaningfully across teaching and learning practices.

**Keywords:** Capability approach, gender equality, social inclusion, valued educational capabilities, teachers, capacity building

## **Introduction**

In educational context, the Capability Approach (CA) as originally developed by Sen (1979), has gained momentum in recent years. Since then, several studies have employed Sen's CA to assess children's valued capabilities and their opportunities to achieve what they aspire to do and be (Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999). According to Sen (1993), a capability is understood as a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being, representing the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be.

CA, therefore, provides a human-centered framework that views education as a means of expanding learners' freedoms, agency, and well-being rather than merely developing skills or achieving academic outcomes. For instance, studies demonstrated that CA can be used to understand educational inequalities and promote social justice through teaching and learning (Walker, 2006; Unterhalter, 2007). Similarly, Hart (2012) and Robeyns (2017) emphasised that the approach helps recognise children as active agents capable of making valued choices about their lives. Furthermore, Babb et al. (2017) adopted CA to understand how Australian children's movements in their neighbourhood environment support their well-being.

Building on these insights, several empirical studies have used CA to explore children's aspirations and valued functioning within school settings (Biggeri et al., 2011; Conradie & Robeyns, 2013). This research highlights the importance of teachers' roles in creating enabling environments that nurture students' agency and aspirations. Considering these benefits, the study adopted CA as an intervention framework to build teachers' capacity in promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) by building on children's valued educational capabilities.

Despite the global application of this framework, significant research gaps exist in the Bhutanese context. For instance, no studies have examined teacher's capacity building or classroom practices through the lens of CA. Furthermore, no prior research has explicitly explored how teachers can advance GESI in schools by fostering children's valued capabilities in Bhutanese schools. Therefore, this study aimed to address this gap by employing CA to empower teachers to promote GESI in schools by expanding children's freedoms to do and be what they value and aspire to. The study was guided by the following research question:

How can the capability approach enhance teachers' capacity to promote GESI in schools by building on children's valued educational capabilities?

## **Literature Review**

The Capability Approach developed by Sen (1999) and further advanced by Nussbaum (2011) focuses on what people are really capable of being and doing (ends) and not just on the resources they have and the public goods they can access (means). This implies asking, "What are people really able to do and what kind of person are they able to be?" and leads to a normative commitment to conceptualising well-being in terms of capabilities (What people can do and be if they so choose) and functionings (What they are actually achieving in terms of beings and doings,

and the capabilities that have been realised) (Robeyns, 2017; Robeyns & Byskov, 2021). As a result, CA involves a twofold notion of well-being: achieved well-being, which focuses on *functionings*, and well-being freedom, which is connected to one's capability set (Sen, 1992).

Thus, CA provides a normative framework for evaluating human well-being and social justice. It shifts the focus from resources or achievements to people's actual freedoms which is what they are able to be and do. Within the context of education, CA emphasises expanding learners' real opportunities to pursue lives they value by placing children not merely as recipients of education but as active agents capable of reasoning, aspiring, and making meaningful choices (Robeyns, 2017; Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

In this study, CA was chosen as an approach to promote GESI in schools by building on what children value and aspire to do and be. Thus, within the context of this study, gender equality is understood as a state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020; United Nations [UN], 2015) while social inclusion captures the extent to which learners irrespective of their background, caste, language, and disability, feel valued and included within their learning communities, which contributes to belonging and participation (Biggeri et al., 2011). Research has identified several capability indicators relevant to children's development and educational experiences. In this study, capabilities such as planning, imagining, and thinking; social relations; love, care, and respect; mental well-being; aspirations; participation; physical health; and autonomy were selected to advance GESI in five partner schools. According to Hart (2012), the ability to plan, imagine, and think reflects cognitive and creative freedom, enabling children to envision futures and set goals that align with their aspirations. Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1999) describe social relations as the ability to form meaningful relationships, engage in social interactions, and participate in community life with a sense of belonging and mutual recognition while love and care involve the capacity to give and receive affection, empathy, and emotional support which are essential for developing bonds of trust and compassion with others (Nussbaum, 2011). Respect, on the other hand, encompasses treating oneself and others with dignity, recognising equality, and valuing diversity and human worth in all interactions (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 2005).

Mental well-being is another essential dimension, as positive emotional and psychological states enhance learners' ability to engage meaningfully in learning and social interactions (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Similarly, aspiration and participation indicate the extent to which children can envision possibilities for their lives and actively engage in shaping those possibilities (Conradie & Robeyns, 2013). Physical health represents a basic but fundamental capability that underpins all other functionings. Without it, educational engagement and achievement are constrained.

Lastly, autonomy reflects children's ability to make informed choices and exercise agency in decision-making, a critical element of empowerment and holistic development (Walker, 2006; Robeyns, 2017). To conclude, by focusing on these indicators, CA offers a holistic lens for understanding children's well-being and educational empowerment. In addition, schools can create an environment that is equitable, inclusive, safe, and supportive, whereby learners are given the choice and opportunities to do and be what they value and aspire.

## Intervention Design

To operationalise CA in the school context, a series of interactive activities were designed to strengthen teachers' capacities to promote GESI in schools building on children's valued capabilities. The interventions focused on nurturing capabilities such as planning, imagining, and thinking; social relations; love, care, and respect; mental well-being; social relations; aspirations; participation; physical health; and autonomy through participatory learning experiences to advance GESI in schools. Activities such as 'Creating Inclusive Mind', 'Garden of Kindness', 'Draw What I Say', 'Cross the River', 'Empathy Auction', 'Many Colours, One Fabric', 'My Safe Corner', 'Innovation Lab', and 'Luejong Bege (Movement for All)' were developed as practical tools to translate CA into classroom practice. Each activity was conducted for approximately one to two hours and aimed to build teachers' capacities on children's valued educational capabilities.

The short descriptions of the activities are provided below:

- *Creating Inclusive Mind* focused on including everyone irrespective of disability, race, caste, or religion. It aimed to promote capabilities such as gender equality, social inclusion, participation, physical health, mental well-being, love, care, and respect.
- *Jamtsei Lingka* (i.e. Garden of Kindness) was aimed at promoting love, care, and respect by weaving a garden of kindness through display of positive words and emotions.
- *Draw What I Say* is a creative exercise aimed at nurturing capabilities of imagination, communication, and participation. It demonstrated the importance of clarity, listening, and mutual understanding in teaching and learning.
- *Cross the River* focused on planning and imaging creative solutions to face difficulties and obstacles. This activity was aimed at nurturing capabilities such as plan, imagine, think, and social relations.
- *Empathy Auction* encouraged participants to reflect on making the right choices through freedom and voice, thereby enhancing autonomy, participation, and the ability to plan, imagine, and think.
- *Many Colours, One Fabric* was designed to promote capabilities such as religion and identity, love, care and respect, and participation.
- *My Safe Corner* focused on capabilities of bodily integrity, safety, and non-discrimination. This activity encouraged teachers to envision and discuss strategies for creating safe spaces for children, ensuring their wellbeing and protection.
- *Innovation Lab* engaged teachers in identifying three key GESI issues, crafting potential solutions, and developing an innovation plan for the most promising idea. This activity promoted social relations, participation, and plan, imagine, and think.

- *Luejong Bege* (Movement for All) activity began with guided meditation, followed by each participant demonstrating a stretching exercise, aimed at promoting mental and physical well-being.

A one-day workshop was organised for school teachers of five partner schools from 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2025. Each school was introduced to four activities, each followed by individual and group reflection exercises, as well as facilitator's observation. The activity lasted for one and half hours each. The goals for this workshop were to:

1. Introduce Children's Valued Educational Capabilities (CVEC) as a framework for inclusive education;
2. Equip teachers with strategies to embed GESI principles into classroom practices and school culture; and
3. Familiarise participants with activities, designed to foster children's valued educational capabilities.

During the workshop, teachers actively participated, reflected on the underlying capability dimensions, and discussed strategies for classroom adaptation. The participatory nature of the workshop encouraged teachers to internalise the approach and recognise their role in promoting GESI by building on children's valued capabilities. This intervention, thus, served as both a capacity-building exercise for teachers and a practical framework for fostering children's holistic development through CA.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, grounded in the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders, including both the researchers and the participants (Sedova et al., 2016) and aimed at bringing about social change through action (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). It comprised three interrelated phases: Participation, Knowledge, and Action. In the Participation Phase, two teachers from the five partner schools actively collaborated in identifying and co-developing intervention activities, ensuring that the design reflected local needs and classroom realities. The Knowledge Phase focused on deepening teachers' understanding of the Capability Approach and its indicators, which subsequently led to the creation of capacity-building activities aimed at promoting GESI in schools. Finally, during the Action Phase, these capacity-building interventions were implemented across the five schools. This iterative cycle of participation, learning, and implementation enabled teachers to both internalise key concepts and apply them meaningfully within their teaching and learning practices.

## **Participants and Setting**

The study was conducted with a total of 267 teachers from five secondary schools. The participating schools were purposefully selected to represent diverse educational contexts, considering factors such as demographic composition, gender stereotypes, and school locations.

The sample also included one special needs school that catered to children with additional learning requirements. The inclusion of this school provided an opportunity to explore how CA could

be adapted to support inclusive education and address varied learner capabilities. Asyiqoh and Mundiri (2024) indicate that teachers play a crucial role in creating inclusive learning environments. Additionally, Hart and Brando (2018) consider schools as spaces that enable children's exploration and development of the values and aspirations that promote agency and well-being and achievement. In alignment with these findings, the present study aimed to strengthen teachers' understanding and capacity to advance GESI in schools.

Teachers from all five schools participated in a one-day workshop and engaged actively in the intervention activities, offering diverse perspectives on the relevance and effectiveness of the capability-based capacity-building approach.

### **Data Collections**

Data were collected through reflections conducted after each activity, during which participants provided written reflections and were invited to share their thoughts and experiences in group discussions. Studies highlight reflection as a powerful qualitative tool for capturing the personal, emotional, and experiential dimensions of learning (Finlay, 2008; Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983; Winkel, 2017). Further, Mann et al. (2009) describe reflection as a structured process of critical thinking that involves examining one's experiences, emotions, and actions to derive deeper understanding and professional growth. In this study, reflection was used to explore teachers' insights and experiences from the workshop, allowing their voices to reveal how the activities influenced their understanding and practice.

Another data collection tool was the facilitator's observation notes. Cohen et al. (2018) assert that observation enables researchers to capture real-time behaviours, interactions, and contextual nuances that may not emerge through self-reported data. Throughout the workshop, the facilitator maintained systematic notes documenting participants' engagement, emotional expressions, and collaborative interactions. These notes provided valuable insights into how teachers internalised concepts of inclusivity, empathy, and capability-based education. Patton (2015) highlights that observational data offer a "window into real behaviour," helping researchers interpret not only what participants say but also what they do. The facilitator's reflections further helped identify shifts in teachers' attitudes and confidence during hands-on activities, supporting data triangulation and enriching the overall interpretation of the findings.

This was followed by a survey designed to capture teachers' perceptions of the workshop and its effectiveness in enhancing their understanding of CA. The survey comprised three sections: demographic information, dichotomous (yes/no) questions, and linear scale items. It was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights into teachers' understanding and application of CA and its related capabilities. The questions explored key themes such as teachers' knowledge before and after the workshop, their understanding of CA principles, its application in teaching, reflections on the workshop experience, and the perceived impact on their professional practice. The survey concluded with a few open-ended questions that invited participants to share personal reflections, examples, and suggestions to provide deeper contextual understanding of their learning and experiences.

Permission to conduct the workshop was obtained from the District Education Officer (DEO)

and the respective school principals through formal letters, e-mails, and verbal communication. Random pseudonyms such as P1, P2 and so on were used to capture participants' verbatims.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed and interpreted through a triangulated approach that combined survey results, participant reflections, and observational notes. This integration enhanced both the validity and depth of the findings. Quantitative data from the surveys were summarised and visualised using graphs and tables to illustrate patterns and shifts in teachers' understanding before and after the intervention. While some data were interpreted directly from graphical trends, others were organised into tables to highlight specific comparisons across capability domains. Responses to the close-ended questions were analysed descriptively to identify trends and patterns, while the open-ended responses were examined through thematic analysis to capture recurring ideas, emotional nuances, and deeper meanings underlying teachers' reflections.

Qualitative data from reflections and observations further supported the open-ended responses and were analysed aligning to the survey themes. These triangulated data sources provided a comprehensive understanding of both the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the workshop.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This section discusses the results of the capacity building workshop supported by literature.

Table 1 presents the number of teacher participants based on their gender.

**Table 1:** *Demographic Information*

Gender	Male	Female	Total
	151	116	267

Table 2 indicates the designations of the participants.

**Table 2:** *Designation*

Types	Numbers
Principal	3
Vice Principal	1
Teachers	248
Others	15
Total	267

Table 3 shows participants' years of experience.

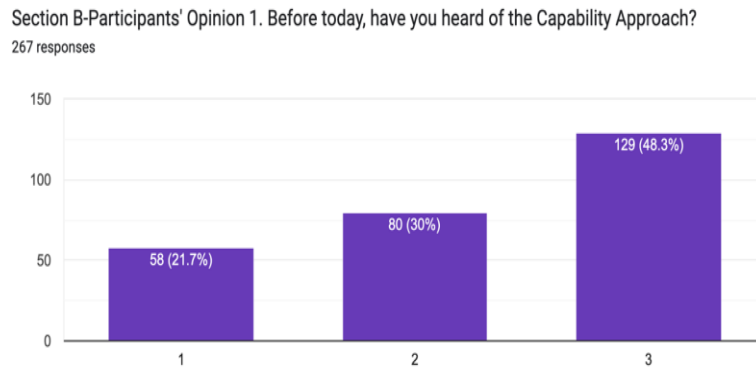
**Table 3:** *Years of Experience*

Years of Experience	
Below 5 years	119
6-10	59
11-15	29
16-20	23
21-25	19
26-30	9
Above 31 years	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>

**Participants' Opinion**

As shown in the graph below (Chart 1), 58 participants were familiar with the Capability Approach, while 80 had not heard of it, and 129 were unsure.

**Chart 1:** *Knowledge on Capability Approach*

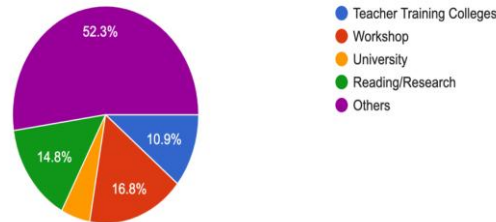


As shown in the pie graph 2 (Chart 2), 52.3% of participants reported learning about it from others, 16.8% from workshops, 14.8% through reading or research, and 10.9% from teacher training colleges.

**Chart 2:** *Information Presented*



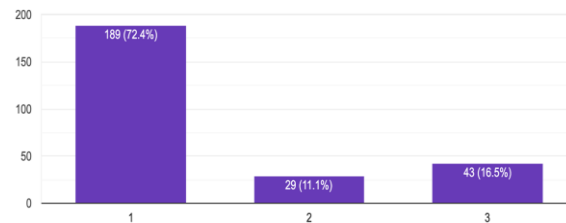
2. If yes, where did you learn about it?  
256 responses



As shown in graph 3 (chart 3), 72.4% of participants considered the information on CA relevant, while 11.1% disagreed and 16.5% were unsure.

**Chart 3: Information presented**

3. If no, were the information presented on capability approach relevant?  
261 responses



### Teachers' Understanding of Educational Capabilities

Table 4 shows a remarkable improvement in teachers' understanding of all the capability domains following the workshop. Before the intervention, knowledge levels varied widely, with the lowest comprehension observed in CA (44.9%), Autonomy (55%), and Mobility (60%). These low baselines suggest that teachers were less familiar with the theoretical underpinnings of Sen's and Nussbaum's work, which conceptualises human development not merely as resource access but as the *freedom to be and do what one values* (Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2017; Sen, 1999).

After the workshop, however, understanding rose dramatically, exceeding 90 percent in all categories. The most substantial increases were recorded in CA (+46 percentage points) and Autonomy (+36.9 percentage points). The sharp rise indicates that teachers not only grasped the philosophical essence of CA but also began relating it to their teaching practices, understanding that fostering agency and freedom in students is as vital as delivering curriculum content (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Further, participant 2 indicated "Unknowingly I was discriminating against

diversity in the class saying one can do that and one can't. From this very session, I am enlightened not to discriminate despite their differences.” A similar opinion was shared by participant 31, stating they thought GESI is about “roles and responsibility of male and female, where opportunity is provided equally” but after the workshop, understood that gender “role determines whether to grab it or not”. This indicates that participants were able to understand CA as a framework that not just focuses on resources, but also what children are capable of being and doing (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017; Robeyns & Byskov, 2021).

Teachers also demonstrated stronger conceptual grounding in capabilities such as gender equality, social inclusion, and love, care, and respect, areas that already held relatively high baselines. These results mirror global findings that participatory, experiential learning is effective in transforming abstract notions of justice and inclusion into practice (Biggeri et al., 2011; Conradie & Robeyns, 2013).

**Table 4:** *Teachers’ Understanding of Capabilities Before and After the Workshop*

<b>Capabilities</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
Capability Approach	44.9%	90.9%
Gender Equality	74.5%	94.4%
Social Inclusion	67.8%	94.7%
Participation	68.1%	93.6%
Education	72.6%	94%
Love, Care and Respect	75.9%	94%
Mental Well-Being	71.5%	93.6%
Social Relations	71.2%	92.9%
Mobility	60.0%	91.7%
Understand/Interpret/Plan/Imagine/Think	59.6%	94%
Physical Health	71.2%	93.7%
Autonomy	55%	91.9%

Overall, the findings affirm that the workshop successfully built teachers’ theoretical and practical capacity to view learners through a capability lens: valuing their aspirations, participation, and emotional well-being as central educational goals (Sen, 1992).

### **Integration of Capabilities in Teaching**

Table 5 highlights how frequently teachers incorporated various capabilities into their teaching. The most consistently embedded areas were love, care, and respect (53.2%), participation (43.1%), education (44.9%), and gender equality (41.2%). This pattern suggests that teachers instinctively prioritised relational and moral capabilities, echoing Nussbaum’s (2000) argument that empathy, compassion, and respect are fundamental for human flourishing.

Moderate integration was seen in social

inclusion, mental well-being, and physical health, suggesting that holistic well-being was recognised but not yet deeply embedded. In contrast, conceptual or structural domains such as mobility (28.2%), autonomy (28.3%), and capability approach (14.2%) remained the least integrated. This finding aligns with previous studies that teachers often struggle to translate complex frameworks into classroom-level action without adequate scaffolding or institutional support (Hart, 2012; Walker, 2006).

Despite these variations, “never” responses were minimal (below 3%), revealing that nearly all teachers made at least some effort to embed capability concepts in practice. For instance, participant 32 noted that the workshop included “practical activities as well; it is very simple and doable. As a teacher, we can always include these activities in our daily lesson.” The participants’ comments underscore the workshop’s success in translating CA into tangible, classroom-based strategies that teachers could easily apply (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Further, Robeyns (2017) argues that CA’s strength lies in its practical adaptability within the education context. Teachers’ emphasis on relational aspects underscores the centrality of affective and ethical dimensions in Bhutan’s education culture, resonating with Nussbaum’s (2011) notion of love and care as educative capabilities that nurture human dignity.

**Table 5: Integration of Capabilities in Teaching**

<b>Capabilities</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Always</b>
Capability Approach	2.2%	14.2%
Gender Equality	1.9%	41.2%
Social Inclusion	1.5%	37.1%
Participation	1.5%	43.1%
Education	1.9%	44.9%
Love, Care and Respect	2.2%	53.2%
Mental Well-Being	1.9%	39.8%
Social Relations	1.5%	36%
Mobility	1.9%	28.2%
Understand/Interpret/Plan/Imagine/Think	1.5%	33%
Physical Health	1.9%	38.6%
Autonomy	2.7%	28.3%

### **Impact of the Workshop on Teacher Growth**

Table 6 summarises the self-reported changes in teachers’ understanding of capabilities. Only 0.7 percent reported no change, while nearly 80 percent experienced either *significant improvement* or felt *confident to apply the concepts*. This strong response demonstrates that the workshop went beyond conceptual awareness to promote pedagogical readiness. This aligns with Sen’s concept of (1999) *capability expansion*, which is the enhancement of one’s ability to act on valued goals.

Teachers’ reflections reinforced this transformation. Participant 1 shared that prior to the workshop, they viewed gender equality merely as parity between boys and girls but had since come to understand it as inclusion of “every learner regardless of ability or identity”. Similarly, Participant 2 reflected that experiential activities helped them “see through the eyes of children with disabilities,” leading to greater empathy and a stronger sense of responsibility. These reflections echo Nussbaum’s (2000) call for moral imagination which is the ability to envision others’ experiences as one’s own.

**Table 6:** *Change in Teachers’ Understanding of the Capabilities After the Workshop*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
No change	0.7%	2
Slightly Improved	2.6%	7
Moderately Improved	15.7%	42
Significantly Improved	43.4%	116
I now feel confident in applying them in my teaching	37.5%	100
Total	99.9	267

### **Enhancement of Teachers’ Knowledge, Skills, and Values**

Analysis of the 267 qualitative responses revealed four dominant themes:

1. **Enhanced Conceptual Understanding**

Many participants reported clearer comprehension of CA, gender equality, and inclusion. One participant explained that they now “understand how to apply it practically,” reflecting the workshop’s success in bridging theoretical and applied knowledge. Similar findings are noted by Walker and Unterhalter (2007), who argue that teacher learning grounded in CA fosters transformative professional growth.

2. **Improved Pedagogical Skills**

Teachers described gaining practical tools to address diversity, plan inclusive lessons, and promote student voice. Such skill development aligns with the participatory essence of CA, which emphasises enabling others to act and choose freely (Robeyns, 2017).

3. **Values and Mindset Shifts**

Many responses highlighted an internalisation of empathy, diversity, and respect. Teachers reported becoming more attentive to learners’ varied abilities and more deliberate in creating inclusive spaces. This attitudinal shift underscores the importance of emotional intelligence and relational ethics in teaching (Nussbaum, 2011; Walker, 2006).

4. **Confidence in Application**

Teachers expressed a sense of empowerment, viewing inclusivity not as an optional value but as a professional mandate. As Participant 4 explained, “These are not just ideas, we must live them daily in our classrooms.” This confidence is a clear indication of capability enhancement as conceptualised by Sen (1992).

## **Experiential Activities and Their Transformative Value**

Teachers identified several workshop activities as particularly impactful in promoting key capabilities:

- *Garden of Kindness* fostered empathy, care, and respect, reinforcing effective learning that nurtures well-being.
- *Cross the River* emphasised teamwork and cooperation, supporting the capability for social relations and collective problem-solving.
- *Creating Inclusive Mind*, which involved playing games with participants of differing abilities, deepened appreciation of inclusion, participation, and well-being.
- *Mobility Maze* offered firsthand insight into physical and emotional challenges faced by students with disabilities, leading to enhanced empathy and advocacy for accessibility.

Through these activities, teachers reported moving from *cognitive understanding* to *embodied empathy*, a transition also noted by Hart (2012) as vital in making inclusion meaningful. Observations during sessions also showed increased sensitivity and spontaneous collaboration, behaviours that reflect both internalised empathy and a shared sense of social justice.

Participant 5 remarked that such experiential learning “helped me see barriers from a student’s perspective,” while Participant 6 noted that mindfulness and kindness “brought calmness and clarity,” reducing stress and promoting attentiveness. These accounts illustrate the effectiveness of mindfulness practices to contribute to emotional regulation and patient, reflective teaching (OECD, 2020).

## **Challenges in Applying Capabilities in Teaching**

Despite these encouraging outcomes, teachers anticipated several barriers to sustaining capability-oriented practice. Commonly cited challenges included limited time, curriculum pressures, inadequate resources, and the complexity of addressing diverse learning needs. For instance, teachers found it difficult to reconcile syllabus completion with time-intensive reflective activities. This was also noted by Walker (2006) in her studies of South African teachers implementing CA-based pedagogies.

Additionally, some participants highlighted challenges related to language and conceptual clarity, suggesting a continued need for mentoring and professional dialogue. These findings highlight the importance of institutional structures, not only individual awareness, to shape the feasibility of implementing inclusive pedagogy (Robeyns & Byskov, 2021). Asyiqoh and Mundiri (2024) suggested that this can be achieved through curriculum adaptation, the use of differentiated instructional methods, and classroom management practices that promote collaboration between students with and without special needs. Furthermore, continuous training and institutional support from schools and the government are essential for enhancing teachers’ capacities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that capability-based teacher development can effectively enhance inclusivity, empathy, and professional agency. The data reflect Sen's (1999) concepts of *expansion of freedom*, with teachers becoming more capable of fostering environments where children can imagine, plan, participate, and flourish. The integration of reflective dialogue, experiential activities, and collaborative learning aligns with global literature affirming that sustained transformation in teacher beliefs requires participatory, contextually relevant experiences (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

For Bhutan's education context, the results highlight that building teachers' capacity on children's valued educational capabilities will only strengthen their emotional and social capabilities which are as crucial as developing cognitive or technical skills. Thus, embedding CA in professional learning offers a holistic framework to advance GESI, ensuring that all children's "freedoms to learn and to be" are meaningfully realised.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In conclusion, the report indicates that the hands-on activities of the capacity building workshop successfully enhanced teachers' understanding of CA and its application in promoting GESI in schools. Participants demonstrated significant growth in knowledge, confidence, and readiness to integrate capabilities into their teaching practices. The results revealed that the workshop not only deepened teachers' awareness of inclusivity, empathy, and respect but also equipped them with practical strategies to strengthen students' creativity, empathy, socio-emotional skills, and foster equitable, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. These results suggest that a continued follow-up support and integration of these concepts into school-based professional learning will not only help sustain the positive impact but also ensure that GESI principles are meaningfully embedded across teaching and learning processes.

### **Limitation**

The workshop was conducted in only five schools within Samtse district and involved a relatively small number of teachers. Consequently, the generalisability of the findings may be limited, as the results might not fully represent teachers' experiences or contexts across other districts or school settings in Bhutan.

### **Acknowledgment**

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to GPE KIX and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) for their invaluable funding support. Our heartfelt appreciation also goes to the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD) for their unwavering guidance and collaboration throughout the project. We extend our thanks to the District Education Officers (DEOs) and school principals for their kind consent and continuous support. Our deepest gratitude goes to the teacher participants for their active engagement and enthusiasm during the capacity-building workshop. Finally, we would like to acknowledge Kathmandu University,

Nepal, for its thoughtful conceptualisation and partnership in this initiative.

### **Funding**

This work is supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange, a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre, Canada, with Grant Agreement No. 110410-001.

### **Disclaimers**

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### **Ethical Statement**

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines specified by the IDRC's Advisory Committee on Research Ethics. Informed consent was obtained from all participants through signed consent forms, which outlined their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The authors declare no conflicts of interest. All research activities were conducted independently, without external influence on the study's design, data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The data collected and analysed during this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and confidentiality agreements with the participating schools and students. However, anonymised data may be made available upon reasonable request to the corresponding authors, provided that such sharing aligns with the institutional policies and ethical guidelines of Samtse College of Education. Requests for data access will be reviewed to ensure compliance with ethical standards, particularly regarding the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

### **References**

- Asyiqoh, D., & Mundiri, A. (2024, December). The role of teachers in making inclusive education a success in regular schools. In *Proceeding of International Conference on Education, Society and Humanity*, 2(2), pp. 165 – 173).
- Babb, C., Oлару, D., Curtis, C., & Robertson, D. (2017). Children's active travel, local activity spaces and wellbeing: A case study in Perth, WA. *Travel Behaviour and Society*, 9, 81 – 94.
- Bergold, J., & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory research methods: A methodological approach in motion. *Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 13, 30 – 37.
- Biggeri, M., Ballet, J., & Comim, F. (2011). *Children and the capability approach*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539>
- Conradie, I., & Robeyns, I. (2013). Aspirations and human development interventions. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 14(4), 559 – 580.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2013.827637>
- Domínguez-Serrano, M., & del Moral-Espín, L. (2022). The capability approach and child well-being: A systematic literature review. *Child Indicators Research*, 15(6), 2043 – 2063.
- Finlay, L. (2008). *Reflecting on reflective practice*. The Open University Practice-Based Professional Learning Centre (PBPL) Paper 52. <https://oro.open.ac.uk/68945/>
- Gillis, A., & Jackson, W. (2002). *Research methods for nurses: Methods and interpretation*. Davis Company.
- Gladstone, B., Exenberger, S., Weimand, B., Lui, V., Haid-Stecher, N., & Geretsegger, M. (2021). The capability approach in research about children and childhood: A scoping review. *Child Indicators Research*, 14(1), 453 – 475.
- Hart, C. S. (2012). *Aspirations, education and social justice: Applying Sen and Bourdieu*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hart, C. S., & Brando, N. (2018). A capability approach to children's well-being, agency and participatory rights in education. *European Journal of Education*, 53(3), 293 – 309.
- Klasen, S., Otto, H., & Ziegler, H. (2010). Children, education and the capability approach. *Education, welfare and the capabilities approach: A European perspective*, 103-112.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Mann, K., Gordon, J., & MacLeod, A. (2009). Reflection and reflective practice in health professions education: A systematic review. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, 14(4), 595 – 621. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10459-007-9090-2>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020). *OECD gender equality in education, employment and entrepreneurship: Final report to the MCM 2020*. OECD Publishing.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Sage Publications.
- Robeyns, I. (2017). *Wellbeing, freedom and social justice: The capability approach re-examined*. Open Book Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0130>
- Robeyns, I., & Byskov, M. F. (2021). The capability approach. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy* (Fall, 2021 ed.). Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Sedova, K., Sedlacek, M., & Svaricek, R. (2016). Teacher professional development as a means of transforming student classroom talk. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 57(1), 14 – 25.
- Sen, A. (1979). *Equality of what? The tanner lectures on human values*. Stanford University.



- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality reexamined*. Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A. (1993). Capability and well-being. In M. Nussbaum & A. Sen (Eds.), *The quality of life* (pp. 30 – 53). Clarendon Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press.
- Sen, A. (2005). Human rights and capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 151–166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649880500120491>
- Unterhalter, E. (2007). *Gender, schooling and global social justice*. Routledge.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- Walker, M. (2006). *Higher education pedagogies: A capabilities approach*. Open University Press.
- Walker, M., & Unterhalter, E. (Eds.). (2007). *Amartya Sen's capability approach and social justice in education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Winkel, A. F., Yingling, S., Jones, A. A., & Nicholson, J. (2017). Reflection as a learning tool in graduate medical education: A systematic review. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 9(4), 430 – 439.