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Embodying the Four Immeasurable Qualities in Teaching-Learning: A Collaborative Action Research

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Abstract

This collaborative action research (CAR) explored how the Four Immeasurable qualities (*Tshe Mey Zhi*) can be embodied in teaching-learning practices at Paro College of Education. Conducted by a team of 12 teacher educators and their respective students (N=332), the study followed Kemmis and McTaggart's action research spiral model—Reconnaissance, Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. The team implemented intervention strategies during the Autumn 2023 semester to integrate the Four Immeasurable qualities into teaching practices. Post-intervention data were collected using research diaries, in-depth interviews with two students from each class (n=24), end-of-semester module feedback (n=259), and a survey (n=316). Findings reveal that embedding the Four Immeasurables enhanced classroom relationships and student engagement, with tutors demonstrating approachability, compassion, flexibility, effective communication, inclusivity, professionalism, and mindfulness. These qualities fostered supportive learning environments and contributed to both academic success and student well-being in higher education, suggesting that values-based pedagogy grounded in the Four Immeasurables can serve as a practical framework for teacher education reform and for aligning classroom practice with Bhutan's national vision of Gross National Happiness.

***Keywords*:** action research, values, teaching-learning, pedagogy

Introduction

Bhutan, known as the "Land of Happiness" or a GNH nation, is deeply influenced by Buddhist principles of loving-kindness (*jampa*), compassion (*nying jey*), empathetic joy (*gawa*), and equanimity (*tang nyom*) (Bhikshu, 2015; Chodron, 2011; Kraus & Sears, 2008; Patrul Rimpoche, 1999). These Four Immeasurable Qualities are essential for cultivating mindful and compassionate teaching. Teachers in Bhutan are expected to embody these values, serving as role models for their students. His Majesty the King has emphasised that "GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality, and humanity" (October 2013), while Buddhist philosophy teaches that happiness arises from positive mental attitudes, prioritising the well-being of others over self-interest (Payutto, 1994; Tashi, 2004).

Despite this philosophical foundation, studies indicate a troubling rise in negative behaviours, including cruelty and insensitivity towards students in both schools and higher education (Schuelka & Sherab, 2022; Sherab, 2013; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023). Reports also highlight bullying and discrimination among students and staff (Choden et al., 2019; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023; Dolma, 2022), which adversely affect students' mental well-being and can have long-term detrimental effects (Sherab, 2013; Yangdon et al., 2021). Research further reveals that Bhutanese students often perceive schools as sources of unhappiness due to bullying, excessive emphasis on examinations, boredom, and strict disciplinary measures (Sherab & Schuelka, 2023).

The "**Educating for Gross National Happiness" (EGNH)** initiative, launched in 2010, sought to integrate GNH values into all aspects of school life (Sherab, 2013). Yet, evidence suggests a persistent misalignment between school practices and the advancement of happiness in Bhutanese society (Sherab & Schuelka, 2021; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023). International research also indicates that students perform better academically when they are happy and free from stress (Adler, 2016; Kaplan et al., 2005; King & Datu, 2017). Pestalozzi, a Swiss philosopher, emphasised the importance of emotional and moral education alongside intellectual development, stating that "the basis of moral action is not the head, but the heart" (Brühlmeier, 2010). Similarly, Noddings (2003) highlights that classrooms should reflect a universal desire for happiness, minimising pain and maximising opportunities for pleasure. Studies have shown that universities face a crisis of student well-being, necessitating genuineness, connection, care, and compassion in educational relationships (Macaskill, 2012; Mikalajūnaitė, 2019; Riva et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2024; Yangdon et al., 2021).

The inability of Bhutanese teachers to model positive behaviour reflects the quality of their training. Positive role modelling by teachers significantly impacts students' lives (Hanushek, 2011, cited in Inan, 2014). Substantial evidence shows that young children learn essential soft skills from role models through a hidden curriculum, which can be more influential than explicit teaching (Sherab, 2013; Utha, 2016). As teacher educators, we are concerned about the prevalence of negative role models in schools, which suggests that teacher preparation programmes have neglected fundamental issues while focusing solely on academics.

Although prior research has documented these challenges and critiqued the misalignment between EGNH and actual school practices (Sherab & Schuelka, 2021; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023), it has not adequately addressed *how teacher educators themselves can embody and model the Four Immeasurable Qualities in practice*. Existing studies tend to describe problems or policy gaps but provide limited guidance on transforming classroom behaviours through values-based pedagogy. This gap is critical because teacher preparation programmes continue to emphasise academic content while neglecting the cultivation of compassion, equanimity, and mindfulness—qualities essential for role modelling and embedding GNH principles in education.

Therefore, this collaborative action research (CAR) aimed to evaluate our classroom behaviours and find ways to embody the Four Immeasurable Qualities as positive role models. It is essential for teacher educators to possess these basic qualities. There is widespread agreement in the literature that such attributes and core competencies of a good teacher must be a part of teacher education programmes (Bernard, 2015; Casero, 2016; Tunca & Şahin, 2015). Once a baseline was established, we implemented interventions to improve our behaviours, intending to inculcate these qualities in prospective teachers.

Literature Review

Understanding the Four Immeasurables

The cultivation of the Four Immeasurable qualities (*Brahmavihara or Apramana*) is essential across Buddhist traditions, originating in pre-Buddhist times and present in various yogic traditions of India (Weiss, 2022). These qualities—loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity—are practiced as heart meditations, complementing mindfulness and insight. Known as *Tshe Mey Zhi* (*Brahmaviharas*), the Four Immeasurables involve generating equanimity, love, compassion, and joy towards all sentient beings, integral to Buddhism (Chodron, 2011). They are thought-feelings that open our hearts toward others and ourselves, serving as precursors to Bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to seek enlightenment for all sentient beings. The key aspect is extending these qualities to all sentient beings without exclusion. Each Immeasurable encompasses four components: a wish, an aspiration, a resolve, and a request for inspiration, leading the mind to a deeper, more committed state (Chodron, 2011; Patrul Rimpoche, 1999). Practicing these steps with specific people or situations aids in achieving spiritual maturation, a core aspect of mindfulness.

Loving-kindness (*metta or jampa*) signifies warm-heartedness and compassion for oneself and others, distinct from ordinary love, which often involves attachment. It represents detachment and unselfish interest in others' welfare. Compassion (*karuna or nying jey*) is the ability to empathise with and respond to others' suffering with kindness, embodying the wish to liberate all sentient beings from suffering. Sympathetic joy (*mudita or gawa*) is the ability to feel happiness for the successes of others, recognising that all sentient beings have the potential for bliss. Equanimity (*upekkha or tang nyom*) involves maintaining calm and balance in challenging situations, fostering a clear-minded state free from delusions or agitation. It forms the basis for unconditional love, compassion, and joy for others'

happiness, preventing negative actions. Equanimity suffuses the other three qualities by breaking down self-centred divisions, allowing loving and compassionate concern for others to extend evenly (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Chodron, 2011; Fielding, 2004; Pandolpho, 2020; Patrul Rimpoche, 1999).

Cultivating these qualities leads to increased kindness and compassion, as evidenced by practitioners and studies. In Bhutan, teachers should understand and practice the Four Immeasurables in their daily teachings, beginning by cultivating these qualities towards themselves and then extending them to friends, neutral individuals, and difficult people.

Application of the Four Immeasurables in the Education System

People do not live their lives in moral or ethical isolation but grow up within particular moral traditions (Reiss, 1999). In Bhutan, Buddhist philosophy profoundly influences the lives of its people. As the 'Land of Happiness,' the cultivation of the Four Immeasurables—*Tshe Mey Zhi*—is essential, underpinning the guiding philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). GNH represents development with values, bridging fundamental values of kindness, equality, and humanity (His Majesty's Address to the National Assembly of Bhutan, 21 October 2013). Article 9-2 of the constitution directs the state "to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness" (RGoB, 2008, p.18).

For nearly sixty years, GNH principles have guided Bhutan's development, emphasising well-being beyond financial measures and aligning with sustainable development ideals. Bhutan has become a significant voice for development, measuring prosperity through the spiritual, physical, social, and environmental health of its citizens. Studies advocate for the transformation of Bhutan's educational system to embody GNH values for its longevity (Hayward et al., 2009; Sherab, 2013). The EGNH initiative, introduced in 2010, aimed to integrate GNH values in all school aspects, focusing on leadership, teaching-learning, and community relationships (Gyamtso et al., 2017; Tshomo, 2016). Significant progress has been made in promoting EGNH values through various school-based activities (Gyamtso et al., 2017). Tacit knowledge transfer, or the 'hidden curriculum' (Utha et al., 2016; Sherab, 2013), plays a crucial role in this process. Teachers acting as role models and fostering teamwork help implement EGNH principles.

Teacher education is vital for promoting EGNH and the Four Immeasurables in the classroom. Mamgain (2010) refers to this as 'ethical consciousness in the classroom,' where teachers use contemplative pedagogy to cultivate empathy and compassion. Globally, there is agreement that education should contribute to personal and collective happiness (Elwick & Cannizzaro, 2017; Layard, 2005; Mamgain, 2010; Noddings, 2003; Nikolaev & Rusakov, 2015; Vinh, 2022). Studies indicate that teachers must possess emotional intelligence, compassion, and care to support students' well-being (Riva et al., 2020).

However, there are growing concerns about a decline in these values in schools (Sherab & Schuelka, 2021; Sherab & Schuelka, 2023). Lhamo et al. (2020) argue for compassionate pedagogy to enhance teaching effectiveness. Schools must support students' intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, and emotional development. Practicing the Four Immeasurables can improve quality of life by fostering peace and contentment. The Four Immeasurables can positively impact college students by cultivating empathy, compassion, and emotional resilience (Bhikshu, 2015; Chodron, 2011; Kraus & Sears, 2008). For instance:

- Loving-kindness (*jampa*) helps students build empathy and community.
- Compassion (*nying jey*) encourages volunteering and emotional support.
- Sympathetic joy (*gawa*) promotes celebrating peers' achievements.
- Equanimity (*tang nyom*) aids in managing academic and personal demands.

While classroom-based research on the Four Immeasurables is limited, studies exist in psychology and psychotherapy (Elices, 2017; Kraus & Sears, 2008; Neff & Germer, 2022). Therefore, this exploratory collaborative action research on embodying the Four Immeasurables is the first of its kind in the Bhutanese education system.

Research Question

How can teacher educators embody the Four Immeasurables in the teaching-learning practices?

Sub-questions

1. What were the overall experiences of the module tutors before and after implementing the intervention strategies to embody the Four Immeasurables in teaching-learning practices?
2. What is the level of module tutors' (researchers) care for their students?
3. What are some of the interventions that can be successfully used by the teachers to embody the Four Immeasurables in their teaching-learning practices?
4. What are some of the key strengths and weaknesses that emerged as a result of the embodiment of the Four Immeasurables?

Research Approach

Collaborative Action Research

This study was conducted as a collaborative action research project involving 12 faculty members and their 12 different classes (N = 332). The design followed Kemmis and McTaggart's action research spiral model—Reconnaissance, Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting (Grundy, 1995; Maxwell, 2003). Action research provided a framework for faculty to critically examine their own teaching practices and implement interventions to embody the Four Immeasurables. It enabled iterative cycles of reflection and improvement, situating the inquiry within real-life classroom contexts (Crowe et al., 2011).

Within this broader action research framework, each faculty member's class was treated as an individual case. This allowed for detailed situational analyses of how the Four Immeasurables were integrated into teaching practices. Each case generated rich qualitative data, capturing the unique dynamics of different classrooms. The case study approach thus complemented the action research process by providing depth and contextual specificity, while the cross-case analysis offered a holistic view of shared themes and patterns (Willis, 2014).

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Informed by existing literature and personal experiences, the CAR team identified intervention strategies to embody the Four Immeasurables during the autumn semester of 2023. Data collection was continuous throughout the semester. The primary tool was a research diary maintained by all members to document daily experiences. Regular team meetings facilitated debriefing and experience sharing. Additional data were collected through end-of-semester student module feedback, in-depth interviews with two students from each member's class, and a survey on the 'care' questionnaire, with a critical friend conducting the student interviews.

The data were primarily qualitative, comprising interview transcripts (n = 24), student module feedback (n = 259), and research diary reflections. A post-intervention survey (n = 316) on the CARE questionnaire was administered to assess students' perceptions of the quality of CARE provided by respective tutors. Thematic analysis was conducted using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (University of Pretoria, n.d.). For survey data on CARE, descriptive analysis was conducted, allowing for data triangulation. Analysis proceeded in two stages, individual case level where each tutor's class was analysed as a distinct case, generating 12 case studies followed by cross-case analysis. Findings were synthesised across cases to identify common themes, resulting in a comprehensive cross-case analysis.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards, with formal clearance obtained from the Centre for Educational Research and Development. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was secured from all participants, and they were fully briefed on the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymisation and the use of pseudonyms, while audio recordings will be securely stored and destroyed after five years. To minimise discomfort among student interviewees, the concept of *critical friends* was employed in collecting interview data, ensuring a supportive environment and safeguarding participants' rights and well-being throughout the research process.

Intervention Strategies

The following intervention strategies categorised into the Four Immeasurable qualities were identified and implemented during the semester. While some were regularly implemented, others were

implemented only when required. Each tutor had two classes of two hours each in a week. Weekly meetings were held during the intervention period to share experiences and learn from each other regarding both intervention strategies and research methods.

Loving-Kindness (*Jampa*)

The first Immeasurable, Loving-Kindness—*Jampa*, which is a sense of warm-heartedness and compassion for oneself and others—was practiced through some of the time-tested strategies such as mindfulness practice, heart/well-being circles, cultivating gratitude, and making positive affirmations. These strategies have been found to have significant benefits for both teachers and students, fostering a more focused, compassionate, and engaged classroom environment, leading to well-being and productive academic outcomes (Adler, 2016; Epton & Harris, 2008; Epton et al., 2014; Escobar-Soler et al., 2023; Harris et al., 2014; Riva et al., 2020; Robinson, 2022).

Compassion (*Nyingjey*)

The ability to feel and respond to the suffering of others with kindness and understanding, which is the ultimate compassionate motivation, was practiced through intervention strategies such as positive role modeling, non-violent communication, empathetic listening, and human dignity (Kendrick, 2007). Tutors worked on creating supportive and understanding interactions. The positive impact of role modeling by the teachers has a "life-transforming effect" (Hanushek, 2011, cited in Inan, 2014, p. 427) on their students. Existing literature also suggests how these strategies support young children in learning valuable soft skills from their role models in the form of hidden curriculum, which is more powerful than what is being explicitly taught in the classroom (Sherab, 2013; Utha, 2016).

Sympathetic Joy (*Gawa*)

Sympathetic joy refers to finding delight in the joy of others. Practicing delight in the joys of others—or, in some commentaries, rejoicing in the virtue and goodness of others—targets our envy, ambition, pride, and arrogance (Chodron, 2011; Patrul Rimpoche, 1999). This was practiced through strategies such as celebrating the achievements of others, gratitude practices, self-care through drawing boundaries, and saying "no" to requests for help or support. For instance, drawing boundaries and saying "no" is crucial for people to maintain a positive and productive environment. It involves establishing clear expectations about behaviour, workload, and appropriate interactions while also protecting one's own time and well-being.

Equanimity (*Tang nyom*)

Equanimity refers to a state of mental balance and even-mindedness (Chodron, 2011; Patrul Rimpoche, 1999). It involves maintaining inner calm and steadiness regardless of the external circumstances. It is the balance that infuses the other three—loving-kindness, compassion, and

sympathetic joy, with wisdom and helps each of those qualities from falling (Salzberg, 2024). *Tang nyom* was practiced through strategies such as mindful communication, fairness and equity, and giving voice to students (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Fielding, 2004; Pandolpho, 2020).

Findings and Discussion

The findings and discussions are presented in the form of a summarised cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1981). Themes presented below provide insights into effective teaching practices and areas for improvement: i) Twelve case study contexts; ii) themes; and iii) areas for improvement:

Twelve Case Study Contexts

This study was implemented by 12 teacher educators (Female= 5; Male= 7) who voluntarily joined the group to examine our own teaching practices and implement interventions to embody the Four Immeasurables. Where relevant, these tutors are referred to as Tutor 1; Tutor 2; … and Tutor 12 in this report. Our higher education teaching experiences ranged from three years to more than 30 years, and the modules taught included sports nutrition, invasion games, inclusive education, early childhood education, Dzongkha education, academic skills, action research in Dzongkha, social issues, and social change and development. These modules include diploma, bachelor's, and master's level courses. Some members were experienced action researchers, while a few were new to action research. A few had PhD and bachelor's qualifications, while the majority had master's level qualifications.

Themes

The cross-case analysis revealed key themes that highlight the multifaceted nature of teaching and learning. Approachability and supportive relationships, compassion and care, flexibility and adaptability, effective communication, inclusivity and fairness, professionalism and competence, and mindfulness and well-being emerged as critical components that contribute to a supportive and engaging learning environment. These themes not only reflect the personal qualities of the educators but also align with best practices in contemporary educational research, indicating a path forward for continuous improvement in teaching and learning. By focusing on these themes, educators can enhance their impact on student learning and well-being, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and effective educational experience. Each of the themes is presented below:

Approachability and Supportive Relationships

A recurring theme across the case studies is the importance of being an approachable and a supportive educator. According to a female student, "our sir [Tutor 9] is approachable, provides equal opportunities, and treats everyone equally." Many students appreciated the friendly and open demeanor of their tutors, fostering a comfortable learning environment. One student described her Tutor (4) as

"very approachable, caring, and respects students. I have approached her several times and I think she can understand our problems." Students noted their tutors' willingness to listen and provide assistance outside of class hours. For instance, one student appreciated her teacher (Tutor 6), "besides the module topics, she always gave us good advice on academics and life matters and provided attention to students, particularly to those who were troubled or distressed" showing a supporting relationship. Findings from this study suggest that approachability is a key characteristic of effective teachers, as it encourages students to seek help and support, which is crucial for their academic success. Arthur et al. (2015) rightly argue that these are some of the important character strengths that sustain good teaching and that teachers must be proficient in this 'moral language' of the classroom. Earlier studies have also shown that such strong positive student-teacher relationships influence student motivation, engagement, and performance (Hughes, 2011; Sherab, 2013) and also lead to better mental health and well-being of adolescents (Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2013; Waters, 2011).

Compassion and Care

Compassion, one of the Four Immeasurables, was another central theme identified. Findings showed that tutors demonstrated care and understanding towards their students, often going beyond academic support to address their emotional and personal needs. Specific instances included tutors checking in on students' well-being and creating a nurturing atmosphere. This study found that tutors implemented various techniques such as care, compassion, and inclusion to inspire and engage students, fostering a love for learning. This was clearly reflected in one student's feedback for Tutor 1, "I thank sir from the bottom of my heart for the precious time spent with us, even though we are full of flaws. Once again, thank you for accepting us for who we are." Such teacher qualities have been widely researched and proven effective in motivating students to learn their academic subjects as well as take care of their well-being (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2016; Casero, 2016; Ida, 2017; Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2013). According to Ushioda and Dörnyei (2011), inspirational teachers play a critical role in encouraging academic perseverance. The impact of these strategies was reflected in students' increased motivation and engagement in their academic pursuits. This corroborates earlier findings of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) that compassionate and caring teaching enhances student engagement and motivation, leading to better academic outcomes. This will go a long way in fulfilling the national vision of GNH.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability in teaching methods were prominent themes across the reports. Findings suggest that tutors adjusted their teaching styles to accommodate varying student needs, learning styles, and unexpected classroom dynamics. This adaptability contributed to a more personalised learning experience and helped create an inclusive environment where all students felt valued. One male student expressed, "I feel safe to discuss anything with him [Tutor 3]. I like his caring nature. It makes me feel safe to discuss anything with him." Tomlinson (2014) highlights that teachers who adapt their methods improve academic outcomes for students, reinforcing the value of flexible

teaching approaches. Furthermore, giving students a say over what happens in class helps promote engagement and a strong sense of community (Pandolpho, 2020).

Effective Communication

Findings of this study exhibited that effective communication was one of the highlights of most tutors, which helped them convey complex concepts in an understandable manner. Many reports noted the importance of clear instructions and engaging explanations that promote interaction and participation. As noted by various scholars, effective communication is essential in facilitating student understanding and engagement, making it a fundamental trait of successful educators (Ates, 2017; Ida, 2017; Inan, 2014; Morrison & Evans, 2018).

Inclusivity and Fairness

Equitable treatment by teachers fosters positive student-teacher relationships, which in turn enhances student motivation and engagement. Findings from this study indicate that inclusivity and fairness were crucial components of effective teaching. Students consistently noted that their tutors treated everyone equally, creating a just learning environment. This theme reinforces the importance of creating an inclusive classroom to support diverse learners. For instance, one student appreciated her tutor (7), "Madam gives equal opportunity to all students, explains concepts clearly, and makes the learning process more effective." This finding aligns with prior studies that show teachers who create a safe environment build a bond between themselves and their students (Clapper, 2010; Haidari & Karakus, 2019), while on the other hand, favouritism and unfairness have been proven to have a serious impact on the learning of university students (Zaki et al., 2023).

Professionalism and Competence

Students involved in this study appreciated tutors who were well-prepared, knowledgeable, and committed, which contributed to a positive learning experience. Findings confirm that students value teachers who demonstrate high levels of competence, professionalism, and commitment, as these traits significantly impact their learning outcomes (Tunca & Sahin, 2015). According to one student, "My tutor [2] has a deep understanding of the subject matter she teaches. She explains concepts clearly and accurately, address student questions effectively, and tailor her instruction to meet individual needs," Literature also suggests that teacher commitment and passion are critical factors central to engagement with the profession (Crosswell & Elliott, 2004; Morrison & Evans, 2018).

Mindfulness and Well-being

Several case studies emphasised the incorporation of mindfulness practices into the classroom. Tutors reported implementing activities such as meditation, positive affirmations, and well-being circles that helped promote the emotional and mental health of their students. This finding corroborates the

existing literature that mindfulness practices enhance emotional regulation and well-being and reduce stress, leading to improved classroom management and student outcomes (Adler, 2016; Fredrickson et al., 2015; Graham & Truscott, 2019; Roeser et al., 2013; Roeser et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2019; Zeng et al., 2017). Findings also support how positive affirmations in the students' daily routine help improve their confidence, mental and emotional well-being, and overcome fear and self-doubt (Cooke et al., 2014; Falk et al., 2015). Students acknowledged the positive effects of these practices on their focus and overall well-being, highlighting the increasing relevance of mindfulness and well-being in educational settings.

Areas for Improvement

The identification of areas for improvement provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators as well as students. These recurring issues are discussed below:

Communication Challenges

A few case studies revealed that communication was not always effective, with some students feeling that their tutors could improve their communication. For instance, a few students expressed concerns about the clarity of instructions and the pace of speaking during lessons. One student noted that the tutor (1) needed to be louder while teaching. This highlights that, despite positive aspects, communication gaps can hinder student engagement and learning. According to Hattie (2009), effective teacher communication is crucial for student understanding and achievement, and any barriers in this area can negatively impact learning outcomes.

Intensity and Strictness

Some students reported that certain tutors exhibited a level of strictness or intensity that could be intimidating. For example, one student mentioned that a tutor (2) was "business-like" and suggested that a more relaxed demeanor could improve the learning environment. Research by Kohn (2006) indicates that overly strict teaching styles may create anxiety and disengagement in students, suggesting that a balance between authority and approachability is essential for effective teaching. Perhaps Zagyváné Szűcs' (2018) suggestion that a good teacher is friendly but strict, demanding but understanding, consistent, objective, unprejudiced, direct, patient, and respectful is apt to be noted here for further improvement.

Time Constraints

Multiple case studies highlighted time constraints as a significant challenge. Tutors often struggled to balance curriculum demands with the implementation of new strategies. Some reported feeling rushed and unable to fully engage in mindfulness practices or other interventions due to limited class time. This lack of time can prevent the effective incorporation of teaching strategies that foster a supportive learning environment. According to Arthur et al. (2015), time constraints in educational settings can lead to a less thoughtful approach to teaching, ultimately affecting student outcomes.

Resistance to Change

Resistance to the incorporation of the Four Immeasurables was noted in some reports. Certain students were hesitant or uninterested in engaging with new practices such as mindfulness or heart circles. This resistance may be attributed to cultural norms or personal preferences, indicating a challenge for educators seeking to implement these strategies effectively. As noted by Fullan (2007), resistance to change in educational settings is common and can arise when new initiatives are perceived as irrelevant or misaligned with students' needs and experiences.

Perceived Superficiality of Care

While many students appreciated the care shown by their tutors, some expressed skepticism about the authenticity of these efforts. Students remarked that they sometimes sensed a disconnect between the tutors' intentions and the actual impact on their learning experiences. This suggests that while care is a valued trait, it must be genuinely felt and not perceived as superficial to be effective. Research by Riva et al. (2020) indicates that authentic care from teachers is linked to improved student engagement and motivation; thus, superficial displays of care may not yield the desired positive effects.

Emotional Overwhelm

A few students indicated that the emotional components of interventions, such as sharing personal feelings during heart circles, could be overwhelming. Some felt uncomfortable discussing their emotions in a group setting, which could hinder their participation and overall comfort in the classroom. This highlights the need for careful implementation and consideration of students' emotional readiness for such activities. According to Brackett et al. (2019), emotional intelligence in educational settings is critical, and educators must be mindful of students' emotional states when implementing activities that require vulnerability.

Recommendations

To further enhance the positive aspects of teaching and learning, it is equally important to acknowledge and address the challenges that may hinder progress. By recognising these obstacles and working to mitigate them, educators can create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective learning environment. Within a GNH society, this means cultivating a compassionate and caring atmosphere where both teachers and students thrive.

One essential area is *communication*. Professional development workshops that emphasise clear instruction, active listening, and compassionate dialogue can help teachers refine their communication skills. Peer feedback sessions can further strengthen this process, ensuring that educators are able to connect meaningfully with diverse student needs. As Hattie (2009) cautions, barriers in communication can significantly undermine learning outcomes, making this a priority for improvement.

Equally important is the balance between *professionalism and compassion*. Educators must walk the middle path—firm yet approachable, disciplined yet empathetic. Overly strict approaches risk stifling creativity and inducing anxiety, while excessive leniency can erode respect and accountability. A balanced professionalism, as highlighted by Kohn (2006) and Zagyváné Szűcs (2018), fosters respect and a positive classroom climate. Mentorship programmes and socio-emotional learning workshops can guide teachers in embodying this blend of authority and care.

Time management is primarily about structured planning and the effective allocation of teaching time. Training in lesson planning, prioritisation, and scheduling helps educators balance curriculum demands with student engagement activities. When teachers manage their time well, they avoid rushing through content and can devote attention to meaningful interactions with students. As Arthur et al. (2015) caution, poor time management often leads to a less thoughtful approach to teaching, which can negatively affect student outcomes.

Mindfulness practices, on the other hand, are about emotional regulation and presence in the classroom. They equip educators with strategies to reduce stress, remain calm, and respond thoughtfully to challenges. Schussler et al. (2016) highlight that mindfulness enhances teachers' emotional regulation and resilience, which in turn improves classroom management and creates a more supportive environment for students.

Resistance to change is another challenge that must be addressed with openness and empathy. Facilitating discussions with students about new practices, incorporating their feedback, and sharing examples of successful implementation can ease transitions. Fullan (2007) and Sanchez et al. (2013) remind us that when teachers approach change with positivity and cheerfulness, students' willingness to learn and sense of well-being improve significantly.

At the heart of effective teaching lies *authentic care and compassion*. Educators should engage in self-reflection to ensure that their expressions of care are genuine and resonate with students. Building empathetic relationships, as Riva et al. (2020) emphasise, enhances student motivation and engagement. Creating safe spaces for emotional expression, guided by Brackett et al. (2019), allows students to share openly and feel supported, further strengthening the bond between teacher and learner.

Finally, *continuous feedback* must be embedded into the teaching process. Structured mechanisms for student input, regularly reviewed in faculty meetings, ensure that educators remain responsive and adaptive. Hattie (2009) highlights the importance of feedback as a cornerstone of learning, and when students are given a voice, teaching practices evolve in ways that better meet their needs.

Conclusion

This collaborative action research focused on the Four Immeasurables of Loving-kindness

(*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Joy (*Mudita*), and Equanimity (*Upekkha*) has yielded significant insights and benefits for both tutors and students. For educators, embodying these qualities has led to a deeper understanding of our students' needs and challenges, paving the way for more empathetic and effective teaching approaches. All participating tutors, regardless of their level of experience, reported enhanced satisfaction and fulfillment in their roles, feeling a stronger sense of connection and value within the educational environment. Notably, some veteran colleagues expressed a desire to have encountered this experience earlier in their careers to positively influence their teaching practices.

Tutors who actively embody the principles they teach can inspire students and deepen their understanding. By focusing on enhancing communication, balancing professionalism with approachability, effectively managing time, and fostering genuine care, educators can cultivate a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Continuous professional development and student engagement will further support the growth of both educators and students throughout their educational journey.

For students, the integration of these qualities fostered a nurturing and supportive atmosphere, significantly enriching their overall learning experience. They reported feeling more respected, understood, and motivated, which directly contributed to increased engagement and improved academic performance. The focus on cultivating positive relationships and emotional intelligence not only facilitated academic growth but also supported their personal development and well-being, an essential factor to be considered by the educators. This nurturing environment is likely to inspire our students to model these qualities in their own teaching practices as they transition into their roles as educators. This presents an opportunity for further study to explore the long-term effects on our graduates.

In summary, this research emphasises the transformative potential of the Four Immeasurables in education, demonstrating their profound impact on teaching practices and student outcomes. The findings highlight the critical need to integrate these qualities into educational frameworks, especially within teacher education programmes, to foster a compassionate, joyful, and equitable learning environment.

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