INTI JOURNAL | Vol.2026, Issue 1, No.14
eISSN:2600-7320

Exploring the Influence of Instructional Leadership on Teacher Motivation for Effective Teaching: Evidence from Rural Bhutan

Jamtsho[1], Sonam Dorji[2*], Sangay Zangmo[3]

[1]Principal office, Wangdichoeling Lower Secondary School, Bumthang, Bhutan
[2]Science Department, Jakar Higher Secondary School, Bumthang, Bhutan
[3]Mathematics Department, Wangdichoeling Lower Secondary School, Bumthang, Bhutan

[*]**Email**: sdorji123@education.gov.bt

Abstract

Instructional leadership plays an indispensable role in nurturing both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of teachers. Teacher motivation significantly influences teachers' performance and their ability to enhance students' academic achievement. This study examined the factors influencing instructional leadership and teacher motivation in a rural Bhutanese Lower Secondary School. The study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data was collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire administered to 35 respondents. Qualitative data was gathered through focus group interviews involving five teachers and five instructional leaders to gain deeper insights. Interviews with instructional leaders also helped validate the findings reported by teachers. The results indicate that strong instructional leadership practices were evident, particularly in setting clear instructional expectations (M=4.54). Providing meaningful recognition (M=4.72) also emerged as a powerful driver of teacher motivation. Qualitative findings confirmed that such leadership practices promote pedagogical innovation and strengthen teachers' commitment to effective teaching. However, the study also identified persistent systemic challenges. Severe resource constraints (M=3.95) were reported, suggesting moderate limitations in leadership effectiveness within the institutional context. Overall, the study establishes that instructional leadership is a systematic process for strengthening effective teaching in challenging educational settings. However, its effectiveness depends on adequate policy support and the availability of institutional resources. These findings provide evidence-based insights into leadership development and educational policy in similar developing contexts.

Keywords

Effective teaching, Instructional leadership, Motivation, Professional development

Submission: 23 January 2026; **Acceptance:** 14 March 2026; **Available online:** March 2026

Introduction

Instructional leadership has long been recognised as a key factor in improving school effectiveness and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2020). It involves guiding, monitoring, and supporting teachers to ensure effective classroom instruction while fostering a collaborative and supportive school environment. Teachers are central to the teaching–learning process, and their motivation plays an important role in determining instructional quality and student engagement.

Teacher motivation has been widely associated with leadership practices in schools. Motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, resilience, and commitment to professional development (Shen et al., 2015). In contrast, low motivation may lead to reduced instructional quality, absenteeism, and teacher attrition (Collie et al., 2019). Understanding how leadership practices influence teacher motivation is therefore essential for sustaining effective teaching and improving learning outcomes.

In Bhutan, strengthening school leadership has been identified as a key strategy for improving education quality and student learning outcomes (Royal Education Council [REC], 2019; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2020). However, schools located in rural areas often experience contextual challenges such as high teacher workloads, limited instructional resources, and geographical isolation, which can affect teacher morale and performance (Thinley, 2014; Deema, 2021). Examining how instructional leadership influences teacher motivation within such contexts is therefore important for understanding ways to support teachers and improve teaching effectiveness.

Instructional leadership primarily focuses on the role of school leaders in improving teaching and learning processes. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identified three core dimensions of instructional leadership: defining the school's mission, managing instructional programmes, and promoting a positive school learning climate. These dimensions emphasise the importance of setting clear goals, supporting teachers' instructional practices, and creating an environment that encourages professional collaboration. Similarly, Leithwood et al. (2008) highlights that effective leadership involves developing a shared vision, promoting collaboration, and supporting professional learning, all of which contribute to improved teacher motivation and instructional effectiveness.

Motivation theories provide additional insights into how leadership practices influence teacher engagement and performance. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1959) distinguishes between motivators, such as achievement and recognition, and hygiene factors, including salary and working conditions. While hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction, motivators play a critical role in promoting engagement and commitment. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) further suggests that intrinsic motivation is enhanced when individuals experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Similarly, Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) proposes that individuals are motivated when they believe their efforts will lead to valued outcomes, such as improved student achievement.

Empirical research provides substantial evidence linking instructional leadership with teacher motivation and instructional quality. Ahmad et al. (2022) found that supportive and collaborative leadership practices significantly enhance teacher motivation. In Bhutan, Norbu and Ghalay (2023) reported that principals' leadership styles influence teacher motivation, burnout, and job satisfaction. International research also demonstrates that effective instructional leadership contributes to improved teaching quality and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). In resource-constrained contexts, leadership plays an especially important role in sustaining teacher motivation and supporting instructional improvement (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Walker, 2014).

Within the Bhutanese context, several studies highlight the importance of leadership practices in influencing teacher motivation. Tshewang (2021) found that supportive leadership positively affects teacher motivation in secondary schools. Similarly, Dorji (2025) reported that principals' leadership practices significantly influence teacher motivation in schools in Lhuentse District. These findings suggest that leadership practices can play an important role in strengthening teacher motivation and improving instructional effectiveness in Bhutanese schools. Despite growing attention to leadership and teacher motivation, limited research has examined these factors in rural Bhutanese schools. This study therefore investigates how principals' instructional leadership practices influence teacher motivation and teaching effectiveness at Wangdicholing Lower Secondary School in Bumthang. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of leadership practices that support teacher motivation and strengthen teaching quality.

The study also holds significance at multiple levels. At the policy level, the findings may inform leadership development initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Education by providing evidence-based insights into strengthening instructional leadership practices in schools. For school leaders, the research offers practical strategies for enhancing teacher motivation, which is essential for sustaining effective teaching. From the teachers' perspective, the study highlights leadership practices that support professional growth and improve job satisfaction. Academically, the study contributes to the limited literature on the factors influencing instructional leadership and teacher motivation in Bhutan, particularly within rural contexts.

The study seeks to address several key research questions. First, it examines the instructional leadership practices implemented by the school leadership at Wangdicholing LSS. Second, it explores how instructional leadership influences teacher motivation for effective teaching. Finally, it identifies the specific leadership strategies that have the greatest impact on enhancing teacher motivation.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a convergent parallel design. In this design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analysed independently during the same phase of the research process, and the results are integrated during interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The

quantitative component examined instructional leadership practices and teacher motivation through descriptive analysis, while the qualitative component explored teachers' and school leaders' perceptions and experiences regarding leadership practices and motivation. Integrating both datasets allowed for triangulation of findings and a nuanced understanding of how instructional leadership influences teacher motivation within the school context.

Research Setting and Context

The study was conducted at Wangdicholing Lower Secondary School (LSS) in Bumthang Dzongkhag, Bhutan. The school provides education from Pre-Primary to Class VIII and is situated in a rural community primarily dependent on agriculture. Rural schools in Bhutan often face challenges such as limited instructional resources, geographical isolation, and high teacher workloads. These contextual characteristics make Wangdicholing LSS an appropriate setting to investigate how instructional leadership practices affect teacher motivation in resource-constrained educational environments.

Participants and Sample

The study involved two groups of participants: instructional leaders and teachers. The instructional leaders comprised five participants, including members of the School Management Team (SMT) and Heads of Departments (HoDs), who were selected through purposive sampling due to their direct responsibility for instructional leadership and decision-making related to teaching and learning. The teacher group consisted of thirty-five participants from various grade levels and subject areas, selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across both STEM and non-STEM disciplines. The sample size reflects the total teaching population of the school. As the study was conducted in a single rural school, the findings provide context-specific insights rather than broad generalizations. Nonetheless, such case-based investigations are valuable for understanding leadership dynamics in rural Bhutanese schools and may offer transferable lessons for similar contexts.

Instrumentation

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from established and validated instruments. Instructional leadership practices were measured using items derived from Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS).

Teacher motivation was measured using items adapted from validated teacher motivation scales informed by Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) and prior educational leadership research. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: (1) instructional leadership practices and (2) teacher motivation, with all items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). To ensure reliability, a pilot test was conducted with a small group of teachers ($n = 8$) from a neighboring school. The pilot indicated that all items were clear and appropriate, and minor wording adjustments were made. Cronbach's alpha values for the final instrument were acceptable, indicating strong internal consistency: Instructional Leadership $\alpha = 0.87$ and Teacher Motivation $\alpha = 0.84$. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with instructional leaders and focus group discussions with teachers. The interviews and discussions focused on three main topic areas: (1) perceptions of instructional leadership practices, (2) experiences of teacher motivation, and (3) factors influencing the leadership and motivation. Open-ended guiding questions allowed participants to provide in-depth responses and examples from their professional experiences.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection occurred in two phases. First, the structured questionnaire was distributed to teachers to gather quantitative data on instructional leadership practices and motivation levels. In the second phase, qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions with teachers and semi-structured interviews with instructional leaders. These qualitative methods enabled participants to elaborate on their questionnaire responses and provide deeper insights into leadership practices that influence teacher motivation.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to examine teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership and motivation levels. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. This systematic approach enhanced the rigor and credibility of the qualitative findings.
both teachers and instructional leaders. Member checking was also conducted, wherein summaries of interview findings were shared with participants to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. These strategies ensured the trustworthiness and rigor of the study.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions on the Level of Instructional Leadership Practices

Item No	Item	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
1	My instructional leaders regularly provide constructive feedback on my teaching	4.28	0.69	High
2	The school leaders set clear expectations for teaching and learning.	4.54	0.51	Highest
3	Instructional support provided by the leaders enhances my classroom performance.	4.28	0.56	High
4	I feel encouraged to try innovative teaching methods because of leadership support.	4.44	0.68	High

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics on teachers' perceptions of instructional leadership practices. The results indicate that teachers generally hold favourable views toward their leaders' instructional support. The highest-rated item was *"The school leaders set clear expectations for teaching and learning"* (M = 4.54, SD = 0.51), which was categorised at the highest level of perception, suggesting that clarity of expectations is strongly emphasised by school leaders. Similarly, from the qualitative data, teachers expressed that the leaderships effectively communicated and reinforced the school's vision. T4 further elaborated the vision of the school:

> *Our school's vision focuses on making learning engaging, hands-on, and connected to real life. The leadership team has shared this through meetings, walk in observations, and*

coaching sessions. In science, this encouraged me to use more experiments, group work, and real-world examples. Their support helped me create lessons where students explore, ask questions, and take ownership of their learning.

Similarly qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interview of the instructional leaders. All the instructional leaders articulated clearly various forms of instructional practices implemented within the schools. Instructional leaders consistently emphasised that they actively engage in structured, evidence-based classroom observations and provide constructive feedback aligned with MoE criteria and performance rubrics. They highlighted processes such as reinforcing strengths, identifying areas for improvement, and offering actionable strategies rather than evaluative criticism. Leaders also stressed the importance of institutionalising expectations through verifying lesson plans, ensuring readiness to teach, promoting activity-based instruction, and monitoring consistent standards. One leader (L1) explained that after every observation, they "*fix time during teachers' free periods, begin with positive feedback, and then provide specific areas for improvement based on agreed criteria*." Another noted that a non-negotiable practice in their school is *"verifying lesson plans and observing classroom readiness every morning (L5)"*. Other items also reflected a high level of perception, with mean scores ranging from 4.28 to 4.44. Specifically, teachers acknowledged receiving constructive feedback on their teaching (M = 4.28, SD = 0.69) and instructional support that enhanced classroom performance (M = 4.28, SD = 0.56). Moreover, respondents agreed that leadership support encouraged them to adopt innovative teaching strategies (M = 4.44, SD = 0.68). Teachers reported that they received enough constructive feedback and support for teaching and learning. For instance, T1 recalled:

My instructional leader observed my science lesson on Force, where I relied mostly on verbal explanations, and students struggled to grasp the concept. He suggested incorporating more hands-on experiences and experiments. I applied this feedback by beginning the next lesson with a simple experiment using cotton balls, doors, and toy cars to demonstrate what force is and how it works. As a result, students became more engaged and asked thoughtful questions. Since then, I have made hands-on activities a regular feature of my science lessons.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that instructional leadership practices are perceived positively, with school leaders being most strongly recognised for establishing clear expectations for teaching and learning.

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership-Driven Motivational Practices

Item No	Items	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
1	I feel motivated when my efforts are recognised by school leaders.	4.67	0.66	Highest
2	Opportunities for professional development motivate me to improve my teaching.	4.49	0.64	High
3	Supportive school leadership helps me stay committed to my profession.	4.67	0.53	Highest
4	My morale increases when my instructional practices are appreciated.	4.72	0.46	Highest

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics on teachers' perceptions of leadership-driven motivational practices. The data indicates a consistently positive perception, with all items rated at either the highest or high level of perception. The highest mean score was observed for the item *"My morale increases when my instructional practices are appreciated"* (M = 4.72, SD = 0.46), suggesting that recognition and appreciation are powerful motivators for teachers. For example, (T5) expressed the excitement when appreciated by the instructional leaders:

> *It's when school leaders notice the specific things I do in my teaching, like how I help students understand hard topics or how I create fun lessons, and they tell me exactly what they like. Which boosts my confidence in teaching.*

Two other items also attained the highest level of perception, namely, *"I feel motivated when my efforts are recognised by school leaders"* (M = 4.67, SD = 0.66) and *"Supportive school leadership helps me stay committed to my profession"* (M = 4.67, SD = 0.53). These findings highlight that acknowledgment of teachers' contributions and supportive leadership play a critical role in sustaining teachers' motivation and professional commitment. T1 elaborated the motivation acquired when efforts are recognised by the school leaders:

> *Recognising the achievements and outcomes does impact on a teacher's commitment and dedication. And recently I was awarded certificates of appreciation and achievement for 100 percent result, supporting students in national level literary competition and for not using any Causal Leave in a year. This recognition motivated me to work harder and put optimum efforts in teaching.*

Meanwhile, the provision of professional development opportunities was also rated favorably (M = 4.49, SD = 0.64), categorised as a high level of perception. Although slightly lower than the other items, this still reflects strong agreement that professional growth opportunities enhance teacher motivation and teaching performance. Many teachers shared the positive perspectives of recent PD conducted on integration of ICT into curriculum. T2 explained that:

> *Amongst numerous PDs I attended, I would suggest ICT in classrooms as the most impactful in my professional life. It eased my planning, teaching and assessment of the learners. It also enhanced my subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge too*.

Interview data from the leaders supported the findings reported by the teachers interview and analysis of the survey questionnaires. Across interviews, leaders described a range of motivational strategies used throughout the academic year. These included verbal and written recognition, certificates of appreciation, and open acknowledgement during staff meetings. Leaders emphasised that recognition must be genuine, timely, and tied to actual impact on student learning. They also viewed supportive leadership as creating a caring environment, reducing workload where possible, delegating responsibilities based on competence, and being present during teacher stress or personal difficulties. A leader (L3) shared that the school awards certificates to teachers of Classes 6 and 8 "*when their students achieve national mean scores or 100% pass rates*," noting that these recognitions contribute to annual performance evaluations. Another (L2) emphasised that supportive leadership means *"treating everyone fairly, delegating based on strengths, and being available during challenging times."*

Overall, the results accentuate the significance of leadership practices in fostering teacher motivation. Recognition, appreciation, and supportive leadership emerged as particularly influential, while opportunities for professional development, though slightly less emphasised, remain a crucial motivator for continuous improvement in teaching.

Table 3. Teachers' Perceptions of Leadership Influence on Effective Teaching

Item No	Items	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
1	Instructional guidance from leadership has improved my teaching practices.	4.31	0.57	High
2	Motivational support from leadership encourages me to use student-centered methods.	4.46	0.60	High
3	My teaching effectiveness is directly influenced by the quality of school leadership.	4.49	0.72	High

Table 3 indicates the descriptive statistics on teachers' perceptions of leadership influence on effective teaching. The findings report that all items were rated at a high level of perception, with mean scores ranging from 4.31 to 4.49. This suggests that teachers' motivation is strongly associated with leadership practices having adverse impact on the instructional effectiveness.

The highest-rated item was *"My teaching effectiveness is directly influenced by the quality of school leadership"* (M = 4.49, SD = 0.72), indicating that teachers perceive leadership quality as a significant determinant of their classroom performance. T5 explained that:

> *Leadership in the school really impacts on the teacher's commitment and dedication to the service. I worked with few leaders, and I found that leaders who model themselves are the best leaders. I also found that leaders with good communication skills and trust and believe in the team impacts the efficacy of the teachers.*

Similarly, *"Motivational support from leadership encourages me to use student-centered methods"* (M = 4.46, SD = 0.60) was rated highly, suggesting that supportive leadership plays an important role in promoting innovative, student-focused teaching approaches.

Finally, *"Instructional guidance from leadership has improved my teaching practices"* (M = 4.31, SD = 0.57) also received a high level of perception, reinforcing the importance of direct instructional support from leaders in enhancing classroom practices as shared by the T3:

> *One teaching practice I improved as a direct result of school leadership guidance was my use of formative assessment. During a classroom observation, my principal suggested incorporating more frequent, low-stakes checks for understanding instead of relying mainly on end-of-unit tests. With that guidance, I began using exit tickets, quick polls, and peer discussions to gauge student learning in real time. At first, it required extra planning, but over time I found it saved me time because I could adjust lessons immediately rather than reteaching later.*

Furthermore, instructional leaders reported that their guidance aims to promote student-centred, activity-based, and interactive teaching. They described promoting evidence-based strategies such as cooperative learning, continuous assessment practices, innovative classroom activities, and the use of ICT and AI tools. Leaders stated that effective guidance directly improves classroom engagement, supports differentiation across career stages (new, experienced, struggling teachers), and enhances teacher competency.

Overall, the results indicate that leadership exerts a substantial influence on teaching effectiveness by providing instructional guidance, motivational support, and strong leadership qualities that collectively enhance teachers' professional practices.

Table 4. Teachers' Perceptions of Challenges and Recommendations Related to Instructional Leadership

Item No	Items	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
1	Lack of time for instructional supervision affects my teaching.	3.08	1.04	Moderate
2	Limited professional development opportunities reduce my motivation.	3.44	1.14	Moderate
3	Limited mentoring and coaching from my instructional leaders reduce my motivation.	2.92	1.11	Moderate
4	Resource constraints hinder effective teaching in my school.	3.95	1.15	High

Table 4 shows teachers' perceptions of challenges and recommendations related to instructional leadership. The results show a mixture of moderate and high levels of perception, suggesting that while some challenges are moderately experienced, others are more strongly felt by teachers.

The highest-rated challenge was *"Resource constraints hinder effective teaching in my school"* (M = 3.95, SD = 1.15), which reached a high level of perception. This indicates that inadequate resources remain a significant barrier to effective instructional practices. Many teachers shared the concern lack of adequate Science Lab and ICT lab affects the teaching and learning. For example, T3 stated that, "If I could get one specific resource for my classroom, it would be better science lab materials, like microscopes, test tubes, and measuring tools. Also, it would be general ICT lab for other teaching and learning".

In contrast, three items were rated at a moderate level of perception. These include *"Limited professional development opportunities reduce my motivation"* (M = 3.44, SD = 1.14), *"Lack of time for instructional supervision affects my teaching"* (M = 3.08, SD = 1.04), and *"Limited mentoring and coaching from my instructional leaders reduce my motivation"* (M = 2.92, SD = 1.11). These findings suggest that teachers perceive time constraints, insufficient mentoring, and limited professional development as moderate challenges, though still noteworthy in shaping their teaching experiences and motivation.

Additionally, leaders highlighted persistent challenges such as time constraints, administrative workload, frequent meetings, large teacher numbers, and limited resources. These factors reduce the time available for meaningful instructional supervision and professional

development. Financial limitations also restrict diverse PD opportunities, pushing leaders to conduct in-house PD and prioritise essential materials. Instructional leaders also identified the need to strengthen mentoring systems but noted obstacles such as lack of time, insufficient trained mentors, and varying levels of teacher receptiveness. For example, leader (L4) expressed his/her concern:

> *Teaching responsibilities, administrative correspondence, and co-curricular monitoring reduce the time available for classroom supervision. Sometimes there also ad hoc meetings to be attended. Therefore, these impedes the quality of the classroom supervision. Whenever there are discipline issues of the students being reported to the administration, this also affects the classroom supervision.*

Another explained that a key challenge in mentoring is *"leaders being overburdened and unable to allocate consistent time for mentoring cycles,"* recommending the involvement of HoDs and trained peer mentors.

Overall, the results highlight that while resource limitations present a more prominent challenge, issues related to time, mentoring, and professional development also require attention. Addressing these challenges could enhance the effectiveness of instructional leadership and further strengthen teacher motivation and performance.

The study reported that teachers perceived instructional leaders as highly effective in providing clear direction and guidance for teaching and learning. The highest-rated item, "*The school leader sets clear expectations for teaching and learning*" (M = 4.54, SD = 0.51), highlights the importance of a shared vision and structured instructional support. Leaders consistently articulated this vision through meetings, lesson observations, and feedback sessions, ensuring teachers understood institutional priorities. This finding aligns with Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), emphasising vision-setting and instructional management as central to effective leadership. Likewise, Leithwood et al. (2008) emphasise the importance of a shared vision in fostering collaborative teaching cultures. Teachers' qualitative narratives confirmed that constructive feedback from leaders encouraged innovative practices such as hands-on science activities and cooperative learning. Similarly, Tshewang (2021) found that principals who provided clarity of purpose enhanced teacher engagement and motivation. Thus, clarity of vision combined with consistent instructional support is fundamental to effective instructional leadership.

Recognition and appreciation emerged as key motivators enhancing teacher morale and performance. The highest-rated item, "*My morale increases when my instructional practices are appreciated*" (M = 4.72, SD = 0.46), affirms that acknowledgment strongly influences teachers' enthusiasm. This aligns with Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, which identifies recognition as a critical driver of job satisfaction, and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that fulfillment of competence and relatedness enhances intrinsic motivation. Teachers expressed that verbal praise, public acknowledgment, and certificates of appreciation inspired greater commitment and professional pride. Norbu and Ghalay (2023) similarly observed that recognition in Bhutanese schools correlated with increased motivation, reduced burnout, and higher professional satisfaction. Therefore, recognition and appreciation serve as powerful

leadership strategies to sustain motivation, commitment, and teacher retention within Bhutanese schools.

Findings indicated that leadership practices significantly influenced teaching quality. The highest-rated statement, "*My teaching effectiveness is directly influenced by the quality of school leadership*" (M = 4.49, SD = 0.72), underscores this connection. Teachers reported that effective instructional guidance, feedback, and motivational support from leaders improved lesson delivery, assessment practices, and student engagement. Hallinger and Heck (2010) also confirmed a strong link between instructional leadership and improved learning outcomes. Expectancy Theory explains that teachers are more motivated when they believe leadership efforts contribute to meaningful outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Bhutanese evidence from Dorji (2025) similarly indicates that principals' mentorship and professional support enhance teacher performance and instructional quality. Thus, instructional leadership plays a pivotal role not only in motivating teachers but also in strengthening pedagogical practices and professional identity.

Despite these strengths, teachers reported several constraints limiting effective instructional leadership. The highest-rated challenge was resource scarcity (M = 3.95, SD = 1.15), followed by limited professional development, inadequate mentoring, and lack of time for supervision. These issues mirror challenges in developing educational contexts (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Walker, 2014). In rural Bhutanese schools, shortages of teaching materials, ICT tools, and laboratory facilities hinder innovative pedagogy. Teachers emphasised that these constraints restrict experiential learning and continuous improvement. Leithwood et al. (2008) highlighted that sustained professional learning and coaching are essential for maintaining instructional quality. Therefore, addressing these barriers through targeted capacity-building, funding, and policy support is crucial. Overall, the study affirms that instructional leadership, anchored in vision, recognition, and professional support, greatly enhances teacher motivation and effectiveness. Strengthening leadership capacity through systemic support and adequate resources can further elevate educational outcomes in Bhutan.

Conclusion

The study reported that instructional leadership plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher motivation and teaching effectiveness within Bhutanese schools. Teachers expressed highly positive perceptions of their school leaders, particularly valuing the clarity of vision, constructive feedback, and consistent instructional support provided. Recognition and appreciation emerged as powerful motivators that strengthened teachers' commitment, morale, and professional satisfaction. Moreover, effective leadership was found to directly influence pedagogical practices, promoting student-centered teaching approaches and continuous professional growth. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as limited resources, insufficient mentoring, restricted professional development opportunities, and time constraints were identified as barriers to effective instructional leadership.

Therefore, future initiatives should focus on strengthening leadership capacity through targeted professional development, improving mentoring and coaching systems, enhancing school resources and infrastructure, and allocating adequate time for instructional supervision. Such

measures will help cultivate a more supportive and dynamic educational environment that empowers teachers and advances Bhutan's holistic vision of education grounded in Gross National Happiness.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their sincere gratitude to all participants who generously contributed their time to this study. Special thanks are also extended to the school administrators and teachers who were involved during the research. This study did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

References

Ahmad, S., Khan, M., & Ali, R. (2022). The influence of instructional leadership on teacher motivation: Evidence from secondary schools. *International Journal of Educational Leadership, 15*(2), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.55737/qjssh.791004378

Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., & Perry, N. E. (2012). School climate and social–emotional learning: Predicting teacher stress, job satisfaction, and teaching efficacy. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 1189–1204. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029356

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Springer Science & Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7

Deema, T. W. (2021). School leadership in remote areas of Bhutan: Some insights from the land of the thunder dragon. Education Research and Perspectives, 48, 1–23. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.366393079257563

Dorji, P. (2025). *Leadership practices and teacher motivation: A study of secondary schools in Lhuentse District, Bhutan*. Royal University of Bhutan Press.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning in developing countries: A framework for policy and practice. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 39*(6), 659–682. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111116699

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management, 30*(2), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663214

Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1985). Assessing the instructional leadership behavior of principals. *The Elementary School Journal, 86*(2), 217–247. https://doi.org/10.1086/461445

Hallinger, P., & Walker, A. (2014). Instructional leadership in resource-limited contexts: Evidence from Tanzania. *Journal of Educational Administration, 52*(2), 196–214.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management, 28*(1), 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701800060

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management, 40*(1), 5–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077

Ministry of Education. (2020). *Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014–2024: Rethinking education*. Thimphu, Bhutan: Ministry of Education.

Norbu, N., & Ghalay, K. (2023). Leadership styles of school principals and their impact on teacher motivation in Bhutan. *Bhutan Journal of Educational Research, 9*(1), 12–29.

Shen, J., Leslie, J. M., Spybrook, J. K., & Ma, X. (2015). Are principal background and school processes related to teacher job satisfaction? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 43*(3), 405–427. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.3102/0002831211419949

Thinley, K. (2014). *Educational leadership in Bhutan: Practices and challenges of principals in rural schools*. Thimphu, Bhutan: Ministry of Education.

Tshewang, D. (2021). *Leadership styles of secondary school principals and teacher motivation in Bhutan*. Royal Education Council.

Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. Wiley.