SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL BHUTAN: QUALITY OF WORK LIFE, WELL-BEING AND THE RISKS OF RESIGNATION
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ABSTRACT In Bhutan, recent increases in annual teacher attrition rates, particularly in rural areas, pose significant challenges for the government and concerned agencies in terms of retaining qualified teachers and reducing teacher attrition rates and turnover. This article, partly based on a field study exploring the quality of work life (QWL) and well-being of school teachers in rural Bhutan, explores the possible reasons why such teachers might seek to resign. Using mixed methodology, the study reveals poor QWL and well-being of teachers, caused by a variety of factors. In view of such findings, the Ministry of Education and the government need to ensure better all-round protection for teachers to avoid the risk of large-scale resignations.

KEYWORDS: Bhutan, education, Gross National Happiness, quality of life, school teachers, well-being

Introduction
In Bhutan, teachers have multiple functions in society, mainly as educators and guardians of students in schools, often playing also the role of surrogate parents, mentors, counsellors and, of course, role models. Above all, teachers have a vibrant place in students’ intellectual capacity development, which ultimately affects the development of a nation, as argued for India (den Hollander & Doss, 2018). In Bhutan, the Ministry of Education (2014) released a new ‘Teacher Human Resource Policy’, aiming to create conducive working environments, opportunities for professional development, allowances and incentives, including recognition systems to attract and retain the best teachers. Yet, despite this intervention, more teachers are resigning every year, putting the quality of education in jeopardy and leaving the Ministry of
Education challenged to replace these teachers. The 2017 Annual Education Statistics (Ministry of Education, 2017) showed teacher attrition rates of 2.0 per cent in 2014, 2.5 per cent in 2015, 3.5 per cent in 2016 and 4.2 per cent in 2017. In light of such an upward negative trend, this article focuses on studying the various factors which affect school teachers’ quality of work life (QWL) and well-being, seeking to ascertain what may be perceived as problematic aspects of their QWL by the teachers themselves. A further aim was to provide policy suggestions to address the growing phenomenon of school teachers’ resignations in Bhutan.

To ground the study theoretically, the QWL theory of Mirvis and Lawler III (1984) focused on increasing employees’ well-being in an organisation, together with Bhutan’s unique national theory of well-being based on the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) (Bothe, 2017; Phuntsho, 2013; Ura et al., 2012) were studied to understand the circumstances of teachers’ resignations and to explore possibilities of preventing resignations of teachers. A field study for the present article was then conducted in rural, remote and difficult schools in the District of Thimphu Dzongkhag, fairly close to the capital. According to the Ministry of Education (2014), schools in Bhutan are divided into five categories, namely urban, semi-urban, rural, remote and difficult schools, based on geographical location and access to other amenities such as electricity, markets, hospitals, telecommunication facilities and housing. Some schools do not have motor road accessibility, and it may take more than four days on foot to reach them from the nearest road. These schools are classified as ‘difficult schools’. Given their remote location, these difficult schools do not have access to large markets, telecommunication technologies, transportation, proper housing and health facilities. They are probably not an easy and attractive place to live and work in for teachers, even if the natural environment may be breathtakingly beautiful.

The article first explores the QWL concept and its implications on happiness and well-being in general and in relation to Bhutanese values. It then turns to the methodology of the study, summarises its main findings and proceeds to analyse them in more depth to understand better why so many teachers in Bhutan may want to leave their profession. The conclusion is combined with recommendations to address the risks of teacher resignations.

The QWL Concept and its Implications on Happiness and Well-being

QWL as a management-related concept reflects attempts to create a conducive working environment for the welfare of employees in their workplace, providing satisfying jobs and working environments in an organisation (Bhavani & Jegadeeshwaran, 2014). Since QWL provides employees with a stable job, adequate income and benefits, fair treatment and safe and conducive working conditions, Mirvis and Lawler III (1984) argued that theory and practice need to be integrated by organisations to account for satisfactory QWL outcomes. There should be set criteria to measure QWL, rather than relying merely on a vague understanding of accepted procedures. They also
argued that there are two sets of criteria common to definitions of QWL. The first set incorporates the characteristics of the work itself and the work environment as factors that influence employees' work life, while the second set comprises various criteria of employees’ welfare and well-being.

Accounting for the nature of work and the work environment provides employees with job safety, safe working conditions, fair pay and adequate compensation, good quality jobs and better work relations and supervision. The criteria of the second set are more personal and focus on employees’ welfare and well-being, including satisfaction with their work and environment, salary and working hours. A good working environment for employees with the aim to ensure high quality productivity at the workplace includes safe working conditions, reasonable working hours (Mirvis & Lawler III, 1984), and workload supervisory support (Cullen & Hammer, 2007: 266). The workplace or working environment, as one of the main factors determining the QWL and well-being of employees (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008), encompasses communication in the workplace, good relationships between leaders and co-workers in the community and avoidance of unfavourable working environments, which are often cited as a key reason for high attrition among teachers (Qureshi et al., 2013). One factor causing stress and resignations is simply the excessively demanding working environment in schools (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008), particularly in ambitious developing countries like Turkey (Barutçu & Serinkan, 2013) or South Africa (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016).

In such conditions, fair pay and adequate compensation play an important role for teachers’ individual well-being, too. The main reason for seeking a job is normally to earn a living, but income earned should meet the social standards of sufficiency (Walton, 1973). According to Hanushek (2016), if an organisation’s employees are not paid what matches their value in terms of output, another competitive organisation would offer better emoluments to attract the best employees. A pertinent question for this article would thus become whether school teachers in Bhutan have alternative employment opportunities. Connected to pay, workload is seen as negatively related to QWL, as heavy workloads cause job burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) and job change intentions (Houkes et al., 2003), impelling teachers to leave the profession (Kent et al., 1995). Sargent and Hannum (2005) found in rural schools in China that teachers with greater workloads were less satisfied with teaching. Excessive workload was also quoted as a key source of teachers’ weariness in some schools in South Africa (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016). Heavy workloads often cause teachers to experience stress, leaving limited time for family and recreation, while teachers experiencing a good work–life balance become more dedicated and feel a deeper sense of commitment (Hakanen et al., 2006).

Despite perceived hardships, sufficient motivation helps individuals to focus on attaining goals, promoting eagerness, aspirations and good intentions as essential factors of individual or organisational performance (Al-Neimi & Amzat, 2012). Working for long hours was earlier presumed to indicate commitment to the employer, exhibiting
that work comes first, before any other personal interests or obligations (Pfeffer, 2014). However, according to Warhurst et al. (2008), employees who work for long hours claimed that this made their lives uneasy. Increased time dedicated to work would mean less time for people’s non-working life, family time and recreation. According to Watson et al. (2003), people who work for long hours reported less work satisfaction and this is also associated with mental health problems and unhealthy lifestyles (Virtanen et al., 2010). Overall, job satisfaction as the main criterion of a high QWL (Mirvis & Lawler III, 1984) has become the focus of recent research about teacher attrition and retention (Appiah-Agyekum et al., 2013). The feeling of contentment about interaction with students and teaching itself, especially when the outcomes for the students are awesome, is often conducive to generating increased teacher satisfaction (Maeroff, 1988). But, there needs to be a kind of holistic balance between the skills and expectations of teachers and levels of motivation, engagement and achievements among the students.

**Well-being and Bhutan’s GNH**

In this context, while developed countries seem to direct their efforts mainly to economic development as a route to well-being, life satisfaction levels have remained low in countries such as the UK, with depression and anxiety found to be increasing among young people (Aked et al., 2008), often leading to self-harm. Marks and Shah (2004) asked what politics would look like if promoting people’s well-being was actually one of the government’s main aims. The New Economics Foundation as an independent think tank in Britain inspired and demonstrated real economic well-being (Aked et al., 2008), aiming to increase the quality of life through providing innovative solutions that challenge typical thinking about economic, environmental and social issues. Marks and Shah (2004) argued that policies alone cannot make people happy or engaged with their lives, but can bring changes to the culture and society in which people live. As most policies are focussed on improving people's income and economic growth, this has arguably only a small effect on people's well-being. Thus, the well-being manifesto of the New Economics Foundation sets out a more holistic vision to improve the total well-being of people (Marks & Shah, 2004).

In Bhutan, well-being is based on the principles of GNH, a developmental philosophy that the Royal Government of Bhutan adopted to promote spiritual and psychological well-being of people along with economic growth and development. According to Ura et al. (2012), in 1972, the fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, declared GNH to be more important than Gross National Product. There are nine core domains and thirty-three indicators regarded as measurable components of happiness. These nine domains tell us more completely about the elements of GNH and form the basis of the GNH index (Ura et al., 2012). The four pillars of GNH are good governance (at public and private level), conservation of the environment, preservation and promotion of culture and equity and sustainable development.
These four pillars are included as part of the nine domains. The first three domains, relating to living standards (income, housing and assets), health and education are closely related to the human development perspective. The next three domains are relatively new, comprising the use of time, good governance and ecological resilience. The last three domains are said to be more innovative, namely psychological well-being (including overall happiness, emotions and spirituality), community vitality and cultural diversity and resilience (Ura et al., 2012). Of particular interest for the present study would also be how the main goals of the Bhutanese education system are connected to GNH (Schuelka, 2012: 150).

**Methodology of the Study and Data Collection**

The main objective of this study was to explore factors which affect school teachers' QWL, work–life balance and well-being, to predict the risks of resignations and provide focussed policy suggestions to counter the increasing problem of school teachers' resignations in Bhutan. A sequential mixed method design was used in this study, which began with a quantitative method, followed by qualitative approaches. This article focusses on the qualitative research design and its findings.

The data were collected in two phases. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 74 teachers, but four teachers did not return these questionnaires. It was learned from the original questionnaires that 22 teachers out of the 70 who responded expressed their wish to resign. It is likely that the four teachers who did not respond were reluctant to convey their critical stance about their own employment, displaying perhaps a form of self-censorship through deliberate non-response (Christensen, 2017). All of the 22 teachers contemplating resignation were then contacted through phone calls to motivate them to take part in an interview and to agree to become participants in the present study. However, only 15 teachers were ultimately agreeable to this, and another 7 teachers, at this stage, withdrew from the study. Table 1 shows the quantitative data of the initial participants.

The qualitative data from the 15 interviews were analysed using directed content analysis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), the advantage of analysing data with a directed approach of content analysis is that theories can be tested, and existing theories and previous research about a related phenomenon can benefit in this way by further study. This article presents below the qualitative data, which were analysed based on existing categories developed using the conceptual framework used for this article.

**Summary of the Research Findings**

The findings about the QWL of the teachers revealed that teachers in Bhutan are generally encumbered with a heavy workload. Teachers reported teaching more than 30 hours a week, and in remote and difficult schools, they were covering two or more subjects. Besides this, they were engaged in administrative and non-academic
tasks. Overall, they were not satisfied with their monthly salary and its increments. While teachers in Bhutan are paid the same salary in every school throughout the country based on seniority and experiences, since the respondents worked in difficult environments, with multiple extra tasks, they expected to be paid more. They also reported having insufficient time for their family and for recreation, due to long working hours. Teachers were also found to be unmotivated, as there were no incentives or rewards, particularly regarding recognition of their strenuous work in rural, remote and difficult schools. While teachers were overall content with their working environment, they expressed with some urgency the need for protection from antagonistic parents and members of the community. Particularly this somewhat surprising factor, as shown further below, caused significant job dissatisfaction among teachers.

Regarding teachers’ well-being, the findings revealed that their monthly salary was the only source of income and all participants indicated that their salary is insufficient

Table 1  Demographics of the Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–30 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>30–35 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>35–40 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>40–45 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School category</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0–5 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>5–10 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>10–15 years</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>15–20 years</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Computations based on fieldwork by the first author.
for their needs. Housing problems confronted many teachers. While teachers residing in government quarters encountered no difficulties with housing, those living outside the school campus often even lacked basic accessories in their accommodation. Teachers in difficult schools faced the worst housing conditions. They were often sharing rooms, with no water and toilet facilities inside the dwelling, as there was not a single house available to stay in or to rent.

Teachers also said they needed more time for family, friends and recreation and for socialising with the community around the school to develop interpersonal relationships. Teachers in remote and difficult schools were emotionally affected due to separation from their family and were dissatisfied about the lack of modern urban facilities. However, spirituality played a vital role in bringing peace and calmness to these teachers. When asked about their health, teachers reported that they did not have regular health check-ups. Their work brought on headaches and body pain, but nobody talked about suffering from depression. They claimed to have good community relationships in general, but in some cases such relationships were weakened when some parents showed aggressiveness and lack of support. Some teachers wanted to study further and change careers, or sought to work in the ministry, but not as a teacher. Most of them did not want to study for advanced degrees, as there was no perceived value in upgrading their qualifications.

Discussion and Analysis of the Findings

Overall, concerns about a safe working environment, disparity in workload and salary, lack of motivation, long working hours and poor living standards were found to be the main determinants for negative QWL perceptions of teachers, causing job dissatisfaction and the desire for resignation.

Regarding safe working environment, the results of the interviews indicated that teachers were broadly satisfied with their working conditions, school and classroom structures and had a positive rapport with the administration, among their colleagues and the community. Teacher 1 said: ‘We have a conducive working environment and I have good relationships with everyone here’. However, notably, some teachers expressed the urgent need for laws to protect them from aggressive parents, students and other threats, and thus saw the need for improving their working environment. Teacher 2 told the researcher in a disparaging tone: ‘It was around 11 pm, my friend and I just went to sleep. After a few minutes, two villagers stoned our house through the windows and door. I still have this fear in me’. Teacher 3 said: ‘An angry parent came to charge me for disciplining his child and was ready to hit me if I reacted violently. If the government do not make a law to protect us, teachers would not be safe in schools’. Notably, many teachers in South Africa encounter undisciplined and aggressive actions from learners and parents and are reportedly leaving their teaching career (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016). Teachers in such circumstances eventually gravitate to a safer working environment with better protection (Kersaint et al., 2007).
Teachers in rural Bhutan reported responsibilities for many tasks, involving academic, non-academic and administrative activities. The academic work consisted of daily classroom teaching, lesson planning and assessing student work. Non-academic work included teaching cultural dances, sports and coordinating clubs. Administrative work included being a staff secretary responsible for conducting conferences and meetings, monitoring other teachers’ welfare and being the school administrator in the absence of the school principal. Another responsibility is to serve as an academic subject area head, monitoring quality education through effective performance of both teachers and students in certain subjects. In addition, teachers are required to plan, manage and execute local disaster management drills. Teacher 4 said: ‘I cannot escape my work pressure, as we just have two teachers. I have to teach four subjects. I have to administer school welfare, coordinate disaster management and scouting programmes in the school’. Heavy workload caused job dissatisfaction, and teacher 5 said: ‘After working so hard going to school next day makes me nauseated. I was trained to teach, not as staff secretary or the person in charge of sports’.

In terms of fair pay and adequate compensation, low salary and lack of compensation were factors pushing teachers in Bhutan to contemplate resigning. Many were unhappy with their pay and fussed about the rise of commodity prices. Teacher 6 voiced: ‘I am not satisfied with my monthly salary. It is low and hardly meets my monthly expenses. Commodity prices increase every year, but our salary remains small’. Teacher 7 said that he just earned 25,000 Bhutanese Ngultrum per month (around US$450) and observed: ‘I need to pay house rent, electricity bills and send my kids to school. The remaining amount cannot sustain me until the end of the month. I am not satisfied with my salary’. As a basic principle, employees must be paid appropriately and sufficiently for their work (Walton, 1973). Low salary forces teachers to exit from the profession (Imazeki, 2005).

Regarding motivations, teachers were least motivated in terms of extrinsic motivation, while student achievement and the teachers’ commitment to educate the children were major sources of inspiration. ‘My students’ achievement and the king’s love for teachers motivate me to work here’, admitted Teacher 8. Teacher 9 responded: ‘I neither receive any reward nor have heard of any teachers in rural, remote and difficult schools getting one. If we are rewarded for our services in these schools, it would motivate everyone to work hard and serve for a longer time’. Extrinsic motivations are directed by external factors like incentives, high salary, extra remunerations, recognition and rewards. Sushil (2013) states that it is important for organisations to motivate employees regularly to reduce attrition rates, increase job satisfaction, retain the best employees and create organisational efficiency. This would suggest that a policy of providing extra incentives for certain teachers in Bhutan could be a good way forward. Incentives to increase teacher satisfaction in Bhutan, as part of the ‘Teacher Human Resource Policy’ (Ministry of Education, 2014), might include more recognition of special efforts, including advanced professional study and providing
scholarships, attractive pay increases along with other incentives like study tours and public recognition for deserving teachers.

Concerning working hours, teachers expressed their dissatisfaction over long working hours and the related desire to leave teaching. School hours were from 8 am to 3 or 4 pm and involved continuous work. Indeed, the working time stretches beyond this schedule, and teachers felt they did not have enough time for recreation and family. Teacher 10 claimed:

There is no time limit for teachers’ work. Everybody shares equal amounts of workload. We work the whole day. By 4 pm I get home, but with unfinished work from school. I think if I did not have to work more, I would not have to be under stress and could live happily with my family members and socialise with other people around me.

Warhurst et al. (2008) found that employees who work for long hours in a day claimed this ruined their social and family lives and affected their well-being. Teachers wanted less working hours to reduce stress and increase family time. Virtanen et al. (2011) found that long working hours cause higher levels of anxiety and depression and also identified that women are at higher risk compared to men, as they also have to engage in domestic work at home.

Regarding job satisfaction, all teachers interviewed were fond of working with children and their pupils’ achievement was their main satisfaction, while many were otherwise dissatisfied. Teacher 11 responded: ‘I feel proud to say I am a teacher. The future of every student in the school is in my hands. I am responsible to make them better human beings in the future’. However, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with workloads and stress, extra non-academic workloads, salary disparities and less motivation and appreciation. Teacher 12 said: ‘For a long time, teaching was a much revered profession in the country, but today we are looked down on by our society. We have no respect, even our students become aggressive toward teachers, parents sue teachers and there is a lack of support from the government’. While such responses from Bhutanese teachers may be surprising, research elsewhere found such dissatisfaction, closely associated with factors related to the working environment, school leadership, teacher workloads, occupational stress and low salaries (Dinham & Scott, 2000; Sass et al., 2011). Job satisfaction has also been the focus of research in Africa concerned about teacher retention (Appiah-Agyekum et al., 2013; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016).

**GNH of Bhutanese Teachers**

Teachers were also asked questions about their satisfaction with incomes and housing to study their physical living standards and assess the related levels of happiness. Most of the responses were similar. However, some teachers voiced completely different expressions. As noted, the monthly salary was their only income and teachers who
lived outside the school campus faced issues over housing and basic accessories. Teacher 13 claimed:

I have been living in a government quarter for almost three years, there are enough rooms, twenty-four hours water and electricity supply. It is safe and comfortable. I can even save my money as I do not have to pay huge amounts for rent like my friends who dwell outside the school campus.

Outside house rents were higher, and houses were not up to the teachers’ satisfaction. Teacher 14 said: ‘My house is not safe for me, it does not even have water inside. I have to go around forty metres to the bathroom, and it is scary at night to go there’. In one of the difficult schools, there were no proper teacher quarters, nor even houses to rent. A respondent said: ‘I stay with my friend, we just have a kitchen and a bedroom. There is no privacy, no bathroom, and no water. There is no single house to rent. That is disgusting, as our friends of other ministries have beautiful quarters’. Some teachers thus expressed a desire to resign as they were dissatisfied with their income and faced housing problems in rural, remote and difficult schools.

In terms of psychological well-being, teachers working in remote and difficult schools were emotionally affected due to separation from their family and were dissatisfied due to lack of modern urban facilities. Teacher 15 shared: ‘There are no facilities like 3G internet, motor road, a recreational centre and proper housing facilities. Moreover, I miss my wife and children. I have not seen them for the last three months’. Teacher 1, working in a remote school, said: ‘At least if there was a nice house, internet, television and enough teaching resources for the students’ learning, I would get some satisfaction working here’. As indicated, spirituality played a vital role in bringing peace and calmness to some teachers. Meditation, praying for the well-being of others and treating everybody equally were rooted in spiritualism. Teacher 2 stated: ‘I did not believe that meditation will help reduce stress, but when I tried it for some days, I saw the magic. Then I started to do it every morning for five to ten minutes’. Praying was an everyday ritual for teachers to offer their gratitude to Lord Buddha, for blessings and keeping every being safe. Teacher 3 said: ‘I pray every evening to offer my gratitude for keeping everyone safe all day and ask for continued support for every next day’.

Regarding health issues, as noted earlier, teachers might suffer from minor ailments such as headaches and body pain, but nobody talked about suffering from depression, probably also a taboo subject. They claimed to have good community relations in general, but these relationships got weakened when some aggressive parents showed lack of support for teachers. Teacher 3 said: ‘So far I have a good relationship with the community, they respect me and I do the same, but there are some people who actually do not like me. It poses some kind of threat, I do not feel secure’. Health, being associated with physical and mental health, is an outcome of relational balances between mind and body, and between persons and the environment (Ura et al., 2012). Feeling under threat
from the local community is certainly not conducive to maintaining a comprehensive level of happiness.

As the teachers were working throughout the day and had only few hours to spend with their family or for recreational pursuits, they felt under pressure, as expressed by teacher 4: ‘If leisure time is increased by reducing the number of working hours, I can have more time to relax and prepare for the next day and I can have enough time for my children at home and may socialise with people around me’. According to Ura et al. (2012), the balance between paid or unpaid work and leisure is essential for one’s well-being. A flexible working life with space for leisure is said to be important for the well-being of individual employees and their families.

Teachers were also asked to share their interest to upgrade their qualifications. Various responses indicated that some wanted to study further to change their career or work in the same ministry, but not as a teacher. No other career options were indicated. Most teachers did not want to study further, as they saw no value in upgrading their qualifications. Teacher 5 stated: ‘I am planning to study further and want to work in administration. I do not care how much I am paid, but I do not have to work then like I do as a teacher’. Teacher 6, however, who did not want to study further, said:

Teachers need to upgrade qualifications at least to a Master’s degree, but I do not see value in this. Every teacher has a Bachelor’s degree and their salary is equivalent to those who have a Master’s degree, as everyone has to follow the same promotion track. There is no distinction in terms of qualification.

This indicates a view that teachers with higher qualifications should be recognised and treated with respect to encourage others to upgrade their qualification.

Lastly, it seems that the community vitality was not strong enough to keep teachers happy while working in rural schools. Teachers are secluded the whole day, away from the community, with long working hours. Work under stress and especially the risk of hostility from aggressive parents were reasons for a perceived decline in community rapport. Teacher 7 said: ‘I do not get much time to socialise with people. I find myself being surrounded by piles of work every day, I even do not engage in family functions’. Another teacher was more explicit:

I have seen and heard of friends being arrested, manhandled by parents and threatened by people. I do not feel safe. These days, teachers are punished for disciplining kids who are not doing their work. I even do not like to interact with people around me.

In ideal terms, the concept of community vitality reflects GNH values and Bhutanese moral beliefs, and a community is expected to have strong relationships within families, between community members and should hold socially constructive values, volunteer and donate time or money and create a free environment (Ura et al., 2012). However, this GNH idealisation and the experienced realities for rural teachers in
Bhutan appear to be different and explain to a large extent why so many teachers are contemplating resignation.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is evident from this study that the differences between the goals of QWL and well-being, including GNH values on the one hand and the actual working conditions of the sample of rural Bhutanese teachers on the other hand, are major reasons for increased inclinations of teachers to consider resignation. There was little motivation, compensation and extra reward for teachers working in rural, remote and difficult schools, where often housing and access to basic facilities pose big challenges. The various factors mentioned caused job dissatisfaction among many teachers, who want to leave the teaching profession. As was also learnt from this study, teachers’ workloads need to be reduced, and their pay needs to be increased or at least a fairer pay needs to be provided to match the extra burdens on rural teachers, offering reasonable compensation to motivate and retain them, also by providing proper housing for these teachers to increase their living standards. The official policy (Ministry of Education, 2014) seems oblivious of such expectations.

Above all, however, some teachers expressed strongly that the government needs to frame a law to protect the teachers from threats posed by parents or students, in this way enhancing their safe working environment. Teachers need to be comprehensively recognised as valuable agents of change in rural, remote and difficult schools. Based on this study, a number of policy suggestions to reduce teacher attrition and to increase the QWL and well-being of teachers in Bhutan may thus be made. These should focus on reduction in teacher workloads, fair and adequate salary and better incentives, including improved living quarters for teachers in remote locations. In addition, special rewards for hard work would increase job satisfaction, together with better recognition for increased qualifications and ample teaching and learning resources and supplies. Above all, though, the safety and security of every teacher must be assiduously protected, for it is intolerable that teachers who want the best possible results for the children in their classes are resented and threatened by parents and other members of society who do not seem to value education.

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