



Teamwork Dynamics in Nepalese Secondary Schools: A Multiple Case Study of Principal Perspectives

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Received: April 22, 2026

Revised & Accepted: July 25, 2026

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Abstract

Background: Teamwork is a cornerstone of effective school leadership, promoting collaboration, shared decision-making, and improved educational outcomes. However, despite increasing emphasis on collaborative practices, limited evidence exists regarding how teamwork is developed, sustained, and influenced by organizational culture in Nepalese

secondary schools. This study explored the practices, enabling factors, challenges, and cultural influences that shape teamwork in secondary educational institutions in Nepal from the perspectives of school principals.

Methods: A qualitative multiple-case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of teamwork in four purposively selected secondary educational institutions in Nepal. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with four school principals. The interview data were transcribed verbatim, systematically coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Trustworthiness was ensured through prolonged engagement, triangulation of interview, and careful interpretation within the contextual setting.

Results: Four major themes emerged from study, i. leadership as a catalyst for teamwork through shared vision and participatory decision-making; ii. effective communication, including regular meetings and digital platforms, as the foundation of collaboration; iii. organizational culture characterized by trust, mutual respect, and collective responsibility as a facilitator of teamwork; and iv. contextual challenges, including hierarchical structures, resource limitations, and resistance to change, that hinder collaborative practices. Principals emphasized that supportive leadership and an inclusive school culture significantly strengthened team cohesion and institutional effectiveness.

Conclusion: Effective teamwork in Nepalese secondary schools is shaped by leadership practices, communication, and organizational culture. Strengthening collaborative leadership and fostering a supportive work environment can enhance teamwork and school performance.

Novelty: This study provides context-specific evidence on teamwork culture in Nepalese secondary schools using a multiple-case qualitative approach, offering practical insights for educational leaders and policymakers to strengthen collaborative school management.

Keywords: Collaboration, Educational Leadership, Nepal, Principals, Teamwork

Introduction

Educational organizations in Nepal are in a diverse range from playgroups to primary, secondary, and further colleges and universities from public and private sectors. The country has been investing a huge amount of money in improving the education system, increasing the literacy rate and producing skilled manpower who can competently adapt and contribute to the dynamic demands of society. However, educational institutions are facing several challenges such as inequality among urban and rural areas, quality education, constraints of human resources, etc. In this context, effective teamwork within educational organizations and cross-organization teamwork among educational professionals, stakeholders, policymakers, etc., is essential to identify and address challenges to enhance educational organizational output, delivery, and effectiveness. This study is aimed at diving deep into the challenges and effectiveness of teamwork in the educational organizations of Nepal and provides a research outcome as the impact of teamwork skills and culture in educational organizations in Nepal.

Teamwork is an effort of the group to meet a common goal and complete set objectives efficiently and effectively. In the context of educational, and organizational settings and their functioning, teamwork is more crucial. As per the Oxford English Dictionary, teamwork is working together effectively or cohesively in collaboration and cooperation by the members of team members. Teamwork is considered one of the essential skills in personal academic and

professional achievement. Even among learners, teamwork helps enhance academic results (De Prada et al., 2022). Teamwork enhances educational quality, efficiency, or administration, and improves institutional effectiveness. Organizational success increasingly depends on effective teamwork, as collaborative efforts enable organizations to achieve goals that individuals working independently cannot accomplish (Kilcullen et al., 2023). Educational organizations' objectives roam around technical subjects such as collaborative teaching-learning activities, administrative effectiveness, student support and development, community engagement and fostering community-educational organizations relationships, addressing challenges, and strategy management. Dhungana (2020) studied the perception of a principal's transformational leadership wherein teamwork is considered one of the important factors. As a teamwork, the principal is expected to coordinate with teaching and nonteaching administrative support members, respect the views of all teachers and staff, sometimes students, have equal behavior of teachers and staff, have collaborative decision-making, cooperate, and create conducive learning happening consequently achieving educational objectives. Effective delivery is possible through teacher-staff and school management teamwork, especially in the secondary educational organization setting. Shared responsibility and integrated team action results in collective success. Teams need to work in dynamic, complex environments and members need to be more adaptive to changing situations when operating in their actions (Zaccaro et al., 2001).

Teamwork is essential in the operation and successful functioning of any institution, including the education industry. In the Nepalese context, teamwork is also considered pivotal in achieving goals and enhancing educational or institutional achievement. A study of Ojha (2014) found that the days when managers used to be with legitimate power and his/her subordinates' trust with faith were no more. Now, every manager's action is required to be discussed, justified, and agreed upon with subordinates so each team member will make teamwork forms and required contributions. Traditional hierarchical structures are being demolished and challenged by a collaborative approach while cultural and geographical differences, leadership styles, resource availability, etc. play important roles in shaping best teamwork practices. The study of Augustin et al. (2024) also shows that teamwork results in a positive effect in work productivity and effective execution of work. Effective teamwork fosters a sense of ownership, encourages a culture of sharing best practices, and supports staff professional development. It also enhances student engagement, effective management of resources and improves teaching practices. This study carries important value for educational practitioners, leaders, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the Nepalese context. By understanding the essentials of teamwork, stakeholders can coin strategies to address collaboration efforts paving the path for improved practices and outcomes in education institutions.

Statement of Problem

Over the past decade, inter-institute collaboration has been a significant factor in improving educational quality. Knowledge-sharing, emotional intelligence, and team conflicts were the primary factors that garnered attention in this innovative team project's performance. All the educational institutions have their own individual style of spreading education to their students. However, it may not be sufficient for effective development. Only if the institutions collaborate among themselves and share openly about their way of dealing with education in an open way

will it surely benefit the institutions in themselves. The institutions can add or share the techniques used by one or the other in reforming their curriculum, as well as teaching or leadership styles and administrative techniques. Developing effective collaboration among educators, administrators, and students is a major challenge faced by educational institutions in Nepal. Culture, lack of resources, inadequate professional development, and resistance to change; communication barriers are deeply ingrained. To improve educational outcomes in Nepal through better collaboration, it is necessary to have a grasp of these issues.

Nepalese society traditionally emphasizes hierarchical structures and respect for authority, which often translates into educational settings. This cultural norm can hinder open communication and equal participation in team activities, as individuals may be reluctant to share ideas to the senior members or challenge their opinions. Hofstede Insights identifies Nepal as having a high-power distance, reflecting significant acceptance of hierarchical order without much questioning (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Several educational institutions in Nepal face significant resource constraints, such as inadequate infrastructure, financial difficulties, and limited access to advanced technology. Also lack of staff management makes it difficult to utilize the available resources. The resources necessary for ECA/CCA related activities cannot be used properly if the staff fails to manage the available items in a smart way. The limitations make it hard to implement collaborative tools and create environments that foster teamwork. According to a report by the World Bank, Nepal's education sector is facing significant resource shortages, especially in rural areas where schools cannot effectively support teamwork initiatives (World Bank 2020). Most of the institutions in Nepal still think in a traditional way and regard Professional development sessions or skill enhancement workshops as waste of time and money. Even if conducted, Nepal's professional development programs often lack a team spirit and collaborative skills and instead focus on subject-specific training. Effective team-based activities must be promoted and engaged by educators and administrative staff. When an organization fails to do so it is a poor performance indicator. UNICEF's evaluation of teacher training in Nepal revealed a significant gap in training programs that emphasize teamwork and collaboration, among other soft skills.

Though progressive schools are present in Nepal in the present era, most educational institutions in Nepal still follow the traditional teacher-to-student method and regard progressive methods like learning through fun and entertainment as wrong approaches. The organization's resistance to change is a significant obstacle to adopting new collaborative practices. The prevalence of conventional teaching techniques and rigid procedures makes it challenging to switch from individualistic to collaborative methods. In the "International Journal of Educational Development," a study was published that examines how entrenched resistance to change in Nepalese schools hinders educational reform efforts to enhance teamwork.

Effective collaboration requires strong communication skills, and many educational institutions in Nepal, especially those far from centers, face significant communication obstacles. Those who establish an institution regard other institutions as a competition and think if the ideas of their institution are shared with the other, they will be at loss leading to blocked communication or sometimes even leading to no communication at all. They fail to understand the value of collaboration in improving the quality of education as a whole.

Effective teamwork requires robust communication channels, yet many educational institutions in Nepal, particularly in remote areas, face significant communication challenges. Technical and logistical obstacles impede the efficient coordination and cooperation of various parties.

Research Objectives

1. Explore how cultural and hierarchical barriers impact teamwork effectiveness in Nepalese educational organizations
2. Identify strategies to improve teamwork considering current resource limitations and professional development gaps
3. Examine principals' perceptions and practices regarding teamwork in secondary schools.

Review of literatures

Theoretical Foundations of Teamwork

Teamwork refers to the coordinated efforts of individuals who work interdependently toward achieving shared goals through effective communication, mutual trust, and collective responsibility. Contemporary organizational theories consider teamwork as a dynamic social process rather than merely a structural arrangement. Team effectiveness depends on shared objectives, complementary expertise, psychological safety, communication, and supportive leadership.

One of the most influential framework of teamwork is Salas et al.'s "Big Five of Teamwork," which identifies five core components of effective teams: team leadership, mutual performance monitoring, backup behaviour, adaptability, and team orientation. These competencies are supported by communication, mutual trust, and shared mental models, making them particularly relevant to educational organizations where collaboration among teachers and school leaders is essential.

Recent evidence continues to support these theoretical perspectives. A systematic review by Freedman and Somech (2021) concluded that teamwork positively influences school effectiveness by strengthening collaboration, organizational learning, innovation, and collective problem-solving. The review emphasized that successful teamwork requires supportive leadership, shared goals, and an organizational culture that encourages professional collaboration. Similarly, Kilcullen et al. (2023) demonstrated through a meta-analysis that team orientation significantly predicts team performance across organizational settings by improving coordination, communication, and collective efficacy.

Teamwork in Educational Organizations

Educational institutions increasingly recognize teamwork as an essential element of school improvement. Unlike traditional hierarchical management, collaborative schools encourage teachers, administrators, and staff to share expertise, solve problems collectively, and participate in decision-making.

Collaborative teamwork enhances instructional quality, teacher motivation, professional development, and student learning outcomes. Schools characterized by strong collaborative cultures demonstrate greater innovation, improved instructional practices, and higher organizational commitment.

Freedman and Somech's (2021) systematic review synthesized evidence from two decades of research and found consistent positive relationships between educator teamwork and school

effectiveness. Teacher collaboration improved instructional quality, professional learning communities, organizational commitment, and student achievement. However, the review also noted inconsistencies in how teamwork has been conceptualized and measured across studies, limiting comparisons between contexts. Educational teamwork therefore extends beyond cooperation among teachers and includes collaboration between principals, administrative staff, students, parents, and communities.

Leadership and Teamwork

Leadership is widely recognized as one of the strongest determinants of effective teamwork in educational organizations. School principals establish organizational vision, create collaborative cultures, allocate responsibilities, and promote professional trust among staff. Contemporary educational leadership emphasizes distributed and transformational leadership rather than centralized authority. Distributed leadership encourages shared decision-making, empowers teachers, and strengthens organizational ownership. Transformational leaders motivate staff through inspiration, support, and professional development (Leithwood et al., 2020).

Recent literature indicates that principals who encourage participation, open communication, and trust are more likely to develop effective collaborative teams. Educational leadership shapes organizational culture by creating opportunities for dialogue, conflict resolution, and collective problem-solving (Hallinger, 2022). Thus, leadership functions as both a structural and cultural mechanism through which teamwork becomes institutionalized.

Challenges to Effective Teamwork

Although teamwork offers substantial organizational benefits, numerous barriers hinder effective collaboration within schools. Communication problems remain one of the most frequently reported obstacles. Poor information sharing, unclear role expectations, and inadequate feedback reduce team effectiveness. Hierarchical organizational structures may discourage participation and limit collaborative decision-making (Kilcullen et al., 2023).

Resource limitations also affect teamwork, particularly in developing countries. Schools often face shortages of qualified personnel, financial resources, infrastructure, and technological support, making collaborative practices difficult to sustain (OECD, 2020).

Cultural factors further influence teamwork. Differences in professional status, organizational norms, power distance, and resistance to organizational change may reduce trust and participation among staff members (Hofstede et al., 2020).

Teamwork in the Nepalese Context

Research specifically examining teamwork culture in Nepalese secondary schools remains limited. Existing studies primarily focus on educational leadership, school governance, teacher professional development, and school management committees rather than teamwork itself. School governance studies indicate that collaboration among principals, teachers, parents, and community members contributes to improved accountability and school performance (Giri et al., 2025). However, evidence regarding how teamwork develops within schools is scarce. Recent qualitative studies in Nepal have explored teacher professional knowledge and school improvement but have paid relatively little attention to teamwork as an organizational culture (Nepali & Tamang, 2026).

Furthermore, Nepal's educational system is characterized by diverse cultural backgrounds, centralized administrative traditions, limited resources, and varying institutional capacities.

These contextual characteristics may uniquely influence teamwork practices compared with those reported in Western educational settings.

Research Gap

Although international research consistently demonstrates that teamwork contributes to school effectiveness, several important gaps remain in context of Nepal. Previous research has largely employed quantitative methods, measuring teamwork through surveys and standardized scales. These approaches provide limited understanding of how teamwork is experienced, interpreted, and culturally constructed within schools. In context of Nepalese research has primarily focused on school leadership, governance, school management committees, and educational reforms rather than examining teamwork culture itself. Also very little is known about how principals perceive teamwork, what organizational processes facilitate collaboration, what contextual challenges they encounter, and how Nepalese culture shapes collaborative practices in secondary schools.

Finally, very few qualitative multiple-case studies have explored teamwork across different Nepalese secondary schools, leaving insufficient evidence to inform leadership practice and educational policy.

Methods

Study Design

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore the culture of teamwork in secondary educational institutions in Nepal. A multiple-case study approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon across different contexts while allowing comparison between cases

Study Setting

The study was conducted in four secondary educational institutions in Nepal. Selecting schools from different settings provided an opportunity to understand how contextual factors shape teamwork culture in Nepalese educational institutions.

Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was employed to select four school principals who possessed extensive experience in educational leadership and school management. The inclusion criteria were: (a) currently serving as a principal or head teacher of a secondary school, (b) having at least five years of leadership experience, (c) actively involved in school management and teamwork initiatives, and (d) willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using an interview guide developed from the research objectives and relevant literature on teamwork and educational leadership. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions exploring participants' experiences, perceptions, leadership practices, communication strategies, organizational culture, and challenges related to teamwork. Interviews were conducted in Nepali to facilitate participants' comfort and expression, lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, and were held in the participants' schools at a mutually convenient time in a private setting. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes and

observations to capture contextual information and non-verbal cues. The interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim in Nepali and translated into English for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis approach. Interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated systematically by identifying meaningful statements related to teamwork experiences. Similar codes were grouped into categories, which were further refined into broader themes and subthemes representing patterns across the four cases. Themes were reviewed, defined, and interpreted in relation to the research questions and existing literature. Cross-case analysis was also conducted to identify commonalities and differences among the participating schools. Throughout the analytical process, coding decisions and theme development were documented to maintain transparency and consistency.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with participants, in-depth interviews, and triangulation of interview data with observational field notes. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and data collection procedures to enable readers to determine the applicability of findings to similar settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research process, including interview protocols, coding procedures, and analytical decisions, creating an audit trail. Confirmability was ensured through reflexive journaling, maintaining records of coding and theme development, and grounding interpretations in participants' verbatim quotations to minimize researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly followed throughout the research process. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authority before commencing the study. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the participating schools. Participants received detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, research procedures, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants' identities and school names were anonymized by using pseudonyms, and all interview recordings, transcripts, and research documents were securely stored with access limited to the researcher. These measures ensured respect for participants' autonomy, privacy, and confidentiality while maintaining the ethical integrity of the study.

Results

This research study explored the perceptions and practices of teamwork among principals from different secondary schools in Nepal. The participants were purposively selected for their extensive experience and diverse perspectives. The principals involved in this study included Mr. Hari Bahadur K.C, Mr. Krishna Bahadur Thapa, Mr. Dil Bahadur Rawat, and Mr. Yuvraj Shrestha.

Mr. Dil Bahadur Rawat has served as the principal of Shree Nischal Secondary School for seven years. He oversees the institution's overall education and administration, ensuring that staff and students are working towards common educational goals. Similarly, Mr. Krishna Bahadur Thapa has been at Shree Bhagawati Secondary School for ten years, with eleven years of experience overall, including at both basic and secondary levels. He emphasizes the importance of teamwork in achieving the organization's objectives.

Mr. Yuvaraj Shrestha, who has been with Jana Priya Model Secondary School for 21 years, highlights his role as primarily managerial, having served as vice-principal before becoming principal. Lastly, Mr. Hari Bahadur K.C. has been working at Shree Bhairav Secondary School for nine years, with seven years as principal, managing various aspects of the school's administration.

Through semi-structured interviews, we gathered insights into their roles, definitions of teamwork, team structures, communication methods, challenges, and strategies to foster effective teamwork within their respective institutions.

Key insights

The case study explores the insights and experiences of four principals from different secondary schools in Nepal, focusing on teamwork within their institutions. The principals, who have extensive experience in educational leadership, share their perspectives on how teamwork is structured, managed, and its impact on achieving educational goals. The participants in this study are:

Defining and Structuring Teamwork

All four principals define teamwork as a crucial component for the success of their educational organizations. They had agreed that effective teamwork involves clear communication, mutual respect, and a shared vision. But the structure of teams varies across these schools. Mr. Rawat viewed teamwork as collaboration, communication, and mutual support among staff members. He explained that teams were typically structured based on expertise and responsibilities, with clear roles and hierarchies. He said:

“In my school, teamwork is about collaboration, communication, and mutual support among staff members towards achieving our educational goals. To me effective teamwork means that every team member understands their role and communicates openly, respects each other’s ideas, and works towards common objectives with dedication and enthusiasm. Yes, Teams here generally are structured based on expertise and responsibilities, with clear roles and hierarchies where necessary.”

Mr. Thapa saw it as the collective effort that powers the organization, and he mentioned that teams are formed based on their roles, and members are selected through staff meetings. regarding this he said:

“Teamwork is needed to make success our goal in the organization. Effective teamwork looks like the whole effort of the organization. It is the power of the organization. Teams are typically structured in terms of their roles.”

While Mr. Shrestha emphasized the roles and responsibilities of each staff member, they were mandatory to achieve daily overall goals. He added that teams usually have one leader and subordinates, with members assigned based on their abilities and team requirements He said:

“Each & every staff of our organization knows their role & responsibilities which they fulfill on an everyday basis for the achievement of the overall goal of the organization. Effective

teamwork in my opinion is a state where each team member plays crucial role in the achievement of common goals. It is characterized by clear communication, trust between team members, improvement of team, etc. Typically our teams have one leader & subordinates. Team members are assigned on the basis of their ability & requirement of the team."

Mr. K.C. described teamwork as satisfactory, with coworkers working towards a common goal, though not necessarily sharing personal emotions. He explained a more segmented approach, with teams divided into five groups, each focusing on specific areas like exams, extracurricular activities, and complaint management. He said:

"Our teamwork is satisfactory. I cannot say it is all good but everyone is happy working in this team. Colleagues are not friends. They don't share emotions but they share a common goal for an institution. An effective teamwork pushes one another to achieve a common goal. We have divided the team into five groups: Exam, ECA, Art and Literature, Assembly Management and Complaint management. Apart from these groups, we have Incharge for all three levels."

Reflexivity:

From a researcher's point of view, the answers from Mr. Rawat, Mr. Thapa, Mr. Shrestha, and Mr. K.C. offer a detailed picture of how teamwork is seen and practiced in schools. Each person shares different ideas that help us better understand what makes teamwork effective in educational environments.

Mr. Rawat emphasized the importance of working together, good communication, and supporting each other, with clear roles and a structured hierarchy. This traditional approach ensures everyone knows their responsibilities, making the team efficient and accountable. However, it may miss out on the benefits of more flexible team structures that can adapt to change.

Mr. Thapa viewed teamwork as the combined effort driving the organization, focusing on a shared goal. He mentioned forming teams through staff meetings, which suggests a democratic method that can increase staff involvement and ownership. This can boost motivation but might slow down decision-making.

Mr. Shrestha focused on the importance of each team member's role and responsibility for daily goals, with a clear leader and subordinates, indicating a hierarchical setup. This provided clarity and order but might restrict the flow of new ideas and limit innovation that more equal team structures could bring.

Mr. K.C. described dividing teamwork into specific groups for different areas like exams, extracurricular activities, and complaints. This specialized approach ensures high efficiency and expertise in each area but can create silos, reducing collaboration and sharing of different perspectives across teams.

Communication and Interaction

Effective communication is highlighted as a key component of teamwork. Team members interact through regular meetings, email, messaging apps, and face-to-face discussions.

Mr. Rawat emphasized the use of multiple means of advanced technology to stabilize effective communication. He said:

"In my school, I used practices like clear goal setting, effective communication, supportive leadership, and recognition of achievement can support teamwork. Conversely, micromanagement, unclear expectations, and lack of feedback can hinder it. I emphasized using Microsoft Teams, Viber, face-to-face, and Messenger for planning and coordination to

connect each other making it easier to manage our tasks and collaborate effectively. However, challenges can include communication barriers, conflicting priorities, resource constraints, personality clashes, and external disruptions”.

Mr. Thapa noted that meetings, group discussions, and video calls are common methods of interaction. He said:

“They organize monthly meetings in break time and after or before the school time. Incharge is reported by class teachers and class monitors. They discuss the problems and find possible solutions. All the decisions are reported to the principal.”

While, Mr. Shrestha emphasized open and interactive discussions where all team members' ideas were considered. He said:

“Open & interactive discussions are held to entertain all the ideas from the team members. Team members arrive at the set date and time. The pre informed agendas are presented and discussed thoroughly. Decisions on the issues are made with a participative approach. Meeting minutes are prepared.”

Mr. K.C. mentioned monthly meetings and discussions where class teachers and monitors report to in-charges, who then communicate with the principal. He said:

“They organize monthly meetings in break time and after or before the school time. Incharge is reported by class teachers and class monitors. They discuss the problems and find possible solutions. All the decisions are reported to the principal.”

Reflexivity

Reflecting on the responses from Mr. Rawat, Mr. Thapa, Mr. Shrestha, and Mr. K.C., it becomes evident that each leader employs distinct methods to foster effective teamwork in educational settings.

Mr. Rawat advocated for integrating advanced technology like Microsoft Teams, Viber, and Messenger to enhance communication and coordination among team members. His emphasis on clear goal setting, supportive leadership, and recognition of achievements underscored a proactive approach to team dynamics, aiming to boost collaboration while acknowledging potential challenges such as communication barriers and conflicting priorities.

In contrast, Mr. Thapa and Mr. K.C. described more traditional approaches with structured monthly meetings and hierarchical reporting systems. These methods prioritize formal interactions and decision-making processes through established routines involving class teachers, monitors, and in-charges reporting to the principal. While these approaches ensure clear lines of communication and accountability, they may limit inclusivity and innovative problem-solving.

Mr. Shrestha stood out for promoting open and participative discussions where all team members' ideas were valued. This approach fosters a collaborative environment where decisions are made collectively, potentially enhancing creativity and team cohesion.

Leadership and Management Practices

Leadership plays a significant role in influencing teamwork. Mr. Rawat believed that leadership sets goals, provides guidance, and facilitates challenges. He said:

“In my school, teamwork is about collaboration, communication, and mutual support among staff members towards achieving our educational goals. i role involves overseeing the overall education and administration of our institution. I have been working here for 7 years now, it’s

been a fulfilling journey so far. Teams here generally are structured based on expertise and responsibilities, with clear roles and hierarchies where necessary”.

Mr. Thapa noted that communicative and democratic management practices support effective teamwork, while autocratic practices hinder it. He said:

“I am the Principal of Bhagawati Secondary School. Teamwork is needed to make success our goal in the organization. It is effective teamwork looks like the whole effort of the organization. It is the power of the organization. Teams are typically structured in terms of their roles. Team members are selected by the meeting of the staff. Team meetings or collaboration are fruitful in deciding on the organization. Leadership can make a team work by communicating with others so it is necessary to build up teamwork”.

Mr. Shrestha added that leaders with skills to get the best out of team members were vital for success. He said:

“Teamwork in my opinion is a state where each team member plays a crucial role in the achievement of common goals. It is characterized by clear communication, trust between team members, and improvement of team. Typically our teams have one leader & subordinates. Team members are assigned on the basis of their ability & requirement of team. Open & interactive discussion are held to entertain all the ideas from the team members. Team members arrive at the set date and time. The pre informed agendas are presented and discussed thoroughly. Decisions on the issues are made with a participative approach. Meeting minutes are prepared. Leaders with skills to get the most out of every team member are vital for the success of every team. Leaders are influential for every team here”.

Mr. K.C. highlighted the autonomy of committees to plan and implement without needing the principal's approval, fostering a sense of ownership among staff. He said:

“Our teamwork is satisfactory. I cannot say it is all good but everyone is happy working in this team. Colleagues are not friends. They don't share emotions but they share a common goal for an institution. An effective teamwork pushes one another to achieve a common goal. They are selected considering their potential and interest. They organize monthly meetings in break time and after or before the school time. Every committee is autonomous to make plans and implement them. They don't need approval from the principal but the outcome is discussed and plans are amended if necessary.”

Reflexivity

Reflecting on the perspectives shared by Mr. Rawat, Mr. Thapa, Mr. Shrestha, and Mr. K.C. regarding teamwork in educational settings, several insights emerge. Mr. Rawat emphasized leadership's role in setting goals and providing guidance, highlighting structured team roles and hierarchies as essential for organizational clarity and direction.

Mr. Thapa underscored the importance of communicative and democratic management practices in fostering effective teamwork, contrasting these positively with autocratic approaches that can inhibit collaboration.

Mr. Shrestha stated a vision of teamwork characterized by clear communication, trust, and participative decision-making, emphasizing the pivotal role of skilled leadership in maximizing team potential and achieving common goals.

In contrast, Mr. K.C. highlighted the autonomy of committees in his school, promoting ownership and initiative among staff members, although recognizing the need to improve emotional connection among colleagues.

As a researcher, these perspectives illustrate varying approaches to fostering teamwork, each with its strengths and potential areas for development. Effective leadership, clear communication, and a balance between structure and autonomy emerge as critical factors in enhancing collaborative effectiveness within educational institutions.

Decision-Making and Conflict Resolution

Decision-making processes involve collaboration and harmony between team members of educational organizations. Mr. Rawat and Mr. Thapa described decisions being made through team discussions and democratic voting. He said:

“Decisions may be made through consensus and democratic voting team dynamics. In a team deciding on a new project direction, members might first brainstorm ideas, then evaluate them based on criteria, discuss pros and cons, and finally vote on the preferred option. Conflicts are often resolved through open communication, active listening, compromise, or seeking mediation from a team leader or external facilitator if needed. In a disagreement over project priorities, the team might hold a facilitated discussion to understand each other’s perspectives and find a compromise that aligns with project goals.”

Mr. Thapa said:

“Decisions are made to communicate with each other in the team. Agenda, discussion, different view of the whole team that makes decisions. Conflicts and disagreements within teams are resolved by table talk, communication, and negotiation. I faced a conflict in the class routine but later I managed the negotiation.”

Mr. Shrestha mentioned that all team members contribute ideas, which are considered before making informed decisions. Conflicts are typically resolved through open communication, negotiation, and compromise. He said:

“All the team members put forward their relevant ideas which are all considered & informed decisions are made. In team meetings, agendas are presented by presenters & they are discussed thoroughly. Decisions are finally made with consensus agreement. Conflicts are managed by promoting win-win situations for all the members involved”

Regarding decision making and conflict resolution Mr. KC said: *“Every teacher is given time to express their opinion and decisions are unanimous. If there is a conflict, the principal takes the call to find the bone of contention. He talks to the teams separately and resolves the issue.”*

Mr. Rawat and Mr. Thapa highlighted the importance of communication and mediation, while Mr. Shrestha emphasized promoting win-win situations. While Mr. Thapa focused on negotiation and communication. He said:

“Decisions are made to communicate with each other in the team.- Agenda- discussion- different views of the whole team – make decisions.”

Reflexivity

Reflecting on the insights shared by Mr. Rawat, Mr. Thapa, Mr. Shrestha, and Mr. K.C. regarding decision-making and conflict resolution in educational settings, several themes emerge. Mr. Rawat and Mr. Thapa emphasized the value of team discussions and democratic voting in reaching decisions, emphasizing open communication and mediation as key to resolving conflicts.

Mr. Shrestha emphasized the need to listen to everyone's ideas in his team and work towards agreements that benefit everyone. He believes in discussing issues thoroughly and negotiating until decisions are well-informed and support the team's goals.

In the other hand, Mr. K.C. described a process where every teacher had a chance to share their thoughts, and decisions were made only when everyone agreed. If there were disagreements, the principal stepped in to help find solutions.

As a researcher, these perspectives reveal diverse approaches to decision-making and conflict resolution. Each method has strengths that help teams work well together and agree on goals. Good communication, mediation, and making decisions together are key to building strong teamwork in educational leadership.

Challenges and Strategies

Communication barriers, conflicting priorities, resource constraints, and personality clashes are common challenges faced by teams. These challenges lead to misunderstandings, delays, and decreased morale. Strategies to overcome these challenges include fostering open communication, setting clear expectations, providing training, promoting diversity, and seeking feedback for continuous improvement. Mr. Rawat mentioned regular team-building activities and conflict resolution training. Mr. Rawat said:

“By implementing regular team-building activities and conflict resolution training, a team was able to improve communication and collaboration, resulting in higher productivity and morale”.

While Mr. Thapa focused on negotiation and communication. He said:

“Negotiation and communication are used to overcome the challenge”.

Mr. Shrestha highlighted the importance of involving everyone in the team and clearly communicating roles and responsibilities. He said:

“We try to make everyone in the team as involved as possible. Roles & Responsibility of all the team members are properly communicated & valid expectations from team members are established”.

Reflexivity

From the participant’s reflection, it was evident that effective strategies such as team-building activities, conflict resolution training, negotiation, and clear communication of roles contributed significantly to enhancing teamwork in educational settings.

Mr. Rawat emphasized on regular team-building activities and conflict resolution training illustrated how proactive measures can improve team communication and collaboration, leading to increased productivity and morale. Whereas, Mr. Thapa highlighted the importance of negotiation and communication in overcoming challenges within teams, suggesting these skills are crucial for resolving conflicts and fostering cooperation.

Additionally, Mr. Shrestha's approach of ensuring all team members are involved, with clearly defined roles and expectations, underscores the importance of clarity and inclusivity in promoting effective teamwork.

Cultural Context and External Factors

Teamwork is influenced by the cultural context of Nepal. Such as respect for hierarchy, collectivism, and emphasis on relationships can shape team dynamics and communication styles. Mr. Rawat and Mr. Thapa noted that cultural values such as harmony and group consensus impact decision-making and conflict resolution. Mr. Rawat said:

“In Nepal, cultural values such as respect for hierarchy, collectivism, and emphasis on relationships can influence teamwork dynamics and communication styles. Factors like

organizational policies, budget constraints, technology infrastructure, and market dynamics can influence how teams collaborate and execute projects”

Mr. Thapa said:

“Sometimes religion and culture influence teamwork to decide on our organization. Sometimes policies do not match at the ground level and resources may not be sufficient to influence teamwork.”

Mr. Shrestha mentioned that cultural attitudes can sometimes lead to arrogance and affect teamwork. He said:

“Teamwork is influenced by culture. Team members tend to be arrogant with an attitude that they need to perform all the tasks themselves. This tends to affect teamwork as team members try to override the delegated task. This affects the environment of the team. People try to use their communications trying to force their own motives. Groupism within a team leads to downfall of the entire team. Resources are essential for common goal achievement. On the basis of the resources availability; team goals might need to be revised periodically to make them realistic or to increase the scope.”

External factors like organizational policies, resources, and local government influences also play a role. Policies that support effective communication, goal setting, and training are beneficial, while mismatched policies and insufficient resources can hinder teamwork.

Mr. Shrestha mentioned that cultural attitudes can sometimes lead to arrogance and affect teamwork. He said:

“Influenced by culture; team members tend to be arrogant with an attitude that they need to perform all the tasks themselves. This tends to affect teamwork as team members try to override the delegated task. This affects the environment of the team. Cultural points of views of people belonging to different cultures are different. This can lead to conflicts if not properly managed. So, teams need to work around these points of views. External factors may be people trying to use their communications trying to force their own motives. Groupism within a team leads to downfall of the entire team. Resources are essential for common goal achievement. On the basis of the resources availability; team goals might need to be revised periodically to make them realistic or to increase the scope. Some practices and policies are that support effective teamwork are; Effective communication channel, Goals & Objective setting, Investment in training & development, Defined responsibilities and Flexible work hours.”

Mr. KC said:

“We still have caste-based discrimination and the culture of seniors and juniors. Yes, Age is considered a factor in leadership. In the context of external factors local Governments favor their voters more than the outsiders. I think for effective team work organizational practices or policies should give opportunities to the interested and capable ones.”

Reflexivity

From the insight shared by participants, it was evident that cultural values, organizational policies, and external influences significantly impacted teamwork dynamics in Nepalese educational organizations.

Mr. Rawat highlighted how cultural values such as hierarchy and collectivism shape communication styles and collaboration approaches within teams and Mr. Thapa emphasized the challenge of aligning organizational policies with ground-level realities and resource constraints, which can hinder effective teamwork.

Mr. Shrestha underscored the detrimental effects of cultural attitudes like arrogance and the need for self-reliance, which can lead to conflicts and weaken the unity and cooperation among team members. Additionally, he noted the importance of managing diverse cultural viewpoints and ensuring adequate resources for goal achievement whereas, Mr. K.C. pointed out persistent issues like caste-based discrimination and age-related hierarchy, suggesting that organizational practices should prioritize meritocracy to foster effective teamwork. These perspectives collectively highlighted the complex inter-relation of cultural, organizational, and external factors that researchers must consider when studying and promoting effective teamwork in Nepalese educational settings.

Measuring Success and Future Vision

The success of teamwork is measured through project completion rates, team satisfaction surveys, meeting deadlines, achieving goals, and qualitative feedback on collaboration effectiveness. Examples of successful team projects include implementing new curriculums, achieving excellent exam results, and overall school development. Effective teamwork contributes to educational goals by facilitating knowledge sharing, innovation, and problem-solving.

For the future, the principals visualize creating a collaborative ecosystem where all stakeholders work together to achieve educational excellence. Mr. Rawat emphasized the importance of lifelong learning and continuous improvement. He said:

“Success can be measured through metrics such as project completion rates, team satisfaction surveys, meeting deadlines, achieving goals, and qualitative feedback on collaboration effectiveness. An example could be a cross-functional team that successfully implemented a new curriculum integrating technology, where members from different departments collaborated effectively, resulting in improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Effective teamwork can facilitate knowledge sharing, innovation, and problem-solving, ultimately enhancing teaching quality, students' learning experiences, and institutional reputation. For students, teamwork fosters critical thinking, and communication skills, and prepares them for collaborative work environments. For teachers, it promotes professional development, creativity, and shared learning. For the institution, it leads to improved academic performance, stakeholder satisfaction, and organizational resilience. Enhancements might include providing more opportunities for team training and development, fostering a culture of constructive feedback, addressing communication barriers, and ensuring equitable distribution of resources and recognition. Future initiatives could involve establishing mentorship programs, creating interdisciplinary project teams, implementing agile methodologies, and leveraging technology for virtual collaboration and communication. The vision could include creating a collaborative ecosystem where students, teachers, administrators, and stakeholders work together synergistically to achieve educational excellence, innovation, and societal impact, fostering a culture of lifelong learning and continuous improvement.”

Mr. Thapa highlighted the need for regular meetings, interactions, and discussions. He said:

“We measure success by the output of the organization. Excellent SEE results and overall school development are the team projects of our school. Effective teamwork contributes to making perfect decisions to meet the goals of the organization. To solve the problem, to make the decision, to make the education better. Communication and negotiation are needed to

enhance teamwork in your organization. Meetings, interactions, and discussions promote better teamwork in the future. There should be interaction, communication, and regular meetings for the future of teamwork in educational organizations in Nepal.”

Mr. Shrestha proposed teamwork as crucial for planning, execution, and growth, He said:

“Primarily, results are taken into account to measure the success of teamwork. In addition; the impact of teamwork in the overall organization is evaluated. The Model School Project has been in operation for the past 5 years. It is progressing quite well & we are in a commanding position to complete the project in near future. Team effort makes achievement of our educational goals easier. Co-operation, collaboration, Coordination & sense of ownership are some of many observed benefits of teamwork. Power delegation, more discussion, reward & feedback system, encouragement of more participation are some of noted improvements. The above mentioned improvements are in consideration to promote better teamwork. Principal should have the power over all the operations within the school & should be the decision maker. School management committee should be transformed into an assistant committee. Community schools should have more community involvement. Teamwork will be crucial for the planning, execution & growth of educational organizations in Nepal.”

While Mr. K.C. focused on building systems where every teacher can excel and receive recognition for their efforts. He said:

“In my opinion the success of teamwork in my organization is achieved, if the leader and team are enjoying their role. Teamwork is crucial because an organization is not run single handedly. Workload is divided and every teacher develops professional skills. The local teachers still have ego and they think they are superior to the outsiders. Wait for them to retire.”

Reflexivity

From the perspectives of participants, it was evident that teamwork in educational organizations in Nepal is viewed through various lenses.

Mr. Rawat emphasized measurable outcomes such as project completion rates and team satisfaction, stressing the importance of collaboration for enhancing teaching quality and student outcomes and Mr. Thapa highlighted the organizational output and the role of effective teamwork in decision-making and educational improvement.

Mr. Shrestha focused on results and the institutional impact of teamwork, advocating for structured improvements like communication and feedback systems. In contrast, Mr. K.C. emphasized personal satisfaction and professional development within teams, acknowledging challenges such as ego issues among local teachers. Overall, these perspectives underscore the multifaceted benefits and challenges of teamwork in educational settings, reflecting a nuanced understanding of its role in achieving organizational goals and fostering professional growth.

Discussion

The principals acknowledged the importance of teamwork in achieving the educational goals of their institutions, characterizing effective teamwork by clear communication, shared goals, mutual respect, and collaboration (Levi & Slem, 1995). Mr. Dil Bahadur Rawat emphasized the significance of every team member understanding their role and communicating openly, while Mr. Hari K.C. highlighted that effective teamwork involves pushing one another to

achieve common goals despite not sharing personal emotions this annotation was supported by Parker, (2011). In contrast, a study by Thompson (2010), it was found that while effective teamwork indeed hinges on clear communication, shared goals, and mutual respect, the emphasis was placed more on emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills rather than solely on role clarity and open communication as highlighted by Rawat and K.C. Team structures varied slightly across the schools but generally included defined roles and hierarchies. At Bagdevi Secondary School, teams were organized into groups such as Exam, ECA, Art and Literature, Assembly Management, and Complaint Management, allowing for targeted focus and efficient management. Similar study was conducted by Homburg, (2005). Whereas, Jana Priya Model Secondary School had teams with clear leadership and accountability (Dive, B. 2008. In other hand According to Don, & Raman, (2019) focused on taking action, leadership, and collaborative efforts. Emphasizing teamwork as a lifelong skill, the article advocates for promoting teamwork within schools, highlighting effective methods for fostering collaboration and building strong teams.

Team members were typically selected based on their potential and interests in Nepalese context, but in research conducted by Smith and Johnson (2015), team selection criteria were found to include diversity of skills and perspectives, aiming to enhance innovation and problem-solving capabilities. Interaction and communication among team members occurred through regular meetings, emails, and messaging apps. Monthly meetings were common, where problems were discussed, and solutions collaboratively found were supported by Anders, A. (2016). Mr. Krishna Thapa highlighted the importance of team meetings for making fruitful decisions. Common challenges included communication barriers, conflicting priorities, and cultural influences. Misunderstandings due to different interpretations of the same issue, as pointed out by Mr. Krishna Thapa, impacted teamwork and overall performance supported by Van den Bossche et.al (2006). Conflicts were generally resolved through open communication and negotiation, as illustrated by Mr. Hari K.C.'s example of mediating between two female teachers but in contrast, conflict resolution strategies emphasized not only by open communication and negotiation but also by formalized conflict resolution procedures and peer mediation programs (R. M., & Lian, R. (2019).

Leadership played a crucial role in influencing teamwork by setting goals, providing guidance, and supporting team members Montes, (2005). Decision-making processes involved presenting agendas, discussing them thoroughly, and reaching uniform decisions Weekes, (2023). Strategies to overcome challenges included fostering open communication, setting clear expectations, providing training, and encouraging participation (Ayttey, 2024) . Additionally, cultural values such as respect for hierarchy and collectivism were acknowledged as influential factors in teamwork dynamics Belohlav, (2011).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study reveals that effective teamwork in educational organizations in Nepal is essential for achieving institutional goals. Principals play a pivotal role in fostering a collaborative environment through clear communication, defined roles, and supportive leadership. Despite cultural influences and communication barriers, strategies like open discussions, conflict resolution training, and regular meetings help enhance teamwork. The insights from these

experienced principals underscore the need for continuous improvement in teamwork practices to ensure the success and development of educational institutions in Nepal.

Recommendations

School principals should adopt participatory leadership by involving teachers and staff in decision-making and encouraging shared responsibility. Schools should establish regular meetings and effective communication channels, including digital platforms, to strengthen collaboration. Educational institutions should foster trust, mutual respect, teamwork, and recognition of collaborative efforts. Educational authorities should offer training on teamwork, communication, collaborative leadership, and conflict management for school leaders and teachers. The Ministry of Education and local governments should develop policies that encourage teamwork and collaborative school governance.

Further studies should include teachers and other stakeholders, involve a larger sample across different regions of Nepal, and examine the impact of teamwork on school effectiveness and student outcomes.

Author Contributions

Anita Gurung: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing - original draft

Radha Maharjan: Data collection, formal analysis, writing - review & editing

Narayan Prasad Bhusal: Data curation, formal analysis, writing - review & editing

Laxman Shrestha: Investigation, validation, writing - review & editing

Kalyan Thapa: Formal analysis, visualization, writing - review & editing

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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