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**Guest Editors**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EDITORIAL</b> Education as a Means, Not End: Perspectives from Nepal <b>Lina Gurung</b> <b>Guna Raj Nepal</b> <b>Ranju Kumari Yadav</b> <b>Gobinda Puri</b>	1-5
Reflections on Pandemic Emotions: Reconstructing Self as a Female Educator in Nepal <b>Bhawana Shrestha</b>	6-29
University Students' Perceptions of Online Learning during Covid -19 Pandemic <b>Binod Neupane</b>	30-49
Influence of Parental Socio-Economic Status on Students' Academic Performance: Experience from Pokhara University, Nepal <b>Deepak Neupane</b> <b>Santosh Kumar Gurung</b>	50-67
Status of Girls' Participation in Higher Education in Nepal <b>Deviram Acharya</b>	68-85
Action Initiatives in Integrating Indigenous and non-Western Knowledge in Curricular Practices of Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education: A Qualitative Inquiry <b>Indra Mani Rai</b> <b>Ram Gaire</b>	86-104
Mathematics Teachers' Perceptions on Higher Order Thinking Skills <b>Nara Hari Acharya</b>	105-125
Unravelling Indigenous Pedagogy: Tracing Dances and Songs of Dangaura Tharus <b>Nathuram Chaudhary</b>	126-155
A critical-appreciative approach as/for transformative professional development <b>Parbati Dhungana</b>	156-181

**Education as a Means, Not End: Perspectives from Nepal**

**Lina Gurung  
Guna Raj Nepal  
Ranju Kumari Yadav  
Gobinda Puri**

A global institution of critical importance, higher education has been in a constant flux in the past few decades. Higher education systems around the world have witnessed significant transformations brought about by the impact of globalization, the explosion in ICT, and increasing enrollments (massification) in higher education, among others. Among the impacts of these impacts are the spreading use of English, cross-cultural experiences and skills, collaboration for research and scholarships across borders, and the expansion of private higher education. The international exchange of ideas, knowledge, and skills also characterize today's higher education, as well as interdisciplinary collaborative research, increasing volumes of publication, and the exponential use of ICT in research practice.

Despite the influences of some of the above changes and dynamics, however, especially in the developing world, unequal opportunities and resources keep higher education an aspiration for the majority, making it seem more like an end than a means toward achieving other goals in the lives of individuals and communities. Higher education in our country Nepal, for instance, exhibits a complex mix of forward leaps alongside persisting challenges that make structural changes very slow or impossible. It also continues to use imported frameworks and aspire for international standards, rather than address national needs and social realities as well. Curricula don't build on local knowledge bases; internationally aligned degree programs such as the four-year college don't meet national needs; and

content-heavy teaching and assessment practices fail to address students' future needs in local society and professions. As technology makes information more accessible and opportunities in the global marketplace more appealing young generations, formal education is becoming less appealing (as well as less affordable) to them.

Nepal doesn't have a very long history of modern higher education, as it established a public college, Tribhuvan University, just six decades ago. After the restoration of democracy in Nepal in 1990, Nepali higher education landscape rapidly expanded and started radically transforming, in response to political upheavals, globalization, and technological advancements. In addition to the government-funded (public) universities which now include regional ones, there are community-funded (community), and privately funded (private) colleges and universities that provide higher education. This tiny country now educates nearly half a million students. However, the one public institution still serves 80 percent of the students across the nation to this day. On the one hand, the public institutions maintain high access but have a low graduation rate, with lower quality of education than private institutions. On the other, all three types, including public and community colleges, mainly concentrate in just a few urban centers. The establishment of Nepal Open University in 2016 (which became functional in 2018) is expected to provide additional access to higher education for the economically disadvantaged students regardless of their geography which is one of the major hurdles. But the public hasn't leaned very heavily in this direction either. Broadly put, the development of higher education in developing countries like Nepal shows the urgent need for it to be reframed within a social justice approach – not just to advance technologically and in terms of quality and rigor but to make it accessible and to redesign it for affecting equity and justice for all.

It is in the above context of entangled opportunities and problems, change and challenges that this Special Issue is situated. The issue includes nine research articles from Nepali scholars who have explored the current status and key issues in Nepali higher education, seeking to offer broader perspectives. The articles have highlighted social disparities in the Nepali society reflected in its higher education, influence and domination of the western knowledge, professional development of teachers and shifting practices in teaching learning due to the recent global pandemic of Covid-19. The socio-economic context of learners in Nepal reveals



the disparities and how higher education has not been able to address them equitably. As Nepal stands at the crossroads of major political transitions, the issue of how higher education can play a transformational role in exploiting its various developmental opportunities is a key priority in the Nepalese context. A country with an immense potential for development due to its abundant natural resources and diverse topography, Nepal needs the synergy and system that can be garnered only by expanding the boundaries of higher education. How can Nepalese higher education contribute to the development of research capacity so that developmental goals could be harnessed fully? How can the discourses surrounding the impact of local-global interactions be tailored to fit the local needs, while realizing the global values of quality education? How can Nepalese higher education open up productive spaces for research collaboration so that international educators can be invited to support strategic planning and institutional leadership to that end? How can it be used to substantiate accountability and autonomy among higher education institutions? Questions such as these demand a major breakthrough in the way knowledge, skills, and scholarships are anchored on higher education in Nepal.

The global pandemic of Covid-19 has disrupted Nepal's overall education and especially higher education in ways that it will take a generation to fully understand and address the impacts. But the crisis has also accelerated some changes, challenging slow-changing institutions and their faculty and students to learn and adapt more quickly. Some of the changes might help address inequities and create new opportunities for more people. Still, it is equally important to be cautious against new kinds of challenges cropping up in the changing landscape – some of which contributors to this have started to identify and address.

There is an inspiring background to this special issue that we want to also share. A grassroots community of scholars from diverse disciplines from Nepal conducted a rigorous academic writing and publication program for the university faculties and researchers in late 2020 and early 2021. The program's mission was to support scholars in a global-south country to enhance their research and publication skills, and it was multidisciplinary and transnational in collaboration and support. Among the roughly 100 scholars who were selected, 81 completed the three-month rigorous workshop with article manuscripts ready for publication. Given that the works focusing on

higher education would be a natural fit, we responded to a call for a special issue and got to work, calling for additional work from interested scholars. Our editorial team is grateful to *JIMPHE* for providing this invaluable space for a Nepal based Special Issue. As elsewhere, there is an increasing demand for research and publication in Nepal but support program for writing, mentoring, and collaboration to promote academic rigor and integrity are just catching up. Therefore, this issue has greatly inspired Nepali scholars by connecting them to global and local academic audiences, as well as providing opportunity and support in the process. This issue has highlighted the importance of locally grounded research, providing us opportunities to practice new skills and learn to use new tools for journal publication workflow.

We hope that readers from around the world find something new and useful in the perspectives and stories, experiences and findings about higher education from both unique and similar contexts of Nepal. And we would like to thank the journal and its editorial team for the opportunity to contribute to this special issue.

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## **Reflections on Pandemic Emotions: Reconstructing Self as a Female Educator in Nepal**

**Bhawana Shrestha**

### **Abstract**

Even though the documentation on the effects of the pandemic on educators is being done, enough spaces have not been provided to the female educators working in higher education in Nepal. In this paper, I attempt to explore the journey of navigating my emotions as an educator in Nepal working from home and hope to contribute to the broader discussions on emotions and emotional expressions. The context of this self-study is my life as an educator working in higher education between 29 March 2020 to 29 March 2021. This paper focuses on exploring the question, 'How did the reflections of my emotions during the time of pandemic help me reconstruct my identity as an educator?'. Written as a retrospective reflection on vulnerability, courage, and empathy, self-reflective diary entries were used for data analysis. The paper shows the gendered implication on the emotional expression on me as a female faculty and how it impacted my identity as an educational leader.

कोभिड-१९ महामारीले शिक्षकहरुमाथि कस्तो प्रभाव पारेको छ भन्ने कुराको अभिलेखिकरण भइरहेको भए तापनि उच्च शिक्षामा कार्यरत महिला शिक्षकहरुका बारेमा त्यसले पर्याप्त ठाउँ दिएको छैन। यो अनुसन्धान पत्रमा म नेपालको उच्च शिक्षामा कार्यरत, घरबाट काम गर्न बाध्य महिलाको मनोभावहरुको एउटा यात्राको रूपमा अन्वेषण गर्दछु र त्यसले महामारी नसृत भावना र मनोभावजन्य विषयमा हुने बृहत्तर छलफलमा योगदान पुऱ्याउने आशा गर्दछु। यो स्व-अन्वेषणको परिवेश म महिला शिक्षकले नेपालको उच्च शिक्षामा काम गरेको २९ मार्च २०२० देखि २९ मार्च २०२१ सम्मको समयवधि हो। यो अनुसन्धान पत्रको मूल प्रश्न महामारीमाथिका मेरा प्रतिबिम्बनले कसरी मेरो पहिचानको पुनर्निर्माणमा मद्दत पुर्यायो भन्ने अन्वेषण गर्दछ। कमजोरी, साहस र सहानुभूति को पूर्वब्यापी प्रतिबिम्बन भएकोले यसमा तथ्यांक विश्लेषणका लागि स्व

प्रतिबिम्बित डायरीको प्रयोग गरिएको थियो। यो अनुसन्धान पत्रले महिला शिक्षकको मनोभावजन्य अभिव्यक्तिमा निहित लैङ्गिक महत्ताका साथै कसरी त्यसले शैक्षिक नेतृका रूपमा मेरो परिचयलाई प्रभाव पार्छ भन्ने देखाउँछ।

**Keywords:** *COVID-19 pandemic, emotions, gender, higher education, identity*

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### **Affective Self-Understanding and Reflective Writing**

What can the documentation of emotions and the reflection of them contribute to the understanding of one's identity as an educational leader? Affective self-understanding is a reflective practice that helps an individual understand their own emotions to heighten the awareness about themselves (Mortari, 2015). As Slaby and Stephan (2008) have pointed out, affective self-understanding is *Sui generis*, meaning significantly different from other ways of referring to the world where meanings cannot be derived purely from cognitive intentional states. Given that this is the form of self-understanding where humans face both inward and outward to generate an evaluative awareness of both, the existential situation, and the affective process in that while experiencing the situation, it brings the implicit awareness to the forefront and helps in understanding and reconstructing the identity. This paper explores my journey of affective self-understanding where I navigate my emotions as an educator working in higher education in Nepal with the upsurge of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The paper further explains how the reflection of my emotions through affective self-understanding helped me identify my vulnerability and then slowly helped me find courage amid the crisis and foster empathy.

The need for exploring the emotions arose with the sudden increase in the anxiety attacks that I started getting which started affecting my physical health. Although I used to have anxiety attacks before, the frequency suddenly started rising with the increase in the death tolls in the country during the lockdown. Gupta, et al. (2020) emphasizes that more than one-fourth of the Nepalese participants were found to have experienced predominant anxiety with 7 % of them experiencing depression during the time of lockdown. As a faculty who was working in an institution that was exploring online teaching and learning opportunities and was not leaving any stones unturned in trying to pave the way to rethinking the prevalent

education system during the difficult times, the added workloads were not serving well for me making me feel even more anxious. As I observed the increasing helplessness and vulnerability as an educator, I felt an extreme need to overcome it both for my personal and professional growth. This was a phase of ‘reflective learning’ (Dewey, 1933 as cited in Peltier et al., 2005) as it encompassed two interrelated ideas that are a state of doubt and mental difficulty, and an act of exploration to get rid of that hesitation. It was an uncomfortable feeling to just be in a state of on hold with anxiety unsure about what lies ahead signifying the importance of looking within for the exploration.

Reflective journal writings had been an engaging process for me as an educator and had worked as a medium for learning and growth. I started reflective journal writing in 2013 when I had just started teaching to help me clear my confusion. I find it difficult to share my thoughts and confusions with others easily and given my inexperience in teaching, I needed a way out to express those confusions. Writing reflective journals helped me take a step back from the situations that I was in as a novice teacher and encouraged emotional discourses with myself first and then slowly with other colleagues later supporting my growth both inside and outside the classroom. Bubnys (2019) argues that reflection is a conversation with oneself where an individual provides the answers to the questions for themselves, considers solutions by evaluating its results themselves, and makes an amendment in a way that fosters relationships even in the group settings. Witnessing its benefits, I have continued the writing until now where I share my reflections in the form of blogs written in the English language. This paper has used the self-study method to interpret the reflective journal writings that I had used to get a comprehensive understanding of the new possibilities amid the crisis.

The themes that will be discussed in this paper relate to my questioning self about my vulnerabilities, the newfound courage, and the reconstructing of my identity as an educator during times of crisis. Through the interpretation of these themes, I have come to understand my journey of emotions during the period and how my gender had played a crucial role in the construction of my identity and the emotions that I was feeling as an educator and had an impact on my outcomes. I acknowledge that addressing the full understanding of the teacher’s identity is challenging for me given how broad the concept

is in itself. Given how identity is an ongoing process, it involves both a person and a context, I believe that individual voices combine into the voice of a community giving rise to discourses that shape perspectives, thus can be closely associated with self-concept (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2005). Thus, this paper shares my subjective understanding and transformation of my identity based on the self-reflection that I had with the knowledge that I have at the present moment.

### **Theoretical Influences**

With the popular use of the concepts like ‘emotional literacy’, and ‘emotional intelligence, the agreement on the importance of emotional life in the teaching-learning process as well as critical reflection is increasing. Though the concept ‘emotional literacy’ and ‘emotional intelligence’ are often found to be used interchangeably (Brackett, 2019; Dirks, 2006; Goleman, 2005; Khadka, 2019; Shrestha, 2018), the concept ‘emotional literacy’ means one’s affective self-understanding while the concept ‘emotional intelligence’ addresses the process of enriching that self-understanding through focused attention or reflective analysis (Park, 1999). With the increasing social science research showing the significance of emotions on human agency as well as learning, and decision making (Archer, 2010; Brackett, 2019; Goleman, 2005; Mortari, 2015), the emotional side of life cannot be avoided when it comes to critical reflection. Reflective analysis of one’s own action and interaction which can be developed both formally and informally, however, is a complex teaching-learning process among the participants who are involved in the higher education institution (Bubnys, 2019).

To navigate this complexity, I am employing a critical paradigm. Through this, I aim not only to understand or share an account of behaviors but also to seek change in behaviors in myself (Mack, 2010). The change in behaviors meant relating the knowledge construction with the difficult times of pandemic and adapting to cope with the complexities, and challenges that are hindering my growth as an educator. Standing on the ontological assumption that the social reality is defined by the persons of the society, my epistemological assumption is that knowledge is a social construction made through media, institutions, and society (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, I consider using the socio-cultural approach in understanding my

emotions influenced by Vygotsky's (2012) works. Though Vygotsky did not develop a theory of emotions and identity, his emphasis on the idea that emotions as socio-cultural constructions especially concerning the verbal expression of thoughts are significant which he emphasizes are similar to the non-verbal expression of emotion. Tsai et al. (2004) argue that understanding the values related to emotions in their socio-cultural settings provides guidelines for desirable emotions to facilitate emotional regulation norms and interpersonal relationships. Because one of the major functions of culture is to maintain social norms, Matsumoto et al. (2008) claim that since emotions serve as primary motivators of social behaviors, culture has created guidelines and norms about the regulation of emotions. This is further supported by Hoy (2013) with the argument that for the maintenance of social relationships, individuals are asked to display certain emotions only. The display of emotions, both externalizing and internalizing, are related to the socialization contexts like family, schools, classmates. Gender is considered as one of the important factors in the socialization process and in setting the guidelines about the expressions of emotions (Olson et al., 2019). Gendered expectations might differ according to the culture, however, the influence of gender in the emotional understanding during the process of critical reflection is unavoidable.

Similarly, understanding the role of reflection and reflexivity is equally important because of my direct involvement in the process and the product of the research. Though the similarities between reflexivity and reflection are evident, reflexivity should not be only considered as "the achievement of 'introspection' as an isolated mind in private contemplation, as the traditional concepts of insight and self-analysis may have implied; rather, self-reflexivity always involves an affective engagement, a meeting of minds" (Lewis, 2000, p.685). Reflection can be broadly categorized into three interrelated stages; awareness, critical analysis, and change (Hay et al., 2004). It starts with the awareness of a particular experience stimulated by either some uncomfortable or some positive feelings leading to the stage of critical analysis of the contextual knowledge and brainstorming of the alternatives to finally moving ahead with a new perspective which Mezirow (1991) calls perspective transformation.

Using the broader view of epistemological reflexivity, I have derived the understanding as a researcher through my involvement in the reciprocal processes on interpretation related to my being in this



world. I have both influenced and been influenced by the experience of my engagement in the research taking into consideration how I act on the world and the world acts on me is in a loop (Hand, 2003). Therefore, the critical reflection of my personal position, self, and identity has been acknowledged and can be seen accounted for in my reflective diary writing. Reflective writing empowers us to have that perspective transformation “when questions about the investigated phenomenon are written down creating the possibility to go back and reflect... and reveal the richness of the phenomena in the outlived experience”(Bubnys, 2019, p.4). Mortari (2015) terms this practice as “the journal of emotional life in which the learner writes about their self-investigation of their emotional life to gain a meaningful comprehension out of it” (p. 158). Recording my emotional life in a journal has not just helped me keep myself open to other opinions but has also helped me understand my own assumptions and beliefs as an educator.

### **Self and Identity**

Though self and identity are complementary terms, they are distinct. According to Owens (2006), “the central quality that distinguishes self from identity is that the self is a process and organization born of self-reflection whereas identity is a tool by which individuals or groups categorize themselves and present themselves to the world” (p.206). Self is a source of continuity that provides a sense of connectedness and unbrokenness to the rejuvenated identity of an individual. We understand our rejuvenated selves by observing ourselves in association with our social relationships and social interactions (Swann & Bosson, 2010). I have been a higher education faculty for the last five years in an institution in Nepal that is affiliated with an American University. A married Nepali woman, I am also a doctoral student. So, I relate with interaction theorist Goffman’s (1959) argument that people are like actors taking on various identities where the self is a consequence of the scene that comes off rather than the cause. Given this situationist approach to the self and identity, I feel the continuous need for reflection in general, with high importance during the times of crisis in particular to find my true self, opposite to Goffman’s notion of not having a true self. With a research interest that focuses on improving her practices as an education leader concerning her works in the field of emotional intelligence, reflection on my own emotions is crucial.

Thus, I agree with Snyder (1974) that rather than perpetually getting engaged in impression management activities, self-monitoring helps us find our true enduring sense of self that has valued cross-sectional consistency. In this light, my true enduring self as an educator is someone who strives on improving the quality of life and learning both in myself and in others, enhancing optimism and trust by being mindful of our emotions. However, with the global pandemic, it became evident that my own optimism and trust were shaken with the deteriorating work-life balance as well as the mental health fueling the need for critical questioning of my deeply held beliefs and assumptions as an educator (Mezirow & Taylor, 2011).

My experiences during the time of working from home that started on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 led me to explore the answers to the questions concerning my own emotions and my identity as an educator especially in terms of my gender. The need for the expression of my emotions that I felt particularly because I was a female heightened as I felt limited and suppressed within the collective identity as an educator. When the team reflection meeting was going on, I used to find myself turning my camera off and cooking meals for the family. Especially, when the male faculty thought of giving an extra hour for some musical sessions after the classes, I used to find myself still cleaning the dishes and craving for an hour of rest during the break. Somehow, I had started seeing myself more as an outsider who was in the zoom meeting but not a part of it in anyways which slowly started turning out as a burden for me. The identity that was being framed by the collective discourses that educators who are working during these difficult times are trailblazers stood as a site of contradiction and conflict with my subjective identity leading to the creation of knowledge through the act of questioning myself as a researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Working from home during the time of pandemic offered me a unique opportunity to systematically observe the different educational landscapes that men educators and women educators were in. The shift from feeling marginalized and silenced as a female educator to reconstructing my identity amid the gendered space through open discourses helped me reconfirm my presence and power.

### **Role of Reflection on Emotions in Shaping Teacher's Identity**

Understanding the individuals as intentional beings and the formation of identity cannot be context-free, especially concerning

socio-cultural contexts, identity is a shifting phenomenon and is transformational (Varghese et al., 2005). The constant reconstruction of the teacher's identity based on the wide range of narratives they create to explain themselves and their teaching lives, the discourses, and the context they are part of makes understanding of a teacher's identity challenging, making the role of reflection in the exploration of identity significant (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) further argue reflection "as a key means by which teachers can become more in tune with their sense of self and with a deep understanding of how this self fits into a larger context which involves others; in other words, reflection is a factor in the shaping of identity" (p.182).

Zembylas (2003) highlights the significance of reflection on emotions and claims two ideas. The first one is that the construction of a teacher's identity is effective and is dependent upon power and agency, while the other is that the introspection of those components helps them gain a richer understanding about themselves as a teacher. Given that teachers are not just technical experts, the importance of exploring their emotional experiences is extremely important in relation to their personal lives. Nias (1996) observes teachers having a deep emotional relationship with their work for three reasons; first, teaching involves interaction because of which emotional dimensions are inevitable; second, teaching becomes the main source for them for their self-esteem, fulfillment, as well as vulnerability; third is because of the extension of the second as they are heavily invested in their students as well as the values which they believe represent their work. More than emotion as a psychological phenomenon, the emotions that teachers experience and express are matters of social construction, especially concerning power and culture, and have to be re-thought associating it with identity (Campbell, 1994). Therefore, the role of reflection on emotions is immense as the identity formation of the teacher "involves how the social operation of power and agency influences the discourses about emotion and identity and vice versa" (p. 218).

Vygotsky (2012) argues that the individual experiences can be understood only when it goes beyond the individual and is examined through the social and cultural processes. If analyzed the human actions and speech, the representational systems of tools and signs used in the socio-cultural setting then it can be seen as the resources that constrain or transform the action. However, the examination in

itself does not yield self-knowledge if not provided a discursive shift. The discourse with the self and with the others helps open up a space for self-consciousness even in terms of identity which consequently helps in the reconstruction of identity highlighting the importance of critical reflection on the emotional experiences and expression (Britzman, 1998).

## **Methodology**

The drive to improve my practice as an educational leader motivated me to explore my assumptions rigorously in an organized manner. Garbett and Ovens (2012) illustrate that self-study shifts the researcher from being an ‘outsider’ who looks in on practice to analyzing and improving their own practice. Drawing on a self-study research approach, I aim to make my process of critical reflection ongoing and iterative through careful critical questioning on the written journal entries (Loughran et al., 2007). The writing on the journal was unstructured and an honest depiction of the circumstances and the reflections. As a researcher, I have engaged in the critical reflection of my written reflections and have tried to deconstruct the underlying emotions and explore the tacit knowledge which Mezirow (1991) calls ‘taken-for-granted’ frames of reference. This self-study spans the time frame of one year keeping the global pandemic COVID-19 in the backdrop and using the lens of Mezirow’s (1991) transformative theory. The journals had both inside and outside classroom reflections as an individual experience where classroom meant virtual classrooms. In this self-study, I have been involved in a dialogic process where I have engaged in a conversation with self and others by sharing them as a blog or social media posts (Boyer et al., 2006). The interdependent relations between the individual experience, critical reflection, and dialogue played a crucial role in the perspective transformation helping me reconstruct my identity as an educator. Since it is a challenge to analyze every account of emotions in any given context (Zembylas, 2003), I have chosen to focus on the major incidents that happened during the pandemic that influenced me most when it comes to orienting my identity as a higher education teacher.

I relate to Cooper (2013) as she brings the metaphor of series spinning plates in the air and illustrates the significance of reflective journaling for the meaning-making process by helping an individual organize those spinning plates and helping them grapple with their

own sense of belonging. With reflective journaling of the major events, I have found myself getting further clarity over the incident as soon as I write them down. After writing, when I read it again, I analyze and examine my thoughts, feelings, and actions about my identity as a teacher. This has led further to making connections through interactions within myself and others, thus engaging me actively in the meaning-making process.

## **Reflections**

### ***Vulnerability***

COVID-19 induced a substantial global burden worldwide since its first diagnosis in Wuhan, China, highly affecting the nations with lower capacity to cope with the pandemic and claimed that vulnerability and lack of coping capacity as the two major dimensions to be relevant to it (Wong et al., 2020). The dimension of vulnerability meant the “susceptibility of populations to hazardous incidents” given the socioeconomic, political, and social features (Wong et al., 2020, p. 816) on the one hand, while on the other, it also meant “uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure” (Brown, 2012, p.34). As a higher education married Nepali female faculty who belongs to a middle-class family, I witnessed both the dimensions of vulnerability that I could find being expressed in my daily journals. Vygotsky (as cited in Nyongesa et al., 2017) argues that social interaction is crucial for an individual’s cognitive development for both the formal as well as the natural setting, and language is a tool that is important to bridge the understanding of the world and the particular context. Journaling served a similar purpose for me in helping me become a more independent learner in terms of acknowledging my vulnerability and in shaping my identity as a teacher.

As a consequence of the lockdown, universities in Nepal were temporarily closed for nearly two months since March 24, 2020, however, I being the part of the institution associated with the foreign University decided to shift to a completely online model right away since March 29, 2020, where teaching and learning were undertaken remotely. Although the abrupt transition was made possible through emergency training on e-learning strategies, the challenges were seen around the inevitable variations in the socio-economic backgrounds, and different gender roles of both the faculty and the students as they

were not prepared mentally and technically (Gautam & Gautam, 2020).

Questions and concerns started to rise to support the vulnerable students through discussions and seminars (Chapagain & Neupane, 2020), however, not enough space was provided to address the vulnerability of the faculties, mostly female faculties even when the lockdown had shown a considerable rise in gender discrimination among working men and working women both as a subject and as a participant (Nepal & Aryal, 2020). As a part of one of the core committee members myself that conducted an international virtual conference for higher education educators based on rethinking education amid the crisis, I realized how I was finding it difficult to find at least one female higher education faculty as a speaker and was feeling frustrated about it. Seeing the huge gap in the participation of women educators, on the one hand, was inducing anger within me while on the other hand, I being a woman, that too a married woman myself, I was facing the challenge of putting in an extra effort to bring the same outcome as my married male colleagues were triggering disgust within me. The female faculties were busy doing the household, caring for their babies, taking classes, checking assignments all at the same time. However, when it came to male faculty members they were busy in the meetings, seminars, and virtual conferences that had some major role in the decision making. I was noticing our voices as female faculties during the crisis were not being heard. We were not finding space to share what we were going through, what our experiences were, and most importantly how we were feeling. One of the consequences of the lockdown was an increase in the workload for women in the household along with the extension on the office work hours making it a challenge for women, especially married women to maintain a work-life balance giving rise to emotional breakdown and mental health issues (Kolakakshapati et al., 2021). The added feedback sessions that all the faculties had to be a part of to enhance the skills for virtual teaching-learning had either no or few female faculties. Those were also filled with praises for the male faculties while female faculties had to go through shame and guilt for not being even able to turn on their video cameras while teaching. These social interactions were shaping my perception in a way that I had started seeing myself as an individual with low self-esteem who needs to prioritize her household chores more than that of her office work. On 10 April 2020, I had written,

I can understand how for so many female educators working from home and advocating for online education is a burden. I can understand how they are expected to be teaching while at the same time cooking meals for their family. I can make sense of why they are turning off their camera while they are talking to their students because on the other side they are patting their crying toddlers.

The expectation for women to perform a majority of the housework and childcare responsibility is there despite the increment of full-time participation of women in paid employment. Vygotsky (2012) explains this as the outcome of understanding created by the social interaction where we depend on the society even to create a perspective about our own identity. In this context, while the home is considered as a place for healing and recovery in general, for women it is recognized as a place for additional unpaid work. Therefore, what Olson et al. (2019) has claimed for secondary school teaching applies to higher education teaching as well:

Whether emotion management bolsters or counters a teacher's wellbeing and intention to stay in their job or the profession, may depend on the fit of this emotion management within that teacher's identity—and the extent to which the job allows the teacher to fulfill the objectives linked to that identity. (p. 141)

The perceived identity of Nepali women is to fulfill the role of a caretaker of the family with utmost perfectionism relating that with the family and work-life balance that anything that is done for self-development either triggers the feeling of shame or the feeling of guilt within them. Nepali (2018) claims that with the changing workplace dynamics it has grown more complex in the situation where the women are expected to work as equal as men in the office along with greater responsibilities at home and are expected to not fail in both places. The unexpressed but deeply engraved expectations for the working women by the society forces women faculties to not just outperform in the teaching but also in the household influencing their choices and consequences as an educator (Harvard Business Review, 2018). Apart from that the rising death tolls were triggering fear of losing our loved ones, and the increasing uncertainty was weakening the mental well-being, I felt helpless and vulnerable for not finding the reflective space to share whatever I was going through within the professional sphere making me share my feelings on my journals. On 16 May 2020, I had expressed

We both (me and my husband) hear the murmur of our neighbors every evening as they break the inhuman silence of this city with their grocery visits and realize the running fear that is inside all of us. As we have become closer than ever, the terror has also grown more than ever with this increasing uncertainty.

The lack of safe space for the expression of the authentic self had led women to experience emotional and physical exhaustion, anxiety, and unproductiveness. I, too was one of them when teachers were being considered as the trailblazers amid the crisis. Chapagain and Neupane (2020) highlighted the importance of the attitude and ability of the teachers in playing a supportive role in the creation of the flexible environment and identify themselves as “learning engineers” who play the role of champions amid the crisis (p. 109). However, with the increasing fear in my personal life, I identified myself in a vulnerable spot as a higher education faculty not being able to give my best in fulfilling the role as a champion. The emotional exhaustion contributed to burnout in my work context with the untold but heightened pressure from the management to adopt high-performance in the work systems.

### *Courage*

The massive pressure and uncertainty concerning the workload that was being expressed both officially and unofficially felt like we were gearing up for a war that needed acknowledgment of my emotions, acceptance of my vulnerabilities, and finding different coping mechanisms. I expressed that vulnerability through a poem on 22 May 2020. Some of the excerpts of which are

Meandering on my thoughts,  
I realized how vulnerable I was –  
In a society that never let me express,  
The stories that I had lived and felt  
day and night.  
My vulnerability haunted me in disguise –  
Like a ghost that had no mercy on my wounds.

The poem represented my failure to maintain a balance between my work and family chores leading to serious implications on my emotional well-being. The increasing demand of the outcomes both inside and outside the classroom, at the administrative level of the institution as a faculty along with heightening expectations at home



while working from home, left me to feel bounded and stressed. Vygotsky (as cited in Chigondo, 2019) argues this scenario as the impact of socio-cultural setting that impacts an adult's decision making, especially the women in leadership. The emotional manifestation of heightened stress and vulnerability demanded courage. Brown (2012) claims that vulnerability is the key to wholehearted living as courage goes hand in hand with vulnerability. Hemmingway (as cited in Lopez et al., 2003) defines courage as "grace under pressure" (p. 191). By default, being a human, we are not perfect, however, Buber (2002) argues that for humans in the darkness lies the light, in fear there is salvation and in callousness, there is great love. For me, courage meant the ability to recognize emotions and act in a meaningful manner regardless of the risks associated with them (Woodard, 2004). Being exposed to multiple social-emotional challenges, I was already feeling sad, when an insulting incident from one of the male students triggered rage, disgust, agony, and grief all at the same time. The student had sent an abusive and threatening message for not receiving the grades he had anticipated. On 28 October 2020, I wrote a long monologue and shared it through a blog after receiving a foul-mouthed abusive Viber message.

As I look back, my eyes fill up with tears; tears of joy for a few of my students are doing amazing with their lives who had given up on their lives at one time; tears of pain for a handful of my students didn't find meaning in the education system and left studying after their high school; tears of guilt for not meeting up that mark of a perfect teacher that several of my students had expected; tears of disappointment for not meeting my own expectations and reacting on my impulse; tears of sadness for being helpless when how much I try to help them with their learning but they see their fewer grades and rather than putting an effort on their work, they keep on taunting, abusing, scolding, foul mouthing me.

The way the message was crafted from the student, I felt angry for being born as a female and then to be working as an educator during the difficult time. I understood what Palmer (2017) meant when he claimed teaching, as a daily exercise where we practice vulnerability. It was even more difficult when it was online with its easy access to abuse.

Meanwhile, the blog that I shared helped me connect with another female faculty from another institution who had been through a similar situation. She called me back to share her story and that conversation made me realize that it was not only me who was facing online abuse from the male students during the pandemic. Few conversations with other female higher education faculties helped us understand the gravity of the situation but the shame and guilt that we have to go through when bringing these issues into the limelight, especially at times like the pandemic present us in a negative light. More than the victim, we were judged for not being the torchbearers and helping our male students navigate the situation. Thus it is understandable why serious attention has not been given to cases like these. This transparent self-disclosure among us formed a strong sense of courage and mutual trust between us which Ilies, et al. (2005) describe as relational authenticity. However, teacher emotions are usually felt but not displayed as they are expected to avoid feeling anger, irritated or frustrated and most importantly are assumed to play the roles of a caring adult and show interest in the course and the students almost every time (Hoy, 2013). Campbell (1994) argues that the experiences and complaints of women are dismissed either considering them as an offense or stigmatizing women as being overly sensitive and claims that the expression of authentic emotions can be considered a privilege. This makes the authentic expression of the emotions of female teachers even more challenging.

I realized that the truth that I had started to share and the vulnerability that I had started to embrace had helped me feel courageous and started expressing my emotions, especially my anger and disappointment regarding the events that helped me connect with other educators who were going through a similar situation like mine. Brown (2012) argues that vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage and both of them are not always comfortable, however, both are not weak as they nurture relationships and fosters innovation. I echo with Spelmen (1989) that “[anyone] who does not get angry when there is reason to be angry or does not get angry in the right way, at the right time with the right people, is a dolt” (as cited in Campbell, 1994, p. 47). Though we could not muster the strength to bring out all the stories in public given the ethical dilemmas that we had in that context, we nurtured a healthy relationship among each other within and beyond the institutions we were working in. Choosing vulnerability involves being transparent and open to the

emotional exposures in relationship with self and with others and often comes with risks. Here, the importance of emotional regulation is important to understand what the teachers are feeling and what function the emotion fulfills. However, I echo with Hoy (2013) as she claims

The unpreparedness of teachers for the reality that their chosen profession will require emotional labor to enact a myriad of sometimes contradictory display rules; that they will live with a constantly changing landscape of criticism and reforms ‘inflicted’ upon them by parents, administrators, and policymakers. (p. 264)

My authentic display of emotions encouraged me to develop social and emotional competencies to regulate my emotions being true to myself which helped me build confidence and determination. On February 17, 2021, reflecting on that day’s class where I had to stand up for a female student against a male student when he shunned her instead of listening to her while she was sharing some probable solutions for growing rape issues in the country, I wrote

As an adult, every woman has the right to self-determination, but in a context where there are multiple structural problems just because of the patriarchal order of the society, it is important to support each other whenever we can and wherever we are.

This newfound courage where I gave myself the permission to feel and display my authentic emotions helped me improve my confidence, lower my levels of anxiety, and got me engaged in different programs where I could share my experiences. This also helped me have a difficult conversation with my husband where I shared the problems that I was having because of the added responsibilities on my front since the time we started working from home and need more support from him in the household. This is what Vygotsky (as cited in Allahyar & Nazari, 2012) explains transformation as the “inborn capacities entangled with socio culturally constructed meditational means, through the internalization of which an external operation is internally reconstructed” (p. 81). Once I moved away from the idea of perfectionism and balance, I was courageous enough to focus on the aspects that I found meaningful rather than the ones that I was forced to do.

## *Empathy*

My reflection about my emotional experiences also led me to a journey of understanding the need for emotional education more and making me realize that using the right word to describe authentic emotions helped me manage my emotions as well as respond with empathy. Roulston (2020) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic came as an opportunity for the higher education teachers to focus on their self-reflection as a part of ethical decision making where they see themselves as a human being affected by the non-human forces and seek to inspire actions that matter in the classrooms with students. Regular reflection on the emotional journey has helped me see my strength but has also helped me figure out my limitations. On 30 January 2021, after facilitating a session for the facilitators and activists from different countries on the importance of being self-aware and authentic about our emotions that are associated with our activism, I reflected

With my own experience as an activist, I had sometimes been thought of as a change-maker while the rest of the time, I have been termed as a troublemaker. By now, I have come to understand the importance of courage to be an activist, meanwhile, I have come to realize the importance of encourage more.

The heightened awareness of the complexity that I was facing in expressing my authentic self in the challenging times made me question if the skills that I had were enough to encourage myself and others and what could I do to improve my practices. I thought of being a part of a course that would help me be better at it as a facilitator. Thus, I joined a facilitation certification course. The course helped me center around myself as an educator, see through my vulnerable side, and provided me alternative ways to express my emotions by holding a space for myself. I could see the improvement in my interpersonal relationships as I could hold a space for other's authentic emotions as well within and even beyond the classroom. Reflecting on the course, on 4 March 2021, I had written

Having a brief moment with myself; observing the inner self so that I can prepare for being able to see what is going inside of me to prepare to see what's going on inside of others is important while I create and hold space for the ones I am practicing empathy with.

Reflecting on my authentic emotions by acknowledging my vulnerabilities helped me develop self-compassion and be courageous to work on myself and see as well as listen to others which helped foster empathy for myself and others. Campbell (1994) argued that empathy does not come easy for everyone, especially for women as the feeling of shame is subtly encouraged by the ones who keep denying the feelings of women are held responsible for the unpredictable attitudes that women share especially concerning their individual accountability and their emotional wellbeing. The contextual perspective on the self and my emotional expressions helped me understand the idea of ‘becoming’ that Zembylas (2003) suggest as “the incompleteness of identity and a dynamic identity construction, one that involves a non-linear process by which an individual confirms or problematizes who she/he is/becomes” (p. 221). The journey of understanding the vulnerable side of me as a higher education teacher and holding that space for myself and my discourses continues fostering empathy within me and in my interpersonal relationships reshaping my identity as a reflective practitioner who keeps on working on improving her practices as an educational leader by exploring her authentic expressions.

## **Conclusion**

The move toward an understanding of my teacher self through the reflection on my emotions during the pandemic provided space for my transformation. Furthermore, the construction of my personal narratives during the process of reflection helped me reconstruct the dots of my personal life and my narrative by opening the conditions of possibilities for who and what I as a higher education teacher might be by highlighting my situatedness of self (Zembylas, 2003). Therefore, the journey from being vulnerable to finding the courage to being empathic has become a continuous process for me through the reflection of my emotions and expression of emotions. Not explicitly on teacher identity construction, but this paper encourages critical attention towards the reflections and narratives of female higher education faculties of Nepal and how challenging it can be for her to find a space for her authentic expressions. This reflection also provides an insight into how the critical reflection on emotions can contribute to the transformation of a teacher’s identity which can foster courage in her in contributing to the larger discourse amid the pandemic.

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## **University Students' Perceptions of Online Learning during Covid -19 Pandemic**

**Binod Neupane**

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### **Abstract**

The Covid-19 pandemic has seriously affected all social systems, including education in Nepal. After the government decided to implement lockdowns throughout the country, all schools and universities remained closed for a long time. To overcome the loss of education from long-term lockdowns, most of the universities of Nepal sought to continue education by using digital platforms as well as they could. The purpose of the study reported here was to examine university students' perceptions of online learning during the pandemic and identify the challenges they face while learning through online mode in rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal. Using a cross-sectional online survey design, I collected data from 8 community campuses of rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal. The participants for this study were 100 master's degree students who had been learning through various online platforms since the lockdown began. Eight of those participants were interviewed to explore their perceptions of using online learning. The result showed that the majority of the students found online learning supportive during the pandemic and they preferred the continuity of online learning even after the Covid-19 pandemic. However, they faced challenges related to technology, pedagogical skills, and the socio-economic status of the students. Based on these findings, this article argues that the effectiveness of online teaching can only be further studied by considering the effects of these other social-educational factors simultaneously.

कोभिड-१९ महामारीले समाजका सबैखाले कृयाकलापमा असर गर्यो, जसमा शिक्षा अछुतो रहेन । नेपालमा सरकारले विद्यालय र विश्वविद्यालय बन्द राख्ने निर्णय गर्यो जुन भ्याक्सन अभावका कारण निकै लामो समयसम्म रह्यो । त्यसका कारण भएको खतीलाई न्यूनीकरण गर्दै धेरैजसो विश्वविद्यालयहरूले डिजिटल खालहरूको प्रयोग गरेर सकेसम्म शिक्षालाई निरन्तरता दिन प्रयत्न गरे । यो लेखमा प्रस्तुत अन्वेषणको उद्देश्य अन्लाइन शिक्षणप्रति विश्वविद्यालयका विद्यार्थीको बुझाईलाई अध्ययन गरी उनीहरूले सामना गरेका चुनौतीलाई पहिचान गर्नु थियो । अन्तर्खण्डीय अन्लाइन सर्भे प्रयोग गरेर गाउँ र अर्धशहरीय क्षेत्रका ८ वटा सामुदायिक कलेजबाट आँकडा जम्मा गरिएको थियो । सहभागीहरूमा १०० जना स्नाकोत्तर तहका विद्यार्थी थिए जसले विभिन्न अन्लाइन खालहरूमार्फत अध्ययन गरिरहेका थिए । तीमध्ये ८ जनालाई अन्तर्वार्ता लियो । यो अध्ययनले अन्लाइन सिकाई सहयोगी पाएका थिए भने महामारीपछि पनि यसको प्रयोगमा निरन्तरता होस भन्ने चाहना व्यक्त गरे । तर उनीहरूले प्रविधिको प्रयोगमा चुनौती भएको, अध्यापकहरूमा भएको प्रविधि मार्फत गरिने शिक्षणमा कमी भएको, र आफ्नो सामाजिक-आर्थिक स्तरका कारण अरु समस्या खप्नु परेको अनुभव पनि बताए । त्यसका आधारमा यो लेखले नेपालजस्ता समाजमा यी सामाजिक-शैक्षणिक अवस्थाको विश्लेषण एकैसाथ गरेर मात्र अनलाइन शिक्षा कति प्रभावकारी छ भन्ने खोजी अघि बढाउन सकिन्छ भन्ने तर्क गरेको छ ।

**Keywords:** connectivity, Covid-19 pandemic, digital literacy, online learning, survey

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## **Introduction**

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) as a worldwide pandemic in March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2019). The global burning issue of the coronavirus pandemic has affected various sectors including human life, economy, and education. Many countries including the developing countries closed their schools and universities to maintain the social distancing due to the ongoing Covid -19 (Ferrel & Ryan, 2020). During the crisis, face-to-face learning was disturbed in many countries, so there was a need for alternative ways of learning, and learning associating with information communication technology can be one of the best alternatives (Rose, 2020). Consequently, a large number of schools and universities of developed and developing countries like Nepal have adopted distance mode online learning using various E-learning platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, Microsoft Office 365 to deliver lectures using audio and video conferencing to compensate the educational loss during the Covid -19 pandemic. However, there may be some problems for the effective implementation of online learning in developing countries compared to the developed countries (Baticulon et al., 2021).

Several studies across the world found online learning as flexible, easy to use, and better control over the environment (Govindasamy, 2001). Other benefits include increase convenience, easy access to resources regardless of space and time, and less expensive, and the success of e-learning depends on the factors including accessibility, usage of appropriate methods, course content, and the criteria of assessment (Rosenberg, 2001). Similarly, Adam et al. (2012) argued that online learning can be equally effective as the face to face classes if it is managed appropriately. Moreover, the students of the 21st century may be motivated towards learning through technology, and this mode of learning can be one of the useful alternatives during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. However, despite its multiple advantages, there are a few limitations of e-learning such as less interaction between teacher and students, social isolation, and connectivity issues (Kwary & Fauzie, 2018). The adequate preparation for online learning, training to recipients and providers, and technical enhancement can mitigate the challenges and make online learning effective.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Nepal imposed a countrywide lockdown from 24 March 2020 and it lasted until 21 July 2020. The government closed schools and campuses across the country during the long lockdown. UNESCO (2020) estimated that the prolonged lockdowns in Nepal during the Covid-19 affected nearly nine million students, out of them 404,718 belonged to higher education level students. The long period of disturbance of educational institutions dramatically increased distance education through online mode. Despite the challenges for operating online learning effectively, different universities in Nepal such as Kathmandu University, Tribhuvan University, and Nepal Open University have started online classes using the zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Office 365 (Kathmandu University, 2020; Tribhuvan University, 2020).

The growing use of online learning in the universities of Nepal during the Covid-19 pandemic and the mixed responses of my students in my classes triggered me to carry out this research on online learning and students' perceptions in the context of rural Nepal. This study aims to investigate university students' perceptions of using online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The specific objectives based on the research questions for the study are to explore university students' perceptions of learning through online mode

during the pandemic, and to examine the challenges they face while using online mode in the context of rural and semi-urban Nepal. For this survey, I selected 100 master's level students using stratified random sampling representing seven provinces of Nepal. I forwarded the Google form to the master level students who were studying online mode since the beginning of lockdown. I received their responses from the Google form. Furthermore, I interviewed 8 participants from each campus and collected qualitative data. Based on these quantitative and qualitative data, I explored the students' perceptions of using online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study can be significant to the policymaker and the university teachers to decide on the alternative learning policy focusing on the students of rural Nepal. Similarly, the study can provide insights to policymakers and other higher educational institutions on managing disturbance and loss in education during crisis in future.

### **Literature Review**

Various studies in different contexts explored the students' perceptions and experiences on online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Agarwal and Kaushik (2020) reported that the majority of the postgraduate students in India found online learning supportive, feasible and cheap during Covid – 19 because students got the opportunity to continue their studies at a time when the face-to-face classroom was impossible. Likewise, Awadalla et al. (2020) reported that the majority of the medical undergraduate students perceived E-learning as the best solution during the Covid - 19. However, the problems like connectivity limitation, unfamiliarity with the online learning system, limited technical support, and time flexibility disturbed them for effective implementation of online classes in Sudan. In a survey, Acharya et al. (2020) explored that although the majority of students in Nepal have faced problems like internet access, electricity connectivity, institutional policy, and economic crisis to manage the devices for online learning, it has brought more opportunities to reform the traditional teaching-learning paradigm. In a different context, Rohman et al. (2020) found that the majority of university students had negative perceptions of online mode education although they agreed that it was the appropriate alternative during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, they reported that the unstable and high cost of internet service was responsible for making online education less effective in Indonesia.

Abbasi et al. (2020) reported that students in Pakistan have found online learning less appealing due to its limitations for the practical aspects of learning. However, earlier in India, Ali et al. (2016) revealed that online learning increased students' satisfaction level towards learning. Similarly, Baczek et al. (2020) in a survey revealed that there is no significant difference between face-to-face and online learning to increase students' knowledge in Poland. They further reported that e-learning was less effective in comparison to face-to-face learning to increase skills and social competence. However, they reported some advantages of online learning such as learning may be possible anytime anywhere at their own pace and continuous access to online materials. In a different context, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) found that online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic has created some challenges as well as opportunities for university students. They further reported the challenges related to technology, socio-economic factors, digital competence, assessment and supervision, heavy workload, and the opportunities like research innovations, technological innovations, and socio-economical innovations.

In a survey in the Indian university, Muthuprasad et al. (2021) reported that the majority of students experienced online classes as an effective means to manage the curriculum in the absence of physical classes during the Covid-19 pandemic due to its flexibility and provenience nature. However, the problems like connectivity issues and little technology knowledge marked it a challenge for students for regular learning. In a similar line, Gautam et al. (2021) revealed that online learning has become an effective tool as alternative learning in Nepali universities as it not only supported learning continuity but also controlled the teachers' and students' anxiety and made them free from psychological disorders during the Covid-19 pandemic. They further suggested that the universities of Nepal need to develop in various aspects such as techno-friendly curriculum, adequate and effective IT infrastructure, trained and designed faculty, supportive students, and proactive management. Earlier in a qualitative study, Laksna (2020) explored that the majority of the students were satisfied with online learning skills, quality of online academic interactions, and online learning infrastructure in Thailand. Regarding the ease and usefulness perceptions on various online platforms, Faudy et al. (2021) found that Zoom was the most useful online



platform compared to other platforms such as Google meet, Google classroom, and LMS in the universities of Indonesia.

Several studies on online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the various aspects of online learning including teachers' and students' perceptions and experiences. However, a few literatures have attempted to explore the university students' perceptions of using the online mode of learning in the context of rural and semi-urban Nepal. I tried to fill this gap with this study focusing on how students have perceived online learning and what challenges they have faced while learning through online mode. Moreover, this study can add literature in the context of Nepal on online learning.

## **Methodology**

### ***Method and Participants***

I used a cross-sectional survey design using a mixed-method approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) in this study. I used a questionnaire with closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data. I used a quantitative survey tool to find out the participants' demographic background, the devices they used for online learning, their prior experiences, digital knowledge and their satisfaction level on provided online learning facilities. Similarly, the open-ended questions included in the survey form and in-depth interviews with selected participants explored the participants' perceptions of using online learning and the challenges they face in the context of rural and semi-urban Nepal.

The participants involved in this study were 100 master level students from different community campuses of Nepal. With the idea of Kumar (2010), I followed a stratified random sampling method to select the participants for the study. Out of 400 masters level students studying through online mode in 8 community campuses, I selected 100 students representing 7 provinces of Nepal. Similarly, I interviewed 8 participants following purposive sampling, one from each campus to explore their perceptions and experiences of using online learning. I included master's level students as the participants because most of the campuses used online mode for this level since the lockdown began.

## ***Data Sources***

I used the Internet survey and administered it online through Google form as suggested by Nesbary (2000), Sue and Ritter (2012), and Creswell and Creswell (2013). The questionnaire used at the online survey consisted of 15 questions in which 12 items were closed-ended questions, and three items were open-ended questions. I arranged the questionnaire in two main sections. The first section investigated the students' experience of using online learning along with information of the devices and platforms they used and their satisfaction towards the online mode of learning. The second section explored students' perception of using online learning, the usefulness of online learning even after the pandemic, and the challenges they have faced in managing online learning. Furthermore, I used in-depth interviews to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences of learning through online mode during the pandemic.

## ***Data Analysis***

Following the idea of Creswell and Creswell (2014), I analyzed the online survey responses from 100 participants of 8 different campuses under Tribhuvan University. I analyzed the quantitative data using simple statistics. The open-ended questions and the responses from the interviews were undergone thematic analysis in which I developed two themes to describe the participants' answers. I maintained research ethics while collecting data and doing overall research work by taking the participants' consent and maintaining anonymity by using pseudo names of the participants and the campuses they represented.

## ***Findings***

I collected the information from 100 graduate students who were learning through online mode in eight community campuses of rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal. The results revealed the university students' perceptions of using online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the available quantitative and qualitative data, I have listed the results of the study under the following headings and themes.

## ***Demographic Details of the Respondents***

The participants were the master's level students of the community campuses of Nepal. Out of the participants, 65% were

girls whereas 35% were boys. The data reveals that the number of female students was higher in the master level compared to the boys which shows the growth of female students in higher education even in the rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal. Similarly, the participants were from the three major streams: humanities, management, and education. The majority of the participants (40%) were from education whereas the participants from humanities and management were 35% and 25% respectively. This shows the growing trend of students in the education stream in community campuses of Nepal.

### ***Experience of Online Learning before the Pandemic***

Among the respondents, the majority of them (90%) had no prior experience of using online learning whereas only 10% were having prior knowledge of online classes. However, 40% of them were digitally literate before the pandemic. Since a few universities had online learning programs in higher education before the Covid-19 pandemic in Nepal, many students might have inadequate knowledge about online learning systems. The low experience of students on online learning can hinder effective use of online learning during a crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic.

### ***Devices used by the Participants***

Out of the total informants, 56% of them used smartphones for the online class whereas 44% of them used laptop computers. As the majority of them used smartphones for online learning, they reported that they faced problems in searching learning resources, uploading assignments, and downloading the required resources immediately. Similarly, the majority of them used data packs from Nepal Telecom as they had no access to Wi-Fi. It shows that university students of rural Nepal have inadequate infrastructure for online learning which can create a barrier for effective learning.

### ***Online Platforms used by the Respondents***

Out of various online platforms, the majority of the participants and teachers used Zoom for online learning. The data shows that 55% of them used Zoom whereas 32% and 13% of the respondents used Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams respectively. Despite the effectiveness and multiple functions of Microsoft Teams for online learning, many participants used free

platforms. This shows that students' economic status can influence the use of effective devices for online learning.

### ***Preference for Online Learning after Covid-19***

The data shows that online learning in higher education has become popular for students from rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal, especially for those who did not have access to face-to-face learning. Motivated with online learning, 40% of the participants demanded for the continuity of online learning even after the Covid-19 pandemic and 40% of them demanded a blended class. This shows that online learning can be an effective means of alternative learning not only during a crisis, but also for the students who cannot present physically due to various reasons. However, they reported several benefits of face-to-face learning over online learning.

### ***Participants' Satisfaction on Online Learning***

The majority of the participants were satisfied with the online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the survey report, 56% of them were satisfied and 8% of them were very satisfied. The Rest of them were partially satisfied. Despite some challenges, the participants were satisfied with online learning because they could give continuity of their study with teachers' scaffolding during the pandemic.

### ***Students' Perceptions of Online Learning***

The participants had mixed perceptions of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of them found online learning useful as it provided a chance to continue their study while staying at home, developed digital technology skills, and felt comfortable while learning. However, the majority of them reported that they had limited pedagogical activities and could not get regular feedback on their assignments. The following table shows the responses of the participants involved in the study.

Table 1: Students' Perceptions of Online Learning

Perceptions	Percent (%)
I could continue my study even in pandemic.	80
I developed some digital technology skills.	70
I could learn anytime, anywhere.	80
Teachers used a variety of activities to facilitate us.	40
I felt it was easy to submit my assignments.	50

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My teachers provided feedback regularly on my assignments.	45
I could present almost all the class.	75
We had more classroom interaction.	45
Sufficient time was allowed for discussion and questions.	40
My teachers were able to teach through online mode.	70
I felt comfortable learning through online mode during the pandemic.	65

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The participants involved in the interviews reported that they perceived online learning as a useful and safe mode of learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the terror of the coronavirus, students enjoyed learning through various online platforms. However, they faced problems and got confused when they could not update with online technology. For example:

I think online learning helps us to continue our studies during this fearful situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. We can join the class living safely at our homes and the time is very flexible (Fulman, Fulbari Campus).

We are getting the benefit of online learning during a crisis like this. It is an opportunity to contact our teachers and friends using technology. But it is difficult to submit assignments. It requires sound digital skills to operate the system successfully, but I have little knowledge of how to use it for the first time (Jaya, Janahit Campus).

The above comments indicate that the participants perceived online learning as one of the effective means to continue the teaching learning process during the pandemic as it is not limited by space and time. Nevertheless, online learning requires digital skills to use the learning platforms and many students face problems submitting their assignments due to inadequate technical knowledge.

The study explored that online learning was useful for university students during the Covid-19 pandemic despite some technological problems. The majority of the students were positive towards online classes as they could continue their learning even in the pandemic. Similarly, many students perceived that online learning has developed their digital skills and updated with the latest information communication technology. Likewise, online learning

enabled them to learn any time any space using digital tools which can save their time and minimize the cost. For example:

I was not able to continue my class due to my job in the village. Now, technology has provided me the opportunity to join the class and connect with my teachers and friends from my home and workplace.

I have developed digital skills after learning through online mode. Online learning would be easier for the students who are far from university and difficult to take face-to-face class. (Abhaya, ABC campus)

Abhaya's comments indicate that students have perceived online learning as an opportunity to connect with their teachers and friends wherever they live. Abhaya further added, "I see many friends looking for alternative means to continue their study as they cannot leave their jobs." Abhaya's response shows that online learning can be an effective means to increase the enrollment rate of the students by providing access to higher education in their place.

Besides continuous learning, participants involved in the study reported that online learning could provide a chance to learn technical skills. For example:

Learning through online mode has developed various technical skills like using e-mail, googling information, and downloading documents from search engines. I was not familiar with digital technology before we started online learning, now I feel I have developed many skills along with my curricular activities (Binita, Binayak Campus).

Binita's comments reveal that students perceived the online mode of learning as a means to develop technical skills along with their academic skills to make them more dynamic learners. As the medium of sharing documents and submitting an assignment is digital technology in online learning, the students can gradually develop the required technical skills.

The majority of the participants took online learning as flexible, cost-effective, and tools for easy access to learning resources. However, it can be a burden for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. For example:

Although online learning is effective, managing the device and affording the internet data pack is

difficult for me. I have no device to use for online learning, and I use my father's smartphone to join my class. I would learn effectively if I had a laptop computer with a Wi-fi facility (Cristina, Kirti Campus)

The response of Cristina has raised a serious issue about online learning as it can be a cause of inequality in learning. Those who do not have access to the internet and learning devices may get frustrated. For example:

I couldn't join an online class for two months as I didn't have a smartphone to join it. I got frustrated when my teachers repeatedly asked me to join the class. Finally, my parents took a loan to buy a smartphone (Sima, Shuvakamana Campus).

Despite the usefulness of the online mode of learning, it can be a problem for students from low economic backgrounds as they may have economic problems managing the devices for online learning. Students' low economic status can prevent many students from accessing online learning.

### ***Challenges Faced by Students***

Despite the benefits of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue their study and enhance their technological efficiency, the data reveal that the students involved in the study faced some challenges in shifting to the new mode of learning. Mostly, they reported the challenges related to technology, pedagogy, digital competence, assessment and supervision, and socio-economic factors. The following table shows the major challenges faced by the participants involved in the study.

Table 2: Challenges Faced by Students

Challenges	Percent (%)
My internet connectivity was low.	85
There was frequent electricity power cut.	75
I had inadequate knowledge in digital technology.	60
I felt it was difficult to manage effective online learning devices.	68
The assessment and supervision system was ineffective.	60
It was economic burden to my family.	70

The participants involved in the interviews also reported that technological constraints such as poor Internet connectivity, frequent power cut, and lack of technical knowledge in operation were the major challenges in using online learning effectively. Similarly, they explained that the dependency of online classes on technical devices and lack of adequate digital knowledge of students and teachers also created problems for effective online learning. For example:

When I join the class, I often miss some important instructions given by the teachers due to the poor Internet service. As this is my first experience of learning through online mode and I have little knowledge on digital technology. I feel it is difficult to download the learning resources and submit an assignment. I am always late to submit the given assignment though the task is not easy (Sima, Shuvakamana Campus).

Sima's problem might be the representative one; many participants' may experience a similar challenge in using the online mode of learning. The unstable internet connectivity and low digital literacy can be the barrier for effective online learning.

Since there is a short history of online modes of learning in Nepal, the participants reported that teachers' incompetency and learners' inefficacy were also intervening factors for the effective implementation of online learning. This can create problems in students' assessment and supervision. For example:

Some teachers seem confused about using online mode. They give lectures all the time and give subjective types of questions for the assignment.

Since the mode of learning is different, they teach in the same way as they usually teach in the traditional classroom. We rarely get time for interaction (Dipak, Janasewa Campus).

Dipak's response reveals that the lack of competent teachers in using online pedagogical skills and their low motivation to adapt to the changing situation also created a challenge in students' learning. Similarly, they also shared their experience that lack of interaction among students hindered in promoting their interpersonal communication skills. Moreover, the management of the device and the cost for the data package were also challenging factors for the



students from a low socio-economic background which can be the cause of inequality in the access to online learning.

## **Discussion**

The university students of Nepal perceived online and virtual learning as an alternative way of delivering skills and knowledge during the Covid-19 pandemic. Learning by staying at their place might be cheaper and easier compared to face-to-face learning. The majority of the students found online and virtual learning supportive to continue their studies along with a job. This argument is supported by the study of Agarwal and Kaushik (2020) in India as the majority of the university students found online learning as feasible, cheap, and suggested to make a part of the postgraduate level beyond the prevailing lockdown. Similarly, Bączek et al. (2020) found that medical students found online learning as a powerful tool to gain knowledge because of the continuous access to online materials, learning being distanced physically at their own pace, and comfortable surroundings. Furthermore, Rohman et al. (2020) concluded that despite several obstacles, university students' perception on online learning is relatively good during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Abbasi (2020) and Rohman (2020) reported that students perceived online learning to have little impact compared to face-to-face learning although online learning was the right solution during the Covid-19 pandemic. Similarly, Sujarwo et al. (2020) found that online learning missed classroom interactions and direct guidance of the instructors which made it difficult for students to understand the concept clearly.

Despite the wide coverage of online learning, the participants experienced that they get less time to engage in the activities like interaction, group discussion, and group work and pair work as in the face-to-face classroom. Similarly, they missed the emotional attachment among their friends and teachers. Bączek et al. (2020) and Abbasi (2020) also found that online learning limited student-student interaction which decreased their social connections with teachers, peers, and the university community.

Out of various learning platforms for online learning, the participants used freely available platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom instead of Microsoft Teams. Because of the cost, the participants might have compromised with the effective learning platforms. This is in line with Faudy et al. (2021), who found that

Zoom was the most popular platform in the universities of Indonesia. In contrast to this, Gohiya and Gohiya (2020) explored that the students' perceptions of Microsoft Teams were popular among the students in India as it has multiple functions such as Moodle to submit the assignment, backup recording, attendance, etc.

Despite the growing use of online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and the positive reaction of university students towards online learning, students of rural areas may face problems related to technological issues including unstable internet service, frequent power cut, lack of technical knowledge to use devices for students and teachers, high cost for the internet service, and lack of technical support from the university or campuses for students. This finding is supported by several studies (Acharya et al., 2020; Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Awadalla et al., 2020; Rose, 2020) as they revealed that the majority of the students had a problem with the Internet service and electrical connectivity and some students. Similarly, students' less experience of online learning hindered Nepali university students for effective online learning during the crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic. This is supported by Sujarwo et al. (2020) who explored that many students did not have experience of using online learning before the Covid-19 pandemic and the lack of experience could deter them from using online mode.

Students have flexibility in learning through online mode. Unlike traditional learning, students can learn anytime and anywhere at their convenience. They can interact with teachers synchronously (through video conferencing, or live chat) and asynchronously (through learning activities provided electronically (Agung & Surtikanti, 2020)). Learning through online mode can provide access to the rural students to continue their higher education along with their jobs. However, Adedoyin and Soykan (2020) reported that the challenges related to technology, pedagogical skills, and socio-economic background of the students can create significant barriers against effective learning online.

Since online learning has little history in the context of Nepal, the participants experienced problems in using the new mode of learning due to the lack of digital skills and adequate preparation including infrastructure management and limited gadget facilities, and Internet connectivity. This is in line with the study of Sujarwo et al. (2020) which believes that students' experiences and knowledge with digital skills play an important role for effective online learning and

those who lack these skills and infrastructure do not have an equal chance in learning. Similarly, Rusdiana & Nugroho (2017) suggest that colleges or universities can play a significant role in providing infrastructure facilities to the teachers and the students, and effective scaffolding from teachers encourages students in learning.

Many students' perceptions about online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic indicate that online learning was considered effective in reducing the spread of the Covid-19 virus by reducing the anxiety of students and teachers. This is supported by the study of Wijayanengtiyas and Claretta (2020), which states the psychological role of online learning along with academic activities. However, many students' perceptions reveal that online learning has several problems for its effective implementation in the pandemic time. It is in line with the findings of Agarwal and Kaushik (2020), which highlights the problems like inadequate infrastructure, lack of teachers' preparation, and low motivation of students.

Broadly put, the current study revealed that the effectiveness of online teaching depends quite heavily on the “other” social-educational factors of a given place. It showed that academic and policy discourses should only be advanced by considering those factors simultaneously. Asking whether online education is effective in itself—especially in contexts like Nepal’s where the socioeconomic and educational frameworks and resources in place are not strong and sound—is like trying to study the health of trees without asking how good the soil, water, and climate on which they depend. Obvious as this may sound, there is a need to educate educators about the importance of situating their claims and hopes about the power of educational technology not only on how well technology is actually able to achieve educational goals but also on how other factors influencing technology use are shaping its use and effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

The unexpected spread of the Covid-19 has severely impacted the everyday lives of ordinary people across the world. Many educational institutions couldn't give the continuity of their regular academic activities in face-to-face mode during the crisis. For many universities, online learning became one of the effective means to continue their teaching learning process. Despite the challenges of using online learning with inadequate infrastructure, the Nepali university students have a favorable perspective on online learning

during the Covid-19 pandemic. They perceived online learning to be very helpful to continue their study and can be one of the effective means of learning in case such a crisis happens in future. It can be equally useful even after the pandemic to continue their study along with jobs as it is flexible in terms of time and space. However, few significant issues faced are problems in powerful internet connectivity and electricity, lack of digital literacy, financial problems to manage devices like laptop computers and smart cell phones, costly data packages, and some problems related to teachers and institutions. Various responsible agencies such as the government, teachers and schools should bring programs to support the students from low economic backgrounds who need some support like financial support and internet access connectivity.

Since learning through online mode is new in the rural and semi-urban areas of Nepal, this study has explored how the graduate students perceived and experienced using the online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic. The instructors should design online classes in such a way that they can motivate students to focus on online learning enthusiastically and should introduce various instructional techniques to increase the interaction between learners and instructors. Training on online classes is needed for both learners and course instructors. Furthermore, the results of the study can be an important input to decide the mode of learning addressing the need of the students who are excluded from an access to higher education due to several problems such as economic crisis, jobs, and geographical distance even after the Covid-19 pandemic in Nepal.

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**Influence of Parental Socio-Economic Status on Students'  
Academic Performance: Experience from Pokhara University,  
Nepal**

**Deepak Neupane  
Santosh Kumar Gurung**

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**Abstract**

This study focuses on the relationship between parent's socioeconomic status and student's academic performance in different graduate and undergraduate programs offered by constituent colleges of Pokhara University. The total sample of the present study was 301 students who have been pursuing their respective academic degrees. The sampling design was based on a purposive convenient method. Structured questionnaire technique was used to obtain quantitative data related to parental socio – economic status and academic performance of students. The results revealed that parental socio - economic status and parent's level of education does not have a significant relationship with academic performance of students. However, the occupation of parents has a greater impact on academic performance of students. Moreover, the residence of the students has a significant impact on the academic performance of the students. The findings of the study also reveal that family financial status is more important determinant of school level academic grades, however, its influence in college level grades is relatively low. Although, parent's educational status is found to be associated with academic achievement, father's employment nature and family expenditure level were found to be the most significant determinants of academic



achievement of students. However, the relationship is true only up to the school level academic performance.

यो अध्ययनले पोखरा विश्वविद्यालय अर्न्तगतका विभिन्न कलेजहरूले संचलान गरेका स्नातकोत्तर तथा स्नातक कार्यक्रमका अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति र विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धि बीचको सम्बन्धलाई उजगर गरेको छ । यस अनुसंधानको लागि अहिले पढदै गरेका ३०१ विद्यार्थीहरूलाई छनौट गरिएको थियो । यस खोजका नमूना विद्यार्थीहरू परपोशिभ कनभेनियन्ट (उद्देश्यपरक सुविधाजनक) विधिबाट छनौट गरिएको थियो । साथै अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति र विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिसँग समबन्धित गुणात्मक तथ्यांकहरू स्टरचकर कोइशनारहरू (संरचनात्मक प्रश्नावली) विधिको प्रयोग गरेर संकलन गरिएको थियो । यस अध्ययनले अभिभावकहरूको सामाजिक आर्थिक स्थिति तथा अभिभावकहरूको शैक्षिक स्तरले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा खाखै असर नपार्ने देखाँउछ । यद्यपि अभिभावकहरूका पेशाले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा ठूलो प्रभाव पार्छ । यसबाहेक विद्यार्थीहरूको बसोबासले विद्यार्थीहरूको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा ठूलो प्रभाव पार्छ । यस अनुसंधानले यो पनि देखाँउछ कि परिवारको आर्थिक अवस्थाले विद्यार्थीको कलेज स्तरको शिक्षा भन्दा विद्यालय स्तरको शिक्षामा महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका खेल्छ । यद्यपि अभिभावकको शैक्षिक स्थिति विद्यार्थीको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिसँग जोडिएको छ , बुवाको रोजगारी प्रकृति र पारिवारिले खर्च गर्ने क्षमताले विद्यार्थीको विद्यालय स्तरको शैक्षिक उपलब्धिमा निर्णयक भूमिका खेल्छ ।

**Keywords:** Socioeconomic status, academic performance, graduate and undergraduate students, parents

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Education is an indispensable human right, key to sustainable development, a tool for the advantageous participation in societies which enhances peace and stability amongst countries (Ninomiya, 2003). Melgosa and Posse (2002) found three environments namely family, school and community that must come with the educational process and to realize a successful educational process, there is the necessity of harmonizing the objectives of these three environments.

Education helps individuals and society to acquire knowledge, ability and skills that enables to participate effectively in the development process. For this purpose, practical curriculum is designed, teaching materials are prepared and lessons are disseminated through formal programs. Moreover, students' achievement is not totally realized in a position they are supposed to be, and thus the performance gap is also realized through the studies. In this case, according to Schiefelbein and Simmons (cited in Abera, 1993), a major question of what makes a difference in students' achievement? has been the major problem in the field of educational research which has attracted researchers from various disciplines, such as psychology, sociology and economics. Thus, the interest in

enhancing the level of performance leads to identify the factors that promote students achievement either at each subject or in general.

According to Kurdek and Sinclair (2000), Tavani and Losh (2003), Admasu (2004), expectation of the parents, influence of the group, socio-economic status, structure of the family, involvement of the parents in their children's schooling, behavior of the children, academic self-concept, and environment of the school are some of the major factors which can affect the achievement and learning activities of the students. Ford and Harris (1997) made a research on parental influences on African-American students' school achievements and emphasized mainly on parents' level of education, marital status and family income as the major determinants and came to conclude that children from the parents of high and middle socio-economic families realize a better learning environment at home. Ngorosho (2010) made a study in the rural area of eastern Tanzania and came up with four major variables namely, father's and mother's education, source of light, household materials and the academic materials such as books as significant indicators essential for learning. The conclusion revealed that the parent's socio-economic status, involvement of the parents in their children's learning activities and the educational achievement are greatly associated.

The study regarding the influence of the family financial status, parents' level of education, parents' occupation, parents' expenditure on education and residence on the students' academic performance has not yet been studied simultaneously, so the comparative obvious results regarding the major determinants were not extracted regarding the dominant one in the actual practice. Thus, the goal of this study is to examine and make the comparative analysis regarding the most influencing factor amongst the variables under consideration. Moreover, most of the studies are based on the primary and secondary level education, which has guided and motivated students to conduct research on the students of university level and even from the various disciplines.

## **Literature Review**

This study is based upon the theoretical concept of social capital theory. Accordingly, this theory was first introduced by French Philosopher Pieere Bourdieu, also regarded as Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital (1977). According to this theory, the academic achievement of the student depends upon the cultural capital inherited

from the family rather than the individual talent. Accordingly, the ability of an individual is socially constructed and is the outcome of the individual's access to cultural capital. In this respect, Bourdieu's theory states that, the differences in the family background leads to the differences in the academic achievements of the students. This is due to the easy accessibility of the educational materials of the children from parents of high socio-economic status than that of the children from the parents of low socio-economic status.

Moreover, the several studies considering various factors influencing the academic performance of the students came up with different outcomes. Accordingly, what matters most in the upliftment of the academic performance of the children is the parents' involvement in children's school activities then the parents' financial status (Machebe et al., 2017). Etikan et al., (2017) concluded that there is no significant difference regarding the academic performance of the students residing within or outside the school environment. However, gender and age have been the influencing factors on the choice of the students' accommodation preference.

Students from the parents with higher educational qualification have higher academic performance than those from parents with lower educational qualification (Bakar et al., 2017). The study from Ghana found that though the parental socio-economic status and parental educational background has no significant effect on the academic performance of the students, the parental educational qualification and health status of the students were found to have significant effect on the academic performance of the students (Yelkper, 2016). A study in Thimpu Bhutan, among the government high school students came with the conclusion that there exists the positive association between the parent's literacy and the academic performance of the children (Dekar, 2016). Education of the parents, their occupation and family income have distinct effects on their spending behavior. However, the education of the parents seems to be the most influential determinant in the academic performance of their children (Hao & Yeung, 2015). Rana (2015) on his study in South Punjab Pakistan regarding the relationship between parent's level of education and academic performance of their children came up with the outcome that there exists a significant positive relationship between the parent's level of education and the performance of their children.

Children from parents with good economic status are able to get better performance than that of the children from the parents with low economic status (Shah & Anwar, 2014). Machebe (2014) in his study among the students of selected secondary schools in Enugu State came to specify that the parental educational qualification and health status of the students have a statistically significant relationship with the academic performance of the students.

Sean (2013) in a study in the United States of America found that the students from high income families have better performance than those from low-income families. Similarly, Zhang (2012) on his study in China among the students of secondary schools concluded that the children from low income families exhibit lower levels of cognitive-linguistic skills, lower verbal interactions, lower phonological awareness and lower academic performance as compared to their counterparts from high and middle income families. It also showed that children from high income families are comparatively more proficient in reading skills than that of low-income families. The academic achievement of the secondary school students is affected by the education, occupation and income level of the parents (Suleman et al., 2012). Pant (2020) in a study conducted considering the qualitative case study research design in Kailali Nepal, came to conclude that the majority of students from the parents with low socio-economic status have poor academic achievement since the parents with low socio-economic status are less interested in the education of their children as they emphasize more on the employment of their children rather than their further studies. Besides, the illiterate and poorly educated parents are unable to support their children in their educational activities.

This study is a descriptive survey that empirically examines the influence of parental socio-economic status on the academic performance of the students' of Pokhara University. This study has incorporated the simultaneous effects of the major determinants such as parents' financial status, level of education, occupation, expenditure on education, residential status on the academic performance of the students which were not addressed by most of the scholars conducting research in this subject matter.

## **Methodology**

Cross-sectional survey design has been employed to conduct the study with the assumption that it helps to identify the socio-economic

factors that influence students' academic performance. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been adopted for this study. The population of this study is the entire graduate and undergraduate students of constituent college of Pokhara University who are pursuing different programs. The sample population consists of 1,981 students (1089 males and 892 females) according to an annual report published by Pokhara University (2074/75). Moreover, in order to get a relatively better opportunity of selecting the students from the parents of different socioeconomic status, with the assumption that the students in the constituent colleges comprise the parents of high socio-economic diversification, the constituent colleges were selected for the study. A total of 322 samples were selected with confidence level of 95% out of which 301 samples of graduate and undergraduate level of constituent college were analyzed. The samples were chosen on researcher's convenience using purposive sampling technique. Moreover, for the reference purpose, Mendeley and crossref software were used.

The structured questionnaires were developed on the basis of the conceptual framework of the study and were pre-tested for the reliability before drafting the final questionnaire. The data collected in this study were coded and tested for completeness and then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). Pearson correlation coefficient has been computed among parents' income level, educational level, occupational status and residential status on academic performance of students to see whether there exists the relationship or not. Similarly, multiple regression analysis has been conducted to see the overall relationships of academic performance with the independent variables and to investigate the relative contribution of parents' income level, educational level, parents' occupational status and residential status to the variance in the academic performance of students.

For the assessment of the reliability of the data collected from Likert scale, Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted. The Cronbach's Alpha for the scales used is 0.72 which represents an acceptable level of validity of the constructs used for the survey. Moreover, the questionnaires and scales were extracted from standard survey instrument used by higher education institutions measuring academic achievement of students. Furthermore, pre-testing of the survey instrument was done in a small scale of 50 samples before finalizing the survey instrument. The drawbacks of the questionnaire are

incorporated to minimize the errors in the instrument. Besides, consultation with several experts from higher education institutions of Nepal is also done to finalize the questionnaire and constructs used in the study.

## Results and Discussion

Data was collected to ascertain whether socio – demographic characteristics of the students that had a direct influence on academic performance of the students. Accordingly, this section comprises the data analysis and discussion of the results obtained. Responses gathered are analyzed in the table below:

**Table 1:** *Socio – Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Socio – Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	123	40.9
	Female	178	59.1
Age	18-23	258	85.7
	23 and Above	43	14.3
Marital Status	Unmarried	274	91
	Married	26	8.6
Number of Siblings	0	53	17.6
	1	97	32.2
	2	69	22.9
	3	54	17.9
	4 and Above	28	9.3
School/Program	SoB/ Management	111	36.9
	SHAS/ Health	82	27.2
	SoE/Engineering	91	30.2
	SoSE/ Social Engineering	17	5.6

Qualifications	Under-Graduate	262	87
	Post-Graduate	39	13

According to table 1, the number of respondents for the study were 301 among which 40.9 % were male and 59.1 % were female. The age range of the respondents were divided into two groups. The respondents that fall within the age range of 18-23 years were 85.7 % whereas the age range of 23 and above were 14.3 %. Moreover, 91 % respondents were found to be unmarried and 8.6 % married. Besides, the 17.6 % respondents were without siblings, 32.2 % with 1 sibling, 22.9 % with 2 siblings, 17.9 % with 3 siblings and 9.3 % of the respondents had 4 and above siblings.

The data related to School, Program and Qualification reveals that most of the respondents were of management school/ program and undergraduates. Accordingly, out of the 301 respondents, 36.9 % were from the School of Business related to management studies. 27.2 % were from the School of Health and Allied Sciences, 30.2 % were from the School of Engineering and 5.6 % people were from the School of Social Engineering. Besides that, 87 % respondents were Under-Graduates and 13 % were Post Graduates.

Table 2 exhibits correlation matrix of the variables of the study. The correlation coefficients of interest are the bivariate correlation of factors influencing academic achievement with recent SGPA of college students. The results show that all the correlation coefficients except for the nature of employment of the father are statistically insignificant. It reveals that only the variable nature of employment of the father is associated with college level grade. Other variables are not found to correlate with college grade. Family financial status is found to affect school level grade but it is found to have minimal effect on the college level grade.

**Table 2: Correlation Coefficient**

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9
V1	1.00 0								
V2	- .182 **	1.00 0							

V3	.036	-.399**	1.000						
V4	-.178**	.487**	-.258**	1.000					
V5	-.025	-.145*	.132*	-.256**	1.000				
V6	.129*	-.275**	.379**	-.166**	.027	1.000			
V7	.075	-.289**	.480**	-.221**	.071	.592**	1.000		
V8	.042	-.159**	.235**	-.168**	.047	.194**	.172**	1.000	
V9	-.204**	.189**	-.017	.139*	-.154**	-.074	.026	.009	1.000

Where, V1 = Academic achievement, V2 = Father's Education, V3 = Father's employment status, V4 = Mother's Education, V5 = Mother's employment status, V6 = Father's nature of employment, V7 = Family income source, V8 = Nature of house, V9 = Monthly expenditure

Table 3 presents the output of multiple regression model with the student's academic achievement as dependent variable and family's socio-economic status as independent variables. The independent variables are father's education, employment, family income source, nature of house and family expenditure.

**Table 3**  
*Output of Regression Model*

	Unstandardize d Coefficients	Standardize d Coefficient s	T	Sig.
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	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.069	.296		13.761	.000
Father Education	-.120	.067	-.108	-1.775	.077
Father Nature of Employment	.044	.045	.074	.992	.322
Family Source of Income	.026	.056	.035	.467	.641
Nature of House you Live	-.025	.092	-.016	-.269	.788
Monthly Personal Expenditure	-.198	.058	-.199	-3.419	.001
Dependent Variable: Grade of Plus Two					

Regression Results from the table

- ❖ DV = Academic Achievement IV = 5 Variables
- ❖ Significant Variables (Variables having relationship with DV) = Father education (10% level of sig., Family monthly expenditure (1% level of significance)
- ❖ Both variables have positive relationship with academic achievement
- ❖ Monthly family expenditure has higher relationship with academic achievement as compared to father's education (as shown by the beta coefficient)
- ❖ Four variables are associated with DV (correlation result), however 2 variables are found to be significant determinants of academic performance (regression result)

The fitted regression equation of the model becomes:

$$Y = 4.069 - 0.120X_1 + 0.44X_2 + 0.026X_3 - 0.025X_4 - 0.198X_5$$

The table 3 and the fitted model shows that one unit increase in the parent's education, would result in the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.120 units.

The findings of the parent's nature of employment concluded that the increase in the parent's nature of employment by one unit would result in the increase in the academic performance of the students by 0.44

units. Similarly, an increase in the family source of income by one unit results in the increase in the students' academic performance by 0.026 units. Moreover, the increase in the nature of the house lived and monthly family expenditure results in the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.25 and negative 0.198 respectively.

### **Research Findings**

The first objective was to determine the influence of the financial status of the family on students' academic performance. The study revealed that the parent's income did not have a significant coefficient with  $p\text{-value}=0.345$ . The finding further stated that one unit increase in parent's income leads to the increase in academic performance by 0.026 units. The correlation coefficient between the parent's level of income and the academic performance of the students is 0.075 which shows the weak positive correlation between the parents' level of income and academic performance of the student's which is not supported by the Bourdieu's capital theory with the essence that the children from the parents of high social status have advantage on the availability of the educational materials.

The second objective was to examine the extent to which parents' level of education influences students' academic performance. The study found that the parents' level of education has no influence on the academic performance of the students since  $p\text{-value}=0.663$ . The finding further stated that the one unit increase in parent's level of education leads to the increase in the students' academic performance by negative 0.120 units. The correlation coefficient between the parent's level of education and the academic performance of the students with father (-0.182) and with mother (-0.178) shows the negative correlation between the parents education level and the academic performance of the student. This outcome too is not supported by Bourdieu's theory which is based upon the fact that differences in the family background leads to the differences in the academic performance of the pupils.

The third objective was to analyze the level to which parents' occupation influences students' academic performance. The findings of the parent's nature of employment concluded that the increase in the parent's nature of employment by one unit would result in the increase in the academic performance by 0.44 units. Accordingly, the correlation coefficient between the parent's occupation and academic

performance of the student's is 0.129 which establishes the positive relationship between the two. This result is supported by the base of Bourdieu's theory which states that the children from the parents of high social status is determined by the sources and nature of employment and have advantage on the availability of the materials and thus is the influencing factor on the academic performance of students.

The fourth objective was to assess the impact of expenditure of the parents on the children's education on their academic performance. Accordingly, one unit increase in the monthly family expenditure results in the increase in the academic performance by negative 0.198 units. The correlation coefficient between the expenditure of the parent's on the children's education and their academic performance is -0.204 which shows the negative correlation between the two. This outcome is not supported by Bourdieu's theory that a family with a sound economic background leads to the higher academic performance of the students.

The fifth objective of the study was to determine the impact of the residence of the students on the academic performance of the students. The coefficient of the residence shows that one unit increase in the nature of the residence leads to the decrease in the academic performance by 0.025 units. The correlation coefficient between the residence and academic performance is 0.042 which shows the positive correlation between the two. The positive relationship is supported by Bourdieu's theory as well that children from the parents of high social status have advantage on the availability of the educational materials.

Thus, the findings of this research came up with the similar results as that of (Etikan et.al., 2017) and (Yelkperci, 2016) that a parent's level of income and educational qualification does not have a significant impact on the academic performance of the students. On the contrary, the outcome of this study varies to that of the results of the (Pant, 2020), (Barker et.al, 2017), (Dekar, 2016), (Hao & Yeung, 2015), (Rana, 2015), (Shah & Anwar, 2014), (Machebe, 2014), (Sean 2013), (Zang 2012) and (Suleman et. al, 2012) who came to conclude that the parents' socio-economic status, nature of employment i.e. occupation and residence has a significant impact on the academic performance of the students.

## **Conclusions**

Parental socio-economic status is considered to be one of the major factors that influence the academic performance of the students. Accordingly, out of the several factors considered to measure the academic performance of the students, family financial status was found to be a more important determinant of school level academic grades, however, its influence in college level grade was relatively low. Although, parent's educational status was also found to be associated with academic achievement of the students, father's nature of employment and family expenditure level were found to be the most significant determinants of academic achievement of students. However, the relationship is true only up to the school level academic performance. The expenditure level of family is the important determinant of school level academic achievement. Financial status of family affects school level grades but not college level grades. Family financial status is found to have significant influence over the school level grade but minimal influence over the college level grade. This study has implications for the educational practice and policy formulation. Academic administrators should provide the parents with the opportunities to be involved in the decision making process of the academic institutions. Accordingly, our study reveals that though the family income level, parent's occupation, parent's nature of employment and parent's educational qualification do not have significant relationship with the academic performance of the students. However, the residential status comparatively has influence over the academic performance of the students. To conclude, the formulation of the social policies that would contribute to the upliftment of the social and economic condition of the certain groups of the society would narrow down the academic achievement gap and ensure the quality education for all the students.

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### **Annex I: Item-wise Mean Scores and Standard Deviation**

SN	Items	Mean	SD
1	Parents Financial Status determines the type of school their children attend	3.6146	1.26925
2	Parents’ ability to support students’ education influences their confidence level and attitudes towards learning.	3.7409	1.19413

3	Parents' financial status determines the ease with which students' fees and other levies are paid.	3.9169	1.04071
4	Parents' financial status determines the level of provisions made for learning and writing materials.	3.5216	1.06005
5	Parents' financial status determines how regular a student is given money for school.	3.7375	2.01847
6	Parents' financial status influences how regular students attend school.	2.7076	1.30163
7	Parent's financial status determines the payment of school fee//installments on time.	3.8405	1.00390
8	Parent's financial status affects the field visit and outdoor teaching learning activities.	3.5947	1.14390
9	Parents' educational qualifications influence students' educational achievements in school.	3.0000	1.19443
10	Parents' educational qualifications determine the kind of assistance children receive at home in respect of their studies.	3.5980	.95979
11	Parents' educational attainments enhance the home environment for children's learning activities.	3.8073	.99469
12	Parents' educational attainments encourage students to work hard.	3.6246	1.03695
13	Parents' educational qualifications determine the kind of supervision given to students learning at home.	3.6047	1.01973
14	Parents' educational qualifications influence the interest they attach to their children's education.	3.3787	1.06899
15	Parents' educational qualifications provide the guidance for their further education.	3.8140	1.06393
16	Parents' educational qualifications help them to take the right decision at the right time.	3.5581	1.06807

17	Parents' educational qualification helps to create a good economic environment as well.	3.6678	1.03405
18	Parents' educational qualifications help to shape the sound academic performance.	3.3555	1.06609
19	Parent's occupation influences the students' academic performance in the colleges.	2.6844	1.14749
20	Parent's occupation determines the kind of assistance students receive at home.	3.3322	.93946
21	Parent's occupation determines the academic environment of the students.	3.1661	1.04514
22	Parent's occupation affects the students' hobbies and field of interest.	3.2458	1.17730
23	Parent's occupation determines the confidence of the students in learning.	3.1993	1.19169
24	Parent's occupation influences the interest they attach to their children's education.	3.2359	1.13762
25	Parent's expenditure on the education of students helps them to be equipped with the materials they need.	3.5017	1.15072
26	Parent's expenditure on education determines the grade/percent the student attains.	2.3887	1.18817
27	Parent's expenditure on education influences the creativity of the students.	2.8439	2.65560
28	Parent's expenditure on education enhances the willingness of the students to get engaged in academic activities.	3.1395	1.04266
29	Parent's expenditure on education makes the students more determined to increase their academic performance.	3.0930	1.13929
30	Parent's expenditure on education helps to participate in outdoor academic activities.	3.3522	1.11456
31	The distance of the residence from the college/school affects the academic performance of the students.	2.9468	1.19603
32	The academic performance of the students is influenced by the comforts of the residence.	3.1794	1.07752
33	The residence with individual and separate rooms enhances the academic performance of the students.	3.4286	1.04517



34	Living with the parents and siblings increases the academic performance of the students.	3.4651	1.05021
35	The nature, location, shapes and size of the residence affects the academic performance of the students.	3.3289	1.17536
36	The residence near the colleges/school enhances the regularity and punctuality in the class.	3.3223	1.19407
37	The distance of the college/school from the residence affects the duration of studies at home.	3.5714	1.05785
38	Living and the environment in the sophisticated residence enhances the academic performance of the student.	3.2458	1.09515

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## **Status of Girls' Participation in Higher Education in Nepal**

**Deviram Acharya**

### **Abstract**

Given that achieving gender equality is a global development agenda, girl's participation in education has been taken as one of the most important indicators. The purpose of this article is to analyze the status of girls' participation in higher education and explore the reasons behind the disparities among them. Similarly, some ways forward to address disparities of the girls' participation are also explored. To analyze the status, the secondary data have been collected from University Grants Commission Nepal (UGC-Nepal). The data are tabulated, analyzed, compared, interpreted and the conclusion is drawn. Similarly, other related documents are consulted and reviewed to make recommendations for achieving gender equality in education. Girls' participation in higher education has increased significantly from nineteen percent to forty-two percent during the thirty years. Though there exist many disparities in different groups, interventions need to start from the school education and access of technical higher education should be expanded in rural areas and to underprivileged groups.

लैङ्गिक समानता हासिल गर्ने विश्वव्यापी विकास लक्ष्य प्राप्तीका लागि शिक्षामा छात्राहरूको सहभागितालाई मुख्य सूचकको रूपमा लिने गरिएको छ । यो लेखमा खासगरी नेपालको उच्च शिक्षामा छात्राहरूको सहभागिताको अवस्था विश्लेषण गरी यसमा रहेका असमानताहरूको खोजी गरिएको छ । यसका साथै उच्च शिक्षामा छात्रा सहभागितामा देखिएको असमानता कम गर्नका लागि अबलम्बन गर्न सकिने केही उपायहरू पनि प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ । विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोगबाट प्रकाशित तथ्याङ्कीय प्रतिवेदनलाई तथ्याङ्कको स्रोतको रूपमा आधार लिएर छात्रा सहभागिताको अवस्था सम्बन्धी अध्ययन गरिएकोछ। आयोगले प्रकाशन गरेको तथ्याङ्कहरूलाई तालिकीकरण, विभिन्न वर्षका बीच तुलना, विश्लेषण र व्याख्या गरिएको छ । यसैगरी

विषयसँग सम्बन्धित अन्य विभिन्न सामग्रीहरूको सहायताले उच्च शिक्षामा लैङ्गिक समानता हासिल गर्ने उपायहरू खोजी गरिएको छ । विगतको तीस वर्षमा उच्च शिक्षामा छात्रा सहभागिता उन्नाइस प्रतिशतबाट बढेर बयालिस पुगेको छ । यद्यपी विभिन्न समूहहरूका बीचमा थुप्रै असमानताहरू विद्यमान छन । छात्राहरूको भर्नादर साधारण विषयहरूमा बढी छ । यस्तो असमानता कम गर्दै प्राविधिक उच्च शिक्षामा समेत छात्रा सहभागिता वृद्धि गर्न विद्यालय शिक्षादेखि नै छात्र र छात्राको समान सहभागिता र सिकाइमा ध्यान दिनुपर्छ । साथै ग्रामीण क्षेत्रमा समेत पहुँचको विस्तार गर्नु आवश्यक देखिन्छ ।

**Keywords:** Girls' participation, gender, education, equality, empowerment

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## Introduction

Only the percentage of girls' enrollment is not a sufficient criterion for ensuring gender equality in education. Girls' participation in school education in Nepal is satisfactory as a whole; however, a number of disparities can be seen among the rural-urban, community and institutional schools, provinces (Karnali, Bagmati, and Province two), privileged and underprivileged castes, and Hill and Terai dwellers. Likewise, girls' learning achievement in the School Education Examination-SEE (end of grade X) is very low compared to the boys. The achievement level of SEE determines the subject to study in grade XI. Likewise, subjects studied in grade XI and XII determine the higher education opportunities and enrollment. Students who obtain C+ grade in Mathematics and Science subjects can get enrolled in science stream in grade XI and those who study science in grade XI and XII, can get enrolled in technical higher education and other streams as well. Thus, the girls' participation in technical higher education is quite lower than that of the boys (University Grants Commission Nepal, 2020). It indicates that girls' enrollment in higher education with low levels of academic achievement affects their performance in higher education and the subject studied in higher education affects employability opportunity.

Gender equality is a core development objective of the global society. All-round development of any country is not possible without achieving gender equality in each sector of development like health, education, economic opportunities, earnings, productivity, and representation in governance with voice. The World Development Report 2012 entitled 'Gender Equality and Development' has also stated that economic and social development is not enough to decrease all gender disparities among the different groups, especially the poor, marginalized, disable, disadvantaged, and dwellers of

remote areas (World Bank, 2011). Gender equality impacts not only at the personal and family level but also at society and the global community level. To achieve gender equality and girl's empowerment, education is the most powerful means. But only counting the percentage of a girl's enrollment in education does not transform the real gender equality. Indeed, inclusive and quality education could leverage empowerment in all aspects of gender equality. Empowering the girls in each sector of the society to enhance the individual capability is important (Sen, 1999 ), which is not possible without the quality education.

The total girls' participation in higher education is about 52 percent in 2018/19 but the participation in technical higher education is only 38 percent (UGC, 2020). The subject of medicine has a high percentage of girl's participation (61%) and agriculture and engineering have low enrollment, i.e. 1.2 % and 2.1% respectively. Subjects studied in higher education can limit or expand job opportunity, income, and empowerment as a whole. The role of education to empower girls and gender equality is multidimensional. Gender equality of education can contribute to multiple areas of women empowerment like more earnings and standards of living, reduction of the rate of child marriage, increase in quality childbearing, fertility and population growth, better health, nutrition and well-being, decision making, social capital, and quality of life (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, the low educational attainment and learning for girls have a negative impact not only on girls but also on the children and household. The purpose of this paper is to ascertain the girls' participation in higher education and gender equality. Specifically, the paper focused on finding out the girls' participation in technical education, gender parity index, and future direction of the girls' education.

## **Method**

This paper is prepared using secondary data published by University Grants Commission-UGC Nepal. It has developed the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) and published the report annually. The researcher has collected the HEMIS report from UGC Nepal website and by visiting the UGC library to find out the additional information and HEMIS which was not in the website. HEMIS data has been categorized, tabulated, summarized, analyzed, interpreted, and described to meet the objectives of this study. The

table and graphs mentioned in this paper are prepared by researchers using the data mentioned in the UGC report. To find out girls' enrollment trends, HEMIS reports, from 2010/11 to 2018/19, were reviewed and analyzed. Similarly, other relevant literature, different universities' websites, journal papers, and documents were also reviewed.

### **History of Nepali higher education**

Increasing the number of higher education institutions in Nepal, the enrollment rate of higher education has also been increased simultaneously. The history of higher education has not been so long in Nepal. It was started along with the establishment of Tri-Chandra College in 1918. About 40 years later, Tribhuvan University was established in 1959 and Nepal Sanskrit University was established after 27 years again in 1986. This indicates that in the span of 70 years, there was slow development of higher education.

The political system of Nepal changed in 1990. Then after the establishment of higher education institutions took rapid pace. There were only two universities in 1990, currently there are eleven universities, six medical academies and 1432 higher education institutions providing higher education in 2020 (UGC Report, 2020). After Nepal entered into the federal political system with seven provinces, opening of new universities and medical academies by the provincial and federal governments is taking place simultaneously. The Gandaki provincial government has established its own university and the Bagmati provincial government is in the process. Federal government has also announced the establishment of new universities in the annual policy of the government. It indicates that the number of higher education institutions, in Nepal, is going to increase in the future.

The girls' participation in higher education has also increased with the higher education institutions. After 29 years of establishment of Tri-Chandra College, only four girls were enrolled in 1947 (Sharma, 2001). Similarly, only two percent of females were literate in the 1950s (National Education Commission, 1992). Now the female literacy rate has reached 65 percent and total girls' enrollment in higher education reached 52 percent (National Planning Commission, 2020; UGC Nepal 2020). The Government of Nepal has implemented various interventions to increase girls' participation in education. Various kinds of scholarships are in place to ensure the

girls' access to education. To participate in higher education, there are no visible obstacles to girls but socio-cultural factors are responsible for it. When the level increases, then the female participation will decrease. So, more females are enrolled in bachelor level than the master's level.

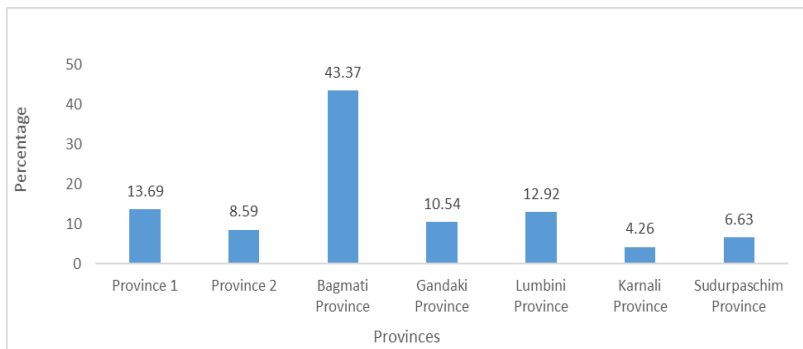
### **Status of higher education institutions**

In Nepal, students start higher education after completing grade XII. Students choose the subject in grade XII as per their interest and the performance in the grade ten examination. The higher education institutions of Nepal offer courses to the students based on their previous study and performance in grade XII. Similarly, the access to higher education institutions all over the country is not equal. Higher education institutions offering technical education like engineering, agriculture, forestry, and medicine are located in the urban areas and institutions located in a rural area offer only general education such as education, management, and social science.

Tribhuvan University (TU) is the oldest university and it has a high number of colleges and students. According to the University Grants Commission Nepal-UGC (2020), out of 1432 higher education campuses, TU has 1141 campuses (80%). Similarly, around 76 percent of students are enrolled in campuses under TU and the rest 24 percent are enrolled in other universities and medical academies.

Most of the higher education institutions are centralized in Bagmati province and urban areas. There is also a trend to establish provincial universities in urban areas. It limits the access to higher education for underprivileged and disadvantaged girls and other people from the rural area. Figure 1 presented below shows the distribution of province-wise higher education institutions in Nepal.

**Figure 1: Province-wise Distribution of Higher Education Institutions**  
(Data source: UGC Nepal 2020)



The higher education institutions located in Nepal presented in figure 1 shows the significant disparity in the distribution of higher education institutions. Bagmati province has the highest number of HEIs, whereas Karnali province has the lowest. Karnali and Sudurpaschim have more rural areas and a low level of human development index. Similarly, poorer and underprivileged people live in those provinces and province two as well. Most of the HEIs in these provinces provide general education. The distribution itself creates gender inequality in access and then in quality. There are three types of higher education institutions, providing higher education in Nepal like constituent, private, and community. Private (privately funded for-profit) institutions are more expensive than community and the community campuses are more expensive than constituents. Only 10.27 percent of HEI's are constituent and 52.16 percent of them are private. Again, more (170 out of 538) community campuses are in the Bagmati province. Private campuses are located in urban areas providing better higher education than communities located in rural areas. The unequal distribution of HEIs has historically existed and the HEIs are focused only on the people who live in urban areas with high socio-economic status (National Education Commission Report, 1992, 2018). The HEIs distribution has created inequality to the access in higher education.

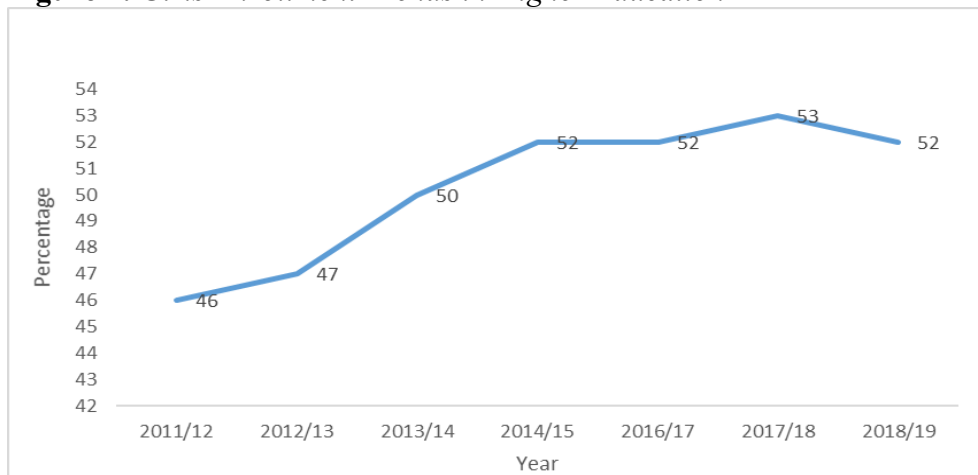
## Findings

The findings are presented in tables and charts. Based on the data tabulation, summary and analysis, interpretation has been also included. In-depth analysis is presented under the discussion section.

### ***Status of girl's enrollment***

Girls' enrollment trend in higher education changed over time. According to the National Education Commission (1992), the girls' enrolment was 23.34 percent in higher education out of 91826 students. In the academic year 2018/19, the overall girls' enrollment in higher education in Nepal was about 52 percent (UGC Report, 2018/19). The enrollment rate in the different subjects in higher education has not changed significantly over the eight years. Female participation in higher education as a whole, has significantly increased over the years. In the year 2011/12, there were 46% of females studying higher education and in the year 2018/19, it was 52% in total. The enrollment rate seems to be increasing only in general subjects but not in technical subjects compared to boys. Reviewing the historical data, it appears that female participation has increased. The increasing trend is presented in figure 2 below.

**Figure 2:** *Girls Enrollment Trends in Higher Education*



(Data Source: UGC Nepal)

The figure 2 presents girls' enrollment in higher education, which has increased significantly up to 2015, then it seems constant. According to the UGC Report (2010), female enrolment has sharply increased from 19 percent to 42 by 1980 to 2010. From the last five years, girls' share in higher education is more than fifty percent. But the trend in the different subject groups varies. The subject-wise enrollment of girls is presented in table 1 below.



**Table 1: Girls' participation in Different Faculties in Higher Education in Nepal**

Faculty	2011/12		2018/19	
	Female percent age in total	Female percent age in faculty	Female percent age in total	Female percentage in faculty
Education	38.6	51.4	21.1	63.7
Management	30.4	45.1	49.9	56.0
Humanities & Social Science	19.7	44.5	10.7	50.8
Engineering	2.4	21.7	2.1	16.9
Science & Technology	2.5	26.4	5.8	36.1
Medicine	5.6	56.1	7.6	61.6
Agriculture (Forestry and Animal Science)	0.1	13.4	1.2	37.5
Others (Law, Buddhism, & Sanskrit)	0.6	21.9	1.7	35.2

(Data source: UGC, Report 2020)

According to table 1, the girls' participation has changed into the faculty. In the academic year 2011/12, the highest percentage of girls was enrolled in education. In the academic year 2018/19, it declined from 38 % to 21% in education and increased by 20 percent in management. Similarly, in subjects such as humanities and social science, the girls' participation also declined by 10 percent. While the total enrollment of girls in higher education has increased, it is not equal in each faculty. But the concern is that only changing the pattern and enrollment ratio in general and technical education has not significantly changed.

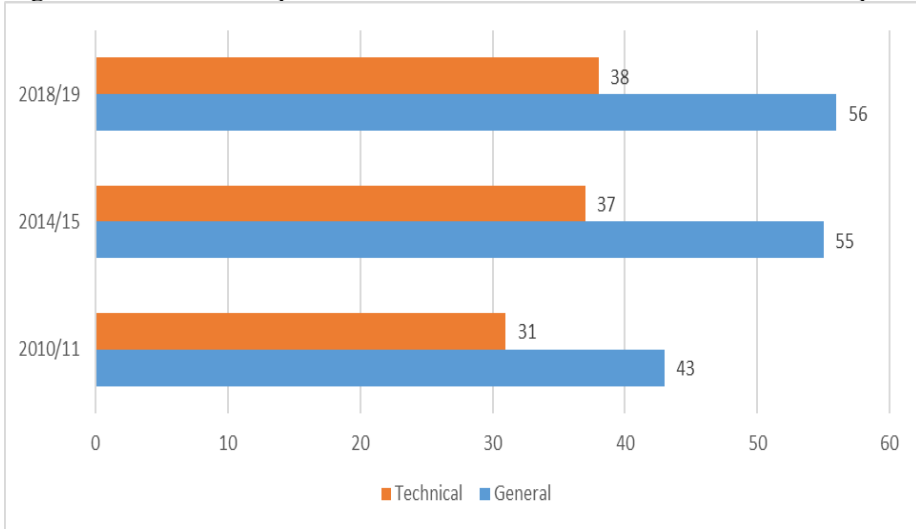
### ***Participation in general and technical education***

Different subjects teaching in Nepalese higher education institutions are mainly divided into two groups; general and technical education. The general education incorporates management, education, humanities, and social sciences, law, Sanskrit, and Buddhism. Similarly, technical education includes science and technology, engineering, medicine, forestry, agriculture, and ayurveda. General education is mainly designed to lead participants to a deeper understanding of a subject or group of subjects. Successful completion of these programs may or may not provide the participants

with a labor market-relevant to their academic qualification. Education Commission Report (2018) stated that lack of the specific skills in general education the higher education produces a group of unemployable graduates. Technical education is mainly designed to lead participants to acquire practical knowledge and skills. Successful completion of such programs leads to a job market relevant to their vocational qualification (University Grants Commission, 2019). In general, technical education is only available in city areas and it is expensive in comparison to general education. Similarly, to get admission in technical education, students should pass the entrance exam and get a certain score at the end of school education. However, in general education, there is no entrance exam and strict criteria.

Technical education is job market-oriented and it has a high probability to get employment opportunities. The girls' participation in technical education is low compared to general education. Figure 3 below presents the girls' participation in technical and general education.

**Figure 3:** *Girls' Participation in General and Technical Education in Nepal*



(Data source: UGC Report, 2020).

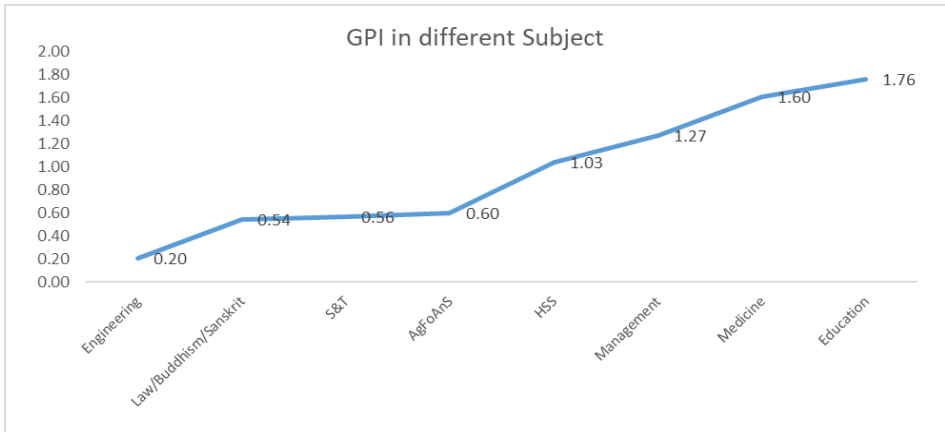
As mentioned before, girls' participation has increased significantly. However, the girls' participation in technical education has not increased. As per the data presented in figure 3, the girls' participation trend has increased in the past nine years in general education by 13 percent and only seven percent in technical education. Participation in technical education mostly covers

medicine, especially nursing, where girls prefer and are encouraged to get enrolled in nursing. In the academic year 2018/19, there was enrollment of 61.56 percent of girls in medicine in contrast to engineering by only 17 percent (UGC, 2020). The data indicates that the girls' participation has increased in general education which has less job opportunity and income as well as long-term empowerment and social justice. According to the data about girls' enrollment in different disciplines only 6 percent of girls enrolled in science and technology and two percent enrolled in engineering which shows that the low level of girls' participation in technical education limits economic empowerment.

### ***Gender Parity Index***

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the most important indicator used to measure the participation of girls in education. GPI is a ratio of male and female students obtained by dividing the number of females over the number of males at a certain level of education (Tienxhi, 2017). GPI value 1 indicates parity between sexes. GPI less than 1 indicates a disparity in favor of boys and greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favor of girls. According to UNESCO (2012a), a GPI ratio 0.97-1.03 indicates that gender parity has been achieved. In 2018/19, the GPI in higher education in Nepal is 1.09, which indicates that enrollment of girls is higher than the boys. The girls' enrollment is higher in only Bachelor and Post Graduate Diploma levels. While the education level increases, the GPI value seems to be decreasing, whereas the highest GPI in Bachelor level is 1.15. The figure 4 below presents the GPI in different subjects in the year 2018/19.

**Figure 4:** *Gender Parity Index in Different Subject in Nepali Higher Education*



(Data source: UGC Report, 2020)

As shown in figure 4, the faculty of education has the highest GPI, i.e. 1.76, whereas engineering has the lowest, i.e. 0.20. As categorized in general and technical subjects, medicine has higher GPI than others, but it is the effect of nursing courses.

Similarly, community campuses have higher value of GPI (1.83) than private and constituent campuses. Constituent campuses offering higher education at low cost and located in urban areas have the lowest GPI of 0.80. Total GPI 1.09 could not show the real disparity among the different social dimensions.

## Discussions and implication

Only enrollment is not sufficient for the girls' education initiative and equality. Despite the overall progress in the data of the enrollment, the girls remain lower than the boys of the underprivileged and disadvantaged population, particularly in province two, Karnali and Sudurpaschim. As mentioned in the Education Commission Report 2018, there is a huge gap in enrolment between rich family women and poor family women. The report further elaborated the girls' enrollment of different groups like 69 percent of the girls' from Bhramin and Chettri, 12 percent from Newar, 14 percent from ethnic, one percent Dalit, and four percent Madhesi. It indicates that the disparities among different groups reveal other social disparities in terms of social, economic, political and so on.

The World Development Report (2012) mentioned that greater gender equality should remove the barriers that prevent girls from schooling and learning (World Bank, 2011). Equal access is one prerequisite condition for girls' participation in education. However, the learning disparity in secondary education has been hindering the

higher education opportunity for girls. Gender friendly environment, unbiased teaching-learning materials, equal learning opportunity, and gender-friendly teaching-learning activities could contribute to the quality of the education. Stereotypical behavior of the society like girls are other's property, educating the girls takes benefit from the next family, society is not ready to provide better education to girls in school and higher education. The trend of sending boys to private schools and girls to community schools has been hindering enrollment in technical higher education.

A low level of learning achievement of girls has posed multiple negative impacts not only to enroll them in technical higher education but also to decline their self-confidence. While the girls' achievement is poor, then the family pushes them for early marriage rather than providing education. Bista (2004) argued that 'parents intend to marry them off early to avoid the extra economic burden and perceive only dubious advantages from educating girls (p.7).' Low achievement in school education is also a factor contributing to the prevalence of early marriage in the rural areas. This is the grim reality in the rural areas. Higher education institutions, offering general subjects, particularly education, are located in the rural areas. The faculty of education has no strict criteria to enroll the students, so more married girls are enrolled in this discipline in the rural areas. One campus, offering higher education in rural areas of province 2, has twelve married females out of 17 enrolled in graduate courses (Shilapatra, 2019). This is one positive aspect of the higher education institutions located in the rural areas. But a pertinent question arises here: why are those girls studying education more than other subjects?

Gender equality in education is not only the matter of girls' empowerment but also the matter of social justice and human rights. Better education is vital for achieving a peaceful, inclusive, resilient, and protective environment. Gender equality is measured by Gender Parity Index. Nepal has achieved equal GPI in school and Higher education. However, UNESCO (2016) argued that achieving gender parity in education does not necessarily translate into gender equality in economic activities and employment opportunities. So, higher education provides equal opportunity to girls and boys for decent work. Counting the number and percentage is not sufficient for girls' education and equality. The most important aspects are equal learning opportunities, equal access to decent work, employability, income, decision-making role, representation in government, and other

political, social, and economic activities. Acharya (2007) argued that education itself reproduces the discriminatory attitudes and practice of the wider society; resulting in greater risk of drop-out and non-completion of education and low level of learning. The remarks of the author point out the social disparity faced by underprivileged students, particularly girls. In this regard, educational organizations should be sensible to create a gender-friendly teaching-learning environment. To this end, providing equal learning opportunities can contribute to ensure better higher education.

Formal education of good quality equips individuals with skills and knowledge to become more productive (UNESCO, 2016). Only the enrollment percentage and GPI value is not sufficient for gender equality and empowerment. As mentioned by Acharya (2007), addressing equity in access and equity in quality are complex to achieve. Existing programs and policies are not sufficient for addressing the vulnerable and excluded groups. It requires special attention and context-specific intervention. Gender equality should be translated into employability, income, meaningful participation in governance, and a gender-friendly society.

Gender equality in education is also linked to the right to education and important means of improving other social and economic outcomes (UNESCO, 2012b). Similarly, achieving gender equality requires an approach that 'ensures that girls and boys, women and men not only gain access to and complete the education cycles, but are empowered equally in and through education (UNESCO, 2016). It is necessary to remember that there is no inherent difference in the capacities to learn by boys and girls but the learning environment in school and society contributes to creating the learning gap. To increase the girls' participation in technical higher education, the learning achievement of girls in secondary education should be improved. Similarly, the establishment of higher education institutions, offering technical education in rural areas at low cost, can attract the girls towards it. Among the three types of higher education institutions, almost 80 percent of constituent campuses are located in the city areas. Private higher education institutions that charge more fees and provide better learning opportunities are also located in the urban areas. Community campuses located in rural areas offering general education have a lower graduation rate than the private campus located in urban areas. Disparities between the graduation rate of private and constituent campuses and their location have

created gender inequality. The graduation rate has also shown the disparities. Girls are enrolled in faculty of education more but the graduation rate is very low, i.e. 16 percent. This is an indication of the disparities in learning.

### ***Girls in technical education***

Hu (2020) mentioned the percentage of women researchers in software development and artificial intelligence research as six and twelve respectively. Only six percent of the girls are studying science and technology in Nepal 2020 (UGC, 2020). Trusz (2020) claimed that females prefer humanities/social studies and males prefer science and technology. It seems to have become a global issue. Trusz (2020) further stated that teachers' expectancies regarding female students' achievement in mathematics and their own self concept of abilities predict choosing science and technology for the future career. Time span on learning has also been an affecting factor in the achievement and it correlates to the subject selection for the study. Hu (2020) further elaborated the issue of female participation in science and technology stating the disparity in the field being male-centric, thereby promotes gender discrimination and inequality. Trusz (2020) elaborated the consequences of the subject selection by boys and girls "translates into eventual outcomes on the market in terms of employment opportunities, matched to their satisfactory earning (p. 635)". So many social, cultural, economic and political factors influence the gender discrimination and biases in society. Girls spend more time in household chores than boys in the Nepalese context because the social belief system is that boys can go outside for income, whereas girls should remain at home. This disempowering social practice has discouraged girls from getting enrolled and continuing their education.

The UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2017) estimates that globally only 35 percent of women are involved in science, technology, and innovation. Similarly, McCarthy (2015) explored the linkage between gender difference in learning achievement and female participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The percentage of female teachers in schools and involvement of women in the field of science and technology somehow influence the orientation of the selection of the subject in school and higher education. The higher level of learning achievement contributes to developing self-confidence. Sen ( 1999)

stresses that human capability is also influenced by girls' empowerment. True empowerment comes from the opportunity for decent work and income opportunities.

To achieve the global aspiration of greater gender equality in every sector of the state and society, the entire education system needs to be flexible and inclusive so as to ensure equal learning opportunity. Without addressing the complex dynamics of social, economic, and political exclusion and gender discrimination, it is rather tough to create a gender-friendly global society. In a similar vein, Lockheed (2010) further stated the relevancy of the school, curriculum, and quality learning support to social mobility for the excluded girls. In order to provide equal learning opportunities, different learning modalities and empowering education systems should be developed and implemented.

### **Way forward**

Gender Parity Index of higher education indicates that the enrollment of girls is higher than that of boys but many forms of disparities exist there. To achieve gender equality in every sector of the society, it is necessary to reduce the disparities between different academic groups. To increase the girls' participation in technical subjects, it is important to expand the opportunity to get better employability opportunities and higher income. Several efforts are made and programs are implemented for ensuring the girls' participation and their empowerment. Even if there is no such discrimination from the legal perspective, but the social, cultural, economic, political factors play a role in limiting the girls' empowerment in many facets. So technical education should be available in the rural areas at low cost in order to enhance learning achievement and provide equal learning opportunities. Availability of resources and equipment can stimulate the interest in technical education, so the opportunity to get exposure to technical education should be made available. Classroom teaching-learning activities should be gender friendly by teacher. Teaching learning materials should be developed targeting the girls' motivation to learn. Hostel and required stipend should be made available based on priority to marginalized and disadvantaged groups. McCarthy (2015) suggested that career counselling and mentoring opportunities should be expanded, and gender responsive teaching strategy, and resource materials should be available in schools. Gender-friendly physical infrastructure, gender-friendly teacher behavior, gender



responsive curriculum and content are the essential components in the educational institutions. Targeted interventions should be implemented for marginalized and disadvantaged girls to promote gender equality and access to education.

## Conclusions

Decades of advocacy, policy work, law reform, investment, and other targeted interventions have brought about a substantial achievement in girls' enrollment at both school and higher level of education in Nepal. There are still several disparities pertaining to enrollment and learning. Multiple reasons such as high rate of poverty, socio-cultural belief system, gender-based violence, geographical location, minority, and disability are the key obstacles for the girls to get quality education. To achieve the goals of gender equality in every sector, a gender-disaggregated data system should be developed and implemented. Girls' participation in science and technology is not only the issue of Nepal, it is also a global issue. Promoting the quality of the community campus and community school can reduce the disparity to some extent. So, targeted interventions and equitable learning opportunities are necessary to achieve gender equality.

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**Action Initiatives in Integrating Indigenous<sup>1</sup> and non-Western Knowledge<sup>2</sup> in Curricular Practices of Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education: A Qualitative Inquiry**

**Indra Mani Rai  
Ram Gaire**

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**Abstract**

Higher education in Nepal has been guided by the Western academic culture, thereby promoting Western knowledge and ways of knowing as superior. Adoption of external ideas and practices has subjugated indigenous and non-Western knowledge heritages in Nepal. Based on textual data collected from teacher educators in virtual Webinars and review of existing core courses of Master of Education (M.Ed.), this article first shows that university actors are starting the process of decolonization of curricular practices. Teacher educators including curriculum developers are using negotiation, resistance, and response to the supremacy of imported education. In so doing, they have incorporated a small portion of indigenous and non-Western knowledge in some of the courses and contextualized some of their pedagogical and assessment practices. However, as this article goes on to show, Western modern educational practices remain dominant. We conclude that the teacher educators have increasing awareness of

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<sup>1</sup> Informally generated knowledge of indigenous peoples that are experiences, beliefs, worldviews, oral traditions, myths, cosmologies and so on and so forth

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the non-Western knowledge is the body of knowledge in religious philosophies such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islamism

external domination on curricular practices and they have initiated the actions of reclaiming their indigenous and non-Western knowledge through curricular practices from within the structural barriers of Western model of academia. The university structure needs to promote a conducive educational environment in order to provide justice to indigenous and non-Western knowledge and ways of knowing thereby reforming curricular practices.

नेपालमा उच्च शिक्षाको अभ्यास र परम्परा पश्चिमा शैक्षिक संस्कृतिद्वारा निर्देशित हुँदै आएको छ । पश्चिमा प्राज्ञिक ढाँचाले नेपालको उच्च शिक्षामा आफ्नो श्रेष्ठता कायम गरि पश्चिमा ज्ञान र सिप अनि ज्ञान प्राप्त गर्ने तौर तरिकालाई प्रवर्द्धन गरेको छ । यस्तो बाह्य विचार र अभ्यासको अंगीकार गर्नाले नेपालमा रहेको आफ्नै आदिवासी र गैर-पश्चिमा ज्ञान सम्पदालाई दमन गरेको छ । यस आलेखले अनलाइन गोष्ठीहरू मार्फत विश्वविद्यालयका प्राध्यपकहरूबाट संकलित सूचना र त्रिभुवन विश्वविद्यालय शिक्षा शास्त्र संकायको स्नाकोत्तर तहको शिक्षाको आधार अन्तर्गतका मुख्य पाठ्यक्रमहरूको समीक्षाको आधारमा विश्वविद्यालयको शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरूमा अउपनिवेशीकरणको प्रक्रिया केहि हद्द सम्म प्रारम्भ भएको तथ्य प्रस्तुत गरेको छ । पाठ्यक्रम विकासकर्ताहरू सहित प्राध्यापकहरूले आयातित शिक्षाको सर्वोच्चतालाई महशुस गरि त्यसको विरुद्धमा आफ्नो क्षमताको तहवाट प्रतिरोध र प्रतिक्रिया देखाउन थालेका छन् । यसो गर्दा उनीहरूले शिक्षाका आधारसँग सम्वद्ध केही पाठ्यक्रमहरूमा सानो अंश भएपनि आदिवासी र गैर-पश्चिमा ज्ञानको समावेशीकरण गरेका छन् । त्यसैगरि प्राध्यापकहरूले आफ्ना शिक्षण पद्धति र मूल्याङ्कन प्रकृया र अभ्यासहरूलाई सान्दर्भिक बनाउँदै लगेका छन् । यद्यपि यस लेखले पश्चिमा आधुनिक शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरू अझै हावी रहेको तथ्यलाई नकार्न सकेको भने छैन । नेपालको उच्च शिक्षाको अभ्यासमा पाश्चात्य प्रभुत्व बारे प्राध्यापकहरूमा चेतना बढेको र उनीहरूले पश्चिमी ढाँचा अन्तर्गतको संरचनागत अवरोधहरूको वावजुद पाठ्यक्रम वा आफ्ना शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरू मार्फत आदिवासी र गैर-पश्चिमी ज्ञानको पुन प्राप्ति गर्ने कार्यहरूको सुरुवात गरिरहेका छन् भन्ने यस लेखको निष्कर्ष रहेको छ । तसर्थ विश्वविद्यालयको संरचनाले अर्थपूर्ण शिक्षालाई प्रवर्द्धन गर्नको लागि आदिवासी र गैर-पश्चिमा शैक्षिक अभ्यासलाई न्याय प्रदान गर्न पाठ्यक्रम र शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरूमा व्यापक सुधार गर्दै अनुकूल शैक्षिक वातावरणको प्रवर्द्धन गर्न आवश्यक छ ।

**Keywords:** Western modern knowledge, indigenous, non-Western, decolonization, pedagogies, assessment, curriculum

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## Introduction

Nepal is a highly diverse country in terms of caste/ethnicity, language, culture, and religion. Specifically, there are 59 indigenous groups (*Adivasi Janajati*) officially recognized by the state (Government of Nepal [GoN], 2002) among 126 castes/ethnic groups speaking more than 123 languages (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012). Based on religious belief, they are divided into Hindu, Buddha, Kirat, Bon, and Muslim. It is evident that they have their

own culture, indigenous/local knowledge systems, beliefs, worldviews, and epistemic traditions. However, Nepali higher education has less association with the contexts of youths from diverse Nepali communities due to the adoption of policies guided by neoliberal ideas (Regmi, 2021). The education, from the very beginning, when Tri Chandra College was established in 1919 under the affiliation and prescribed courses of Patna University, India (Upadhyay, 2018), was already influenced by British colonization. It has followed the international academic practices expanding structured and rigid programs in the country (Stiller & Yadav, 1979) sidelining the indigenous and non-Western knowledge and ways of knowing.

Higher education in Nepal from the very beginning played an important role in introducing the Western modern education system particularly of Indian traditions that were already guided by British colonialism then after American traditions (Bista, Sharma, & Raby, 2019). Tribhuvan University, the largest university in Nepal, established in 1959 has introduced different graduate programs with technical and non-technical courses which have dominantly included Western knowledge based on Western modern worldviews. The Western modern worldviews that grew in the enlightenment era with the belief of ontology of materialism that regards mind-independent matter as the only reality in the world and objectivity as epistemology (Luitel & Taylor, 2019) are blind towards indigenous and non-Western knowledge and knowing. Thus, the higher education in Nepal that has promoted Western knowledge came to Nepal from the West as a part of modern development with international support (Rist, 2014). The practices of this modern education have ignored the metaphysical beliefs of supernatural beings (spirituality), empathy, emotions, values, aesthetics, and ethics which represent indigenous and non-Western knowledge.

The centrally designed curriculums have legitimized Western knowledge. The corpus of indigenous knowledge, generated through the primitive contact with the life-worlds of indigenous peoples and native ideas, beliefs, values, and norms passed down from generation to generation (Akullo et al., 2007), is largely neglected in the curricular practices of university education. Imitative Western academic culture has devalued the body of lived/experience knowledge embedded in the local culture and environment, community practices, institutions, and rituals. Indigenous knowledge

as a body of relational knowledge (Hart, 2010) produced in the process of continuous interaction or engagement with the natural resources and tested over centuries of use have been underrepresented in the curriculum of higher education in Nepal. The indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing are embedded in Shamanic practices (Dhungana & Yamphu, 2016), and knowing through lessons, sayings, proverbs, riddles, metaphors, experiences, and '*Arti-upadesh*' (Chemjong, 2003) are unloved in the curricular practices of modern higher education.

The subjugation of indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems began from such an un/conscious importation of Western ideas. The legacy has still continued with less realized resistance from any of the higher education policies, practices, and structures. It does not mean to say that the Western modern knowledge and ways of knowing are worthless or wrong to adapt in Nepali higher education. But, the concern is that higher education has promoted unjust educational practices. The emphasis given to perpetuating the Western domination has promoted the irrelevant or less usable knowledge and skills in day to day lives of students. The decontextualized curricular practices (Luitel, 2009) are instrumental to detach students from their native cultural worlds. The learning in the boundary of classrooms, teacher-centric and text-book guided pedagogies, disconnection of community or indigenous knowledge have compelled them to engage in rote-memorization of abstract Western ideas and concepts.

With the realization of injustice created by the Western ideas and subjugation of indigenous knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999) particularly in higher education of Nepal, NORHED QUANTICT Project (2013 – 2020), with three partners namely; Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education, Kathmandu University School of Education, & Oslo Met University Norway, kept on continuous effort for a decade on promoting equity and inclusion of indigenous knowledge in higher education through drawing the attention of key actors of the university. In this context, this paper, based on qualitative inquiry, collecting the experiences of teacher educators of different constituent and affiliated campuses of Tribhuvan University in two different Webinars, explores the action initiatives taken in integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge particularly in the core courses/courses of Foundations of Education.

In dealing with the issue of decolonizing curricular practices, the paper highlights the efforts taken in incorporating indigenous and non-Western knowledge as the content of curricula through a review of the courses of Foundations of Education. The paper further delves into how the teacher educators have initiated to decolonize educational practices in a university setting. In addition, it deals with the analysis and discussion of experiences of teacher educators in assimilating indigenous and non-Western knowledge in pedagogical and assessment practices.

Based on the analysis and discussion of the qualitative data collected from the Webinar participants, the paper draws key insights as concluding remarks. The paper concludes that the teacher educators have initiated to resist the invisible power domination of Western ideas and practices of education. They have a sense of ‘mourning, dreaming and commitment’ (Chilisa, 2012) in changing the unjust educational practices in higher education. They have started to visualize the association of indigenous and non-Western knowledge with Western modern knowledge. This is the process of recovering their culture in the process of engaging in teaching-learning processes. The action initiatives through negotiation, resistance, and response to external suppression even in a structural uncondusive educational environment perpetuated by the Western model of the academy are in line with decolonizing higher education in Nepal.

## **Methodology**

For understanding the phenomena, we mainly used a qualitative approach to research. We believed that qualitative research as a Western approach could provide space for understanding non-Western cultural traditions (González y González & Lincoln, 2006). The approach facilitated us to explore the subjective worlds of teacher educators. The decolonial or indigenous methodology could be appropriate to engage in the contexts in a culture-sensitive and respectful manner thereby, getting informed consent for invited observation and careful listening of the stories (Smith, 1999; Chilisa, 2012; Hart, 2010; Held, 2019)) of teacher educators. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic situation could not allow us to participate meaningfully in the working contexts of the teacher educators.

Because of this disapproving situation, we tried to understand the views on action initiatives adopted to integrate indigenous and



non-Western knowledge in the educational practices of the university through two virtual Webinars conducted by the NORHED QUANTICT Project. The first Webinar was conducted on the 17th and the 18th July 2020 including sixty teacher educators from Provinces 1 and 2 and the second Webinar was conducted on the 31st July and the 1st August 2020 including eighty teacher educators from Provinces 5, 6, and 7. The Webinars also included eleven Subject Committee (SC) members responsible for developing curriculums and other five administrative professionals of the university. The participants shared their experiences, ideas, perspectives, and practices regarding the integration of indigenous and non-Western knowledge in their curricular practices at the Master of Education (M. Ed) level. We maintained the notes and recordings of the discussion in the Webinars and transcribed in detail the ideas shared in the Webinars. Moreover, we followed a sequential process of searching, recognizing, coding, categorizing, and generating themes of the ideas (Ngulube, 2015). We, then, describe and present the data in order to interpret them and provide their underlying meanings. Further, we used reflections and synthesis drawn by different experts in the Webinars as data to support our arguments.

In addition, we reviewed the semester courses of Foundations of Education-core compulsory courses of Master of Education (M.Ed.) in order to explore the action initiatives in order to integrate the indigenous knowledge in the curriculums. In so doing, we reviewed each of seven older and newly developed courses in order to understand the changes made from the indigenous and non-Western perspectives. The courses were a) Ed. 511: Foundations of Education; b) Ed. 513: Advanced Educational Psychology; c) Ed. 521: Curriculum Practices; d) Ed. 522: Education and Development; e) Ed. 531: Measurement and Evaluation in Education; f) Ed. 532: Research Methodology in Education; and g) Ed. 541: Contemporary Educational Issues. We reviewed the courses particularly focusing on the scope of contents. In so doing, we simply identified and segregated the Western modern and indigenous or non-Western contents to look at the preference given to the courses.

## **Findings and Discussion**

This section deals with the key findings of action initiatives taken by curriculum makers (Subject Committee members and other experts of Foundations of Education, a department of core courses of

Master of Education) in apportioning indigenous and non-Western knowledge as the content of the course. In the second sub-section, we articulate the subjective views of teacher educators that represent their mourning, dreaming, and commitment and discussed from the decolonial perspective. The third section analyzes and discusses the key findings of action initiatives taken by teacher educators in integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge in pedagogical and assessment practices.

### ***Integration of indigenous and non-western knowledge in course content***

As we reviewed the courses, we found that there is a domination of Western modern ideas and concepts in most of the core courses of master level programs in Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education. However, there are a few courses that integrate a small portion of indigenous knowledge and non-Western ideas. For example, ‘Ed. 511: Foundations of Education’ and ‘Ed. 522: Education and Development’ include the indigenous and non-Western knowledge in a unit. However, there are other courses such as ‘Ed. 513: Advanced Educational Psychology’, ‘Ed. 531: Measurement and Evaluation in Education’, ‘Ed. 532: Research Methodology in Education’, and ‘Ed. 521: Curriculum Practices’ in which there is no explicitly incorporated indigenous knowledge or non-Western ideas. The course ‘Ed. 541: Contemporary Educational Issues’ also provides less space for engaging students in writing a seminar paper on indigenous and non-Western ideas. For example, the course specifies particular non-indigenous issues on which students prepare seminar papers. However, the issues in the course such as ‘Language’, ‘Access, Equity and Inclusion’, and ‘Community Participation’ are likely to provide space for analyzing and discussing the indigenous issues.

In comparison to the older courses, the new courses which are recently revised are more progressive in terms of integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge. Particularly, the ‘Ed. 511: Foundations of Education’ appears with more explicit in terms of including Nepal’s indigenous philosophies such as *Kirat Mundhum*<sup>3</sup>. It has included indigenous cosmos, corpus, and praxis with nature (Toledo, 1999), other arts and vernacular knowledge, and knowledge embedded in agricultural practices. The course has incorporated non-Western knowledge such as the ideas of Bhagwat Gita, Basic ideas of

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<sup>3</sup> Religious scriptures and folk literature *Kirat* indigenous groups such as *Rai*, *Limbu*, *Yakkha*, and *Sunuwar* of the East of Nepal.

Buddhism, and Islamism/Quran. Second, the course 'Ed. 513: Advanced Educational Psychology' seems more sensitive to indigenous issues as it incorporates explicitly the indigenous perspectives for looking at the issues of adolescence. The counseling and guidance in schools is a newly added chapter that includes indigenous and non-Western knowledge. These issues were less focused in the old course of 'Ed. 513: Advanced Educational Psychology'. The third course, 'Ed. 521: Curriculum Practices' also includes the indigenous perspectives as a unit which envisages analyzing the curriculums from decolonial perspectives. However, the older course was almost silent on these issues.

In addition, the new course 'Ed. 522: Education and Development' seems more sensitive to incorporating indigenous and non-Western knowledge. The course tries to deal with the role of indigenous knowledge in sustainable development. Further, it has included more explicitly the concept of peace from Vedic and Buddhist perspectives. It has raised the issues of equity, participation, inclusion, and other human rights issues of the people at the margin including indigenous peoples for social sustainability. In addition, the idea of a 'right-based approach to development' provides space for dealing with indigenous issues. However, the courses, 'Ed. 531: Measurement and Evaluation in Education' and 'Ed. 532: Research Methodology on Education' has included much less indigenous and non-Western ideas and practices of research. There is no explicit articulation of the issues. But, the course, 'Ed. 541: Contemporary Educational Issues' focuses on the issues of indigenous/minority languages to use as a medium of instruction and caste/ethnicity. Moreover, the course deals with the issues of access, equity, and inclusion of marginalized and deprived segments of society in educational processes.

From the above discussion, we understood that there is still more domination of Western ideas and concepts in most of the core courses of the Faculty of Education at the Master of Education level. However, the attempt has been made to integrate more indigenous and non-Western knowledge in the newly revised courses as compared to older courses. This indicates that the key actors of course development, including the Subject Committee of Foundations of Education, are more sensitive towards promoting inclusion and equity as human rights of diverse groups whose knowledge systems are under continuous marginalization in higher education. We understood

that the practices of developing courses were action initiatives on deconstructing the culturally deficient models and reconstructing the past stories of indigenous or local peoples (Chilisa, 2012). This was a critical appraisal and action against the imperial model of the academy that continued the colonization of education and marginalized indigenous and local people to create the space to communicate from their own frames of reference (Smith, 1999). However, the curriculums were still under the domination of Western ideas and practices.

This might be due to the fact that the university curriculum in Nepal is designed centrally with the ideas of few experts giving less attention to contextual realities. The curriculum is developed by loading Western theoretical content assuming that the qualified students are produced through inputs and processes as the products of an industry with intended abilities (Le Grange, 2016). The compulsion of taking into consideration the market demands particularly in schools and bureaucratic spheres might force curriculum makers to select the Western ideas with rigid processes of education. Further, the existing educational structure guides them to adopt them to develop rigid and structured curriculums. These curricula are less friendly to address the community's needs and expectations. The present-day university curricula that are characterized with fixity and closeness have limited the students to discuss the alternative thoughts of non-Western and indigenous knowledge. It has denied the learning through indigenous traditions adopting lived experiential knowing of the real-world situations. This has marginalized the multiple individual experiences of students that they have gained in families and communities. The curricula have limited the ways of knowing through student-friendly pedagogies. However, the university actors have realized and demonstrated actions against such structural domination on curricular practices.

### **Mourning, Dreaming, and Commitment**

The Webinars conducted in the collaboration of Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education, Kathmandu University School of Education, and Oslo Met University Norway, under NORHED QUANTICT Project, provided space for more than one hundred teacher educators to share their experiences, ideas, and perspectives on integrating indigenous knowledge in their own curricular practices. There were more than two dozen teacher educators who were

particularly teaching the core courses (courses of Foundations of Education). We have highlighted here the representative voices of the participants. One of the teacher educators from eastern Nepal noted, “The present curriculums are less friendly to indigenous knowledge. It should be revised immediately with integrating indigenous knowledge and also it should be made online friendly.” Another teacher educator from Sukuna Multiple Campus, Morang, said, “We have our own huge body of knowledge but our curriculum is guided by top-down approach and mostly dominated by the West. We have been neglecting eastern knowledge in the process of making curriculum”. Similarly, a teacher educator from Pathari Multiple Campus shared, “We should integrate the concept of indigenous knowledge in classroom practices and curriculum but these are included less”. The ideas of teacher educators demonstrate their ‘mourning and dreaming’ (Le Grange, 2016, p. 5). They have felt the injustice promoted by the university structure. They have a kind of realization of the domination of external knowledge and ways of knowing neglecting their own indigenous and non-Western knowledge systems.

Many teacher educators demonstrated their commitment to promoting indigenous and non-Western knowledge through university curricular practices. One of the key experts synthesized the commitment generated in the Webinars as follows: a) Teacher educators have given some efforts to integrate indigenous and non-Western knowledge via pedagogical practices, assessments, and research activities in those courses where there are a few contents included otherwise these bodies of knowledge have been deserted; b) Indigenous and non-Western knowledge are apportioned much less in particular courses only and hence there is the domination of Western ideas and practices in most of the courses; c) We need to be sensitive towards indigenous issues in classroom practices; d) We need intercultural and interdisciplinary contents focusing on indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge; e) We have to rethink about the top-down model of curriculum making with foreign contents domination; and f) We need to promote equity, justice, and inclusion of indigenous and non-Western knowledge which have been suppressed by the international discourses. These were the collective promises to struggle against the domination of the Western academy in order to promote the right to self-determination and social justice and about

seeking legitimacy for knowledge that is embedded in their histories, experiences, and ways of viewing reality (Smith, 1999).

Another key expert synthesized the commitment that they needed to think about the transformation of rigidity and structured curriculum and its development process to more flexible, collaborative, and participatory approaches. He was in favor of embracing the diversity of knowledge and assessing the beliefs and awareness of integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge in the curricular practices. The key experts in the Webinars drew key synthesized ideas of the participant teacher educators as takeaways and their collective commitments of integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge and ways of knowing. It was a shift from mourning to dreaming and commitment to the decolonization of higher education practices (Le Grange, 2016). The teacher educators were committed to think and act with their own historically rooted beliefs, worldviews and knowledge systems (Le Grange, 2016). They realized that they were under the domination of imported ideas and practices of education. They were able to imagine the alternative possibilities of curricular practices rooted in contextual realities. In addition, the teacher educators were committed to including the knowledge systems of colonized others in the higher education curriculum. They demonstrated the commitment to translate their dreams into actions through different strategies. Even though the teacher educators were integrating indigenous knowledge in their curricular practices to the extent possible amidst structural barriers. However, these practices might not be informed pedagogical practices.

### **Integrating Indigenous Knowledge with Pedagogy and Assessment**

College teachers from throughout Nepal who participated in the Webinars organized by NORHED QUANTICT, Central Department of Education, shared their views and experiences of their pedagogical practices of the integration of indigenous and non-Western knowledge. Most of the teachers in the Webinar noted that they sometimes shared their personal stories linking with global contexts. Many teachers sometimes shared examples from local community practices for contextualizing classroom learning. In many cases, the teacher educators shared local ideas, beliefs, and community practices as examples to connect with the ideas in the courses. In this sense, they, knowingly and unknowingly, discussed the indigenous and non-

Western knowledge in the classroom teaching-learning activities in the process of delivering their ideas on course contents. One of the teachers in the Webinar said:

There is less indigenous and non-Western knowledge as such in the course contents but it can be integrated through pedagogical practices. We share examples from the community practices and also allow students to share their prior ideas and beliefs in the class. Sometimes, we share the Western theoretical ideas and then give examples of our own practices. In the classroom, we allow them to discuss the theoretical ideas in the group and they gradually share their personal, local, and communal practices in the class.

The pedagogies as methods and practices of teaching-learning activities were largely conventional in Tribhuvan University, Faculty of Education. There was the domination of the practices of delivering content knowledge through lectures. The teacher-centric pedagogical practices were less supportive to promote indigenous and non-Western knowledge. However, the teachers and students as custodians of indigenous knowledge were able to share, discuss, and express their prior ideas and beliefs. In many cases, they were adopting constructivist and progressivist approaches which were more flexible to integrate indigenous knowledge, beliefs, and worldviews in the class (Rai & Shyangtan, 2021). The approaches might be more meaningful in order to conceptualize the newer Western ideas. The indigenous and non-Western knowledge might be a tool to make Western modern knowledge more accessible, moving from known to unknown (Mawere, 2015). These practices might be serving as prerequisites for conceptualizing abstract Western modern ideas or concepts. The students could be able to improve the conceptual development by linking their non-Western and indigenous knowledge with Western theoretical concepts through reflective processes (Snively & Corsiglia, 2001).

The practices of shared learning were not purposeful to integrate indigenous knowledge though these practices were a radical departure from the rigid and structured teacher-centric practices. These practices were providing justice to some extent to the students to uncover their indigenous knowledge. However, the teacher educators had hardly thought of using such pedagogical practices in order to integrate

indigenous knowledge. One of the teacher educators of a campus of east Nepal noted:

Integrating indigenous knowledge in higher education depends on curricular content. For example, I completely discuss indigenous knowledge on the topic 'indigenous ways of child development as the topic of discussion provides space to explore indigenous knowledge.

Even though many teacher educators were less aware of how to link the topic with practical knowledge. The teacher educators who participated in the Webinars were positive about the integration of indigenous knowledge in teaching learning in higher education. Many of them shared that they have been integrating them in different ways in their teaching.

The teacher educators were in favor of rethinking the pedagogical and assessment practices in higher education particularly in the courses of Foundations of Education. They were remarking on the unjustifiable centrally designed curriculum-making process (as the process excluded the involvement of teachers, students, and communities) that has given less emphasis on indigenous and non-Western learning materials and structured assessment practices. One participant in one of the Webinars remarked:

The courses of Foundations of Education are more theoretical. These are not practical. There are few topics that are related to indigenous and non-Western knowledge but these are not enough. Reading materials on indigenous knowledge is to be prescribed in the course i.e. contents that should reflect indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge should be incorporated as separate subjects or topics in the courses. The students are to be engaged in the communities to collect, analyze and discuss the indigenous knowledge and practices. There are still tendencies of rigid and time-bound examinations that compel students to rote memorize the contents just to pass the tests at the end of the semester.

We understand that the teacher educators of campuses of Tribhuvan University Faculty of Education in Nepal have realized that they have been adopting the disempowering nature of transmissionists' approaches to teaching-learning activities. They were not in favor of



transmitting the textbook content to the students through lectures. They were aware of the practices that the ‘one size fits for all’ approach has passivated the students, compelling them to memorize imported ideas and concepts. They thought that the existing pedagogical approaches have facilitated the promotion of decontextualized teaching-learning activities (Luitel, 2009). The teacher educators have a consciousness that the students are exposed less in their indigenous contexts with locally developed materials and cultural artifacts.

The teacher educators have questioned the practices of rare engagement of the students in shared learning and critical self-reflective learning through project works in their own communities. They have demonstrated their sensitiveness of detaching students from everyday contexts with less focus on promoting their prior indigenous knowledge. They were aware that the learning within the university setting has marginalized the local cultural values, beliefs, non-verbal and background knowledge (Ray, 2007). The sensation of teacher educators has informed the students to learn social truths in the society through their everyday living, but they are imposed to learn universal truth through textual learning (Koirala, 2003). It is due to the university that has become a legitimized structure mediating the power of Western modern worldviews to shape the ways of knowing for students of the margin. Such a hegemony as a perpetuation of invisible control over the education system of higher education in Nepal is excluding non-Western and indigenous knowledge through the process of homogenization.

In addition, in many cases, the teacher educators used assessment practices as means of learning. As understood from the discussion in the Webinars, they experienced that they have been incorporating indigenous knowledge into their assessment practices. Specifically, one teacher shared that he often allowed students to conduct research on indigenous knowledge and community practices of Muslim communities. Another teacher educator from Kailali Multiple Campus noted, “Our students submit the project work related to indigenous knowledge on the course ‘Ed. 541: Contemporary Educational Issues’. The concepts of indigenous knowledge are explored by the students in their cultural heritage and events.” As understood from the sharing of other teacher educators, many of them have adopted largely the performance-based assessment practices providing specific tasks (Buhagiar, 2007) of writing and engagement in reading for creating

academic notes or papers. Students most often were engaged in classroom presentations on particular given themes, writing papers and reflective notes, project works, group works and sharing of community issues and practices. Further, the new courses envisaged engaging students in analysis, synthesis, and creation of academic tasks. The teacher educators were more democratic in terms of respecting and valuing the needs and interests of the students while doing assignments. They have allowed students to write indigenous culture and knowledge systems as assignments.

The teacher educators shared the possibility of integrating indigenous knowledge through providing community-based project works. Many of them have been encouraging their students to write papers and reports from the lens of indigenous knowledge. They have allowed students to explore knowledge attached to herbs, agricultural tools, and classical practices regarding purification, dieting, etc. One of the teacher educators highlighted one of his practices thus:

The practice of non-Western knowledge in our teaching-learning process is satisfactory. I invited a knowledgeable person of The Quran, the major holy text of Islam, to share the ideas and it was so effective classroom.

However, these practices of inviting community elders were less in other campuses of different parts of the country. We sensed that the practices of inviting community elders and other knowledgeable persons from indigenous communities were guided by the course contents. There were a few contents of indigenous and non-Western knowledge in the curriculums and hence there was less chance of inviting such experts in the classrooms.

The inequality in terms of integrating indigenous and non-Western knowledge through undemocratic pedagogical and assessment practices was visible (as the perspectives of teacher educators) in higher education in Nepal. However, the teacher educators were in favor of struggling and responding to the standard, rigid, structured, time-bound, and objective nature of assessment practices which have promoted injustice to the students who have multiple indigenous and non-Western beliefs, knowledge, and worldviews. The narrowly conceived paper-pencil-based assessment models have a focus on testing specific knowledge and skills through teacher-made or standardized tests thereby, paralyzing the knowledge of students' competencies as a whole (Luitel, 2009). The teacher

educators have recognized that the emphasis on testing the content of textbooks has ignored the students' conceptualization of ideas developed based on indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. They have begun to act on promoting flexible assessment practices against the testing of mastery of basic skills in order to achieve higher aggregate scores on standardized tests (Johnson, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

There is increasing awareness on external domination of ideas and practices of education among teacher educators, particularly those who have been engaging in teaching core courses in the Faculty of Education at the Master of Education (M.Ed.) level. They have a realization of the hegemony created by Western modern knowledge and hence they have initiated the actions of reclaiming their indigenous and non-Western knowledge through curricular practices. They have negotiated, resisted, and responded to invisible power even in the structural uncondusive educational environment. The university as the structure has been perpetuated by the Western model of academic practices. However, teacher educators have attempted to promote their dreams of decolonization through curricular practices. However, still, there is the supremacy of Western modern knowledge and ways of knowing. The university structure needs to think about promoting equity and inclusion of indigenous and non-Western knowledge and ways of knowing. This stimulates justice to the colonized others thereby facilitating meaningful learning and quality education. The emphasis given to curriculum development endorsing local contextual knowledge facilitates the transformation of educational practices.

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## **Mathematics Teachers' Perceptions on Higher Order Thinking Skills**

**Nara Hari Acharya**

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of this study was to explore mathematics teachers' perception on Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The explanatory sequential mixed method with Likert scale and interview guideline was used as research tools for data collection. 50 mathematics teachers who were teaching at Higher Education were conveniently selected for the survey and 5 of them were interviewed. The mean and standard deviation of different views on Likert scale were calculated and the results from quantitative data are presented in language with the help of qualitative data obtained from the interview. The teachers' perception was gathered about concept or understanding, needs, clarity, and practice about the HOTS. The study found that most of the teachers viewed HOTS as a commonly known idea of analyzing and synthesizing skills together with logical thinking and decision making skills. In depth, teachers were clear about the meanings, strategies and the use of HOTS but weak in implementation. Majority of the teachers viewed the practice of HOTS in mathematics classrooms as necessary but they were rarely used. Only a few of them were partially practicing them in classroom instruction. The teachers felt complexity in practicing HOTS due to students' basic knowledge, approach and access to different materials, teachers' training, curriculum and time of implementation in development of HOTS in students.

यस अध्ययनको मुख्य उद्देश्य हायर अर्डर थिंकिङ स्किल (HOTS) मा गणित शिक्षकहरूको धारणा अन्वेषण गर्नु थियो। लाइकर्ट स्केल र अन्तर्वार्ता दिशानिर्देशको साथ व्याख्यात्मक अनुक्रमिक मिश्रित विधि डेटा संग्रहको लागि अनुसन्धान उपकरणको रूपमा प्रयोग गरिएको थियो। उच्च शिक्षामा पढाउने ५० गणित शिक्षकलाई सहज रूपमा सर्वेक्षणका लागि छनोट गरिएको थियो र तीमध्ये ५ जनाको अन्तर्वार्ता लिइएको थियो। लाइकर्ट स्केलमा विभिन्न विचारहरूको औसत र मानक विचलन गणना गरियो र अन्तर्वार्ताबाट प्राप्त गुणात्मक तथ्याङ्कको सहायताले मात्रात्मक तथ्याङ्कबाट प्राप्त नतिजाहरूलाई भाषामा प्रस्तुत गरिन्छ। HOTS बारे अवधारणा वा बुझाइ, आवश्यकता, स्पष्टता र अभ्यासको बारेमा शिक्षकहरूको धारणा जम्मा गरिएको थियो। अध्ययनले पत्ता लगायो कि धेरै जसो शिक्षकहरूले HOTS लाई तार्किक सोच र निर्णय गर्ने सीपहरू सँगै विश्लेषण र संश्लेषण गर्ने सामान्य रूपमा ज्ञात विचारको रूपमा हेरे। गहिराइमा, शिक्षकहरू HOTS को अर्थ, रणनीति र प्रयोगको बारेमा स्पष्ट थिए तर कार्यान्वयनमा कमजोर थिए। धेरैजसो शिक्षकहरूले गणित कक्षाकोठामा HOTS को अभ्यासलाई आवश्यक ठान्थे तर तिनीहरू विरलै प्रयोग भएका थिए। तिनीहरूमध्ये केहीले मात्र कक्षाकोठा निर्देशनमा आंशिक रूपमा अभ्यास गरिरहेका थिए। विद्यार्थीहरूको आधारभूत ज्ञान, दृष्टिकोण र विभिन्न सामग्रीहरूमा पहुँच, शिक्षकहरूको तालिम, पाठ्यक्रम र विद्यार्थीहरूमा HOTS विकासको लागि कार्यान्वयनको समयका कारण शिक्षकहरूले HOTS अभ्यास गर्न जटिलता महसूस गरे।

Keywords: pedagogy, strategies, taxonomy, assessment, constructivism, higher ability

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## Introduction

The exposition of information and its globalization *needs* not only reform in the curriculum but also pedagogy from traditional methods of instruction to new methods (Afandi et al., 2018). The incorporation of the new aspects of the innovation in teaching and learning is crucial to develop qualified and appropriate human resources for the nation to make it successful and well developed (Retno et al., 2019). Teaching and learning different skills are directly proportional to teaching and learning mathematics because of the integration of mathematics and mathematical concepts and its contents in different disciplines like pure science, applied science and social science (Anthony et al., 2007). Most of our teachers as well as learners have been taking mathematics as a hard and arid subject and teachers have been teaching mathematics through traditional methods of teaching like rote teaching and algorithmic methods of teaching and learning (Anthony & Walshaw, 2009). Teachers have been encouraging the students to memorize the formula written by themselves on the board and the rules of solving mathematics with deductive memorization (Lessani et al., 2017). Teachers' thinking is



concerned about higher scoring or obtaining a higher grade in their formative evaluation at a higher level. Furthermore, students have been asked to solve problems from textbooks rather than solving their daily life problems by using creative and critical thinking skills. That is why the student's achievement is less satisfactory (Kafle et al., 2019). This situation has become a great global challenge in incorporating the well participatory approaches as well as developing different skills for a meaningful way in teaching and learning mathematics.

In Nepal's context, there are two different mathematics curricula; compulsory mathematics and optional mathematics in secondary level for grades 9 and 10 (CDC, 2005). Furthermore, different mathematical contents are integrated with different disciplines to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills. So, we can say that different mathematical skills have been taken as fundamentals for everyday life (Puteh et al., 2018; Tajudin et al., 2018). In the secondary level mathematics curriculum, the items of higher ability should be at least 20% of the total items asked in an examination of formative and summative evaluation (CDC, 2017). This provision has been implemented not only making the item matrix of school level but also in higher level and university level examinations. It is necessary to incorporate higher-order thinking skills as well as critical thinking strategies and skills in teaching and learning mathematics. Teachers' role is more crucial for developing such types of skills in students. So, to incorporate them in classroom instruction, mathematics teachers and other stakeholders should know about higher-order thinking skills and different strategies and methods for developing them in students by implementing them in their teaching and learning process. The incorporation of higher order thinking skills is possible only when the mathematics teacher knows about the concept and understanding, needs, importance, and obstacles as well as barriers and complexities in the practice of teachers and students for acquiring higher-level thinking skills (HOTS).

## **Literature Review**

Examining through the history of thinking, the Socratic method of questioning followed by Plato and Aristotle is now taken as critical thinking. This had been going with Descartes, Newton, and later Comte in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in different perspectives such

as logical, rational thinking that has a purpose and collaborative endeavor (Facione, 2011). Interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation are taken as core critical thinking skills. The concept of higher order thinking skills (HOTS) was initiated from Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. According to Blooms' taxonomy, the level of thinking is divided into two levels; Lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and Higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). LOTS consists of the cognitive, comprehension, and application levels of knowledge whereas HOTS includes the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). Similarly, in the new taxonomy three levels of skills of analyzing, evaluating, and creating together with the cognitive processes of gaining factual, conceptual, procedural, and meta-cognitive knowledge are taken as higher order thinking skills (Krathwohl, 2002). Krathwohl explains that higher order thinking skills mainly contain two kinds of thinking, namely critical thinking skills and creative thinking skills.

Halpern (2008) defined the word critical as a judgmental way of thinking to describe something not to imply finding fault. Thomas and Throne (2011) describe it as the skill of connecting, categorizing, manipulating, rearranging, and using different learned skills to solve new problems. It is higher than rote memorization with the skills of understanding, inferring, estimating, connecting, categorizing, manipulating, and applying learned skills through creative, logical, reflective thinking, problem-solving and mathematical thinking to solve new problems (Wang & Zheng, 2016). According to Binti and Rosli (2016), creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving, and meta-cognition are the elements of HOTS that are distinguished from lower order thinking skills (LOTS) based on students' reasoning behavior and reproductive thinking. Shukla and Noen (2016) described higher order thinking as the consequence of Piaget's developmental stages in 1939 followed by Bloom's taxonomy of 1956.

The incorporation and proper implementation of effective questioning techniques and monitoring the students' process of thinking by the instructor help the students to actively engage in cooperative and collaborative activities (Peter, 2012). Restructuring of instructional techniques including different thinking activities in mathematics with contextualization (Kamal, 2016) and social interaction with emotional and cognitive behavior help to develop

higher-order thinking (Mainali, 2013). Mathematics teaching materials including ICT Tools and ICT integrated problem-based materials and worksheets enhance the students' thinking ability. The problem-based learning approach and connection of citizenship education has a significant impact on the ability of student's critical thinking abilities in mathematics in terms of school level and students' prior mathematical abilities (Maass et al., 2019). Using a Contextual teaching approach and visualization mathematics with cooperative strategies among teachers and students can foster problem-solving and HOTS (Abdullah et al., 2016; Hassan et al., 2016). Because the teachers encourage the students in developing confidence as well as critical thinking skills so that they can use their learning in solving mathematical as well as daily life problems . The students' ability of critical thinking, problem-solving and reasoning can be fostered only by reflecting them in mathematics pedagogy (Dahal et al., 2019).

According to Saido et al. (2017), most of the teachers in the classroom are applying memorization strategies, and least of them are applying problem solving and hands-on activities. Moreover, gender and experience are significant factors for applying different teaching and learning strategies. The HOTS are key elements for students as well as teachers in developing the 21st century skills in students' in learning technical subjects like mathematics and science (Afandi et al., 2018). According to Mustika et al. (2019), the teachers' awareness about the importance of higher order thinking skills in teaching learning measures the mastering of higher order thinking skills of fostering problem solving, critical thinking rather than memorization through rote learning on students. The students' achievement in mathematics is directly proportional if the textbooks include the activities of promoting higher order thinking skill in students. Also, most of the lessons and the different kinds of plans of teachers are prepared on the basis of textbook related to the prescribed curriculum. So, it is necessary to analyze the textbooks on the basis of higher order thinking skills(Pratama & Retnawati, 2018). It means the textbooks are the key materials for the students as well as teachers for the development of higher order thinking skills. A mixed method research in the USA about assessment of higher order thinking skills in *secondary* level by Robinson (2020) found that most of the teachers and educational officers teaching and learning by incorporation of HOTS is crucial. Although, most of the American teachers as well as

officers state the importance of higher levels; analysis, synthesis, and evaluation for assessment of the students, they have been implementing up to application level of Bloom's taxonomy. According to Crowson (2020), most of the teachers in the USA have been using information release methods of teaching mathematics instead of using innovative methods and strategies such as creative and critical thinking strategies for promoting higher order thinking skills. Furthermore, only few teachers have been using such innovative methods instead of traditional, authentic tools containing performance based items. It was also indicated that the use of strategies of students' responses, gradual release, meaning making and associativity of student's concepts and knowledge relating visualization supports fundamental concepts on HOTS termed as soft skills.

The reviewed literature shows that most of the researches on the topic of HOTS conducted inside and abroad had focused on what is HOTS, how can we foster the HOTS to students and teachers, and what are the roles of HOTS in teaching and learning in different disciplinary and interdisciplinary subjects. Along with those incorporation of higher order thinking skills in students' assessment and their impact were analyzed. I was unable to find research reports those were conducted about the teachers' and student's beliefs about the HOTS on different subjects including mathematics in abroad as well as in the Nepalese context. So, I was intended to find out how the secondary mathematics teachers have been taking the HOTS and what their perception is in mathematics teaching and learning. This study was attempted to answer the following research questions:

- a) How do the higher level mathematics teachers define higher order thinking skill?
- b) What are the perceptions of mathematics teachers regarding the needs and practice of higher order thinking skills?
- c) What are the influencing factors for implementation of higher order thinking skills in mathematics instruction?

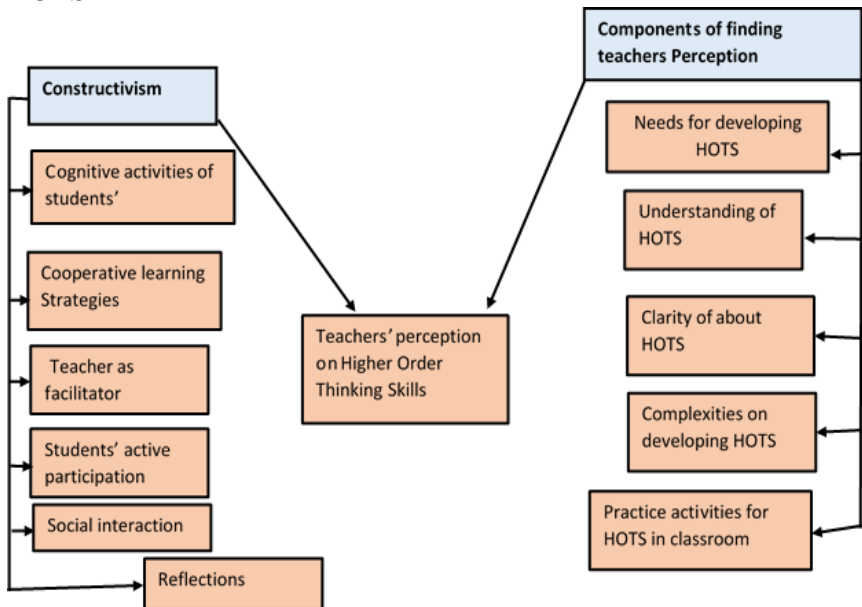
### **Theoretical Framework**

The shift in paradigm of teaching and learning leans towards a constructivist paradigm from behaviorism along with cognitive paradigm. Mainly, Piagetian (focus on individual construction and cognitive construction), Vygotsky (social constructivism by interaction of learner and society), social and holistic perspectives of

constructivism are four perspectives of constructivism (Green & Gredler, 2002). Cognitive and social constructivism is the main area for the study of the HOTS in mathematics (Schlechty, 1990). Constructivism originated at the time of Socrates by the Socratic model of questioning. Later Bruner's discovery learning and Piaget's cognitive psychology revised and allowed students to create knowledge into practice (Caffarella & Merriam, 1999). The knowledge processing by the individual mind for knowledge construction is the perception Golotti (2015) explained Vygotsky's view as; higher-order cognitive skill includes reasoning, decision making, problem-solving, and creative and critical thinking skills (Galotti, 2015). The main aspects for finding the teachers' perception on higher order thinking skills are inductive, deductive, conditional reasoning, decision making and creative and critical thinking.

The conceptual framework for identifying mathematics teachers' perception on HOTS is here in figure 1.

**Fig 1:** *Conceptual framework of the teachers' perception on HOTS*



## Research Methods

The main intent of my study was to explore the mathematics teachers' perception on higher order thinking skills. It was a sequential explanatory mixed method design in which the results from quantitative data were explained with the help of qualitative data. The

quantitative data were collected and then analyzed with descriptive statistical measures such as mean and standard deviation. After that, the outputs of quantitative data were explained through qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

All the mathematics teachers teaching in grades 11 and 12 and higher level of Bagmati province were taken as the population of the study. Due to the pandemic situation, out of 50 mathematics teachers, only 5 teachers were selected for the in-depth interview about higher-order thinking skills by convenient sampling technique.

According to Nemoto and Beglar (2014), the Likert scale questionnaire gathers data about the opinion, feeling, and attitudes about the particular issue as well as the practice in the classroom. So, surveys with Likert scales as well as the interview guidelines were used for data collection. The survey, the demography of the teachers such as address qualification, the experience of teaching along with five-point Likert scale with strongly agree (SA) = 5, Agree (A) s = 4, Neutral (N) = 3, disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 was included. The statements of the scales were designed based on the concept of needs, clarity, complexity, and quality, and practicality of higher-order thinking skills of mathematics teachers. The interview guidelines were prepared for the interview with the mathematics teachers who are involved in teaching as well as developing different curricular materials. The Cronbach Alpha (0.773), from pilot study of the tools in the non-sample group of teachers, showed the items have internal consistency as well as the reliability of the statements of the Likert scale. I have finalized the items and statements of the Likert scale and interview guidelines with the help of a mentor.

The quantitative data from Likert scale were collected from the email responses of the sample teachers through the survey. Based on the result of the survey the interview guidelines were prepared. The focus group interview was conducted with sampled teachers based on the guidelines prepared.

The data from the survey were analyzed with the help of SPSS 20. Mean and standard deviation with a maximum and minimum value of responses of each statement were calculated. After that, the data from the interview were recorded, transcribed in detail in word documents, and were transferred into segments based on the research questions to investigate teachers' perceptions of HOTS. The findings are presented by using abbreviations to quote from participants. The triangulation of the findings from the literature review and both kinds

of data with theory was used to analyze data and discussion of results. The pseudo names of T1, T2, ... are assigned for the ethical consideration of the respondents.

## Results and Discussion

To explore the perception of mathematics teachers on HOTS, quantitative data were collected from a five-point Likert scale. The views and perceptions about the HOTS of teachers were collected with multiple responses and the things required developing HOTS in students' by using an open-ended question. After the interviews with the expert teachers, the results of data from the questionnaire were used to triangulate. The results from both types of tools reveal the teachers' perceptions on understanding, practice, clarity, complexities and needs for developing HOTS.

### *Understanding about HOTS*

The knowledge and understanding are the basis to get perception of teachers towards higher order thinking skills. Results of the survey about the teachers' knowledge and understanding of HOTS is presented in the following diagram.

Fig 2: *Teachers understanding about HOTS*

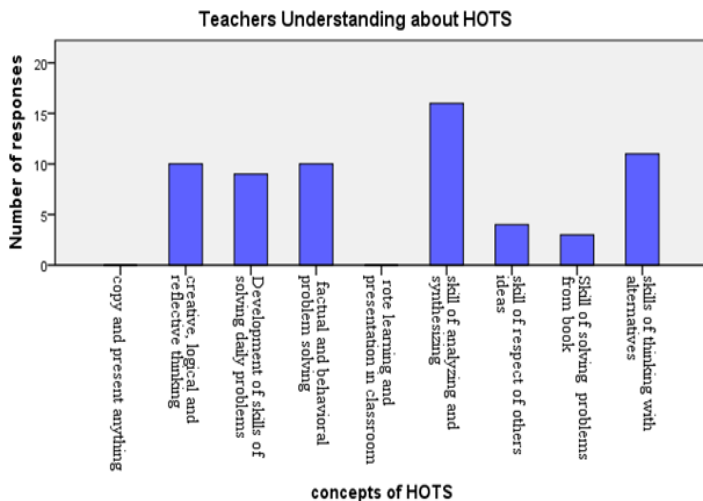


Figure 2 shows that, about half of the participants (48%) teachers' viewed HOTS as the skill of analyzing and synthesizing knowledge based on revised taxonomy (Krathwohl, 2002). About 45% of the teachers said the skill of thinking with alternatives is called HOTS. 40% of the participants put their view on factual and

behavioral problem-solving skills as HOTS. No teachers selected the idea of copy and present anything as well as the only solving of routine problems from a textbook. It seems that secondary level mathematics teachers' have a better, positive, and adequate understanding of HOTS. Regarding the understanding of the HOTS the teachers views are as follows:

The skills of connection between the learned concepts with daily life problems by the generalization of mathematical knowledge are HOTS. (T1)

The teaching of students to develop logical thinking, the reasoning of complex concepts of mathematics with model teaching methods is the process of developing HOTS. (T2)

Teaching activities that bring students from memory or rote learning to learning for understanding and finally generalization and demonstration by individual, peer, and group efforts. (T3)

The students' ability makes them able to solve different problems of higher ability like analysis, application, synthesis, evaluation level. (T4)

The teachers' views about the concepts and understanding of higher order thinking skills are the skills of students' to solve daily problems creatively and critically. It is above the rote memorization with skills of higher level of Bloom's taxonomy. Based on the definition of HOTS by Thomas and Throne (2011), the skills of creative thinking, logical thinking, reflective thinking, problem-solving with understanding, connecting, categorizing, manipulating, and applying them to new problems are the HOTS. The constructivist approach deals with the method of construction of new knowledge by connecting and interpreting the learned concept in new problem-solving. Because most of the teachers' understanding of HOTS is logical reasoning as well as problem solving skills, we can say they are aware of the developing process of HOTS. According to Lewis and Smith's (1993) view, the collection of new information, memorizing them, and processing that information in multiple ways in confounding situations is the process of the development of HOTS. Furthermore, it was found that mathematics teachers at the secondary level have found theoretically well understood HOTS.



### ***Perception on clarity about HOTS***

Based on the clarity of HOTS, six statements were asked such as the knowledge, clarity of use; how to use HOTS, teaching techniques, and variability in teaching and learning mathematics. The statistical measure of the value of view of the Likert scale is given in the following table 1.

*Table 1: Teacher's Perception on clarity about HOTS*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mini mum</b>	<b>Maxi mum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S. D</b>
I am known about HOTS in mathematics teaching	2	5	3.86	.848
I am clear about the Higher order thinking skills in mathematics	2	5	3.79	.787
I am clear about the use of HOTS in teaching mathematics	2	5	3.64	.911
I am clear about how we use the HOTS in mathematics	2	5	3.21	1.101
HOTS should be taught differently than other content materials	1	5	3.43	1.317
HOTS brings variability in mathematics teaching and learning	2	5	3.64	1.311

Table 1 shows to what extent the mathematics teachers are clear about HOTS in the mathematics classroom. The statements of measuring the perception of the teacher clarity about what is HOTS in mathematics, what is the use of HOTS, how can we use HOTS, teaching methods, and outcomes of the HOTS. The mean shows the knowledge about HOTS (3.86) which is more than the average (3). It means that the majority of the mathematics teachers are somehow clear about the HOTS. The mean use of HOTS and how to use HOTS in mathematics are respectively 3.64 and 3.21. Furthermore, the value of standard deviation from most statements also seems higher. It means the perception of clarity of HOTS varies widely among the teachers. These values are slightly more than the average value of responses on the Likert scale (3) means most of the teachers do not properly know about the application and process of using HOTS in the mathematics classroom. Furthermore, the teachers are nearly neutral about the different methods and the variability of teaching mathematics by using HOTS.

Based on the clarity of HOTS teachers' expressions are as follows;

The students who have the HOTS can use their knowledge in society, solving daily life problems, increasing the questioning as well as reasoning capacity. (T1)

It produces the level of creativity as well as the criticality that makes integration between different mathematical knowledge for new problem-solving. (T2)

The teaching-learning process starts with the LOTS by the algorithmic method of routine problem solving to HOTS. (T3)

The students learn and demonstrate HOTS through curricular and extracurricular activities, analyze and synthesize the knowledge and apply the conclusion in solving daily problems. Furthermore, the cooperative learning strategies in classroom instruction are the main driving wheel of HOS. (T5)

I think HOTS means the ability to solve the problems of higher ability in the course book as well as the long questions and outer questions asked in the examination. (T4)

Most of the teachers are clear about higher order thinking skills. They understood HOTS as the ability of solving real life problems with interaction within and between small groups and communities. This process starts with memorization to questioning skills and develops with analysis, interpretation and judgment of the appropriate solution. In some cases, the capacity of solving complex problems from textbooks is called higher order thinking skill.

According to (Lewis & Smith, 1993) the teachers need more clarity for the development of higher-order thinking skills in mathematics students. It shows the opportunity of exposing their reflection in the classroom by students, and makes them able to develop their different skills. So, collaborative and cooperative teaching-learning strategies in the classroom should be administered during concept teaching and assessment. In some cases, it is found that the capacity of students to solve the problems of higher ability during the assessment or evaluation. Based on Lessani, et. al (2016) view the teachers' clarity and confidence level help to develop higher order thinking skills in students.

### ***Practice of HOTS***

In this content, I have collected the views by stating eleven different statements about HOTS. The received responses from the five-point Likert scale were collected from Google sheet. The

summary of statistical measures of responses is presented in the following table.

Table 2: *Teacher's perception on the practice of HOTS*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mini mum</b>	<b>Maxi mum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S. D</b>
I am concerned about memorization and rote learning	1	5	2.21	1.449
I am concerned about Bloom's Taxonomy during teaching and assessment.	2	5	2.79	1.101
I encourage the students to present the conclusion from the group discussion.	2	5	3.57	1.069
I use to discuss contemporary subject matters.	2	5	3.57	1.260
I encourage students for creative and critical thinking	2	5	3.79	1.031
I perform the group works among students	2	5	3.86	1.079
I am Using other problems except for the textbooks	2	5	3.86	.848
I am using the student centered methods	2	5	3.93	1.120
I encourage students for development of decision skills	2	5	3.93	.900
I encourage students to apply learned things in solving daily life problems	2	5	4.07	.979
In the classroom, I focus on problem solving and question answering	2	5	4.36	.826

In table no. 2, the mean value of responses on statements shows that most of the teachers are partially clear about the higher-order thinking skill in mathematics instruction. Most of the mathematics teachers have been using different strategies to develop HOTS in students. The responses on the statements are student-centered methods, group works, discussion and presentation of the conclusion of groups and discussion on contemporary calculated 3.86, 3.93, 3.86, 3.57, and 3.57 respectively. The mean values are more than the average 3 and close to 4. Most of the teachers agreed that the discussion among the

small groups in contemporary issues, and presenting the group's conclusion helps to develop higher-order thinking skills in the mathematics classroom. Also, it was found that the teachers encouraged the students to use their knowledge in solving daily problems (mean= 4.07) by using problem-solving and questioning techniques (mean = 4.36). Furthermore, students were encouraged for creative and critical thinking in classroom instruction. Although the average perception of using rote and memorizing learning is below the average (2.21), the teachers have a low concern about Bloom's Taxonomy during teaching and assessment. Regarding the practice of HOTS in classroom teaching the teachers' viewed

First, I provide some basic conceptual understanding about the topics and then ask them to use this concept for solving the problems of complex order. (T1)

Sometimes I ask students to work in small groups as well as peers to solve different real-world problems and ask to present possible solutions in the classroom. But in most cases, I use mass teaching for mathematics due to the abstract nature of the content of mathematics. (T2)

In mathematics teaching, I spent the most time teaching abstract things. Sometimes, I ask the students to search for alternative techniques and solutions. (T3)

In my opinion, together most of the mathematics teachers are teaching mathematics as an abstract subject by using the lecture methods to get scores and make them able to obtain minimum requirements. There are fewer chances of presenting the students' perceptions and ideas for the solution of problems. (T4)

I realised that the mathematics teachers who have been teaching at a higher level were aware about higher order thinking skills. The teachers expressed that it is necessary for teaching and learning mathematics. But due to different constraints such as; abstract nature of mathematics courses, information release method of teaching, achievement assessment nature of the evaluation, teachers have been using teacher dominated methods. The mean scores of the statements about the practice of higher order thinking skills in the classroom and the teachers' views from interviews show that most of the teachers are worried about the HOTS of students but they are applying different techniques and strategies of developing HOTS rarely. Since the effective questioning skills and classroom strategies foster HOTS in

students ((Peter, 2012), I found it was not properly implemented in our context due to different complications and lacking in different things of students.

### ***The complexity of Using HOTS***

Based on the complexity and obstacles faced by the teachers during incorporation of strategies in mathematics class to develop HOTS, altogether seven statements were asked Based on the complexity while using the different strategies in classroom instruction in developing HOTS. Six statements were asked to teachers for rating their perception. The summary of descriptive statistics of teachers' responses is summarized in table no. 3.

Table 3: *Teachers' perception of the complexity of using HOTS*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S. D</b>
In mathematics classroom, it is easy to develop HOTS	1	5	2.64	1.254
It is easy to understand HOTS	2	5	3.07	1.120
A clear structure of HOTS is necessary to present in the classroom.	1	5	3.79	1.031
We need sufficient times for developing the HOTS	1	5	3.93	1.303
We need adequate standard materials to develop HOTS in the classroom.	1	5	4.07	1.184
We can use low cost no cost materials in developing HOTS	1	5	4.14	1.008
The teacher needs sufficient training for teaching HOTS	2	5	4.14	1.008
A qualified teacher is needed for developing HOTS	2	5	4.14	1.008

Table 3 shows how the teachers feel about implementing the HOTS in mathematics teaching and learning. The mean (2.64) of responses on the statement 'it is easy to develop HOTS in the classroom is below the average value (3). It means that the teachers feel a bit hard to conduct different strategies in the classroom to develop HOTS in their students. Moreover, the teachers expressed; it requires different training and sufficient materials are necessary to perform indicated

strategies. The majority of the participant teachers indicated that the time factors, standard as well as low/no-cost materials, sufficient training to teachers, and quality of teachers are the necessities for developing HOTS in students.

Concerning the complexity of the HOTS the teachers viewed as;

To develop higher-order thinking skills, we should evaluate through practical work. In our context, there is not any mark allocation for practice. That is why the students are not highly encouraged in different project works and practical activities although the textbook has inserted the project works. (T1)

The nature of mathematical content as well as the abstract nature of mathematics, we are using the traditional method of teaching and learning in mathematics teaching. So, we provide less time and opportunities for the students for development of HOTS.” (T2)

“The time allocated by the curriculum is insufficient for students to develop HOTS. The student's level of intelligence, as well as the foundation on mathematics, is the main component of less development of HOTS. (T3)

The practical work with contextualization of learned concepts should be administered in assessing students' learning. Promotion of rote learning and rote memorization in assessment compelled the teachers to use traditional knowledge releasing methods in teaching and learning mathematics. Furthermore the lengthy course of content and the insufficient time allocated for the completion of the course through alternative techniques prohibited the teachers to use alternative critical and creative strategies with problem solving methods.

These views of teachers show that the nature of curriculum, assessment and evaluation, weekly weightage of mathematics teaching, students' level of prior knowledge as well as the motivation in active participation in teaching-learning activities fosters the HOTS in students. Based on constructivism (Liu & Chen, 2010), it can be described that the process of developing HOTS in students is a collaborative task for both teachers and students. Although the students need group and peer work to develop thinking skills, the physical facilities, and structure of our school. Traditional methodological structures also prevent the students from performing such activities within and between peers. Moreover, the opportunities of creating alternatives with interaction with society and the

environment with active participation and cooperation help to develop HOTS in students.

### ***Needs to Develop HOTS***

Regarding the requirements for the teachers and students to develop HOTS, a single open written question was asked in the survey as well as in interview guidelines. The teachers' commitment, readiness, time, training about curriculum as well as teaching methods and our trends of delivering in the classroom, insufficient concrete materials are the most important things, they said. Regarding this concept, the secondary level mathematics teachers said;

The students' regularity, punctuality, intellectual development, participation along with teachers' facilitation".

"The knowledge, skills, and attitude with creative, practical teaching with integrating ICT in teaching and learning mathematics are the main requirements for developing HOTS. The use of cooperative, as well as collaborative teaching and learning strategies in mathematics teaching, helps in developing HOTS.

The incorporation of practical evaluation will help the student to develop critical thinking and creative thinking through cooperative learning strategies.

Based on the views, I realized that there are teacher related, student related and institution related needs to develop HOTS. The teacher's and students' supportive and collaborative activities with positive, motivated, and active thinking help them in developing HOTS. Students actively engage in the teaching learning process with different skills of thinking, questioning as well as decision making capacity play crucial roles in developing HOTS. Moreover, Peter (2012) described that the use of manipulative as well as ICT tools and techniques in teaching and learning mathematics are more important for students to acquire critical thinking and creative thinking skills. The student's regularity and punctuality as well as the use of different manipulative and virtual manipulative help them to develop HOTS. Similar to Galotti's (2015) explanation, the Vygotskian view about HOTS, the mathematics teachers viewed that restructuring, reorganizing, and contextualization are necessary for them to develop HOTS. By implementing different cooperative as well as collaborative strategies for teaching and learning mathematics we can develop higher order thinking skills in students.

## Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the mathematics teachers' perception of higher order thinking skills with sequential explanatory design. The data were collected by using the Likert scale and interview guidelines. From data analysis, it is found that most of the teachers define HOTS as logical and reflective thinking skills, decision making skills, and skills of analysis as well as synthesis. Some teachers expressed students' capability of solving long questions and new questions of higher ability as HOTS. Taking the view of Peter (2012), we can generalize that by using different cooperative learning strategies and techniques of constructivist learning, we can develop the HOTS. The consolidation of mathematical knowledge by using non-routine problems with possible alternative solutions is one of the best methods to develop HOTS. Although the teachers believe that cooperative and collaborative learning with group interaction develops HOTS in students but rarely do they implement them in teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. Rather, they use rote as well as lecture methods. Due to the abstract as well as the algorithmic nature of mathematics, teachers are not concerned about Bloom's Taxonomy in teaching and test construction in mathematics. The lengthy syllabus, insufficient time for teaching learning activities, insufficient training for the teachers, students' weak motivation and foundations, availability of materials and physical facilities of the schools are the factors that chunk students into developing HOTS in the mathematics classroom.

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### Author Bio

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**Unravelling Indigenous Pedagogy:  
Tracing Dances and Songs of Dangaura Tharus**

**Nathuram Chaudhary**

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**Abstract**

This paper attempts to explore the underpinning pedagogy in Tharu culture – songs and dances of Dangaura Tharus- performed in various feast and festivals. Along with this, my study focused on examining the connections of the Tharus' pedagogies with that of the formal and non-formal schools. I employed interpretivism as a research paradigm and ethnography as a research design which includes focus group discussion, observation and interview with Chairperson of Guruwas (Tharu Priests), 4 Morihyas (leader of Singer), 4 Barghars (village Chief) and 4 Tharu social elites of the Kailali district of the Far western province as methodology. I interpreted the pedagogy embedded in Tharu dances and songs; interconnected to western learning theories, Gardner's multiple intelligence theory and Aboriginal pedagogy. I theorize the objectives, contents, teaching methods, evaluation process and revision process embedded in Tharu songs and dances. I concluded that each culture has its own pedagogical process and pedagogy embedded in any culture can be applied for learning in formal as well as non-formal education systems. It is where I expect that the present study is of substantial importance for the teachers, educational planners, policy makers of formal education.

यस अध्ययनले डंगौरा थारु संस्कृतिका नाच तथा गीतहरू कसरी शिक्षण कलाको रूपमा प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ भन्ने बारेमा अनुसन्धान गर्ने प्रयास गरेको छ । यो मेरो खोजले थारुहरूको अध्यापनकला र औपचारिक तथा अनौपचारिक शिक्षा बीचको सम्बन्धलाई पनि दर्शाएको छ । यो अनुसन्धान एथनोग्राफी डिजाइनमा आधारित

रहेर गरिएको छ जसमा मैले सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेशको कैलाली जिल्लाका गुरुवाको अध्यक्ष (थारु पुरोहितहरु), ४ जना मौरियाहरु (गायकका नेताहरु), ४ जना बरघरहरु (गाउँका मुखिया) तथा ४ जना थारु समाजका अगुवाहरूसँग छलफल तथा अन्तर्वार्ता लिएको छु । थारु संस्कृतिका नाच तथा गीतमा भएका शिक्षणकलाहरु तथा पश्चिमा शिक्षा सिकाइका सिद्धान्तहरु गाउँनरको बहु बुद्धिमत्ता सिद्धान्त तथा आदिवासी शिक्षाशास्त्र बीचको अन्तर समबन्धीत छ । मैले थारु गीत तथा नृत्यका उद्देश्य, विषयवस्तु, शिक्षण विधि, मूल्यांकन प्रक्रिया र परिमर्जनका प्रक्रियालाई प्रस्तुत गरेको छु । सबै संस्कृतिका फरक फरक शिक्षणकलाहरु हुन्छ र तिनिहरुलाई औपचारिक तथा अनौपचारिक शिक्षण सिकाईमा प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ भन्ने यो अध्ययनको निष्कर्ष हो । यो अन्वेषणले शिक्षक, शैक्षिक योजनाकारहरु, औपचारिक शिक्षका निति निर्माताहरुका लागि महत्व राख्छ भन्ने अपेक्षा गरेको छु ।

**Keywords:** Dangaura Tharus, learning theories, Tharu dances and songs, Indigenous Pedagogy

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As a Tharu, this article is the re-observation and reflection of my experience in daily life. As a qualitative researcher, I self-consciously drew my attention in this enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I also sought strategies to make connections among lived experiences, larger social and cultural structures. It is where, I am eager to analyze the pedagogical practices envisaged in Tharu culture by linking them with western learning theories like behaviorist theories, Vygotsky's social theory, pragmatists' learning theory and Bandura's social learning theory as well as aboriginal pedagogy.

Tharu, the oldest and largest inhabitant of Terai, is one of the 59 indigenous people of Nepal. They are mostly concentrated in the Mid-western and Far-western Terai regions (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The famous Nepalese anthropologist Bista (2004) was the first one to describe the Tharus of Nepal in his book *People of Nepal*. Then, Rajaure (1981), McDonough (1984) and Krauskopff (1989) explained the vivid aspects of Dangaura Tharus of Dang district. Similarly, Krauskopff (1989, p. 49) focused on the relationship between hereditary priests and their clients, on which, she argues, the Dangaura social structure is built. Guneratne (1994) focused on subjects such as ethnicity, class and the state of the Tharus of Chitwan district.

Bista (2002) argues that the Tharus can't be compared with the Rajput Tharu women who have been living in Nepal since five hundred years ago. They (indigenous Tharu) have a very long history”

(Bista, 2002) together by a common fate over a period of a thousand years or more.

There are numerous arguments about the origin of Tharus of Nepal. Each group with its origin has different sub-groups with distinct cultures. Despite this difference, all the Tharus are highly influenced by the Hindu culture. And yet there is no agreement among scholars as to the origin of the Tharus. This needs a great effort in order to make a detailed and systematic study of the Tharus, as they have not been given much attention by either foreign or native sociologists/anthropologists like (Guneratne, 1998; Majumdar, 1944; McDonough, 1989; Patel & Arti, 2016; Srivastava, 1958). This study is one of the efforts to explore the pedagogical practices of Dangaura Tharu culture in which I belong.

My review shows that most of the studies done on the Tharus are sociological/ anthropological in nature. Some deal with the marriage system while others with culture, feasts and festivals and Kamaiya pratha. But my major aim is on exploring the pedagogy of Tharu culture. I realize that Tharus are rich in pedagogical practices as well but they are not documented in written form. When I saw the one of the Tharu songs i.e., Kathghorik Naach Songs written by my grand- father, the words of the songs I couldn't read fluently and accurately. But my eldest uncle could read it easily with correct rhythm, however some of the words are missing too. In this situation, I felt that he learned it from his ancestors. I, being a Tharu, became unable to do this, why? Are there any pedagogical differences in our culture? Self-aroused questions like these made me curious to explore the underpinning pedagogy in Tharu culture – songs and dances of Tharus- performed in various feast and festivals. Along with this, my study aimed at examining the connections of the Tharus' pedagogies with that of the formal schools.

Chaudhari (2014) has studied Saptari Tharu's womb to tomb practices and tried to figure out the pedagogical practices in them. He illustrated the pedagogy of rites and rituals among Saptari Tharu on the basis of curriculum, contents, method of instruction, evaluation system, teacher, and students in a holistic way. However, my study focuses on the objectives, contents, teaching methods, evaluation process and revision process of Tharu songs and dances (of them). It is where I expect that the present study is of substantial importance for the educational planners, policy makers of education.

In any social system, culture serves as a perceptual framework that guides the interpretation of interactions and the construction of meanings (Cortazzi,1993). This means after understanding the pedagogical practices in Tharu culture, it will provide the basis for the curriculum developers as well as the teachers who implement the equity pedagogy in the classroom. In this sense, it is supposed to be supportive for the preservation and conservation of the Tharu culture.

### **Theoretical Literature in western learning theories**

Tharus have many more seasonal and feasts and festival-based dances and songs. They have vividness in their nature and features. So, I have interpreted them with lances of many western learning theories to theorize the Tharu pedagogy in dances and songs of Dangaura Tharus of Nepal.

Manain ke Buddhi ek se ek ratha (Human beings have various minds). Each person has its contextually constructed wisdom is the Tharu proverb which indicates that people have multiple intelligences. But Gardner (2011) in the west developed a theory of multiple intelligences in which he discussed eight types of intelligences - verbal-linguistic intelligence (reading, writing and speaking), mathematical-logical intelligence (use numbers and logic), visual-spatial intelligence (shapes, images, pictures, graphs, and textures ), bodily-kinesthetic intelligence (motor skills), intrapersonal intelligence (self-reflection), interpersonal intelligence (person-to-person communication), naturalist intelligence (learn easily from the external condition of the environment) and musical-rhythmic intelligence (learn through sound and vibration).

Tharus learn many things through their behavior. "karbo to janabo" (if you do, you learn it) is the indication of the connection between and among the former learning. But connectionism is the western term as a learning theory based on behaviorism i.e., the learning theory based on learners' formation of associations or connections between stimuli and responses. Hilgard (2007) illustrated that this theory is the association between sense impression and impulse to action. Such an association is known as a "bond" or a "connection." For the formation and breaking of habits these bonds or connections become strengthened (p.15). In addition, Thorndike considered the trial-and-error method useful in the formation of appropriate associations between stimuli and responses.

‘Khitakali manai (Active people) knows more’ is the proverb which signifies that learners should be active. The base of operant conditioning is the Khitkali. Skinner (1937) theory of operant conditioning focuses on learners’ behaviors conditioned by the environment. The psychologist applied the concept of operant conditioning to an educational area, and demonstrated that learning is a set of particular behaviors (Hilgard, 2007).

"petem dharbo to janabo" (keen observer learns easily). This saying indicates that people learn social things through observation. The Observational Learning Theory is the theory demonstrating the transition from behaviorism, the oldest approach to a human learning process. As Weiten et al. (2014) underlined that the Observational Learning Theory was first proposed by Albert Bandura. As Bandura’s brainchild, the Observational Learning Theory (sometimes called Social Learning Theory) was formulated in the time when psychologists investigated the foundations of human learning.

Positive reinforcement occupies an essential place in understanding of Bandura’s learning theory. According to Bandura (1995), the presence of positive reinforcement plays a significant role in the formation of individual motivation for displaying certain behavior observed in others. Observers need to have a strong motivation to copy others’ behavioral patterns; hence, positive reinforcement from an external environment is essential (Bandura, 1995).

"Mann ke sukha dil ke dukha" (reduce the need/wish to be happy) connotes Hull's Theory of Learning which believes in drive reduction. According to Hull (1974), he attempted that the organism finds itself in disequilibrium with its environment, that is, it finds itself deprived of something it needs. It is just like a physiological need for food. Drive causes the organism to become active i.e., energized. This active organism produces its own stimuli and its own responding. In this process, a state or condition is attained that reduces the drive by satisfying the need. The word used to define this final process is reinforcement. The reinforcement of a response causes it to be learned (Anderson, 1974).

Pung na puchhar ko kura (root or shoot less talk) is the culturally embedded saying of the community. This saying indicates Dewey's pragmatism. Dewey (1997) is one of the pragmatists who believed that learning occurs through individual experience. Dewey claims that new knowledge is constructed on the basis of existing

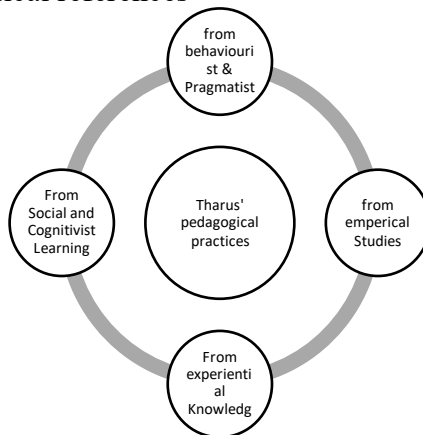


knowledge. The components shaping Dewey’s learning theory include knowledge, judgment, impulse, and observation (Kolb, 1984). To be more specific, learning transforms all these components of the previous concrete experience into higher-order purposeful action (Dewey, 1997 as cited in Ord, 2012, p. 57). As a result, he claims that an individual takes advantage of reflective experience and reflective thinking by integrating the previously learned things (Ord, 2012). Henceforth, learning can be achieved through a complex intellectual process which allows the making of a conversion from previously gained experience to a new one.

Dhyaunti kheti and ghokanti bidya (rote for learning and attention to farming), this knowledge is related to cognitivists' understanding. The research evidence suggested that numerous constructivists made their contribution to the development of this learning theory. Piaget and Vygotsky have the valuable contribution for education and psychology under this cognitivism. Piaget (2003) was the first who offered the term “schema” or “schemata” for identifying an innate structure or structures that help an individual to perceive the world (p. 26).

By investigating the developmental and learning peculiarities of children, Vygotsky (1986) concluded that human development always precedes learning, since a child first needs to meet a particular maturation level before learning can occur. The theorist was a founder of social constructivism based on the idea that a human being may construct knowledge only within a certain culture and particular society to which he or she belongs.

**Figure 1: Theoretical references**



**Note.** This cyclical without any directional arrow shows that four theoretical lenses were the basis for analysis and interpretation in various ways below or above, to and fro in any direction etc.

Collected information was analyzed by using multiple theoretical lenses to make a clear concept on Tharus' pedagogical practices in cultural aspects. I used different theories at a time to understand particular phenomena found from the research process. Along with this, the collected information was analyzed from my own experiential knowledge and empirical sources. Thus, multiple theories as cited above were used as the theoretical reference of this study.

### **Empirical Literature in Tharus' pedagogies**

Bainbridge (2013) developed a pedagogical model designed for an open university in Nepal, based on the geographical, regional and linguistic diversity of Nepali learners including Tharu. The main contribution to knowledge he assessed that the factors like geographic, regional and linguistic backgrounds of Nepali learners and the online learnings of Nepalese students. Besides, the major contribution of this study was providing the first pedagogical model of open university in the context of Nepal in which Tharus are the relevant one.

Neure (2014) notifies that eastern Tharus had their own teaching learning strategies that were used from generations. They generally used storytelling, demonstration, questionnaire, discussion, and deductive methods by considering children's level, nature of content, etc. to teach diverse indigenous knowledge, skills and values rooted in Tharu community. Likewise, Tharu learners used observation, trial and error, memorizing, action, reflection, dialogue, etc. as their learning styles to obtain various knowledge, skills and values embedded in the community.

Chaudhary (2014) has studied Saptari Tharu's womb to tomb practices and tried to figure out the pedagogical practices in them. He focused on only how the Eastern Tharu people transfer their rites and rituals from one generation to another. He illustrated the pedagogy of rites and rituals among Saptari Tharu on the basis of curriculum, contents, method of instruction, evaluation system, teacher, and students in a holistic way.

## **Research Gap**

Empirical studies notify that most of the research was carried out on the eastern Tharus' social norms and values, rituals and rites. Along with these, the studies inform that indigenous learners have different learning styles by which they learn different aboriginal knowledge, skills and values rooted in their community. Generally, they learn many things from observation, interaction, action, imitation, role play, etc. Likewise, parents, elder brothers and sisters, relatives, peers, etc. play a vital role for passing on various knowledge and skills to the learners. Thus, there have not been studies that endow(s) the cultural aspect of Dangaura Tharus and pedagogy envisioning the dances and songs of Tharus in Kailali district – the prominent gaps, the study proposes to plug.

## **Methodology/Conceptual Framework**

As Mautner (1996) claims that perception, memory, proofs, evidence, beliefs and certainty refer to the epistemology (p.132). My study believes Guruwas, Barghars, Morihyas, Tharu Elites sayings, and other documents as the sole sources of knowledge. So, I tried to synergize their individual knowing as epistemology of my study. He indicates the theory of reality that deals with the most fundamental concepts – reality, existence, substance, causality, etc. The ontology of this study refers to those things which were rooted in Tharus' beliefs, culture, experience, understanding, and soon. As Mautner (1996) focuses on theory of value - By considering the axiological orientation, I have maintained ethics and values of research. The study attached positive values to those things to which the Tharus conceive positively and attached negative values to the things that Tharus perceive negatively.

As stated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 375) I involved in participant observation of each and every dance and songs performed by the Tharu people of Kailali districts, I collected the experienced realities of the people i.e., Narration of the Guruwas, Morihyas and my self-reflection as I related with the same culture; and as theory I analyzed and interpreted the gathered data from the lance of the multiple western learning theories and Aboriginal pedagogy of the indigenous people which helps to reach the objectives of the study.

Ethnographic study like this demands to achieve information like their mythical story, songs, dances, dialogue, painting architecture, activities of feast and festivals. As Atkinson and

Delamont (2009, p. 834) I focused on how Tharus actually do social life and sustain social entities transfer their culture from one generation to another. It provided me processing ideas how to start, how to precede what sensitivity toward are sincerely adopted. I have made relations with informants. Moreover, I talked about the issue and got some clues to make further observation and discussion. The field experiences guided me repeatedly. Analysis was started in the beginning with coding and phasing during the data collection.

I adopted an interpretive Paradigm, which demands natural setting and focuses on empirical inquiry. More emphasis was given to the field study. For the convenient coverage of maximum information, interviews and participants observation were applied. More time was given for the collection of data and for analytical and critical interpretation. This study followed ethno- methodological technique while analyzing data. The dialogue (connected talking or discourse) and observation among the Tharus became the primary tool for soliciting their knowledge on pedagogy.

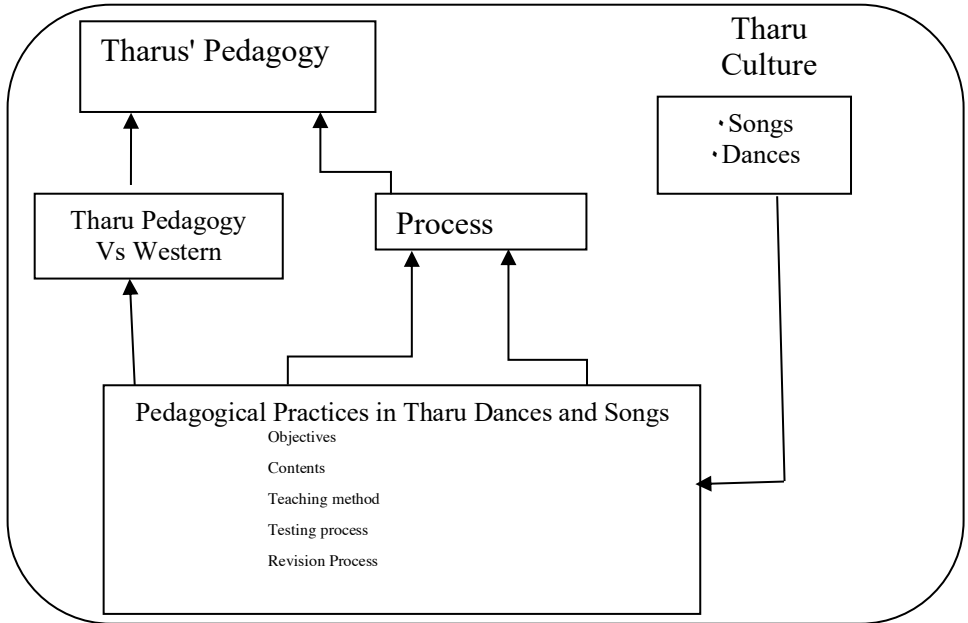
The Tharu community of Kailali district was my study population. I selected this specific geographical location because the Tharu population of this area is fairly dense and large. The villages were selected deliberately i.e., through the purposive sampling. One chairperson of Guruwas, four Barghars, four Morihya and four social elite informants were chosen purposely. In addition, their experiences were discussed. I did not categorize the informants with gender perspective because these informants have sufficient information about the cultural knowledge regarding fairs, festivals, dance and songs of the Tharu community. Along with this, the informants that I selected were mostly male in the Tharu community of Kailali district because of the continuity of Male Barghars in the community throughout the generation and in some village, selection of female Barghars are exceptional.

I was aware that the ethnographic study adopts many methods of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I, as an ethnographic researcher, used participant observation; focus group discussion and in-depth interview for achieving the goals.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Reflecting over the theoretical approaches above, I followed the ethnographical understanding which is applicable to my local context. Then I developed the following conceptual framework.

Figure 2  
Conceptual Framework of the study



**Note:** This framework shows the road map for unravelling the indigenous pedagogy embedded in Tharu dances and songs.

The aforementioned framework shows that grounded theory was applied for data collection and pedagogical theories were used for the interpretation of information about the Tharu dances and songs. It also shows that every activity was looked at in natural setting. The conceptual framework also shows that I used qualitative tools like participant observation, in-depth interview, and focus group discussion for gathering information about the Tharu culture. The practices of dance and songs were observed in natural settings and I applied multiple learning theories like behaviorist theory, cognitivist theory for the interpretation of the data gathered. Along with this, I analyzed and interpreted the collected information in the form of narration with multiple intelligence theory, various learning theoretical perspectives. This made me suitable for production, description and explanation of the pedagogy (objectives, contents, teaching learning methods, improving process and testing process) embedded in the Tharu culture.

## Major findings

Tharu is one of the major groups on the basis of population, culture and time of living in Nepal. Tharus have their own cultural habits. They celebrate various fairs and festivals from generation to generation. The informants accept the cultural identity of Tharus. *Guruwa, Morihyas*, Social elites and *Barghars* agreed about forgetting the culture, though they indicate that Tharu culture is being changed. Songs and dances are the social identity and ancestors' traditions which should be preserved and transferred from one generation to another through re-educating the youths. I found that most of them focused on documentation and management of the songs and dances of Tharus' in a scientific way.

The Tharus have a large and rich collection of songs. They do not have any formal categorization. However, they can be categorized into devotional/ religious songs, life cycle ritual songs, and festival songs and others. They are *sumrauti, Badhai, satti, Mangar, Holi geet, Maghauta songs, Mungrahwa songs, Hurdangwa songs, Kathghorik naach songs, Sajana, Barkimaar, Barmasya songs.*

The Tharus have numerous indigenous dances popular amongst themselves because of their love for singing and dancing. They are *Sakhiya Naach, Mungrahwa Naach, Kathghori Nach, Maghauta Naach, Hurdangwa Naach [Bhuwar Bihan (Dawn), Bihan (early in the morning), Din (noon), Sanjh (evening), Addharat (mid night) and Bhinsahra (When Cock Started to shout)], Jhumra Naach, Barka Naach.* All of these dances are performed on the occasion of major fairs and festivals of the Tharu community like *Maghi, Dashya* and *Dewari.*

Origin of life as well as love and Tharu's occupation and daily life activities can be seen among these songs. The major objectives of these songs are to convey the messages about life, duties, responsibilities, love between husband and wife, natural things, entertainment as well as seasonal activities of farming to the future generation. The contents of these songs are related with the all-around development of the child such as emotional development, physical development, cultural, creativity as well as social development. The teaching methods are observation, oral as well as dialogical with social relations. The testing process and improving mechanism can be seen by the elders, villagers, friends as well as family members individually or collectively.

Cultural aspects of Tharu community are unique in nature though differ in the eastern and western Tharu. Culturally rich Tharu people celebrate many more feasts and festivals since the development of civilization. They perform dances and songs on the occasion of feasts and festivals accordingly. Lack of documentation of songs and way of celebration of festivals is the major concern of Tharu community. Due to this reason most of the cultural aspects of Tharus are in a declining stage. Dances and songs are changing gradually. Indigenous knowledge is dynamic. Most of indigenous knowledge has changed, modified and disappeared due to formal education, media and fear of punishment, modernization and globalization UNESCO (2007, as cited in Chaudhary, 2014). If the cultural pedagogy of the Tharu community is adopted in formal schooling, then it becomes a vital motivational factor for learning in formal school. Not only this, documentation of these songs and dances can also enhance the learners to preserve their identity hidden in the culture.

Multiple ways of learning dance and songs, feasts and festivals are the specialty of Tharu people. They transfer the respective aspects of culture from generation to generation orally and informally. The mechanism hidden inside the pedagogy of Tharu people is related to their social life. I found that the objectives of performing dances and songs are related with spirituality, duty and responsibility of daily life, social awareness, entertainment, maintaining better health and life as well as forgetting sorrows of life with love. The contents including within them are related with religious events as in Barka naach, social struggle as in Story of Hitwa in Anatta; Social awareness as in songs of Mungrahwa naach, love and peace as in songs of Sajana; Mangar, Health and Physical education as in Mungrahwa dance; Human relations and brotherhood as in Maghi. All the contents are theoretical as well as practical in the form of songs and story. I found that the songs are written in Devnagari script but the words were of Tharu which can't be read and bring out the meaning of them by the scholars of formal degree holders as shown below:

There are multiple ways of teaching methods included in the cultural schooling in Tharu community. The teaching methods embedded in Tharu community are distinctly different from formal and non-formal educational systems. They use diversified teaching method to transfer their culture (songs, dances, fairs and festivals) on

the basis of age, sex and maturity level of the learner, nature of contents, context of the learner etc. from one generation to another generation. Guruwa (The priest), Morihya (leader singer) and Mirdangya (Musical leader) play vital roles for transferring the dance and songs as a teacher/facilitator whereas Barghar (villagers' leader) and elders have a supportive role for organizing them systematically. The table gives the findings related to the research questions that I set.

**Table 1:** *Matrix of research questions and study findings on them*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Findings</b>
How do Tharu people perceive their dance and songs?	The social identity and ancestors' traditions which should be preserved and transferred from one generation to another through re-educating the youths.
How do they practice in their daily life?	Most of the dances and songs are performed on the occasions of particular Tharu festivals and fairs. Some of the dances like <i>Kathghori</i> dance and <i>Barka Naach</i> are performed on the special program only if it is organized by any institutions or industrial fairs.
How do Tharus transfer their dance and songs to the next generations?	Imitation, participation, Observation, Rehearsal, imitation of elders' behavior, role play, peer group discussion. Dialogue, Empirical, learning by doing.



<p>What are their mechanisms to ensure that the new generation learnt it?</p>	<p><b>Objectives:</b> to explain daily life activities, to provide entertainment, to share experiences and feelings of happiness and sorrows, to maintain social relationships, to aware people and to develop spiritual manifestation.</p> <p><b>Contents:</b> Culture, Traditions, social relationships, Arts, Music, Health and physical, food, dress, lifestyle, indigenous skills, knowledge, values and norms.</p> <p><b>Teaching Method:</b> Oral conversation, Imitation, Observation, Discussion, Dialogue, Songs, Role play, learning by doing, Trial and Error, Peer group, Practical and empirical Methods.</p> <p><b>Testing process:</b> Performance Based Evaluation i.e., Practical demonstration and Rehearsal of songs and dances.</p> <p><b>Revision process:</b> Feedback of elders, counseling of experts (<i>Morihya, Guruwa, Mirdangya</i>), Guidance of colleagues and family members individually as well as collectively.</p>
<p>What kinds of methods are adopted/adapted for revision and improvement of knowledge, attitude and learnt behavior?</p>	<p>- Self inspirational, guidance and counseling of elders, family members, colleagues.</p> <p>-based on performance of the learners providing feedback by the knower people according to gender individually /collectively.</p>
<p>What are the methods that can be used for formal schooling?</p>	<p>Way of observation and imitation, the way of self-participation, the way of oral conversation as well as the dialogical process embedded in the Tharu community can be included in formal schooling. This makes learners motivated for effective and meaningful learning in the formal education system.</p>

### Discussion over Findings

The data collected from the participant observation and in-depth interview depicted that the teaching method embedded in Tharu

community are listed in the paragraphs below with their short description:

### **1. Role Playing**

Role playing is another popular method adopted in the formal as well as non-formal schooling system. According to Mangal and Mangal (2009)(Mangal & Mangal, 2009) "Role playing is a teaching learning techniques or strategy in which a well-planned situation is dramatized by a group of students by playing specific roles, under the direction of a teacher for deriving useful educational experiences" (p. 451). In the Tharu community, during the process of interview some of the respondents said that dance and songs couldn't be learned without rehearsal of that with peer groups under the guidance of *Morhiya*. At the time of participant observation, I also found the following situation:

It was the participant observation of Mungrahuwa dance performing on the occasion. I saw that the leader (Mirdangya) of the Musical instrument (Madal) was absent. In that situation who took his role was the major concern of that day and one of the musicians was ready to play the role of that leading musician. At first, he hesitated to perform the activity and gradually his peer group encouraged him for better performance. All the participants accepted his role without any comment. Suddenly, the main musician reached there and praised him by watching his successful and effective performance. Then, the learner who was playing the role of the leader handed over the Madal to the main musician.

On the basis of the above citation, each and every learner can learn dance and songs if he/she gets the opportunity to perform the activities. *Khithkali manai* (active people) can perform the dance and songs and after showing the right response he/she becomes praised or rewarded and learning takes place as in Skinner's operant conditioning theory. In another perspective, this is the representative event of a role-playing method to learn and feel the experiences of being the leader musician. This role-play method not only helps the learners to learn certain knowledge and skills but also enhances the confidence level of the learner. In this regard, Mangal and Mangal (2009) stated that this role play method increases the students' interest, motivation and efforts for learning about a subject or phenomena.

## 2. Observational Method

Observation is the typical method for learning cultural phenomena embedded in the Tharu community. They use this method to obtain various contents of related fields which are presented by the parents, elders or *Guruwa* and peer group etc. This made me refer to Bandura who stated that the repeated demonstration that people can learn and have their behavior shaped by observing another person and even film has tremendous implications for modifying tastes and attitudes (as cited in Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004, p. 103). As mentioned by Bandura's observational learning theory, Tharu dancers and singers also learn by observing the steps and rhythms of the specific songs performed by the seniors. In this regard, the learner actively performed the observed dances and songs for achieving the needs with satisfaction as Hull claims the drive reduction theory of social learning. This theory can be realized in learning dances and songs in the Tharu community.

## 3. Dialogical and Oral Conversational Method

Dialogue and conversation are another popular method in cultural schooling of Tharu. Dialogue means '*Baatchit*' in Tharu language. All the respondents indicated that *batchit* is a universal teaching learning process embedded in Tharu community. Vigotsky argues that humans possess unique mental activity as the result of social learning that has occurred within an evolving cultural setting. Thus, human mental development is a socio-genetic process shaped by the individual interactions, 'dialogue' and 'play' with the culture (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). When I was interviewing with *Morhiya*, a dancer came there and I started to talk with him also about teaching learning phenomena of dances and songs, which is elaborated below:

When I was in the process of interviewing Morhiya (Head Singer) in his own home, suddenly, a Tharu dancer came there and I started to talk with him also. He replied in Tharu language "hamre kono fen geet chahe naach sikhke ber Mirdangiya o sanghariyan se batchit karthi ". This means they learned any songs and steps of dances by conversation or dialogue method with Mirdangiya (Head Musician) and friends.

From the aforesaid narration, I found that the dancers and singers of Tharu songs indicated that they improved their performance by interacting with their peer groups. In this way, Tharu people transfer

their cultural aspects by dialogue or conversation method from one generation to another generation.

#### **4. *Dekhaina and Kaina* Method: Demonstration and learning by doing method**

*Dekhina* equates to a demonstration method in Tharu language. It is the traditional way for transferring the specific skills practically to the offspring in the Tharu community. One of the experienced and skilled manpower of specific areas shows that skills to the learner and learner understand and grasp the skill conveniently. Demonstration is the visual presentation of the action and activities or practical works related to the facts and principles of the delivered lesson in front of the learner (Mangal & Mangal, 2009). Similarly, Tharu people also grasp the skill and contents mostly in the dances and songs by the demo of the *Mirdangya* and *Morihya* of related dance and songs.

*Kainaa* equates to doing actively in Tharu language. As Dewey (1997) claims that learning by doing in a social context is the method to learn dances and songs. This method helps the learner to remember for a long time to use them in a practical way. The ninth day of the *dasya* the villagers started to show the *Hurdangwa* dance, one of the singers had done the mistake and what happened is elaborated as follows:

It was the day of pittar asraina (ninth day of Dashain), I was at the research site and the time was 3 o'clock, the villagers (both male and female) were enjoying the festival near the river. They were wearing the tharu typical dresses but some are in modern dress. One of the youth participants started to sing a song in his own way and then morihya of the songs stopped him to sing and he sang the song with physical gestures in attractive way like this "kehwai bole kaag kabuttar kehwai bole maur ho ....." i.e., somewhere crows crow and somewhere peacock. Then, the youth singer started to sing the songs with joyful manner.

The above paragraph is the representative event of showing the demonstration method in teaching cultural activities by the Tharus. My informants agreed that this method had been in practice from ancient times to teach various aspects of culture. Tharus' *dekhaina* can be related to Gardner (2011) who explained that the learners who have musical intelligence enjoy learning various musical instruments and singing songs like playing various tunes of madal, listening and

singing varied songs and so on. Further he stated that those learners who have bodily-kinesthetic intelligence easily learn various physical movements like dancing steps by observing attentively. In this regard, the informants of focus group discussion claimed that Tharu learners tried to learn songs and dance by their own style but they learned the desired contents and skill after the demonstration of the dance and songs by the *Morihya* and *Mirdangiya*.

### **5. Imitation Learning Method**

Imitation is the most popular learning method embedded in the Tharu community. According to social learning theory of Bandura (1995), learning involves four separate processes i.e. attention, retention, production and motivation. Similarly, Morgan (1978) stated that "A person watches or hears someone else say or do something, then attempts to copy it" (p.104). Most of the informants whom I consulted claimed that imitation is the major method of learning dancing and singing activities done by the *Morihya*. When I was watching the *Sakhya* dance in a village, what I saw is elaborated as follow:

When I was watching the *Sakhya* dance in Durgauli VDC, young tharu girls (*Bathainiya* in tharu language) were performing the dance in two rows. The young girl who was dancing in the back of the row made the mistake. Then, she herself watched the *morihya's* steps of dance and then corrected her steps at once. Similarly, the typical *sakhya* songs were also copied by the other groups.

As mentioned in the above narration, I realized that most of the dances and songs are transferred through imitation. Not only this, informants of the focused group discussion also replied that they copied the major activities during the celebration of the dances and songs.

### **6. *Kosis Kaina*: the Trial-and-Error Method**

*Kosis Kaina* is the method used by Tharu people in learning specific skills related to dance and songs. This method believes that each and every dance and song can't be learned without a series of efforts. *Kosis Kaina* equates to Thorndike's approach to learning. Thorndike has developed three primary laws of learning: The law of readiness, the law of effect and the law of exercise (Aggarwal, 2013). In the same way, I found that Tharu learners who are ready to learn certain skills of dance and songs used this method. I observed most of the Tharu dances before performing in the certain festivals. Brief

description of learning process involved in *mungrahwa* dance is given below:

It was the month of September; the villagers were planning to perform the Mungrahwa dance in the coming Dasya festival. They decided to practice the dance at Barghar's home. The Tharu youths and children who had motives in the dance gathered and started to practice the dance. They tried the steps of dances according to the music of madal. They tried again and again in the same taal of madal until they were satisfied with their performance. I noticed that if they were perfect in one step then they practiced the next step of the dance. These activities were repeated for many days. If they have made errors in turning or any other steps, they minimized them in the next performance. On the final day of rehearsal, I observed that the dancers and musicians were wearing the typical Tharu dress and ornaments. They showed complete dance without any errors and enjoyed drinking 'chhanki' (alcohol). Thus, I found the trial and error method is the pedagogy embedded in that dance.

From the above discussion, I came to the understanding that skills of dances and music are learned by the trial-and-error method by the Tharu people. Most of the informants of FGD whom I approached during the course of my study accepted that this trial and minimizing errors is the best method for learning not only dance but singing songs also as Thorndike claimed (Hilgard, 2007). In this way, I found that the trial and error process of learning is the vital method for the Tharu learner who has musical intelligence higher as Gardner claimed.

### **7. Memorization and Rote learning Method**

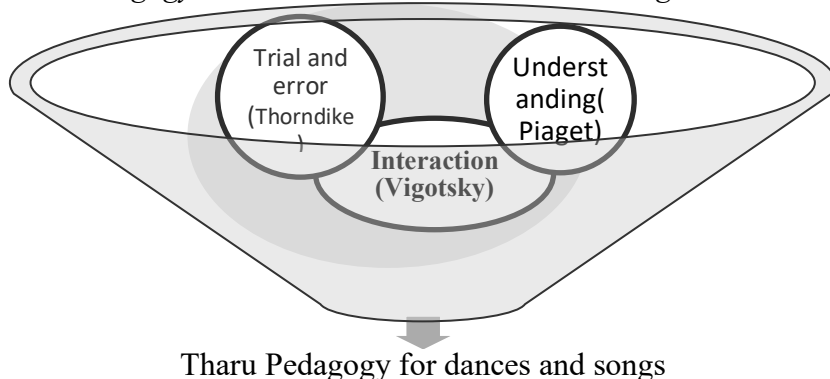
Memorization and rote learning are another style of learning embedded in the Tharu community. Tharus used this type of learning to get factual information, principles, songs, proverbs and so on. In this regard, Mangal and Mangal (2009) stated, "memory level of teaching is confined merely to the memorization of facts or associations related to the contents material of a subject" (p.155). Most of the informants indicated that songs, *sumrauti* (hymns), proverbs, poems, steps of dances and attitudes towards the dance and songs were learned by memorization and rote learning. As cognitivist Piaget (2003) claims that to learn something new the learner should

make the schema of a new thing and then after learning learn dances and songs.

I accept that the pedagogy embedded in Tharu cultures are somehow interconnected to learning theories like Hull's theory, Vygotsky's Socio-cultural cognitive learning theory, Thorndike's connectionism, Bandura's imitation learning theory, Piaget's theory and Gardner's multiple intelligence theory. But all of these aforementioned theories challenge me to accept teaching and learning at Tharu fairs, festivals, dances and songs. Each Tharu fairs and festivals requires dances and songs in the Tharu community. The knowledge, values and skills included in Tharu culture can't be transferred by any single learning theory. For this, I challenged the western learning theories as follows:

- a) Tharu dances and songs can be transferred by imitation/role model of Bandura with social interaction/ZPD of Vygotsky. I found that imitation with social interaction and Scaffolding is the Tharu pedagogy for fairs and festivals.
- b) Thorndike's laws of learning (law of readiness, law of practice and law of effect) are not sufficient for learning Tharu dances. It needs a role model of Bandura with connectionism of Thorndike and Dewey's learning by doing. Tharu dances can be learned by joint effort of these three theories of learning.
- c) For learning Tharu songs it needs Piaget's cognitive theory with social interaction theory of Vygotsky and trial and error theory of Thorndike. I found that these theories can't be identified identically in learning Tharu songs. Thus, the pedagogy embedded in Tharu dances songs can be seen as given below:

**Figure 3:** *Pedagogy embedded in Tharu dances and songs*



## **Theorizing Indigenous pedagogy embedded in Tharu dances and songs**

Biermann and Townsend-Cross (2008) believed that indigenous pedagogy is based on indigenous philosophies, norms, process and values - relational worldviews which includes identity, relatedness, inclusiveness, reciprocity, nurturance and respect. Similarly, Tharu people learn dance and songs, process and procedures to celebrate fairs and festivals by the *Guruwas*, elders, family members, social elites and their colleagues. The Canadian Council on Learning (2009) claims that family, elders and the community plays a great role in the learning process of Aboriginal people of Canada. There are no predetermined methods to learn them but Yunkaporta (2009) claims an eight-way aboriginal pedagogy framework which includes-story sharing, learning maps, symbols and images, land links, non-linear, deconstruct/reconstruct and community links. However, I theorize the indigenous pedagogies embedded in dances and songs including objectives, contents, teaching methods, testing process and revision processes.



**Table 2:** *Pedagogies embedded in Tharu Songs and dances*

Songs and Dances	Pedagogies				
	Objectives	Contents	Teaching methods	Testing process	Revision process
<b>Maghauta</b>	To maintain the social relations among relatives To provide empowerment to the Tharu community through sharing their experiences about life.	love, friendship, relations, traditions and identity of Tharu	-songs taught in a dialogical way by wearing typical Tharu dresses and ornaments - observation of elders' behavior while dancing and singing by the children and other villagers including women	Experimental, the children show the learned behavior before the celebration. For example: rehearsal of Maghauta	Morhiya (the leader of the singers) observes and listens to the action of the singers during the celebration of the

<b>Mungrahwa</b>	To make people aware about cleanliness and various epidemic diseases.	Physical exercises, neat and clean habit, dumping site, healing of diseases through awareness	-Rehearsal of dance and songs in groups. - dialogue and conversation ( <i>Baatchit</i> ) with colleagues.	naach, Mungrahwa naach, Hurdangwa naach and sing the songs accordingly with the demonstration of the dance. If the audiences of the rehearsal	songs. He/she corrects their mistakes with a demo and tells them to repeat it. Along with this audiences and elders can also
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<b>Hurdangwa</b>	to provide the messages about the role and lifestyle of husband and wife. to explain the division of time period of 24 hours with special activities.	Division of time, role and responsibilities of husband and wife, love and daily life activities of tharu people.	One of the main singers (Moriya in tharu) started the song and others follow it in a group and most of the youth and dancer and musician show their dance with music whole day and night.	decide their performance to show their songs and dance in the specific function.	provide feedback to the singers individually.
<b>Kathgorik naach /Barka naach and songs</b>	to explain the History about the lifestyle of the people.	One part of Mahabharat in which the Bharat king's activities.	In the dialogical way people sing the song and the dancers and musicians show their acting in the dramatic way and dance. These songs are imitated by the audience orally.		

**Table 3:** *Pedagogies embedded in other Tharu Songs*

Songs	Pedagogies				
	Objectives	Contents	Teaching methods	Testing process	Revision process
<b>Mangar</b>	To explain the marriage ceremony in a typical way with entertainment.	Marriage, relationships, division of work and duties in marriage, arts of Tharu.	<i>Bhansariya</i> (ladies cook) and <i>surahuwa</i> (male who works physical labour such as bringing leaves from the forests, Meat cutting and carrying the chandol /Doli etc.) and other friends of bride and bridegroom sing Māgar in which all the activities are explained serially with special situation. Interested women and men follow the songs in a rhythmic way that means orally and by imitation of experts before and during the marriage ceremony.	Elders and friends decide that the singers' lyrics are fine. For this, singers have to sing the Magar in front of them.	Individually the singers can sing the songs in front of the knower (friends, elders, relatives etc) they popularize him in the village according to his/her performance . Practice is the best way

<b>Dhamar/ Sajana</b>	To express the love and sentiments between girls and boys or husband and wife. to explain natural things with the roles of male and female.	Emotional development such as love, happiness, sorrow, role of male and female.	This song is also orally learned by singing along with people who know the song other times also.	The new singers should sing the songs in front of villagers and friends along with elders. If they declared that he/she can sing the songs with rhythm then now he/she is labeled as a singer.	to improve his/her singing skills.
<b>Barmasya songs</b>	To convey the messages about the seasonal activities of farming and wild birds and animals.	Seasons, activities of wild birds and animals and farming.	This song has no special occasion. Through this song people learn about seasonal activities of farmers and other wild birds and animals orally.		

There are many more Tharu songs which are practiced either individually or in groups. Some of them are sung at fairs and festivals and some are seasonal. The indigenous pedagogies embedded on some Tharu songs including objectives, contents, teaching methods, testing process and revision processes can be theorized in the table given below:

### **Conclusion**

Tharus are the indigenous people of Nepal with their own unique cultural traits. Most of them are not documented in written form(s). These cultural aspects are transferred from generation to generation by the elders, *Guruwas*, social elites, *Barghars* and parents by their own style. But most of the feast and festivals, dances and songs are looming towards the declining stages due to the lack of their documentation, systematic orientation and awareness towards culture as well as occidental cultural impact. Spiritual beliefs, entertainment, social solidarity, social unity and brotherhood and sharing feelings are the major objectives implanted in the Tharu culture. The teaching learning strategies mostly demonstration, role play, memorization, discussion and imitation are found in Tharu culture. The improving and testing process are observation and providing guidance and counseling individually as well as collectively by the elders, peers or parents. That's why various pedagogical practices embedded in The Tharu community can be fruitful in formal and non-formal education systems.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The information collected from the research site indicates that Tharus have unique pedagogical styles that they use to convey their cultural knowledge. These pedagogies also have some educational implications in the formal education system. The major educational implications, drawn from the information given by the informants and collected from the research site are given below:

- the linkage between Tharu schooling and formal schooling will be one of the ways of problem solving in multicultural education.
- a teacher can use multiple methods of teaching at the same time to transfer prescribed content among the students, such as learning Tharu dances and songs.
- As in the Tharu community, various behaviors can be developed within the students enrolled at formal schools by showing model

behaviors by teachers and other administrative personnel working at the same institutions.

- As in the Tharu community, teachers can use this interest-based teaching method in the formal schooling process.

-As a Gardner **learner, having** musical intelligence became a success in singing and dancing. Nowadays, teachers apply the methods suitable for the verbal intelligence students only. In this regard, formal schooling teachers can also teach their students by identifying their intelligence for better results.

- As in the Tharu community, there can be managed time or environment for peer learning in the formal schooling system.

- As the flexible nature of pedagogy of Tharu dances and songs, the formal institutions should continuously change the curriculum and instructions to make it fruitful for the learners as the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) highlights on mainly six issues like economic and social development, another one is culture including environment, education and finally human rights. Moreover, Indigenous people have collective nature in accordance with UNPFII.

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### Author Bio

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**A critical-appreciative approach as/for  
transformative professional development**

**Parbati Dhungana**

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**Abstract**

Critical ‘self’ (i.e. dualist or egoist I) reflection seems insufficient in the context of Nepali university education, particularly in the process of transformative professional development. Therefore through this paper, I argue that a *critical-appreciative approach contributes to my professional development*. Assuming ‘Self’ (i.e. non-dualist or non-egoist I) as a better form of ‘self’, I conducted a self-study examining my conflict (between egoist I and non-egoist I) enhancing integral perspective. For it, I posed the research question: *How could I nurture my integral perspective for my professional development in the higher educational context?* I adapted dialogue as a research method to explore the conflict between ‘self’ and ‘Self’ with the support of my embodied knowledge, reflective journal, assignments and articles. In this paper, I discuss how my critical-appreciative approach enhanced my ‘self’ and at times remained a living contradiction. Then I discuss the four approaches as themes (adapting inclusive perspectives, creating open space, using participatory-based approach and developing tactful mentorship) that provided me with a cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective as professional development. These themes seem useful for understanding ‘self’ and the rest in an optimal way while being in higher education.

आलोचनात्मक 'स्व' (अर्थात् द्वैतवादी वा अहंकारी म) प्रतिबिम्ब नेपाली विश्वविद्यालय शिक्षाको सन्दर्भमा, विशेष गरी रूपान्तरणात्मक व्यावसायिक विकासको प्रक्रियामा अपर्याप्त देखिन्छ। यसैले यस पेपर मार्फत, म तर्क गर्छु कि एक आलोचनात्मक-प्रशंसनीय दृष्टिकोणले मेरो व्यावसायिक विकासमा योगदान गर्दछ। 'आत्म' (अर्थात् गैर-द्वैतवादी म वा गैर-अहंकारी म) लाई 'आत्म' को एक राम्रो रूपको रूपमा मान्दै, मैले मेरो द्वन्द्व (अहंकारी म र गैर-अहंकारी म बीच) अभिन्न परिप्रेक्ष्यमा परिक्षण गर्दै आत्म-अध्ययन गर्ने। यसको लागि, मैले अनुसन्धान प्रश्न खडा गर्ने: उच्च शैक्षिक सन्दर्भमा मेरो व्यावसायिक विकासको लागि म कसरी मेरो अभिन्न दृष्टिकोणलाई पोषण गर्न सक्छु? मैले मेरो मूर्त ज्ञान, प्रतिबिम्बित जर्नल, असाइनमेन्ट र लेखहरूको समर्थनमा 'आत्म' र 'आत्म' बीचको द्वन्द्व अन्वेषण गर्न अनुसन्धान विधिको रूपमा संवादलाई रूपान्तरण गर्ने। यस पत्रमा, मैले कसरी मेरो आलोचनात्मक-प्रशंसनीय दृष्टिकोणले मेरो 'आत्म' लाई बढायो र कहिलेकाहीँ एक जीवित विरोधाभास बन्यो भनेर छलफल गर्छु। त्यसपछि मैले विषयवस्तुका रूपमा चार दृष्टिकोणहरू (समावेशी परिप्रेक्ष्यहरू अनुकूलन गर्ने, खुला ठाउँ सिर्जना गर्ने, सहभागितामा आधारित दृष्टिकोण प्रयोग गर्ने र कुशल मार्गदर्शनको विकास गर्ने) छलफल गर्छु जसले मलाई व्यावसायिक विकासको रूपमा सांस्कृतिक (अर्थात् सात्त्विक) परिप्रेक्ष्य प्रदान गरेको छ। यी विषयवस्तुहरू उच्च शिक्षामा रहँदा 'आत्म' र बाँकीलाई बृहत तरिकाले बुझ्नको लागि उपयोगी देखिन्छन्।

**Keywords:** critical-appreciative approach, higher education, integral perspective, 'self', self-study, transformative professional development

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*A lonely fish  
in a pool  
dreamt of a school,  
a surging river,  
then the ocean  
living together  
in harmony.*

Like the lonely fish in a small pond, I see my better 'self,' (like the fish in a surging river) in 'Self' (like the harmonious fish living together in the ocean) through my critical-appreciative engagement in the process of my professional development. 'Self' refers to the non-dualistic or non-egoistic 'self', Brahman or pure consciousness (Osborne, 2014). For me, the non-egoistic self or 'Self' is the highest form of my 'self' or being that attains the state of oneness in the form of harmonious and conscious living. Attainment of oneness is my inner 'harmonious and conscious' experience which is possible by being together and/or interacting with the outside world harmoniously and consciously. Here, my concern is to nurture

oneness by adapting multiple strategies or approaches. The critical-appreciative approach is one of them. Critical-appreciative is akin to an integral approach which is neither only a critical approach nor only an appreciative approach rather both and also beyond. Inspired by the integral perspective of Taylor, Taylor, and Luitel (2012), I made sense of the word integral as connected, integrated, inclusive, participatory, oneness-like and beyond (any and/or all of them).

Adapting a critical-appreciative approach I have been continuously questioning taken for granted beliefs, values and practices including my own and of others (e.g. teachers) (Mezirow, 2000), exploring weaknesses (e.g. needs) and strengths (e.g. values and inherent qualities), and thereby appreciating and improving values and inherent qualities addressing weaknesses (Whitehead, 2018) being together. I, a PhD student of Kathmandu University School of Education who has been conducting (since 2017 till the time of writing) PhD research on the issue of teachers' professional development, critically reflected my values, beliefs, and practices of professional development using different forms of reflections, explored my own weaknesses and strengths and thereby appreciated and improved my values and qualities. This research journey developed my cultural perspective (i.e. satvic perspective which I will explain later) which supported me to (re)conceptualize professional development. Through this paper, I shared how I developed a cultural perspective as transformative professional development while being in higher education, particularly in the PhD research process.

It appears to me that before the PhD research process, I did not get enough space for appreciating and improving my inherent qualities in Nepali higher educational contexts. My schooling might have envisioned me as a student of the 21st century. Like Johnston, Mitchell, Myles and Ford (2011), I was assumed to have the following personal qualities and values:

- (1) a well-developed, robust, confident and aware self, able where necessary to challenge and reconstruct existing understanding and modes of operation;
- (2) an awareness of the values, priorities and power structures implicit in a context and a capacity to be constructively critical to them;
- (3) appropriate values such as respect for reasons, an inquiring attitude, open-mindedness, independent-mindedness (p. 80)

However, I sensed that I, a student of the 21st century, forgot to appreciate my own qualities, qualities of my culture and take

responsibility for nurturing cultural knowledge for passing to the upcoming generation. Rather, I was deeply engaged in reflexive engagement and thereby became passionate about changing or transforming self and others. In line with Luitel and Dahal (2020, p. 1) “reflexive engagement of researchers and practitioners in the life world contributes to the conceptualization of transformative praxis as professional development”. According to Luitel and Dahal (2020), for transformative professional development,

Practitioners can use different forms of reflection, such as retrospective, ongoing, and anticipatory (Johns, 2017). Retrospective reflection refers to reflection on events, activities and performativities accomplished in the past. The main purpose of such reflection is to examine events that have transpired from the vantage point of new possibilities. Reflection on our ongoing actions can help immediately improve, revise, and modify our activities and engagement in the world (Brookfield, 2017). Such an approach to reflection-in-action makes practitioners mindful of ongoing events and eventualities. In the same manner, anticipatory reflection enables practitioners to envision possible opportunities and challenges embedded in their practice.

Adapting multiple forms of critical self reflections I could have enough opportunities of improving my professional practices e.g. to create a harmonious learning environment for teachers. Moreover, I wanted to sustain or nurture my inner harmony fully which seemed impossible only by being critical to ‘self’ and others. From this insight I made sense that critical ‘self’ reflection is insufficient in the context of my professional development. It is because I sensed that ‘Self’ inquiry might be more transformative.

Here, to express my sense, I prefer to use the word *bibek*, a Nepali word, which refers neither only thinking nor only feeling or emotion rather an integrated (or integral) form of thoughts and emotions that interplays and creates synergy and thereby that results into a condensed, authentic form of knowledge or consciousness. In other words *bibek* means my socio-cultural consciousness that enables me to distinguish between ‘right’ or ‘wrong’; to say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The word *bibek* cannot be replaced with words such as knowledge and wisdom. Here, I am not opposing the notion of knowledge and wisdom by replacing the word *bibek* rather trying to express my authentic or organic understating which the word ‘knowledge’ and

‘wisdom’ could not make explicit. Seemingly, knowledge is more connected to Western Modern Worldview (e.g. scientifically proven knowledge of outside world which is available more in written form than in oral form) as wisdom to Eastern Wisdom Tradition (e.g. Vedic and Yogic embodied knowledge of the inner world which is available more in the oral form than in written), however, they are not a dichotomy instead complementary to each other. Perhaps rather than presenting knowledge and wisdom as a dichotomy, I wanted to dissolve dualism (i.e. scientifically proven knowledge vs. embodied knowledge) by valuing co-existence and complementary with appreciative intent. In Balsemão-Pires’ (2018, p. 209) words, it is called “dissolution of dualistic thinking.” I think the dissolution of dualistic thinking might always not require the notion of deconstruction. Seemingly I had reconstructive intent. Reconstruction of constructivism might work in the context of sustaining through open dialogue and mutual respect (Reusswig, 2020).

It appeared to me that cultural consciousness would support my transformative professional development (Luitel & Taylor, 2019; Taylor, 2013). Perhaps my disciplinary orientation of school and the initial phase of university education could not fully support me to be *bibeksil* (i.e. become conscious of both critical and appreciative dimensions) and enhance my *bibek*. It is because I, a *bibeki* being, use my *bibek* when I think, feel, and/or act to be a better ‘self’, human, or student and teacher. My sense of *bibek* might have played a significant role in my both normal and abnormal situations and thereby shaped me into who I am and how I am living in this transdisciplinary world.

For instance, sometime in 2018, I (i.e. teacher trainer) was delivering a session to the primary level teachers (interdisciplinary group), beyond my expectation, I found teachers culturally conscious as they engaged in appreciative, creative and critical activities with their students. For instance, teachers used *bibek* (i.e. cultural consciousness) in the teaching and learning process (e.g. inviting local people to the class to share knowledge). I felt transferring my theoretical knowledge and ignoring teachers’ socio-cultural consciousness was my blunder. From my next session, using my *bibek*, I tried to develop my cultural responsiveness (i.e. appreciation or value teachers’ cultural knowledge and skills being critical self-reflective).

This might be a representative story of many university graduates who failed to value and appreciate socio-cultural consciousness while rushing to become critical practitioners. Perhaps, implying other ways of 'knowing' as inauthentic I was enhancing disharmony within me and that disharmony was reflecting in the outside world. I think as the primary level teachers, the world itself is a transdisciplinary space, however my exposure to disciplinary knowledge and skills limited me to value more to my disciplinary knowledge and skills than interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Perhaps I was exposed to divided knowledge and/or wisdom in the form of multiple disciplines or subject knowledge/s. Perhaps I was comfortable within the disciplinary boundary. And never realized being with other people or making connections with others than myself could be a collaborator having a sense of empathetic connection with others (Daloz, 2000). Perhaps, I feared moving towards 'we' or becoming a collaborator. My fear of collaboration might be the reason for my non-inclusive nature of choosing not to be with the more diverse people in the world (e.g. inter/transdisciplinary) making connections and cooperation.

Reaching here, I sensed that 'harmony' and 'collaboration' were my living values and realized I was 'a living contradiction' by not living those values as fully as I could, influencing my learning and learning of others (Whitehead, 1969). Here, I got the insight that when I was appreciative towards others and critically reflective with 'self' I experienced harmony within and out. It appeared to me that the dis/harmony of the inner world was the reflection of the outer world and vice versa which was the result of disconnection with people and disintegration with my inner and outer world. Therefore I would like to continue living the values of collaboration and harmony exploring the conflict between 'I' and 'we' (i.e. egoist I and non-egoist I) with the help of a research question: *How could I nurture my integral perspective for my professional development in the higher educational context?* For it, I explored the existing literature and then examined my embodied knowledge, reflective journal, assignments, and articles being critical-appreciative.

### **Literature review**

It appears to me that university education plays a vital role in fostering socio-cultural consciousness, sensitivity, and responsiveness among students. However, I explored that Nepali education is either

promoting critical perspectives (Bista, Sharma, & Raby, 2019; Regmi, 2021) or an appreciative approach such as appreciative pedagogy (Budhathoki & Pant, 2016) and socio-cultural thesis writing practice (Khati, 2020) but not critical-appreciative approach.

Here, the critical-appreciative approach refers to neither critical nor appreciative approach rather an integral approach of critical (self) reflection and appreciation in which one critically (self) reflects, then explores weakness, strengths, values and/or qualities and then addresses weakness improving values, qualities and practices.

As the objective of the higher education of Nepal is “to preserve and develop the historical and cultural heritage of the nation” (Upadhyay, 2018, p. 96) valuing historical and cultural heritages, knowledge and practices seem vital in Nepal and across the board for sustaining, nurturing, and flourishing humanity (Luitel & Taylor, 2019). However, an appreciative approach seems less prioritized and/or implicit as I could not explore any appreciative approach of conducting research in Nepal. Here, I sensed developing my socio-cultural awareness and thereby taking the responsibility of making the critical-appreciative approach explicit.

I think education makes one able to make implicit explicit for common good. Here, my understanding of education expands as education as a cultural value and a value-laden process that cannot overlook inherent strengths which are present in the form of socio-cultural values and/or inherent qualities. The study (Gjøtterud, 2009) discussed that a university educator’s living values such as love and critique play a transformative role in guiding university students. I think love and critique create synergetic effects that make it possible for inquisitive and reflective opportunities and thereby support students for transformative learning. Here, I saw the potentiality of making the deep shift through frequent catalysts’ (Daloz, 2000) (both soothing and thrilling encounters); in Yongming Tang’s words ‘a new synergy consciousness’ (interplay between individualistic and collaborative interests). However, living values such as love and critique alone might not be sufficient in a country that is rich in diversity (e.g. cultural). For instance, my study (Dhungana, 2020) explored the challenges of living the value “living love” by expressing the word ‘love’ as a living value in the context of community school teachers’ professional development in the rural part of Nepal.



Perhaps it was my experience of the conflict between what cultural qualities I have (e.g. passion) and what I do not have (e.g. inclusion and discernment). Being a university student who has been facilitating in-service teachers for professional development, I felt the need for some particular socio-cultural qualities (e.g. passion, inclusion and discernment) that could support my professional and personal life in a meaningful way. The study (McAlinden, 2014) discussed the two qualities: reflexivity and empathy as essential elements to be an interculturally effective educator. This study reminded me of my cultural qualities (as my identity has been shaped or constructed by my society and culture to which I belong). Here I had a query-did the existing modern (formal) education enhance my cultural qualities? No! (at least for me till I began my PhD study)

I think the existing modern education seems to fall short to nurture my socio-cultural qualities such as inquisitiveness, passion, inclusion, and discernment as it could not support me to enhance them appreciating my existing socio-cultural knowledge which is available in Vedic, Yogic, Shamanic, and Tantric scripts, oral traditions, rituals, images, and practices. It doesn't mean that I lacked socio-cultural knowledge rather I was unaware of its presence in the form of socio-cultural qualities. Somewhere in my heart, I had a sense of respect towards my culture and cultural diversity that's why I might have promoted collaboration and collaborative practices while being with teachers in the school (Dhungana, 2020; Dhungana, 2021) and students in the university (Dhungana, 2021). Doing so, I might have been seeking my cultural identity (i.e. not individualistic but collective) or localness. The study (Parajuli, 2015) discussed the loss of cultural knowledge and calls for searching 'localness.' The call was not for annihilating globalization rather seeking localness to meet globalization. I think I was seeking cultural knowledge to enhance the inherent socio-cultural qualities that I might have been living in for a long time but forgotten.

Here, I sensed that I was experiencing decultured situations. My forgetfulness and/or my ignorance of socio-cultural knowledge and/or wisdom might be the reason for the existing modern education. The studies (Luitel & Taylor, 2019; Parajuli, 2015) discussed the loss of culture in the Nepali educational context, particularly in university. Seemingly, it was the sign of declination of cultural diversity in the Nepali context including across the globe (Luitel & Taylor, 2019) which might be beneficial for some but not for harmonious co-

existence of all (i.e. including human and non-human) I found a study (Schlesinger, 1994) which discussed the loss of collective (i.e. cultural) identity in Europe which is still relevant. I think it was the call for ‘cultural emancipation’ (Taylor, 2013) or liberation. Here, liberation is not meant as getting rid of modern education rather getting rid of the ignorance, the ignorance of not knowing the possible strengths of socio-cultural knowledge.

I think modern education developed a kind of passion for knowledge acquisition, forgetting what we know and how we know that existed since long for living meaningful life prior, probably to the beginning of modern education. I think modern education played a vital role in my forgetfulness and ignorance (means un/awareness of not known). For instance, despite encountering diverse communities in diverse contexts since 1993, my shifting schools every now and then have not made me critical to unhelpful socio-cultural knowledge and practices and appreciative to the helpful ones. Perhaps, with the orientation of modern education I was so embedded that way as I was ‘invariably affected by the quality of the world in which I was formed’ (Daloz, 2000) rather could not appreciate helpful socio-cultural knowledge and practices According to Luitel and Taylor (2019, p.2),

On the one hand, modern education is designed to produce a highly skilled workforce essential for improving a nation’s infrastructure, social services and materials standard of living. On the other hand, the absence of local cultural capital in imported curricula contributes to loss of cultural and linguistic diversity... Appreciating linguistic diversity, for instance, I could learn Tamang and Newari languages from my neighbors, friends and colleagues and thereby use them in my class to enhance the learning of my Tamang and Newari students; appreciating Yogic practices I could practice meditation for enhancing concentration and awareness of my own and of my students throughout my teaching and learning process. Here, I think I am being conscious of my upbringing within the modern education system that has been shaping who I am and who I am not today. Therefore, to enhance cultural consciousness university education can create an open space in which students learn diverse subjects with multi-cultural and cross-cultural groups of students developing both critical and appreciative skills.

I think teacher education can foster a non-dualistic integral (i.e. inclusive) perspective. Seemingly a third space might be an

alternative as the study (Diamond, Wescott, & Mollo, 2021, p. 40) defines teacher education as a ‘third space.’ As the “third space’ practice speaks back to narrow discourses of teacher education that frames it as the unproblematic transfer of practice from experienced to novice practitioner.” The third space seems unproblematic, as it questions the dualistic or ‘either or’ perspective and thereby dismantles unhelpful knowledge and practices embracing others. Going beyond the existing transmission technique their study argued for developing reflective and critical professionalism through collaborative inquiry.

The collaborative inquiry of Diamond, Wescott, and Mollo (2021) reminded me of Belenky and Stanton (2000) and Daloz (2000) who argued for transformative learning through collaborative practices. I resonated deeply with collaborative professional practices as they are context-responsive in Nepali educational contexts (Dhungana et. al, 2021). Here, I had a query about why collaborative practices were context-responsive? Seemingly, the word ‘collaboration’ itself is inclusive in nature. It shows that Nepali people have a deeply rooted quality of inclusiveness.

The word ‘inclusion’ traced me back to the ancient Brahmanic education system which led me to explore the Bhagavad Gita, the ancient Hindu scripture for its meaning. It was the best thing that I could do. Perhaps I strived to authentically understand my origin to understand myself, my students, my teachers, my family and all others to show a willingness to hear and value their stories (Locke, 2017).

According to the Bhagavad Gita (chapter 14 verse 5) “material nature consists of three modes: satva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance).” It is culturally believed that goodness is the highest mode, the best quality that humans can possess which makes it possible for the best results.

कर्मणः सुकृतस्याहुः सात्त्विकंनिर्मलंफलम्

रजसस्तुफलंदुःखमज्ञानंतमसः फलम्॥ 16॥

Translation: It is said the fruit of actions performed in the mode of goodness bestows pure results. Actions done in the mode of passion result in pain, while those performed in the mode of ignorance result in darkness.

<https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/14/verse/16>

We might have forgotten our deeply rooted socio-cultural knowledge that we humans possess all three qualities and we are dominated by one of the qualities. When we are dominated by satva, we have qualities of inquisitiveness, inclusiveness and discernment (chapter 14, verse 11). In the state of rajas dominant we possess qualities of restlessness and passion that arises from desire and attachment (chapter 14, verse 7) whereas in the state of tamas dominant we seem passive and ignorant that arises from ignorance (chapter 14, verse 8). Here, I am appreciating and critically reflecting deeply rooted cultural (e.g. inclusive and discernment) qualities that we all possess including all nationalities, castes, genders, religions, and cultures.

Valuing collective identity and inclusion, the study of Schlesinger (1994, p. 27) discussed constructing “Europeanness” (i.e. collective identity) through developing active strategies of inclusion and exclusion who wrote:

Collective identities are relatively fluid constructions rather than eternal essences. Their social making is an active, dialectical process that involves the continual construction and reconstruction of a sense of themselves by self-identifying communities using the signs provided by their cultures. The construction of a collective identity also generally involves active strategies of inclusion and exclusion...

I found the study relevant to the Nepali context as I have been trying to explore Nepaliness or collective identity by examining the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Reaching here, I think university education can help to reconstruct Nepaliness by providing ‘good education.’ According to Auler (2021), good educational institutions question the incompatibility between academic excellence and equity. I think questioning the existing academic excellence in light of equality might help to enhance equality and equity rather it seems insufficient to enhance goodness (i.e. a constellation of satva-like qualities such as inquisitiveness, inclusion and discernment). According to Auler (2021), there are three qualities of a good educational institution such as socio-emotional education, equity and academic excellence. However, in the context of Nepal which has diverse cultures might also need cultural perspectives to deal with issues in diverse contexts.

Here, I am not considering Eastern Wisdom Tradition and Western Modern Worldview as a dichotomy rather dialectical or co-

existing and complementing each other from my socio-cultural inclusive orientation that values diverse cultural knowledge and practices. Cultural practices refer to the research practices which university promotes intended to provide 'good education'. For me, 'good education' refers to the education that enhances my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective as transformative professional development that continuously encourages living a good or meaningful life.

The lack of theory in qualitative research seems to undermine its quality (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014), however, my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective (partly) guided me throughout the research process which I used as theory. Satvic refers to having satva-like qualities such as inquisitiveness, inclusiveness, and discernment (the Bhagavad Gita, chapter 14 verse 11). In line with Kumar (2008, p. 15) I believe that my satva-like qualities "sees unity in diversity, wholeness, relatedness and creates synthesis"; my rajas-like qualities are "based in disunity and cause separation"; tamas-like qualities "focuses on a part and sees it as if it was the whole." Therefore, in Whitehead's (2008) line, the value words such as inclusiveness and discernment (i.e. reflection that lead to improvement) are my explanatory principles and standard of judgments as they influenced me, others, and social formation.

## **Methods**

Like other teacher educators and self-study practitioners (Delong, 2020; Dhungana, 2021; LaBoskey, 2004; Whitehead, 2009) I found the self-study methodology a suitable methodology to explore and nurture cultural perspectives. It is because self-study methodology supported me to explore to develop a 'satvic framework' (Dhungana, 2021) and thereby inspired to the conflict between 'self' and 'Self' (i.e. I and 'we') intend to transform myself first and then my students and teachers so that I could help them to develop and nurture their own cultural perspective.

The way Willink and Jacobs (2011) drew students' writing of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios, I drew on my lived experiences which recorded in my reflective journal, assignments, and articles that I developed from 2017 to 2021(i.e. during my PhD study years) while being in the higher education context. Using 'dialogue as a research method' I interacted with my lived experiences (Delong, 2020) that hold the evidence of (1) adapting inclusive perspective, (2) creating open space, (3) using a participatory-based approach, and (4)

developing tactful mentorship) as ‘my cultural perspective as transformative professional development. Following the scientific format, “IMRAD” (Cuschieri, Grech, & Savona-Ventura, 2018) was challenging particularly in the section of results and discussion as I could not separate results and discussion separately. My multiple ways of reflection mitigated the gap between data, interpretation, results and discussion.

### *Adapting inclusive perspective*

An inclusive perspective seems the first step that led me towards professional development. Here inclusive perspective refers to integral (i.e. to embrace or to integrate) perspective which does not value one perspective over another realizing “all elements are interrelated and are reflections of the same underlying unity” (Taylor, Taylor, & Luitel, 2012, p. 283). The quality word such as inclusion is a common or shared underlying integral quality in both Western Modern Worldview and the Eastern Wisdom Tradition.

For instance, in the university, I took the two academic classes: Curriculum and Advanced Qualitative Research which had become more meaningful than any other academic class as they fostered my inclusive perspective (e.g. Dhungana, in Press). I think these courses which were designed for in-depth study challenged my status quo in light of transformative learning theories and my lived experiences. Further, the classroom culture gradually engaged me in different reflective forms such as retrospective, ongoing, and anticipatory. I started to think beyond ‘givens’. I began to question my disciplinary orientation and envisioned holistic orientation. For instance, my assignment submitted on 7 September 2017 showed

As my research is about effective integrated learning, this demands an inclusive model of reasoning, vision-logic (Ken Wilber, 1999) that draws on Western and Eastern wisdom traditions, seeking to integrate to one another. From a vision-logic perspective, the four paradigms: post-positivist, interpretivism, criticalism and postmodernism comprise in a form of integral paradigm that values all paradigms without privileging any of them to create a better understanding of the learners to prepare them to address the growing needs of their living in their contexts. These multiple paradigms weave all the fragmented ways of learning into one that makes my research a holistic exploration.

Thus I developed a holistic perspective which was later enhanced by transformative learning theories (e.g. Mezirow, 2000; Daloz, 2000) that supported me to be self-critical and to work for the common good. As a result, I gradually see the gap between my prior assumptions and my actual life experiences as I learnt that there are no fixed truths as contexts change (Mezirow, 2000).

As a result not only in my academic classes, I started to look into my life critically and thereby questioned my ways of living personal and professional life. For instance, I realized that I began to listen to and value multiple perspectives of family members enhanced harmonious relationships.

I used to think I was correct although at times I used to support (partly) the perspectives of my family members. But suddenly, I began to give importance to things other than my perspectives, beliefs and opinions. Similarly, I began to question my professional life. My journal entry dated 14 October 2017 shows-

Being a so-called expert, how could I help the Curriculum Development Centre in developing curriculum materials at the central level and distribute them to all the teachers. How could I be guided by disempowering technical and practical interests? I feel ashamed of myself. How could I become an expert of a particular subject being a teacher of the capital city? My disciplinary orientations seem vain. Are they enough to facilitate the teachers of multiple disciplines in a rural setting?

Such reflective dialogues with self-taught me to be self-critical. For instance, I felt guilty about doing all the past works including textbook writing. My journal entry dated 15 October 2017 shows:

By heart, I wanted to see my students and teachers being creative and critical learners but what I was doing was against my wish, that is, I was just promoting the production of old traditions rather than making them emancipatory. Neither my schooling nor my profession has shaped my curriculum practices to develop students as self-regulated (self-reflective) and autonomous (akin to bibeki who can differentiate what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' to them) learners who can be critically aware of the dis/empowering cultural myths.

Reaching here, I realized that I could do differently. It was a step beyond disciplinary space which was possible by developing an inclusive perspective.

### *Creating open space*

Here, open space refers to beyond disciplinary space, i.e. the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning space. An inter/transdisciplinary space is an aesthetic space where learners' (of multiple disciplines) thinking, feeling and sensing interconnect as one (Given, 2008). I think the interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary learning space, the space where I was and which I created later in my research process was more open or inclusive than disciplinary space as it developed a sense of 'weness' within me.

For instance, every Wednesday, I, a member of a learning community, used to meet to share, discuss and plan together with the students of other disciplines such as Mathematics and Science. The members of KUSOED, Tribhuvan University (TU), Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU), and action school (teachers) were part of my learning community who frequently meet that formed a forum for reconciliation, where both differences and similarities are acknowledged and thereby led for common good (Daloz, 2000).

As we humans by birth want to engage ourselves and exercise the capacities with the social groups (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the Wednesdays meetings, presentations, and workshops provided an opportunity to live in the transdisciplinary space. Although the transdisciplinary space provided both soothing waves and painful bumps, they became frequent catalysts for me to live a meaningful life. Here, meaningful life refers to the good life which is open and harmonious that is dedicated for common good.

On 'Wednesday meetings', I used to get ample open space for collaboration. I, together with colleagues, shared beliefs, values and vision to interact with meaningful activities and engaged in order to enhance my knowledge and skills (Hord, 2009). In the group, we shared our recent experiences; we provided re/constructive feedback to all; we planned together; we discussed if there was an issue. Together we came to the conclusion. Then individually we worked for a week and again sat and shared in the group. Then we planned further.

By and by I learnt to be open. For instance, in the process of developing baseline tools being together with colleagues in the university, I learnt how to support participants to feel free to share the experience by probing questions; how to ask questions to make it more participatory; how to maintain 'no harm' to any; how to work together and come to a conclusion being in groups. Gradually, I learnt



to say ‘yes’ and ‘no’. For instance, I took a stand to remove some irrelevant probing questions in the group work. I agreed on colleagues’ perspectives and decisions. Many times, I learnt from others and even from my own perspectives by active engagement in the discussion process.

Such discussions provided a favorable environment to be open by acknowledging various perspectives, possibilities, opportunities and ways out including my own and of others. None of the members of the learning community seemed and acted as perfect who continued work for the good of all. In this favourable place, I continued learning, sharing, discussing, negotiating and understanding the interplay of differences and similarities. Unlike this smooth journey, one day I experienced a bump that I recorded in my journal.

Today we sat to finalize the baseline tools. We had been collecting inputs from all the community members and modifying them to make the tools the final tools.

Incorporating all voices has already made the tool very long. Although all the members know this reality, none of us was ready to remove his/her part. I think taking a final decision was not easy incorporating all the perspectives. After a long discussion, finally, we came to the conclusion that all the inputs were not important in our context. I sensed that making the tool contextual was the common goal. Then, we had to revisit the tools many times.

From it, I realized that collaborating days were more challenging when the learners of the community members had to decide the best practices. This ‘storming’ (Tuckman, 1965) phase was the ‘difficult phase of a project’s life cycle’ in which members negotiated their roles, values, relationships and visions and determined leadership to give focus on the project to accomplish than to themselves (Davidson, Naffi, & Raby, 2017). I experienced my value of common good from the incidents in which two of my colleagues discontinued their studies. I recorded one of them as follows:

I think s/he gave up. Probably, s/he did not like the journey of the rafting, a roller coaster. I had two queries from his/her decision: 1. Does everyone like to negotiate for the common good? 2. Was quitting the only alternative? Perhaps, s/he might have sat in the discussion but that discussion might (not) lead to negotiation and participation for the long-term committed common good.

Perhaps 'common good' was not the final state but an ongoing dialogue with those who may not be full participants on the common (Daloz, 2000). Here, common good refers to the practices that do not harm any participant instead benefit all participants (at least to some extent). Perhaps my sense of 'common good' resulted from collaborative culture.

Thus, frequent meetings, presentations, and informal settings with learners of community field visits are 'frequent catalysts' for me as I have been experiencing constructive engagement with otherness (Daloz, 2000). Perhaps, my being in the open space with the learning community where I could be critical and appreciative to my and others' practices, enhanced my inherent socio-cultural qualities such as inclusion and discernment as I developed my understanding of connection across differences and similarities among people, disciplines, contexts, and cultures.

### ***Using a participatory-based approach***

Here, a participatory-based approach refers to the approaches which have qualities of participatory action research such as collaboration, reflection, inclusiveness, dialogue, and democracy (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007). I attended many Participatory Action Research (PAR) workshops throughout my study and research process which were participatory-based approaches. The workshops helped me to question as well as acknowledge my assumptions and prior knowledge.

In every meeting, I found the PAR approach is participatory, collaborative, empowering and democratic which were completely different from other conventional workshops. Conventional workshops were guided by the top-down approach where the instructors come and teach and share knowledge in a big group intending to implement their understanding but in PAR workshop, we all (probably) equally involved for knowledge production where the trainer and the trainee remain in the same horizontal line, not in hierarchy. All the members present in the workshop of PAR are found committed to the long-term goal of the projects-transforming self and the other through their projects.

I, a practitioner of PAR, knew that we all are internally diverse, differentiated, and sometimes inconsistent and contradictory but also the shared vision was the guideline to work together reconstructing the social interaction by reconstructing the acts that have been

constituting us (Kemmis& McTaggart, 2007). Collaborative planning, action and reflection cycle were practiced in the workshop that has helped me to internalize the PAR process and thereby practice in the research process (e.g. Dhungana, 2020; Dhungana et. al, 2021).

That participatory learning space improved my interactions by questioning and changing my disempowering irrational, unproductive, inefficient, unjust, unsatisfying and alienating (Kemmis& McTaggart, 2007) egoist 'self' or 'I' culture. For it, PAR approaches, planning, taking action and reflecting guided me and my actions. I believe this participatory-based approach has been helping me to improve my way of working with people of similar and different mindsets, values, abilities, qualities and needs. Frequent presentation programs created a forum for reconciliation. Such exposure to the diverse community was always beneficial for the collective feedback (Hord, 2009) as a soothing wave. Presenting understanding in the presentation was a completely new discourse for me. Even the route of that journey was unfamiliar but I enjoyed it.

Every time I am/was open for critical comments intending to improve my practices. I ask my teachers, colleagues and supervisors for constructive feedback. For instance, the feedback provided by my colleague- "*Your presentation is more descriptive than...*"-supported me to be self-critical as I tried to use my reflections and produced better presentations.

I felt really good to be heard. It was nothing new for me but when I heard other's perspectives I began to listen actively. I found active listening to be interesting and eye-opening. In every presentation (others and my own), I learnt something new that was always unique and different. Gradually I learnt to respect others' unique stories as well as my own (I used to hesitate on sharing my stories).

Such improvement proved that all of us have the potential to make things better (Daloz, 2000). The culture of collecting collective feedback and improving my presentations is adventurous. More than that, I realized that I developed 'weness' within open space as I recorded in my journal.

I found my presentation a different presentation because the presentation was not my presentation but ours. It was the product of collaborative work. My heart sensed, "This is our presentation'. 'Our' includes co-researchers, teacher-participants, me and even a larger community. I felt this is

‘weness’, ‘our’ findings. Was I becoming a collaborative practitioner? I shared this feeling before we began our presentation that day. Something amazing happened. I was happy deep down that ‘my’ and ‘your’ turned into shared ‘our’.

Besides such pleasant waves, I experienced painful waves while becoming a part of a group of people. For instance, my ego was hurt when I felt others not paying attention to me, my work, and my experience at that moment was like a roller-coaster. Again and again, I reached the point that separated my ‘self’ as ‘my kind’ from others and ‘their kind’ (Daloz, 2000, p. 109).

However, painful moments taught me to listen to self and others equally and embrace multiple perspectives aiming for the common good. Such pleasant and painful waves taught my sense of ‘self’ is unhelpful to nurture my inclusive perspective. Such waves and some other untold (cannot express through words) cumulative effects might have deepened my horizon-developed sense of ‘self’ and sense of social responsibility. I think such ‘catalytic’ moments (Daloz, 2000) were transformative conditions to bring positive changes in my professional (i.e. collaborative or cultural) way of living.

### ***Developing tactful mentorship***

I think my supervisors’ mentorship with pedagogical tactfulness (van Manen, 1991) is/was my life-enhancing opportunity. Here, pedagogical tactfulness refers to the multiple (e.g. critical, appreciative, and inclusive) strategies employed by my mentors while facilitating my learning. My mentors or supervisors have a prominent role in my change by creating pedagogical tactfulness through providing an “all-inclusive perspective” (Taylor, Taylor, & Luitel, 2012) with the blend of “love and critique” (Gjotterud, 2009).

I think, at times, they believed in me more than I do in myself. For instance, they give equal importance to me (like to my co-researcher) although I felt that I did not deserve it as I was new to educational philosophies, theories, and methodologies. Both of my supervisors have been pushing me to take the next step with positive remarks which I no longer thought I had in me at the time. “*Excellent! This is exactly what I wanted to see.*” “*I trust you.*”

“*Congratulations! Excellent work! You clearly show some grounding challenges, to which I do not have answers, only questions...*” Such

remarks such as “excellent”, ‘congratulations’ meant a lot to me. For me, they meant to say- “You keep on experiencing new perspectives and exploring more and more.” Despite a lot to improve, such positive feedback encouraged me to improve my way of living and learning.

Similarly, my supervisors’ tactfulness enhanced my *bibek*. For instance, at the beginning of my field visit, I sensed chaos, an internal (seemingly cultural conflict) in the school. Perhaps it was only my assumption but I was worried thinking about how to work in such internal conflict? Later, I returned to university and discussed with the members of the learning community and then with my supervisors. Both of my supervisors gave their own opinions (e.g. What do you think would be appropriate for you to do?) and left me to decide on my level of understanding. None of them suggested anything in particular which was unexpected for me. Perhaps, my schooling is deeply rooted in the culture of following instructions from the top (e.g. supervisors) and implementing them without any alteration. In the beginning, I was in a dilemma, whether to avoid the conflict or face it. Finally, I used my *bibek* and decided to face the challenge for common good. As a result, in collaboration with my two colleagues, I planned a four-day discussion program which went well. Although I had some mixed feelings I was surprised to see the positive environment of teachers who welcomed us and participated fully in the four days’ program.

Thus, my supervisors’ tactfulness taught me not to give up in difficult situations, rather cope with diverse perspectives and go through them. Besides my supervisors, I feel all the other members of the community of learners are my mentors as they hear me, acknowledge my perspective, respect my feelings and give constructive feedback on time whenever I ask and even without asking. I feel all the members of my learning community are my good friends who are teaching lessons one way or another. For instance, we co-authored the paper (Dhungana, et al, 2020), co-present it in the conferences (Rajbanshi & Dhungana, 2020; Rajbanshi & Dhungana, 2021) besides co-learning and peer-evaluating which became my professional praxis.




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## Final reflections

In short, while adapting the critical-appreciative approach, I explored the following context-responsive approaches (see Figure 1) such as inclusive perspectives, creating open space, using the participatory-based approach, and developing tactful mentorship in the form of a satvic perspective as/for my transformative professional development. For the development of the satvic perspective, the following things were prerequisite:

(1) Nurturing ‘we’ culture: I nurtured ‘we’ culture by not deconstructing individualistic ‘self’ rather expanding ‘self’ being open and inclusive. Working together was beyond living in isolation. Although working alone was getting time for self, working in a group was getting time to understand ‘Self’ in reference to ‘self’. Further, the interplay between ‘self’ and ‘Self’ was a transformative moment, a ‘flight of fancy’.

(2) Knowing living values: I realized my living values such as vulnerability, trust and respect which had the potentiality of being inquisitive, open and self-reflective and self-improving. My living values supported me to sense ‘who I am/not, what I don’t/know, what I am/not doing and how I am/not improving’ while influencing self, others and social formation living values (Whitehead, 2008).

(3) Valuing available time, place, people, and things: I valued what I had in the present moment. Perhaps that provided me with a favourable environment to expand my disciplinary horizon as I felt I had been getting all the moral, personal and financial support to stretch my boundary. Perhaps, my ‘supportive structural conditions like time, place & resources’ was an important factor for transformative learning (Hord, 2009).

(4) Writing as a ‘Self’ inquiry: I loved writing as I realized that I thought writing my ‘self’ and ‘Self’ and their conflicts and thereby improved my professional practices. Looking back at my own writing with fresh eyes and re-making sense was an eye-opening moment for me.

Thus, the four prerequisite factors and the four strategies supported me to develop my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective which might be significant to the ones who would aspire for exploring their own cultural perspective in the local and global university contexts. I envision that university students and teachers are well prepared to address the past, present and immediate future professional development issues being together in the diverse cultural contexts harmoniously. I am hopeful that educators and students would foster cultural knowledge through ‘Self’ inquiry. It would be interesting to continue the discussion in light of cultural perspective to seek the underneath issues of Black Life Matters! Anti-Asian Campaign! Seemingly such issues are the call for “cultural emancipation” (Taylor, 2013) and/or cultural responsiveness. As sustainability in education inquiry about and being in the natural world is vital through inquiry-based learning (Austin, 2020), for nurturing cultural knowledge, cultural responsiveness, and cultural perspectives inquiry of ‘Self’ seems vital.

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### Author Bio

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**Online Pedagogy in Teaching and Learning English Language  
and Communication during COVID-19: A Case Study of  
Kathmandu University School of Law**

**Haris C. Adhikari**

**Abstract**

This article explores undergraduate students' perceptions of online pedagogy (OP) being practiced in teaching and learning English language and communication courses during COVID-19 at Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSL). As a case study under a combination of constructivist and social constructionist paradigms, the study highlights the majority voice for continuing the OP in practice (with improvements) as part of the conventional mode, diagnoses numerous problems associated with the pedagogy, and identifies spaces to bring about improvements in. Alongside, it enriches the conceptual framework employed and presents useful implications and suggestions for stakeholders—also for those who have been practicing similar pedagogy in similar contexts.

यो अनुसन्धान पत्रले कोभिड महामारीको समयमा काठमान्डु विश्व विद्यालयको कानून संकायमा अध्ययनरत अन्डरग्राजुएट विध्यार्थीहरुको अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा र संचार विषयको शिक्षण सिकाईमा अनलाइन पेडागोजी सम्बन्धि धारणाको अन्वेषण गर्दछ। रचनावादी र सामाजिक रचनावादी दुबै प्रतिमानको संयोजनमा गरिएको यो केस स्टडीले अनलाइन पेडागोजीको (ओ पी) को निरन्तरताई (केही सुधार सहित ) परम्परागत शिक्षण सिकाईको एक भागको रूपमा प्रकाश पार्नुका साथै त्यससंग सम्बन्धित समस्याहरु पहिल्याईससधार गर्नुपर्ने क्षेत्रहरु पनि पहिचान गर्दछ। यसका अतिरिक्त यसले सरोकारवालाका साथै समान परिवेशमा शिक्षण सिकाईमा संलग्न भएकाहरुका लागि प्रयोग गरिएको सैद्धान्तिक ढाँचा र उपयोगी अवधारणा र सुझावहरु पनि प्रस्तुत गरेको छ।

COVID-19 has posed unforeseen challenges in all areas of life. Globally, under the threats of the pandemic, both teachers and learners are practicing different types of alternative pedagogies (e.g., online, on-air, and other media forms), but with various ensuing hurdles, especially in online medium. In this context, Nepali educational scenario needs special attention, for in general it lacks proper technological infrastructure to effectively practice online pedagogy (OP). On the one hand, there is a lack of preparation, and on the other, the pandemic risk is rapidly growing. Therefore, most public and private educational institutions in Nepal are still closed. However, as floods of news reports reveal, well-equipped and well-prepared stakeholders have been running or taking online classes, except in situations of power cuts and internet disconnection. These stakeholders are saying that they have been using OP as something which has proved quite fruitful.

As a teacher of English language and communication, I also have been teaching online for nearly two years now, by using, among others, Google Class, Google Meet, YouTube, discussion forums, and academic journals. My experiences also tell me that OP, though problematic at times, is more helpful for language teaching, when compared to the conventional mode. The multimedia modality that it comes with helps make classes more interactive and interesting, helps make students collaborate and learn more fruitfully and present their works more effectively. In the process, learners get to exercise their autonomy, agency and creativity to a greater extent. But students' perceptions are also equally important when it comes to seeing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of any pedagogy being practiced. Therefore, I, in this article, explore how the student participants from KUSL view the pedagogic practices they have been part of during the pandemic.

### **Conceptual framework**

In modern times, critical and reflective pedagogies hold undeniably crucial positions. Inspired by Freire's transformative model of education, Kumaravadivelu (2001) stresses that pedagogic exploration, critical thinking and reflections are integral parts of

postmethod pedagogy. He says that a pedagogy of particularity must involve context-sensitivity, which eventually turns out to be a pedagogy of practicality. His third focus is on context-sensitive reflective practices and local experiments, which, in fact, helps build a pedagogy of possibility (pp. 539-44).

Internet technology (primarily Internet connectivity and Web 2.0 tools) assisted pedagogy is what is generally understood as OP. However, OP is not something that is practiced in real time only, for it involves both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Plus, it may also involve contents already downloaded from different means and sources.

Ko and Rossen (2004) define online teaching as “conducting a course partially or entirely through the Internet” (as cited in Dawley, 2007, p. 3). Dawley observes that in online teaching teachers must be able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the online tools available to them, and then match the appropriate tool and activity to achieve the objectives (p. 3).

According to Duncan and Young (2009), the rapid development of technology in teaching and learning “focuses not only on the medium of delivery, but also, and more critically on pedagogy” (p.18). However, Nickols (2011) states that in online education “an overall educational framework is still missing.” He advocates for “a synergy between the pedagogy and technology” (pp. 322-323). He reminds of Postman’s (1993) idea of “technopoly”—a pervasively growing culture of deifying technology, of finding satisfactions in technology, and of taking orders from technology (p. 71).

However, to incorporate my colleagues’ experiential observations on OP, or more precisely on its medium, certain complex but highly useful multimedia skills, such as animation, are difficult to learn right away. Therefore, they have been relying on ‘collective learning’, which they think has helped them to some extent. On another front, they, like other stakeholders, are concerned about various ‘makeshift’ practices at different levels in the OP mode.

OP’s effectiveness is, therefore, a growing concern (Pelz, 2010, p. 103). Serdyukova and Serdyukov (2014) caution that in the name of embracing new educational format and technologies we should not undermine fundamental pedagogic research.

One more key concept that deserves a definitional look here is “pandemic pedagogy.” Smith and Hornsby (2020) view pandemic pedagogy (PP) as a makeshift that “speaks to the approaches we

employ in our learning environments to teach and foster learning in a context of a serious health crisis and the spread of a new disease.” Besides, it is “about developing an understanding of ourselves and how we teach” (pp. 1-2) in such times. Clearly, COVID-19 pandemic is a major propeller in its development, at least in its modern versions that have embraced the latest technological innovations. Currently, it is being taken as the safest alternative solution to normal ways of teaching and learning worldwide.

In Nepali contexts, it has to be seen in relation to, among other things, the country’s education policy responses to the pandemic, educational institutions’ provisions of technological infrastructure, immediate stakeholders’ capacity to have technological devices, quality of Internet facility, and skills needed for it. Alongside, ‘ethical aspect’ is also being highlighted in its different dimensions.

According to local literature, means of remote education such as radio, television, newspapers and telephone, and synchronous and asynchronous modes and platforms are what communities of teachers and learners in Nepal have been using as part of PP. UNESCO (2020) states that the country’s mountainous landscape and its remote hard-to-reach communities via Internet made distance learning through radio a suitable way to maximize continuity of learning. Radio Pathshala, a UNESCO-supported pilot radio lesson broadcast, provides educational content and live call-in support to students. The broadcast has been found useful. However, it is devoted only to secondary level students. Similarly, Hamro Ghar: Hamro Paathshala, another educational radio program, has turned out to be effective in these difficult times (World Vision Nepal, 2020).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has also developed an online learning portal, which has e-books, interactive videos, learning games, and audio lessons—all categorized grade-wise. But unfortunately, there are unpredictable power cuts and Internet facilities across the country are also not fast, smooth and reliable. These things make it difficult to use these materials as and when needed.

Users of PP have their own realizations. Some of its positive aspects identified in Nepal include its effectiveness for student collaboration and group work, instant feedback circle, emotional support, growing digital literacy, (easy) access to online training, and increased research skills (Bajracharya, 2020). What Bajracharya notes is, if made accessible and affordable to all, PP can help drastically

transform education systems in Nepal. However, PP is not without certain negative aspects. For example, fatigue found in digital platforms, fatigue of prolonged exposure to technology, and extra time for session planning makes the online mode problematic and taxing (Rijal, 2020). Similarly, issues of limited digital literacy and plagiarism are also being reported.

When seen this way, PP, except for its reliance on other means such as radio or television, is not different from OP. It also uses OP's online medium and features. Additionally, PP, just like OP, is well-informed by the dimensions and principles of and discourses on pedagogy (or pedagogies), as seen so far. This relation can be visualized thus:

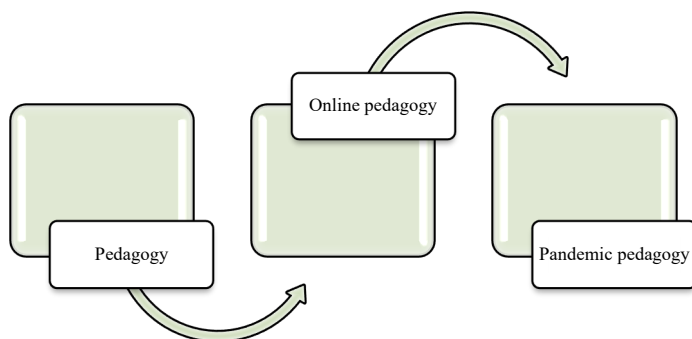


Figure 1: Relation among pedagogy, online pedagogy and pandemic pedagogy

Evidently, the experimental turn of teaching and learning online is receiving more attention and is already spawning stakeholders' interests in its future implications in Nepal. However, students' perceptions of OP have not received much attention in research. Therefore, my purpose in this article is to explore different aspects of OP as experienced and perceived by the student participants from KUSL. Alongside, I inquire into whether or not they would like to continue having OP as 'part' of the conventional mode.

### **Research methodology**

The study is inspired by constructivist and social constructionist paradigms and presents both individual perceptions and interactive sense making about the subjects and the elements of the object of study, i.e., the OP in practice at KUSL. This frame allows my participants' voices (with edits for conciseness and clarity) a direct way to or space in the paper. However, to maintain anonymity of the



participants, I use pseudonyms: Gita, Rita, Sita, Nita, Aman, Prem, Kush, and Dev.

Blending descriptive, narrative and interpretive case study methods, the study further uses Stake's (1995) ideas of qualitative cum multiple case study approach to see "multiple realities" (p. 64). Yin (2018) says case study helps to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and involves an empirical approach to research (p. 50). Yin's (1984) descriptive method helps to carefully scrutinize and articulate at the outset pertinent research issues and boundaries of the case. Further, it helps to make the study focused, detailed, and rigorous (Tobin, 2010, p. 288). To borrow from Wells (2004), narrative approach involves thinking "in narrative" and leads "from one finding to another" (p. 758). In narrative case study, each participant is a unique part of the whole (Thomas, 2011, p. 184). Similarly, interpretive case studies "seek to identify meanings that participants have about a context, event, individual, group, or phenomenon," i.e., they help to "create rich insights" into the study (Mahoney, 2010, p. 314). Yin (2018) also maintains that participants' moods or exact words are highly important, as are messages between the lines in their written responses, which may sometimes require follow-ups with the sources and even triangulations (pp. 50, 136).

### **Context, setting and participants**

The study was virtually conducted with the first and the third semester undergraduate LLB students at KUSL, Dhulikhel, Nepal. The first semester class of 'General English' (which involves critical, creative and academic writing) had 21 female and 19 male students and the third semester class of 'Managerial Communication' (which also involves professional communication) had 23 female and 18 male students.

The semesters started in September 2020 and lasted until February 2021. During all this time, these students took online classes, particularly through Google Meet, Google Class, Zoom, and Moodle, from their respective homes in different districts. The data for this research were collected from December 2020 to January 2021.

### **Instrumentation and data collection**

Initially, a Google Meet session was held to brief about the research issue and the ethical aspects the study would maintain. This was followed by a virtual survey, to see whether or not the students

would like to continue having the OP as part of the conventional mode and to be able to accordingly frame interview questions. The survey showed different results from the two classes. Therefore, I prepared the questions addressing these results, with a view to getting in-depth data from their sides.

Then, each class was asked to provide 4 names of 2 male and 2 female students for an email interview. Email interviews provided them with ample time to reflect and respond, at their own convenience and in a risk-free manner (Bampton & Cowton, 2002, pp. 1-7). Later, follow-ups (via phone calls and Google Meet sessions) were also conducted, whenever in doubt or confusion. Similarly, to corroborate data from them concerning ‘monotony’ in particular, a triangulation with one of their English teachers was also conducted over phone.

### **Data analysis**

The analysis process involved looking for key words and ideas in the participants’ email responses. The data were analyzed on the basis of five broad categories, namely, ‘Why continue?’, ‘Space to improve’, ‘Alternative views’, ‘Why not continue?’ and ‘Insights from triangulation’. These categories were suggested by the research purpose, the data collected, the follow-ups conducted, and the triangulation used. In addition, because categories within categories emerged, I used Crabtree’s and Miller’s (1992) continuum of coding strategies that range from “prefigured” categories to “emergent” categories (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 185).

Crabtree and Miller (1992) suggest: Once identified, units in the data should be sorted and organized into categories or codes. Then the interpreter should explore categories and determine patterns and themes that connect them (p. 20). However, Creswell (2013) cautions that Crabtree’s and Miller’s technique may serve to limit the analysis to the prefigured codes or categories rather than opening up the codes or categories to reflect the views of the participants (p. 185). Therefore, I dealt with each of the ‘emergent’ categories individually, preserving the participants’ voices.

### **Findings**

#### ***Why continue?***

“Personally, I have found the switch to online mode not only time-relevant but also required for innovative and autonomous learning...”

“The links to articles and audiovisuals provided to us saved my time. They were written so cogently and to the point. Earlier, I used to randomly search on Google. Now I know about some good online platforms and have understood the value of authentic reading materials.” (Nita)

Majority of the participants found the pedagogy beneficial and suggested incorporating it in the conventional mode. But they also stressed that it needs refinement. Below are the categories that emerged from ‘Why continue?’

**a. Time saving and cost effective**

All of the email participants revealed that the pedagogy is time saving and cost effective. There is no need for them to travel to school, which saves their 2 to 4 hours per day, apart from travel cost. This, according to Aman, Kush and Rita, also makes it “hassle-free.” Aman further connected this to learning situations when he was able to have “peaceful composure.” Further, 6 participants mentioned that it offers cost effective online tools and educational resources like books, papers and audiovisuals.

**b. More flexibility**

6 interviewees noted that they did not have to follow rigid schedules; and therefore, the pedagogy encouraged both teachers and students to set their own pace. This, according to Aman, promoted deep learning, “which is long-lasting and more enabling.”

**c. Autonomy, increased creativity and independent learning**

5 participants noted that the pedagogy encouraged them to build a habit of learning independently. They got to exercise a greater amount of autonomy and creativity, which bolstered their self-confidence and helped them explore different ideas and proper ways of doing their projects and assignments.

“Without a friend beside, it is not disturbing as is often the case in physical classes. Consequently, this mode promotes independent learning and increased creativity,” wrote Rita.

**d. Simpler and easier communication**

4 participants noted that the pedagogy involved desirable communication. Kush wrote, “Even formal interactions have been

much simpler and easier.” According to 3 other participants, informal communications eased many things for them, including reducing the level of anxiety through quick help.

#### **e. Personalized learning**

Aman wrote that the practices in the OP mode encouraged them to come up with questions and ideas for interaction. As mentioned by Rita, practices of occasional one-to-one interaction or input giving helped make classes interactive and encouraged other learners to open up. In a follow-up, she revealed that such instances work as “ice-breakers” and help bridge conceptual gaps and “promote faster learning.” Similarly, Gita wrote that one of her assignments involved making a group representing video on their experiences of collaborating online, which she found effective to learn newer ways of communication through collectively personalized creativity.

#### **f. Customized learning**

3 participants noted that online tools that give themselves to customization are helpful to garner long-lasting learning. In the follow-ups with them, they gave the examples of their blogging experiences and the stepwise challenges involved in the online quizzes they participated in. Sita suggested incorporating customized video games, apart from quizzes, in language teaching. She, along with Kush, observed that customizing teaching and learning as per learners’ interests can help promote better learning, newer skills, and creativity. This realization came to them through the assigned works of blogging, video making, group presentation making, and Google Docs collaborative writing. They noted that this is where personalized or collectively personalized learning and customized learning actually converge.

#### **g. New multimedia skills-oriented**

5 out of 8 participants wrote that OP is both time relevant and futuristic. According to Aman, Sita, Gita and Dev, the pedagogy encouraged them to develop new multimedia skills, which they took as ‘instrumental’ in teaching and learning English language and communication. They mentioned that they individually and / or collectively learned to use in their projects and presentations different useful features from ‘Canva’, ‘Animaker’ and YouTube video tutorials. They also used some other multimedia skills to collaborate online through Google Docs and Google Meet, to collect useful contents (such as relevant interviews with writers) from platforms like Google podcasts, and to do better documentation of resources.

However, certain skills were difficult for them. For example, Kush's and Gita's collaborative video project required entirely new and complex skills. Upon further inquiry, they revealed that they took help for this project from one of their friends majoring in graphics and visual computing.

***h. More practical and descriptive learning***

5 participants noted that, unlike oral interactions in physical classes, the pedagogy often involved use of interactive multimedia in online teaching and learning; and therefore, it was more practical. It encouraged them to develop multimedia skills, which they considered indispensable in today's education. According to Aman and Nita, the pedagogy also involved an increased use of descriptive teaching and learning through diagrams, audiovisuals, etc. This, according to Aman, gave "a sense of better understanding or learning."

***i. User-friendly and encouraging***

Aman, Kush and Sita found the new mode friendly, for there was no or less disturbance coming from their friends. 5 participants wrote that OP's online tools are user-friendly and encouraging, and that the newly introduced features in these tools helped make communication easier. Nita, Gita and Dev wrote that chat box and hand icon features on Google Meet are of great help to put forth queries or to participate in conversations. In the follows-ups with them, they said these features helped them ease their anxiety, especially when they wanted to approach their teacher to dispel their confusions. Aman wrote that even introverts like him were encouraged to open up by these features on Google Meet. Similarly, as stated by Dev, activating automated attendance encouraged students' participation; and this, he thought, is a big relief for teachers, because they now do not have to worry much about issues of attendance.

In addition, OP's asynchronous modality, which functions as a backup of all that goes in class, including notes and recorded classes, was a big relief, as observed by Aman, Nita, Gita and Dev. The recorded classes also helped them to follow up and stay updated. With the recording option on in class, they did not have to fear losing anything. Interestingly, this made "undivided attention in class" possible, as put by Gita.

***j. Quick access to up-to-date contents and easy storage***

5 out of 8 participants noted that the new mode was helpful for them in their self-explorations. It provided them with quick access to "useful" contents online. For example, Aman, Prem, Nita and Sita

wrote that they consulted on their own some online tips, particularly on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, word etymology, and writing format and style, on Google or YouTube. They said these tips were not only time saving but cogently prepared, with ample examples.

Further, their teachers also provided them with “new” or “most relevant” knowledge or information, from online sources. Upon further inquiry, they revealed that, among other things, classroom discussions of findings from latest research gave them an idea of how they could/ can link ‘course contents’ to latest research discourses. Similarly, they found the provided links to documentaries and videos on YouTube and latest interviews with writers on Google podcast very helpful.

Moreover, according to Sita, Gita and Prem, it was easier to store documents and resources in the OP mode, either in Google Drive or on a computer. Gita further noted that reading books and papers in pdf format, by highlighting key ideas in them, is very useful. She found this facility cum technique particularly useful in internalizing and synthesizing all that she read in this way. Unlike in printed documents, it was easier to go back and forth and follow the signposts (e.g., comments in comment boxes) left behind, she noted. This was also cost effective for her.

#### **k. Quick help and collaboration**

5 participants noted that it was easier to receive quick help from friends and teachers in the OP mode. Kush wrote that his teacher was so kind to receive his calls even in late hours. Sita observed that their WhatsApp group messaging helped them in many ways, from updating to organizing immediate interactions. According to Aman, Gita and Nita, online tools like Google Meet and Google Docs augmented their synergistic work spirit and / or great learning through rounds of quick collaborations.

#### **l. Well-prepared classes**

According to Gita and Nita, their English teachers evidently put extra time and extra seriousness off the screen to prepare or to help students prepare relevant or helpful materials for class, mostly in the forms of slides and audiovisuals. They also noted that they were provided with some succinctly prepared notes or cogently written online journal articles. They acknowledged that reading, selecting, and providing such materials do involve extra time and extra care. Gita further wrote that the new mode involved different interesting activities such as group presentations and rounds of interactions, often

systematically scheduled. Therefore, it was far better when compared to drifting and boring lectures in conventional classes. It also seemingly encouraged teachers to invest more time in preparing their lectures in visual forms.

### **m. Reduces stress**

Rita, Gita and Dev wrote that they did not have to multitask while in class because everything, including the recorded class itself, was provided to them later, via email, Google Class or Moodle. Rita and Dev noted that this reduced their stress, because there was no pressure for them to catch up the pace of their teachers. They could revisit the class later, if necessary. Most importantly, revisiting the recorded classes at their leisure helped them to fully understand certain difficult concepts. However, the recorded classes sometimes created confusions, so they had to contact their respective teachers.

### **n. Fruitful utilization in future**

4 out of 8 participants wrote that this pedagogy, with all the ongoing improvements in its educational technologies, can be even more fruitfully utilized in difficult times in future. Sita wrote that “in a politically unstable country such as ours, this mode of teaching is more effective because it is not affected by political bandas.” Similarly, Aman wrote that tools associated with this pedagogy, such as mobile and Internet, can immensely help in other normal situations like educational tours—to capture important things which can later be used to enrich classroom teaching and learning.

“This modality has initiated the concept of e-learning. Both faculties and students have come out of their comfort zones. Though stressful in the beginning, it has definitely made us familiar with new educational technologies, which will be useful for us in our personal and professional lives.”

“Learning via this mode has been fun. But there is a need to become more interactive and engaging.” (Rita)

### **Space to improve**

The data from the participants also revealed that there is ample space for improvement in various areas of the pedagogy. Below are the categories that emerged from ‘Space to improve’.

“English is a subject that requires a lot of interaction, but the online medium is not supporting substantial two-way human communication... The size of our class is also a problem in this mode.”

“I feel the university’s role in the pedagogy is very limited, if not next to nil. Professors are doing what they can, but the institution also must have its presence in making this mode a bit more effective... For example, we need an online library that can cater to our needs.” (Prem)

**a. Long term solutions**

5 out of 8 participants stressed on finding long term solutions to unpredictable power cuts and unsteady Internet facility. Also, the internet packages provided to them by the university were not sufficient; therefore, their volumes should be increased, as observed by Prem, Rita and Dev.

**b. Developing futuristic skills**

4 participants identified OP as futuristically important. However, they found faults in how it was being taken. Kush wrote that the teachers or the institution should have invited some multimedia experts to orient them on certain important skills. This would have helped them immensely. Similarly, Nita, Sita and Dev wrote that both the teachers and the students need to improve their multimedia skills. They reflected that such skills lacked in lesson deliveries and students’ presentations, including that of their own, that they used not even half of what the medium of this pedagogy offers, primarily because important contents were not available for free.

It was interesting to note that Nita and Sita took multimedia skills as having almost equal significance when compared to the content knowledge they gained from their respective courses. Nita pointed out that learning the art of animation is important for making presentations visually rich and effective. Sita added that presenting stories or ideas through cartoon characters could be “awesome and easier to remember.”

According to Gita, students often muted the audio and video features on Google Meet. Teachers themselves made them mute the audio feature. She wrote that maintaining a rule to unmute these features while in class can help encourage students to be more serious about the class. However, classes should be taken from “noise-free” and “comfortable” zones; both “teachers and the institution should think about creating such zones to make it [the pedagogy] more effective.”

**c. Need for more user-friendly tools, facilities and materials**

Most participants iterated that makeshift attitudes and practices should give way to seriousness and proper systems. For example, Sita



noted that facilities of Moodle (which has also been used as a virtual library at KUSL) need to be made more user-friendly by constantly updating it, for “there are materials of both shallow and comprehensive nature and some links to dead sites.” Aman and Prem also saw “the dire need for an online library.”

According to Kush and Dev, teachers used different means of communication, such as email, Moodle, Google Class or WhatsApp, to update or send reading materials, and this practice was what they found “distracting” and “confusion creating” respectively. They suggested using only one site, either Moodle or Google Class, for regular communication.

**d. Need for variety and individual attention**

5 participants suggested breaking monotony with a variety of tools and techniques and promoting individual attention and interaction. According to Sita, their teachers mostly gave lectures via plain slides. Nita noted that the pedagogy often lacked “interactivity” and “fun.” It mostly promoted “group works;” therefore, individual attention and interaction often lacked in class. Dev noted that only a few students were often repeatedly encouraged to participate; and a larger number of students in the class was another problem, which, he thought, generally blocked fruitful interaction.

Sita, following Kush, Nita and Rita, stressed on utilizing various other multimedia tools and interactive ways to make classes more interesting. Similarly, Kush suggested asking questions randomly every 10 or 20 minutes so that students behind the muted screen are discouraged to leave class and start paying more attention to what is being discussed.

**e. Timing is important**

Proper timing was another important factor that sometimes lacked, as identified by 5 participants. Each class lasted for two hours. Prem, Nita and Sita suggested having shorter classes or increasing the break time from 5 minutes to 10 to 15 minutes. Similarly, Aman, Gita and Dev suggested sending the recorded classes on time, immediately after the recording is available to the teacher. “Doing so will immensely help those students who have not been able to attend the class due to power cuts,” wrote Gita. Similarly, according to Prem and Gita, unnecessary procrastinations or postponements should be avoided by both teachers and students. They also stressed on maintaining punctuality by all the parties involved.

**f. Fun activities with variations**

Most participants wrote that maintaining variety and balance in the use of fun activities is important. According to Rita and Kush, the fun activities (including quizzes and Google Docs collaborative works) made the classes interesting but their repeated use actually irritated them. Prem wrote, “Mentimeter quizzes are fun-filled but feel below our age, and when repeatedly used, really irritate us.” He further observed that repeated use of fun activities via Google Docs, blogging or YouTube videos cannot help make classes interactive in real sense, because “they block the real human interaction, especially with the teacher.” In a follow-up with him, he stressed on having balance through “ample amount of two-way communication.” Similarly, Sita suggested including more “ice-breakers” and both “individual and group interactions,” alongside fun activities, to ensure fruitful engagement.

#### **g. More flexibility needed**

Dev, Sita and Kush emphasized the need for more flexibility. Dev wrote: “We should be allowed to select projects and assignments according to our interests and internal assessments should also be flexible, because the mode itself is being flexibly used by our teachers under the pretext of the pandemic.” Sita, on the other hand, pointed out the drawback of the usual routine: “Apart from an hour-long clinical class, we have two classes every day just one hour apart. This one-hour time we get for lunch in between is not sufficient. It also adds to the stress we are already going through.” Similarly, Kush called attention to what he called “intense pressure,” thus: “Our teachers have been taking classes even on Saturdays to compensate for classes affected by power cuts. This is obviously a good gesture. But we need some time to refresh and rejuvenate. In fact, even teachers should take weekends off.”

#### **h. Exploiting the full potential**

“OP should also be used to create different kinds of bridges across cultures and disciplines,” wrote Aman. In a follow-up, he said he found some Facebook live interaction among students from different countries worthwhile. So he suggested practicing such interactions once in a while.

### **Alternative views**

As in the survey with the first semester students, in which 1 participant gave an alternative view (see figure 2 below), 3 participants in the email interviews also responded with alternative

views. They neither completely went for ‘Yes’ nor for ‘No’. They stated that only a bit of OP should be incorporated in physical classes.

According to all these 4 participants, PowerPoint presentations are helpful but they should be judiciously used in physical classes. In addition, certain facilities such as Google classroom, Google Meet, Moodle, and online library, among others, can be a great complement to the conventional mode. However, they should not overshadow the importance of physical mode, which, according to Prem, is more real.

QUESTION: Do you think the online pedagogy [online teaching and learning principles and practices, including the use of any resources, tools and methods] being practiced at Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSL) during COVID-19 should continue as part of conventional teaching and learning English language and communication even in future? [Note: You can either go for YES or NO options or you can choose to write your own answer against the third option, i.e., 'OTHER']

36 responses

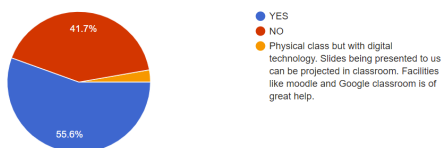


Figure 1. Survey responses from the class of General English (first semester), KUSL; YES - 20; NO - 15; OTHER - 1 (out of 40 students)

### *Why not continue?*

To go with the survey results from the third semester, majority of the participants disfavored pedagogy. Out of 41 students, 16 voted for ‘No’, 13 voted for ‘Yes’, and no one went for ‘Other’ (see figure 3 below). However, the results from the first semester were different. Out of 40 students, 20 voted for ‘Yes’, 15 voted for ‘No’, and 1 went for ‘Other’ (see figure 2 above). Similarly, the email participants also articulated different reasons for this category.

QUESTION: Do you think the online pedagogy [online teaching and learning principles and practices, including the use of any resources, tools and methods] being practiced at Kathmandu University School of Law (KUSL) during COVID-19 should continue as part of conventional teaching and learning English language and communication even in future? [Note: You can either go for YES or NO options or you can choose to write your own answer against the third option, i.e., 'OTHER']

29 responses

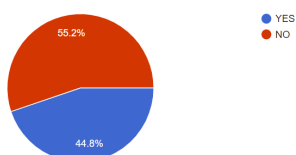


Figure 2. Survey responses from the class of Managerial Communication (third semester), KUSL; NO - 16; YES - 13 (out of 41 students)

“Am I speaking correctly? I hope they aren’t laughing at me, are they? Did I say something stupid? — are some of the thoughts I get while interacting online.”

“Looking at the slides for two hours straight and paying cent percent attention is almost next to impossible. Sometimes, it is tempting to leave class for a short while, especially because teachers won’t realize our absence.”

“So, should it continue in the future? To a certain extent yes, but not like this. First we must rescue ourselves from the makeshift mentality and technological hurdles.” (Dev)

#### **a. Technological issues and their by-products**

All the email participants highlighted technological issues as the biggest problems in the OP mode. In fact, unofficial and annoying power outages caused much trouble in 2020 (see Subedi, 2020). Similarly, according to Sita, internet facilities were sometimes unsteady. Kush wrote that these issues were even worse in Sunsari, his hometown, and posed “biggest challenges” to online learning; therefore, “instances of cancellation or postponement of classes were common.” Similarly, “procrastination and unpunctuality—the byproducts of these issues—were other foes of this pedagogy,” observed Aman. For most participants, the totality of these issues was irritating and stressful, which further bolstered the makeshift attitude.

#### **b. Monotony**

5 participants mentioned that ‘monotony’ resulted from repeated use of various elements: same method (particularly lecturing), same style (particularly teacher’s authority and facilitation), same activities (particularly quizzes and writing and editing on Google Docs), and heavy reliance on one-way communication. 2 other participants found technological and routine-related issues contributing to monotony.

Upon further inquiry, Prem suggested sharing certain responsibilities, in particular coordination and material preparation, among the teacher and the students. Prem and Nita revealed that two-way communication was also practiced in their classes; yet its use was repeatedly limited to interactions among a few students and the teacher. Prem further added: “Students’ hesitation or shyness should also be counted in this regard.”

#### **c. Extra burden**

According to 3 participants, they had to take up extra burden. Kush wrote, “Some of my friends, who now are in their hometowns, could not contribute much to the group works we were doing because of power cuts or weak internet.”

#### **d. Distractions**

3 participants mentioned issues of ‘distractions’. Aman wrote, “Apart from noise or rumination, tempting social media, (particularly memes on Facebook) also distracted.” Rita sometimes got carried away by food, social networking sites or games. She also added “sleep-inducing environment” to the list. Similarly, Gita wrote that she was sometimes misled by inauthentic or incomplete ideas in some online sources.

#### **e. Pedagogy of pretexts?**

4 participants took the pedagogy as the pedagogy of pretexts. Sita observed that sometimes cases of low attendance and / or late arrivals were normal. “With the video feature turned off, students generally seemed to have been freer to do whatever they liked,” wrote Dev. Similarly, Aman, Nita and Gita noted that the recorded classes were generally not sent to them on time. In the follow-ups with them, they said they had to spend a lot of time doing unnecessary communication, either to ask for the recordings or to update or get updated. Nita further added: “Though group presentations were encouraged and their evaluations were done, individual presentations and individual input giving were not practiced that often, under different pretexts. This made her feel “uninvolved.”

#### **f. Extra spending**

5 out of 8 participants reported that they had to spend extra money on buying data packs, because the data packs provided by the university were not enough. Kush, in his lamentation, correlated this to the “high fees” charged by the university.

#### **g. Informal communication: problematic**

Prem and Gita identified informal communication as problematic in the OP mode, for it added stress to learning. Prem wrote, “Chat box conversations, especially when they included only key words or when they lacked context, were confusing—more so when they were revisited after class.” Such instances, according to Gita, led them to ask their friends or do follow-ups with the teacher to dispel confusions. In this, she found “misuse of everybody’s time.” Prem, in a follow-up with him, forwarded a solution: “Classes themselves

should be more interactive, with ample two-way communication, so that confusions, if any, are cleared.”

***h. Desire to be with friends***

“It has been nearly a year since we have not met in person,” wrote Aman. “Face-to-face human interaction cannot be replaced by this mode,” he added. Similarly, Sita represented her class thus: “We are already talking about when we can meet face-to-face and feel the company of friends.”

***i. Limits in-depth, intimate, direct individual interactions***

Lack of ample individual interaction in the OP is identified as a big problem by 6 participants. As stated by Sita, physical absence and inability to convey one's (mis)understanding by body language or facial expressions were the biggest limitations of the pedagogy. According to Prem, having in-depth individual interactions would have been possible but in a class of 20 to 25 students. He wrote that the (muted) screen further made it problematic to have such interactions. Similarly, Gita wrote that recorded classes were a big relief but asking questions and clearing one's doubts right away was often not possible.

***j. Not so flexible as discoursed***

“Though a great relief, the pedagogy is not as flexible as is being talked about,” wrote Dev. In a follow up with him, he clarified thus: “OP itself is definitively flexible but we do not have flexible practices. For example, we do not get to choose assignments.” Dev was also not happy with the end-semester exam format, for it was going to be administered, however virtually, much in a traditional way, i.e., with only 3 hours' time to respond to the questions.

***k. Lack of resources***

Despite the reading materials provided, there was a lack of ample resources, according to Aman, Prem and Sita. They particularly pointed out the dire need for an online library and / or free access to premium educational or research materials online. Aman wrote, “The school could have subscribed to e-libraries such as JSTOR.”

**Insights from triangulation**

To cross-check the issues of monotony resulting from various aspects in the OP mode, I interviewed the English teacher teaching in the third semester. He said his students had not spoken about such

issues directly with him. He guessed that perhaps they feared getting low grades later or something.

In his reflections, he shed light on five areas in particular: mismatch of interests, repetition of tools and materials, students' laziness, additional sources of monotony, and lessons learnt.

According to him, tools like Mentimeter (for interactive presentations), Quizizz (particularly for quizzes), Kahoot (a game-based online learning platform), Google Docs, and PowerPoint slides were used for different purposes, particularly for fun, for making sessions more interactive, and for delivering lessons more effectively. He said some students perhaps did not like them—or some of them, that perhaps their repeated use might also have been slightly irritating, that perhaps they also felt lazy and unenthusiastic to take up challenges, for reasons of their own, and that they might also have felt so because of additional sources of distraction at home or because of the same daily schedule, prolonged exposure to on-screen reading and fatigue, and the accumulated stress caused by different assignments in different subjects.

He further added that perhaps those who had not tried out Google Docs for group works might have found it “not so very interesting,” for the nature of this kind of collaborative work generally expects each student to answer one question in a list of questions, finally taking the group to a collective answer which may sometimes lack overall coherence in it. “Reading such writing might have been boring for them. In fact, its purpose is to make them write collaboratively and do the necessary editing together, learning from one another in the process, before receiving feedback from my side,” he observed.

He reflected that there is ample room in the pedagogy to bring about improvements in—in policies, planning, attitudes, and practices. He viewed the two semesters he taught during 2019 and 2020 also as special cases from which he learned a lot and is already improving his pedagogical practices. He, however, preferred blended mode, considering the hurdles involved in the OP mode. But blended mode also requires OP and multimedia skills, so he maintained that the makeshift attitude should give way to long-term solutions and reliance on collective learning should also be backed up by institutional investments. Further, he saw the need for orienting students on how to use authentic online sources, without plagiarizing.

As someone who taught the first semester students, I also share most of his observations and learning.

## **Discussion**

The participants' perceptions reveal that OP becomes 'desirable' or 'undesirable' primarily because of how the technology is and how we use it (in case of monotony). As revealed, issues of power cuts and weak internet are overriding concerns in the OP in practice. This revelation is important because the participants' experiences more or less represent the national context. Similarly, repeated use of the same materials such as slides, use of mostly one-way communication, and haphazard ways (mostly pretexts) relied upon by both teachers and students, among others, are the major sources of monotony. And the makeshift attitude exhibited by the stakeholders, including the institution, is identified as irritating.

Even with the barriers identified and different issues raised about the effectiveness of the pedagogy, majority of the participants have taken it as time relevant and convenient and have stressed on the need for incorporating it in the conventional mode in future. However, they have cautioned to not go ahead without necessary planning and investments.

The participants have vocally expressed that if innovative language teaching-learning is to be promoted, there is no alternative to making the OP more futuristic by investing in developing multimedia skills needed for it, because both the teachers and the students have not been able to exploit various multimedia tools and features, such as animation. They have clearly articulated that such skills both help develop practical skills of writing and communication and help deliver 'content knowledge' more effectively in OP and blended modes. Hence the need for scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) in necessary forms of training for teachers and ample orientation for students, particularly from the institutional level. Other types of preparation and investments can also be seen as such scaffolding necessary for various reasons, one being the dire need for online library as seen by the participants. Alongside, the participants' perceptions and the insights from the triangulation clearly suggest that personal and collective learning (scaffolding) is also important but, when it comes to issues of preparations and readiness at the institutional level, especially as



regards pedagogic practices, institutional scaffolding is imperative to boost the spirit of change at different levels in educational settings. This can be visualized as follows:

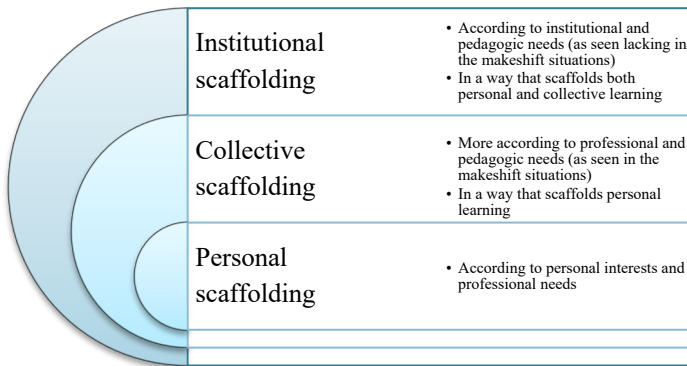


Figure 4: Relationship among personal, collective and institutional scaffoldings

Alongside, the participants have expressed their concerns for being allowed to self-select certain projects or assignments, for such practices offer them autonomy and agency. Need for more flexibility, especially in the end-semester exams in the OP mode, is another important issue raised, because this issue may have its connections to some serious problems related to technology or stress or something else. Similarly, making classes more interactive and interesting is another equally important concern expressed by the participants.

Historically, we have seen more focus being placed on teaching ‘contents’ in Nepal. Low quality teaching environments, large classroom sizes, lack of adequate infrastructure, inadequately trained professionals, and lack of proper research, documentation, funding and appropriate directions in ELT are other issues that need serious thought (Aryal et al., 2016, p. 144). And so is more or less true even in the context of the present study.

Interestingly, the present study also reveals that not only the dimensions and principles of and discourses on teaching and learning pedagogy (or pedagogies) inform OP and PP, as shown in Figure 1; but the reverse is also true. Let us see this with some evidences. The effectiveness of different online facilities in transferring knowledge and skills, as revealed by the majority voice, adds new dimensions to teaching and learning pedagogy (or pedagogies). Similarly, the participants’ concerns for more flexibility in OP or PP mode nudge us

to redefine conventional notions of pedagogy and evaluation, as do their implicit suggestions for incorporating multimedia skills and interdisciplinary knowledge in the existing curricula. Clearly, the latest inventions both in OP and PP also give fresh impetus even to relatively modern pedagogies.

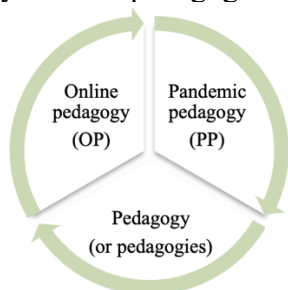


Figure 5: Redefined conceptual framework: Cyclic influences among pedagogy, online pedagogy, and pandemic pedagogy

In sum, seeking long-term solutions to technological problems, using more engaging ways of teaching, doing communication clearly, ensuring greater amount of interaction (also with individuals), making teaching-learning participatory, considering issues of learner autonomy, and providing facility of a great learning ambience (also through online library), among others, are all important issues raised. In addition, because the students have apparently felt more pressure in this mode, there is a need for teachers to be more empathetic towards them.

## Implications

There are a few implications that stand out. First, long term solutions to technological issues and training on multimedia skills and facilities like online library can help augment OP's usefulness. They further help reduce monotony, by helping to make classes uninterrupted or more lively. Second, because some participants have given almost equal importance to multimedia skills and content knowledge in the OP mode, rethinking about our pedagogic practices is important. Similarly, to go with their implicit suggestions, incorporating multimedia and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills in the existing curricula and syllabi is time relevant. So, their revision is needed. Third, maintaining balance among content knowledge, content delivery, other practices in the OP mode, and reliance on technology is highly important, because such balance naturally tends to have, among other things, engaging and empathetic approaches and

ways to ward off the evils of technopoly, such as fatigue or only surface knowledge. Fourth, (greater amount of) learner autonomy cum agentic learning should be promoted alongside more active participation and two-way communication, because doing so will help address students' interests and curiosities. However, ample orientation is necessary to make students beneficially use online sources of knowledge of knowledge and avoid plagiarism. Last but not least, learners also need to be more serious in learning through OP and blended mode, for they have their own relevance in futuristic education.

### **Suggestions**

The findings primarily suggest future research on the following:

- i. How can long term solutions to technological problems faced in the practices of OP be sought and introduced?
- ii. How can we best incorporate OP in the conventional mode in future? Definitely, this study has revealed some important areas to improve. But more research—based on subjects, disciplines and other local contexts—is required. Alongside, futuristic education should not miss to correlate personal cum collective learning and institutional investment in developing multimedia skills with the effectiveness of OP and blended mode, as done by some participants.
- iii. Learners are complaining about different pandemic stressors. Perhaps we should correlate them in terms of possible generation of negative emotions both in learners and teachers? How can we best tackle them?
- iv. As revealed, the students do not have online library and do not get access to premium educational materials online. Why do educational institutions not invest, say individually or collectively, in these areas? What are the challenges involved?

### **Conclusion**

The manifold voices covered in this study collectively and clearly indicate that, if necessary improvements are brought about, the OP in practice will prove even more instrumental in today's education, in today's language teaching and learning. Interestingly, this tenor is evident not only in the responses favoring the pedagogy or its continuity as part of the conventional mode (technically blended mode) but also in some responses disfavoring it. Together, these

voices earnestly demand to be heard. Therefore, a makeshift mentality should give way to fruitful teaching and learning, balanced pedagogic practices, and empathy, alongside contextually futuristic preparation, research, proper investment, and enabling training and induction programs.

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