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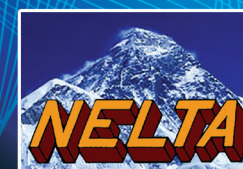
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Editorial

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has a collaboration with various dimensions regarding language teaching, instructional pedagogy, classroom-based research activities and teachers' professional development (TPD). As a part of English language TPD to improve the quality of EFL and to contribute to knowledge creation, the publication of the *Journal of NELTA Gandaki (JoNG)* has a pivotal role in sharing pedagogical skills through academic writing among EFL teachers from home and abroad. In today's interconnected world, proficiency in English is a desirable and a requisite skill for personal and professional success. Like educators, researchers, and practitioners, we should equip learners with multidimensional knowledge of EFL in the diverse phenomena.

We are pleased to publish the sixth volume of *JoNG*, a star-rated NepJOL-indexed peer-reviewed research journal of NELTA Gandaki, covering articles from various facets of EFL pedagogy and research. From exploring innovative methodologies to enhance English language teaching (ELT) to examining the cultural and sociolinguistic dimensions of English education, we strive to cater to the varied interests of our readership. We encourage readers to engage with these articles, not only to gain new insights but also to contribute to the ongoing conversation by sharing their own experiences and expertise. Furthermore, we are committed to fostering inclusivity and diversity in the EFL community.

This issue includes ten articles from various fields of applied linguistics, ELT and testing, ICT in EFL classrooms, and classroom-based research. Of them, the first one explores the factors responsible for the trivialization of extensive reading in university reading instruction. The second article attempts to bridge the gap between traditional pedagogical approaches and modern educational requirements. Similarly, the third article investigates how model presentation, collaboration, discussion, and peer feedback as the intervention of participatory action research (PAR) improve students' academic writing (AW) and presentation skills while dealing with a practical course 'ELT seminar and report writing'. Likewise, the fourth article sheds light on secondary-level students' experiences of using Facebook for communication and education.

The fifth article examines the students' perceptions of assessment in the EFL context and explores the preparation strategies for the examination. Similarly, the sixth article explores how counter-discourse exposes illusion and creates awareness taking reference from the text 'Politics of Fear' by Al Gore. The seventh article presents a review of participatory action research papers highlighting their meaning, purpose and use in research. The eighth article explores the students' experiences of cyberbullying through Facebook and the strategies they apply to cope with cyberbullying. The ninth article reveals the usefulness of building collaborative relationships through collaborative mentoring for teachers' emotional and mental well-being. The final article highlights teachers' perceptions and challenges in using teacher training strategy as a professional development.

We expect that this volume will inspire and guide educators and researchers fostering a culture of research. We appreciate the authors, reviewers, and the entire NELTA family for their support and inspiration to publish this issue. *JoNG* will continue to serve as a platform for innovative ideas, best practices, and insightful research in the field of EFL.

The articles published in the journal are the properties of NELTA Gandaki Province. However, the authors bear the sole responsibility for the authenticity and liability of the opinions and knowledge expressed in them. We expect constructive feedback from valued readers and well-wishers to uplift the standard and quality of the journal in the forthcoming issues.

-Editors

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Extensive Reading at the University Level: Why is it Trivialized in Practice?

Bal Ram Adhikari and Kumar Narayan Shrestha

Abstract

The role of extensive reading in the formation of students' life-long reading habits and their overall academic achievement has been well established in ESL/EFL scholarship. Despite this, studies reveal that extensive reading is being either trivialized or ignored in reading instruction. In this regard, the current paper aims to explore the factors responsible for the trivialization of extensive reading in university reading instruction. To this end, the study adopted a single case study design that comprised four university ESL/EFL teachers and eight students as participants. The data were collected through three qualitative methods: non-participatory semi-structured classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussion. The analysis of the data revealed four major factors preventing university students from reading widely and extensively: students' poor reading habits, students' increased use of social media, teachers' lack of extensive reading and failure to motivate students, and an unsupportive institutional environment. The findings imply that extensive reading cannot be promoted unless it is integrated into every day reading lessons and practised under the guidance of teachers in a resourceful environment.

Keywords: Extensive reading, intensive reading, trivialization, reading instruction

Introduction

The power of extensive reading i.e., reading widely and in quantity (Day, 2015) in shaping students' productive and critical reading habits and in their overall academic performance and achievement has been well established in reading scholarship (Bell, 2020; Krashen, 2004; Renandya, 2007; Renandya & Jakcobs, 2002). A wealth of research has demonstrated its contribution to students' language development and content enrichment (Hedge, 2000; Krashen, 2004; Renandya, 2007). Extensive reading is deemed instrumental in the expansion, activation, and retention of students' vocabulary (Ghanbaria & Marzban, 2014; Lee & Mallinder, 2011; Liu & Zhang, 2018; Tiryaki, 2012), and fostering their grammar knowledge (Celik, 2019). Likewise, studies have reported the positive impact of extensive reading on students' overall reading performance, including reading comprehension, reading speed, and writing proficiency (Bell, 2020; Kirin, 2015; Mermelstein, 2015; Vu et al, 2022).

The necessity of engaging ESL/EFL students in extensive reading to enhance their language performance and expand their knowledge horizons has been recognized by the current Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) English curriculum within Tribhuvan University. The curriculum has prioritized the reading component in its four-year B.Ed. English curriculum with the allocation of nearly 23 %

weightage to reading courses i.e. five out of 22 total courses prescribed for four academic years. The courses include *General English* (B. Ed. 1st year), *Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking* (B. Ed. 1st year), *Expanding Horizons in English* (B. Ed. 2nd year), *Critical Readings in English* (B. Ed. 3rd year) and *Literature for Language Development* (B.Ed. 4th year). Interdisciplinary in nature, each of these courses draws reading texts from varied disciplines such as humanities, education, linguistics, sports, music and entertainment, science and technology, and mass media. These courses have adopted "a content-based approach to the development of reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities" (Gardner, 2005, p. v), emphasizing the integration of language and content (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013) and integration of intensive and extensive reading. A cursory survey of the objectives of these courses and course compilers' and editors' views reveals that extensive reading is treated as integral to intensive reading. The readings featured in the course books include book chapters (e.g. 'Respect for Woods' from *A Walk in the Woods*), autobiographical extracts (e.g. 'Krishnamurti's Journal'), interviews (e.g. An interview with Mo Yan), book introduction (e.g. Bhagavat Gita), apart from poems, short stories, and essays. In each reading chapter, the teacher is expected to guide students in exploring further knowledge through the reading of additional materials related to what has been read in the classroom. Moreover, the literature course (B.Ed. Fourth Year) aims to engage students in reading for both pleasure and information by requiring them to read novels. To connect students' classroom intensive reading with out-of-classroom extensive reading, each reading chapter provisions extensive reading activities that go by different names such as 'Areas for Writing', 'Making Connections', and 'Appreciation and Free Writing'. However, it seems that the course aspiration and effort to engage students in extensive reading of additional texts have been least translated into practice.

We relied on three sources to identify the virtual absence of extensive reading among B.Ed. English students: our own teaching experience, interaction with B.Ed. English teachers, and findings of previous studies. First, I (the first author) taught the course *Expanding Horizons in English* (B. Ed. 2nd year) for an academic year (2021-22), whereas the second author has been teaching *General English* (B. Ed. 1st year) for a decade. Our teaching experiences tell us that B.Ed. students do not read as extensively as the courses expect them to do so. Second, I have come across several teachers in workshops, seminars, and academic gatherings complaining about their students' poor reading habits. Third, previous studies (e.g. Adhikari, 2013; Luitel, 2012, 2016; Neupane, 2016; Tiwari, 2022) have also indicated education English majors' poor reading habits with their limited engagement with prescribed and additional reading materials. In this respect, the current paper aims to explore the factors responsible for the trivialization of extensive reading in the ESL/EFL teacher education program.

Review of Literature

Extensive reading can be broadly conceived as a mode of teaching reading and reading activity. As a mode of teaching instruction, extensive reading is an approach that encourages students to "read large quantities of material that are within their linguistic competence" (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 286). As a mode of reading activity, extensive reading involves reading large quantities of materials or longer texts (e.g. novels) rapidly for general understanding prioritizing meaning over language (Carrel & Carson, 1997). Unlike intensive reading, which is reading in quality (i.e., digging into the text for content and/or language), extensive reading is reading in quantity which usually takes place outside the classroom. It is principally for pleasure, recreation, and for gaining a general understanding of the text (Richards & Schmidt, 2013; Watkins, 2017). Extensive reading fosters in students a lifelong reading habit by supportively and unthreateningly 'flooding' them with a large number of reading materials (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). To follow Renandya and Jacobs (2002, pp. 296-297), the following features distinguish extensive reading from intensive reading: a) Students read a large number of texts; b) Reading

texts are usually chosen by students themselves; c) Students read a variety of topics from diverse genres; d) The selected texts lie within students' level of comprehension; e) Students usually take part in post-reading activities such as designing bookmarks for the books they have read, role-playing the story; designing posters to advertise the books and sharing their views with their friends about what they have read; f) Teachers read with their students, thus modelling enthusiasm for reading; g) Teachers and students keep track of student's reading progress.

The pragmatic philosophy of extensive reading is that classroom-intensive reading is essential but not sufficient to strengthen students' reading performance and develop their sustained reading habits. The time and opportunities that students get for intensive reading in the classroom are limited. It should, therefore, be supplemented, accompanied, and extended by out-of-classroom reading through extensive reading. Keeping this in mind, scholars have made a strong case for incorporating extensive reading in language programs (Bell, 2020; Hedge, 2000; Horst, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Renandya, 2007). Regarding this, Horst's (2009) study with adult immigrant ESL students in Canada highlights the two crucial roles of extensive reading in students' proficiency development. First, extensive reading expands students' vocabulary size beyond their existing levels. Second, it provides opportunities for them to encounter new words in diverse contexts. Drawing on the findings, Horst (2009) conclusively argues that "extensive reading plays a key role in moving learners beyond the basic levels of proficiency required for basic communication so that they are well positioned to achieve personal and professional goals". (2009, p. 63). Likewise, Bell (2020) catalogues the following multi-faceted benefits that extensive reading can offer to ESL/EFL students: a) It can provide comprehensible input and increase students' exposure to the language; b) It can enhance students' general language competence; c) It can increase students' knowledge of vocabulary; d) It can motivate students to read; e) It can consolidate previously learned language; f) It helps build confidence with extended texts; g) It facilitates the development of prediction skills; and h) It can lead to improvement in writing (pp. 243-245). Extensive reading is also highly valued for its potential to motivate students by offering them a choice regarding what to read and when to read without the pressure of formal assessment (Davis, 1995; Safaeia, & Bulca, 2013). Despite its well-recognized contribution to students' reading habits, their language competence, and positive attitudes towards reading, extensive is not widely practised, as various studies have reported (e.g. Day et al., 1998; Gallagher, 2009; Huang, 2015; Renandya & Jacobs, 2002).

Renandya and Jacobs (2002) discern four reasons for the trivialization of extensive reading in ESL/EFL programs: overemphasis on intensive reading, teachers' failure to discard their traditional role as a source of knowledge, lack of sufficient time, and lack of assessment of extensive reading experiences. Conventionally, teaching reading is equated to classroom-intensive reading taking place under the close monitoring of teachers and this mode of reading is deemed sufficient for developing students' language skills and content knowledge. Likewise, Gallagher (2009) contends that institutions' overemphasis on assessment-focused intensive reading has resulted in 'readicide', "the systematic killing of the love of reading" (p. 2). In his argument, our education system values the development of short-term test takers in reading more than the development of lifelong readers, which has led to a decline in students' reading habits. Huang examined the students' and teachers' perceptions of and challenges faced in the implementation of extensive reading in senior high schools in Taiwan. Huang's study reported that despite teachers' acknowledgement of the benefits of extensive reading and students' positive attitudes towards the extensive reading activity, students were found weak in extensive reading. The study cited heavy workload from tests, homework, and cram school as the main factors that prevented schools from effective implementation of the extensive reading program.

Collectively, the global studies reviewed above highlight the marginal status of extensive reading in language education. In Nepal's higher university context, Neupane (2016) surveyed the views of English major students at the Faculty of Education regarding their choice of reading materials, their purposes of reading, and the expected teacher roles. His study reported that the students preferred easy, interesting, and informative reading materials mainly for general information; and they expected teachers to be their model readers. The studies reviewed so far offer little or no information about the factors responsible for the marginal status of extensive reading in university ESL/EFL programs. The current study aims to fill this research gap.

Methodology

The current study adopted a single case study design to understand the status and practice of extensive reading at the B.Ed. level. The case study design enables the researcher to explore the phenomenon more holistically and comprehensively (Creswell, 2009; Duff, 2018; Riazi, 2016). A constituent campus of Tribhuvan University running B.Ed. and M.Ed. English programmes located in the capital city of Kathmandu were purposively selected as a research site. This campus was designated as a research site because of its location and accessibility (Dornyei, 2007). I (first author) have been teaching at this campus for more than two decades which, we believed, would ensure our better accessibility to participants. We purposively selected two cohorts of participants. The first cohort comprised four university English teachers teaching B.Ed. English reading courses at different academic years, whereas the second cohort consisted of eight B.Ed. English students, two from each academic year. We employed three qualitative methods, namely semi-structured classroom observation, semi-structured interview, and focus group discussion (FGD) to study the phenomenon from multiple standpoints (Cohen et al., 2007). A semi-structured observation scheme comprised broadly identified observational categories such as approach, techniques/activities, resources, and challenges.

Altogether, 28 classes, seven classes of each teacher, were observed, audio-recorded, and supplemented by narrative field notes and reflections (Dornyei, 2007; Nunan 2010; Riazi, 2016). Each teacher was interviewed after every three classes in the Nepali-English mixed medium. Each interview lasted approximately an hour to 45 minutes. Moreover, FGD was held with the selected students to explore their views and experiences of extensive reading. Interviews and FGD were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recorded lessons, interviews, discussions, and field notes were coded by both authors to ensure inter-rater reliability, and codes were categorized and thematized (Riazi, 2016). In the analysis, teacher participants were anonymized and given pseudonyms: Binod, Asmita, Hikmat, and Bharat to ensure their anonymity.

Findings and Discussion

This paper is part of a larger study that sought to explore the practice and challenges of teaching reading at the B.Ed. level. This section presents and discusses the findings drawing primarily on interview and focus group discussion data concerning only extensive reading. Classroom observation data are also referred to where necessary. The analysis of the data showed four major themes related to extensive reading in the case campus: students' poor reading habits, increased use of social media, teachers' lack of extensive reading and their failure to motivate students, and unsupportive institutional environment.

Students' Poor Reading Habits

All teacher participants categorized their students as poor readers, lacking strong reading habits. They unanimously reported that their students had difficulty reading the prescribed texts even under their teachers' close guidance. When asked how often his students read texts other than the prescribed ones in the course of study, Binod replied in a tone of surprise:

Additional reading?! Don't expect this from these students. They even don't read the prescribed texts, and forget about reading additional texts for pleasure. Most of them expect their teachers to explain the texts to them. All they need is lesson notes and summaries.

Other teachers also recounted that their students showed unwillingness to read the texts contained in the prescribed course books. When probed further into reasons for their lack of interest in reading, Asmita stated that her students did not read much because of their limited English proficiency and poor content knowledge, which together led to a lack of confidence in reading. In her observation, their English proficiency is below standards and not sufficient to cope with the language of prescribed texts. Echoing his experience, Bharat stated:

As you might have noticed during classroom observation, most of them cannot read the text fluently. I mean they have not developed reading skills properly. They are poor in reading, and always dependent on teachers' explanations and notes. When asked to read the texts themselves at home, they hardly do so.

All teachers unanimously concluded that their students hardly read additional materials for pleasure and to expand their understanding of the content served in the coursebooks. These teachers saw no possibility of engaging the struggling readers in additional reading activities when they found it difficult to read even the prescribed short reading texts. The Focus Group Discussion with the students also revealed a similar picture of students' poor reading habits. None of the students recounted reading at least two pages a day at home, and only two of them said that they had the prescribed English coursebooks. None of them called themselves regular readers and had explored additional materials online or borrowed ones from the library. Their main concern was to get notes from their teachers that they could use to pass exams. Since they felt it challenging to read the prescribed texts, reading additional texts seemed to be out of the question for them. The class observation showed that the teachers adopted lecture-centered instruction with little space for students to encounter additional texts. We can postulate a causal relationship between students' poor reading habits and lack of extensive reading. Students did not read extensively because they were poor in reading. Conversely, students were poor in reading because they were not engaged in extensive reading activities. This implies that poor reading habit is the cause and consequence of the absence of extensive reading.

Increased Use of Social Media

Concerns were expressed about students' increased use of social media and its negative impact on extensive reading. All teacher participants identified social media such as Facebook, TikTok and YouTube as a major source of distraction ruining students' reading habits. Referring to his ongoing classroom research about students' unwillingness to read, Binod asserted:

I am conducting a sort of research to find out why my students do not have time to read or don't read. I have found that reading and writing are of secondary importance to them. They spend most of their time on social media and they have no time for books. They find using social media far more entertaining than reading.

In his observation, students spend most of their out-of-class time on social media mainly for entertainment. He showed grave concern over students' addiction to social media mainly Facebook and Tik Tok. He even recounted some students getting internet data packs and using Facebook on their cell phones in the classroom. Other teachers also complained about cellphone usage and social media browsing in the classrooms and students' increased dependency on them for entertainment. They also

lamented that social media is killing their students' precious study time in and out of classrooms and distancing them from books. A similar finding has emerged from the University of Namibia showing how social media usage is taking over out-of-classroom reading activity (Liswaniso & Mubanga, 2019). Liswaniso and Mubanga's (2019) findings show that university students spent most of their time on social media posting photos and chatting rather than reading books for recreation and information.

Also known as free voluntary reading, extensive reading is carried out for pleasure and recreation with little or no comprehension-checking questions (Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Watkins, 2017). It means that extensive reading is done mainly for pleasure and recreation. However, what is noteworthy here is that today's techno-native students have unlimited sources of pleasure and creation on the internet. In this regard, Hikmat's view is notable:

> In today's digital age, students have easy access to various forms of entertainment, such as social media, video games, and streaming platforms. Now it is hard for books to compete with such entertaining platforms. Students are spending more time on social media than reading books for recreation.

Likewise, Binod noted that students find more pleasure in social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and TokTok than in books, leading to the depletion of students' reading time. As all teacher participants viewed, with the unprecedented rise of social media platforms, books are no longer serving as the major source of recreation. These teachers indicated that the sources of pleasure and recreation have shifted from books to social media.

The focus group discussion with the students also revealed the encroachment of social media on reading. The student participants called themselves active Facebook users- all of them had Facebook accounts, scrolled through Facebook many times a day, posted statuses frequently, shared photos several times a week, liked and commented on others' posts, and communicated almost every day via Facebook Messenger. Similarly, they loved watching songs and entertaining videos on YouTube. Moreover, girls had picked up a habit of watching TikTok videos several times a day. None of the students recounted reading short stories, poems, and novels in their free time. All this suggests that voluntary reading is giving way to social media usage and there is less time left for students to read for information and recreation.

Previous studies have also reported the encroachment of social media on extensive reading activity (Al-Jarf, 2023; Huang et al, 2014; Mokhtari et al.; 2009). Situated in the American context, Huang et al. (2014) study reported the Internet as a major factor responsible for a decline in students' academic and extracurricular reading. This study found students spend more time online with its a negative impact on academic and extracurricular reading activities. Mokhtari et al. (2009) also reported a similar finding. They studied the impact of the Internet and television use on reading habits and practices of college studies and reported the students' increased use of the Internet and correspondingly their decreased involvement in recreational and academic reading.

Teachers' Lack of Extensive Reading and their Failure to Motivate Students

Although teachers lamented students' poor reading habits, they were found to be poor readers. Interview and classroom observation data both revealed that the teachers' reading was limited to prescribed texts only and they failed to motivate their students to read widely, leading to the trivialization of extensive reading.

Extensive reading was trivialized in almost all reading lessons. As observed, the teachers avoided post-reading activities given in course books. The purpose of post-reading activities provisioned at the end of each reading chapter is to extend classroom-intensive reading experiences by engaging

students in additional reading materials. For example, the chapter 'The Bhagavatagita' (Readings for the New Horizons, B. Ed. 2nd year) contains a post-reading activity- Visit the library or websites and write short notes on Homer, The New Testament and Sermon on the Mount. An activity like this plays a crucial role in integrating classroom-intensive reading with out-of-classroom extensive reading. However, none of the teachers was found to engage students in any of such activities that encourage students to read additional longer texts. For instance, the teacher (Bharat) teaching 'The Bhagavatagita' ended the lesson with a summary and left the classroom without engaging the students in extensive reading questions given in the post-reading section. Like him, another teacher (Asmita) explained the key points of the essay 'I Want a Wife' and told the students to read the essay at home. She did not inform the students anything about additional reading related to the essay. These teachers' skipping of the post-reading phase corroborates the earlier observation, which showed that M.Ed. teacher students teaching B.Ed. reading courses did not engage students in any post-reading activities (Adhikari & Poudel, 2020).

Although the teachers expected their students to read additional materials to widen their reading experiences, they were not found to play an active role in initiating students' extensive reading. The teachers seemed to preach the 'You should-read-a- lot' approach but failed to awaken students to the value of self-selected or teacher-recommended longer texts, including short stories and novels (Hedge, 2002). When asked, none of the teachers said that they ever provisioned even a single class to orient students to the value of extensive reading and educate them about its short-term and long-term contributions to their academic achievement. Teachers' role is deemed crucial in orienting students in extensive reading, helping them in the selection of reading materials and designing different activities to engage them in extensive reading (Peragine & Mattson, 2023).

Classroom observation and interview data also showed the teachers' lack of extensive reading experience. In none of the observed lessons, the teachers connected the prescribed reading texts to the longer texts from where they were extracted. For example, there is a short reading 'Frequently asked questions about Multiple Intelligences', a chapter extracted from H. Gardner's book *Multiple Intelligence: New Horizons* (1993). In teaching this chapter, Asmita did not make any mention of the book. In the post-lesson interview, she admitted that she had no idea about the book, let alone read it. The same was true of a chapter extracted from the novel *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho included in the course book *English for the New Millennium*. Hikmat, who had been teaching this course for four years, admitted that he had not read the complete novel. Further probing into the issue revealed that the teachers' reading was almost exclusively limited to the prescribed course books. They hardly read texts other than those prescribed in the reading course they were teaching. Binod shed light on teachers' reading habits as:

> Teachers themselves don't read widely. I don't read other texts related to the prescribed ones. Apart from this class, I am engaged in other institutions too. This is the case with all teachers here. So, when teachers don't read themselves, you cannot expect your students to do so.

Surprisingly, the teacher teaching the literary course admitted that he had not read any of the novels and dramas prescribed in the course. The course prescribes three novels (Tetsuko Kuroyanagi's *Totto-Chan: The Little Girl at the Window*, Patrick Modiano's *The Search Warrant*, and Kim Edwards's *The Memory Keeper's Daughter*), and one drama (Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*) and he had not read any of them. It was a bit shocking revelation that he had been teaching the course for five years, but he did not have these novels and dramas with him. He would gather information from different online sources, specifically Wikipedia, prepare notes and summaries and present them to students. This

indicates that the teachers could not present themselves as model readers for their students, which runs counter to Neupane's (2016) finding that students expect their teachers to act as model readers.

Unsupportive Institutional Environment

The inadequately resourced and poorly managed library was identified as one of the factors contributing to students' poor reading habits and trivialization of extensive reading. Teacher and student participants both expressed their dissatisfaction with the campus administration's poor management of the library. They complained about the lack of recent publications and reader-friendly space in the library. Bharat remarked on the unavailability of recent books:

> The library is stuffed with old books. You can see only outdated books in the stacks. I have hardly seen any teachers and students issuing books from the library. There is no point in going to the library. Why? Because I hardly get the *books,* I need to teach the course.

In this teacher's experience, the college library does not contain even basic reference materials prescribed in the courses and forgets about information resources such as yearbooks, bibliographies, biographies, indexes, and recent literary books. Hikmat also noted that a poorly resourced library does not appeal to teachers and students:

> There is a library in name only. Why should students go to such a library that does not have sufficient reading materials? You can see some Nepali and English dailies lying on desks outside the library. Students cannot enter the library and study there.

Like other teachers, he was a rare visitor to the campus library, as he thought it was a waste of time. As a teacher from the same campus, I am aware of the fact that even teachers have to get permission from librarians to enter the library. Then one could not expect students to enter there and choose the books of their interest by themselves. By not allowing readers to enter the library, the institution was creating a distance between books and readers, further contributing to students' poor reading habits and devaluation of extensive reading. Librarians mentioned the lack of space for reading as a reason for disallowing readers to enter the library. It means that the campus library does not even have the minimum requirement of a general library. More than a library, it looked like a bookstore guarded by some campus staff and rarely visited by students and teachers. To compensate for the lack of reading space in the library, the campus has placed some benches on the passage. The space allocated by the campus for library visitors contained two old wooden benches and three chairs placed around two large tables joined together. The wooden stakes and a steel cupboard contained masters' level theses and some old locally produced reference materials. During my frequent visits to the library, I did not find any students and teachers sitting and reading in this narrow and congested space, which did not look like a reading place in the library from any angle. Regarding the lack of adequate peaceful space for reading in the library, Binod questioned:

> How can we promote reading culture when there is not even space in the library to sit and read? I have hardly seen any students going to the library and reading there. Forget about students, even we teachers don't go to the library. When students don't see their teachers reading, how can we expect them to read?

Setting up a resourceful library is a must for building a successful reading culture and promoting extensive reading (Loh et al., 2017). Accentuating the role of a library in encouraging students to read widely, Loh et al. (2017) identify the following as crucial to promote a reading culture among students:

a) curate the book selection for readers; b) make books visible; (c) create programs to excite readers; and (d) design spaces for reading. However, none of these provisions were made in the case campus. Binod associated the lack of a student-friendly campus environment with students' poor reading culture:

> Our campus has the worst study environment. As I said, the library is not properly managed, there is no facility for students to sit and read. There is no study room in this big campus. Students have no access to the Internet to explore additional information about their courses. There is no water facility in the toilet. No drinking water. This poor physical facility has a direct impact on their regularity and the time they spend in the campus premises.

Like teachers, the students participating in FGD complained about the unmanaged library and lack of a supportive environment on the campus. The following are the representative voices:

> The library has no books that we want to read. It is a shame that this big education campus does not have the needed books.

> The library is so unmanaged. There is no place to sit and read.

> Look! There is no place in the campus compound to sit and read. I have seen on YouTube that in foreign universities students can sit on the ground and read. They can read in the cafeteria. But here there is nothing like this in this campus. If we can read like this, I don't think that sitting in the classroom and listening to the teacher is always necessary.

Contrary to teachers' common belief that their students lack the willingness to read, these remarks demonstrate the institution's failure to create a supportive environment for reading. Their views and experiences carry undertones of frustration with the campus administration for not providing them with a resourceful library and reading spaces. Rodrigo et al.'s (2014) study demonstrates a positive correlation between the availability of a well-resourced library and adult readers' extensive reading with a conclusion that a well-resourced library and easy access to books are key factors in promoting extensive and recreational reading.

Conclusion and Implications

The current paper aims to explore the factors hindering university students' engagement in extensive reading. The findings demonstrate four major factors preventing students from reading widely for information and recreation, which were related to students (i.e. their poor reading habits and increased use of social media), teachers (i.e. teachers' lack of extensive reading and failure to motivate students), and institution (unsupportive institutional environment). These findings lead to a conclusion that despite its pivotal role in the formation of students' life-long reading habits and contribution to their academic performance, extensive reading is trivialized or ignored both at the personal and institutional levels. These findings have important implications for teaching reading policies and practices. At the policy level, extensive reading needs to be treated as integral to reading instruction by incorporating extensive reading activities in reading courses. Likewise, the institution should plan and implement an extensive reading program both for students and teachers. At the practice level, classroom-intensive reading and out-of-classroom extensive reading should be integrated into every day reading lessons, one extending and strengthening the other. An important implication of this study is that students do not read extensively by themselves unless teachers encourage them to do so, and therefore teachers should present themselves as model readers, and an institution should have a well-resourced library with a pleasant

reading environment. These findings contribute to our understanding of the problems of engaging students in extensive reading and help us find out ways to overcome them. As a case study, it was limited to a campus of Tribhuvan University with a small number of research participants, its findings are not generalizable to the students and teachers from other institutions. To address this limitation, a larger-scale study comprising a survey and interview is needed to fully understand the status and practice of extensive reading in Nepal's higher education.

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The 21st Century Model for Pedagogical Transformation: Exploring Teachers' Identity and Professional Responsibility

Yadu Prasad Gyawali and Meghna Mehndroo

Abstract

This study proposes to facilitate the implementation of learner-centered, language-integrated, and future-oriented teaching and learning methodologies, per the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) principles and global educational perspectives. The primary goal of the study is to bridge the gap between traditional pedagogical approaches and modern educational requirements. The independent discussion with four educational experts from Nepal and content analysis were regarded as the methods of the study. The paper highlights the importance of learner-focused teaching and learning strategies, where learners are encouraged to develop creativity and critical awareness. Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal 4, India's NEP 2020, and Nepal's education policy aim to improve educational quality and accessibility, focusing on fair access and inclusion for those in need. India and Nepal also prioritize teacher training and development to improve education systems, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Article concludes by focusing on language, logic, and social context, in line with recent reports and research studies, to ensure outcome-based learning in a changing world. Similarly, some suggestive parameters for curricula reform to enhance sustainable development goals in line with the 21st-century mindset have been discussed.

Introduction

The need for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning strategies has become prominent in a rapidly transforming educational setting. This study aims to facilitate the implementation of progressive educational strategies, including learner-centred, language-integrated, and future-focused approaches. Aligned with the principles articulated in the National Education Policy of 2020 (NEP 2020) and enlightened by global educational perspectives, the primary objective of this study is to bridge the widening chasm between traditional pedagogical practices and modern educational requirements. The paper emphasizes the incorporation of learner-centred teaching and learning methodologies, encouraging students to develop their creativity and critical thinking. These approaches align with the goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4, India's National Education Policy 2020, and Nepal's education policy, all of which seek to improve the quality and accessibility of education, with a consistent emphasis on equitable access and inclusion for the marginalized.

Moreover, both India and Nepal accord a central role to teacher training and development, recognizing the central role educators play in moulding effective education systems, and thus substantially contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4. In an ever-changing world, the conclusion of this paper emphasizes the significance of language, logic, and social context by citing recent reports and studies. These facets are integral in ensuring outcome-based learning that equips learners to navigate and succeed in an evolving educational landscape. In addition, the paper discusses parameters for reforming curricula to align educational objectives with sustainable development goals, thereby cultivating a 21st-century mindset attuned to the most urgent global challenges of our time.

This research is motivated by the need to bridge a gap between traditional pedagogical practices and the changing educational environment. It is essential to adapt teaching, learning, and evaluation strategies to the changing requirements of today's students. The NEP 2020 functions as a catalyst for this transformation, both in India and globally. This study aims to contribute to the corpus of knowledge by advocating for learner-centered, language-integrated, and future-focused teaching and learning strategies per NEP 2020 and global perspectives. Numerous deficiencies in the current corpus of knowledge have been highlighted, emphasizing the need for several crucial improvements. The establishment of a more learner-centered educational paradigm, which places the learner at the center of the pedagogical process, is an essential requirement. As important is the incorporation of a thorough understanding of the psychological complexities of learners into pedagogical planning, given the pervasive influence of individual psychology on educational outcomes. In addition, there is an imperative need to shift from a predominant focus on summative assessments to an emphasis on forward-looking educational goals that equip students to face the ever-changing challenges of the future. Moreover, there is a compelling demand for the widespread adoption of andragogical principles, empowering students to assume responsibility for their educational journeys and developing their creative and critical thinking abilities. In addition, recognizing the significance of locality, language, and culture in the educational domain is crucial for the development of inclusive and effective learning environments. To effectively address the urgent global challenges of the 21st century, the integration of sustainable development objectives into contemporary curricula becomes an absolute necessity.

Literature Review

Teaching and learning situations are considered the backbone of the educational system. How pedagogical practices occur and are interconnected with the learners' achievement are important parts of quality education. On the other hand, the academic institutions, agents and curricular and extra-curricular facets have been influencing the learning situation. A learner can be taken as an agent of society and what, why and how the learner poses attitude and behaviour to the existing situation is crucial in the value of teaching. Ministry of Human Resource Development (2020) in National Educational Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) presented and explained knowledge, wisdom and truth as the main components for teaching and learning. Similarly, learning is taken as the preparation for life. Dörnyei (2009) discussed the psychological aspects of learning as all human beings have different perspectives, needs, interests and expectations. In a recent study, Sato and Csizér (2021) supporting (Dörnyei, 2009) explained that the learners are the core unit of learning. The most important thing is to read them and implement the programs.

Furthermore, they discussed that learners' psychological considerations are key skills to reveal pedagogical goals as a result, quality education and products can be ensured. Another important concern regarding learners is the framework for learning (Mercer, 2011). For example, in the situation, we create for teaching-learning, evaluation only for summative perspectives, learners' psychology moves backward not forward. The recent trends of learning goals focus on futuristic learning goals. Mulcahy et

al. (2015) explained changing trends of pedagogies as the learner-focused teaching learning strategies prepared them to mature and they could realize learning. Furthermore, they explained the pedagogical shift to andragogy, where the learners are independent to develop creativity and critical awareness. Furthermore, Jeanes (2021), elaborated the pedagogical scenario with examples of andragogical realizations and focused on locality-based, language-oriented and cultural influences in learning. Therefore, this paper suggests some parameters of current needs and curricula reformation measures to enhance sustainable development goals relevant to the 21st century mindset.

Several fields, including education, have undergone substantial transformations in the 21st century. Globalization, technological advances, and labour market adjustments have created new demands for education systems to better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary world (Tican, 2019). Countries around the world have responded to these changes by instituting curriculum reforms and searching out the best teaching practices that align with the requirements of the learning environment of the twenty-first century.

The function and responsibility of instructors in the 21st century is one of the most important aspects of this pedagogical evolution. Rahayu and Bandjarjani (2021) stated that teachers in the 21st century encounter new challenges and expectations that require them to adjust their teaching practices to suit the requirements of their students. Teachers must now be prepared, trained, and endowed with the necessary skills to navigate these obstacles and educate students effectively in the twenty-first century. These alterations have prompted a shift toward dynamic learning environments that foster teacher-student partnerships and student-centered instruction. Research indicates that giving instructors and pupils access to mobile devices does not guarantee that they will be used in pedagogically desirable ways (Reichert & Mouza, 2018). The 21st century's pedagogical transformation is heavily dependent on teachers' sense of self and professional obligation.

This paper focuses on an important issue in the field of education, namely a significant disparity between traditional pedagogical practices and the changing needs of students in the dynamic landscape of contemporary education. Modern educational environments are characterized by dynamic shifts in societal, technological, and cultural dimensions, necessitating a reevaluation of how knowledge is transmitted and assimilated. In this context, it is imperative to emphasize the critical importance of aligning teaching, learning, and evaluation strategies with the ever-changing and diverse requirements of learners. This imperative for change is supported by concrete examples such as India's National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020, which functions as a beacon illuminating the path to educational reform. NEP 2020 is not an isolated instance, but rather a representative of larger global education trends and aspirations. It presents the compelling argument that our educational system must endure a radical transformation, one that transcends the boundaries of conventional pedagogy. In essence, the purpose of this paper is to serve as a compass, directing the course of education towards a future where the gap between tradition and progress has been bridged, ensuring that students are not only prepared for the present but also prepared for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the rapidly evolving educational landscape.

Methodology

This study's research strategy and methodology were meticulously selected to effectively align with and achieve the research objectives. Specifically, the study employs an interpretative research design following the ideas of (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), a choice made after careful consideration due to its inherent capacity for a thorough exploration of the perspectives and experiences of participants. The qualitative method as suggested by (Leavy, 2017) was instrumental in facilitating a profound and detailed comprehension of

the topic. To execute the investigation, interviews were conducted with four eminent Indian and Nepalese educational leaders. These individuals were chosen based on their extensive track record of implementing innovative policies and well-documented expertise in educational reform. This meticulous selection process was instrumental in ensuring that the selected participants had substantial insights germane to the study's predetermined areas of interest. The interviews were only audio-recorded with the participants' explicit permission, thereby preserving the accuracy and integrity of the data collection procedure suggested by (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Mears, 2012). In addition, meticulous notes were taken during these interviews to capture subtle nonverbal indicators and contextual elements. The resulting data set, which included both interview transcripts and detailed notes, was subjected to a rigorous qualitative analysis procedure. This required the systematic identification of recurring themes and patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Kekeya, 2016), a procedure for which the use of software for qualitative analysis is acknowledged. Based on the emergent themes, a coherent narrative was meticulously crafted, encapsulating and concisely summarizing the research findings.

Results and Discussion

In the following section, our study explores the dynamic relationship between language, technology, and educational outcomes in South Asia. We examine the relationship between content and language learning, with technology functioning as a catalyst to shape the pedagogical landscape of the region. The evolution of teacher education is central to our discussion, as it highlights the shifting perspectives and methodologies amidst accelerated technological transformations. As we deconstruct these findings, we also speculate on the future, presenting a wide range of possible directions for South Asia's educational policies, constrained by both challenges and opportunities in an ever-changing educational environment.

Language, Technology, and Outcomes: Innovative Educational Policies in South Asia

Educational policy is the main landmark in shaping the educational environment. The policies are the guidelines for implementing the education system, pedagogical practices, reflections and program evaluation. The country's constitution, educational act, rules and procedures of the specific country direct the educational policies. For example, NEP-2020 is the recent guideline of educational management in India from basic to higher education. Similarly, other countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and the USA have their educational policies and procedures with diverse provisions. For example, one of the expert's remarks:

> The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in India signifies a significant turning point in the educational framework of the nation. The statement exemplifies a forward-thinking transition towards a comprehensive and all-encompassing methodology for education. The National Education Policy of 2020, with its emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge, cultivation of wisdom, and pursuit of truth, lays the foundation for nurturing individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of various subjects and are equipped with the essential skills required in the 21st century. Nevertheless, achieving its desired outcomes is contingent upon the proficient execution of policies and the facilitation of educators' empowerment to foster educational settings that promote profound and meaningful learning experiences. (Expert 1)

From the expert's view, indeed, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 is a turning point in India's educational landscape. Its emphasis on knowledge, prudence, and truth demonstrates an aspiration for a well-rounded educational system. This policy envisions individuals with subject

knowledge and the critical thinking and problem-solving skills essential for the complexities of the twenty-first century. However, the success of NEP 2020 is contingent upon its successful implementation. The policies must be translated into actionable steps, and educators must be granted the authority to design engaging and transformative learning environments. In addition, comprehensive teacher training programs aligned with the new policy directives are required.

In addition, it is crucial to resolve issues such as equitable access to high-quality education, particularly in rural areas, and to adapt the policy to India's diverse sociocultural contexts. The effectiveness of NEP 2020 will be measured by its ability to bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation, ensuring that the vision of a comprehensive and innovative education system for all pupils becomes a reality.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (2020) published a dynamic and popular National education policy in India. According to NEP (2020), the structure of school curricula and pedagogy has been reformed and they are categorized based on developmental ages such as foundation (five years), preparatory (three years), middle (three years) and high (four years). Similarly, NEP suggested focusing on language learning and provisioned three language policies. Along with the three-language formula, Indian sign language across the country must be implemented; as a result, learners can understand the reality of learning. Regarding NEP-2020, the current needs and 21st-century skills must be incorporated into the curriculum from the beginning as the learners are the product and must be highly magnified with knowledge, skill and truth.

Along the lines of (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020), technological integration, vocation-based education, education for public service and promotion of soft skills have been emphasized and language is taken as the central issue by which learners can get exposure to the contents of diverse universe. Regarding the Nepalese education system, one of the experts said:

> The education system in Nepal is currently experiencing a noteworthy transformation as it strives to synchronize with prevailing global educational patterns. The Ministry of Education in Nepal is taking significant steps towards creating a more responsive and relevant education system. This is achieved through a strong emphasis on technological integration, outcome-based education, and a multi-dimensional approach. To fully actualize the potential of these reforms, it is of utmost importance to prioritize establishing fair and equal opportunities for all individuals to access high-quality education. Additionally, it is crucial to invest in teachers' ongoing professional development, empowering them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively navigate the ever-evolving educational landscape. (Expert 2)

The expert's view reports that the ongoing transformation of Nepal's educational system demonstrates a commendable effort to conform to international educational trends. Prioritizing technological integration and outcome-based education demonstrates a commitment to modernize teaching and learning methods. However, the success of these reforms is contingent on addressing the urgent issues of equitable access to high-quality education, especially in rural areas. Moreover, investing in comprehensive teacher professional development is essential to equip educators to navigate changing pedagogical landscapes. Furthermore, embracing the sociocultural diversity of the nation is essential for successfully implementing these reforms, as it promotes inclusivity and relevance in the educational system. Furthermore, With the provisions of the Ministry of Education (2016) Nepal is also implementing technological and outcome-based educational planning and policies.

Content Learning vs. Language Learning

The curriculum of school education is associated with core and optional provisions. The core curriculum is highly emphasized for the basic level, where the learners are expected to learn language, logic and environments. However, the context seems content-oriented and the instructors and learners are focused on the activities and exercises given in the prescribed texts. Dalton-Puffer (2011) suggested a content, language-integrated approach for outcome-based learning; as a result, learners learn the content through language and vice-versa. Furthermore, they reported that language creates the situation for learning. For example, learners can use lingua franca (a foreign or second common language) to interact in a group and share their understanding if they have difficulties understanding the first language. The situation defines the importance of language to learn the content. Therefore, language must be primary to intervene in new learning contexts and scenarios. For example, the views of the experts in the independent discussion shared:

> Language is the key to unlocking deeper comprehension in the evolving educational landscape. Our curriculum must go beyond merely delivering content and prioritize language to facilitate meaningful learning. To promote holistic development, students must engage with language, logic, and culture beyond the confines of textbooks. (Expert 3)

> Traditional content-centred learning frequently limits the scope of intelligence testing. Adopting language integration enables us to utilize multiple intelligences, thereby nurturing well-rounded individuals. Periodic examinations cannot disclose the true extent of a student's abilities; language is the key to unlocking their vast potential. (Expert 4)

The third expert emphasizes the significance of language in facilitating deeper comprehension and significant learning. This viewpoint is especially pertinent in Nepal, renowned for its linguistic diversity. Curriculum in Nepal should utilize language as a tool for engaging with knowledge, logic, and culture rather than merely delivering content. Given Nepal's rich tapestry of languages, promoting a multi-lingual and culturally sensitive educational approach can cultivate a more inclusive and relevant learning experience.

In addition, Expert 4 correctly identifies the limitations of traditional content-centred learning, which emphasizes a limited range of intelligences and heavily relies on periodic exams. In a country like India, where students originate from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, standardized tests alone are insufficient for determining their true potential. Incorporating language into the educational process enables a more comprehensive assessment of students' intelligence, including linguistic, logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and other intelligence. This strategy is consistent with India's and Nepal's need for a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

Both experts conclude by emphasizing the transformative force of language integration in education, which is highly pertinent to the context of India and Nepal. To unlock students' complete potential and promote holistic development, the educational system should prioritize language to engage with knowledge and assess multiple intelligences, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (2020) focused on the language-based approaches from the foundation age and explained that a learner should have mastery of at least three languages (two native and one second/foreign). The three-language approach prepares learners to face situational, content-based, and pedagogical challenges. Following (Mulcahy et al., 2015) a learner

is the source of resources that need to be fulfilled by basic requirements such as language, logic, culture and attitude. As a result, they can prepare themselves to tackle world issues and establish themselves as a mature personality. Some of the previous works suggested that content-based learning systems encourage learners to take examinations as a result they are looking for good grades. For example, Rajbhandari and Wilmut (2000) asserted that the theoretical component is the cornerstone of all practical actions in which students can prepare themselves confidently and responsibly.

Similarly, Wiliam (2011) exemplified classroom dialogue and innovative practices as a result of the theoretical foundation upon which learners may form their creativity and practicality in learning. However, the content-based learning system hardly addresses learners' performances in real-life situations as stated in (Dalton-Puffer, 2011) language creates an opportunity to interact with the social system and the content needs to be oriented to the linguistic need. According to (Gardner, 2011) students possessed a variety of intelligences, including logical, verbal-linguistic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual, musical, naturalist, and kinesthetic, and those periodic written examinations compelled students to write down what they had memorized but were unable to assess students' intelligence levels.

Therefore, Language policies and practices must be prioritized from the foundation level of formal schooling. The policymakers, curriculum developers and practitioners need to put language as a core unit and content should be managed through interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives. The main reality lies with the learners because they are the focal points of learning. We need to answer the following questions to introduce language-focused classroom strategy intervention.

  i. Who are the learners?
  ii. What is the linguistic background of the learners?
  iii. How do the learners feel comfortable communicating and exchanging ideas?
  iv. Why do the learners want to learn?
  v. How could the learners feel an easy and entertaining environment for learning?

By and large, the policies need to guide the learners. As a result, learners learn the content through a linguistic approach and can be involved in world scholarship. Another important consideration is access to learning. The learners who want to learn something new are affected by access and affordability. For example, the available resources, learners' ability, and environmental relevancy are some of the suggestive parameters to determine the present need for education and could have future usability.

Teacher Education Perspectives and Practices

Rajput and Walia (2001) commented that the post-dependence period was important for reforming teacher education in India. The major efforts at the time were related to updating and adapting the teacher education curriculum as per the local needs. Another significant attempt made by them was adapting research initiatives to define teacher education from policy to practice level, indicating the role of institutions. Current trends and information communication technology (ICT) have become crucial to enhancing transformative consciousness in teacher education.

Ministry of Human Resource Development (2020) illustrated teacher education motives in the Indian context clearly that teacher education is to enhance reformed pedagogical and research behaviours. Teacher education institutions need to consider the practical values and situational challenges. Moreover, collaborative and innovative teaching learning strategies, training and refreshments must be reformed as society needs to change. Chari (2020) discussed that teachers are the core unit that shapes national development and need to introduce a sound pedagogical atmosphere according to the changing reality of the world. Similarly, teacher empowerment is a significantly

important issue and they need to prepare themselves with a motivated and result-oriented component because national eligibility criteria are taken in reference for recruitment of the teachers. Another important factor is related with professional development of the teachers and the NEP-2020 encouraged teachers to develop 21st century skills and adapt to the sustainable goals through research-oriented guidelines. For example:

> In India, teacher education is crucial to determining the nation's future. It must adapt to the shifting demands of the educational environment. It is essential to emphasize practical values, innovative instructional strategies, and research-based guidelines. Teachers are the architects of our society, and empowering them through professional development is crucial for fostering the next generation of leaders. (Expert 1)

> To meet the challenges of the 21st century, Nepal's teacher education system is enduring a substantial transformation. It is essential to contextualize teacher preparation so that it is responsive to our students' diverse needs and expectations. Effective teacher education in Nepal is founded on experiential learning, research-based methods, and the ability to adapt to an ever-changing environment. (Expert 3)

Expert 1 emphasizes the importance of teacher education for India's future, recognizing that teachers are society's architects. This viewpoint resonates with India's extensive and diverse population, where educators are crucial in moulding the nation's youth. The need for teachers to be endowed with innovative instructional strategies and a solid foundation in research-based practices is consistent with the call for adapting teacher education to the changing demands of education. In India's dynamic and complex educational environment, empowering instructors through professional development is crucial for developing the next generation of leaders.

Similarly, the viewpoint of Expert 3 regarding Nepal's teacher education system's radical transformation is pertinent. Nepal's teacher preparation must be responsive and flexible to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The sociocultural diversity of the country is reflected by contextualizing teacher education to meet student's diverse requirements and expectations. The emphasis on experiential learning and research-based methods is consistent with the requirement for teachers to possess practical skills and critical thinking abilities. In an ever-changing educational environment, the ability to adapt is a fundamental aspect of effective teacher education.

The views emphasize the need for teacher education systems in India and Nepal to adapt to their countries' dynamic educational environments. These modifications include innovative strategies, research-based practices, and an awareness of the unique contextual factors that influence education in these countries. Such changes are necessary to equip instructors with the skills and knowledge required to prepare students for the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The teacher education policies need to be reformed so that the teachers are the technical human resources. For example, (Li et al., 2019; Tafazoli, 2021; Zhang & Chen, 2022; Zhou et al., 2022) in the different context reported that a teacher's professional development crucially reflects the learning outcomes and the teacher education needs to have the practice-oriented values as a result that could be implemented in the society. Furthermore, they suggested that research-based and technology-integrated teachers' professional development plans must be reformed and implemented. Hao (2018) reported that teachers' readiness is crucial to transform the existing educational environment as the teacher is realized as a delivery component in another sense, teachers are the drivers of the educational system. Therefore,

they must be updated and conscious of social, psychological, emotional, environmental and pedagogical considerations. Moreover, teachers are responsible for shaping the learning reality; as a result, they can ensure future leadership by establishing comprehensive communication, content and contextual realizations.

Teacher education along the line of (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020; Rajput & Walia, 2001) need to be context-specific and it should address the current need and expectations of the learners. Furthermore, it is elaborated that a practical-based learning system is the guideline for the changing reality. The responsible organizations should plan need-based, outcome-oriented teacher education within the guidelines of current needs, values and research-oriented.

New Directions and Perspectives

The debate for teaching, learning and evaluation needs to be continuous because the debates are the sources of change. When we flashback to the theories, we find debates, new interventions and strategies. Mahan (2022) focused on a content language-integrated learning approach to enhance learners' participation and linguistic practices in the classroom. It is taken as the pedagogical movement (Blaschke, 2021; Hainsworth et al., 2022; Mahan, 2022) in the recent study reported that presently world knowledge economy demands self-directed and lifelong learning skills and in comparison to traditional educational theories of pedagogy and andragogy, heutagogy offers a potentially compatible educational learning method to underlie the continuity of holistic care. Furthermore, they argued that the learners are independent units of the learning circle and pedagogical move from pedagogy to heutagogy, making them stronger and more confident in learning. The following diagram discusses the new direction of learning, which could be the intervention for pedagogical transformation.

Figure 1 presents the expected teaching-learning environment situations based on the ideas of (Dalton-Puffer, 2011; Jeanes, 2021; Rajput & Walia, 2001). The parameters and the aspects define the outcome indicators. The main parameter is learner and learning. The main parameter is interconnected with language and content indicators regarding society and indicators. The teaching-learning strategy is in the motives of current trends of learner development. The studies conducted by (Neborsky et al., 2021; Romerosa et al., 2022) revealed the current situation in the new normal context after the COVID-19 pandemic. The pedagogical movement introduced technological immersion in learning and sharing the importance of language. Therefore, the aspects deal with learner engagement, participation, cross-cultural references and technological awareness. The aspects and parameters are cross-sectioned as they are interrelated for the outcome-based education system from which the system can produce a matured learner who can be ready to face the challenges in life-going activities. Here we would like to conclude that the language policy for learning and how language can shape the learning goals of learners. On the other hand, if a learner has mastery over the language s/he can comprehend the content. Furthermore, he elaborated on NEP-2020 and focused on the teachers' readiness, accessible learning motives and mindset change for effective and transformative learning. Therefore, it is time to transform pedagogies focusing on the language, logic and social context to ensure outcome-based learning in the changing world.

Figure 1

Futuristic Pedagogical Perspectives
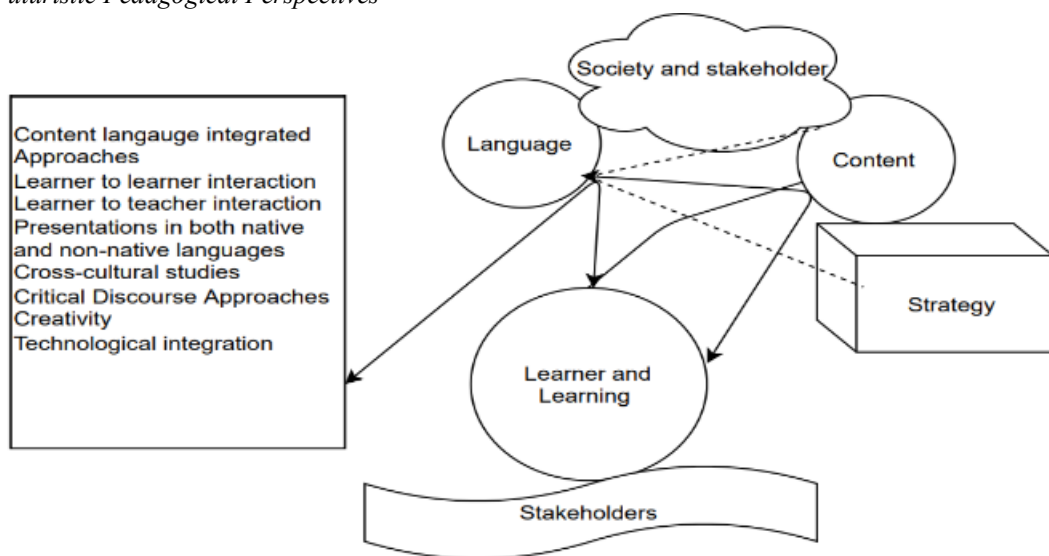
Conclusion and Implications

The present article discussed the potential configuration of pedagogical movement, referencing national reports and recent research studies that focus on evolving perspectives during and post-COVID-19 situations. We believe that paradigm shift is not a matter of theory change. It is the change in thought and behaviours. Similarly, teachers' identity and professional responsibility could be the discourse in this changing mindset. The teachers are independent and they need to be responsible for designing the curriculum for students. The curriculum should focus on the language development unit. If a learner can communicate, exchange and reform thoughts, it's only for the compartment of language consciousness. However, the content in the curriculum is presented with high value from foundation to higher education. It is a critical question and a great challenge for teachers either to focus on language or content. We could remember the lines (Haniya & Paquette, 2020) in which they focused on learning trends with the framework of digital well-being and technological consciousness. Similarly, they emphasized the situational learning goals of learners.

Although numerous policies, difficulties, obstacles, and mitigating strategies have been recognized as critical factors in re-framing the mindset of learning. The primary focus should be on the duties and responsibilities, attitude, and integration of many types of knowledge with language. As a result, learners feel confident in learning and can deal with social phenomena in transdisciplinary aspects. Therefore, the paper revealed the need to introduce language-based instruction to the learners. The content must be integrated with logic, language, environment and technology in interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspectives to enhance learning outcomes and introduce new pedagogical shifts.

Diverse factors, including policies, challenges, and mitigation strategies, have an undeniable effect on the reconfiguration of learning perspectives. Nonetheless, the integration of various knowledge forms with language is fundamental to this reconfiguration. This is a pragmatic position, not just an ideological one. When learners integrate knowledge across disciplines with language, they not only gain confidence in their learning processes but also develop the acumen to address social phenomena from a transdisciplinary perspective. Some may argue that merely acknowledging problems and implementing policies is sufficient, but such an approach is simplistic. For genuinely transformative learning, it is

essential to address the attitudes and responsibilities of the learners. Furthermore, while language-based instruction is advocated in this paper, it is not language alone. Instead, it is the combination of content with logic, environment, and technology from diverse disciplinary vantage points. In this case, the potential counterargument is the complexity that this may introduce. Combining so many aspects may appear overwhelming and dilute the essence of individual disciplines to some. However, in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, isolated learning is not only obsolete but also counterproductive. By promoting interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary perspectives, we are not diluting disciplines but rather enriching them, paving the way for necessary and inevitable pedagogical shifts in the modern era.

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Collaboration, Discussion, and Feedback for Improving Students' (Report) Writing and Presentation: A Participatory Action Research

Rajan Kumar Kandel and Ganesh Kumar Kandel

Abstract

This study investigates how model presentation, collaboration, discussion, and peer feedback as the intervention of participatory action research (PAR) improved students' academic writing (AW) and presentation skills while dealing with a practical course 'ELT seminar and report writing'. We implemented the intervention for three months in our regular class with 30 students pursuing a Master's Degree in English Education from Tribhuvan University, Nepal. During the intervention, we used observation notes and after the intervention, we used semi-structured interviews (with 15 students) to collect data. The findings showed that the intervention significantly improved the students' AW and presentation skills. The findings also showed that students refined their writing skills by gaining insight from the model presentation, discussions, and feedback. They significantly improved their writing and presentation skills through collaborative tasks performed regularly during the study. The study suggests that model presentation, group discussion, peer and teacher feedback, and self-reflection can be effective in enhancing students' AW and presentation.

Keywords: Model presentation, collaboration, feedback, ELT seminar, research writing, academic writing (AW)

Introduction

Academic Writing (AW) is essential for university students, especially those studying report writing courses in English as a second language (ESL) programs. AW skills are necessary for students to succeed in their academic pursuits, including research projects, essays, and assignments. However, students struggle with AW skills as they lack vocabulary, techniques for developing cohesive writing, lack of AW culture in the classrooms, and support from organizations (Elbow, 1998; Zhang & Wang, 2023). As a result, writing becomes a tiresome and more rigorous activity than speech (Iftanti, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to develop effective strategies to enhance students' AW skills. This study aims to investigate how model presentation, collaboration, discussion, and feedback as an intervention helped students improve their AW and presentation skills during the instruction of the ELT seminar and report writing course.

ELT seminars and report writings are important parts of ESL programs in universities. ELT seminars aim to enhance students' language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and knowledge of the English language. However, due to the dependence of the mixed-ability heterogeneous students on their teachers in the Nepali context (Kandel, 2014), many ESL students find AW and presentation difficult to

begin with and complete successfully in the ELT seminar. Although the improvement of advanced writing skills is essential in today's text-oriented world (Yangın-Ekşi et al., 2022), many students may lack such skills. They struggle with the format, choice of academic vocabulary, and way of organizing ideas in writing. Instead, they take AW similar to other types of generic writings. AW is a challenging and complex writing process where students face problems in organizing and synthesizing ideas, using grammatically correct sentences, appropriate academic vocabulary, and proper citation and referencing (Islamiyah & Fajri, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to develop effective strategies to enhance students' AW skills for preparing research reports and their presentations in the ELT seminars.

PAR has been identified as an effective approach to foster a better learning environment and habit of collaborative problem-solving (Thawinwong & Sanrattana, 2022), which helps participant students develop research ideas and AW skills in various educational contexts (Dancis et al., 2023). PAR promotes research participants for collaboration and reflective practice. It is effective in encouraging active learning and engagement among students. It involves both teachers and students in a self-reflective cycle of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and then repeating the cycle successively to improve the practices (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

AW involves a wide range of writing that involves writing reports, papers, and articles including other varieties of research-based writing (Das, 2019; Das et al., 2022). Despite the importance of AW skills in ELT seminars, many ESL students struggle with AW which can negatively affect their performance and achievement. Research finding also indicates that students feel difficulty in many aspects of writing such as spelling, writing summary and organizing texts while developing writing skills (Zhang & Wang, 2023). The traditional approach to teaching AW, which often involves lectures and individual writing assignments, is ineffective in enhancing students' AW skills. The teaching of writing skills in the Chinese context is a challenging job because it incorporates various skills from drafting to the final essay (Chen, 2023). The findings of the study reported students' difficulties in writing since they used vague expressions, unclear main points, and simple sentence structure as a result of low vocabulary and organization knowledge.

Writing skills in our context too is one of the difficult skills to learn for students. Even the students of graduate and post-graduate levels find it difficult to write different kinds of academic papers such as reports, proposals, theses and other kinds of formal writing and their dissemination. Thus, there is a need to develop effective strategies to enhance students' AW skills in the ELT seminar. As PAR allows researchers to put ideas and assumptions into practice and examine their usefulness by gathering evidence (McTaggart, 1997), we identified it as an effective approach to enhancing students' AW as well as presentation skills. Despite the potential benefits of PAR in enhancing students' AW skills, there is limited research on its effectiveness in improving students' report writing skills and presentation. In this regard, this study aims to investigate the impact of the intervention on enhancing students' AW and presentation skills. It also aims to explore how different collaborative activities, model presentation, open discussions, and everyday writing and commenting as intervention helps students develop and polish their AW skills. The study aims to contribute to the literature on effective strategies for enhancing students' AW skills in ESL programs. Moreover, this study aims to investigate the impact of PAR intervention on improving students' AW as well as presentation skills.

Research Questions

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

a) How does the use of model presentations, student collaboration, discussions, and feedback improve ESL students' AW and presentation?

b) What are the perceptions of the ESL students regarding the effectiveness of the interventions in enhancing their writing and presentation skills in ELT seminars?

Literature Review

PAR is a collaborative and reflective approach to research that involves participants in the research process along with the researchers (MacDonald, 2012). It can be used in various educational contexts to promote students' learning engagement, qualify novice practitioners and build academic communication between teachers and students (Forshaw et al., 2023). It can be effective for enhancing research-level students' AW and presentation skills in different disciplines such as social work, education, and nursing (Sharma & Hammond, 2023). It also helps develop the 4 C's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) (Saimon et al., 2023) among the research participants through interventions which ultimately foster organized writing and better presentation. PAR promotes collaborative learning activities in the classroom and helps students develop AW skills as participants and researchers work collaboratively to improve their practices (Wright, 2015) incorporating different cognitive strategies (Sethuraman & Radhakrıshnan, 2020). Moreover, PAR can also help the research participants become change agents (Altares et al., 2022) based on the interventions introduced during the study.

AW is not a skill that can be mastered overnight. Several factors are responsible for making it a challenging task for students. A study (Pineteh, 2014) carried out in South Africa reported a lack of mastery of AW conventions, analysis of writing topics, research skills, and applying research knowledge in different contexts as challenges for the development of AW skills. To mitigate such challenges, collaborative tasks, lively discussion, and constant peer and teacher feedback may significantly contribute. An experimental study in the Vietnamese context revealed that collaborative activities regularly helped students improve their overall AW skills meaningfully (Hoang & Hoang, 2022). Advanced AW skill is the complex process of writing as it involves the acquisition of new vocabulary and knowledge of language structure and mechanics. Moreover, it includes the better dissemination and presentation of the information, concisely, and in a logical format to communicate the message to the intended audience (Ashcraft et al., 2020). Studies have reported that frequent sharing with the intended audience and their feedback improves speech delivery (Hager & Hilbig, 2020; Lewis & Neighbors, 2005) and helps bring change in students' presentations through improved classroom dynamics reflecting their better personal, social, and professional identities (Oleson, 2023). The collaborative learning culture helps students learn skills required for AW and presentation more effectively.

An experimental study carried out in Malaysia showed that collaborative learning activities and sharing among students helped them develop different writing components such as vocabulary, organization, grammatical accuracy, and writing mechanics to increase their writing skills (Yusuf et al., 2019). The finding of an analytical study based on the reviews of many studies shows that cooperative learning and teacher and peer feedback in the classroom supported ESL students to improve their writing skills (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). Similarly, the findings of action research carried out by Sapkota (2012) to improve students' writing skills through peer and teacher correction in the Nepali context showed that students improved their vocabulary skills, writing mechanics and grammaticality of sentences after intervention.

The above literature shows that collaborative learning context, discussion, and peer and teacher feedback play a significant role in developing students writing skills. Although many studies have been carried out regarding the role of collaborative learning, discussion and feedback for improving writing in the international context, there is limited literature on how model presentation, collaborative work,

and peer and teacher feedback help students develop their AW in the context of Nepal adopting PAR design.

Methodology

In this study, we used PAR design and observation and interview methods to collect data from the class of ELT Seminar and Report Writing consisting of 30 students. We followed the interpretative research paradigm as suggested by researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; 2018) to explore participants' subjective experiences of improving AW and presentation skills. Through the PAR design, we explored individuals' feelings, views, experiences and ways of learning AW and presentation skills. We applied the intervention in the regular class by presenting models, having discussions with friends and teachers, and getting peer and teachers' feedback regularly for three months without control or manipulation taking ideas from MacDonald (2012). This study followed the use of qualitative interpretive modes of enquiry and data collection through observation notes and semi-structured interviews with 15 participants selected purposively based on the judgments on how to improve classroom practices (Kemmis et al., 2014).

As PAR facilitates students' engagement in their learning contexts and improves their language skills by bringing changes in usual practices (Cammarota, 2017; Cammarota & Romero, 2011), we designed the intervention that included model presentation, student collaboration, discussions, and feedback on research report writing and its presentation. To improve the writing skills of our students, we used the interventions for three months during the regular classroom instruction. The improved actions were grounded on the use of intervention for improving students' AW proficiency and presentation skills in the study as suggested by McNiff (2016).

Research Participants

The demographic characteristics of the research participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Participants	Female	Male	Total
No. of M. Ed. 4th-semester students	12	18	30
No. of Researcher teachers		2	32
Total	12	20	34

Out of the 30 participants, we selected 15 participants (including seven female and eight male) purposively for the interview.

PAR Cycle and Intervention

To implement the new intervention, we followed the following cycle and carried out everyday teaching-learning activities to improve students' writing skills by taking ideas from Hall and Keynes (2005):

Figure 1
PAR Cycle
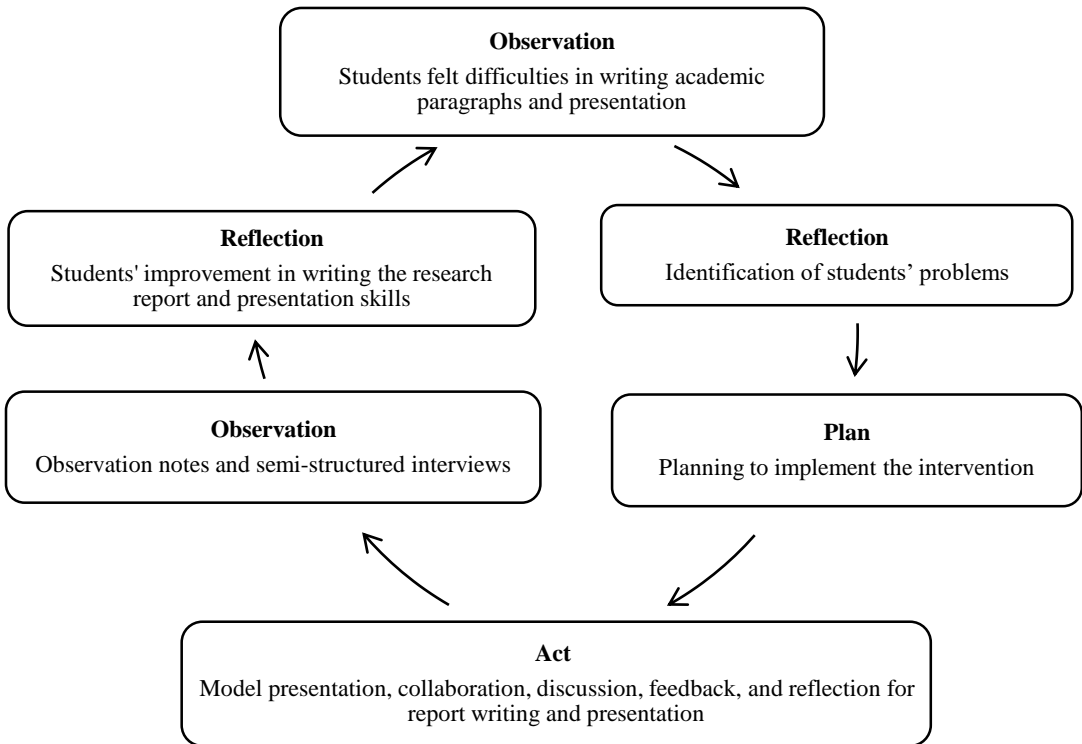
To interpret the cycle in Figure 1 at first, we taught students for a month conventionally through teacher-led instruction, followed by some assignments to the students as the preliminary **observation**. Although the students attended the classes, they did not involve themselves readily in writing. Even when they were (made) to write, they did not write paragraphs effectively. Mostly, they used figurative words and used many words and sentences to express a small idea. Their writings seemed messy and less academic. Their choice of vocabulary and organization of ideas were not properly maintained to meet the basic features of AW. Moreover, they were hesitant and inhibited from sharing and presenting it in class among their classmates.

As a **reflection** in the first cycle, we identified students' poor writing and presentation skills. We discussed with students: how to improve their writing and presentation. From the discussion, we agreed to practice writing and presentation differently. Many students reported that they could not write as they had less opportunity to observe models of writing and were not confident in presentation due to their rare practice.

To **plan** for further improvement, we decided to use model presentation, collaboration, group discussion, and feedback as interventions to develop their AW and presentation skills. We made plans for everyday teaching in collaboration and negotiation with the students. Everyday classroom discussion paved the way forward for planning the lesson for the next day.

We en**act**ed the intervention for three months and the classroom dynamics changed. Before assigning the students to write we provided them with model papers and paragraphs. Then, they started writing their paragraphs. They discussed them with classmates before, during, and after their writing.

They discussed in groups and pairs and provided feedback on their mate's writings and presentations. As a presentation, the second author also presented a model as a regular teacher though the observation, reflection, and plan were led by the first author initially. The teacher facilitated the model presentation, discussion, and feedback sessions.

During the intervention, we also **observe**d how the students began learning to write and present. We took notes on how the participant students developed writing skills and the way they presented the findings of their studies. We kept a record of each day's progress. We kept notes of each day's progress in the diary. Through everyday observation, we noticed how intervention supported students in improving their writing and presentation skills.

Through everyday classroom observation, we noticed (**reflection**) that the students improved their AW and presentation skills. Their writings seemed more academic and presented their plans (and reports) more confidently during the seminar organized internally in the class for rehearsal. Moreover, we explored the experiences of half (15) of the students through semi-structured interviews. The interview data also justified how successful the intervention was in improving students' AW and presentation skills. Based on everyday reflection we often revised our plan and continued the cycle for three months.

Methodology

Since PAR is a collaborative, iterative and often open-ended method of inquiry (Cornish et al., 2023), we used classroom observation notes and semi-structured interviews with 15 participants as a method of data collection to explore how students experience their AW skills after implementing the intervention. Although all the students got an opportunity to learn and develop AW skills through the interventions in the classroom, only half of them were interviewed.

We also used the participatory observation method taking the idea of the researchers (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018) to notice students' improvements in AW skills particularly in report writing and their presentation. We observed the writing activities of all the participants focusing on how they improved their writing and presentation. We especially observed and developed a diary of classroom activities and the strategies students used before and during the intervention. We noted every detail of the student's activities and their oral responses through collaborative and interactive ways with peer and teachers' feedback on everyday writing. We noted important points during class time and recorded them in the diary after class.

After the intervention, we interviewed purposively selected 15 participants at their convenient time to explore their experiences of learning academic writing and presentation and their enactment through their actions and reflection. We elicited rich data through prompts and probes when required and recorded the interview on our smartphones for transcription.

Results and Discussion

After collecting data through observation notes and interviews, we interpreted the collected information thematically taking the idea of thematic analysis of qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2016; Braun et al., 2019). The data were analyzed descriptively into three themes. The result of the study is discussed under the following themes.

Discussion and Feedback for Developing Writing Confidence

The findings showed that the PAR intervention significantly improved students' AW skills. The students increased their involvement in writing work after gaining ideas of how to initiate and proceed ahead in writing reports based on discussion and feedback from peers and teachers every day. The students practised regularly, they read reading material to expose themselves to the styles and structures of AW, sought and provided feedback, and edited and revised their writings. Moreover, they persisted

and kept writing out of their comfort zone. On top of that, they celebrated their writing even when they finished a paragraph. It developed student autonomy and engaged them as claimed by Crane and O'Regan (2010) who reported that PAR encourages more involvement, ownership and participation in the work. The findings of this study also resembled their claim as PAR provided opportunities to gather information, develop relationships, and generate ideas about how to work collaboratively with the postgraduate scholars learning English as a foreign language in the Nepali context. Everyday model presentations of an academic text by the teacher and/or students, discussion on several elements of their writing, and peer and teachers' feedback for refining writing incorporating the elements and mechanics of AW significantly improved students' writing. In this regard, Ramesh, a participant, reflected on how he developed confidence in writing. He argued:

> I could hardly write before gaining ideas on how to maintain different elements of academic writing from teachers and peers. I often did not know how to begin writing. It took me many days to begin writing and I wrote one sentence and pondered a lot of time and felt very hard to continue it at the beginning. The sharing of my friends' writing and discussion encouraged me to write and improve my writing. Backed up by the feedback from my teacher and my classmates, I learned many ideas and now I have started to cherish my writing.

Our observation also revealed that the students mainly faced challenges in the organization and selection of vocabulary in their report writing. In the initial phase, their writing seemed messy in terms of the selection of vocabulary, cohesion, coherence, and unity of the text. They were unaware of the citation and referencing even the proper use of punctuation and relative clauses in AW. They did not know how to maintain the transition of ideas in the paragraphs before the intervention. Exposure to the model reading texts, their friends' model, and constant collaboration and feedback on their writing provided them with ideas on how it was different from other kinds of writing. After the intervention, Sharmila shared a very interesting experience in the interview on how she developed AW skills through a collaborative effort. She said:

> I thought academic writing meant simple essay-writing in newspapers. Very easy. I had no idea that academic writing requires a particular structure and choice of vocabulary. I thought I could search on Google, copy and paste, and prepare a report. Now, I know that academic writing requires in-text citation, referencing, evidence and a concise and clear flow of ideas. Exposure to the model, class discussion, and feedback we received from teachers and friends inspired us to improve our writing.

Her ideas reflected how the students perceived AW activities at first. The participants' experiences in the interview and evidence found in observation revealed that without proper instruction and collaborative effort, students were misled in AW. However, persistent collaboration and feedback on their writing provided them with ideas on how AW differs from other kinds of writing. Umesh's comments showed how collaborative work eased their AW journey. He said:

> I know what academic writing is now and how we have to write academically a bit better when I work every day with my friends. Earlier, I never thought of any differences between literary writing and academic writing. I thought that if one is a better writer /he or she can write anything be this a story, novel, drama, poem, or any academic essay. Throughout these three months we we have explored the

opportunities for exposure and practice. It has enriched our confidence in writing academic texts and reports. We can now differentiate between academic and non-academic writing.

It reflected how exposure to AW, teachers' and peers' comments and ideas helped students develop their AW significantly. It resonates with the findings of a Vietnamese quasi-experimental study (Tran & Pham, 2023) which reported that peer feedback has a significant influence on improving students' writing abilities. The students demonstrated an improvement in their ability to organize their ideas, use appropriate language, and provide proper citations and references in their seminar reports.

Collaboration to Improve AW and Presentation Skills

Data collected during the study revealed that collaborative work among the students not only offered what and how aspects of writing but also improved the quality of students' writing. The classroom observation and reflection discovered that the students' engagement in the seminar activities in the collaborative learning environment facilitated their learning process. They did not only learn skills of better AW but also learned to present more confidently and interactively among their classmates. Similar to the findings of a survey study (Tatzl et al., 2012) in Austria and an experimental study (Li & Mak, 2022) in Canada which reported learners' appreciation for collaborative projects in AW, this study also showed students' appreciation in collaborative learning as it helped them improve their language, content matters as well as presentation skills. Ideas expressed by Sadhana in the interview also reflected how she improved her writing and presentation skills through collaborative efforts. She claimed:

> I got a chance to see the writings and observe the presentations of my friends. I got an opportunity to compare my work with my friends. Sometimes, we discussed and I corrected ourselves before getting teachers' feedback. I revised my writing and, in this way, my writing improved. I also learned to present better. Now, I can present more confidently what I have written.

Such collaborations helped them to complement and complete the task in time, and improve the quality of their paper too. The intervention also provided them with opportunities to polish their writing and presentation skills. Like the findings of Li and Mak (2022) who reported that collaborative writing instruction supports students to improve their writing skills significantly, the students in this study also made substantial progress on their report writing skills. They developed confidence in writing and presenting their reports well after gaining feedback from teachers and friends. Regarding how participants experienced collaborative work, the ideas shared by Mukesh are interesting. He shared:

> I could not write even a few sentences for many days. I read the articles and theses too. But reading also didn't provide me expected insight. But when I started working with friends, discussing writing, and sharing each other writing, I gradually learned academic writing. My writing improved after sharing and revising my writing many times after getting comments from friends and teachers. For the presentation, I learned to prepare and be confident of what and how to share the documented ideas.

His comments pictured the improvement of writing quality while being involved in collaborative tasks. Similarly, the study (Das et al., 2022) in the American context also reported collaborative writing as an integral part of professional and academic work and it supports colleagues commenting on what, where, when, and how aspects of writing and editing their writings too. In this

study too, students learned and helped their friends' by receiving and giving feedback on different aspects of writing. The students also noticed improvement in their writing and presentation tasks.

Report Preparation and Presentation

The findings showed that model presentations of writing every day, discussions over the writing of students, and constructive feedback from the teacher and colleagues helped students learn basic skills of AW such as the use of academic vocabulary, writing mechanics, and organization and ways of presentation. A finding of a survey study (Malpique et al., 2023) in Australia showed that emphasis on teaching basic skills of writing and process activities in writing such as planning, revising and editing helps students improve their writing skills meaningfully. In this study also, students shared that they engaged in the process of writing after working in collaborative activities. Participants expressed that the choice of vocabulary, organization of ideas and how to begin and complete writing as challenges of writing were significantly resolved through the practice, discussion, and constructive feedback of the teacher and colleagues. Their experiences of learning writing after observing others and making model presentations of their writing reflected how collaborative writing and model presentation eased and improved their AW skill and helped them prepare and present the final report. To illustrate, Dipika shared:

> I learnt how to begin, proceed and complete writing after I observed others' writings and also presented mine. When friends provided feedback, I changed my writing, I knew how to write abstract, background, objective, methodology etc. from model presentation. As a result, I have produced the report in this form and prepared well for the presentation in the final workshop.

The students were also observed providing comments taking their writings as an example. The model presentation and collaboration helped students in their thinking process of writing. They got the opportunity to refine their writing after a model presentation and constructive feedback. In this regard, Storch (2013) claimed that collaborative writing helped students in the thinking process of word choice, writing organization, and cohesiveness of the text along with the opportunity for revision and evaluation of the text. Such collaborative ventures motivated hesitant students to complete their writing tasks and made them risk-takers. The ideas shared by Niraj in the interview reflected how important collaborative writing and model presentation were to help produce their final report and improve presentation skills. He said:

> I learned what kind of words I have to use, and how to organize them and write academic papers after looking at my friends' presentations of writing. My presentation also helped me revise my writing. While writing alone, I could not write for a long time. I could not think how ideas are organized and what kinds of writing are required in different units of academic writing. Now, we have prepared our reports and gone through some of our friends' reports. We have also rehearsed presenting or reporting in front of others.

Niraj's comments clearly showed that frequent writing collaboration, negotiation and model presentation supported students to think, generate ideas, write, revise and prepare good AW papers. It also provided them with a platform for the rehearsal of the presentation of the research reports. As students engaged much in discussion and observation of their written tasks and presentation, we found teachers' place as facilitators rather than someone who dictated students' writings and interrupted their writing fluency. Classroom observation and students' comments in the interview revealed that the

intervention was significant as it helped them improve their AW skills, prepare better academic reports and present their research reports confidently.

Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative work, discussion, and peer and teacher feedback followed by model presentation either by the teacher or by fellow students to enhance students' AW skills and better presentation in an ELT seminar. The students can improve their AW if they gain opportunities to present and get feedback regularly from their teachers and friends. The study further revealed that working together and sharing AW among friends and rigorous discussion about different components of AWs have great impacts on their AW improvement. Collaborative work regularly can support students to refine the structure and content of their writing as well as provide opportunities to improve their presentation skills and build confidence in writing and disseminating the ideas explored in their studies. Constructive feedback from colleagues and teachers and self-reflection increase students' writing motivation. It helps them improve the quality of their writing taking a little support from teachers as facilitators.

The study suggests that the intervention used in the seminar, including model presentation, student collaboration, discussions, feedback, and revision on research and AW, can be applied in other educational contexts to enhance students' AW skills. The study recommends teachers and students adopt student-centred cooperative learning enhanced by peer feedback and teacher facilitation in teaching and learning writing skills in general and AW in particular. Student autonomy and self-preparedness of learners result in better learning than teacher-led authoritative teaching. Course designers and policymakers should develop curricula accordingly to meet the learning objectives.

Although this study has advocated an avenue in teaching and learning, it possesses some limitations in its methodology and its scope. The study was carried out under a regular class which the authors shared for a semester in Surkhet district. It consisted of 30 students and 15 students were interviewed. Moreover, it was limited to teaching (academic) report writing and its presentation using classroom observation notes and semi-structured interviews as tools for data collection under PAR design. It implies that the study can be used in other such classes consisting of a large number of students and in many classes. In addition, studies can be carried out in teaching other language skills and aspects. Studies can also be carried out using other research tools such as questionnaires, test items, conversational analysis, reflective diaries, retrospections and other designs except PAR. However, the study is significant since it has opened up the discussion of using student-led activities with teacher facilitation in the field of teaching language skills and research writing despite its limitations in the scope and methodology.

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Exploring Students' Experiences of Using Facebook for Communication and Education

Babita Parajuli

Abstract

This article aims to explore the Secondary Level students' experiences and perceptions of using Facebook for academic and communicational purposes contributing to the less explored literature on students' social media usage in the context of Nepal. I used a descriptive-qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with purposively selected eight students studying in Grades 11 and 12 of a government secondary school in Morang to investigate their daily usage of Facebook. The thematic analysis of this study indicated that most students perceived Facebook positively as one of the potential tools for their classroom learning purposes along with their daily online communication with family, relatives, and friends. However, some students also revealed their experiences of misusing Facebook such as creating fake Facebook accounts, chatting and flirting with unknown people, uploading fake photos, and receiving unpleasant comments in the posts resulting in family pressure on them. This study highlighted Facebook as a popular social network that has become one of the important tools in students' daily lives and academic careers by ensuring their electronic participation in communication and education, increasing their social relationships, collaboration and information sharing in the 21st century.

Keywords: Facebook usage, Online collaboration, descriptive-qualitative, learning purposes, e-communication

Introduction

The development of social media is outlined back to the time when the mainframe computer was developed in about 1960s, the microcomputer in the 1970s, the internet in the 1980s and the World Wide Web in the 1990s (Donaldson & Knupfer, 2002). Computer technology and the Internet have supported the foundation for the development of social networking sites at present. Aghaei et al. (2012) state that the World Wide Web (WWW) as a significant information search engine, has supported the progression of four generations of web technologies such as Web 1.0 evolved for connecting information, Web 2.0 for connecting people, Web 3.0 for connecting knowledge, and recently Web 4.0 for connecting intelligence. With the Web 2.0 features of the internet development, social media such as YouTube, Facebook, blogs and wikis became popular across the world in the first decade of the 21st century (Reinhardt, 2019). In the beginning, the arrival of Web 2.0 promoted blogs as a platform for sharing personal content that motivated many people around the globe to use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Skype, Instagram, Google+, and ResearchGate (Chiroma et al., 2016)

Social media are internet-based applications with the technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing people to create and exchange User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Facebook, as the fastest-growing Web 2.0 technology (Isacsson & Gretzel, 2011), has the highest popularity among all social networking sites (Chiroma et al., 2016). Weil (2015) stated that Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook on February 4, 2004, to connect Harvard students to be familiar with each other and now it is available in over 70 languages of 213 countries (Pander et al., 2014). There were about 2.50 billion monthly active Facebook users in the world by September 2019, of which 387 million Facebook users were from Europe and 1,013,000 from Asia (Aslam, 2020). He further reports that India has the largest monthly Facebook users with 270 million, then 190 million in the US, and about 82% of the college graduates are on Facebook.

Social media are widely used websites as the essential parts of Information and Communication Technology to communicate virtually in the global context. The growing body of literature has emphasised that social media such as Facebook, Messenger, What's App, Twitter, Viber, and Google classroom are increasingly being used for educational purposes in many parts of the world, as it provides collaborative access to users to communicate and share content in virtual groups (Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017; Allam & Elyas, 2016; Miller et al., 2019; Premadasa et al., 2019). Rana (2018) reported that practising computer and ICT technology in education is a newer practice in Nepal. Studies on social media usage in education have become one of the popular and largely explored research areas in the western context, including many developed countries; however, it is needed to explore in the low technological context like Nepal focusing on how the students representing today's young generation perceive social media such as Facebook and how they have been using them in their daily life and study purposes. Realizing this situation, the researcher explored the typical experiences of students on Facebook usage. Although the statistics of internet and mobile users in Nepal are gradually increasing, many people cannot afford it due to their socioeconomic status and geographical location of the country. The study (Acharya, 2016) states that there is a considerable growth of internet users in Nepal along with the evolution of social networks. Talking about the internet penetration in Nepal, Neupane (2018) reported that there were about 35.70% internet users in October 2014, which increased to 45.64% in October 2015, 54.42% in October 2016 and approximately 62.94% in October 2017.

Similarly, based on the NTA report, Onlinekhabar (2019) informs that about 4.4 million Nepali internet users are added in a year and about 63% of the total population has access to the internet. Similarly, about 49 % of the total population uses internet services on their mobile phones, whereas about 10.9 million use the 3G service. Neupane (2018) states that Nepali users are increasing in social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and communication platforms like Messenger, What's App, and Viber. Similarly, platforms like Emo and Viber are popular among people whose family members are abroad. Furthermore, Prasain (2019) reports that there are approximately 9.8 million active Facebook and Instagram users in the country, which is rapidly expanding internet access, and the presence of young people on Facebook is more than that of adults due to their online literacy. Dinesh (2021) reported according to the recent record of the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) that there are about 36.7% of internet users in Nepal in the year 2020 including about 69.89% of social media users on Facebook and most of the internet bandwidth is consumed for social media such as Facebook, Tik-Tok, and YouTube. It seems that many young students are attracted to the extensive use of Facebook in their daily lives, but the limited research work on social media use in education in Nepal drew my attention. The researcher chose Facebook for this study as it is a popular social media with increasing choices of many young people in the present situation. Considering the importance of investigating the practices of this social networks, focusing on how and for what purposes students studying in higher level have used

Facebook in their daily life, this study aims to examine the experiences and perception on Facebook for academic and communicational purposes using the descriptive qualitative method. The following research questions guided the overall study:

a) How are the students' experiences and perceptions of using Facebook in daily life and study?

b) How does Facebook help students in their day-to-day life and study-related activities?

Literature Review

This section reviews the literature related to information and communication technology, Facebook as a social network and Learner productivity in Facebook Use.

Information and Communication Technology

Information and communication technologies (ICT) these days have become the necessities of many people around the world Ibrahim (2010). Different forms of traditional technologies such as radio, television, and telephone have been used in the field of education as an important means of serving with communication and delivering messages from the beginning. Wishart and Thomas (2015) argue that the development of Web 2.0 tools has greatly enabled people to create and share information online all over the world. Moreover, they report that it is more interactive than the previous static Web which allows only to consume information passively. The evolution of Web 2.0 has allowed new applications for social engagement (Woerner, 2015). As a result, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, what's app, Blogs, and YouTube have become the choice of many young people these days and they have been continuously used for interaction, collaboration, and information sharing among people around the globe. Researching the students' uses of social media is less explored in the context of Nepal, therefore it needs researchers' attention to fill this literature gap.

Facebook as a Popular Social Media

Social media technologies have changed the landscape of both personal and professional communication (Acharya, 2014). Similarly, Masin (2011) argued that the early 21st century has focused on the use of social media as the new platform of information sharing user-created content. Akir & Atmaca (2015) reported that Facebook could potentially increase learners' self-study skills, language skills, access to authentic learning materials, practising new forms of knowledge, receiving instant feedback, and motivation from academic activities in intermediate classes. Supporting the widening use of social sites like Facebook, Chugh and Ruhi (2018) stated that Facebook has become an integral part of social media which aims to promote social communication and collaboration among people in the world. Various research emphasises the utility value of Facebook as the platform for communication, socialisation, fun, and recruitment, sources of data collection, research, and education.

Learner Productivity in Facebook Use

Facebook is recognized as one of the most popular and acceptable social networking sites among young students studying in college and university to facilitate online interaction and communication (Ping & Maniam, 2015). Students spend their considerable time on social media and Facebook has been preferred as the largest and leading social media application in the present-day virtual world (Al-Dheleai & Tasir, 2017; Hew, 2011). The Facebook platform was the information channel specially used to promote online communication, collaboration, content sharing, and engagement among people for academic and non-academic purposes (Alhazmi & Rahman, 2013) which creates several opportunities and challenges together (Chen & Sali, 2010). For example, Nguyen (2017) stated some of the problems resulting from the negative output of Facebook usage such as creating a distraction in work, ineffective and informal communication, collaboration, information accuracy, and cyber-bullying. Similarly, Facebook has several misuses, such as fake identity, blackmailing, misinformation, and advertising.

In recent years, Facebook usage has increased rapidly and has become one of the most popular social media among students at the university and higher education levels. The study by Alhazmi and Rahman (2013) found that Facebook supported students in diverse ways in their academic and daily lives due to its interactive and collaborative features. Several studies such as (Çakir & Atmaca, 2015; Ping & Maniam, 2015; Shih, 2011) revealed that college students have a great deal of experience in using Facebook for different purposes. These studies showed that teaching through Facebook significantly improved the students' interests and motivation, increased the learners' self-study skills, language skills, access to authentic learning materials, practising new forms of knowledge, receiving instant feedback and motivation from educational activities in the intermediate classes. Similarly, a study in Nepal (Jha et al., 2016) of Nepal reported most of the students used Facebook mainly for online communication with friends and family, news updates and leisure time but only about 5% of students used Facebook for educational purposes.

The above literature reflects Facebook as one of the widely used social networking sites, has several beneficial features for students at higher levels such as collaboration, communication, and knowledge transformation. However, limited studies are addressing the student use of Facebook in the context of Nepal.

Methodology

As suggested by Lambert and Lambert (2012), the study was based on the descriptive design under qualitative research to find out the detailed information, experience and perception of students' using Facebook in their daily life and study. The selection of this design supported the researcher in describing social phenomena and a comprehensive summary of specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals in everyday life (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The study was carried out in Shree Sarada Secondary School of Morang, Nepal (Pseudonym). The students studying in grades 11 and 12 were the study population and eight Facebook-using students were selected as the sample of the study by using a purpose sampling method as suggested by (Cohen et al., 2007).

The semi-structured interview was used in the study following the idea of Cohen et al. (2018) as a major tool of data collection to get the free space for personal responses from the smaller size of the sample in the study. The researchers can ask about people's beliefs, perspectives, facts, feelings and motives to yield rich information from the interview in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018). Therefore, following the idea (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018), open-ended questions were designed in the interview guidelines to investigate the overall experience and perception of students about Facebook usage. A qualitative descriptive research approach needs a straightforward description of a phenomenon (Lambert & Lambert, 2012), hence, the obtained information was analysed by using a descriptive summary of the information. The findings were presented in an organized, logical, and relevant manner based on the different categories and subcategories of the themes.

Results

This section presents the critical analysis of the findings outlined under the different themes and sub-themes based on the information obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the students. The major themes of the findings were: students' experience and perception of Facebook use in daily life and using Facebook for academic purposes.

Students' Experience and Perception on Facebook Use in Daily Life

The students involved in this study responded to their growing attraction to using Facebook to connect with friends and share ideas as most of them were found to be active Facebook users, spending more than three hours daily on Facebook. They reported their access to mobile, laptop, and internet at

home, and sometimes they used Facebook from mobile data connecting to 3G and 4G. One of the interviewed students explained:

> I have four years of experience in using Facebook with more than one thousand Facebook friends. I spend about five hours a day using this application to chat with old friends and relatives. I use it for entertainment such as watching videos, listening to music, sharing photos, and getting updated on recent news. (S1)

> I use Facebook for three hours daily to watch and react to my friends' stories and posts especially to know what they have done today. Similarly, I use it to be in touch with my relatives and friends, to follow my favourite celebrities, and to be updated about the current news, sports, and weather. (S3)

The experiences indicated how secondary-level students use Facebook in their daily lives in their context. They seem active in this social media spending extensive periods for various entertainment and e-communicational purposes. This is similar to the findings of Thapa (2017) who reported that most of the students use Facebook for communication among their friends and teachers which developed their interpersonal communication skills.

Some of the participants revealed in the interview that they used Facebook based on their personal choices. For example, one of the participants expressed, "Facebook removes my boredom as I chat with my girlfriend, strangers and my crush using Facebook. Occasionally I like to flirt with my crush and watch her stories' photos" (S2).

These findings indicated the way students practise Facebook in the context of this study. Their participation in using this application showed that the use of social media is mostly directed for personal entertainment purposes and also for establishing a familial, social and romantic relationship among the people around these participants.

The participants involved in this study were technology-friendly and enjoyed learning through Facebook, however, some of the students reported that they did not get support from their parents as their parents' attitude towards Facebook usage was different from their expectations. Some of the students reported that their parents developed a belief that they used Facebook to chat with friends and play mobile games such as Ludo, PUBG and Free Fire making circle of friends. This is contrastive with the study of Raza et al. (2020) who suggested that parental support had a positive role in the students' academic performance in the classroom because parents can lower their children's technological stress that appears while using social media.

Similarly, students used Facebook for different purposes especially to upload their photos, share interesting posts, update with the current news, and follow their favourite celebrities. However, some of the students revealed that they use Facebook unnecessarily for various negative purposes such as creating fake Facebook accounts, chatting and flirting with unknown people, uploading fake photos, getting unnecessary comments on the posts. Some of them could not get parental support to solve the technological and psychological problems created by their misuse of Facebook; instead, parents pressured their children to avoid its use in daily life. For example, one of the respondents shared how she perceived Facebook after her experience of misusing it:

> I had seven Facebook accounts, but I used only two real accounts to connect with my friends and relatives. Once, I uploaded my photo on one of my fake Facebook accounts, but I got many negative comments on that post which made me very sad, and I deactivated that Facebook account. My mother scolded me badly and

> pressured me not to use Facebook. Therefore, I request my brother and sister that we need to use Facebook only in our free time. Now I realised that we should not connect and chat with a stranger. We should think before uploading photos and posts on Facebook. (S7)

This response indicated how social media such as Facebook created complexities in a person's life by establishing false online connections with unknown people.

Most of the students positively perceived Facebook concerning their daily use of virtual connections with people. For example, one of the students said:

> Facebook has made it easier to call my parents every day who are far from my rented room. I feel very close to them when I see them every day in video calls. I can talk with my friends and ask about their updates although we have not met for so long. (S4)

This response indicated that Facebook helped students connect and communicate with the outer world, friends, and family members through online communication, such as video calling and chatting.

Using Facebook for Academic Purposes

Similar to the findings of Ainin et al. (2015), students in this study reported that Facebook has supported them in their classroom learning, as they use Facebook as a discussion platform for sharing various digital learning materials, notes, and assignments with their classmates. They reported that they had created a close Facebook group chat of the class where they received the study materials, assignments, project works, and important educational notices sent by the teachers and friends. Moreover, the interviewed students responded that they used Facebook messenger groups to discuss difficult educational problems with friends and teachers. They improved their study by joining various educational groups that provided useful study materials. For example, some students responded as follows:

> We have created a Facebook messenger group that includes all my class friends and teachers, which has supported discussing study-related ideas among group members and sharing my homework and notes with friends. We shared our ideas and project work through the messenger group. (S6)

> I access my assignments, project works, teachers' notes and different school notices through School Facebook pages and close chat groups of my class. Social medial such as Facebook group chat has assisted in my study and I can get a variety of learning materials as per my convenient time. (S5)

Many of the students replied that they used Facebook for lesson-related discussions with friends and teachers and shared study materials, class assignments, notes and important notices in the group chat. This information from the participants indicated that Facebook can help students share academic ideas and information in the group and can improve their study when students use it properly as an interactive learning platform.

The study found students' positive perceptions of using Facebook to improve their studies and get support and feedback from teachers and friends. In response to the advantages and disadvantages of Facebook based on their experience, another respondent said:

> We should use Facebook only for a limited time. Being addicted to Facebook wastes our time and makes us physically passive and unhealthy, leading to less

interest in studying and involvement in illegal activities. Therefore, I suggest that all students use Facebook properly for educational and informational purposes. (S2)

This expression indicates how students perceive the uses of social networks regarding their role in their daily life and study.

Discussion

This study focused on the learners' experience and perception of using Facebook for academic and nonacademic purposes in the context of Nepal exploring how this application is used by these students in the present situation.

Students' Facebook Usage

As reported in the study of Sánchez et al. (2014), the participants' experience of using Facebook indicated that students primarily use social media including Facebook for entertainment and rapport building with their friends and family members rather than using it for their learning purposes. However, these students' perception of academic uses of Facebook contradicts the findings of Bashir (2019) who reported that the interactive use of online applications develops collaborative learning. Moreover, the participants revealed that Facebook can be considered one of the accessible social media and learning platforms because it helps students exchange knowledge and information through online communication among their friends and teachers.

All the students positively perceived the role of Facebook uses, however, some of them regretted misusing the Facebook platform through unnecessary posts and negative comments as per the argument of Wang et al. (2011) and suggested that it should be used in leisure time carefully.

The use of Facebook has increased the technological awareness of the participants in this study as per the ideas of Gulati (2008) while using technological tools in the context of developing countries. Students in this study expressed that although they could deal with the issues and problems of using social media, some of them did not get support from their parents to use Facebook. They expected that students' positive use of social media should be encouraged by their friends, teachers and parents.

Facebook Supports to the Students

The result is similar to the study of Sánchez et al. (2014) who found that Facebook adopted by students can have practical implications to increase their learning experience through communication and collaboration. The participants in my study responded to Facebook as an innovative practice to develop an understanding of the lessons and learning contents shared by their friends and teachers in Facebook groups and the findings reflected that students had opportunities to explore and share study content with their friends. Following Resta and Laferrière (2007), collaborative learning is one of the successful outputs of the use of Facebook and participants had a positive reflection of their e-participation for collaborative learning as it introduces several teaching-learning opportunities among learners. Consistent with the conclusion of Geiller (2014), the findings indicated the need of integrating social media in classroom activities for better performance as students in this study informed that they can improve their study in different subjects through online discussion and collaboration.

The learners revealed that the interactive use of Facebook creates a supportive learning environment. These findings aligned with the study of Mali & Hassan (2013) who suggested Facebook as a learning tool significantly affected the intention of students to use it in daily life. However, the findings were dissimilar from the study of Abu-Shanab & Al-Tarawneh (2015) in that they reported the negative influence of social media and Facebook in terms of students' performance that the more time they spent on Facebook, the lower the grade students got. Based on these findings, students can transform

the communicative use of Facebook into educational purposes integrating it in everyday teaching-learning activities.

Conclusion and Implications

Facebook as an online application has increased students' e-participation for entertainment purposes, virtual communication and sharing feelings with their friends and relatives due to their extensive uses in daily life. Based on the evidence of this study, students' primary uses of Facebook are not related to educative purposes. Facebook is one of the most popular online platforms for students to share academic problems and learning materials. It also creates a variety of learning opportunities, such as expanding students' pedagogical, content, and technological knowledge and enhancing their day-to-day learning. Due to its potentiality abuse and future consequences, students anticipated using Facebook with caution for a limited period. It is possible to foster a collaborative, innovative, and active learning environment through the use of Facebook for educational purposes. Students' social media preferences can be met by incorporating social media into classroom instruction, such as Facebook. These findings can contribute to the less explored research area about the students' usage of social media in daily life and integration of it in education in many developing countries understanding the primary uses of social media by students in higher grades in Nepal.

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Basic Level Students' Perceptions and Practices on Assessment

Sudip Neupane

Abstract

Assessment in a classroom context is a method of evaluating students' ability and knowledge with certain purposes. This phenomenological study shared the students' perceptions of assessment in the EFL context and explored the preparation strategies for the examination. The information for this study was collected via in-depth interviews with six participants studying at the Basic Level (Grades 6-8) in one of the private schools of Kathmandu Valley. The findings of the study showed that the students were somewhat dissatisfied with summative assessment. They suggested a balance between summative and formative assessment. The participants favoured project assessment as it provided the learners ample opportunities to learn from each other, and their performance was measured while engaging in the project activities. This study is expected to be useful for students, teachers, teacher educators, researchers, policymakers, and ELT experts by providing perceptions, insights, and assessment practices.

Keywords*: Performance, examination, backwash, feedback, learning*

Introduction

Teaching, learning, and assessment have a triangular relationship, each supporting the other. The teacher teaches the subject matters to the learners, the learner learns what their teachers teach. Learners give their best when they are asked to write for their judgment. As a result, there is a regular, continuous, and direct involvement of students and teachers in the teaching and learning process, and assessment is an integral part of it. An assessment is a judgment of a person's knowledge, ability, and understanding for different purposes. In this regard, Brown (2003) states that an assessment as a tool helps to quantify one's ability, knowledge, and performance in a given domain. This definition is closely connected with summative assessment as it mainly focuses on assessing students' performance with some parameters. Similarly, Guskey (2003) argued that nearly every student suffers from the experience of spending hours preparing for a major assessment, only to discover that the material that he or she had studied differed from what the teacher chose to emphasize on the assessment. Such assessment practices may lead students to prepare for the assessment rather than engage in productive learning. Hughes (2003) states that summative assessment is used at the end of the academic session/semester/year to measure the achievement of the individuals. It suggests that the prime goal of summative assessment is to evaluate students' performance at the end of the academic session and provide guidelines to upgrade them to the next level or grade with some observations. Hence, it can be assumed that the summative assessment

helps to measure students' performance at the end of the course or program for upgrading and certifying students.

On the contrary, the formative assessment is a tool that helps to improve student's learning with continuous feedback from the teachers. In this regard, Hughes (2003) states that the progress of students' learning can be observed by formative assessment, and it further provides information to modify teaching plans for the teachers as well. Torrance and Pryor (1998) highlighted that the process of formative assessment is controlled to some extent by the teachers, so they suggested that the teachers involve students themselves in the formative assessment process. The progress and performance of the students can be assessed through formative assessment, and it also helps to provide necessary feedback to the students for their further improvement in their learning as this assessment focuses on a continuous process for helping learners to learn and improve as suggested by the teachers. Likewise, continuous assessment refers to the process of students' evaluation regularly for better learning. In this regard, Kellaghan and Greaney (2004) state, "Learning assessment in a classroom is 'subjective, informal, immediate, ongoing, and intuitive, as it interacts with learning as it occurs, monitoring student behaviour, scholastic performance, and responsiveness to instruction" (p. 45). This suggests that there is a need for formative and continuous assessment to transform classroom instruction and help learners learn through timely feedback for productive learning in this present world.

Having experience as a teacher, assessor and student, I always had a question in my mind i.e. 'Why is there a compulsion for paper-pencil tests? 'How do students perceive assessment?', 'What are the major strategies for exam preparation?" etc. These questions led me to explore the assessment trends, perceptions and practices of the students of the Basic Level (grades 6-8) and discuss them along with some implications.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to explore students' perception of assessment in the EFL context. In addition, this study also aimed to explore the strategies of examination used by the students in EFL classrooms so that it could help the students overcome the difficulties they experience while appearing for examination. To fulfil the purpose of the study, I framed the following research questions.

a) How do students perceive assessment in an EFL classroom?

b) What strategies do they apply for the preparation of the examination?

Literature Review

Bevitt (2015) carried out a case study on 'Assessment Innovation and Student Experience: A New Assessment Challenge and Call for a Multi-perspective Approach to Assessment Research' in the business school which examined the impact of assessment preferences and familiarity on student attainment and experience. It is found that the students' experience must be perceived as a complementary layer within a complex multi-perspective model of assessment, and it supports on assessment of/for learning as a continuous process. Herrera-Mosquera and Zambrano-Castillo (2019) carried out a qualitative-descriptive study entitled 'Assessment of English Learning in a Language Teacher Education Program' at a Colombian public university to identify the perceptions that both teachers and students on assessment of the English language teacher education program (ELTEP), describe the assessment criteria and mechanisms commonly used by the teachers of the ELTEP, and determine suggestions provided by both students and teachers in regards to the assessment approach and procedures implemented in the ELTEP. The information for this study was collected via interviews, questionnaires, field diaries, and documentary records from 160 participants. The study revealed that the professors emphasized formative, fair and democratic assessment despite the general guidelines of the

assessment proposed by the institution. Rana and Rana (2019) in their longitudinal research study entitled 'Teaching and Testing of English Listening and Speaking in Secondary Schools: Pretend or Praxis?' investigated the effectiveness of cooperative learning (CL) for improving learners' English language proficiency (ELP) level in Nepal. It is found that both students and teachers have perceived the test of listening and reading are important. However, the teachers are not assessing students based on the SEE Board framework for listening and speaking skills, and it is unethical and out of the policy. Acharya (2022) in his study on 'An Analysis of Student Assessment Practices in Higher Education of Nepal' explored the assessment practices by students and the problems they faced in higher education in Nepal. The findings of this study based on the primary (media's teachers' opinions, cases and issues coverage) and secondary data (archive and digital documents) suggest that the issues are prevalent in the assessment in the case of Nepal, thus it suggests further transformation and reformation of the assessment along with the use of digital tools. As the above studies and their insights guide me to explore the perception and practices of assessment at the Basic Level in the Nepalese context, I found that this gap could be filled to some extent and this study will support envisioning the assessment practices and working for its reformation.

Theoretical Underpinning

This study was guided by Critical Language Testing and regarding its origin (Shohamy, 2022) states that this theory is influenced by Michel Foucault's '*Discipline and Punish*', Samuel Messick's '*Evidence and Ethics in the Evaluation of Tests*' and Pierre Bourdieu's '*Language and Symbolic Power*'. Shohamy (2022) states, "The term Critical Language Testing (CLT) refers to the misuse of language tests in education and society by raising critical questions and challenges about the misuse of language tests" (p. 1448). Critical Language Testing suggests that the test should not be influenced by the culture of test makers, political dimensions, and power in the society. As this study attempted to explore how the students (Grades 6-8) perceive and practice assessment, I believe that this theory guided me to underpin theory into practice through the eye of test takers and the power and political dimension of the assessment in the Nepalese context.

Policy Review

The Basic Education Curriculum, 2077 (Grade 6-8) was approved by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) on January 28, 2021 [Curriculum Development Center (CDC, 2022)]. According to this curriculum, there is provision for internal (50 %) and external (50 %) assessment. The internal assessment emphasized on portfolio of each student maintaining his/her regular performance, project work, test performance and participation (CDC, 2022).

Internal Assessment (50 %)		External Assessment (50 %)	
Assessment Area	Weightage (Marks)	Final Examination Reading: 25	Weightage (50 Marks)
Participation (attendance: 2 & students' performance in teaching-learning activities: 2)	4	Writing**:** 25 Grammar is incorporated in the writing section.	
Reading: 8 and writing: 8	16		
Listening: 10 and speaking: 10	20		
Terminal Test (2 times)	10		

Methodology

I carried out this phenomenological study under qualitative research design since the purpose of the research drives me to gather subjective information in narrative and experiential form to make

the information rich. This study was conducted at a private school in Kathmandu Valley and the information of this study was collected through an in-depth interview. A total of 6 participants were selected for this study to collect information purposively. The age of the participants ranged between 11-14 years old. During interviews, participants were asked to state their understandings and perceptions regarding assessment. I took consent from the school administration and students themselves orally since I was a teacher at that school which made it easy to have a good rapport with the students which helped me to get rich and sufficient information for this study. However, I gave due respect to the participants which supported me to protect them from the anticipated harm of this study.

Results and Discussion

I tried my best to make sense of the collected information in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities for data analysis and interpretation.

Examination: A Tool for Progress

The participants involved in the study reported that examination is a tool for their progress. They further developed a belief that examination helps to measure students' performance and encourages them for better learning. In this regard, P6 expressed,

> I like exam because it gives me the platform to express my ideas and opinions openly. I can express my ideas openly during exams and it also can denote my talent and thinking capacity. It can support my study as well.

> We have to take an exam to know what we have learned or gained from the course book. The exam is the time when we need to learn what we have learned and present our ideas related to a particular subject. It is good for students as everyone gets frightened and starts reading exams. (P1).

> I do like exams as we can compare our capacity and knowledge with others. We get to know about our competitors. It is a way to know our competitors and perform well so that we would get an opportunity to express our learning through writing in the examination. (P2).

The above views of the participants show that examination helps to show their talents and capacities. It further provides them to explore the knowledge that they have gained from their regular class. This view is very similar to the study of Mussamy (2009) who stated that the forms of assessment are helpful in students' learning. Furthermore, it can be assumed that exam provides them to compare with others and it indirectly motivates them to engage in study for exam preparation. Burns (2008) found that if students spend more time on exam preparation, they are likely to perform well in their examinations. Hence, it is noticed that examination is an important tool for students' progress.

Examination: Realization of Comfort Zone

The participants involved in this study perceived examinations as a comfort zone for them due to numerous reasons. Regarding this, P1 said,

> I feel comfortable writing my ideas during examinations because it is the time to expose our talents, inner ideas, and views and we are free to express our ideas in the form of writing. When we get a chance to share our ideas, the examiner also gets to know about our ideas and experience and it is where we can show our talents.

I would love to share my ideas and views as teachers would examine our thoughts according to the topic. If there is a mistake and confusion, we could clear our views. Ideas are expressed in terms of the knowledge we gain. (P2)

From the above responses, it can be argued that some students favoured written examination as it provided them the opportunity to share their learning in the form of writing. It is important to have progress testing (Moraveca et al., 2015) and such testing helps students prepare for their final examination. The data also revealed that students become more conscious and clarify their confusion by giving more time for examination preparation. Furthermore, it can be assumed that writing helps students to pose their ideas during the examination as a result it is favoured by them to express their ideas and learning.

Examination as a Phobia

The study found that students have a fear of examination since it provides their overall grade/result based on their performance. This aligns with the finding of Vogl and Pekrun (2016) who reported that test anxiety had detrimental consequences for most students. In the context of the school level in Nepal, students are required to rote the subject matter before they appear for their examinations. It needs a lot of preparation which might lead them to have a negative backwash. If students have a fear of examination, it is considered that they have a negative backwash. As per my own experience as a teacher and student, I would say that the teaching and learning process in Nepal is influenced by examinations which is one of the reasons to have a negative backwash. According to Struyven and Devesa (2016), "Sometimes, preference for traditional assessments persists despite the instructor's best efforts to cultivate alternative attitudes" (p. 134). In response to the question of whether they like examinations or not, P5 explained,

No, I do not like exams. When the teachers announced the coming exam, it dreads and feels hopeless. Because I hate to be judged by some amount of marks given by someone. There is also a possibility to be in depression for the students which can hamper their creativity.

The above remarks indicated that many students perceived exams negatively. This perception was similar to Chatterjee and Rani (2013) who argued that the present practice of examination compels students to prepare for those topics in which students are not interested.

Regarding the examination system and their experiences, P1 shared,

I do not feel comfortable writing my ideas during examinations because, in our education system, there is no respect or value for our ideas. My idea and copy checker's idea may not match and I may get lower marks in the exams.

I do not feel comfortable writing my ideas during examinations because most of the teachers prefer the students who write the same answer that is pronounced in the classroom. However, I cannot memorize what is written in the textbooks or said by teachers. (P2)

I am afraid of exams because they dominate the inner qualities of the student. Our curriculum has enforced three-hour exams of a hundred marks. Appearing in the final examinations and writing what is memorized is a difficult task for me. Final examination brings a stressful environment and it is found less useful in comparison to practical and field knowledge. (P4)

The above remarks of the participants expressed that negative backwash is prevalent in the context of teaching and learning in an EFL setting. Prodromou (1995) states that negative backwash, as experienced by the learner, means language learning in a stressful, textbook-bound environment. As a result, it can be said that examination makes students anxious which represents negative backwash or harmful backwash. Therefore, teachers need to follow assessments along with corrective instruction so that students get the opportunity to show their improved competence and understanding (Guskey, 2003). From the above remarks of the participants, it can be assumed that they are afraid of examination. Most of the students perceived assessment as a practice having less to do with enhancing learning, motivating students and shaping classroom behaviours (Zeidner, 1992, as cited in Struyven & Devesa, 2016). Therefore, to some extent, it can be claimed that pencil tests may not judge students' overall knowledge and information for their regular improvement of learning. Hung et al. (2016) suggested involving students in peer assessment (PA) to assess the speaking performance of students and their study further suggests "needs awareness, scaffolding instruction, and proper training" (p. 465) for the PA classroom. This also suggests that there is a need for alternative assessments which might judge students' overall quality through continuous evaluation/formative assessment so that regular improvement is possible for a continuous learning process.

Project Work: A Good Assessment Tool

The participants of this study shared that the project work is supportive for them to learn and to be assessed in their learning situation. The reasons behind choosing this activity would be the advantages of the project work for the students as it fosters their creativity, skills and knowledge related to the given topic for better learning where their self-practice and self-performance are mandatory. They further reported that they would get a chance to learn many new things and get a good platform to show their ability and presentation. In this regard, P3 shared,

> I love project-based assessment because it not only gives us information regarding the topic but also makes learning long-term, fun, and exciting and we develop leadership and confidence levels too. Such activities Project activity involves students in group work, discussing in a team and coming up with ideas to work for the best project to prepare and demonstrate in the classroom.

The above remarks showed the participants' positive perceptions of project work and its assessment as they developed a belief that it helps them to learn on their own and share their learning through discussion and presentation in their classroom. Gülbahar and Tinmaz (2006) state that students get an opportunity to deal with real-life problems in project based-learning so that such learning would be a source of permanent knowledge. Furthermore, the participants of this study revealed that project assessment helps increase the creativity and imagination of the students for better learning. Therefore, the teachers need to give numerous project works to the students so that they can learn by doing with active engagement during the teaching and learning process and activities.

Current Strategies of Examination Preparation

The majority of the participants of this study reported that the major ways of preparing for their assessment were making points, highlighting facts and understanding the content at a deep level. Regarding the strategies of exam preparation, P1 said,

> I believe that studying in the morning time is a good one. I read the text and collect major ideas so that they can be remembered for a long time. I just revised the lessons by reading in-depth and even following the grid.

Similarly, P3 expressed,

> The preparation for the examination depends on our creativity. If we are creative, we can express our ideas properly. The major strategies that I have been using are, i) by understanding various logics and facts, ii) by revising the lessons at surface level iii) by maintaining a timetable, and iv) by not being nervous and having a good sleep and thinking optimistically.

> To avoid panicking during the exam, I always think of something positive that makes me relaxed before the exam. As I cannot memorize everything in my brain, I write simple tricks about it and understand it according to my theory. I go through the hints given by the teacher and friends. I also consult on mind games, cheats, and notes for preparation. (P4)

The above responses reflected that students are adopting different strategies for the preparation of examinations. The major strategies that are being applied by the participants are preparing notes, revising the lessons, getting relaxed and maintaining a timetable. This finding is similar to Entwistle and Entwistle (2003) who argued that reviewing the notes, producing the summary notes, checking understanding of the notes and memorization of the structures and supporting details are some of the prominent exam preparation strategies followed by the majority of the students. Similarly, Ha et al. (2021) reported that teachers' beliefs and practices on assessment are influenced by their experiences as students and traditional ones due to which their assessment practice is driven by exam-oriented situations. As teaching and assessment are influenced by teachers' old practices of assessment and somehow similar to their assessment, rote learning and memorization are observed as one of the major strategies for exam preparation which might be transformed if teachers bring innovation in teaching and assessment practices.

Conclusion and Implications

Assessment is a process of judging students' ability and knowledge based on certain criteria in the context of classroom teaching and learning. From this study, it is noticed that the majority of the student participants shared that the existing teaching and learning is influenced by the assessment and as a result it has a negative backwash in the teaching and learning process. Some of the student participants perceived examination as a tool for progress as it invites them to focus on their studies and improve their learning. As assessment is an integral part and mandatory in academia, it must help students judge, and provide regular feedback and support for learning. The findings of this study suggest that teachers are more supporters and facilitators rather than just assessors for better teaching and learning processes. Likewise, the balance of the use of formative and summative assessment is equally important for education. It is also noticed that project assessment is one of the best assessment practices as the majority of the students favored it. Regarding the exam preparation strategies, it is deduced that the individuals have different ways of exam preparation and the major ways of exam preparation highlighted by the participants are making notes, revising the lessons, and, reading the lessons with deep understanding.

Assessment is a part of everyday life in academia. It helps to test the skills and knowledge of the students and provides feedback to the students for their learning improvements or directs the teachers to upgrade their students in upper Grades. Assessment is mainly used for four purposes and they are a) summative, b) diagnostic, c) formative), and d) placement. As a teacher and teacher educator, I do believe that exams are necessary to find out the knowledge, skills, and talents of the students. Luthfiyyah et al. (2020) highlight an urgency to provide exposure to EFL teachers on assessment to improve students'

learning and teachers' assessment practices. Furthermore, this study helps students to improve their learning. It can be claimed that the examination allows students to express their knowledge and skills. Firstly, this study is believed to be significant for the teachers to explore how the assessment is being perceived by the basic level (Grades 6-8) students in the Nepalese context. Secondly, this study would be helpful for future researchers to take this study as a reference and plan to carry out research related to this area. Likewise, students of the Basic Level (Grades 6-8) and other levels would get some insights and strategies to know the trends of examination preparation if they get an opportunity to go through this study. Finally, this study would be equally beneficial for policy makers, ELT experts, and teacher educators to know the importance of assessment, strategies of examination preparation, project assessment and modify the assessment as per the students' interests and existing assessment practices.

This study was limited to exploring the perception and practices of assessment by the students (Grades 6-8) in a specific location under phenomenological study. Therefore, in Nepal, there are many areas of assessment which have not been explored. Future researchers may focus on the perceptions and practices of English teachers, narrow down their study for certain language skills and widen the study area based on the research issue and areas to cover.

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Fear as a Political Propaganda: A Study on *Politics of Fear* by Al Gore

Madan Prasad Baral

Abstract

The practice of creating fear for personal interest or the interest of the political party is common throughout the world. Politicians use any sort of practice for power hunting. Fear not only influences the discourse but also shapes knowledge and reasoning capacity thereby creating an illusion in people. To expose illusion, counter-discourse or positive discourse is required. This study aims to explore how counter-discourse exposes illusion and creates awareness taking reference from the text 'Politics of Fear' by Al Gore. The study is done using the document analysis method and the information is analysed based on the framework consisting of five discursive strategies viz. framing, countering publicly, and counter-discursive strategies (logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing) for contesting the mainstream discourse as introduced by Macgilchrist (2007). It is argued that 'Politics of Fear' by Al Gore was an attempt to create awareness among the public against propaganda created by the then US President George W. Bush during election through the television advertisements.

Keywords: Propaganda, critical literacy, critical discourse analysis, counter-discourse, positive discourse analysis

Introduction

People opine that politicians are ready to use any strategies because of their power craze. This practice is justified using various arguments such as 'politics is a dirty game', 'There is no permanent foe in politics', and so on. Language and arguments of politicians generally lack credibility though they present their arguments in such a way that the general public is easily convinced. So, we need to have a critical lens to evaluate the authenticity of the public message found in the political discourse. As people are being brainwashed using persuasive language to allure the general public through the technique called propaganda (McClintock, 2005), it is our responsibility to empower people to free themselves from the grip of the illusionary language of politicians. To combat this scenario, the relevancy of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is increasing day by day. CDA blends the ideas from critical theory and discourse analysis and aims to explore the role of discourse as a hegemonic tool for exercising power (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018). Van Dijk (2001, p. 332) defines CDA as "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the political context". Thus, CDA aims to critically explore the "relationship between language, ideology, power and social structure, for example, social inequality as it is constructed, re-produced, legitimized, and resisted in language and other modes of

communication" (Catalano and Waugh, 2020, p.1). Van Dijk (2001) lists gender inequality, ethnocentrism, antisemitism, nationalism, racism, media discourse and political discourse as the research areas of critical discourse analysis. So, critical discourse analysts present themselves against social inequality and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist all forms of oppression.

CDA has a practical association with critical literacy for identifying the forms of oppression in discourse through formal instruction. Critical literacy is deeply rooted in community and adult education throughout the world in general and postcolonial countries in particular (Morrell, 2015). Henry A. Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, and Paulo Freire have contributed to bridging the between critical pedagogy and critical literacy (Nouri, & Sajjadi, 2014). Rogers and Wetzel (2013) assert critical literacy as a core area of an educational programme and propose three approaches to critical literacy: linguistic, multiple literacies and social justice. The linguistic approach to literacy concentrates on linguistic features such as text, structures, and their social functions. Multiple literacies are concerned with literacy through digital technologies and globalized communication networks whereas the social justice approach to critical literacy is oriented towards social transformation and emancipation.

Literature Review

The relevant literature regarding discourse analysis has been analysed in the following themes.

Positive Discourse Analysis: Counter Discourse

Simply, discourse analysis aims at identifying the hegemonic elements of a discourse. However, in practice, there is a constant struggle between hegemonic discourse and counter-discourse i.e. the discourse of hegemony and discourse for social justice counter each other. CDA is criticized on the ground that the researcher selects the discourses that justify the ideological biases of the researchers as it motivates the selection of features for personal attention and leaves a large number of texts un-interpreted (Bartlett, 2012). He further opines that CDA mainly focuses on negative tendencies and manipulations but does not concentrate towards social justice and emancipation whereas positive discourse analysis (counter-discourse) examines the credibility of the dominant message. In this reference, positive discourses are oriented towards positive change in the social world enhancing the emancipatory potential of the oppressed groups (Macgilchrist, 2007) and attempting to reveal as well as protest the domination created by power (Terdiman, 1989). Although counter-discourses are not sovereign and do not exhaust reality, reality can neither exist nor change without them (Terdiman, 1989). Thus, the use of counter-discourse is the key to maximising awareness against violence. (Oparinde & Matsha, 2021). This shows that counter-discourse is to aware people, combat illusionary discourses boosted by power centres and strengthen emancipatory potential.

Terrorism as the Dominant American Discourse

The US is a leading country in world power politics. The US establishment claims that its goal is to struggle against terrorism. So, terrorism has been a buzzword in the US context for a long and is also associated with the hatred of US people towards the Islamic community (Considine, 2017). It is a strategy of achieving the intended result creating fear in the larger society and terrorists justify the significance of their violence claiming that it is a means to bring positive change in the wider society (Garrison, 2004, Ganor, 2002). Most researchers are reluctant to provide a concrete definition of terrorism and take terrorism as a subjective concept and one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter (Garrison, 2004). However, Ganor (2002) refuses this proposition and argues that terrorism and guerrilla fighting should be distinguished. As Guerrilla fighters target military personnel, terrorists deliberately target civilians (Ganor, 2002). Schmid (2004) suggests a conceptual framework for interpreting terrorism discourse consisting of five conceptual lenses: terrorism as/and crime; terrorism

as/and politics; terrorism as/and warfare; terrorism as communication; and terrorism as/and religious fundamentalism.

General people opine that terrorism necessarily involves violence. However, Schmid (2004) opines that the concept of terrorism should not be limited only in terms of violence but its meaning is close to propaganda though violence and propaganda are close to each other. Violence aims at changing public behavior through force while propaganda aims at behaviour modification through persuasion. Terrorism uses violence as well as propaganda for behaviour modification. In this context, Altheide (2006) concedes that terminologies such as crime, victim, and fear are associated with terrorism to influence public discourse which is used as a tool for manipulating public sentiment by political decision-makers.

The existing socio-political agenda of the elite community shapes reality. Terrorism is an agenda that the US has been using for its interest to dominate its foes, which ultimately creates illusions to the world community in general and the US citizens in particular. American establishment creates new metaphors as discourses of illusion and combines them with other features of language and rhetoric for using that discourse for its interest. American strategy for combating terrorism can be regarded as the discourse of terrorism in form while the discourse of illusion in its substance grounded on fear (Bhatia, 2008). In a similar context, Riegler (2010) reported that American films always distort the accurate information regarding the root of terrorism and its developments and create an illusion for the general public. Similarly, Kam and Kinder (2007) opine that American reaction to terrorism relies on the ideals of *ethnocentrism*, keeping one's group in the center of everything which influences both cognition and belief giving space for both positive as well as negative emotions. The US school coursebooks include content on terrorism which ultimately creates fear, and terror as well as an illusion in the students towards terrorism (Burnham & Hooper, 2008). The U.S. attack on Iraq in 1998 by the Clinton government was justified creating fear against children claiming that the rescue of children promotes human rights (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999). American President George W. Bush announced a global campaign against the war on terrorism after ten days of the September 11 attack on the twin Towers for winning the hearts and minds of disaffected people in lands where terrorism thrives (Mockaitis, 2003). After that, language on the war against terrorism became dominant in the US political discourse (Jackson, 2018). The cursory view of the prevalent discourses may lead to the conclusion that American discourses are illusionary and excessively sensitise and emotionalise the public sentiment towards terrorism. Fear is increasingly used as a part of the discourse of fear and the discourse of fear is taken as a resource (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999).

After the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, former Vice President Al Gore criticized the American president for adopting an immoral strategy for party interest. Similarly, in 2016, Hillary Clinton also criticized Donald Trump for creating fear for the future (Jost et al., 2017). They concluded that the perceived threat of terrorism enhanced political benefits for certain presidential candidates.

Selection of the Text and its Rationale

As I have taught the course entitled *Interdisciplinary Readings* in M. Ed. first semester, I found this text quite relevant not only in American but also in Nepali context. This created a sort of curiosity in me to make a critical study of this article for intensive study and its implication in Nepali politics as well. So, I have studied the relevant literature to ensure that similar studies have been carried out on this issue and found that no studies have been conducted earlier. This encouraged me to carry out the study on this issue.

The article 'Politics of Fear' was published in 2004 in *Social Science Journal* published by John Hopkins University Press as an article and later included in the first chapter of the book entitled *Assault*

on Reason (2007) by Al Gore, the 45th American vice-president and presidential candidate in 2000 and winner of Nobel Peace Prize of 2007 (Stefoff, 2008, Turque, 2000). It counters the American discourse presented by the American establishment that was intended to incite fear in the people. I have used the lens of positive discourse analysis as the counter-discourse for analyzing the text. In this connection, this paper aims to explore the discourse elements in the text that counter the illusions of the discourse by the then-American establishment led by George W. Bush.

Methodology

This study is based on secondary sources as the already published sources have been used for information collection analysis and interpretation of the results. The text 'Politics of Fear' by Al Gore was the primary text and framework suggested by (Macgilchrist, 2007) was the basis for analysis. For this purpose, I have collected the sources, made initial screening to identify their relevancy and made their review and analysis.

Findings and Discussion

This section includes the theoretical framework, the findings of the study and a discussion of existing theories and earlier research.

For analyzing the discourse, this work adopts the framework prescribed by Macgilchrist (2007) for positive discourse analysis consisting of framing, countering publicly, and counter-discursive strategies (logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing). Framing refers to the background knowledge required for an in-depth understanding of the text. In the process of analyzing discourse, the researcher needs to explore the social, cultural, historical or economic background in which the discourse is created. Framing also includes the style of presenting the content and the writers' alignment or perspectives (Huckin, 1997). The second step demands countering the discourse in the public through mass media or public speech. The discourse presents the logic against the mainstream discourse for enhancing the emancipatory potential by arousing critical language awareness against the mainstream discourse (Wallace, 1999). The five basic strategies can be used to counter the text: logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing. In an inversion, the authors invert the mainstream view as simply countering a dominant frame when logical arguments do not work. For example, the discourse 'terrorism' is inverted with 'politics of fear'. Similarly, parody is the conscious form of intertextuality that involves insult, exaggeration and satire on social and political phenomena (Berger, 2016).

Intertextuality, a term explained by Bakhtin (1935), is the major feature of the text as texts borrow or refer to previous texts. For the present context, parody is the technique to indicate the illusions of the mainstream discourse. In complexification, the issue is consciously raised and circulated in higher mainstream media. Complexification is the common technique of party and populist politics (Schrøder & Phillips, 2007) to attract public sentiment or wide circulation of the message. Partial reframing is simply a technique of shifting an issue from conventional tradition to the alternative by providing enough justification with logic and knowledge. It creates room for presenting different interpretations allowing different meanings in new contexts. Radical reframing involves reporting an issue not only through dialogue but also with another background. Mainstream media might ignore the views of the oppressed groups and we have to invert mainstream views with logical arguments. Four level of explanation is sought in radical reframing: Lexico-grammar, publication, blending and the curiosity gap. In the lexico-grammar strategy, the author uses externalization, scare quotes, parody, and nominalisations to prove that the article is controversial and interesting to the readers. Balance or impartiality is the basic criteria in modern media which compels them to give space for the publication of alternative views. However, articles may be rejected if they cannot include at least one dominant frame in their discourse e.g. anti-

terrorist position in this instance. In blending, the author uses the background to create alternative views to counterattack the mainstream view while making it acceptable for the mainstream audience. Blending is used to make the marginal discourse and its explanation acceptable to the mainstream audience. Blending contributes to arousing the curiosity of the audience which makes the article likely to be published as editors are oriented towards its sale and business. No discourse is complete in itself and there is a continuous struggle to fill the gaps in the dominant discourse which is the scope of curiosity gap. This is possible by giving appropriate space to the marginal discourse. Marginal views can use appropriate techniques to fill the gap and fix their meaning to counter illusions and dominance.

In this paper, my objective is to explore the features of counter-discourse in the text 'The Politics of Fear' by Al Gore. My claim is that the text is counter against the American establishment and an example of counter-discourse for enhancing public awareness and avoiding illusion. To justify my claim, I have examined the text as per the framework prescribed by (Macgilchrist, 2007) for positive discourse analysis consisting of framing, countering publicly, and counter-discursive strategies (logical inversion, parody, complexification, partial reframing and radical reframing) as stated in the earlier section. A detailed analysis of the text is presented in the following section.

Framing and Countering

The text *Politics of Fear* by Nobel Peace Prize-winning author Al Gore highlights the exaggerated fear of Iraq intentionally created by the Bush administration after the Twin Tower attack. This created a negative attitude among the Americans against Iraq. The text is persuasive and uses impressive quotes and references such as 'Terrorism is the ultimate misuse of power for political ends,' 'Fear is the most powerful enemy of reason (Gore, 2004 p. 779). The text is the first unit of the seminal book entitled *'Assault on Reason.'* There is a reference to Al-Qaeda, a broad-based militant Islamist organization founded by Osama Bin Laden (Cohen-Almagor, 2017). The text expresses dissatisfaction with the exaggerated fear of terrorism created by the administration to exploit public sentiment. The text shows its alignment towards international peace and justice in favour of reason. The discourse is the counter against the dominant discourse and is published through Amazon, the internationally recognized publishing house.

Complexification and Partial Reframing

To complexify the issue, the author has associated the issue with party politics and public sentiment which resulted in the wide circulation of the message. As there is a reference to the mid-election of 2002, Democrats and Republicans, as well as sympathy towards the Islamic community, the issue has been effectively complexified by the author. Enough logic and justification have been supplied for reframing the issue (Dunaway et al., 2015). This shows that Al Gore successfully complexed the issue through media and reframing of logic is also sufficient.

Parody and Intertextuality

After the twin tower attack in the US, George W. Bush ordered American forces to attack Iraq as Saddam Hussein was charged with being linked with Osama Bin Laden in the attack. The appeal by Bush on television played a role in creating fear of terrorism. Thus, this text is a satire on the political administration led by George W. Bush. The author parodies the television advertisements played on mainstream television.

Apart from the parody, the text also involves references from other authors and texts. This phenomenon is called intertextuality in discourse. The author borrows from Edmund Burke, Louis D. Brandeis, F. D. Roosevelt, and Jorgen Habermas to mention a few (Gore, 2004).

Radical Reframing

The author has successfully used the criteria of radical reframing in the text. For this, he provides extensive background from past to present and becomes able to draw the attention of mainstream media. He presents logical comments against the mainstream argument that all Islamics are terrorists and challenges the establishment to present evidences. The author used several quotes that enhance the linguistic strength of the text. He begins his arguments by stating strong dissatisfaction against terrorism as the persuading tool for mainstream media and creating curiosity in the audience. Sufficient justification has been presented by the author to address the curiosity of the audience.

This study has explored the counter-discursive properties in the text, 'Politics of Fear' however it did not analyse how power influenced reality. Further studies can be made about critical language awareness and power relations.

Conclusion and Implications

This paper has presented the counter-discursive properties of Politics of Fear by Al Gore. After examining the text through the lens prescribed by Macgilchrist (2007), it is found that the text countered the mainstream discourse and is an instance of counter-discourse that contributed to mitigating illusions created by mainstream discourses. Taking reference to the analytical framework, it is found that the text is counter against mainstream discourse and tackles illusion in a majority of people. Thus, the fear created by the then-American establishment for personal or party interest has been contributing to creating an illusion in public sentiment. Thus, the text contributed to creating public awareness against the illusions caused by the media language. As the present study is based only on counter-hegemonic and critical dimensions, a more extensive study is required based on wider samples of the author. As discourse is used for the interest of a certain person or group and it should always be viewed with skepticism. In this reference, the discourse vividly counters the established discourse that the American establishment struggles against terrorism. The discussion shows that 'Politics of Fear' by Al Gore has successfully countered the mainstream discourse.

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Participatory Action Research in Social Sciences and Education

Gobinda Puri

Abstract

Participatory action research, as other qualitative methods. like phenomenology, ethnography, narrative inquiry, autoethnography, and case studies, has emerged as a distinct field of study and established itself as a research design in the field of social sciences and education. This methodological conceptual paper presents a review of participatory action research papers highlighting their meaning, purpose and use in research along with their definitions, the process of conducting research through participatory action research as a methodology, its guiding principles, strengths, weaknesses and challenges, applications, misconceptions and analysis of previous studies through participatory action research in various disciplines and contexts. This paper also highlights how participatory action research elevates the marginalized communities involved in the research process, solves their workplace problems and transforms their identities throughout the research by reviewing a few sample studies through participatory action research. The findings show that participatory action research has been immensely used in the social sciences and educational research for creating new knowledge as well as improving the existing situation. This paper might provide some significant insights into understanding and employing participatory action research to the teachers, teacher educators, and researchers who opt for using research as part of their academic degrees.

Keywords: Participatory action research, research design, cyclical process, emancipatory

Introduction

Many researchers (De Oliveira, 2023; Klocker, 2012; Koshy, 2005; Pain et al., 2019) have used the participatory research approach as a methodology for systematically exploring phenomena and taking necessary actions to improve them. Participatory research has been widely used as a research design, method and overall framework (Cargo & Mercer, 2008). It follows the practice of collaboration with the participants connected to the issue of being studied for action or change. Participatory researchers often use methods and tools suggested in the framework in a participatory and democratic way during the research process. Vaughn and Jacquez (2020) introduced the participatory research methods including the holistic picture of participatory research, the specific terminologies across disciplines, the basic elements that make research engaging, and models with the options to be chosen for the beginner researchers. Participatory research is action-oriented and emphasizes the direct involvement of local priorities and perspectives (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Cornwall and Jewkes defined participatory research as the research strategies that focus on a sequential process of reflection

and action to acknowledge local knowledge and perspectives (p, 165). This shows that participatory research is an overarching terminology for research designs, methods and frameworks. It highlights the co-construction of research through direct partnership with the participants/community people. In participatory research, unlike other conventional methods such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, the process of involving the participants in every step of the research process includes facilitative participation, shared decisions and mutual learning (Vaughn and Jacquez, 2020). The methods of conducting research necessarily include the data collection process, analysis, interpretation, dissemination of data and enacting changes.

Various participatory research designs are available in the practice, such as action inquiry (Torbert, 2004), action learning (Pedler, 2011; Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2020), action research (Adelman, 1993; Altrichter et al., 2002), action science (Friedman et al., 2004), appreciative inquiry (Watkins et al., 2011), Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Israel et al., 2019), Educational Action Research (Mertler, 2019), teacher inquiry (Mertler, 2021), Emancipatory Research (Oliver, 1997), Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Baum et al., 2006) Practitioner Inquiry (Anderson et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2015). These participatory research frameworks have variations in practice such as action reflective learning, critical action learning or unlearning, cooperative inquiry, and dialectical inquiry, along with arts-based, critical, feminist, first person, systematic, organizational development, community-based, teacher-initiated, emancipatory, youth participatory, practitioner-oriented, and critical practitioner action research. For example, Paulo Fraire's pedagogy of the oppressed can be taken as one of the participatory action research products for community engagement and emancipation (Freire, 2020) Despite the variations, they have common premises that they value 'genuine and meaningful participation' (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020, p. 5). The methods which offer "the ability to speak up, to participate, to experience oneself and be experienced as a person with the right to express yourself and to have the expression valued by others" (Abma et al., 2019, p. 127) can be the transformative and empowering methods. The researchers have the choice points in each step of the research process (partner, design, collect, analyze, disseminate, and act). These choice points can be functional for informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering the participants (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). In a nutshell, participatory research methods are expected to fulfil the double goals: knowledge creation and change in real-world action democratically and collaboratively (Young, 2006). The researchers must deeply engage the stakeholders and also the community at each stage of the research process which eventually benefits the participants for collective wisdom and change.

In the context that many researchers often get confused about whether research conducted through a participatory action research approach is easily accepted as a part of their higher education degrees, this paper reports how participatory action research could be applied to the research and what opportunities and challenges could occur in the research journey. Studies showed participatory action research projects would engage, empower and emancipate the research participants. This paper might contribute to the academia's understanding of participatory action, its definitions, guiding principles, processes and the opportunities and challenges while applying it as a research methodology.

Defining Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research has been defined differently in different contexts. Bassey (1998, p. 93) described it as 'an enquiry which is carried out to understand, to evaluate and then to change, to improve educational practice'. Similarly, Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 192) (as cited in Rose and Grosvenor, 2013) described the emergent nature of action research while defining it. They explained action research as the procedure designed to solve the immediate concrete problem that occurred in the existing working situation. Following a step-by-step process under sincere monitoring, the practitioners

employ a variety of mechanisms such as questionnaires, interviews, diaries, field notes, and reflections over some time. The process of research always encompasses feedback to improve the situation and bring about some changes modifications or redefinitions. Action research is all about researching own practice or the people involved together rather than people out there. It is participatory and emergent. It can also be useful for real problem-solving. It is situation-based and theory-building from the practice. Moreover, it deals with individuals or groups of people who have a common purpose to improve their practice involving analysis, evaluation and reflection.

<div align="center">

Action Research Processes

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Many studies (Ciampa & Reisboard, 2020; De Oliveira, 2023; Klocker, 2012; Koshy, 2005; Pain et al., 2019) have given various stages/procedures for the participatory action research method of research. Particularly it is known as a cyclical/spiral process in which a complete cycle completes and is repeated time and again. One cycle has four stages: the planning stage, the acting stage, the developing stage and the reflection stage.

Figure 1

Stages of Action Research (adapted from Mertler, 2020)
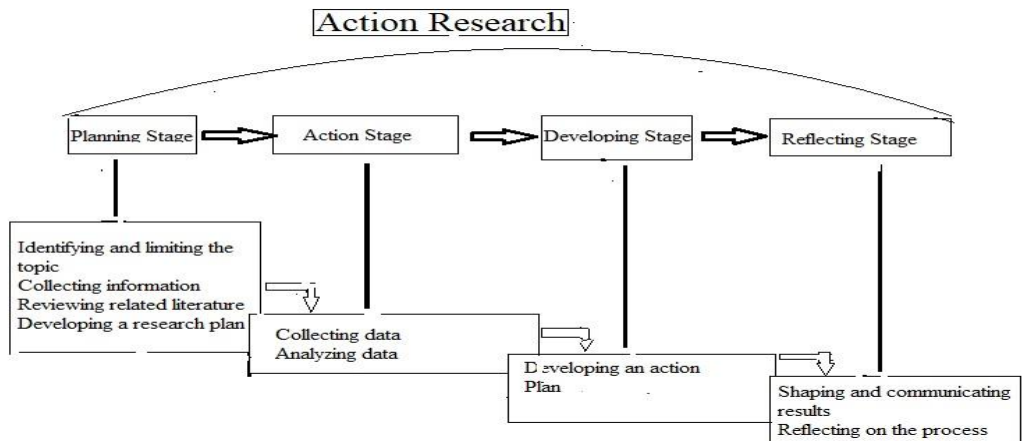
Action research involves recurring stages of planning, observation, action and reflection along with the evaluation. These stages are recursive in almost all the action research process. The influence of Lewin's original ideas continues to organize action research works in the spiral of stages that comprises observation, reflection, action, evaluation, and modification (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). These cyclical stages are recurring even in another cycle. Reviewing many research and research reports through an action research approach reports a common framework for participatory action research that undergoes a "cyclical process of fact-finding, action, reflection, leading to further inquiry and action for change" (Minkler, 2000, p. 191). The contributory writers on participatory action research, Kemmis and McGaraat (2005, p. 276) also emphasized the recursive steps in PAR such as plan, act, observe and reflect and repeat the same process of plan, act, observe and reflect until the situation is improved.

Likewise, Kelly (2005) suggests that the beginning of action research is followed by collaboration with the community partners in three cycles: planning, acting, and reviewing. In the same line, Valsa Koshy (2005) suggested a list of stages to be followed in the conduction of participatory action research. These states are identification of topic and context setting, review of related literature, emphasizing the topic research question or hypothesis, careful planning of the activities, collecting required data, analyzing the data and fixing the problems, implementing the plan, reflecting on the results

and reporting the changes. In the literature on action research, many action researchers (Acosta & Goltz, 2014) often mention the basic common four phases involved in action research assessment, planning, action, and reflection. Among the processes mentioned and suggested by the previous studies, Clark et al. (2020) provided clear steps for conducting action research in the educational setting. These steps are almost similar to many other scholars such as topic identification in a particular educational context, literature review, revision of the topic, construction of research questions, planning of research activities, collecting data, analysing them, doing real action, reflection, reporting, sharing and documenting. These processes can be useful for conducting action research in the classroom setting as well. Aligning these steps of action research to the rigorous process of educational research, these steps can help the researchers.

Participatory Action Research as a Research Methodology

Pain et al. (2019) provided the participatory action research toolkit for conducting PAR as an approach to learning, research and action. They have defined it as "collaborative research, education and action used to gather information to use for change on social or environmental issues. It involves people who are concerned about or affected by an issue taking a leading role in producing and using knowledge about it. (p. 2). PAR is different from other traditional research approaches in the sense that it is initiated by participants at workplaces rather than an outsider, funders or academicians. Moreover, it offers a democratic and practical model of producing, taking ownership, and using the knowledge produced themselves it is collaborative at every stage in nature that involves discussions, reflections and applications intending to bring about changes or improvements in the issues researched. Since PAR is a research approach to explore and improve the practices with a set of principles and practices for identifying issues, designing plans, conducting activities, analyzing and acting, it can also be used as a research methodology. It is not a single method but an integration of multiple methods such as group discussion, interviews, observations, videos, diagramming, and photography. It has a typical and cyclical stage of action and reflection from the beginning to the end of any PAR project. In the toolkit offered by Pain et al. (2019, pp. 4-8), it is said to include a set of questions at every stage of PAR. For example, they said to include various questions for collaboration (who will be involved in conducting this research? what roles will they have? do we need to invite outside experts? what principles will we agree on in working together? How will we work? Who will facilitate the meeting? How will we plan the details of the research? How will we generate the opportunities, reflect as well as plan and act?), knowledge (what questions are most important? what different kinds of knowledge are going to be important? what methodological process do we need to employ to answer our research questions: what kinds of skills will be needed?, what each person present contribute to the research process?), power (who usually conducts the research and decides on the issues identified? Does our research allow others to plan the research? Are the people involved in the functioning group represent the wider group affected by that particular issue? Are there other people who are not involved, but need to be involved in the research? How will we maintain the hierarchy and harmony in the group so that everyone listens to each other in the meetings? How will we address the disagreement, confirm that we don't gloss over differences, but discuss and work through different opinions?), ethicalities (Do individual participants or the group desire to be anonymous? How do we maintain accountability? How do we maintain the storage security of the information so that participants feel secure? What might be possible harms the research may cause in the future and how do we avoid them? What can be the potential benefits of the research and how can we increase them?), theory generation (How can we keep records of all the ideas, discussions and developmental progress of the research? How will we reflect on the achievements and shortcomings of the research during the process? Who is responsible for analyzing and understanding

the findings of the research? Who is involved in the meaning-making process and what does that mean? What outputs will we expect from the research?), taking action (what changes are required based on the research findings? Who will implement the findings? Who can show the ability and time to conduct follow-up activities and what resources can help to do that? How will we share and promote the research findings? Who will support and communicate the results and stimulate changes?), and researchers' well-being and emotions (Is the topic of the research relevant on which the people care passionately or directly affects their well-being? How will we make sure that our workplace is comfortable and hospitable for participants? How can we manage the negative emotions of the participants in the meetings? How might the results of the research affect the outsiders in the participatory action research? Do we have alternative strategies to overcome such problems that arise during the implementation of the research results? These toolkits could be utilized to guide the research methodology through PAR.

Lewin (1946) stated, "You cannot understand a system until you try to change it". As expressed by Lewin, only the talk, exploration, and discussion may not be possible to bring about changes in the existing situation. PAR as a research methodology can be an alternative qualitative approach to improve/solve practical problems. The main aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomena rather than to predict and control them (MacDonald, 2012). PAR is considered a subset of action research which is the "systematic collection and analysis of data to take action and make change" (Gillis & Jackson, 2002, p. 264) by generating practical knowledge (MacDonald, 2012). Action research embeds myriads of other terminologies such as participatory action research, participatory research, community-based participatory research, participatory inquiry, practitioner's research, and classroom-based research which might be confusing for novice researchers to distinguish and conduct action research (Macaulay et al., 2001). The common purpose of all research is to bring social change with a specific action as the ultimate goal (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). By involving researchers and community members who desire to improve their situation, action research often opts for social change

The philosophical underpinning of participatory action research is the change-oriented action that is value-laden and morally committed (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Therefore, participatory action researchers try to understand themselves and the phenomena being intervened concerning other individuals in social contexts along with the epistemological assumptions underlying action. Participatory action research also aims to create knowledge as an active process, knowledge being uncertain and the object of the enquiry (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, p. 206). Action researchers believe that the philosophical underpinnings of participatory action research are similar to "postmodern tradition that embraces a dialectical of shifting understandings whereas objectivity is almost impossible and multiple or shared realities exist" (Kelly, 2005, p. 66). The philosophy of PAR embodies the idea that the people in the community must have the right to determine their development and participate meaningfully in the process of analyzing the results or solutions by recognizing the needs of local people for sustainable development (Attwood, 1997, p. 2). In participatory action research, the role of participants remains the co-researchers since they engage in the research process from the beginning to the end for co-constructing the knowledge.

Guiding Principles for Action Research

The theory of participatory action research is guided by two reasons: the first one is that it is an effective way of imparting knowledge acquired from the experience of participants in the workplace (McTaggart, 1994). McTaggart (1994), further, states that the guiding principles are descriptive as well as prescriptive, whereas, in the second reason, the recipients should perform an educative function.

Lewinian approach (1946) to cyclic action research emphasizes the need for an action plan to be flexible and responsive. Two works were substantive in Lewin's work: group decisions and

commitment to improvement. Participation means taking ownership of the knowledge. Tandon (1988) identified many determinants of actual participation in research. These determinants were listed as participants' active role in setting the agenda of research, their participation in the process of data collection and analysis, and their dominance over the utilization of the results and the entire research process. It is visible from the literature that PAR engages participants from the academic fields and workplace with unique relationships.

Participatory action research is democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing because it selects the participants based on the criteria given with equal access to them and helps them to transform through action. McTaggart (1989) outlined 16 tenets of PAR such as the active approach to improve social practices, real participation of the individuals; collaborative self-reflective learning communities; and involvement of practitioners for theory building, record-keeping, making critical analysis, political, initiated from small cycles and groups. Likewise, De Oliveira (2023) identified seven components that characterize participatory action research such as originating from the problem in the community, oriented to a drastic change of social reality and improvements in the lives of participants, full and active participation of the community, engagement of a range of powerless groups of individuals, creating greater awareness in individuals and mobilizing them for self-reliant development, and making self-determined participants, initiators, facilitators and learners during the process.

Participatory action research shapes the identity of the individual and groups through the collective project which improves their work and the way it is understood (theorization). Furthermore, it increases the collaboration with the individuals within their institution and beyond for understanding the situation, solving the problems and developing their own professional space. It attempts not only to change the individuals but also the culture of the groups, institutions, and societies where they belong, bringing changes in the ongoing discourses, practices and organizational context from the perspective of the distribution of power, unifying the intellectuals and the project, engaging the politics of research and action (McTaggart, 1991).

Strengths of Action Research

The PAR always identifies and values the people as social beings within the broader social, political, and economic context. It also seeks to address the issue of significance concerning humans and their communities. In participatory action research, participants are not only treated as the subject of study rather they are treated as active participants and contributors to the research. It attempts to rebuild the participants' capacity as creative actors in the world, engage them in the decision-making process and empower them by being involved in the research process. Since it as a collective inquiry, develops the ownership of the participants in the research and its outcomes. Moreover, it empowers oppressed individuals to partner the social change. It also provides the opportunity to collaborate the individuals with diverse knowledge, skills and expertise during the process of research. In this research design, individuals learn by doing. The process in PAR is transformative, empowering, liberating, and consciousness-raising for its participants. Furthermore, it provides critical understanding and self-reflection to the researcher and participants. PAR enhances the collective consciousness and the democratization of the participants (De Oliveira, 2023).

Applications and Benefits of Action Research

Action research has been useful in understanding the problem and improving it directly being involved in it since it is the 'systematic inquiry into one's practice' (Johnson, 2008). In the field of education, it is the process which supports teachers to study their classrooms and improve the quality or effectiveness of teaching-learning. Mertler (2020) provided six ways of making PAR and teacher inquiry critical in any profession. They are constructing teachers' knowledge base, developing skills, enhancing

teachers' agency, teacher empowerment, improvement of educational practices and professional growth Among them, Vaughan and Mertler (2020) highlighted teacher empowerment, the improvement of educational practice and professional growth as the important ones. The first application of action research is directly concerned to lead to the improvement of educational practices because the researchers or educators study their practice by critically examining and reflecting on their problems related to their contexts. The action researchers identify their problems, collect the data and finally engage in the process of data informed and practical decision-making. Professionals, teachers and teacher educators get the solutions to their presenting issues at the workplaces and solve them through the process of action research.

Similarly, through action research or teacher inquiry, teachers can grow themselves successfully in their profession. (Vaughan et al., 2019; Mertler, 2013). The application of action research has become the alternative to professional grown for many teachers and teacher educators. Acton research has been considered one of the major means of in-service teachers' professional development in education. For example, in school education in Nepal, the provision of granting one mark for one action research each year has been made just for promotion. In this regard, Oliver (1980) contended that in-service teachers benefit from action research as a key component of professional development since it promotes the culture of posing questions and findings solutions to solve their immediate problems.

Action research and teacher research can be highly effective tools for teachers' empowerment. When teachers engage themselves in the process of research- identifying issues, collecting data by using various tools, making subsequent decisions based on the data and taking necessary interventions for the action and change, they experience, get knowledge and empowerment. That also helps them to innovate, create and apply to their education contexts. The whole process becomes truly empowering themselves. The studies suggested various benefits of participatory action research in education such as empowerment, collaboration, engagement, change, professional community building, and emancipation (Klocker, 2012; MacDonald, 2012; McTaggart, 1989; Minkler, 2000).

There are various advantages to using action research as a method of research. MacDonald (2012, p. 39) provides five characteristics/benefits of action research. First, it is open to all the competing possibilities in the educational context because it rejects the positivistic notion of objectivity, rationality and truth. Second, it invites the practitioner's reflective and interpretive subjectivity and develops localized theory and pedagogy. Third, it provides opportunities for educators to self-realize and understand their practices by exploring and analysing the existing situation. Fourth, it links reflection and action encouraging the educators or researchers to overcome the problems for pedagogical changes through the systematic exploration into the educational context. Finally, it involves deep consideration of theory and practice and also demonstrates critically reflective action by developing and organizing knowledge with the practice.

Sample Studies on Action Research

Many dissertations and articles through participatory action research are available online and offline repositories. Journals, such as the Journal of Teacher Action Research, Action Research, and Educational Action Research publish articles based on participatory action research. For example, one recent study on action research: exploring the teaching of English and academic writing as a social practice in a British Malaysian University by Alison Abraham at the College of Education, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia in 2016 followed the PAR as research methodology. The purpose of that study was to analyze and improve English for academic purposes in the Malaysian university setting. Taking an academic literacies perspective, the study attempted to capture the complexities of teaching and learning academic writing within a tertiary classroom. The researcher used post-method pedagogy

to guide a teacher while implementing the action plans. The researcher used action research with 117 voluntary students in six cycles (semesters) over two years and collected data from various sources such as teacher diaries, interviews with colleagues and students, students' letters, email exchanges, and assignments. In the study, the researcher's journey of becoming a critically reflective teacher alongside the student's growth as academic writers has presented the findings. The study reports the findings that power mismatches can be reduced through negotiated interactions, students' autonomy was increased after the knowledge gained from the study, and students were engaged in learning after ensuring the relevance of social and cultural context (Abraham, 2016).

The researcher engaged in teaching the students for two years long time and kept records of all the documents, analyzed and presented in the form of a dissertation. The analysis of the power conditions, knowledge conditions, and socio-cultural conditions have been developed as the main themes/results of the study in the narrative form. It shows that action research can be applied along with narrative inquiry.

Many studies (Campbell, 2023; Kemp, 2023; Sanna, 2021) have also applied participatory action research as a research methodology for completing their formal university degrees. Campbell's study uses PAR methods for the professional learning community to investigate trauma-informed practices with six co-researchers (participants in the American context. Sanna's study (2021) also used participatory action research as a method to explore the experiences of bilingual teachers at an elementary school in the professional learning community. The study found that the participants in the professional learning community enjoyed the safest spaces for learning, group work and reflection. Participatory action research methods in the field of social sciences and education were found for the participants' engagement, knowledge construction and immediate use of the research findings in the practice.

Misconceptions and Criticisms of Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research is not what academics and workers normally think about. It is more systematic and collaborative in gathering the data on which to base the reflection and plan change. It is not only problem-solving. It is also problem posing where it finds the values and plans realized by the work in real-life situations (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). It is oriented by the quest to improve and understand the problems by getting involved in it and making some changes. PAR is not research conducted by outsiders but research by practitioners on their practices. It treats the people as independent, responsible change agents who can solve their problems themselves, make their histories and construct knowledge. It never makes the people subject of study but encourages them to engage in the research and improve the existing situation. It is also not the method or technique for policy analysis and implementation because it never accepts the truths created by outsiders. Moreover, it is not the scientific method of any social work because it does not test hypotheses using hard data. It further works in the natural setting. It is systematically evolving, a living process changing through living dialectics of researcher and research (Carr & Kemmis, 2009).

Kemmis and McGarrat (2005) illustrated four types of myths, misinterpretations and mistakes in critical participatory action research. They grouped them into four clusters:

"… exaggerated assumptions about how empowerment might be achieved through action research, confusions about the role of those helping others to learn how to conduct action research, the problem of facilitation, and the illusion of neutrality, the falsity of a supposed research-activism dualism, with research seen as dispassionate, informed, and rationales and with activities seen as passionate, intuitive, and weakly theorized. An understatement of the role of collective and

how it might be conceptualized in conducting the research and in formulating action in the project and its engagement with the public spare in all facets of institutional and social life" (p. 284).

Similarly, Clark et al. (2020) stated three criticisms commonly occurred in action research practices. The major criticisms they discussed were the lack of rigour and trustworthiness in comparison to other research methodologies; the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and the deficit model as its basis (pp. 34-36). As they explained in the article, these criticisms can be minimized by maintaining rigor throughout the research process from selecting issues to collecting and reporting.

Challenges in Doing Participatory Action Research

There are several challenges, for example, diversity in meanings of PAR and interchangeable use of terms such as action research, participatory action research, practitioners' research, and novice researchers might get confused. Since there is a lack of a comprehensive and balanced way to learn about the diverse origins, theories, methods, motives and problems associated with the related field (Greenwood & Levin, 1998), the researchers may remain in dilemmas about whether to follow PAR as a research methodology. Another challenge can be the inclusion of community members in the research team because they may have problems maintaining commitment throughout the research since PAR requires time, knowledge and sensitivities on the part of researchers to participants' agenda. Moreover, there may be a divergence of perspectives, values and abilities among the members (Macdonald). The next challenge can be the balance of power and establishing the relationship in PAR. Issues of power imbalances and the establishment of egalitarian relationships must be addressed before initiating PAR research (Gillis & Jackson; Maguire, 1987). There may be misunderstanding among the people involved, lack of agreement, wrong perceptions, directions and questions resulting in irrelevant data (Wadsworth, 1998).

While using PAR as a methodology, the researchers need to be sensitive because the researchers may have to prove its legitimacy to others. Those conventional researchers who are not used to open-ended research designs might criticize it. The most criticized aspect of PAR from a scientific perspective is that it is a soft method of research (Young, 2006). Therefore, other researchers might challenge it for employing as a research methodology as it emphasizes "voice and everyday experiences" and not hard data (Young, 2006, p. 501).

Conclusion and Implications

Participatory action research as it aims to transform the existing situation and emancipate the research participants, has been widely applied in the field of social sciences and education for exploring workplace issues and overcoming them through collaboration, participation and action. Its cyclical and transformative nature has also fascinated many emerging researchers to adapt it in their research as a methodology. Moreover, the critical review of its origin, features, and practices shows that participatory action research can bridge the gap between theory and practice as it is always oriented to generate practical knowledge and also to practice the knowledge created in the local context. Furthermore, participatory action research engages the community people in the process of research and takes ownership of the knowledge or change that occurs. Although it is often criticized for being loosely designed and not systematically/scientifically conducted to produce true scholarship, scholars have suggested ethical considerations and quality standards for its rigour. Its popularity has tremendously increased as the qualitative approach to coping with local issues and theorizing the knowledge produced by the practitioners. This paper might be helpful to understand and apply participatory action research in the field of social sciences and education as a research methodology. Moreover, this can be insightful to the teachers, researchers and policy makers for taking into practice.

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Secondary Level Students' Experiences of Cyberbullying through Facebook

Betendra Kumar Dahal

Abstract

ICT users face various challenges due to the lack of knowledge and awareness to use its tools properly. Along with the spread of Facebook users, the trend of cyberbullying is gradually increasing among teenagers including school students who have been victimised daily. This study explores the students' experiences of cyberbullying through Facebook and the strategies they apply to cope with cyberbullying. I employed the qualitative research method in which the semi-structured interview was designed to collect data from 16 participants. The finding of this study depicts that cyberbullying is experienced by the participants in various ways like sharing memes on Facebook wall and Messenger, using nicknames, using unacceptable (vulgar) words, teasing, threatening, hacking Facebook passwords, and using, proposing for being close friends and joining photos and uploading, sending messages time and again and calling during night time. The study also found that cyberbullying makes victimised people feel insecure. It was also suggested to report with the family members and friends making strict laws, keeping in school level curriculum and launching mass awareness to cope with the cyberbullying activities found in the school level students of Nepal.

Keywords: Digital devices, cyberbullying, Facebook, online harassment, social media.

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) advancement has increased the use of digital devices, making more students turn tech-friendly in recent years. However, internet access has also increased the probability of cyberbullying worldwide (Tsimtsiou et al., 2018). Cyberbullying, a form of bullying behaviour, occurs through the use of multiple ICT platforms with a deliberate intention to repeatedly harm others (Baas et al., 2013; Li, 2007). Cyberbullying entails posting or conveying threatening or embarrassing messages through different digital technologies such as cellular phones, websites, e-mails, and video cameras to trouble others (Ybarra, 2004). Online addiction has exposed the youths to practice such behaviours simply by posting nasty comments, spreading false rumours, circulating vulgar pictures, making threatening comments and making erotic incitement in the lack of proper supervision and guidance (Chang et al., 2015). More to it, the popularity of social media among youngsters has made it a convenient platform to practice online harassment due to the easy leverage one gets to other's personal information (Garett et al., 2016). So, the growing use of the internet including different applications and electronic gadgets has gradually increased such harassing behaviours, which remain a serious health problem, particularly among school children (Aboujaoude et al., 2015).

Unlike physical bullying occurring in the school premises, cyberbullying can take place anywhere and at any time making the consequences much more intense and horrifying particularly for school goers (Notar et al., 2013). Cyberbullying creates severe mental health risks including depression, anxiety, fear, a sense of alienation and powerlessness, somatic symptoms, and suicidal ideation (Field, 2018; Kumar & Goldstein, 2020; Nixon, 2014). It also results in low concentration in studies forcing students to remain absent from the classes ultimately resulting in their poor performances (Beran & Li, 2007). Similarly, it also creates the situation of self-harm phenomenon among the victimized persons (Nguyen et al., 2020) who are closer to the technologies. Sexting, messaging, commenting, making phone calls and disseminating private photos to threaten others create severe anxiety issues in the victims making them feel socially, mentally and academically embarrassed ultimately hindering their progress with a lasting impact upon themselves (Kanwal & Jami, 2019).

Students, while using social media like Facebook, start bullying with its multiple ways to others by teasing, chatting with vulgar words, commenting on statuses, and uploading prank photos and videos (Kanwal & Jami, 2019). The students engaged in cyberbullying and share unnecessary messages, repeatedly insult the bullied ones and transmit unusual propaganda regarding an individual which directly impacts the victimized people as they get (Betts, 2016; Mountjoy et al., 2016; Willard, 2007; Windisch et al., 2022). Whatever and whenever they need to benefit from innocent colleagues, they start convincing others to disclose their secrecy otherwise they threat to exclude others from their group which will negatively affect the persons who cannot go against them (Willard, 2007). As a whole, cyberbullying leads the innocent students being threatened and embarrassed. Along with getting a platform for learning, students are involved in using Facebook mostly reducing time for classes which misleads them to start bullying.

In terms of cyberbullying, Facebook is one of the most common and most used social media (McCarthy, 2021) and it was due to the extreme use of Facebook and other social media and online portals mostly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the students from urban areas were ensured online classes and the students from rural areas were assigned weekly, and monthly assignments (Dawadi et al., 2020) and other ways of making up their education in the context of Nepal. The online class pattern obliged the students of urban areas and rural areas where the internet facility was available to create their Facebook ID where some of them used their parents'/guardians' Facebook to get school notices and information. During that time, Facebook was taken as one of the most effective and easiest means of communication (Giri, 2020) as it employs messenger chatting facilities as well. It was also taken as a medium to connect online classes and to notify rigorously.

Regarding lessening the unusual activities performance, users have to be aware of the crime which can be led by cyberbullying. Similarly, parents and educators are responsible (Kaluarachchi et al., 2020) for reducing cyberbullying focusing on exposure to the use of technology as an excellent platform for shaping the future. There are approximately 13 million Facebook users in Nepal (Digital 2022: Nepal, 2022). It has been used as a better means of communication and helps to deliver and know the information easily in its network so, it is also important to reduce awkward usage of Facebook and should be used as an effective social media for making communicative tool and learning gateway to the students.

Facebook has become a common social network for sharing notices, messages, memos and other necessary information. However, it is discouraging the people, particularly the school students who are being bullied (Pyżalski et al., 2022). Therefore, I want to dig up the answers to these questions which have thrilled me time and again: How do secondary-level students experience cyberbullying through Facebook? What are the strategies they apply to cope with cyberbullying?

Along with the spread of Facebook users, cyberbullying is also committed through it and the school students have been victimized of it day by day. Moreover, very few studies have been carried out regarding students' experiences with cyberbullying in the context of Nepal. So, I want to explore the students' experiences of cyberbullying through Facebook along with the strategies they apply to cope with cyberbullying in the context of Nepal, in particular.

Literature Review

This section presents some related literature based on the research questions in two themes.

Students' Experience of Cyberbullying through Facebook

Cyberbullying mainly occurs on websites and in social media using the internet, cell phones, laptops, computers and so on and is prevalent all over the world; and, the ways of bullying is varied according to the nature of the technology (Li, 2006). Li (2006) found that most of the females were more suppressed than the males in terms of sharing their victimized situation. Similarly, Ging and O'Higgins Norman (2016) mentioned social media as attractive platforms for cyberbullying that create disputes and misunderstanding and there is a high possibility of being afraid of missing the friends among the students. Moreover, Facebook is one of the cyberbullying offences (Gahagan et al., 2016) among social media platforms.

Victims of cyberbullying also prefer to practice with others to get rid of suppression, and self-satisfaction, reducing anxiety; develop a panel of friendships creating hostility with another group; and be involved in awkward activities finally, the victims can also be bullies (Baas et al., 2013). Moreover, cyberbullying develops aggression among the victims as they also react aggressively to other frustrating conditions (Völlink et al., 2013).

Bharati et al. (2021) reported that cyberbullying was experienced by 34.7% of the participants among 213 nursing students and the participants faced academic (61.5%), psychological (57.7%) and social problems because of cyberbullying. Akrim and Sulasmi (2022) found that most the students repeatedly send unnecessary messages on social media because of rival thought, frustration and preference to trouble others. They also revealed that students, sometimes, bully their teachers as well along with their mates. Rajbhandari and Rana (2022) examined the teachers' experience of being bullied by the students. They explored that the students repeatedly used to abuse and insult the teachers through social media which made the teachers feel insecure and harassed from such activities.

Strategies to Cope with Cyberbullying through Facebook

Alipan et al. (2021) suggested some cyber-specific technological solutions to cyberbullying activities by changing the account or keeping details privacy, removing account permanently or temporarily as per the need, restricting friends or follower, staying offline and reporting the issue immediately. However, Parris et al. (2012) stated that the students who are bullied do not report about cyberbullying due to disbelief in others to be helped, so they should have supportive environments, knowledge about cyberbullying resources and open discussions to build confidence in them.

Orel et al. (2017) suggested blocking, staying away from cyberbullying happening place, and asking help from friends to get rid of cyberbullying victimization. Similarly, Selwyn and Aagaard (2021) discussed on being away from technology, particularly mobile phones can control cyberbullying. However, it may not be the permanent solution in this era because banning on advance technology can create complexity. So, it is also important to aware and arm the parents along with teachers and friends about the knowledge and skills in eradicating bullying involvement (Chen & Zhu, 2022; Ozansoy et al., 2018).

School is a source of knowledge transformation. So it should lead to plan, develop and implement policies, and technology, involve students to control cyberbullying (Cross et al., 2012). Along

with school, Cassidy et al. (2013) claimed that home culture, modelling, curriculum development and ICT-based curriculum help students to support lessening cyberbullying, making them empower to reduce cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is not only in the students but also in other people who are rigorously involved in online workplaces. Similarly, Koirala (2020) reported that 67% of female journalists experienced online abuse and they discarded using social media platforms to be protected from it. She also suggested making effective implementation of anti-harassment actions from legislation, media organizations and feminists collectively.

The use of technology and social media platforms are being used excessively. Various studies have been carried out examining the experiences, impacts and coping strategies of cyberbullying and most of the studies are concerned with university level students in various contexts. Most of the studies suggest various ways of being free from cyberbullying. However, the suggestions and strategies made from the previous research seem unable to settle the cyberbullying through Facebook. There is little literature found in the context of Nepal regarding the issue of cyberbullying and fewer studies have been conducted to explore school-level students' experience with cyberbullying through Facebook.

Methodology

This study is an analysis of students' experience of cyberbullying through Facebook. I employed an interpretive phenomenology design as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2007) under the interpretive qualitative method to explore students' lived experiences regarding cyberbullying. After getting consent from the schools and participants, I visited different schools and collected data. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants maintaining all the ethical norms ensuring them confidentiality of the data and the identity of the participants. The interviews were recorded on mobile devices.

Participants

I identified the schools in which most of the students used Facebook to interact with their friends, relatives and used for various purposes. I visited 4 different school head teachers and contact the students. I employed purposive sampling technique to select the schools and participants to get rich information for the study. With the help of the head teachers, I contacted the selected students and developed a good rapport with them so as to make convenient to interview with them. Based on the consent and availability, as the study focused on the secondary level students, I selected 2 girls and 2 boys from each school representing grade nine and ten to make gender equality. Then, I replaced the students' and schools' original names with pseudonyms for high confidentiality regarding participants' identities.

Table 1

Participants' Details with Pseudonyms

SN	School	Participants	Class	Gender
01	Adarsha School	Bhabishya	10	Male
02	"	Pabitra	10	Female
03	"	Shekhar	9	Male
04	"	Mamata	9	Female
05	Advance School	Birendra	10	Male
06	"	Nabin	9	Male
07	"	Rekha	10	Female
08	"	Smriti	9	Female
09	Public Academy	Prajina	9	Female
10	"	Sandesh	10	Male
11	"	Divas	9	Male
12	"	Sandhya	10	Female
13	Janajyoti School	Dikendra	10	Male
14	"	Rohit	9	Male
15	"	Astha	9	Female
16	"	Pradip	10	Male

Data Analysis

After collecting data through semi-structured interviews, I transcribed the interviews, coded them and analysed thematically as suggested by Cohen et al. (2002) as per the research questions. The data were analysed critically following an inductive approach into different themes.

Results and Discussion

The study found how secondary level students experience cyberbullying through Facebook. The findings of the study are categorised into three themes developed from the information. They are students' experience of hacking ID, blackmailing, threatening, and bullying through Facebook, impact of cyberbullying in study and coping strategies against cyberbullying through Facebook and disclosing privacy and harassment. It was found that all the participants used Facebook to upload photos, videos; post status; like and comment in others' status; and interact with their friends, relatives and teachers. Most of the participants reported that they learnt to use Facebook when they were taught through online classes during COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding cyberbullying, Rekha from Advance School said:

> Cyberbullying is extremely dangerous. When we keep our personal information into our account and if it is hacked, it can be leaked. Wrong messages can be forwarded to others. Photos and videos can be shared publicly.

> For cyberbullying, if we visit video section, online sexual harassment is seen more as I have already said. I don't tell Facebook itself is bad but, misusing the social media is bad. Those people who are involved in it can upload in Facebook, and others like providing link of fake websites, promoting the fake apps and so on. (Dikendra, Janajyoti School)

The above remarks indicated that cyberbullying has created numerous problems along with the increment the use of Facebook. Despite the positive use of Facebook in communication and sharing ideas among a large number of people, it was found missing in a great amount. Moreover, it has been found that they experienced cyberbullying in various ways like sharing memes on Facebook wall and

messenger, using nick names, using unacceptable words, teasing, threatening, hacking Facebook password and using, proposing for being close friend and joining photos and uploading, sending messages time and again and calling during night time. This findings align with Ozansoy et al. (2018) who reported that the massive use of the internet in an uncontrolled way and the lack of parents' control in over using of technology raised cyberbullying among the students.

Hacking ID, Blackmailing, Threatening and Bullying through Facebook

Although the students started using Facebook for the purpose of online classes, it could not be limited only with academic activities. The students were found using Facebook for entertainment first, and gradually they faced several problems including id hacking, blackmailing, threatening and bullying. For example:

> I used Facebook only for the purpose of online class [...] after a month, my ID got hacked. […] my sister told me that she had found another ID having my photo and name. […] The hacker posted my photo mentioning my wife in caption. He used to comment roughly in other's status. My brother scolded him, too and later that ID was deactivated. (Smriti, Advance School)

> When I was in grade eight, there was a fake ID of mine having cover photo of my family […] and there used to be posting status time and again. […] comment negatively in other's status/posts. […] Telling 'budo' husband to other boys. Once I talked, but he used to threaten me. Then, I mom talked with him and he removed my photo. (Prajina, Public Academy)

The above remarks explained students' experiences how their Facebook IDs were hacked and got harassed from unknown people. The hackers threatened them by criminal activities such as posting vulgar status and sent unnecessary messages to others. This situation made the majority of the teenager girls to use Facebook confidently. Similar to this finding, Brody and Vangelisti (2017) highlighted how school students were harassed with the activities including private comments, photograph strategies, group bullying along with bullying through fake profiles which directly and indirectly victimised persons being harassed. Likewise, Astha of Janajyoti School shared:

> When I was studying in grade 7, someone scolded me from message. First, he asked my name, sent some photos, threatened to visit home and beat me. I shared it to the friends. They suggested blocking him. Then I kept him blocked.

She reported her experience of being scolded rather than doing any legal action against the bullying. Comparatively, more girls were harassed and threatened than boys. It shows gender discrimination in cyberbullying, too. Rajbhandari and Rana (2022) also reported that the students who have been victimised of bullying experienced of getting exploited from repeated suppressions, insulted messages, lies, manipulated prank-like messages, hacking Facebook ID, and other unethical activities.

Showing Disobedience and Power from Cyberbullying

The participants involved in the study reported that cyberbullying activities performed cyberbullying to make fun of it, to embrace the innocent persons and to revenge against being bullied. The cyberbullies also disclosed the confidential messages and data sharing publicly with other Facebook users. They said that those who were out of track and felt themselves as dominant perform cyberbullying. Furthermore, it was found that cyberbullying took place due to the lack of proper care from their parents to their children:

> A child does a wrong activity, he/she might not know that; and he/she may know if the parents care that. […] The persons who don't obey their parents […] whose parents also give mobile without proper monitoring can perform cyberbullying. It can be done by senior to junior. Harassing, leaking private things, […] teasing, adding in unnecessary groups. **(**Rohit, Janajyoti School)

Rohit's claim showed that Cyberbullies use to perform bullying without a clear reason which impacted to the innocent users of Facebook. Many students were victimised of cyberbullying when they accepted the friend requests of the unknown persons. Moreover, it explored that cyberbullying happens from messenger too in case they accept unknown friend request. This aligns with the findings of Kota et al. (2014) who viewed that the bullies have impacted others mainly into their adulthood in order to show their power through hacking, publicizing disagreement, posting shameful content, and related activities as cyberbullying.

Insecure Feeling of Using Facebook

The study also found that cyberbullying makes the victimised feel insecure of using Facebook. They get tortured, harassed and even lose their prestige as they are thought negatively among family, friends and relatives along with being humiliated. For example, Sandesh from Public Academy said:

> My friend faced […] a girl but it was a boy […] They become very closed. […] The bully one used to ask my friend if he could recharge. […] and he rubbed my friend's money. The bully must be intimate person. He […] felt irritated and arrogant. […] had to manage money by stealing.

> Bully is itself not good because he/she has habit of doing so. His academic cannot be good. To bullied, it is possibility to be depressed, anxiety. Then, if someone is bullied may be in depression and can attempt suicide. (Sandhya, Public Academy)

In addition to Sandesh, Sandhya also reported cyberbullying as a bad practice. Both bully and bullied could not progress in their academic performance as they only thought about the activities they performed and they have been suppressed. Although the students created Facebook account for the purpose of study during lockdown period (2020-21), they became awkward of using it due to such cyberbullying activities. Similar to this finding, Abaido (2020) reported that students do not prefer to report about the bullying because of confidential issue. Likewise, Subaramaniam et al. (2022) reported that anxiety/depression is the highest issue of cyberbullying which bring the bullied with aggression to suicidal thoughts or attempts. As a result, some of them have chosen to use it in careless and inappropriate ways like hurting, humiliating, embarrassing, and personally attacking others suffering from depression, having their education compromised, and committing other unusual activities as well.

Coping Strategies against Cyberbullying through Facebook

With the development of new platforms of ICT, people involve in abusive activities day by day. Cyberbullying is one of them that they commit mainly from social media including Facebook. The participants reported that they did not feel secured from it. They further suggested that a person should update Facebook profile with authentic name and real photo. The participants also suggested not to accept unknown friend request and start chatting with them to be safe from being victim of cyberbullying. In addition, to reduce cyberbullying through Facebook, Divas from Public Academy argued:

> It cannot be eliminated completely but we can report it to Facebook. […] it can be complained with parents or teachers if it happens […] strict law should be

formulated. We shouldn't accept the friend request of unknown people to be safe from cyberbullying. Friends should not be made. Private matter should be well secret. If someone is bullying, it should be reported to the parents promptly. Self-awareness protects us from bullying. (Rekha, Advance School)

Both Divas and Rekha's remarks showed that instant complain against the bullies is a must to lessen the cyberbullying activities. It can discourage the bullies to abuse Facebook. Besides, the Facebook users should not disclose the account ID and password to anyone else and confidentiality must be well maintained. Similarly, it was explored from the study that mass awareness programs can assist to control performing cyberbullying. Moreover, Rajbhandari and Rana (2022) suggested strict cyber laws and cybersecurity should be strongly implemented along with handling strong and confidential policy while working with technology. However, Tozzo et al. (2022) argued that critical awareness of digital knowledge, anti-bullying trainings to the teachers-parents-students, students' involvement in extracurricular activities and proper legislative actions play vital role to eliminate cyberbullying. Thus, there must be systematic mechanism to find out the bullies and punish them along with launching awareness programmes. Furthermore, if the school level students got opportunity to know about impacts of cyberbullying as a part of their course curriculum, it can be reduced in some extent. Critical awareness of digital knowledge, training to the teachers and the parents, involving students in extracurricular activities, legislative actions.

Conclusion and Implications

With the development of information and communication technology, the excessive use of computer and mobile has expanded, leading more students to become enclosed with the gadgets. Very offensive activities have been found along with the development of technology. This study has explored the students' experience of cyberbullying through Facebook. It tried to depict how the innocent students who used Facebook for the purpose of academic activities but became victim of cyberbullying. Similarly, secondary level students (teenagers) are exhausted of using Facebook due to fear of being cyberbullied. Mostly, the girls who are innocent and have no adequate knowledge about the internet use have been victimized of cyberbullying. Bullies show their power to the innocent and start threatening, harassing, dominating and scolding without being identical. Private messages, photos and other confidential things are snatched and shared publicly which demotivate the users to be with the social media. Cyberbullying directly affects the students who perform and who are victim as they think most of the time about it and indirectly it psychologically weakens the victimized ones. Although the constitution of Nepal has provision of living with self-stem, the victimized people of cyberbullying are deprived of it as the mechanism of finding the abusers – only the bullied have to be suppressed and depressed themselves beyond of getting justice. The findings of the study suggest making strict law, keeping in school level curriculum and launching mass awareness in order to cope with the cyberbullying activities found in the school level students of Nepal.

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Collaborative Mentoring for In-service Teachers' Well-being in the Nepalese Context

Gyanu Dahal

Abstract

Teachers experience challenges in their teaching careers these days. The challenges sometimes may affect their personal and professional well-being. Therefore, to address these issues, teachers need to develop collaborative relationships with other teachers and engage in self–reflection activities. This study aims to explore the usefulness of building collaborative relationships through collaborative mentoring for teachers' emotional and mental well-being. A review of selected literature examines collaborative mentoring as beneficial for teachers' well-being as it enables teachers to reflect on their classroom practices and provide and receive support and feedback from their colleagues. I used a qualitative research paradigm to study the impact of collaborative mentoring on the emotional and mental well-being of six private school teachers. The data was collected from teachers' reflective journals and semi-structured interviews. The results seem to indicate collaborative mentoring is useful for teachers' mental and emotional well-being as well as professional development. This study is useful for those who are planning to research mentoring and collaborative mentoring, teachers' well-being, and teacher education.

Keywords: Collaboration, teachers' well-being, reflection, professional development

Introduction

In Nepal, private schools are emerging gradually. Currently, out of 35,055 schools, 6,206 schools are private schools (Pal et al., 2021). Many graduates start their teaching careers in private schools because they can easily find jobs in the private sector in comparison to the public. Private schools hire them even if they are not trained or experienced teachers. Many graduates start their teaching careers with the theoretical knowledge that they learned in universities. They rarely get a chance to participate in teacher training programs (Shrestha, 2018). Therefore, they start facing challenges in the classroom. When they become unable to solve those issues, they criticize their higher education providers. They blame the educational degrees courses are mainly focused on theoretical knowledge. As Erdoğan et al. (2022) argue pre-service training programs in the university are not practice-oriented, and they are inadequate. The teachers who earn university degrees and start teaching in schools face many challenges even after teaching for years. Therefore, they need someone to support, collaborate and mentor them so that they together can implement acquired knowledge into practice and keep themselves updated on their professional development (Erdoğan et al., 2022).

In Nepal up to this point in time, there is no reflection, collaboration or mentoring culture developed among teachers. The mentoring-related program has not been broadly conducted (Khadka, 2021). However, some private schools run this program informally. They recognized the value of mentoring for teachers' professional development. Smith and Lewis (2017) state that mentoring is beneficial for every individual school, mentee, and mentor. Pachler and Redondo (2012) emphasized that mentoring is an important capacity-building relationship that can be easily undertaken using social networking tools like emails, text messaging, phone calls, and video calls. However, there are very few academic articles and research studies have been conducted to address this phenomenon (Ersin & Atay, 2021).

In general, teachers in private schools work hard to prepare lesson plans, develop teaching materials, teach students, assess them, and conduct meetings with parents (Yadav, 2017). Due to the hard work on a regular schedule and no upgrades in their present status, they experience frustration. They become demotivated by looking at themselves in the same position for years with similar classroom issues. Then they start blaming students, parents, and school management. Many of them get anxious and stressed due to the unlimited issues in the classrooms. Before last year, I conducted collaborative mentoring sessions with two teachers and explored the usefulness of the sessions. I found that it was effective for the teachers to reduce their classroom stress and anxiety.

In this research study, I conduct collaborative mentoring sessions with some more teachers to investigate the usefulness and appropriateness of collaborative mentoring from different perspectives. The research study seeks to examine how effective collaborative mentoring is for in-service teachers' well-being. The research questions are:

a) How useful do the teachers feel to attend the collaborative mentoring sessions?

b) In what areas (personal or professional) are collaborative mentoring sessions more useful for the participant teachers? How?

c) How is collaborative mentoring beneficial for teachers' well-being?

Literature Review

Teaching seems exciting and interesting job, however, it is challenging for many teachers in their early careers (Hudson, 2013). They feel pressurized during this time. Because they need to cope with the new environment of the schools and deal with new students and their parents (Yadav, 2017; Spanorriga et al., 2018). Teaching is stressful not only for novice teachers, but it is also the same for in-service teachers sometimes because of its dynamic nature (Smith & Lewis, 2017; Spanorriga et al., 2018). Teachers, after some years, start experiencing frustration due to the issues that occur in the classrooms. They feel demotivated, undervalued, and overloaded (Yadav, 2017). Sometimes they even experience burnout due to unmanageable workloads and dealing with difficult students and parents (Bhattrai, 2012; Smith, 2021). They need someone in such a situation who provides emotional and technical support. During mentoring, a mentor offers emotional support, technical support, and support with reflection to a mentee (Gakonga, 2019) which helps in-service teachers address those obstacles.

Traditional Mentoring

Traditionally, mentoring is based on classification and levelling. It is a one-to-one relationship in which an experienced person guides and supports a less experienced one. For example, Ehrich et al. (2004, p. 519) suggest in mentoring, a mentor is a "father figure who sponsors, guides and develops a younger person". Similarly, Nguyen (2017) argues, that more capable teachers provide professional and emotional support to the less capable in mentoring. Gradually, mentoring is taken as an interactive process happening between individuals of different levels of experience and expertise for interpersonal, psychological and career development (Spanorriga et al., 2018). In addition, Hobson (2016) mentions

mentoring is "a one-to-one relationship" between an inexperienced and an experienced teacher to support the less experienced one in their learning and career development (p.4).

To sum up, traditional mentoring involves a hierarchical relationship between a senior (mentor) and a subordinate (mentee) as highlighted by Mullen (2016). Traditional mentoring is one-way learning where mentees learn from mentors (Mullen, 2016). There is no value in reciprocal learning and growth of both mentor and mentees. It seems close to judgementoring (Hobson & Malderez, 2013). It can be directive and evaluative where the mentor provides direct advice and solutions to the mentees' issues. The mentor regularly observes the mentees' teaching and provides feedback on their performance. Mentoring is mainly focused on improving mentees' performance. There is a hierarchy so there is a lack of safe and trusting relationships between mentors and mentees. Therefore, mentees seem reluctant to openly engage in conversation with mentors.

Collaborative Mentoring

In contrast, collaborative mentoring starts as peer mentoring to unite individuals in a mutually beneficial and trustworthy relationship replacing hierarchy in the sense of equality (Nguyen, 2017, p.36). Mentors and mentees have equal-status relationships (Hobson, 2022) in the collaborative mentoring process. They both support each other in their professional learning and development goals. While mentoring, they find solutions to the issues on their own. Collaborative mentoring benefits both parties (mentor and mentees) in the relationship (Hudson, 2013). The setting of collaborative mentoring is a social place where conversation between mentor and mentees takes place. Collaborative mentoring is non-judgmental and non-directive. It is used to promote mutually beneficial relationships between mentors and mentees through reflective practice (Mann & Walsh, 2017). It enhances the collegial learning culture within the school. Mentoring is a means of facilitating the professional learning and development, well-being, and retention of educators (Hobson, 2022). Collaborative mentoring is for both the mentees' and mentors' professional learning, development, and well-being (Hudson, 2013).

Likewise, collaborative mentoring focuses on mutual growth and collective self-development of both mentor and mentees. There is a supportive and encouraging relationship between teachers which is essential for teachers' well-being. Tisdell and Shekhawat (2019) mention effective mentoring can bring positive personal and career outcomes for both mentees and mentors. For example, mentees start performing better after being involved in mentoring and they observe career satisfaction with decreased job stress in addition mentors experience personal satisfaction, career renewal, and new recognition (Hudson, 2013). Adding reflection on mentoring, MacCallum (2007) suggests mentoring focuses on reflection on the participants' work, questioning their practices and challenges that underpin their mindsets. It improves mentees' self-reflection and problem-solving capacities which leads them to be confident and have job satisfaction (Hobson & Malderez, 2013).

Teachers' Well-being

Research highlights that teachers' well-being is an important factor in teachers' effective performance, retention, and the well-being of the students they teach (Hobson & Maxwell, 2017). However, the topic of teachers' well-being is underdeveloped and seems neglected to be researched. Hobson and Maxwell (2017) further reported that before the second decade of the 21st century, very few studies focused on teachers' well-being. They defined teachers' well-being as a positive emotional state in which positive affect and satisfaction are associated with the experience of teaching. Collaborative mentoring can provide cost-effective professional development and well-being opportunities for teachers. The collaborative mentoring role is professionally and personally rewarding for both mentor and mentees (Hodson, 2013). He further highlights that collaboration among teachers advances their teaching skills by sharing teaching strategies, approaches, and content.

Hobson (2021) mentions that mentoring develops professional learning for both mentor and mentees, enhances critical reflection on their practice (Mann & Walsh, 2017), enriches their active listening skills. When teachers work together, they exchange information about their teaching jobs, school policies, and students and that impoves their knowledge and understanding of their organization (Nguyen, 2017, p. 37). That improvement and understanding certainly affect their professional development and well-being. Additionally, researchers report that teachers' well-being is linked to students' achievement as Schleicher (2018) highlights mental health and well-being of teachers are important not only for the teachers themselves but also for the students and the wider school. Effective mentoring can bring positive personal and professional outcomes for both mentors and mentees (Hudson, 2013; Tisdell & Shekhawat, 2019). It also helps them with career development, enhances competency, increases career satisfaction, and decreases job stress (Johnson & Ridley, 2004, as cited in Tisdell & Shekhawat, 2019). Similarly, Ensher and Murphy (2007) define mentoring as a mutual relationship between a mentor and mentee for new learning, career, and mental and emotional support.

Theoretical Framework

Mentoring practices are grounded in Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), as it argues that human learning is embedded in social interaction. According to the Vygotskian approach, learning is a socially constructed and socially mediated process that develops through interaction (2012). The Vygotskian approach further describes that a person develops knowledge and skills as per his/ her learning context and social environment. Like the Vygotskian perspective, in collaborative mentoring practice, mentors and mentees interact and learn from each other. They develop their understanding and skills through interaction in collaborative mentoring sessions (Hobson, 2021). In these interactive sessions, Langdon and Ward (2014) advocate that "mentors and mentees should have a reciprocal relationship and both should benefit from the exchange of ideas" (p.39).

Methodology

This research study is envisaged within a qualitative research paradigm to allow researchers to understand the usefulness of collaborative mentoring for mentee teachers from the perceptions of the participants (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). I used the qualitative case study method to explore or describe an experience in context using a variety of data sources. A case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a project in a real-life context and it is an evidence-led research method (Simons, 2014).

In this research study, the research participants were six teachers from different private schools in Nepal. The teachers were selected based on their availability and interest in collaborative mentoring. The proposed six mentee teachers were collaboratively mentored three times in one and a half months. After each collaborative mentoring session, the mentee teachers wrote their reflective journals mentioning how they felt during collaborative mentoring sessions. They also mentioned how they found the process of collaborative mentoring. After a week of the third collaborative mentoring session, I conducted an interview individually with each mentee teacher. The interview was semi-structured therefore I prepared some questions and had the flexibility to follow the lines of inquiry that emerged from the interaction (Mann, 2016).

To investigate the effectiveness of collaborative mentoring for in-service teachers, various data were collected. The data were collected through individual teachers' interviews and teachers' reflective journals. I used a thematic analysis technique to analyze the collected data. Boyatzis (1998) defines thematic analysis, as a way of seeing and making sense of the collected data. Therefore, thematic analysis helped me to identify and analyze the theme of the data. It facilitated me to develop a story based on the theme. All the collected data have been grouped into different thematic grounds and some of them are

analyzed and interpreted in detail to meet the objectives of the study. The collected data were thematically analyzed and interpreted mainly to explore how applicable collaborative mentoring is for mentee teachers' well-being. Therefore, I only focused on the themes which were close to my research questions.

Results and Discussion

The primary aim of this research was to conduct collaborative mentoring sessions with teachers three times and investigate how effective those sessions were for teacher participants' well-being.

Collaborative Mentoring Experience of the Teachers

Teacher participants believed collaboration among colleagues is very useful for them. Collaborative mentoring is the same. They mentioned while and after collaborative mentoring sessions, they felt refreshed and energized, therefore it worked like a remedy for them (Gakonga & Mann, 2021). They thought collaborative mentoring was for moral support for teachers to uplift their depressed moods and to take their frustration away. Teacher A said, "It was a relaxation session for me, it lightened my heart and mind, and it uplifted my sulky mood." They thought it was a really good experience when the mentor guided them to look at the other side of the coin in polite words. Teacher C stated, "My mentors' positive feedback gave me new hope for my career."

The participant teachers were highly experienced, even if they shared collaborative mentoring was effective for them. Teacher B said:

> I knew mentoring was effective for novice teachers a lot, but I found it is equally effective and important for in-service teachers like me. We teachers need to deal with new things every day because of changing teaching topics, curriculum, courses, and students' mindsets, so we teachers need to be professionally updated and developed if not we will feel burned out soon.

The mentee teachers shared that they found themselves novices in some areas of teaching-learning activities even after years of teaching experience. They mentioned that collaborative mentoring sessions could help them to cope with those novice areas. They said that collaborative mentoring allowed them to analyze and solve their classroom challenges themselves even if they were new challenges for them. They perceived their mentors in collaborative mentoring as their friends, who can guide and encourage them to address their classroom challenges. They considered that mentors could support them to develop professionally and personally. So, after each mentoring session, they felt accomplished and satisfied. Teacher F revealed, "I never felt dissatisfied after mentoring sessions, I felt the sessions were based on Win-Win scenarios for both mentor and me".

The participant teachers believed that mentoring brought positive changes to them. They felt happy and they commented that happy teachers can bring positive changes to the school too. As Bhattrai (2012) mentions effective mentoring helps teachers nurture personally and professionally. They declared that mentoring supported them to grow personally and professionally. Teachers C and E explained:

> During mentoring sessions my mentor made me reflect on my classroom issue which helped me deeply remember everything and I could see solutions myself, I have attended many TPD programs they never made me reflect in this way.

> …. I found someone (a mentor) to hear me wholeheartedly and share her experience on the same issue as mine then I felt joyful. I was so happy as I could see the issue in another way as well, I have never shared or reflected on my issues and heard the same from others in different contexts.

The research participants believed that mentoring was very effective for their professional development and well-being. After one mentoring session, they could reflect on their classroom issues without hesitation as their mentor acted as a good listener. They noticed that their mentor provided space for them to construct their thoughts and never dominated the conversation. Teacher A shared in the interview "I experienced that reflecting and sharing culture is very useful for teachers' development and well-being". Teachers shared that collaborative mentoring was a nice experience for them as they found themselves very comfortable sharing things with their mentor and when they shared their classroom scenarios with their mentor, they reflected on everything and many times they found the solutions to their issues themselves. They announced that the mentoring session built their sense of self-esteem and confidence (Hascher et al., 2004).

The participants expressed that collaborative mentoring was a good opportunity for them for their self-evaluation as well. They felt it helped them to shape their capacity. They got inspired, encouraged, and motivated and also, and they learned many things about classroom management through mentoring sessions. Teacher F answered the interview question by saying:

> I had an issue with teaching a large class effectively, I shared that issue with my mentor, we discussed different options and then I implemented them in the classroom and found differences. I was happy because the issue was bothering me for a long. I was sad for not getting the chance to attend TPD training but now I feel happy as I could learn something even in this short period.

The participants realized as Yadav (2017) states mentoring relationships are personal and reciprocal, so it is done with the mentee, not to the mentee. Almost all the teacher participants seemed happy and satisfied with the opportunities enabled during the mentoring sessions. They documented in their reflective journals, "Collaborative mentoring is relevant to all of us at any stage of our teaching career because it builds our confidence and self-esteem, and it reduces the feeling of isolation."

Collaborative Mentoring for Teachers' Well-being

Teacher participants marked in their reflective journals that mentoring helped their mental and emotional well-being. They stated that teaching is very challenging these days because every day there appears a new issue sometimes due to students, sometimes parents and sometimes curriculum and syllabus (Yadav, 2017). The mentee teachers revealed that they experience tiredness, frustration, and disappointment many times during school hours. They sometimes feel isolated and lonely. They suffer thinking they have no one to understand their situation and their problems. When they participated in the collaborative mentoring sessions, they felt enriched. Teacher C stated the following extract during the interview session:

> I can say collaborative mentoring worked for my mental well-being as I was mentally faded up, disturbed, and frustrated looking at my students' attitudes and behaviour. But later talking to you in collaborative mentoring, I felt relieved and better. Your feedback uplifted my sulky mood, next day I went to class happily hopeful and with peace of mind, I surely can say that it can be helpful for all well-being mental, emotional, and professional, I am sure it worked for me, so it works with others too.

The teacher participants had different views. Some of them declared mentoring functioned for their emotional well-being and some of them stated it worked for their professional well-being. However, all of them agreed with the fact that collaborative mentoring is equally effective for in-service teachers for their emotional, mental, and professional well-being as for novice teachers.

In the Nepalese context, private school teachers are mostly temporary workers in schools. They are not trained but are regularly observed and evaluated for their teaching skills by the school management. Similarly, they face various challenges in the classroom. However, they have no trustworthy friends in school with whom they can share their stress, frustration, and dissatisfaction. Thus, they mostly feel lonely and isolated. The respondent teachers reported in their reflective journals, "They hesitate to share their problems with other teachers because they think they will be judged as disqualified teachers by colleagues and school management". They considered not being able to solve their classroom issues as their weakness and if they disclosed that to others then they would be taken as disqualified teachers (Panday, 2014; Smith, 2021). The other reason for not discussing their issues among colleagues is that there is no sharing culture and they do not believe in learning from each other through reflection (Panday, 2014).

The mentee teachers disclosed that they used to worry while sharing their classroom issues with others assuming that the listener would judge them. However, after attending the collaborative mentoring sessions three times and discussing their classroom issues with their mentor, they realized that their mentor never judged them (Nguyen, 2017). The mentee teachers reported in their reflective journals, " They shared their classroom issues with their mentor without a second thought". They quoted that they became very happy when they found a trustworthy person (the mentor) to share their issues (Yadav, 2017). They wished for a mentor in their schools with whom "They can share everything without worrying about being judged". They reported that they experienced a positive emotional and mental impact on them during mentoring.

The research participants stated that before participating in the collaborative mentoring sessions, they experienced poor mental and emotional conditions for different reasons but during and after mentoring sessions, they felt good. They found themselves 'patients' while being with their mentor and their mentor acted as 'a therapist' (Orland-Barak & Klein, 2005). They perceived their mentor as a critical friend (Gakonga & Mann, 2022; Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010) who listened to them patiently and facilitated them to reflect. They had some classroom issues which were pressurizing them but while sharing the issues with their mentor they identified the solution to those issues themselves. They noticed that listening to the mentor's experience shed light on them. They identified suitable solutions to their issues for their students and their classroom context with the help of their mentor which made them feel relieved. They approved that proper mentoring practice could solve their issues and challenges and now they feel motivated and encouraged (Baral, 2015).

Conclusion and Implications

Almost all the participants agreed that the need for mentoring is high in Nepal for teachers' well-being (Schleicher, 2018) and professional development (Bhattrai, 2012; Pahadi, 2016; Yadav, 2017). The result shows that teachers in the private sector face different issues, so they experience poor mental and emotional conditions many times during their teaching career. It was found that there is no sharing culture among colleagues in school. They worried about sharing their concerns because of being judged as a poor teacher. In collaborative mentoring sessions, the teacher never experiences being judged. Therefore, collaborative mentoring is useful for teachers' mental, emotional, and professional well-being. Furthermore, collaborative mentoring is cost and time-effective for teachers because it does not demand a formal setting. It can be conducted in a social environment in informal settings. In addition, it would be worth using collaborative mentoring programs in every educational institution. The institution should create a collaborative and reflective culture for the teachers' personal and professional well-being.

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Teacher Training as a Strategy of Professional Development: Perceptions and Challenges

Khem Raj Rauteda

Abstract

This article aimed to explore the beliefs and opinions of in-service secondary-level teachers towards teacher training for professional development. Moreover, it intended to identify major issues that existed in the field of teacher training in Nepal. It is a qualitative research study in which the teachers' stories and experiences have been documented. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select the sample from the target population. Unstructured in-depth interviews were conducted to collect data. The data were further analysed thematically. The study found teachers perceived teacher training as a strategy of professional development that equipped them with both the content and the pedagogical knowledge and skills. The study has highlighted various issues and challenges such as geographical difficulty, inaccessibility to the resources, centrality in training practices in the federal system, nepotism, favouritism, and political relations while selecting the trainees. The study implies that the training courses, provisions, policies, and programs are to be developed and launched based on the teachers' needs. Furthermore, teacher training should be decentralised.

Keywords: Teacher professional development, in-service teachers, perspectives, teacher training

Introduction

A profession is a type of job that requires special training, a high level of knowledge, and skills. It is an occupation that assumes responsibility for some tasks too complex to be guided by rules. Hence, professional development refers to the skills and knowledge attained for personal and career development and is concerned with knowledge, skills, and expertise attained by different activities and strategies.

Teaching is a noble profession that requires continuous updating of knowledge and skills for self-satisfaction, satisfying students' enthusiasm, and producing the noble citizens required for the nation, whereas teachers are taken as professionals. Traditionally, teaching was used to be taken as a form of occupation, and it used to be perceived as a semi or quasi-profession in terms of devotion, income, prestige, and the nature of knowledge that the teachers were believed to have. (Holmes, 1986) stated that after a nation at risk (National Commissions on Excellence in Education, US 1983) ascribed the economic downfall of the country to the mediocrity of schooling and teacher incompetence, there were

calls for educational reform (as cited in Joshi, 2012). Then, professionalizing teaching had become a major concern among the proponents of American Education reform in the early 1980s.

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is concerned with the growth and development of professional roles so that teachers can perform their best. TPD is the "sum of total of formal and informal learning perused and experienced by the teachers in a compelling and dynamic change" (Fullan, 1995; as cited in Bharati & Chalise, 2017). The notion of TPD to be consisting of three independent concepts: learning, engagement, and involvement. In this regard, it is defined as 'learning opportunities that engage educators' creative and reflexive capacity in ways that strengthen their practice (Bredeson, 2002; as cited in Joshi, 2012).

Professional development signifies "any professional development activities engaged in by teachers which enhance their knowledge and skills, and enables them to consider their attitude and approaches to the education of children, to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process" (Bolam, 1993). Thus, TPD is a continuous process throughout one's professional life where one has to master new skills, widen knowledge, and develop or innovate insights in their pedagogy, practice, and understanding of their own needs. To attain all these skills, teacher training is a must.

A glance at the existing provisions and the research studies conducted on teacher training reveals that there has been a great emphasis on teacher training, but the issues and the challenges existing in the field have slightly been studied, concerned, and explored. Although teacher training is considered one of the widely used techniques for TPD, teachers in different contexts may have different perceptions and challenges to develop their professional skills. Thus, this study aims to explore Secondary Level English teachers' perceptions of teacher training and the challenges they have encountered in their professional development. Hence, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:
a) How is teachers' perception of training for their professional development?
b) What are the issues and challenges that the teachers faced in teacher training?

Training for Professional Competence

Training is a strategy of teacher development which aims to develop one's capacity, productivity and performance. It is related to the development of skills and knowledge which are inevitable for professional competence. It involves both understanding and application of learning. Hence, training is defined as "the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the classroom" (Richards & Farrel, 2005). It has different forms and modules such as pre-service training, in-service training, or sometimes post-training supportive programs have been conducted. It has also been taken as a form of teacher education, which is significant for both the teachers and the educational institutions to ensure quality education. Teachers play key roles in the implementation of educational programs. They update and equip with knowledge of technology and pedagogy, according to recent developments in the fields.

A doctor needs to be familiar with emerging diseases, viruses, therapies, treatment strategies, and tools. A teacher needs to be versant with the pedagogical movements, new teaching approaches, child psychology, philosophy, culture, methodological ideologies and practices, and ICT tools. Thus, teacher training is important to produce a competent teacher with the knowledge of pedagogy, content, child psychology and technology. Now, the course for training packages would rather develop for ecology; accessibility, affordability, availability, and usability of the materials and resources.

Major Provisions for Teacher Training in Nepal

Teacher education in Nepal can be traced back to the establishment of the Basic Education Training Centre in 1948 to give training to the primary level teachers who were untrained at the time (Awasthi, 2003). After the recommendation of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) -1954 for establishing the College of Education, the Centre for Teacher Education

discontinued its functions. College of Education started giving pre-service training courses for two and four years. Later, it was merged into the Institute of Education (IOE). In 2016 B.S., Tribhuvan University (TU) was established, and it started to train teachers by offering I. Ed and B. Ed courses in the form of pre-service training. The IOE conducted various types of teacher training in the 70s and 80s, such as women teacher training, 'A' level program, and Remote Area Teacher Training (Awasthi, 2003). National Educational System Plan (NESP) - (1971-1976) brought a new impetus to teacher education, making it mandatory to obtain tenure in schools (Awasthi, 2003). Now, faculties of education of different universities such as Kathmandu University, Far-western University, Pokhara University, Madhyapaschimanchal University, and Purbaanchal University provide pre-service teacher training in the form of B. Ed/M.Ed. degrees (Gautam, 2016).

Pre-service teacher training at the primary level was conducted via the privately established teacher training centres, and secondary-level pre-service training was offered through the University Campus, Faculty of Education (FOE) (MOE, 2009). The National Centre for Education Development (NCED) conducts certification and recurrent training for primary and Secondary Level courses through the Education Training Centre (ETC). Completing teacher training courses has been made mandatory to enter the teaching profession. It is also found that the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) has provisioned leadership training for head teachers, monitoring of training implementation, and 7-10 days of job induction training (MOE, 2009). Moreover, SSRP has planned to ensure the access of all in-service teachers to the TPD training of 30 days within five years. It further categorized the teachers into beginners, experienced, master, and expert. It has also proposed TPD training along with qualification, performance, and seniority as the determinate to the promotion of the teachers.

School Sector Development Plan (SSDP - 2016-2023) provisioned that NCED would develop the course and professional development modalities outlining the strategies of teacher professional development (MOE, 2016). It also has provisioned to launch demand-based and need-based mid-term training programs for teachers. Moreover, it has raised the voice for mandatory teacher training and aimed to develop centrally validated in-service training through ETC and lead resource centres with the provisions of one-month refresher training and head teachers training, and Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) training for the teachers of Grades 1 to 4.

NCED conducts two different types of training: pre-service and in-service Teacher Training. The policy has provisioned that the private primary teacher training centre (PPTTC) affiliated with NCED would provide pre-service primary teacher training. This training would be divided into two semesters of five months. Similarly, In-service teacher training would have been divided into modules, i.e., first, second, and third phases for 330 hours, 660 hours, and 330 hours, respectively.

Regarding teacher training and the teacher's professional development, many empirical studies were conducted. In this regard, Khadka (2017) surveyed the secondary and lower secondary level English language teachers of Dailekh district who participated in the TPD training to explore their perceptions towards the training they had. The findings of the study showed that the participants had a positive attitude towards the 10-day TPD training, as the participants argued that the TPD helped them to update with emerging techniques and methods for their professional development.

Similarly, Budhathoki, (2017) studied teachers' perceptions towards teacher training for professional development to find out the role of teacher training in professional development. He surveyed the opinions of purposively selected secondary-level English teachers from private and public schools in the Salyan district. He found that the teacher viewed teacher training as the most essential, inevitable, and important way and strategy of professional development as it develops knowledge, skills, and competence both in content and pedagogy. Likewise, Gyawali (2007) compared the roles of training

among trained and untrained English teachers to find out the role of training in teaching the English language. He interviewed thirteen purposively selected teachers. He found that trained teachers were more competent than untrained teachers in content knowledge and evaluation skills and motivated students better than untrained teachers.

In a survey in Saudi Arabia, Al Asmari (2016) reported that many teachers perceived the CPD as a challenge to their existing knowledge and classroom practice. Highlighting the need for professional development, a survey in the US found that a majority of teachers found professional development either extremely (45%) or moderately (39%) beneficial (Pearsons et al., 2019). However, in a multi-case qualitative study, Powell and Bodur (2019) examined that teachers face challenges accessing effective TPD and transferring knowledge and pedagogical skills in their classrooms. Finally, Acharya (2019) found that activity-based TPD training was effective in improving teachers' perceptions, self-efficacy and process skills in Nepal. She further suggested that teacher training based on an activity-based approach can gear up to the improvement of teachers' self-efficacy learning which transforms the belief system of teachers about teaching and learning.

The literature review revealed that teachers raised their voices for need-based, self-selected, or equitable training, unlike existing center-oriented, expert-based training. Similarly, some studies found that many teacher trainings failed to transfer pedagogical skills to classrooms due to the lack of favourable teaching learning focusing on the English language teachers in rural Nepali contexts connecting teacher training with TPD. Thus, this study bridges the gap in this issue. This study further examines the policies and practices of teacher training in the new federally restructured contexts in rural Nepal.

Methodology

I adopted narrative inquiry as a research design where the researcher describes the lives of individuals, collects and tells stories about people's lives, and writes narratives of individual experiences. Moreover, a narrative tells a short or extended story about something significant or relates to a life story from its inception (Chase, 2005). I selected three experienced teachers from three schools in Doti district using a purposive sampling strategy to select the participants whose main concern is to acquire in-depth information although it may not be representative, and its information may not be generalizable. As the tool of data collection, I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews based on different areas of teacher training. I developed the interview guidelines first. Then I went to the field, took the consent of the participants, and interviewed them individually. I recorded the stories of the participants with the help of my cell phone. The interviews were conducted in Nepali language as it was preferred by the participants. In the next phase, I transcribed their responses and translated the needed ones. After all, I coded, categorized, compared, and contrasted the data with the provisions and existing scenarios. I followed the thematic approach of data analysis proposed by Barkhuizen et al., (2014) where the researcher reads the data repeatedly, codes it, categorizes, extracts and recognizes the thematic headings.

The participants for this study were three teachers teaching at the Secondary Level in Doti district. They have been named by pseudonyms as they did not like to mention their names. Moreover, they all were from government schools and with 12, 17 and 20 years of teaching experience.

Results and Discussion

The major concern of this study was to explore the perceptions of secondary-level English teachers towards teacher training for professional development and to explore the existing challenges/issues that the teachers faced in teacher training in Nepal. The study's findings are presented into two main themes: teachers' perceptions of teacher training and challenges faced by the teachers in training.

Teachers' Perceptions on Teacher Training

As the study is concerned with exploring the experienced teachers' beliefs and opinions on teacher training for professional development, their stories and experiences have been documented, analysed and synthesised. After coding, categorizing, and processing the data, the following themes have been found as teachers' perspectives on teacher training for professional development.

Teacher Training: A Strategy of Professional Development

The pace of change has been accelerated because of modern technologies. Today's inventions become outdated for tomorrow. One of the previous innovations in the field of education is teacher training as a strategy for teacher professional development (Richard and Farrell, 2005). It encompasses content and methodology as major components. Furthermore, adequate development of content knowledge and pedagogical skills are fundamental aspects of teacher professional development.

The participants involved in this study agreed that teacher professional development is possible via teacher training. Similar to the findings of Gyawali (2007) that trained teachers are competent in subject knowledge in comparison to untrained ones, Harish Ghale (pseudonym), one of the participants, explained:

> Teacher training is not sufficient for teacher professional development, but it is one of the strategies which assist them to be updated, skilful, and professional. It is a platform where one can activate his/her learning experience. Therefore, I believe that there are many strategies for teacher professional development, and teacher training is one among them all. I would not be able to be exposed in the classroom well before the training, but I became able to handle the classroom now.

Hence, the data revealed that teachers perceived training as the foremost strategy to grow professionally. It equips teachers with content and pedagogical skills that make their teaching different from untrained teachers. Similarly, another interviewee, Shishir Bantawa (pseudonym) said:

> Professional development is both personal and institutional. Teacher training is a sharing of problems, experiences, and learning which assists the teachers to grow up. Thus, as I have experienced 20 years of teaching, I have been equipped with a lot of skills for my profession. So, I believe that training is a prerequisite for teacher professional development.

The data obtained from both participants revealed that teacher training is a basis for professional development. Teachers can share their learning experiences. They can learn via collaborative learning. Moreover, training is a solution to their problems. Training helped teachers get equipped with professional skills, and keep them updated. This finding is similar to Pearson et al., (2019) who reported that a majority of teachers in the US found TPD training beneficial for their professional development. Therefore, teacher training is one of the effective and inevitable strategies for teacher professional development.

Thus, both the earlier findings by scholars and the participants' responses confirmed that teacher training is one of the major professional development strategies for teachers.

Need-based Training Assures for Teachers' Competence Development

The government of Nepal has provisions for pre-service training, in-service training, TPD training, and need-based training. However, teachers were more inclined to need-based training for their professional growth. Need-based training is a training program where the trainees' needs are previously analyzed, and the sessions are developed to address the problems or challenges identified. Teacher

training in Nepal has been practised from the centre. In this regard, SSDP 2016 provisioned for need and demand-based training (MOE, 2016). However, the data I obtained from the real practitioners; 'three secondary-level experienced teachers disclosed that they hardly got need-based training until their 20 years of teaching service. This study found the gap between government policies providing need and demand-based training and the practice of teacher training in Nepal.

The participants demanded need-based training. Moreover, they believed that only need-based training can ensure their needs or problems when the policies are implemented. One of the interviewees, Harish Ghale (pseudonym), expressed:

> As I attended different need-based training sessions, what I would like to say is; that in need-based training, teachers' needs are to be analysed from the ground before conducting any sort of training program. The problems which they face in the classroom are taken in the discussions for solutions.

The participants indicated that need-based training addressed teachers' needs and solved the problems. As Harish Ghale said, he attended need-based training and found it effective to grow up because it goes to the ground; digs out the reality; and attempts to address the issues.

Similarly, Shishir Bantawa (pseudonym) seemed agreed to the idea stated by Ghale. In that case, he responded:

> Teachers face many problems during their classroom teaching such as problems with method, problems in content or something else. Some teachers are novices, and some are too old and are confused about methods, content, and technological skills. In such a condition, teachers need mentoring support which is possible via need-based training. So, I would like to extend my wish to better implement a need-based training policy.

The participants were intended to have need-based training to enhance their professional competence. They believed that training equipped them with new technological skills and the contents needed to be delivered in the classroom. This finding aligns with Acharya (2019) who suggested activity-based TPD based on teachers' needs to improve teachers' pedagogical skills and self-efficacy. Thus, the result of the study indicated that need-based training is the only means to address the grounded problems of the teachers. SSDP provisioned for need and demand-based training, which found somehow in practice what the secondary level teachers preferred for their professional development (MOE, 2016).

Training Equipped Teachers with New Science and Technological Skills

The modern era is the era of rapid development of science and technology. Information and communication technology (ICT) have become the essence of modern teaching. Therefore, every teacher is required to update themselves. In the interview, the participants reported that they were disarrayed by using technology in the classroom in their early teaching days. However, they were able to use those technological tools and materials when the interview was taken. They credited the training programs they attended. In this regard, one of the interviewees, Sharmila Shakya (pseudonym) said:

> I am running in my 17th year of teaching in a government school. I would like to introduce myself as one of the experienced teachers here. In my school years, I did not get information about how to deal with modern technologies, but I am catering to this digital-born generation nowadays in my classroom. Moreover, she said, it is because of teacher training programs which made her acquainted with those tools and materials to be used in the classroom.

The above remarks made by the participants revealed that they updated with ICT themselves by attending different training programs to cope with the learners of the 21st century.

Similarly, another participant, Shishir Bantawa (pseudonym) shared his experience:

> I learned to use cell phones in 2010 when I was running in my 12th year of teaching experience. I would not know about computers, projectors or other tools like Ms word, power point, and Excel etc. It was a bit surprising that my daughter taught me about the goggles. When my school started using ICT in the classroom, I was too much troubled, but ICT training made me familiar with those skills, nowadays, I am using ICT tools in the classroom. I would like to thank our government for launching such sort of policies.

The data showed that the training programs helped teachers to update themselves with modern technology, methodology, pedagogy, and content. All participants agreed that they benefited from teacher training programs. Previously, Khadka (2017) and Budhathoki (2017) also found that the teachers perceived training as a strategy to keep themselves updated with modern shifts in pedagogy, technology and science. Thus, TPD training is significant to update teachers with technological skills along with various pedagogical skills.

Challenges Faced by the Teachers in Teacher Training

The second research question of this study was to explore the issues and challenges faced by teachers in teacher training in Nepal. Three major subthemes have been developed from the data analysis process.

Geographical Difficulty and Unequal Development: Cause of Inaccessibility in Training

Participants involved in this study reported that they have to travel long distances to join the training as the training centre is geographically far from their home and school. Some of them were unable to attend training due to centralised training centres. In this regard, Sharmila Shakya said:

> I started teaching at a public school in the Doti district. In my earlier teaching time, my school was not equipped with electricity and internet. We were deprived of so many notices of training. Even if we had been informed, we would have been at the training centre walking four hours in feet. So, that was so difficult. The geography of the place and the underdeveloped situation stood up as the hindrance to our professional growth.

The data revealed that geographical barriers limit teachers' training opportunities, especially in remote areas. The training centre at the local level lacked enough resources and infrastructure for teachers' training. Teacher training programs were not equally available. Similarly, Harish Ghale (pseudonym) shared his experience:

> All the training programs are not accessible to all the teachers who are teaching across the country. I remember 10 months of primary-level in-service training; it was to be listened to via the Radio program, but it was hard to have access to the radio in some places. Moreover, it was hard to launch any training package in such a place. Still, training packages are not accessible to all the teachers because of the geographical difficulties and not enough resources, infrastructures etc.

The participants repeatedly reported that teachers who were teaching in the countryside were unable to get access to teacher training programmes due to geographical difficulties and the

inaccessibility of training centres in their place. Geographical diversity was a hindrance to the development of infrastructure and resources, so access to the training program for teachers in such a place became a genuine issue in teacher training in Nepal. However, Powell and Bodur (2019) examined that teachers face challenges accessing effective TPD and transferring knowledge and pedagogical skills in their classrooms in the US. Thus, the geographical difficulty was a cause of inaccessibility to the resources and exposures for trainees. Moreover, it stood up as a challenge in teacher training in Nepal.

Central Practices in Teacher Training: A Controversy in Federalism

The federal system is simply about power distribution and equal development. Nepal has practised federalism since 2072 B.S., however, power distribution practices have not yet been taken into real-world practice. The teacher training sector has not been decentralised in this federal system yet. For example, SSDP and NCED provide centrally validated training and centrally developed training modules (MOE, 2016).

During the interviews, the participants expressed dissatisfaction as they needed to wait for a centrally provided training programme. The participants believed in power distribution and localisation to address locality, local culture, local languages, local resources, and infrastructures. They were confused about the centrality of course development and the provision of centrally validated training. For example, Shishir Bantawa said:

> Centrally validated training cannot assure teachers' needs. To dig out small problems and needs of the teachers, local agencies need to work out for instance; rural municipalities, municipalities or other local agencies. If the policies were designed in the Centre, those policies could not ensure the teachers teaching in marginal places. Still, we have centrally programmed training packages.

Hence, the above comments showed that teacher training programs were still Centre-oriented. Moreover, teachers believed that the policies designed in the centre have become unable to address their needs in the local context. For that, federal practices should be taken into practice well.

Likewise, another participant, Harish Ghale, said:

> I have been teaching for 20 years, but I have not recognized the course developers. As I know, there is CDC, ETC, NCED, Shaikshik Janashakti Bikash Kendra, etc. are working in the field of teacher training. Most of the training packages seem imposing in nature. In my opinion, central practices in the teacher training program are a huge challenge in this federalism…]

Throughout the data, it was found that the policies were not in actual practice. Still, the teachers' representation was not ensured in course development. Therefore, teachers have been facing many challenges in their teaching. Similarly, Sharmila Shakya said:

> …. the country has been practising federalism, but training packages are still center-oriented. Course development, collaboration, and other vital things are limited in the centre…..

As she stated, I learned that power should be distributed in the local agencies in the federal system. Moreover, collaboration, cooperation, and representation are better be ensured. The responses of all the interviewees demonstrated that the policies were prepared in the centre with the collaboration of some experts and educationists, but they were launched across the country in the same way with similar expectations. Thus, the practice itself has been found challenging. However, such challenges are

contextual. In Saudi Arabia, different from this challenge, Al Asmari (2016) reported that many teachers perceived the CPD as a challenge to their existing knowledge and classroom practice.

Nepotism, Favouritism, and Political Relation in the Selection of Trainees

Nepotism is practised among people with the power or influence of favouring relatives, especially for opportunities. The participants involved in this study also reported Nepotism, favouritism, and political relations have become the norms of the trainees' training selection though such practices are unethical. For example, Harish Ghale explained:

> In most of the training, trainees are selected in terms of their relation with the head teacher, trainers, or some other sort of relations. For instance, if a head teacher or other persons of the agencies are in someone's contact, one asks them about the training packages, and they select him or her for training whether the training is for him or not.

The above remarks revealed that personal relation, influence, hello effect, or power relation are the factors which affect the selection of trainees. Likewise, Shishir Bantawa expressed:

> Trainings have been conducted for formality. Training is for the sake of training; they are purposed to show up to be accomplished by the end of the financial year. Moreover, relatives of the head teacher, relatives of local leaders, and people with relation to them or with the representatives of the agency get a chance to participate in training.

Hence, the above data revealed that the practice of nepotism, favouritism, and political relations in selecting trainees became a great challenge in teacher training. As a result, the teachers who needed training could not get any opportunities.

Conclusion and Implications

Teacher training is the most important strategy of TPD. Professional development is an ongoing process in which the teacher must gain new skills, methods, approaches, and attitudes, and training is a specific program to make teachers professionally competent. Several policies have been developed for teacher training and have assured varieties of training modules and packages. SSDP, SSRP, Teacher Rule, Education Act, and several other reports of commissions have talked about teacher training where the courses for different kinds of training have been designed and disseminated by experts under NCED, ETC.

The mandatory provision of teacher training is an admiring step. It would rather launch demand-based, and need-based training programs to ensure quality education by enhancing teachers' competence. The teachers' needs would better be analyzed via discussion, class observation, and the data would better be recorded by the training hubs such as NCED, ETC, and the Leading Resource Centre (LRC). As this study aimed to explore the teachers' beliefs and opinions on teacher training for professional development, in-depth interviews were conducted with three experienced teachers to explore their pertinent beliefs on teacher training for professional development. It was found that teacher training is a fundamental strategy of teachers' professional development. As the findings showed, it is presented that teacher training is a platform for teachers to grow professionally.

The study found that teachers faced various problems in training in Nepal such as diversified geopolitics, central practices in the federal system, and unethical practices of nepotism, favouritism, and political relations. Furthermore, the practice of training modules and provisions do not match. SSDP has provoked the need-based training policy, but the practice is still centre-oriented, although the country

has been practising federalism. Thus, it is very important to implement locally designed teacher training to get a competent teacher. Moreover, factors like analysis of teachers' needs, accessibility, ecology, infrastructures, and resources should be considered to cope with those issues and challenges for the successful implementation of training policies for teacher professional development.

The findings of the study indicate that teachers, trainers, course designers, and administrators need to reconsider the role of centred-based teachers' professional development programs to make them more relevant to the local context of teaching and learning. Similarly, the insights from this study can be used while designing the training program, selecting the participants, and conducting the training program. The researchers who work in teacher training can conduct further studies based on the findings of this study.

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