

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES IN
INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: AN INTERPRETATIVE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Bharat Sigdel* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on April 11, 2023 entitled *English Teachers' Perceptions of and Experiences in Integrated Curriculum: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*.

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Following the guidelines of the Curriculum Development Centre (2019) and School Sectors Development Plan (2016-2023) a recent venture into integrated curriculum triggered this study. The study “English Teachers’ perceptions of and experiences in integrated curriculum: an interpretative phenomenological analysis” explored the practitioner English teachers’ perceptions and experiences. Based on the thematic, empirical, methodological, and policy review, the present study has been considered momentous in the current context.

This study is qualitative research under interpretivist paradigm. Under phenomenological methodology interpretative phenomenological analysis built its method. With five participants from community schools in Bhaktapur district, the study was driven with Vygotsky’s learning theory of social constructivism. Data was collected through Semi-structured interviews and observations of classroom activities. For meaning making step-by-step analysis as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2015) was carried ahead; superordinate themes were generated with higher abstraction from subordinate themes and emergent theme titles.

The analysis embraced six superordinate themes to inform how five participants perceived and experienced integrated curriculum during its implementation. Amid the challenges that caused agitation of adaptation, the participants perceived integrated curriculum as an unavoidable opportunity and realized it as their responsibility. Despite limited understanding of core areas of integrated curriculum, they ventured ahead with self-efforts. They observed

transitional roles through mutual help. Though they still adhered to same preceding classroom setups and assessment system, the teachers were hopeful about better impact with integrated curriculum implementation. My findings further indicated that the students were better engaged and new attempts had been made for new pedagogical trends. English teachers were still disciplinarians during implementation of integrated curriculum too. They were happy with changes and were hopeful about achievement of learning outcomes and competencies targeted by the curriculum.

The discussion revealed some shortcomings in the effective implementation envisioned by integrated curriculum. Teachers' feeling of agitation, lack of trainings, limited resources, and same traditional practices of assessment led to the conclusion that expecting much may be overambitious. At this context, some additional efforts of rectification would be worth practising. Effective implementation might persist if the participants' appeal to training and exposure were heard before it becomes too late.

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April 11, 2023

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my original work and that it has not been submitted for the candidature of any degree.

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ABBREVIATION

CAS	Continuous Assessment System
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
ELT	English Language Teacher
IC	Integrated Curriculum
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IT	Information Technology
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
SSDP	School Sectors Development Plan
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Chapter one entails an introduction to the present research project. It begins with the concept of curriculum, rise of integrated curriculum, and a recent shift to the integrated curriculum in the Nepali context. The chapter articulates the problematization and the journey to this interpretative phenomenological analysis. Further, the purpose and the significance of the study wrap up the chapter.

Background

In 2018, while I was attending a seminar for school leaders in Kathmandu, I encountered an idea attributed to Will Richardson: We need to stop teaching the children the curriculum. rather, we need to begin discovering curriculum together with them. These words used by a presenter drew my attention to Richardson and later Richardson drew my interest towards curriculum. Richardson and Postman (2013) have claimed, “The current knowledge-based curriculum that most schools use was created at a time when access to information was scarce; we wanted to make sure our students had a working memory of the facts, figures, and skills” (p. 13). This nurtured critical thinking of curriculum and led me to further inquire about curriculum.

Etymologically, curriculum came from ‘currere’, a Latin word that means a ‘race course’ or ‘runway’. Cunningham popularly defines, “Curriculum is a tool in the hands of artist (teacher) to mould his materials (students) according to his ideas (aims and objectives) in his studio (school)” (As cited by Joan et al., 2013, p.24). Therefore, curriculum is an artistic tool of teachers to design shape of the students. For Walker (2003) curriculum is organization of subject matters and goals for teaching and learning practices in academic institutions. The curriculum is understood to be a document or plan that carries guidelines to the entire teaching-learning procedure. It exists in a school system at least with contents to be taught to catch up with the targeted objectives.

Oriental informal educational practices like Gurukula which was the earliest form of practice in Nepal too, never relied on any formal written curriculum. They followed certain standards of own to connect to the needs of society. With the beginning of formal education in Nepal during Rana reign, language schools executed

some formal educational practices. But Nepal did not have any formal curriculum even up to the establishment of democracy in 1951 (Karki, 2014). The government was able to publish a kind of curriculum in 1954 (2010 BS), though it was not guided by curriculum philosophies (Bhandari, 2000). Some attempts were carried out to reform the curriculum through National Education Planning Commission (NEPC) 1954, All Round National Education Commission (ANEC) 1960 AD, and a national seminar on curriculum reform held in 2010 (2067 BS). Since then, to address the needs of society, curriculum in Nepal has gone through many updates.

Curriculum regularly gets changed as per the need and expectations of society. One recent attempt of curriculum change is the introduction of an integrated curriculum in Nepal. The present basic level (1-3) curriculum of Nepal (2019) has adopted an integrated curriculum. This shift to integrated curriculum is a result of various research recommendations, development of science and technology, and the needs and expectations of society (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019). In the existing context, this topical issue sets a worthy background for new discussions and explorations.

My Venture into Research Issue

I am a teacher by profession. With my engagement in school education for more than two decades, curriculum, teaching-learning activities, pedagogical innovations, teacher-student relations have been inseparable parts of my life. In the initial days of my career, I was ignorant about curriculum and its role in my professional responsibility. I had a misconception that curriculum is something abstract, philosophic, and higher than a common ELT practitioner's need. That made me reluctant to study issues related to curriculum. I merely followed the prescribed textbooks and thought it was the entire area a teacher needs to navigate. Not only me, most of the teachers of my generation, have similar experience. It took me a long time to realize the need for changing my mindset. With some exposures to training, conferences, and seminars, I acquired an understanding that curriculum is a fundamental unit of my professional life. Now, my experience has let me argue that curriculum resides at the core of all the academic activities; the teachers are at the core of carrying out curriculum in practice. Effective implementation and success of a curriculum rely on the teachers. In several instances, researchers have considered practitioners' roles and concerns to be significant for a successful implementation of a

new curriculum (Hall & Hord, 2015). The focus of present research, therefore, would be momentous.

My professional and higher studies attachments have made me closer to the curriculum and have triggered my interest in curriculum development, changes, and implementation. As I am pursuing my MPhil. in ELE, it has added a new enthusiasm in me towards education and educational phenomena. I have realized responsibility of doing something in the field I work. Being an ELT practitioner, the arrival of new curriculum has increased my interest to see how it has been perceived and experienced. To pursue my interest, I have come with this research on a recent curriculum change.

Sticking to Nepal government, Ministry of Education's decision and being abided by national curriculum framework 2019, curriculum development centre has developed integrated curriculum for grade one to three. After its piloting for grade one in the academic year 2076 B.S. in 103 schools of 18 districts all over Nepal, the curriculum was implemented in the academic year 2020/21. The recent curriculum has been welcomed with a high optimism. With this execution, the implementation practices became worth researching. In this context, any research based on exploration of phenomena related to teacher's experiences of daily practices becomes milestone to teachers, administrators to policymaking levels. With the realization of need of inquiry on the ground reality, this interpretative phenomenological analysis has been ventured.

Purpose of the Study

The study explored English language teachers' perceptions and experiences with the integrated curriculum from grade one teachers of community schools located in Bhaktapur district.

Research Question

Paying attention to the purpose of the study, I formulated primary research question for this study as:

How do English language teachers perceive and experience newly implemented integrated curriculum in Nepal?

Secondary questions:

- a. How have practitioner teachers perceived integrated curriculum?
- b. How have teachers experienced integrated curriculum in their classroom?

Rationale of the Study

Generally, curriculum change comes with alarming challenges as well as rays of hope to all the teachers, administrators, and educational practitioners. So, any study related to its implementation contributes a great deal to practitioners and policymakers. Practitioner teachers' roles remain crucial in the success or failure of a curriculum (Loflin, 2015). Therefore, this study is important to learn curriculum at the level of lived experience. The meanings out of this may contribute to the overall success of the new curriculum. I anticipate this research to be significant for my higher studies and further research. As the present research boosts my interest and knowledge in curriculum, curriculum research could be one possible prospect for my PhD studies too.

When the teachers' experiences are observed and shared, on the one hand, the participant teachers feel encouraged and supported, on the other hand, their experiences maybe worth reading to many other teachers and administrators. This study remains substantial to the participants of the study and other practitioners with similar daily experiences. Teachers of both status quo mindset as well as innovative mindset will be benefitted as the former will be shaken up and the lateral will be boosted up.

I believe my research might contribute to several other areas too. As it traverses through teachers' experiences regarding the implementation of the new curriculum, it will be a good resource for school administrators to higher level of planners and policymaking authorities. The challenges and prospects from teachers' experiences may inform the concerned authority and policy makers to address the shortcomings. The data and findings from the study may provide insights related to the curricular and instructional activities that allow administrators and practitioners to focus on and support with need-based trainings to mitigate weak areas (Wiles & Bondi, 2014). Additional attention on teachers' activities will benefit both teachers and students. Moreover, this document of research might be a good source for future researchers with interest in curriculum, its implementation, teachers' perceptions and experiences.

CHAPTER II

DOUBT AND HOPE WITH INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

This chapter comprises of literature review, research gap, and conceptual framework. For the literature review, the literature sections are categorized into- thematic review, empirical review, methodological review, and policy review. The research gap has been derived based on the existing literature. This section informs the need for this research by showing the gap. The chapter concludes with the conceptual framework that gives an overall picture of how the study is linked up with theoretical ground, methodological stand point, issue of the study, participants' perception and experiences, and an entire network among them.

Integrated Curriculum as a Response to Demand of Time

Integrated Curriculum does not have much elongated history. Education practitioners first explored integrating curriculum as a concept in the 1890s (Hinde, 2005). It is found to be rooted in John Dewey School in Chicago in 1898 AD. Since then, it started to spread across the world. Integrated curriculum, in its design and objectives, is found closer to French Immersion model of curriculum that began in Canada in 1965 AD (Qiang et al., 2011). Later in the early 90s, Context and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) emerged as a new approach to language teaching with the similar spirit. Eventually, at the turn of the century, all such practices were reconciled to form a new model of curriculum called integrated curriculum. Since then, it has widely been practiced, observed, and studied. Many researchers including Susan Drake, H. H. Jacobs, Gordon Vars, James Beane, and Robin Fogarty are most known for their research in curriculum integration.

An integrated curriculum, sometimes labelled as interdisciplinary teaching, thematic teaching, or synergetic teaching, refers to the thematic, interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary design of curriculum interwoven or connected to the activities and real-life skills (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). It tries to find connections between classroom teaching and real-life settings; and requirements (Drake, 1998). This model of curriculum aims at developing students' ability for applying their learning to the daily real-life settings. At the present context, amidst the regular grumblings on education for being impractical, not applicable to real life, and detached from life, integrated curriculum has been anticipated to be a right remedy.

An integrated curriculum intends to carry various disciplines of study together. Drake (1998) advocated for interdisciplinary nature of integrated curriculum, “If we live in an interconnected and interdependent world, it only makes sense that knowledge be presented as interconnected and interdependent” (p. 24). It is the divergent point of integrated curriculum from traditional disciplined teaching that it tries to seek connections. In the same line, for Aronson and Laughter (2016) integrated curriculum is designed for mutual learning of varied disciplines with synthesis of traditional subjects and teaching learning experiences. Gehrke (1998) with a similar tone takes an integrated curriculum as “curricular programs that are aimed toward making the subject matter more relevant to students’ experiences with less concern for delineating disciplinary boundaries around kinds of learning” (p. 248). Gehrke seems here in favour of multi-disciplinary model of teaching against traditional practice of disciplinary one.

Integrated curriculum is in practice with its various models. Jacobs (1989) mentioned five options for curriculum integration. To list them: parallel discipline, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, integrated day, and complete integration. Whereas, Fogarty (1991) introduced ten models beginning from models under ‘within single discipline’ to ‘within and across learners’ (p. 62). For Drake (1998) there are four frameworks of curriculum during integration: disciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary. The modality of integration seems being reformed in due course of time. The current practice of curriculum integration in Nepal, is found closer to the practice suggested by Susan Drake.

The integrated curriculum, despite its varied models in practice, is considered to be the demand of time. Drake and Burns (2004) mean to say integrated curriculum is fit for education of 21st century when they say, “integrated curriculum addresses some of the central questions in education today” (p. 19). Drake and Reid (2018) believe that the fortunate students who got privilege of experiencing curriculum integration “may find themselves better prepared for life in the 21st century” (p. 32). The same tone finds echo in Magoma (2016), “schools must look at education as a process for developing abilities required by life in the twenty-first century” (p. 28). All these inform us that integrated curriculum is a timely selection to education today.

In all, the integrated curriculum emphasises life skills. It structures learning around themes; encourages active participation of the learners so that they find opportunity to apply the skills from their learning to their real-life settings. Therefore,

an integrated curriculum could be taken as an educational approach that has come in response to demand of time to prepare children for their lifelong learning.

Integrated Curriculum in Practice

After its implementation in different parts of the world, integrated curriculum got extensive attention and was widely researched. Researches on integrated curriculum centred their focus around descriptions of thematic areas, daily lesson plans as well as classroom practices and the practitioners' perceptions and experiences. To review the literature for the present study, my grounds are the articles retrieved from Google Scholar and Eric. The articles were searched with the keywords combined as: "integrated curriculum" AND "teachers' perception" AND "teachers' experience". Out of a varied range of articles found in the search, only the most relevant ones were sorted for the empirical review. With my focus on the teachers' perceptions and experiences, some related and relevant research works have been discussed here.

With the realization of the need for life-oriented education, when integrated curriculum emerged from different bends of the world, the education practitioners started to carry researches on effectiveness as well as challenges of implementation of integrated curriculum. A good number of researches ended up with findings that demonstrated rays of hope despite some issues of doubt. The researchers with critical lens to integrated curriculum expressed their doubts on readiness for immediate implementation of the curriculum. P. S. George published his analytical article in 1996 highlighting challenges of implementing integrated curriculum. Questioning the claims of integrated curriculum, he refused to accept its superiority at the face value. Stating 21 potential problems he suggested to withhold the wholesale and immediate adoption of integrated curriculum.

Homogeneously, Adhikari (2023) raised multiple issues related to implementation of integrated curriculum in Nepal through his analytical and critical observation. He not only raised the issues of faulty process of implementation and training with a dearth preparedness but also poured scorns on the concerned authorities who were bragging beyond the real ground of integration. He pointed on the errors right from the design of textbooks and teachers' guides which would be far effective if experts could have worked together to integrate matters across disciplines. Closely related was the case of Korea. Park (2008) studied three school teachers to examine teachers' attitude and understanding of integrated curriculum and its

implementation. Similar to the issues raised by Adhikari, the Korean elementary teachers' response displayed a lack for teachers' knowledge and understanding for better implementation of the integrated curriculum. Findings noticed a lack for teachers' knowledge and understanding; for better implementation of the curriculum the teachers are required to be trained and informed broadly and deeply. Emphasis was given on training qualified teachers for curriculum integration and implementation.

Tudor (2014) carried a SWOT analysis to observe and regulate efficiency and feasibility of an integrated curriculum. Referring to the lack of experience and fairly superficial familiarity of specific practices, the researcher found inconsistency between education reform policy and reality in the classroom. She gave emphasis on role of teachers for coordination and integration and recommended rigorous design of teaching activities and innovative integrated design. Similarly, Lam et al. (2013) explored the teachers' opinion based on their experiences on implementation of integrated curriculum in Singapore. Majority of the participants suspected the feasibility of implementation of integrated curriculum in Singapore showing the condition of relatively limited knowledge and experience for integration among the practitioners. Amidst the possible challenges in implementation, they indicated to several benefits of curriculum integration too. Similarly, Akib et al. (2020) found the Indonesian teachers not mentally ready for integration of curriculum. In addition, the implementation became challenging because of teachers' limited knowledge of pedagogical approach, lack of skills in designing lesson plan and assessment, and inadequate command over technology. Correspondingly, Ralebese (2018) explored the instructional and assessment practices of implementing integrated curriculum. The interpretative phenomenological analysis showed limited understanding and contextual challenges as faced by practitioner teachers.

Likewise, Magoma (2016) studied Kenyan English teachers and reached to the finding the practitioner teachers lack proper understanding of methodological knowledge of teaching integrated curriculum. As the finding concluded that curriculum implementation had not been effective, to hold the intended promise the research recommendation for in-service trainings for their professional enhancement. Magoma appears to be mirroring Shoham (1998). Shoham in her research article takes reference of interviews and observations of 74 teachers and states her finding that the teachers were only partially familiar to the core concept of integrated curriculum,

appropriate theoretical background, and approaches. She too has recommended for teacher education, in-service training and educational budget.

Observation of the literature indicates several challenges in integrated curriculum implementation. The opinions can broadly be divided into three categories: those with radical voice who recommended abolition of integrated curriculum, those who opined for further tasks required before implementing, and those who suggested to wait, plan, and proceed.

In contrast to the claims of critical views, a good number of researchers have reached to optimistic findings. They have reported integrated curriculum as a promising, hopeful, and needful model of curriculum. Two Turkish researchers Ozturk and Erden (2011) carried their research on Turkish preschool teachers' beliefs on integrated curriculum and with the views from respondents such as integrated curriculum is “child-centric”, “very helpful in helping children to construct more durable knowledge”, “can apply curriculum in a more creative and enjoyable way” (p. 898), concluded to find quite positive and hopeful beliefs of the teachers. Similarly, DeCorse (1996) with the research article based on observation of five teachers regarding how they conceptualized and applied integrated curriculum concluded with the finding that integrated curriculum functions as a positive force with its benefits especially in basic levels. Nevertheless, the research report recommends on preparing teacher since their graduation through practical classes, exposure to children in classrooms, internships, and team teaching.

Similarly, John (2015) in the study tried to check the effectiveness of newly introduced integrated curriculum. The research attempted to measure prospective teachers' efficiencies for effective implementation of the curriculum and ended up with hopeful findings. The research showed better efficiency of trained teachers than the prospective ones. In the same line, the research report by Shriner et al. (2010) takes its base on the inquiry to the participants of a three-day long workshop with a brief questionnaire. The participants retorted integrated curriculum to be student centred and effective. They found it time saving where the students may obtain more knowledge and can connect their learning to the real life

Analysis of the above literature infers that numerous research reports have imparted views on benefits of integrated curriculum. Integrated curriculum has been taken as student-centric and quite effective due to features such as students' better classroom participation, integrating learning area across themes and disciplines, and

fit for twenty-first century society. Though, there are a good number of studies which have shown fear of obstacles to its implementations, the concept has been taken with high anticipation. Doubts on the feasibility of implementation of integrated curriculum increase together with critical questions in the areas such as whether integrated curriculum is a right fit into gap mentioned, how is level of preparedness with teachers and how is their efficacy, level of knowledge and training, and related resources. In all, new curriculum has been keenly observed with tremendous expectations.

Regarding methodology, while going through the literature, there are a good number of researches done through each qualitative, quantitative, as well as mixed methods. The researchers such as George (1996), DeCorse (1996), Park (2008), Shriner et al. (2010) were found to have used qualitative method with the tools of data collection such as interviews and observations. George published analytical article taking reference of the views of experts and practitioners. DeCorse and Minjeong Park interviewed and observed five and three school teachers respectively. These are the prominent tools found in the phenomenological studies. Some others like Shoham (1998), Lam et al. (2013) based their researches on the case study method under qualitative design. A good number of other researchers such as Ozturk and Erden (2011), L. S. Tudor (2014) were found to have applied survey methods under quantitative research design. Some researchers like Yvonne John (2015), Magoma (2016) used mixed methods research. While, Parker (2018), Alkathlan (2019) and Wall and Norman (2021) applied Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis for their studies. Parker (2018) studied lived experiences of health professions faculty on oral health curricular integration, Alkathlan (2019) explored female learner's lived experiences related to using social media for independent learning, where Wall and Norman (2021) studied collaborative planning of eight middle level teacher candidates.

Findings of these researches indicate that the many of them have claimed superiority of integrated curriculum and advocated its efficacy and practicality. It is time for Nepal, to check superiority and efficacy. Though integrated curriculum has been perceived with high expectations and hopeful insights, many researches, mostly ones under qualitative design, have ended up with critical observations and views to integrated curriculum and have concluded with long lists of recommendations to mitigate the existing challenges. As the existing literature indicate, ample researches

have prioritized interviews and observations which are much recognized as phenomenological tools of data collection. As the purpose of the present study is to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences of the practitioner teachers regarding integrated curriculum through their lived experiences, phenomenological research appeared more apposite methodological ground for the present research. Moreover, with reference to researches of Parker (2018), Wall and Norman (2021), Alkathlan (2019), to explore perceptions and lived experience of the participants, I increased my inclination to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Policy Review

While reviewing policy, I tried to see how policy constructed a gateway to the emergence of an integrated curriculum in Nepal. Curriculum changes and development in Nepal came into practice through different plans, commissions, committees, and eventual reports in different stages of time. Through all the attempts they tried to bring reforms in education and make it fit with pace of time. In the process of restructuring education, various remarkable education reform policies were brought before the turn of the century. All these attempts at the national level and their reports contributed a big deal in framing curriculum in Nepal. After the turn of the century, School Sectors Development Plans (SSDP, 2016-2023), National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2007; NCF, 2019), periodical national-level plans, changes in socio-political structure are taken to be remarkable for bringing changes in curriculum and overall education system.

The disciplinary and linear curriculum dominated history for quite long. However, the flood of lately emerged modern educational philosophies brought a realization of inadequacy of existing traditional practices and as a response to the need for time there came a shift toward interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, non-linear, and holistic curriculum. The integrated curriculum in Nepal was incepted in the planning of the Curriculum Development Centre (2007), "The curriculum will be developed on the basis of integrated approach" (p. 33). NCF 2007 seems to be focusing on content to fit "the changes in social, cultural, and economic aspects as well as changes in local, national, and international milieu. ... Therefore, an approach of coordinating instructional methods will be adopted by integrating such diverse subjects in the curriculum" (p. 33). Though, the curriculum could not be carried out immediately, this recent arrival of integrated curriculum became like biproduct of many such contexts.

The concept of integrated curriculum that was incepted in curriculum framework (2007) revived after 12 years only when the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP)-2016-2023 supported and linked it to the next issue of the national curriculum framework in 2019. As mentioned in the preface of the prescribed textbook of grade one for integrated curriculum 'My English book 1', "the new Basic Level Curriculum (Grades 1-3) developed as an integrated form is based on the guiding principles of the National Curriculum Framework 2019" (p. iv). The framework targets seeking out solutions to the issues related to school education and it tries to mitigate the challenges through the guiding principles. For the development of the curriculum that fits to the need of time, bases like competence, all-round child development, child-centred developmental approach, integrated, inclusive, collaborative approaches have been suggested. Chapter 3.1.4 of the framework has stated about integrated curriculum to be the basis for the curriculum development of grades 1 to 3. Being directed by guiding principles mentioned in the National Curriculum Framework (2019), Curriculum Development Centre developed and approved the basic level integrated curriculum for Grades 1-3 in 2019, piloted the curriculum in 103 schools from 18 districts in the academic year 2019/20, and started implementation nationwide since 2020/21.

Education sectors in Nepal have some bitter experiences with their new plans and policies. When new plans and policies are brought into effect, they get a lot of controversies, unnecessary critical eyes and abrupt failure. Continuous assessment system (CAS) is a recent example. Despite being a promising formative assessment model, it was aborted. We need to be mindful here that if same destiny awaits integrated curriculum too.

Research Gap

Curriculum Development Centre (2007) has highlighted the gap and significance of the researching on, which subject to prescribe, how-to and on what basis categorize the subject matter, how to make curriculum and text book child-friendly, gender-friendly and inclusive, how to devise practical teaching learning activities and how to implement them. With a realization of the lack of and need for research NCF (2007) has mentioned the over all development and implementation process of curriculum have so far not been based on research. This real ground of lack of research refers to the main research gap to this research.

This research has set its ground on the basis of evaluation of the thematic, empirical, methodological and policy reviews. When to integrated curriculum, a flood of study had been carried out in European setting mainly because integrated curriculum got its birth in Europe. In the context of Nepal, integrated curriculum itself being a new field, is in need of extensive research but hardly any research has been attempted so far. The new curriculum in its initial phase of implementation seriously needs appropriate type of study and this study is an effort to fill the prevalent gap.

As George (1996) has raised the issues, we find a great significance and gap of research in present context of Nepal too. How the practitioners have perceived new integrated curriculum in Nepal and what potential problems and hindrances have been faced should be studied in time. Like George, we also should try to quality check and be critical to superiority of integrated curriculum to the existing one. And on this verge, we ought to be equally mindful about potential challenges in implementation. As quoted in Lake (1994), “The integrated curriculum is a great gift to experienced teachers. It's like getting a new pair of lenses that make teaching a lot more exciting and help us look forward to the next century. It is helping students take control of their own learning” (p. 1). Now, the time has come to check whether it is the same in the case of Nepal too or not. This research has come to fill the void to contribute significantly to Nepali academia.

Conceptual Framework

The present study took its concepts from Vygotsky's learning theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky's social constructivism relies on the principle: knowledge is socially constructed through means of interactions. Human learning assumes a unique nature and procedure by which learners develop into the intellectual lives of those around them (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Their surroundings help them learn. For Vygotsky (1978), learning happens through real-life experiences and the learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world. In case of integrated curriculum and its implementation, the teachers, as learners, construct their perceptions through interactions and daily real-life experiences. Here, the practitioner teachers' perceptions of curriculum and experiences with integrated curriculum implementation were formed on the foundation of their earlier experiences and daily practices.

By these means, Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theory shaped this study. The integrated curriculum at the core and other components like teachers'

perceptions and experiences in connection to curriculum implementation moulded the conceptual framework. In social constructivism, different people construct knowledge differently. In case of this study, the teachers' perceptions and experiences with the integrated curriculum and their construction of knowledge can be individualized. Each teacher through their lived experiences owing to their individual context may construct their own learning distinctly. For Vygotsky, overall learning was based on the principles of social constructivism and social constructivism took its base on the concepts: knowledge is product of human interaction, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and More Knowledgeable other (MKO). Same differences were considered in the context of this study too.

Community or surrounding play fundamental role for creating environment for interaction through which learners can reach to knowledge. According to Vygotsky and Cole (1978) zone of proximal development is, "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In ZPD, they demonstrate learning through three circles: the inner circle indicates the area learner can learn unaided, middle circle represents the space the learner can do by help of others, and the outer circle that directs the tough most area for the learner to do. Similarly, in teacher circle too, more capable colleagues are taken as more knowledgeable others who through social interaction help other colleagues in proximity to expand their learning ability. In such context, as the learners with difficulty in understanding can learn better with the help of their peers, here teachers might learn better through their colleagues and seniors. Here, the fundamental concept is the participant teachers interact regularly with their colleagues to enhance their learning; they find their zone of proximal development, and try to learn more from more knowledgeable colleagues.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, the perceptions and experiences of the teachers and their construction of knowledge were observed and interpreted. Curriculum implementation depends deeply on the learning activities of both teachers and students. Here, to explore the practitioner teachers' perceptions of curriculum and experiences with curriculum implementation, the teachers remain at the core of the concept representing learners.

The conceptual framework shows patch up and intertwined network among research issue, participants, research design, methodology and theoretical ground. By

keeping integrated curriculum at the core, teachers' perceptions and experiences were connected to the impact of overall teaching learning phenomena on curriculum implementation. Teachers' perceptions and experiences were comprehended from interviews to reach their phenomenological lived experiences.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter three clarifies my methodological position in this research. In detail, the chapter deals with the ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological bases of the research. The chapter also confers about how and why the study is framed with interpretative phenomenological analysis. The research site, participants, data collection, data analysis and meaning making, quality standards, and ethical issues wrap up the chapter.

Research Design

My attempt to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences on integrated curriculum has embraced qualitative research design and adheres to interpretivist paradigm. Qualitative research, as defined by Malterud (2001) is, "the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or conversation. It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context" (p. 483). So, in this research, I have attempted to explore the meaning of their experiences by interpreting the data retrieved from semi-structured interviews with practitioner teachers. To quote Cohen et al. (2007), "all theories constructed within the context of the interpretive paradigm tend to be anti-positivist" (p. 21). So, my stand here is non-positivist paradigm, more specifically, it went under interpretivist framework. In the words of Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), "a research paradigm is the conceptual lens through which a researcher looks at the world, examines the methodological aspects of their research project to determine the research methods that will be used and how the data will be analyzed" (p. 26). As stated in these lines, the paradigm concerns the questions like- how do researchers take reality in the world, how they perceive knowledge, how do they go to find the knowledge out? For this study, I explored the issue through a subjective lens and dug into participants' lived experiences through a phenomenological approach to find the knowledge out.

Ontology, epistemology, and methodology are believed to be intertwined in research work. As Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argued, "ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data

collection” (p. 23). In the case of my research, I observe integrated curriculum through teachers’ perceptions and experiences. So, I incline to multiple participants’ multiple responses to reality based on their varied phenomenological context. Kafle (2013) while reviewing and synthesizing phenomenological study has stated that perception of reality is shaped by individual constructs that may vary depending on different circumstances. This viewpoint is based on the belief that there are multiple versions of reality. With the same spirit, my ontology relies on multiple realities based on different contextual perceptions of different participants. That means relativism is my ontological ground.

I am subjectivist in my epistemological ground. To take reference of Cohen et al. (2007) again, epistemology is related to “knowledge – its nature and forms, how it can be acquired, and how communicated to other human beings” (p. 7). I, as a knower, try to study the subjects, the participants for subjective knowledge. In my present study, as there are multiple participants from multiple contextual settings, their experiences and insights obviously are subjective.

Regarding axiology, the value theory, my axiology is value laden. Concerned with practices in descriptive phenomenological studies, Husserl’s (2013) notion of ‘epoche’ which is also understood as suspending or bracketing researcher’s position. But, the present research being an interpretive one, has been more value laden. It does not mean intervening the participants. For the research, much emphasis has been given to the most possible natural setting to collect participants’ actual experiences. As a phenomenological researcher, my idiographic engagement in the field with the participants does not allow me to be value free. So, my value laden axiology is reasonable here.

Grounded on these assumptions, I decided my methodological position to be interpretive phenomenology. More specifically, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) has made a base for the method of this study. The truth has been attempted to construct through the participants’ phenomenological experiences, hermeneutic meaning making, and idiographic study that was extracted through social interactions, i.e., semi-structured interview and observation of the workplace activities.

Phenomenology and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Phenomenology works as philosophy, methodology, and a method. Miles (2015) has clearly mentioned the differences between phenomenology as a philosophy

and also as a method. As he says there are three types of philosophical phenomenology: transcendental, hermeneutic, and existential. Whereas, as a method, phenomenology has been taken as descriptive and interpretive. Finlay (2009) defines phenomenology as the study of phenomena, their nature, and meanings. Similarly, Guillen (2019) presents his view on the phenomenology as, “an analysis of the phenomena or significant experience shown (phenomenon) to the consciousness” (p.219). Treading on such theoretical ground phenomenology takes its journey to the field of research to reach the specific meaning of the participants’ experiences.

In recent days, phenomenology has been massively used as research methodology by many qualitative researchers. Connecting the beginning of phenomenology, Kafle (2013) has stated, “the phenomenological movement was initiated by Edmund Husserl as a radical new way of doing philosophy” (p. 1). Husserl (1859-1938) and phenomenology were taken as synonymous. However, in the course of time, this philosophical movement has been expanded through several changes. Since then, many new concepts have emerged from it. Husserl came up with transcendental phenomenology. Later, Martin Heidegger challenged several key aspects of Husserl’s phenomenology and initiated a shift towards hermeneutic phenomenology. Then only, phenomenology got its connection to lived experiences. Many other philosophers and theorists such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty contributed a lot to the development of phenomenology.

To study the teachers’ experience, the present study relies on phenomenological approach. As Creswell and Poth (2016) elucidated phenomenological research explores the common meaning for people that an idea or phenomena has based on their particular lived experiences. When studying a phenomenon, phenomenologists concentrate on describing what all of the participants have in common. Aligned with the research methodology, I reached to purposively selected individual participants, observed their lived experiences and activities related to the integrated curriculum, explored their perceptions and experiences, and derived meaning through interpretation. The teachers who were carrying out practical implementation of integrated curriculum as part of their day-to-day practices were studied and meanings were sought through ‘common things’ as they experienced the integrated curriculum. For the present study, the involved teachers’ social and psychological phenomena informed the meaning. Similarly, in reference to Langridge (2007), phenomenology is such a discipline that strives to put an emphasis on how

people perceive their lives and the world that they live in, as well as what it means to them. In the same line, this study endeavored to make sense of the practitioner teachers' perception of the new curriculum in relation to their experience through daily practices.

More precisely, the method of my research concentrated on interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA came in research from the field of psychological research. Eatough and Smith (2008) believed that IPA was first introduced in the UK in the 1990s, it was initially adopted as a method of experience-based psychology for use in clinical and counseling psychology. IPA, when originated in the field of psychology in the 90s, was mostly limited to the field of psychology. Later, it travelled across a wide range of disciplines. In words of Smith (2017) IPA "is not method for health psychology per se and it is now employed in wide range of areas both within and beyond psychology, for example in health, education, management and the humanities" (p. 303). With this, IPA has been common method of researchers across disciplines whether from psychology or education. Foundations of IPA are informed by three key theoretical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Here goes brief discussion about them:

Phenomenology comes as the first of three theoretical underpinnings of IPA. "Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 15). Phenomenological observation of teachers' experiences made ground for this research. As Heidegger has raised the idea of locating people in a particular context, this research observed participants' experiences within their classroom context during implementation of integrated curriculum. Similarly, as applied by several phenomenological researchers, the study approached for the examination of personal experiences of the participants.

Hermeneutics, the second key aspect of IPA, focuses on interpretation. The phenomenal experiences of the participants travel across different levels of interpretation. Hermeneutics was originally associated with the interpretation of biblical texts, but, later, it reached across wider range of texts including literary works as well as historical documents (Smith et al., 2009). In this research, text from semi-structured interviews became subject to interpretation. First of all, the participants interpreted the concept based on their experiential understand, later their responses get reinterpreted by the researcher. This is what Heidegger meant by double hermeneutics. Smith (2017) takes a reference of Heidegger and says, "IPA recognizes

the exploration of the meaning of personal experience as an interpretive endeavor on the part of both participant and researcher. Hence, IPA operates with a double hermeneutic” (p. 303). So, we can reach the point that producing a hermeneutic analysis through the account of participants’ experience is the emphatic skill of IPA. The hermeneutic theory reaches up to the hermeneutic circle. This concept informs the process of interpretation through inherent circularity of part and whole in every context.

IPA, in contrast to nomothetic research approaches, is idiographic in nature. Idiography is concerned with the study of particular case or individual. It tries to get into detailed examination of the particular case to find its uniqueness. “IPA’s idiographic commitment to the detailed analysis of personal experience case-by-case” (Smith, 2017. p. 303) has made it more emphatic to particular. So, with theoretical ground of idiography, individual participants and their experiences played a crucial role. As Schleiermacher (1998) has opined, “everyone carries a minimum of everyone else within themselves” (as cited by Smith et al., 2009, p. 39), the participants’ experiences were not generalized but were observed as they were experienced individually.

Rationale of Using IPA in This Research

With the above discussion and with reference to the methodological review, I found IPA a right match to my purpose of the study. IPA moves around its three philosophical underpinnings: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. With phenomenology, it ensures detail observation of lived experiences of the participants. Hermeneutics emphasizes on meaning making and idiography goes for in-depth study of individual case/s. As integrated curriculum was a new model in Nepalese practice, participants did not have long experiences of practice. So, it would be better to observe their experiences in relation to their understanding and perceptions. With the concept of double hermeneutics, IPA not only conferred about the researcher’s meaning making, rather led to the participants’ interpretation of their lived experiences. In this context, double hermeneutics contributed here to reach to participants’ perception on integrated curriculum. Moreover, IPA with its idiographic focus on exploration of experience and understanding, aided to collect observational details to support the evidences based on their experiences and meaning making. It promoted emphatic sharing of participants’ feelings and sense making out of their experiences with the phenomena around them.

This IPA study focused on how participants individually perceived and experienced implementation of integrated curriculum. Regarding motive of IPA, Eatough and Smith (2008) have stated, “IPA has explicit commitment to understand phenomena of interest from a first-person perspective and its belief in the value of subjective knowledge” (p. 193). Study targeted to reach to the participants’ personal world. The participants made their understanding based on the meanings of lived experiences as they got engaged in their social and personal lives. Additionally, the analytical process ‘step-by-step analysis’ under IPA became next attraction to me. So, to obtain detailed context based phenomenological experiences, active hermeneutic role of the researcher and individual idiographic focus, IPA assured to be the best match in this research.

Research Site and Participants

Integrated curriculum has been implemented all over Nepal in grade one since the academic year 2020/21. Before going to nation-wide implementation, the curriculum was piloted in 103 schools of 18 districts in Nepal. My research sites were five community schools in Bhaktapur district. The rationale behind selecting Bhaktapur as my research site is on the one hand it is one of the districts where integrated curriculum was piloted, on the other hand it is nearer to my residence and easily accessible to me. Smith and Osborn (2015) stated that, “There is no right answer to the question of sample size” (p. 28). They took reference of some practices from the recent past with five or six as a reasonable size and specified their slight difference, “for students doing IPA for the first time, three is extremely useful number for the sample” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 29). Hence, I purposively selected three participants in the beginning but changed the figure later to five for data sufficiency. Emphasis was given to level one teachers teaching in grade one. Out of them too, priority was given to those who taught the same course the previous year during the piloting stage of integrated curriculum and were teaching the same the current year too. The reason behind choosing them is they have longer experience of practicing integrated curriculum in their classrooms.

Data Collection

At the first stage of the data collection, purposively selected site/s and participants were visited. Such visits helped me to familiarize myself with the sites and participants. As Smith and Osborn (2015) claimed, “...probably the best way to collect data for IPA study and the way most Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) studies have been conducted is through the semi-structured interview (p. 29)”, to learn the real-life experiences of the participant teachers, semi-structured interviews were made the main source of evidence generation. Before the interviews, interview schedules were prepared and shared with the participants via email. The interviews were taken multiple times up to data saturation or till evidences became sufficient enough for meaning making. For additional support, regular observations and informal interactions (follow-up interviews) were carried out. Fieldnotes or journals were maintained to record such observations and interactions. By all, responses on the participants’ perceptions and experiences were collected in oral (interviews) as well as written (reports of observations) forms.

Next, the research sites and the participants were visited to build access and rapport. Since it was difficult to obtain information from the stranger, the participants were visited, interacted with, and familiarized. To promote natural data and minimize artificial data from participants, interview guidelines were followed. As much as practicable, natural and encouraging settings were maintained so that there would be less distraction. Required approval was taken from both the institutions they work in and personally with they themselves. Semi-structured interviews were set in the convenience of both the researcher and being researched. Emphasis was given to their convenience. All the interviews were conducted in Nepali for their ease, they were audio recorded, later they were transcribed and translated into English. For quality assurance back translation and triangulations were practiced. Fieldnotes were maintained for recording observation and informal interactions. Field notes were taken with importance because they could carry the real and lifelikeness with the data.

Data Analysis

The data retrieved from the transcribed semi-structured interviews, field notes, and informal conversations were studied in different steps. For the analysis of the data through theme generation and meaning making, reference from Smith and Osborn (2015) was taken at the centre. As recommended, for this study too, the analysis mostly relied on data obtained from semi-structured interviews from five participants of this study. In the process of analysis, meaning making went through the participants’ perceptions and experiences, “IPA researchers wish to analyze in detail how participants perceive and make sense of things which are happening to them” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 29). Under IPA, the course of analysis moves ahead with theme generation and meaning making through them. In case of this study, analysis

process proceeded with the “a step-by-step approach to analysis in IPA” as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2015) themselves.

As suggested by Smith and Osborn (2015) all the semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed and following stages step-by-step approach were carried ahead:

1. Reading and rereading: The transcriptions were read and reread closely multiple times. While reading, I tried to remember and visualize the interviews and field notes were taken into consideration parallelly.
2. Annotations: Comments were written on the left-hand margin. While writing comments attention was given to the words and phrases related to research questions.
3. Developing emerging theme titles: The right-hand margin was used to document emerging theme titles. The initial notes/comments were transformed into concise phrases to develop theme titles.
4. Searching for connections across themes: On the basis of emergent theme titles, phrases with a bit higher level of abstraction were used to form subordinate themes.
5. Moving to the next case: Same practice right from reading and rereading to searching connections across themes was applied to reach to other subordinate themes.
6. Looking for pattern across cases: The pattern of similarity with subordinate themes were used to categorize and connect them with superordinate themes. With next higher level of abstraction superordinate themes were formed.

Participants’ common experiences with phenomena was sought and synthesis of meanings and essence of experiences was made. The entire analysis process was enriched with reflexive writing to connect meaning units or themes to meaning making.

Quality Standards of My Study

Maintaining quality standards is also known as validation or credibility. According to Angen (2000), validation is “a judgement of the trustworthiness or goodness of a piece of research” (p. 387). Whereas, for qualitative research, Eisner (1991) suggested to replace the term validation with the term credibility. That means credibility can be taken as the qualitative equivalence of validation. Regarding credibility Eisner (1991) states “we seek a confluence of evidence that breeds

credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions” (p. 110). For maintaining quality standards, Creswell and Poth (2016), recommend some common perspectives recommended by Lincoln and Guba as still popular in qualitative report. Therefore, credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, and authenticity can be taken as perspectives quality standards of a qualitative research work.

More specifically, in the case of present interpretative phenomenological analysis, I have followed Lucy Yardley’s “four broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research” (p. 147) as recommended by Smith et al. (2009). The four principles include: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance. Taking consideration of all these matters, the present study has maintained its quality standard through the following principles.

Sensitivity to Context

For maintaining quality in my research, I tried my best to take care of the participants’ contexts. As an IPA researcher, though I need to have prolonged engagement with the participants, I tried not to disturb their personal as well as professional environment, rather tried to be encouraging to both teachers and students. Their school environment, rules, timing were duly respected. Their emotions and availability of resources were noted and obtained information from the interviews were dealt with care.

Commitment and Rigour

I remained mindful about sufficient idiographic engagement through commitments in terms of time, dedication, and attention. My multiple visits for rapport building, consideration to their convenience, and natural setting for the interviews assured my commitment. I persisted my commitment and rigour thoroughly right from participant selection, interview to analysis and debriefing. I always remained careful about how they can express themselves the best. Semi-structured interviews reflected the rigour in the research. Commitment and rigour continued in analysis, discussion, and conclusion too. The process of IPA analysis itself demanded much engagement and proper attention to each quote from the interviews and discussion in relation to literature.

Transparency and Coherence

I sustained transparency through detailed descriptions of each and every steps carried throughout the research process right from how participants were selected,

how they were approached with interview schedules, and how interviews were taken. I have my methodological stances and the entire course of procedure in detail. Moreover, all these details have been presented in proper order. Like ‘step-by-step approach to analysis’ everything has been presented in step-by-step order. Coherence has been tried to maintain in case of themes and their connection too. As interpretative phenomenological analysis focuses on real life experience, verisimilitude or the real flavour of life should be maintained and expressed in/through the final report too.

Impact and Importance

A researcher needed to be aspiring to contribute the readers with impactful findings. I observed a good impact on the facial expressions of participants during debriefing of my research findings with the participants. This indicated promises of this research work to be important and impactful. As mentioned in the recommendation, the present research will have great impact and importance to a large number of readerships such as policy makers, concerned authorities, practitioner teachers as well as future researchers.

Ethical Consideration

My research work has maintained ethical issues through some steps like informed consent, policy of beneficence or not to harm, respect for anonymity and respect for privacy. Consents were taken both from individual participants and the institutions they work. The consent was taken for audio recording of all the semi-structured interviews and for observation of the classroom activities and experiences. Their beneficence was taken with significance. During and even after the study no harm in connection to the study was assured. Anonymity and privacy was tried to maintain by masking participants’ real name, the name of the institution they work, and other information., For that, all the participants were given their number identity as participant 1, participant 2. Confidentiality was respected and maintained as far as practicable. Data was solely based on their responses. No changes, discrepancy, or alteration of data was applicable. For further assurance of the accuracy of data, triangulation and debriefing of findings was made.

CHAPTER IV

PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES

This chapter comprises analysis of the data retrieved through semi-structured interviews and classrooms observations of the participant teachers. After reading and rereading of the transcribed text of the interviews through annotations, emerging themes were developed. Concise phrases made way to subordinate and superordinate themes through higher level of abstraction. In total, six superordinate themes were abstracted from the cluster of some supporting subordinate themes for each. The six superordinate themes are: unavoidable opportunity, understanding of core spirit of integrated curriculum, realization of responsibility, new curriculum as a difference in experience, innovations in classroom, and happy with discipline. Though all the superordinate themes largely try to complement teachers' perceptions and experiences both, the first three superordinate themes emphasize more on teachers' perceptions and the remaining three chiefly pay attention to teachers' experiences of implementation. The superordinate and subordinate themes have been listed in the following table:

Table 1

List of the Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

SN	Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
1.	Unavoidable opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Agitation of adaptation- the initial impression b. The adventure begins c. Critical perusal on feasibility d. Acceptance on need of time
2.	Understanding of core spirit of integrated curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Superficial understanding of models of integration b. Challenging issue: finding thematic connection c. Tough most aspect of integrated curriculum: soft skills in education
3.	Realization of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Experience of piloting

- | | |
|--|---|
| responsibility | b. Self-venture |
| | c. Appeal for training and exposure |
| 4. New curriculum- as a difference in experience | a. Difference of being a research participant |
| | b. Teachers' increased interest to curriculum |
| | c. Difference in teacher-student role (mutual help) |
| | d. Difference in evaluation and assessment |
| 5. Innovations in classroom | a. Disinterested towards grade teaching |
| | b. Engaged students |
| | c. Attempts of new pedagogical trends in classroom |
| 6. Happy with discipline | a. Disciplinarians in practice |
| | b. Happy with change in English |
| | c. Increased dependency on the textbook |
| | d. Affirmative response on learning competencies and outcomes |
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Superordinate Theme 1: Unavoidable Opportunity

The first superordinate theme presents how the participants initially perceived the implementation of integrated curriculum. It represents emotions of the participants during the initial phase of implementation and how they moved ahead accepting it as their responsibility. All the participants agreed that the integrated curriculum came to them unexpectedly as a fall into one's lap with plenty of confusions for initial adaptation. In the beginning, they could not comprehend whether the new curriculum was an opportunity or a bare threat to their professional life. So, they were not clear on how to respond it. As they were not trained and prepared, implementation was not much comfortable to them. Due to their lack of preparedness, they suspected its feasibility too. Yet, as the government brought it into implementation, it became unavoidable to them. Only way they had was to move ahead and face the challenges. Therefore, it became a bit like adventure. In the course of time, they started to see light at the end of the tunnel and sensed some opportunities capsuled within. Under the title 'unavoidable opportunity', this superordinate theme conveys four subordinate themes developed from emerging themes: agitation of adaptation- the initial

impression, the adventure begins, critical perusal on feasibility, and acceptance on need of time.

Reflection Box 1

Stating their lack of trainings, exposure, and preparedness, most of the participants showed signs of hesitation to express their understanding of integrated curriculum. During search of participants, I sensed ample nervousness and hesitation on many other teachers too. The facts that many teachers refused to be research participants also indicated that they were not feeling comfortable to adapt with the new curriculum. There was one participant who dropped out in the mid referring the interview to a next colleague of hers saying, “ma’am knows much about integrated curriculum”. Such initial attempts of running away and the facial expressions with clear hint of fear reminded me of my new pet’s struggle of adaption in its new shelter.

Agitation of Adaptation- the Initial Impression

This subordinate theme demonstrates the participant’s initial impression with integrated curriculum. It deals with their perception of nervousness and tension during their initial adaptation of the new curriculum. Most of the participants reported that at first, they were ‘threatened’ with the arrival of integrated curriculum. Participant 5 admitted her initial commotion, “Fear was obvious as there were many challenges.” In spite of her 12 years long involvement in teaching, the changes in curriculum gave her some alarming impressions. Similarly, participant 2 displayed a noticeable tint of fear and nervousness on her face when she was asked about the initial involvement. More intensified tone of ‘fear’ echoed in participant 4 when she cleared her feelings, “I was quite afraid and nervous until I learnt something about the concept from one training.” She had attended a one-day training. The training made her a bit clearer about the concept and she felt better. Participants 1 and 3 remembered their friends who felt better as they read some articles and discussed with each other regarding integrated curriculum. When participant 1 stated her feelings, “I was quite worried in the beginning days thinking how I would face my class on the first day. The feeling was similar to that I experienced when I had newly started teaching career.” The feeling that she felt like a newly recruited teacher evidenced agitation caused by challenges of adaptation.

The emotions with participant 3 was rather critical, “I was much confused as I had heard the change but not updated with it. I felt myself quite weak in my

profession.” The changes had given her sense of being weak in her professional life and it looked like a threat to professional existence itself. Participant 5 represented some of the teachers with curiosity at the changes. She stated, “In the beginning, the change in curriculum made me a bit nervous and eager to get many new things, still, I continued my class almost in the same pattern (as if nothing has been changed) for quite long.” It showed that she was inquisitive as well as anxious. Though, most of the participants agreed that there was obvious initial nervousness, confusion, and fear in all of them, they were all positive and hopeful about the integrated curriculum. In a gist, their initial impression remained as an agitation of adaptation which could get transformed into some energy in length of time.

The Adventure Begins

In spite of the challenges, the new curriculum made many teachers quite excited and curious to implement it. As many of the teachers were not prepared with training and workshops, participant 5 found the implementation of the new curriculum to be difficult, “Without training it is too difficult. So, they do not seem to be ready. For them it’s like experiment and exploration.” Her observation of daily efforts of her colleagues indicated the journey of curriculum implementation to be more like adventure. The participant 1 had rather comparative observation, “Only few teachers got training of new curriculum. Those who got chance to take part in the training feel comfortable but training was not sufficient to them too.” She viewed that the teachers who got privilege of training had felt easier in their daily activities but bitter reality, most of the teachers were deprived of even basic level of training. Participant 3 meant the same when she argued, “Implementation seems challenging without any training because if there was any training, we would get ideas regarding content as well as method of teaching.” For many untrained teachers the implementation of new curriculum became like traveling an untrodden road that they must travel. It was like an adventure to them.

With trust on their adventurous efforts, many of the participants were optimistic about meaningful impact of the changed curriculum. They expected that their journey would be adventurous and better than with the immediate previous curriculum. So, they were rather eager to work more with it. Participant 5 compared the efforts of teachers in the western countries and sensed situation of Nepalese teachers to be far comfortable. She shared her realization, “they (the teachers from western countries) design curriculum as per the requirement of the students. But here,

we follow the prescribed curriculum and the prescribed themes.” So, in Nepalese context limited efforts of training and exposure also could be more impactful. As they were induced for preparing themselves with self-efforts, most of the teachers were interested in trying something new. All the participants agreed to work harder and prepare themselves with the help of internet and their personal contact. They appeared, though not much confident, to be hopeful for the success of the new curriculum.

Critical Perusal on Feasibility

The pandemic COVID-19 obviously obstructed the smooth expedition of planning and implementation of new curriculum and increased some suspicion in its feasibility. In the present context, to check feasibility of new program was a noteworthy observation. In this regard, participants 2 and 4 sounded optimistic despite minor uncertainty. Participant 2 displayed her innocence and trust upon the authorities, “all these changes should have been done for some obvious positive outcomes.” Similarly, participant 4 stated her remarks of hope, “most of the teachers are quite excited to carry out the new curriculum.” Yet, she had observed some issues like lack of teacher training and novelty of the curriculum to be challenging. With the same tone, participant 5 reiterated on need of teacher training. She accepted its feasibility yet realized the fact that teacher training was inevitable, “Yes, new curriculum is desirable, it shall be feasible too but the implementation has some issues as most of the teachers are not provided with needful trainings.” Here, worries of all the participants concentrated on teacher training which seemed to be reasonable too.

Doubt of effectiveness continued with others participants. Participant 3 summed her doubt by saying, “implementation is challenging without proper teacher training.” She was doubtful about proper implementation of the curriculum due to lack of teacher training and exposure. In nutshell, all the participants have observed the feasibility critically and expressed their doubt on effective implementation without any corrective measures.

Acceptance on Need of Time

At its arrival at the turn of the century, integrated curriculum had been widely acclaimed as a need of time. Drake and Burns (2004) sound alike here, “integrated curriculum addresses some of the central questions in education today” (p. 19). In context of Nepal too, curriculum of basic level (1-3) also has been agreed to be timely, “Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has recently developed the

Curriculum Development Centre (2019) to address the changed socio-economic condition of the country and the current needs of the learner” (p. 17). The same framework envisioned the integrated curriculum for grade 1 to 3. In this regard, the arrival of integrated curriculum in Nepal is taken as timely as sand through the hourglass. So, the participants were asked, ‘do you think it is need of time in context of Nepal too?’. In response to the question all the participants nodded their head in agreement. Participant 5 shared her hope:

As it has been well-practiced and found effective in the foreign countries, I think it is better for Nepal too. If there is something good in foreign countries, we need to copy them too. We cannot always go in the same traditional way.

She had read about positive impact of integrated curriculum in foreign countries which made her to believe that it would be worthy to apply it in Nepal too. So, she sounded interested and optimistic with this change in curriculum. Rather stronger belief of need of today’s education echoed in response of participant 3,

Yes, the change in curriculum is as per need. We need to get updated with pace of time. Some life skills such as communication skills (greeting), socialization, collaboration, and team building skills have been talked about and these all are need of education today.

Here, she accepted curriculum to be as per time because it focused on applied areas of life that today’s education should target. Amid this acceptance, participant 1 had a worry, “in case of Nepal too it would be right time if COVID-19 would not be here. Due to pandemic and lockdown, curriculum implementation has been certainly disturbed.” The pandemic COVID-19 and consequences like lockdown bothered in the effective planning and implementation of curriculum. It can be sensed that if there was not COVID 19, situation would be far different and appropriateness of curriculum would be better tangible.

Superordinate Theme 2: Understanding of Core Spirit of Curriculum Integration

Superordinate theme two covers discussion on how participants perceived and experienced the fundamental areas of integrated curriculum such as modality of integration, thematic connection across other disciplines and how soft skills have been attempted to bring to students’ life through education. All the participants accepted superiority of the changed curriculum to the immediate previous curriculum. Despite this acceptance, most of them were not familiar with core concepts of integrated

curriculum. The first subordinate theme here extracts the participants' understanding and perceptions about models of curriculum. Most of them had limited and superficial understanding about curriculum modality, thematic connections, and soft skills. Their limited understanding obviously raised the critical issue of effectiveness of implementation.

Reflection Box 2

I had some misconceptions when I heard the term 'integrated curriculum' first time. I thought integrated curriculum must integrate all the subject areas in one. That indicated that I was not well-informed about different possible models of integrated curriculum. Next, I had not known that we may carry more than one models parallelly for the same class. I was amazed, when I knew that Nepal was practicing theme based disciplinary and interdisciplinary models.

Core spirit of integrated curriculum was not an easy concept to many of practitioner teachers. The teachers' limited understanding about core areas of integrated curriculum wedged my study time and again. As the participant teachers' understanding was too limited, I could not receive sufficient responses on their perceptions, let alone their experience in daily practices. I was upset for quite long regarding my data. I thought if the participants do not have understanding of these core areas of integrated curriculum, how could my study be effective. I attempted to visit some (three) more schools and interacted with some teachers hoping that the picture could be different but the situation was similar or rather poorer. Then I realized that the best option with me was to continue the study with the same participants and the available data thinking that if the real picture is same how can I find different participants with far better understanding. Next, if the situation of teachers in core town area of Nepal (as my participants were from core areas and reputed schools of Bhaktapur district) was such, where could I find better participants as I dreamt. So, I continued.

Superficial Understanding of Models of Integration

The term 'integrated curriculum' and its lexical meaning was clear to all the participants. Response from participant 1 highlighted on their basic understanding, "The name *ekikrit* (Nepali word for integrated) itself tells something about its meaning, all the subjects and their study contents are connected or joined with each other." The lexical meaning in the name itself would show basic essence of interconnectedness, but this understanding would be too superficial and insufficient

for curriculum implementation. Participant 5 viewed that she heard about the term from a friend of another school where Integrated curriculum was piloted. But it took time for her to understand it in detail, “When we went for EGRP training, Mamita ma’am talked about Integrated Curriculum and made me understand the basic ideas.” Similar is the opinion of participant 3, “The basic concept was understood immediately in the preliminary discussions about curriculum. But details took time.” Though they were known to basic concept, without deep knowledge implementation would be difficult.

Most of the participants did not have clear understanding of other terminologies related to core spirit of integrated curriculum. It seemed they were almost unaware about ways of curriculum integration. Most of the participants felt nervous at the question related to models of integration. Participant 2 remained silent with a blushed facial expression that she was not clear on it. Similarly, participants 1 and 4 displayed noteworthy changes on their faces to add them to their silence at their inability to reply. Participants 3 and 5 attempted to reply something out of their understanding.

Participant 3: I think it is mixing all the subjects like we have Hamro Serofero that covers content from science, social, health like subjects.

Participant 5: I have heard two terms: interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. I think it is mixing different subjects together. But in ours all the subjects have not been mixed. Still, I am not that clear.

Their responses showed their knowledge about how intermix of different subjects made it integrated. Amid the frustrating superficial understanding of other participant teachers, these two responses were signs of hope that teachers were getting into integrated curriculum. In this situation, expecting more with this limited understanding would be impractical.

Challenging Issue: Finding Thematic Connection

The changed curriculum, though was claimed to be better, many participants could not reply clearly about thematic connections across the subjects. Participant 3 viewed, “I found the new curriculum to be quite good. Concern has been shown to child psychology, level of students. Materials like textbook/workbook have been designed to be child-friendly.” Though she admired the new curriculum with its other features, she agreeably added her opinion that she was not much clear about thematic connection, “Frankly speaking I have not paid much attention to content relation with

other subjects.” Participant 2 showed her hesitation to reply the question regarding thematic connection and remained silent. Her silence with clear nervousness on her face indicated lack of proper understanding. She was completely unknown about the basic fact of thematic connection across subjects, let alone her understanding regarding core value of thematic connection and its effectiveness.

The situation of participant 4 was not far different though. She accepted her ignorance easily and made a promise to have an attention on that, “I do not know about that. I will check that today in the school.” When I visited her school the next time, she displayed a tint of shyness on her face. She had noteworthy realization and change with on that issue. She further added her understanding about content relation now, “I knew thematic connection make learning interesting and better connected to life.” She had understood something because she accepted to be a research participant. I felt so happy for her changed understanding. Participant 1 was found a bit ahead of them as she stated, “I was amazed to see same chapters in Nepali and Mathematics too. Later, through an interaction with colleagues, I knew the fact that this content relation is meant for integration. However, I have not gone through other subjects much.” Though she has not tried to relate and implemented the thematic connection in her teaching, the response was comparatively hopeful one.

Similarly, participant 5 was found with satisfactory understanding about thematic connection. She sounded quite excited, “Thematic connection is what I loved most in this curriculum. That is what makes this curriculum interesting. We need to teach taking theme-based areas.” To clarify it, she stated one example, “In all subject areas we have: Me and My Family.” She seemed a typical grade teacher, “I have not paid much attention to higher classes as I am a grade teacher in grade one.” On the other side, she displayed her fear at effective implementation, “but..... at first finding a connection is quite challenging. The teacher herself should find the idea of connecting them. When connected, it is easy.” She had learned these things from trainings she had attended. So, whenever, she found herself in problem of finding easy connection, she wished for training and interaction again, “Sometimes, I wish I had at least one another training regarding this. In such condition I try to manage with discussion with my colleagues.” She meant how good if the teachers would be provided with training. This difference and confidence as shown by participant 5 indicated that teachers could be made ready for thematic connection through training.

But with the teachers who were unaware about core thematic relation, getting expected implementation would be challenging.

Tough Most: Soft Skills in Education

In addition to thematic connection, the curriculum has tried to tie up different subject areas with certain soft skills. With various sub-categories under each of them, total 29 skills with five major areas: thinking skills, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, information communication and multiliteracy skills, and citizenship skills have been included in the curriculum (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019, p. 32-35). To most of the participants, soft skills were found to be toughest of all to understand in the new curriculum. Participant 2 believed it to be tough. She frankly revealed, “though I have heard the term soft skills, I don’t know about it.” Participant 3 echoed here, “Curriculum has talked about some soft skills for life. But I found them difficult to trace through the given subject matter.” Participant 1 also admitted her inability to understand and apply soft skills, “Soft skills are rather difficult. Some skills like communication skills, leadership skills, collaboration skills may be easily connected, in case of others I am not clear.” She had heard at least some of common skills. Her response seemed optimistic.

Dim optimism sustained in response of participant 5 in spite of her realization that soft skills had difficulty to connect with the content,

the case of connecting skills with subject matters has been comparatively difficult to me personally. ...some of the soft skills are a bit difficult to understand and carry out. I have been learning through the teachers’ guides and have learnt something.Some like communication skills, leadership as they study and work in groups, and thinking skills are commonly used.

Participant 4 also found soft skills difficult to deal with. However, she viewed, “our students live in the society but do not know much about socialization, they lack good communication skills, now the changed curriculum has tried to address these issues right from greetings, social interaction to collaboration and teamwork.” She liked the aspect that new curriculum had brought soft skills. Though this understanding could not be sufficient for bolstering soft skills in students. the participants, in all, took soft skills as tough most area of integrated curriculum. As most of the teachers seemed to be still in confusion and difficulties, at least some orientations regarding carrying out of soft skills were/are expected.

Superordinate Theme 3: Realization of Responsibility

The third superordinate theme enlists how the participant teachers accepted curriculum as their professional responsibility and how they got ready in its implementation. All the participants realized that they had only one option but to construct their own foundation and make oneself ready for the implementation. Subordinate themes like experience of piloting, self-venture to deal with fear and difficulties, and appeal for training and exposure complete this superordinate theme. As mentioned in superordinate theme one, the first dive into the integrated curriculum and later into the classroom with new curriculum was challenging and threatening to most of the teachers. Piloting could not be experienced well due to pandemic and closure of schools followed by. All the participants expressed their initial fear in different word. Yet, they took assistance of different sources available, tried to ease the discomfort, and carried ahead their responsibilities.

Experience of Piloting

Integrated curriculum was piloted in the academic year 2019 (2076 B.S.) in 103 schools all over the country before bringing it into implementation in 2020 (2077) B.S. But ironically, participants 2 and 3 were unaware about piloting itself. Participant 2 knew about “the book change” when curriculum was brought to phase of implementation. Participant 3 echoed similar. She also heard the ‘textbook changed’ earlier than ‘curriculum changed’. On the other side, participants 4 and 5 had heard about and got their attention drawn through piloting. Participant 4 thought, “Piloting drew our attention to integrated curriculum.” When she heard about piloting, they discussed about it in their colleague circle. Participant 5 heard about the piloting from her principal and started getting prepared since then, “When I knew about piloting, we discussed among our colleagues. It helped us to understand the basic things.” Further, she took help of internet, read some articles, and started preparing herself.

However, participant 1, whose school was in piloting, had different story regarding piloting, “As our school also was the part of piloting, we interacted and learnt something.” Yet, she had her own grumblings, “Though piloted in our school, COVID-19 pandemic and followed by lockdown paralyzed regular teaching learning, and we could not feel the difference of change then.” She opined that they had to complete the academic year with only limited teaching learning activities and some alternative assessment. Her experience matched with the all over Nepal. In such context, piloting seemed to have gone only with its name.

Self-venture

New curriculum, as participant 1 opined, “gave ample pressure to the teachers to prepare themselves.” The pressure was obvious there as the new curriculum was prescribed and even if they were not provided with any trainings and exposures, they could not avoid the class. The readiness the participants had was all from self-efforts. Participant 1 prepared herself with the help of internet and her personal contact. She cleared her views, “What I know is from my self-study and search in internet. Sometimes I take help from my colleagues and my husband as he is a school principal, and for others I relied on internet.” The statement shows that she learnt most of the things from my personal effort. She was luckier because she had access to internet and she had support from her family too. Here, the situation of those teachers who did not have access to internet and no help in the family, may be imagined to be frightening. Similar struggle was found with participant 4 who prepared herself taking help from teachers in her personal contact, “I have not got chance to go to any training, but, I have managed a couple of detailed talks with the teachers from neighboring schools.” Here, her interactions with other teachers functioned as training to her. That helped her minimize her worry of preparing herself. Participant 5 appeared clear about need of self-effort:

Mostly, we need to focus on self-effort. I surf internet, go through videos in YouTube..... Most of the teachers are not much ready for implementation in the real spirit and aim of the curriculum, whoever is efficient there they have made themselves so by their self-efforts.

She realized on need of self-effort because it was the only way to make teachers efficient ones and she observed the same in case of other teachers too. Similarly, participants 2 realized need of changing herself and her habits to fit with the changed curriculum and need of classrooms. This change in curriculum made her, “interact a lot about teaching issues. Earlier we would talk more about personal issues (shopping, family affairs...)” The changed curriculum made their personal chitchats into more professional discussions. It not only added self-efforts but also made them more professional.

Most of the participants remembered the initial days with integrated curriculum when they themselves and their colleagues used to have discussions with each other and they were surfing internet to deal with their difficulties. Their efforts from personal level helped all the participants deal with feelings of strangeness and

different difficulties in their day-to-day practices. When participant 4 expressed her realization, “I was quite afraid and nervous until I learnt something about the concept from one friend who had attended a training.”, it meant that training was inevitable to make them deal with new curriculum. Though she herself had taken a training, it was not related to integrated curriculum though. Her exposure through the training helped her to get updated about the changes. However, as they had only option to move ahead, they had to search and find ways out to the problems on their own. Participant 1 reflected same tone here, “most of them(teachers) seem interested in some extra efforts” to deal with new challenges. It indicated that, as the teachers realized their responsibility, they had to prepare themselves through some additional arrangements on their own.

Appeal for Trainings and Exposures

While all the participants were narrating their stories of self-efforts, they echoed their interest and realization on need of training for effective implementation. They agreed that without proper training and exposure, the effective implementation of the curriculum was not possible. Participant 1 shared her perception on need of training, “Training is basic requirement. The training does not mean the teachers should be sent out of school, there could be in-school trainings too.” Here, her opinion meant if training outside the school would be unaffordable, in-school training also may work; but training would be too important. Similarly, participant 5, with realization of lack of teacher’s training, raised a question on feasibility of new curriculum “feasibility has some issues as most of the teachers are not provided with needful trainings.” This critical glance to feasibility without training seems noteworthy here. Ironically, none of them had privilege of even the basic training for implementation of new curriculum.

No participant had been provided with any related training at all except some limited to participants 2 and 5. Earlier received one-day training EGRP while later attended 2-day long training session. The sessions were not related to integrated curriculum at all. However, it was during the same session, they heard about the term integrated curriculum and learnt about its basic concept first. Participant 5, was privileged to attend a two-day long training, “The 2 -day long training given by the municipality helped me understand the surface meaning. I learnt that in the training, in all subject areas we have: Me and My Family.” In addition, she was also benefitted with regular TPD sessions in school, “some sharing and discussion sessions under

teacher's professional development (TPD) in our school itself in initiation of our school principal himself. For the integrated curriculum itself, I have taken no other training from any other authority." She had exposure to training with both in-school and beyond the school sessions. She had better confidence than any other participants. But she confidently added her realization, "that training was not sufficient at all. If such trainings would be available time to time, it would be easy to teachers." It indicated that her exposure too was too limited. Yet, her better confidence could be connected to better exposures through such trainings.

The limited training that participants 2 and 5 received was not sufficient for effective implementation of integrated curriculum. But, stories of other teachers are rather alarming. Participant 4 tried to learn something about integrated curriculum by discussing with her friends from other schools, "I have not got chance to go to any training, however, I have managed a couple of detailed talks with the teachers from neighboring schools." Same tone echoed in response of Participant 1, "I have not been to any training for integrated curriculum. I try to prepare myself with the help of internet and self-help." In my observation too, being deprived of expected training, some of them turned emotional with their situation and some others sounded angry with the concerned authorities. So, in terms of training and exposure, the participants were found to be highly in need but their responses have tone of appeal for training and exposure.

Superordinate Theme 4: New Curriculum- as a Difference in Experience

Superordinate theme four includes participants' experiences related to integrated curriculum as a feel of difference during research and implementation. Here, subordinate themes include: difference of being a research participant, teachers' increased interest to curriculum, difference in teacher-student role (mutual help), and difference in assessment and evaluation. All the participants were ready to accept superiority of the changed curriculum in comparison to the immediate previous one. Superordinate theme four begins with discussion on how beneficial it would be to be a research participant and further it inculcates role of teachers as well as students in the changed context of curriculum. Most of the participants hopefully experienced more facilitating teachers and engaging students. Hope withered as they shared about their practices of assessment and evaluation.

Difference of Being a Research Participant

Reflection Box 3

In my observation, in case of most of the participants, accepting to be a research participant itself became like registering for a training session because those who agreed to be research participants and signed the consent form did some study to prepare themselves for the interviews. The participant teachers received an email with interview protocol right after they signed on the consent form. The email triggered thoughts and study related to integrated curriculum. Mostly, I found the teachers with two types of mindsets: status quo and innovative mindset. Those with status quo mindset never preferred changes. None of the teachers with such mindset did bother to be research participant. They were not ready to spare a short time. Nor they were interested in learning anything new. Therefore, they tried to run away from being a research participant. On the other side, the teachers with innovative mindset opted for changes and newness. They were interested to learn more. The research project at least shook up the former type and boosted up the lateral.

The participants shared their insightful experiences of being a research participant. Participant 3 made me happy on the first meeting itself by saying, “I think being research participant is our responsibility too.” Such realization was quite difficult to find everywhere. When I asked her why many teachers did not like to be research participants, she replied, “Being a research participant itself was an extra burden to them. They had to spare their extra time, bother to interact with an outsider time and again, and prepare at least something for the interview.” Obviously, they had to spare time. Before entering the interview, participant 1 shared her feelings, “I talked with friends; read the questions thoroughly; took out the curriculum and revisited it once again before coming to the interview.” Some of them studied different resources and prepared themselves for the interview. Most of the teachers’ attention was drawn to further study simply because they agreed to be research participants. In second visit, every participant was found to be far different in comparison to their previous understanding. It showed researches themselves also could be awakening agents to the participants. The preparation of participants 2 and 4 was noteworthy. They had prepared for their interview itself by reading a lot and writing many pages in their diaries. This reading obviously helped their knowledge and understanding too.

Teachers' Increased Interest to Curriculum

Most of the participants had considered that curriculum was not every common teacher's cup of tea (this misconception still persists in case of many common teachers). With the recent change in curriculum, some of them got their mindset changed. Participant 5 expressed her realization "I had a concept that curriculum is for book writers and trainers, but with this recent change in curriculum I have come to realize that curriculum belongs to a teacher." Same idea resembled in the response of participant 1, "previously, when I was in(name deleted) school, I did not pay attention to curriculum at all. Curriculum was heard of quite a lot, but less studied and not connected to professional life." Though, it was and is the case of many teachers all over Nepal, her opinion indicates that with the changed curriculum, she has paid better attention to it. It seems like the new curriculum has increased teacher's interest to curriculum.

The recently changed curriculum drew attention of the teachers. They started to share their understanding about the changes. To connect participant 2 here, "Curriculum change made us talk about the curriculum, partially because we were somehow scared with the new terms integrated curriculum." The new term 'integrated' in the curriculum drew their attention. Same notion echoed in response of Participant 2, "New curriculum made us interact a lot about teaching issues. Earlier we would talk more about personal issues (shopping, family affairs...), nowadays we have made quite much of professional talks." These indicated how curriculum change helped teachers to update themselves. All these changes too could be taken as success of the new curriculum.

Difference in Teacher-student Role (Mutual Help)

New curriculum made the teachers think about possible difference in their role. It stimulated them to search and collect resources, think about better roles, and add mutual help in their relation. Participant 3 stated, "With the new curriculum it became more significant to us to search, get updated and change our teaching style too." In case of many teachers, change in curriculum sowed realization of need of change the way they had been teaching. The change intrigued a positive change in the traditional role of teacher and student, i. e., most of the classes to be teacher centered. Participant 1 focused on activating her students though it would be a bit challenging because of bigger classroom size besides limitation in resources. She stated her practices of engaging students in activities,

As much as practicable. It depends upon the topic. If the topic is weather, observation may be the most suitable activity. They may be sent out of class to see the sky and report their understanding to the class. Similarly, while teaching adjectives for example, they may talk about features of locally available things.

She made her students take part in activities. Here, the teachers' role was found to be of an observant and felicitor. Similar was the experience with participant 3. When her students felt sleepy with her lectures, she tried to activate her students through their participation in classroom activities, "Sometimes, they lazy around. Do not get to the lesson. To activate them I make circle in the class and make them involve in action through action words like: play, swim, jump..." These indicated teachers' efforts for bringing expected changes in the teachers' role.

Moreover, all the participants trusted on teamwork, peer support, and mutual help for better learning. As theory of social constructivism believes in learning through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978), all the participants relied on interactions in their smaller groups. Both teachers and students would be benefitted by interaction. Not only that Participant 5 believed, "Interactive students generally perform better. Students try to learn from their friends, if they had further confusion then only, they come to us." She practised social interaction as a tool for problem-solving. Participant 4 found that the textbook itself demanded student participation and they achieved better with help from friends, "Students learn in their groups better. Sometimes, I divide them in small groups and leave them with some group works. I find their performance far better in the groups". Similar is the experience of participant 3. She shared her observation, "They enjoy interacting and working with friends. Sometimes we try to use active students to help his/her friends. I find both students benefited when they work in pair." With similar understanding, participant 1 agreed that activities embedded in textbook had brought difference, "The textbook based on new curriculum has included many activities to make the students work in pair and group. I find them excited with activities. Moreover, such activities help them develop skills like collaboration, teamwork, leadership in them." These indicated that the new curriculum and the textbook themselves demanded activities and brought significant changes in peer roles in the classroom.

In case of teachers too, the experience of participant 5 was similar, "We do regular interaction in the content, student behavior, as well as pedagogical issues. We

two grade teachers are always together, we interact, plan, make strategy, and support each other.” Their interaction and togetherness indicated mutual help. Moreover, she found her school principal too encouraging and supportive for creating such learning environment in school. So, they would not hesitate to consult others, “In case of any confusion, we go to other teachers related to any subject, like for Mathematics Mina ma’am is there, for English, principal sir is there.” She viewed that all these differences were not the result of curriculum change alone, “we had these interactive habits earlier too, but recent curriculum change demanded and boosted it more.”

Participant 1 had a clear understanding about how interaction help teacher’s knowledge, “In daily practices, every teacher encounters different problems. They could be better solved if discussed with each other. Some come to ask with me and I go to others too.” She shared her related experience regarding IT related issues to deal with online classes during COVID-19. Participant 3 also shared her similar practice, “If one teacher goes for any out-of-school training, she comes back and shares her learning.” All these mutual helps proved their understanding on sharing is caring.

Difference in Assessment and Evaluation

Basic level Curriculum has given emphasis on assessment for learning instead of assessment of learning. It highlights on the need of classroom-based evaluation process, strategy, and tools with the view that evaluation should encourage them for learning and should show them paths to improving their learning (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019, p. 89). So, curriculum shows its preference for continuous assessment system (CAS). CAS was the same evaluation system that was promoted by both 9th and 10th five-year plans. However, “when CAS was in practice, it was not well welcomed everywhere, implementation slugged somewhere, and failed to reach to expected goals.” participant 5 viewed reflecting the real picture of CAS in Nepal.

Curriculum has suggested some process, strategies and tools of evaluation such as maintaining portfolio of students, student learning achievement assessment record, and regular evaluation of their attendance, activities, and participation (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019, p. 90-99). For student learning achievement assessment record (for English), it has been suggested to award 1 to 4 marks in each learning outcome on the basis of interpretation (Curriculum Development Centre, 2019, p. 123). Evaluation has been recommended to carry ahead together with various classroom activities as an inseparable part of learning.

Participant 5 compared the recent trend of evaluation with the past one and stated, “earlier it was more exam centered, much load of content, and not much student friendly too. Though we have been giving the exams, but it is student centric. Student learn by doing and playing.” She had good understanding about changes in evaluation system as she opined, “New curriculum talks about credit hour in place of weightage. CAS in place of regular exam.” But this level of understanding was difficult to expect from other participants. Like participant 5, participant 2 also was carrying CAS together with other summative examinations. But she could not say anything about evaluation and assessment in integrated curriculum. Participant 5 further argued,

Both (formative and summative) types of assessments better if carried side by side...most of our evaluation systems are based on the textbooks. So, we need to rely much on the textbooks. But better part is the textbook itself has included different project works that make easy to the teachers and the students get more engaged.

She was mindful that much dependency on textbook would not be good. But with the changed book with different activities, she found dependency on textbook to be reasonable.

However, other participant teachers were quite unaware about assessment process in integrated curriculum, nor they had any changes in practice. All of them were still mostly inclined to the traditional summative examination practices. They had pen and paper-based time bound unit tests, term exams, mid-term exams, and final exam, instead of continuous assessment system. Participant 1 shared the same here, “We are practicing 3 terms, other 2 mid-terms, and 1 final examination.” Same was the tone of participants 3 and 4. None of these three had continuous assessment system (CAS) in their evaluation practice. Participant 1 had unique experience with continuous assessment system. She narrated her experience, “Last year we depended upon CAS to evaluate students when they came school after long term school closer due to pandemic and we had to conclude the session shortly.” This indicated that they had taken CAS at least as an alternative evaluation technique. Participant 3 showed her inclination towards summative exams, “Exams make them active. They become more attentive towards their studies as there is any upcoming exam.” These all indicated that the assessment and evaluation had a huge gap in understanding as well

as practice. Much efforts were still expected for the effective implementation of assessment and evaluation system to address the real spirit of new curriculum.

Superordinate Theme 5: Innovations in Classroom

The fifth superordinate theme apprehends how the curriculum was felt daily in the classroom. Subordinate themes: disinterested towards grade teaching, engaged students, attempts of new pedagogical trends in classroom have been covered under this superordinate theme. Responses of the participants displayed that the teachers still preferred traditional mode of teaching rather than grade teaching. Such hovering cloud of traditional rigidity and practices have been weakened though with attempts of new pedagogical trends. Students, wherever engaged, were found to be benefitted, lively, and amused with the new trends and innovations practiced in their classrooms.

Reflection Box 4

I had my initial understanding that integrated curriculum with its motive and spirit to create fusion among different disciplinary areas, should have preferred grade teaching. But in many schools, disciplinary teaching was found to be in practice. As the principal of participant 1's school expressed his realization of inability that they could not go for grade teaching 'due to lack of trained teachers and right human resource' for daily practice. Out of 5 participants, four of them were found to be practicing traditional disciplinary or subject based mode of teaching. Only participant 5 represented the grade teaching mode. Though, ratio may not be exact, this 5:1 may represent the national scenario on mode of teaching too. In common too, grade teaching was hardly heard of except in some of the countable community schools. Case could be guessed little bit different in terms of institutional schools. When I visited classrooms, I found quite changed role of both teachers and students. The students were having gossips to each other and actively participating in the classroom. Teacher was not tiring herself as I had expected her to be. The main reason could be the workbook like textbook which is full of exercises, activities, and project works.

Disinterestedness Towards Grade Teaching

Integrated curriculum was still practiced with same traditional mode of teaching. Both observations and responses from the participants did not show practice of grade teaching in most of the schools I visited. Participant 4 showed her dissatisfaction with grade teaching mode of teaching, "In those schools where they have practiced grade teaching, though they have one teacher to teach all the subjects,

the teacher does not try to merge issues across different subjects. Rather, they teach different subjects separately by same teacher.” She was not positive about grade teaching knowing that the teachers were not prepared to fit into the need of grade teaching mode. Most of the participants were reluctant to grade teaching. The cause of their reluctance may be they were not equipped with skills for grade teaching.

Participant 1 had a question in response to my question, “We teach the subject which we studied in our university. Without training how can we teach other subjects too?” Further, it seemed that the schools did not bother much to bring any changes.

Participant 3 not only clarified her preference, “we continued the classes in new academic session with the same teachers and same subjects we had in practice last year.” It also showed her acceptance that her school itself did not like to carry out grade teaching.

Voice of participant 5, only grade teacher participant of the study, is remarkably in favor of need of grade teaching. For her:

Grade teaching is better because as it (integrated curriculum) is integrated, same teacher can find the interrelation across different subjects. It becomes easier to teachers to make students clear about subject matters by finding thematic link among them. Next, in grade teaching, a teacher can learn about their students in better way, that makes student-teacher relation more effective.

Obviously, her preference was mainly because she was a grade teacher. But, when her class was observed, in practice, she was still teaching English, science, and moral science and her co-teacher was teaching Nepali and Hamro Serophero.

Engaged Students

All the participants responded that their students’ classroom engagement and participation was tremendously improved in recent days. Their views were replicated during observation of their classrooms too. Participant 2 viewed that her students became frank and open when they started participation, “I normally start my class with general chitchat to make them feel easy and get involved. They hesitate at first but slowly they start to take part in the classroom activities.” This largely resembled in the class observations too. When I entered their classroom, most of the students of participant 4 were ready with their class works. In a while,

...the teacher used a chart paper that was hung on the wall and started to ask about pictures, their name and spelling. The students, without any hesitation,

were ready to answer their teachers' question. It seemed they didn't worry whether their answer was correct or a wrong one. (Observation 4)

This displays the teachers' initiation for student engagement that might have increased intimacy between the teacher and students. Participant 3 believed that new curriculum made them easier to be student centric, "People were talking about student centered classrooms, still we were traditional and teacher centered in our classroom. With the new curriculum it became more significant to us to search, get updated and change our teaching style too." She further added, "The new textbook that has plenty of exercises, group works, and project works has helped to engage students." it indicated that the new curriculum and the textbook had helped them to be more student centric.

Similarly, participant 1, 3, and 5 viewed that their students were happier with activities.

participant 1: I try to involve them in activities. They remain happy with their participation.

Participant 3: Integrated curriculum and the new textbook have intended and helped to increase student participation. Classes mostly remain participatory. Students get involved in activities thoroughly.

Participant 5: the textbooks are well designed. They are workbooks, students can read and write there on the same book. That is the main strength for making the classes more participatory.

It showed major impact of the textbook that had included different project works that make easy to the teachers and the students get more engaged. These all were taking the classes ahead with more student centered and more engaged.

Attempts of New Pedagogical Trends in Classroom

The participants were in search of new trends to address the challenges they had dreaded of that they may encounter in the process of implementation of new curriculum. Some of them were found practicing some new trends in their practices. In the preface to the teacher's guide (2020) the publisher, curriculum development center has stated, "Learning becomes effective if students are engaged in language learning tasks through various means and interactive techniques such as discovery, discussion, question answer, problem solving, brainstorming and so on." (p. 0). Participant 2 stated her opinion that teachers shape methods as per the need of their classes, "Method goes on changing as per the teacher's experience and need of the

class (this year I did this and found the next way rather impressive which I will try to carry next year)." It indicated evolution of a regular teacher. As she focused on student engagement. in practice too, she was observed to be more interactive through question answer session.

Participant 1 tried to make her classes more student-centered where she found, "Normally, students hesitate a bit to take part in any activities. Some may even fear their teacher." So, in general, her classes are, "teacher centered. Teacher-student participation ratio is almost 80:20." However, in comparison to in other teachers' classes, as she claimed, her students were quite involved on the given classwork. Participant 3 also tried to make her classes more student-centered, "to activate them I make circle in the class and make them involve in action through action words like: play, swim, jump..., I focus much in classwork than homework." On my request, she demonstrated a short game by involving her students in 'bird-fly'. Though her game made her class too noisy, students looked happy.

In addition, participant 5 opined that classes would be best when both students and teachers remained active, "Mixed method where student and teacher get equally involved give the best result." She preferred to carry different methods such as, "Lecture method, projection, audio-video method, Activity based, student engagement, groupwork, pair work." side by side. However, she had fear regarding teacher's knowledge of pedagogy, "I don't think there is problem with teacher's subject related knowledge. But problem may remain there regarding their knowledge related to pedagogy and integration among the subject areas." This lack of knowledge strikes again on the need of training.

A good number of teachers took help of IT to bring changes in their classrooms. As participant 1 shared her experience, "I started changes in my classes on the basis of IT", many teachers seemed to be using audio-video materials for making their classes more interesting. Students of participant 5 were enjoying rhymes through projector when I visited their classroom (observation 5). There was resemblance with response from participant 5, "we use videos and PowerPoint regularly. Our class has one projector and two laptops. We make flashcards and charts too, but we use them quite less because of PowerPoint slides." Their class was well supplied with resources. But, availability may not be same in case of all schools. For that some teachers even used their personal mobiles as a teaching tool. Participant 3 sounded the same here, "I use my mobile regularly in the class, they become happy

when they get chance to listen something or watch videos.” In all, teachers were experimenting different new ways to carry difference in their classrooms.

Superordinate Theme 6: Happy with Discipline

Under superordinate theme six, responses of the participants regarding position of English in curriculum have been analyzed. First of all, I found all the participants sincerely disciplinarian as I believe myself to be. Not only the subject teachers (non-grade teachers) but grade teachers also had disciplinarian mentality. All the participants were found to be English teachers in their qualification and classroom performance both. Being English teachers, all the participants were happy with changes in English. The fact that their responses were based on their observation of the textbook and the teacher’s guide indicated that there was increased dependency on textbook. Personally, I had thought learning competencies and outcomes only limited to the pages of curriculum. But, responses of the participant teachers and students in subordinate theme: affirmative response on learning competencies and outcomes, proved that they were conscious about these issues and they could achieve them.

Reflection Box 5

When I chose integrated curriculum as my area of research, I was not thinking about separating English from other subjects. I thought taking any one subject separately would not be a good idea because we were concerned about interdisciplinarity and cross disciplinarity in the integrated curriculum. So, I was quite puzzled when professors suggested me to Englishize my research. I inserted the term ‘English’ in my topic mainly to show my obedience, though I was not convinced myself. I was rather convinced with the fact that English was there as a separate subject in the curriculum too. In the attempt of making integrated, some webs of connections had been set through thematic links across different disciplines. But later I came to know that real picture was quite different. When I visited a couple of schools, then only I came to the point that English was still taught quite separately and independently, without paying attention to any other thematic concerns. They appeared quite strict and sincere to their subject responsibility and area. Being an ELE student and researcher, I have English in my breathe and think so about my research participants too. Obviously, now as I am with 5 participants who have been teaching English for years, their experiences carry English in spirit.

Disciplinarians in Practice

All the participants were found to be devoted disciplinarian in their mindset. They had been teaching English for years. So, their long practice had brought English in their blood. Participant 3 shared her observation, “Most of the teachers prefer their own subject areas as they have long experience in the same field. I do not think leaving their subject and starting grade teaching is possible without adequate training.” Yes, she revealed the real reason behind disciplinarian mindset. Most of the participants were not much aware about thematic connection across other subjects. Participant 2 shared her realization that she saw similar chapter heads in other subjects too, however, she admitted that, “we generally discuss about subject matters with other teachers from English department. We take their help when needed..... but we rarely discuss about subject matters with teachers from other departments.” She was not ready to interact about other subjects, let alone teaching them. With the same tone, a quick rhetorical question from participant 1, “Without training how can we teach other subjects too?” presented their disciplinarian reality.

Even in grade teaching classrooms, English book and English subject were still intactly English and the grade teacher was still a disciplinarian. They preferred teaching their subject of expertise. Moreover, when participant 5 shared her experience, “I frequently get strange questions from teachers of other schools about grade teaching.”, it indicated that grade teaching was not much practiced and easily welcomed in most of other cases.

Happy with Changes in English

The changed English curriculum together with the prescribed textbook and teacher’s guide, was appreciated a big deal by all the participants. They were found quite satisfied or rather happy with the changes in curriculum and the textbook. In response to the question about effectiveness of English textbook and materials, most of the participants were found to be happy with the changes. Participant 1 was quite happy and hopeful with the changes. She shared her opinion, “This change looks like a progress rather than a minor change. I think it will help a lot to change traditional teacher centric mindset in terms of pedagogical approach and resources.” Typically, in case of English, she further added, “English has been made more communicative.” Participant 5 concluded her happiness with the changes:

Content wise I feel the previous curriculum was a bit detailed or sufficient.

But new one is as per age group and interest of the student. I am happy with

the changes. It talks about credit hour in place of weightage. CAS in place of regular exam. Learning competencies in place of special objective.

In the preface to the teachers' guide curriculum development center has stated that "Curriculum, textbook and teacher's guide are the minimum tools and resources for a teacher. These resources make teaching learning activities smooth in the classroom." Participant 5 rationalized her preference to new materials saying them to be, "child centric, better connection and chronology, content as per the students age group and interest, theme based, changed technique, no priority in rote learning, content is less so we can go slowly." Similar tone echoed in response of participant 3 too, "Bringing the concept of integrated curriculum itself is a great progress. I hope it will make ground for changing our traditional bookish teaching-learning... Integrated Curriculum and the new textbook have intended and helped to increase students' participation." Furthermore, she perceived the materials to be connected to life, "English has been made more connected to life. For example, it teaches about family, society, greetings, and such life skills." In all, position of English in new curriculum was found to be widely appraised by all the participants. They believed that the change in the curriculum was not a mere change rather it was a progress.

Increased Dependency on the Textbook

Most of the participants viewed that the current textbook from curriculum development center to be good with various activities, though it might have increased their dependency. Both students and teachers were using the textbook. They appraised both new textbook and the teacher's guide. Participant 3 found the textbook more attractive and practical, "The current textbook of CDC is rather effective with pictures and writing spaces as it has been designed as a workbook." The textbook was celebrated a lot though participant 1 raised issues on content as per the spirit of curriculum, "I have not seen proper link between curriculum and the textbook. Some contents seem to be a bit broader." Her perception matched here with two of other participants (participants 2 and 5) as they mentioned that they carried additional books for further support. Participant 2 posited they followed, "an additional book from a private (Satyal) publication for grammar as grammar is not sufficient in CDC book." Same was found in case of participant 5 too, "We have CDC book, as well as additional grammar book (Unique publication) and Mirror English (reader)." It showed their perception that the prescribed textbook had limited focus on grammar and reading.

Participant 5 was not dissatisfied with the textbook in entirety, “Except the paper quality and print quality (specially in case of pictures) the textbooks are well designed. They are workbooks, students may read and write there on the same book. That is the main strength for making the classes more participatory.” The response from participant 3 also appreciated the textbook when she viewed, “the textbook is designed on the basis of curriculum.” As she liked the textbook and found it fit for children she further added, “The current textbook by CDC is rather effective with pictures and writing spaces as it has been designed as a workbook. Concern has been shown to child psychology, level of students. Materials like textbook has been designed to be child-friendly.” In all, despite some minor grumblings related to paper quality, binding, and typographical issues, the textbook was much used. They were using the textbook for homework, classwork, as well as project works. This indicated increased dependency on the textbook.

Affirmative Status of Learning Competencies and Outcomes

Most of the participants found the learning competencies and outcomes set by the curriculum to be a good match to the level of students. Students were found to be actively engaged through all four skills of English language, though their speaking and writing parts seemed to be much focused. Participant 5 explained the students’ efforts on pronunciation and speaking,

The students attempt very well to interact in English, they feel hesitation when any friend laughs at their pronunciation. However, we try to stop such demotivating factors.English speaking has been made compulsory, some come to ask on how to tell something in English? Some others come with complaints that their friends spoke in Nepali.

Students feel better when they are motivated. When they were demotivated, teacher’s role seemed significant. With the same tone, participant 3 acclaimed their interest, “the students try minor greetings and simple dialogues.” During my visit to their classrooms too, a good number of students greeted me quite well and tried to reply short questions about their personal information comprehensively. In brief chit-chat too, some of them crossed me and started to ask different questions about myself. One student (from participant 3) asked me, “are you our new teacher?”

Many of the students would feel better while working in small groups and learning with each other. As participant 1 stated, “they enjoy pair works and group works quite much. However, they need close observations during such activities. If

not, they get diverted to casual talks.” Participant 5 also observed that her students too loved to work in their own circle, “They take help with friends. In case of confusion, they equally ask with better performing students as with teachers.” These all indicated that speaking or communication skills of students groomed as expected.

In case of many participants, they were unable to carry all four skills of language parallelly. Lack of resource materials such as devices and internet connection remained to be the main causes of their inability. Same problem echoed in response of participant 4, “for listening, we have one projector and one laptop for senior students, but for juniors, we do not have separate devices. We sometimes try to show them something.” Similarly, participant 2 accepted her inability, “Normally, they do reading and writing practices. For listening, sometimes, I use my personal mobile.” However, participant 5 replied affirmatively, “Curriculum seems to have almost equally prioritized all skills. Earlier, our priority used to be much to reading and writing, but, recently, we also are trying to carry all four skills parallelly.” This indicated affirmative course of changes and sign of hope due to the changed curriculum.

Summary of Findings

Analysis process began with the “a step-by-step approach to analysis in IPA” as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2015). Transcribed data from semi-structured interviews were used for the other steps. Following the process, six superordinate themes were brought through varied subordinate themes to each of them. The first superordinate theme conveyed the mixed emotions and experience of the participants at the beginning stage of encounter with the integrated curriculum. Most of them took it positively as an opportunity despite plenty of challenges and lack of readiness. They began implementation like an adventure. The curriculum gave them a sort of agitation of adaptation in the beginning. Though they were doubtful about its feasibility in its face value, they had a common realization on the new curriculum to be need of time. Most of the participants had limited understanding about core areas of integrated curriculum. The connection to soft skills was the toughest of all to all of them. Some of the participants had limited knowledge about models of curriculum as well as thematic connection the curriculum targets. They realized the implementation as their responsibility and started to prepare themselves with self-efforts as they lacked proper trainings and exposures. They took help of colleagues and family members to deal with their initial fear. The new curriculum mostly reached to the classroom still with

traditional disciplinary mode of teaching. However, the teachers tried their best to make engaging classes by being facilitators and students enjoyed participating in various pair works and team works.

While being focused on English as a discipline, the participants were mostly happy with the changes and they were performing their duties as disciplinarians. All the participants' responses about learning competencies and outcomes were found to be optimistic. In all, the new curriculum had brought a lot of difference in their experience. They had found remarkable difference in teacher-student role and mutual help. Their experience of being a research participant also gave them new experiences and insights. And finally, the difference was noted in terms of assessment and evaluation system as most of them were practicing the same traditional summative examination systems.

CHAPTER V

BRIDGING THE FINDINGS

This chapter aims at recognising relation among the findings of present research with the reviewed literature. Discussion in this chapter concentrates on whether the findings of previous research match or differ with the present one. In other word, the discussion compares the findings of the present research and observes whether they maintained echo or proceeded with departure from the reviewed literature.

With the purpose of exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences with the integrated curriculum, this research had aspired to answer the major question: How do English language teachers perceive and experience newly implemented integrated curriculum in Nepal? Five teachers from different community schools in Bhaktapur district, who were teaching English subject in grade one, were purposively selected as the participants. As a researcher, relativism set my ontological ground where my epistemological ground was subjectivist. Axiology of the present research, being an interpretative phenomenological analysis was more value laden though much emphasis was given to the most possible natural setting to collect participants' actual experiences. In terms of methodology, under phenomenological approach, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) made a base for the method of this study.

For the study, the purposively chosen participant teachers were visited, made some acquittance and got consent form signed. A time of their convenience was set for interviews. Interview protocol was emailed a day in advance and interviews were duly taken. Priority was given to assure normal and comfortable setting as possible. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcribed texts were carried ahead through step-by-step analysis as recommended by Smith and Osborn (2015). Here, each of superordinate themes have been discussed individually.

Unavoidable Opportunity

Curriculum change and update occurs regularly due to rise of different educational approaches and their spread in the global context. To quote Lam et al. (2013), "intermittent interest in progressive educational approaches since the 1920s served as a vehicle for the spread of integrated curriculum worldwide" (p. 31).

Integrated curriculum appeared in practice in the 1990s and it probably came to Nepal too (though late) with the same wave which Lam et al. (2013) had imagined, “a wave of curriculum reform swept through Asia, with many countries adopting integrated curriculum as a means of promoting the learning of ‘21st century skills’ such as problem-solving and its higher relevance to student’s daily life” (p.31). So, it was obvious that this change in curriculum generated various emotional responses in participant teachers. Most of the participants in this research were anxious as well as excited with arrival of the new curriculum. Though the teachers were not ready and they felt agitation of adaptation for long, they could not avoid the implementation. Therefore, one question came here – was new curriculum an obligation alone or an opportunity too? As the government brought it for implementation, it was an unavoidable obligation to all the practitioner teachers. However, for those whoever were interested in innovation, changes, and learning, it was an opportunity too. So, they mostly viewed the integrated curriculum as an opportunity that could not be avoided.

Similar to the claim made by George (1996), “It is certainly true of me; when I am faced with a class, course, or workshop for which I am not “prepared”, it causes me immediate, great, and continuing anxiety” (p. 16), I observed my participants ‘threatened’ by integrated curriculum and largely in the same the condition. They were not prepared. So, the ‘immediate, great, and continuing anxiety’ gave them feeling of agitation of adaptation. For long, many teachers anxiously searched for the possible alternatives to ease their agitated mindset. With realization that there is no one to save them but oneself, most of them took shelter either in self-venture or tried to take help of colleagues and family members. These attempts of the participants resembled to Vygotsky’s concept of more knowledgeable other (MKO). They tried to learn through interactions or with the help of more knowledgeable others. That situation took them to beginning of adventurous journey. The adventure began there. The teachers had to continue the journey mainly because of two reasons. On the one hand, curriculum implementation was a mandatory announcement of the government; they could not run away from it. On the other hand, they had sensed and realized that integrated curriculum was need of time. Like in Singapore where integrated curriculum was viewed as “response to global, neoliberal economic trends and the recognized need to shift schooling toward a more student-centered focus” (Lam et al., p. 26), in case of Nepal too curriculum was accepted to be need of time. However, due

to lack of preparedness for implementation with concerned authorities as well as practitioner teachers, the feasibility raised doubt. Here, the situation of Nepal exactly matched with the situation in Singapore, Romania, Kenya, and Korea. In Singapore, the teachers had doubt on feasibility of implementation due to many constraints such as relatively limited experience and training with teachers (Lam et al., 2013). Similarly, in case of Romania, they had doubt on feasibility because of relatively “superficial knowledge of the specific practices” (Tudor, 2014, p. 732). Same tone echoed about situation of Kenyan teachers in Magoma (2016). When Park (2008) shared the research finding, “the teachers in this study were not familiar” and recommended to focus on teacher education and training, a sense could be made that the experience in Korean integrated curriculum was not different from Nepal. In case of Nigeria, Akib et al. (2020) emphasized in assisting teachers with training to change mindset of the teachers. Their observation might be noteworthy and need to relate to a good number of Nepali teacher’s status quo mindset.

In all, while comparing with all others, Nepal’s ground seems to be rather fragile and challenging. Though the change in curriculum have been taken as ray of hope, minute observation showed some issues of doubt on readiness for immediate effective implementation of the integrated curriculum.

Understanding of Core Spirit of Integrated Curriculum

Most of the participants, though accepted superiority of new curriculum in comparison to the immediate old one, had merely basic level of understanding regarding integrated curriculum. Their knowledge about integrated curriculum was almost limited to its lexical meaning. Regarding core concept, most of them were not informed at all. This state matched with the concept of Zone of proximal development in the words of Vygotsky. In her research on Israeli elementary school teachers, Shoham (1998) found that, “most of the teachers were able to explain what an integrative topic is and even gave examples to clarify it. They related to the ways the subjects and points of view are integrated” (p. 409). But case is apart in case of Nepal. All the participants at least were known to the meaning and basic norms of integrated curriculum. But when there came matter of core concept both Israeli and Nepalese participant have same status. To quote Shoham (1998) again, “their understanding of these concepts is largely intuitive and not based on a study of their significance and of the possibilities of applying them in the process of planning school-based integrative curricula” (p. 415). George (1996) believed that there are some inherent complexities

with the notion of integration, “The vast majority of educators, parents, and policy makers seem to not even understand the concept of IC. There are so many terms in the lexicon of curriculum ... that discussions on the topic are inevitably soaked in confusion and misunderstanding” (p. 15). In this regards teachers’ opinion of its toughness sounds reasonable but additionally it increased suspicion on effective implementation. Yes, most of the participants demonstrated their limited understanding regarding concepts like models of integration, themes, and soft skills.

Same was the reality of Korean teachers as presented by Park (2008), “the teachers in this study were not familiar with the models of integrative planning, did not find them relevant, and did not use them during their teaching” (p. 316). When asked questions regarding integration modality, they either refused to reply or replied too superficially. The next core area of integrated curriculum is thematic connection. In common observation, thematic connection is that component what makes it integrated curriculum. George (1996) highlighted on the need of integrating curriculum that educational psychology informs us that the mind naturally integrates information it learns, regardless of situation. This integration is the primary function of the mind. George has shown the reasonable ground behind the need of carrying various subject areas with thematic connection.

However, the participants’ understanding about thematic connection too was not satisfactory. Their grumbling clearly meant that it became much difficult to them. Most of them, being English subject teachers, did not try to find any thematic connection across the disciplines. In case of the participant who was a grade teacher too, her struggle was focused on finding the connection across different subjects. She (participant 5) viewed that, “at first finding a connection is quite challenging. The teacher herself should find the idea of connecting them. When connected, it is easy”. Moreover, the concept of soft skills appeared rather tougher to all the participants. Through soft skills, integrated curriculum tries to link learning with life. Finding application of education in daily life is equally tough as it sounds sweet.

So, it gave a realization that integrated curriculum could be a better option but without needful preparation it would be much difficult and less practicable. In this regard, the teachers’ overall understanding seems superficial. While linking the participants’ understanding of core spirit of integrated curriculum with Vygotsky’s concept, understanding of the term integrated curriculum and its basic concept fall in the inner circle, thematic connection in the middle circle, and connection of soft skills

in the outer circle of ZPD. Thus, expecting more without further preparation of the practitioner teachers would be an overambition.

Realization of Responsibility

Integrated curriculum in Nepal was piloted in only 103 schools of 18 districts representing all seven provinces. Moreover, as participant 1 revealed the fact that they could not experience piloting more because it came during pandemic COVID-19 and lockdown. Piloting was just heard of to very limited teachers. For most of them it went unheard and the news of curriculum change was announced by the changed textbooks. The unanticipated arrival of new curriculum without any prior information, preparation, or training to the teachers, added notable fear to them. However, they could not/did not go against the government's decision. So, case of Nepal has been taken as departure from what John (2015) shared the case of her country, "there exist resistance to the new curriculum in the majority of schools in Trinidad and Tobago" (p. 185). In Nepal, they did their best attempts to deal with the initial fear and difficulties. No one thought about resistance.

The teachers scarcely received any training and exposure which would be like basic need at this stage. Lam et al. (2013) stated their views regarding need of training and exposure, "most teachers learned about curriculum integration through in-service seminars or short courses; thus, opportunities to explore models of curriculum integration were limited" (p. 29). However, in case of Nepal, the teachers are deprived of that limited opportunity too. The teachers have mostly relied on self-efforts. They have prepared themselves on their own. Their stories of self venture sounded like appeal for training and exposures. In reference of the claim of Lam et al. (2013), teachers' self-preparation cannot be sufficient for effective implementation of integrated curriculum. To quote them, "teacher preparation alone will not enable teachers to implement integrated curricula once they are practicing teachers. Aside from exposing the need for teacher education, the study likewise indicates a necessity for ongoing professional development and support" (p. 32). In this situation, an obvious question comes: where are we heading then? Most of participants were relying on self-efforts as they lacked training and exposure. They were most commonly carrying ahead traditional teaching practices and mindset. In this context, our excitement and expectations with the new curriculum in the same traditional way of delivery may replicate the parable old wine in a new bottle. To have much higher dreams could be hazardous in this situation. Irony with Nepal is, despite being in the

same situation, the excitement and expectations from the changed curriculum seemed more ambitious. Here, being overambitious without proper preparedness, simply because the teachers have realized their responsibilities may be disastrous.

New Curriculum- as a Difference in Experience

New curriculum created ground for difference in roles of teachers and students. Most of the participants had different experiences with the new curriculum. The change, in the beginning, obviously gave feeling of being challenged to everyone. In the course of time, as Akib et al. (2020) claimed, “students are actively involved in the learning process, both individually and in groups. In integrated learning, the desires, interests, and abilities of students are considered, so that students are motivated to search for information and knowledge” (p. 45), Nepalese teachers also somehow observed their classrooms more engaging and more student-centered. The teachers started to collaborate more with their colleagues and encouraged students to work with peers. John (2015) agreed upon teachers’ different role with integrated curriculum, “Teachers need to become members of learning communities, working with a team, to improve education” (p. 186). She meant to say that for improving education, teachers need to be learners too.

Regarding role of teachers, Ghimire (2019) has given emphasis on teachers’ importance in effective implementation of curriculum, “Until and unless the teacher, a real hero in the classroom, is clear, convinced and enthusiastic to implement a new curriculum and curricular materials, no matter how effective the curriculum is, it does not work” (p. 10). Whereas, in case of Nepal, the teachers had not changed their regular tradition, timing, and efforts excluding some exception. Regarding teacher’s role, Ozturk and Erden (2011) highlighted on teachers’ experience, “more experienced teachers have greater tendency to implement an integrated curriculum compared with less experienced teachers. They stated that there has been a positive impact of integrated curriculum on implementation process” (p. 903). Multiple participants viewed opposite idea that more experienced teachers had status quo mindset and were not ready to change themselves or their ways of teaching but innovations and enthusiasm was better observed with new and young teachers.

Similar to John, Lam et al. (2013) also found, “Teachers likewise reported positive effects on camaraderie among the teachers” (p.29). They took example of two teachers and further stated, “Hariff and Jonathan reiterated that through working together for the integrated program, team spirit among the teachers was enhanced” (p.

29). In case of the participants in this study too, they expressed their views related to changed professional relation among colleagues. But in practical level of integrating across subjects and courses, they were far beyond expectation. Maclver (1990) found, “teachers appreciate the social support of working together and feel that they are able to teach more effectively when they integrate across subjects and courses” (As cited by Lake, 1994, p. 57). But, teachers in this research were working with peers only to find solution to their confusion. Working together for integrating across subjects and courses have not been thought yet.

The participants responded exciting experience of being research participants too. They viewed that some activities such as being a research participant, preparing for the interview, followed-by discussion with colleagues, and performance back in the classroom, gave them a sense of empowerment as well as an increment in knowledge. Therefore, I compared the participants’ involvement in research with their training and exposure. Similar difference was experienced in evaluation and assessment too. As George (1996) doubted, “Local, state, national, and international testing, much as we may despise it, focuses on specific subjects” (p. 17), Nepal has the resemblance in practices. The participants univocally stated that they still had more emphasis on summative evaluation that leads to further departure from core spirit of integrated curriculum through formative and continuous assessment on the basis of daily practices.

Innovations in Classroom

In most of the schools, the new curriculum came into the classroom from the same traditional doors. Though integrated curriculum is expected to connect different areas of disciplinary study through thematic connection, the practices in Nepal still experienced the same traditional mode of disciplinary teaching. In case of community schools, grade teaching could be counted in the fingers. The figure may be slightly higher in case institutional schools. However, the new curriculum was welcomed and practiced in the classroom with greater enthusiasm. Most of the participants agreed that the new curriculum mostly activated the teachers for their self-efforts and made learning fun through engaging classrooms.

The findings from this study suggest that most of the participants placed importance on student engagement and participation. Such engagements may be taken as social interactions referred by Vygotsky and may assist learning. As Shriner et al. (2010) stated integrated curriculum made teaching more fun. Their students not only

enjoyed but also learned a lot with it. The student involvement made the classroom activities more fun. For Shriner et al. (2010), “Integrated curriculums provide instruction that engages students, keeps them excited, and keeps them learning” (p. 59). Perceptions and practices of the participants in context of Nepal too matched with these researchers. They found that the prescribed textbooks were helping them for making their classrooms more engaging and student centred because it had plenty of exercises for classwork, group works, and project works.

Regarding pedagogical changes, except some experimental new pedagogical trends attempted by minority teachers, their practices were mostly teacher centric. Concerning some changed trends, as they were acquired from the teachers’ self-efforts, the effectiveness was still on doubt. George (1996) attempted to mean same here, “it had been said that, if Rip Van Winkle were to wake up today, the one thing he would find familiar would be the teaching styles in public school classrooms” (p. 19). Nepalese teachers also mostly relied on same lecture method and teacher-centric ways of teaching except some minor efforts of student engagement. Some teachers with their interest in innovation had updated themselves in course of time. Similar was observed when participant 2 opined, “Method goes on changing as per the teacher’s experience and need of the class (this year I did this and found the next way rather impressive which I will try to carry next year)”, we may sense that she meant that improvement on the self-pace was not directly connected to integrated curriculum alone. So, teachers attempted to do better with new trends and tried their best with realization of their professional responsibility.

Happy with Discipline

Integrated curriculum aims at carrying different subjects with thematic interconnection. English has adopted multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary models of integration with 11 themes: 6 multidisciplinary and 5 subject -specific (Ghimire, 2019, p. 8). This indicates that English has both independent as well as interrelated areas. Which means in integrated learning, the focus is not examined from a separated perspective but rather from multiple disciplines at once (Akib et al., 2020). But in practice, English curriculum was found to be isolated and dealt separately without linking it with other subjects. Adhikari (2023) blamed that the inability to leave the disciplinary curriculum when we still require an integrated curriculum is the main problem in implementation. Here, practice in Nepal was similar to the position of Lam et al. (2013), “teachers were more likely to conceptualize integration through

interdisciplinary approaches that prioritized issues under study rather than the maintenance of disciplines that characterized multidisciplinary approaches” (p. 29). The multidisciplinary worry had not touched any of the participants in practice. Most of the participants were found to be strict disciplinarians. Similar to the practices in Lesotho, as shared her realization by Ralebese (2018), the teachers planned and delivered their lessons in compartmentalized manners, the participants in this study also segmented English subject and felt happy to call themselves English teachers and as he claims all the participants of this study connect themselves to their specific subject. They were found to be sincere devotees of their discipline. Main reason behind could be: teachers today came through long preparations of traditional teacher education and teacher training to teach a specific subject. In this context, my observation convinced me to agree that their present disciplinary mentality is reasonable outcome of the model of teacher education they came through. Now, if we expect difference as per the spirit of integrated curriculum, either we should have paid attention to teacher education before integrated curriculum was brought into effect or there need to be other preparatory efforts like trainings. Therefore, though it would be considered natural to have a disciplinarian mindset, the challenge is integrated curriculum expects teachers to go beyond their subject areas which seemed difficult to obtain.

The disciplinarian participant teachers were found happy with changes in English. They reported their happiness with new curriculum, textbook as well as teacher’s guide, assessing them to be “student-centric” and “child friendly”. Together with this appraisal, they were found quite optimistic about learning competencies and outcomes. However, the fact that advocates of integrated curriculum imagine the classrooms with “revolution in resource availability” and the textbooks to be obsolete (George, 1996, p. 17), our appraisal of textbook still sounds sarcastic. There are still many such schools which cannot manage a sheet of paper on the name of resources. That is the main reason, the deprived and untrained teachers mostly relied on the prescribed textbooks and remain praising them. In this situation, integrated curriculum’s appeal for creating natural environment sounds appalling. Curriculum Development Centre (2019) has stated that the curriculum is based on the principle that children learn English better when they get ample exposure to spoken and written English and sufficient opportunity to use it in stress-free environment. Here, I found the situation in Nepal a right match with what Magoma (2016) has seen, “teachers

were teaching the integrated English curriculum without proper understanding of the methodology involved” (p. 1148). The case of Lesotho also was not far different when Ralebese (2018) found that the Basotho teachers also employed teacher-centred methodologies. What could they do? They can only give what they have. At this context, I imagined - how beautiful it would be if we were with ample resources, trained teachers, small sized (student size) spacious classrooms!

Laconically, the attempts for implementation of the integrated curriculum in Nepal appeared mostly without proper planning, proper preparedness, and significant (sufficiency is a far cry) training and exposure. Most of the teachers did not have any formal professional training and exposures in designing and implementation of integrated curriculum. In this situation, as George (1996) claimed a few teachers, who had exciting classes with the traditional curriculum too, may bring great impact but with others it may go poorly, “some teachers, I am afraid to say, simply do not have the skill to plan an integrated curriculum... A traditional curriculum delivered well, I think, would be far better than an integrated curriculum delivered poorly” (p. 18). Same fear sustained in case of Nepal too. Only enthusiastic and innovative teachers have accepted to be research participants here. Their performance, which has been observed to be mediocre itself due to limited knowledge, may not be comparable to those teachers with status quo mindset. So, in spite of the fact that none of the participants had doubt on superiority of integrated curriculum, with the practitioner teachers’ limited core knowledge related to integrated curriculum and their practices with self-venture and self-actualization, expecting more cannot be a wise idea. To achieve the desired objectives, a lot is yet to be done.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOURNEY FROM AGITATION TO PARTIAL ACCEPTANCE

This chapter commences with the summary of practitioner teachers' perceptions, daily classroom practices, and experiences that were explored and observed during the implementation of integrated curriculum. In addition, the chapter emphasizes the need of teacher education and teacher training. Furthermore, it inculcates researcher's recommendations to the concerned authorities, practitioner teachers, and future researchers. Recommendations may be an initial dose of preventive medicine to many concerned ones.

My interest in curriculum that stems from a recent realization that I had a misconception about it and in particular, one recent curriculum change triggered this study. Initially, I believed that curriculum was an abstract and philosophical concept that was beyond the scope of a common ELT practitioner's needs. However, my increasing personal curiosity about curriculum led me to explore this notion further. With the recent change, there emerged discourses related to challenges and prospects of implementation of new curriculum. At this moment, discerning that implementation practices of the change would be worth researching, the perceptions and experiences of the teachers were explored to understand and interpret their phenomenal experiences.

The research found that integrated curriculum was an unavoidable option for teachers, though they had a superficial understanding of the core areas. The inclusion of soft skills was particularly challenging, but educators were motivated to adapt to the new curriculum. The initial pilot was limited and preparatory training was scarce. So, there was an appeal for training to understand proper implementation. Teachers' roles and assessment methods were mostly traditional and had to be re-evaluated. The integrated curriculum resulted in more student-centered classrooms and engaged students. Teaching methods were still traditional, but many teachers were happy with the changes brought about by the new curriculum. responses to the learning competencies and outcomes were affirmative, covering all four skills of language learning.

Potential Implications

The arrival of integrated curriculum triggered various emotions in different teachers. Some of them felt confused, some others were hopeful, and others felt challenged. The most prominent experience was of agitation to adapt; it gave rise to doubt and fear in anticipated implementation. With that prospect, practitioner teachers started their adventurous journey of implementation. Amid the Alps of adversities, the new curriculum was taken with hope. In spite of the fact that their critical observation of implementation had raised doubt in effectiveness and feasibility, all the participants' acceptance of the change in curriculum as need of time is noteworthy. The integrated curriculum in all has been considered to be unavoidable opportunity to the practitioners.

Several causes could have been responsible behind experiences that produced various emotions. Though the practitioner teachers were not trained and prepared for the implementation, the curriculum was piloted in 103 schools across the country. The piloting itself could not be much effective. Yet, the curriculum was brought into mandatory implementation nationwide. COVID 19 could have been the major cause that piloting and the initial implementations was not properly carried out and circulated. Most of the participants were not aware of curriculum change let alone the piloting. The responses of the teachers from the schools where the curriculum was piloted indicated that the piloting and preparation for the new curriculum was not a success due to many reasons. In that situation, COVID-19 and followed by lockdown became a face-saving excuse to all the concerned areas for their inability.

Being a new curriculum with different novel concepts, terminologies, innovative expectations in pedagogy and assessment, it demands better knowledge and understanding of the practitioner teachers regarding core concepts of integrated curriculum. However, the participants of this study did not have in-depth understanding of models of curriculum except some superficial knowledge with one or two participants. Terminologies of integrated curriculum were too strange to them that without guidance many things seemed to have gone over their heads. For them finding thematic connections across disciplines was next challenge, and only some of them were capable of linking them up. One of the causes behind all these may be their rigid disciplinarity. They simply did not bother to go across other disciplines to find needful connections. Moreover, the achievement of soft skills through education was tough most of all to the teachers. So, at this point, doubt leads to a question: is

superiority of the curriculum outcome of their hasty judgement? At this state of difficulties in understanding of core spirit of integrated curriculum, traditional disciplinary mindset, and lack of proper preparation, it seemed expecting much could be overambitious.

Participants of this study were found in the state of in-betweenness of deprivation and obligation. On the one hand, they were in dire need of training and exposures; on the other hand, they had to shoulder the responsibility of implementation. So, despite being deprived of proper training and exposure for implementation, they did not give up. As no one could run against the clock, they started on their own. They dealt with their initial anxiety on their own, and carried the new curriculum into the classroom with their self-efforts. Nevertheless, throughout interviews and observations, their appeal for training would be overheard.

Piloting was unheard to many of the participants. Here, we may easily imagine how pathetic is our situation. They knew about the book change earlier than curriculum change. At this situation, we may imagine how sufficient was initial preparation of curriculum. They started their venture with new curriculum with self-efforts because they could not resist and go against the decision of the government. Their stories of self-venture, though sound adventurous, are a far cry from availability of resources and effective implementation. In this state of affairs, to be overexcited and overambitious for the changed curriculum may be hilarious.

The participants had notable experience of difference with the arrival of a new curriculum. First of all, the teachers had taken the exposure of being research participants as a learning platform. Their preparation for the interview helped them get updated. Both teachers and students had experienced difference in their roles. The students were working in pairs and groups; they were interested in working in a team with active participation and collaboration. To the teachers, the new curriculum gave a feeling of professionalism with their professional interaction, sharing, and support among colleagues. Their collaboration was to deal with confusions rather than to work for finding interconnection across different subjects. The engaging and interacting colleagues matched here with Vygotsky's social interaction. In terms of evaluation and assessment, practices were still much traditional. The focus was still on summative and intermittent assessments than on formative and continuous ones.

The curriculum was new; expectations were new; but their classrooms, resources, strategies, and processes were still the same. They were still following

traditional mode of teaching and many had adverse response to grade teaching. The changed modality of the textbook (textbook as a workbook) assured more student engagement. Here, practices like student engagement became face-saving factors for them to claim that they were attempting pedagogical innovations. Minor newness observed in pedagogical practices due to student engagement might have been an outcome of upgraded practices of some innovative and experienced teachers.

Integrated curriculum expects a departure from rigid disciplinarity to interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. However, participants, being English teachers, stood as typical disciplinarian English teachers. They appreciated textbooks and teacher's guide and tried to mean that they were happy with the changes in English. The reason behind their happiness may be that at the crisis of resources, textbook and teacher's guide might have meant a lot to them. They were hopeful about targeted achievement of learning competencies and outcomes. Their anticipations amid the limitations are indicators of optimism.

With teachers who had short of sufficient knowledge, proper planning, and preparedness related to implementation of integrated curriculum, we cannot dream more about the future of new curriculum. As most of the teachers were deprived of resources and proper training related to design and implementation of integrated curriculum, first and foremost, a lot is to be done in the field of teacher education and training.

Shoham (1998) stated, "Israeli teacher education is based on academic disciplines and the subjects taught in schools" (p. 415). Similar to Israeli practice, teacher education in Nepal also is mostly based on the subjects taught in schools. On the name of teacher education, we have limited disciplinary areas that are mostly designed on the basis of subjects in the school level curriculum. We could not pay timely attention and planning on teacher education with the target of producing teachers to implement integrated curriculum. We have not planned, prepared, and produced teachers that fit into the demand of current change in curriculum. STEM/STEAM program, that has been flourishing in the Kathmandu University, could be one noteworthy example of such educational program here. But that is too limited to address the need and dire scarcity of right human resources in the field. In simple words, our teacher education has not produced teachers they can design and develop integrated curriculum. It seems clear that before bringing integrated curriculum we did not work enough about teacher education and production of

teachers to fit that need. It would be great if we had planned and practiced such teacher education some 20 years ago. Five or 10 years ago too would be better. But now? To bring immediate impact, teachers could be trained well with the help of involved experts. From these observations, it can be inferred that restructuring of teacher education is one of the serious most needs of time.

If we do not have teacher education that addresses need of integrated curriculum, only way ahead with us is teacher training and exposures to practices. If not, expecting the objectives targeted by the integrated curriculum will be overambitious. At the end of the day, it is clear like daylight that most of the teachers may fail to fulfill the dreams of educational framework and the integrated curriculum. The fact that the participants realized that they were not trained, they were not instructed, and they were not equipped can be evidently verified by observing any of the random class of any practitioner teachers. What plenty can we harvest with all these limited efforts done for the effective implementation? During the piloting and initial implementation, teacher training could have been wedged by different constraints such as COVID-19 and followed by lockdowns, but what did we do after that? What additional plans do we have now? So, right now could be the best time to bring flood of in-service training and sharing sessions. Following training to a good number of teachers, other activities such as teacher exchange, teacher's professional development (TPD), and sharing sessions could be used to enhance teacher's exposures that would help teachers share their understanding and classroom experiences. Teacher's professional development (TPD) sessions regularly arranged in school too would function well as in-school teacher training.

Ways Ahead

Along with the above-mentioned implications, some recommendations would be apposite here. It seems that curriculum implementation has obviously missed many of the expectations of curriculum itself and curriculum designs. The actively involved experts might have envisioned the right implementation procedures but the problem is their vision has not reached well to immediate stakeholders of implementation. The textbooks and the teacher's guides are major evidences of that. It would be great if the practitioner teachers were involved there in the process of curriculum design and textbook preparation. The teachers would think it to be their own asset as well as liabilities. Due considerations to the raised issues may be a wise addition to regular

efforts. Next, the limited number of curriculum designers, textbook writers, and experts should be actively mobilized for the inevitable purpose of teacher training.

Some questions trigger at this stage -who is responsible for teacher training and exposure? Is implementation solely role of the teachers alone? Should not there be preparatory and monitoring unit? How responsible they should be? The Ministry of Education, Curriculum Development Center, Education Development and Coordination Units in every district, local education units in municipality, and schools and teachers themselves are some of the directly associated stakeholders for the effective implementation of integrated curriculum. What should each stakeholder do to shoulder their responsibility in right way. The concerned authorities need to understand that integrated curriculum is not sole responsibility of teachers alone. Sending teachers into the classroom without proper resources and preparations will be as fatal as sending a soldier to the battlefield without any arms. It is not questionable that the teachers should be empowered with training and workshop. Moreover, as emphasized by Adhikari (2023), attention should be added towards grade teaching. The current dedication and devotion towards disciplinarity would be hazardous to journey of transdisciplinary integrated curriculum. So, it is recommended that if a teacher were to finish a chapter of a subject and then proceed to another subject, demonstrating its connection, it would better address the current curriculum's objectives.

The reality in case of Nepal is that the implementation of integrated curriculum was hindered by inadequate preparatory planning and baseline studies. This has caused significant stress to the teachers. In the similar context, Akib et al. (2020) had strictly suggested the Indonesian government for making in-depth studies and bringing implementation of the curriculum as trial to some big cities rather than across the entire territory at once. In case of Nepal too, with the present status of dearth preparedness and teachers' readiness, it would have been far better to carry implementation of new curriculum in different phases: limited schools of major towns or in some specific districts at first. However, as the implementation has already been carried ahead, now concentration should be deepened on supply of resources, training, motivation, observation and follow-up of everyday activities with needful corrective efforts would be stich in time. The teachers and their efforts need to be regularly followed. They need to be monitored, evaluated, and motivated. If they realize their responsibility, good enough. But if not? There need to be one or other authority to

watchdog all the process and product. So, prime step here is initiations and motivations to the teachers from the side of responsible authorities.

No doubt, concerned authorities need to do their best for creating expected environment and needful resources. However, teachers themselves cannot run away from responsibility by throwing the ball in other's court. Teachers are the chief responsible agents in this entire venture. Integrated curriculum seems to have been brought with great expert minds, and it needs to be transferred into practitioner teachers' minds. Some appreciable practices of self-effort and interest in some innovative and inquisitive teachers are some signs of hope but it will not be all sufficient. There need to be proper phenomena to bridge experts and practitioner teachers. In addition, we have teachers with 'job for income' mentality. They have status quo mindset and show no interest to change as if they have no promises to make. Our greatest challenge is to transform such job-oriented-status-quo mindsets into service-oriented-innovative mindsets. Feeling of professionalism and contribution through profession should be every teacher's motive. In this scenario, as recommended by Ralebese (2018) in context of Lesotho, thorough sessions of professional development for teachers would be inevitable in context of Nepal too.

Both integrated curriculum and the present research surged across avalanche of limitations surrounded. In global educational scenario, when any new curriculum is brought into practice, research about progress and impact would be carried out in almost every step. But, in context of Nepal, research in most of the issues is not noticeable, almost like neglected. Particularly, in case of integrated curriculum, being a recent practice, a flood of researches should have been there by this time of two/three years of piloting, but bitter reality is any research is hardly done. When the curriculum comes into implementation, the responsible authorities need to investigate several issues related to daily process and product. Therefore, many crucial areas of integrated curriculum are waiting for the future researchers. Researches in this area are indispensable to provide needful feedback and recommendations to all the concerned individuals as well as authorities and to motivate and encourage practitioner teachers to keep up their spirit of self-efforts.

This study explores the perceptions and experiences of English teachers from five community schools in Bhaktapur district. The study more specifically concentrated on English language teachers but not teachers across other subject areas. Though integrated curriculum was brought for grades one to three all over Nepal, this

study is limited with the participants teaching in grade one in community schools in Bhaktapur district. COVID-19 situation and mindset obliged to delimit the study to the actual practice. The impact of COVID changed psychological mindset and made us more inquisitive and critical to every stranger. It obviously affected both observation and interview, though the researcher tried the best to establish close and natural environment to mitigate the impact. So, any studies with different research questions, different participants and different sites may lead to different findings.

Exploring transferability of findings of this research, similar research could be conducted. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was chosen to be the method and analytical tool. So, any research with any other method may lead to other ways. The present research explores through areas of curriculum: aim, instructional method, materials, or assessment. With the findings of this study, deeper studies could be carried out specifically with either of four scopes of curriculum. Moreover, other related areas such as teacher education, training and motivation together with different prospects and challenges of integrated curriculum in practice have plenty of promises to new researchers. Conducting research comparing immediate previous curriculum with the current one in terms of content as well as practices might be one impressive gap-filling research that may be helpful to many teachers, curriculum designers, as well as many other concerned authorities.

With this research, I have rather got my interest increased for further research in the field of curriculum in general and integrated curriculum in particular. I see a good prospect of research in the field of curriculum in Nepal.

Reflection Box 6

My journey as a researcher for this dissertation took longer time than I had ever imagined. First of all, COVID-19 discouraged everyone to be closer and interact with a stranger. Any strangers would be like an invader or spy in war. Next, integrated curriculum being a new concept in Nepal, finding right participant became a tough job. When I struggled long in search of right participants, I had started to doubt on feasibility and effective implementation of integrated curriculum in Nepal. Doubt persisted throughout the study because all the participants too carried similar doubts thoroughly. However, as I could observe some changed mindset, interest to innovations, and ample self-efforts for adaptation with the new curriculum gave me the sight of light at the end of tunnel. So, I conclude my study with some rays of hope,

though a lot is yet to be done.

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APPENDIX

Interview Schedule**Introduction**

The aim of this interview is to gain an in-depth understanding and experience with the integrated curriculum. I am interested in exploring your thought, ideas, perceptions, and experiences. There is no right or wrong answer, so, I request you to speak frankly as far as possible in your answers. Please take your time in thinking and responding.

Questions for basic information

Name: _____ Age group (approximate): _____

Address: _____

Name of school: _____

Teaching experience:years.

Same school: _____

Which class do/did you teach?

How long have you been teaching English?

How have you taken impact/relation of Integrated curriculum in your professional life?

- a. Negative impact
- b. Neutral/as usual impact
- c. Positive but common impact
- d. Life turning impact

Teachers' understanding/perceptions

1. understanding with the term 'integrated curriculum'
 - a. When and where did you hear the term 'integrated curriculum' at first and what is your understanding of the term?
 - b. How long did it take you to understand what it is exactly?
2. What is your perceptions (threatened or excited) to the new curriculum? is it desirable? feasible?
3. Integrated curriculum is said to have come to address the need of time. Do you think it is timely in context of Nepal too? How? (aim of curriculum)

- a. Your impression: How did/do you find the curriculum? Do you feel any superiority or inferiority between the previous and the new one? Is it a change or a progress?
- b. What difference have you found between the immediate previous curriculum and the current integrated curriculum?
4. Understanding about Integrated curriculum in Nepal
 - a. Model of curriculum
 - b. Horizontal relation: **theme-based and soft skills-based** relation
 - c. Vertical relation: grade 1, 2, 3 content relation/development
5. What do you think on the following sides of integrated curriculum?
 - a. S- strength
 - b. W- weaknesses
 - c. O – opportunities
 - d. T- threats/challenges
6. How ready do you think are the teachers like you for implementation of the integrated curriculum?
 - a. How were you prepared for implementation (on your own efforts, on your school initiations, or with government programs)?
7. The role of teacher in implementation
 - a. How ready are other teachers around you for implementing integrated curriculum?
 - b. Do you think teachers have sufficient knowledge for curriculum implementation?
8. Position of English in integrated curriculum in all
 - a. How have you perceived the textbook based on new curriculum?
 - b. Are you following CDC or any other publication's book? Why?
 - c. Learning competencies?
 - Do/ can students demonstrate an understanding of simple spoken language?
 - Do/ can students respond in simple English with intelligible pronunciation?
 - Do/ can students use English for communication inside and outside the classroom?
 - Do/ can students read simple texts for understanding and pleasure?

- Do/ can students express opinions, ideas, and feelings using simple English?
 - Do/ can students work with peers to learn language together?
- d. Learning outcomes? Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

Experience: Teachers in classrooms with the integrated curriculum

9. Mode of teaching: grade teaching or disciplinary teaching. Why?
10. Training/s before going in the classroom with the integrated curriculum
 - a. How many? (if any)
 - b. When? (if any)
 - c. How effective? (if any)
11. Daily experience with integrated curriculum (a bit in detail)
 - a. Time management- to prepare your class, to develop resources and to plan evaluation
 - b. What do you do in your regular class? (activities in detail)
12. Methods you use to teach integrated curriculum
 - a. How do you teach each lesson in general?
 - b. How do you involve your students in the teaching learning activities?
 - c. Are you using any different method for IC than the regular curriculum?
13. Response and expectations of parents from the new curriculum
 - a. Have you ever talked to any parents regarding new curriculum?
 - b. How have they felt with this?
14. Your experience regarding teaching materials
 - a. What do you use teaching materials in a general class?
 - b. How do you carry out the textbook? (Do you believe that poor teachers are protected by the textbooks?)
 - c. What do your students do in a normal class (a bit in detail)?
15. social interaction for understanding Integrated curriculum
 - a. Do you learn with peers (MKO)? How much do you interact (social interaction) with teachers about the new curriculum? (Reflect the real world/ connect school & society)
 - b. How do you collaborate among colleagues? Is there practice of sharing and guiding other teachers?
 - c. How can teachers/students do better with guidance from others (ZPD) in learning/knowledge development?

- d. Is there anything that you have felt too difficult to understand regarding Integrated curriculum?

16. Assessment and evaluation

- a. How do you evaluate your students learning outcomes?
- b. As part of assessment, what do you do in addition to pen & paper test?
- c. How is your experience with...
 - Formative assessment? Frequency? Evaluation type?
 - Summative assessment? Frequency? Evaluation type?

17. Experience of being a research participant: How you felt being a research participant?

General probes:

How....?

Why....?

What do you mean by....?

Can you tell me more about ...?

Would you give an example...?

How did you feel....?