



## Learner-Centered Teaching in Nepal: Insights from Basic School Teachers, Students and Administrators

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### Abstract

Learner-centered teaching is a philosophy, initially developed in Western countries, is increasingly influencing education globally, including in developing nations like Nepal. This study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers, students, and educational administrators in Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City regarding learner-centered teaching practices. A general qualitative research approach was used, with purposive sampling selecting 12 teachers, 12 students, and 2 educational administrators from the Education Section of Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, and observations. The findings indicate that the curriculum at the school level in Nepal, along with the national curriculum framework and educational policies, reflects a commitment to learner-centered teaching. However, despite this formal acknowledgment, there is a noticeable gap when it comes to providing a clear framework for implementing learner-centered teaching within the curriculum. While the overall policies advocate for such an approach, the curriculum lacks specific guidelines, structures, or models that would help teachers effectively adopt and apply learner-centered methods in the classroom. Accordingly, most basic school teachers support learner-centered teaching, their classroom practices remain predominantly teacher-centered. Major obstacles include poor physical facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient parental support. Additionally, social influences are not always favorable. To enhance the implementation of learner-centered teaching, adjustments are needed, including greater community involvement in the teaching and learning process.

**Key words:** Learner-centered teaching, teacher centred teaching, curriculum, teaching, learning, pedagogy

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### Pedagogical Practices in the Nepal

Since the establishment of democracy in 1950, Nepal witnessed a divergence from its previously slow and stagnant educational growth, marked by an increase in the opening of schools. Prior to this period, education in Nepal was predominantly influenced by faith and classical Sanskrit traditions, with limited

implementation of Western education during the Rana regime (Shah, 2024). During the ancient and medieval periods, teaching was primarily teacher-centered and based on rote learning. Religious scriptures and select literature constituted the main educational materials (Bajracharya, 1974). The tradition of orally transmitting knowledge was necessitated by the scarcity of written texts. Consequently, religious books were the primary sources for teaching and learning (Shah, 2024; Alexander, 2000). Rather than fostering understanding, the norm was the memorization and replication of subject matter. Alexander (2000) characterized this form of pedagogy: "the mode of transmission was oral - through continuous recitation and repetition, backward and forward from teacher to students; texts were committed to memory." In this system, teachers held a high status as the primary sources of information and exercised considerable autonomy in text selection and pedagogy, tailored to individual needs and processes. Progression to the next level of learning was contingent upon a student's ability to memorize and recite a given piece of text to the instructor (Altekar, 1956).

During the Rana period, English was adopted as the medium of instruction. The educational materials predominantly comprised religious scriptures and select literature. The curriculum relied heavily on a limited number of textbooks (Singh, 2012). Religious instruction, both Buddhist and Hindu, was characterized by rote learning, group recitations, and the repetition. The religious education system lacked a structured examination method, with student progression being entirely dependent on the teacher's discretion. Education during the Rana era was predominantly academic, emphasizing drilling, memorization, and lecturing (Aryal, 1970). However, standardized evaluations began to emerge in the form of half-yearly and annual examinations.

The advent of democracy in Nepal facilitated the opening of schools and the advancement of education. The first commission on education, the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) of 1954, signaled the commencement of the projected growth of Nepal's educational sector. Subsequent educational reform commissions, such as the All-Round National Education Commission (ARNEC) in 1961 and the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, further contributed to this development. These commissions led to the establishment of dedicated school buildings, adequate numbers of classrooms, and a sufficient cadre of teachers. Arrangements for grade-wise education, textbooks, and examinations were systematically instituted. Despite these advancements, traditional pedagogical methods persisted, characterized by lecturing, drilling, rote memorization, and chorus repetition.

Beginning in 1984, the Seti Programme, Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP), and Primary Education Project (PEP) have significantly influenced the growth of education, impacting initiatives that continue to this day. Various educational initiatives, such as the National Education Commission (NEC), Basic and Primary Education Programme I (BPEP-I), Basic and Primary Education Programme II (BPEP-II), the National High Level Education Commission, Education for All (EFA), and the School Sector Reform (SSR), have substantially contributed to the advancement of education in Nepal during this period. The emphasis on and value placed on access to quality education have become increasingly relevant. Schools were designed to include essential facilities such as houses, toilets, playgrounds, greenhouses, and compounds. Classrooms were required to be adequately illuminated and ventilated and equipped with appropriate furniture, appliances, and sufficient space. However, despite these advancements, deficiencies in physical facilities remain (Shah, 2024). Many schools still operate in old buildings with inadequate classrooms, overcrowded lessons, and a lack of toilets or separate restrooms for boys and girls (Shah, 2020). Additionally, issues such as poor furnishing and overall inadequate physical infrastructure continue to be observed.

The curriculum and textbooks have undergone multiple revisions since 1984. Essential features of the program have been established, including grade-wise terminal targets, primary-level terminal goals, subject-area scope and sequence, and the availability of optional subjects (Sharma, 2005). Emphasis has been placed on making the program more practical and applicable to everyday life, as well as on ensuring it is gender-responsive, equitable, and child/student-friendly (Singh, 2012). Textbooks were updated in conjunction with curriculum revisions. The importance of using the mother tongue for instruction at lower primary grades has also been highlighted. However, there has been a shortage of training content and

limited implementation of these updated methodologies. Traditional pedagogical methods, such as whole-class instruction, lecturing, instructor superiority, and a focus on test orientation, continue to be prevalent (Singh, 2012). This is despite the emphasis on individualized teaching, child/student-centered approaches, and continuous and formative assessment.

In Nepalese schools, pedagogical practices are primarily dominated by teachers, who treat students as a homogeneous group and place a high emphasis on rote memorization. A comprehensive pedagogical approach, where the entire class is taught in the same way and at the same pace at all times, is not conducive to the needs of children, particularly those who differ from the majority in the classroom. The slogan "quality education for all" necessitates attention to the individual appropriateness of pedagogy for each child. LCT, as highlighted in the objectives of Nepal's primary education system, has been reiterated in important educational documents (MOES, p. 13, 2002).

At present, there are notable discrepancies in the support provided to teachers and the practices employed, particularly when analyzed through the lens of more effective pedagogical approaches such as LCT. One major issue is the provision of a single national-level curriculum and a single textbook. In contrast, an LCT curriculum is typically constructed according to the interests and needs of the pupils, utilizing a variety of resources and activities (Hawes and Hawes, 1932). Another significant discrepancy is the emphasis on norm-referenced tests. While the current system prioritizes these assessments, LCT employs criterion-referenced tests with a formative emphasis, which are better suited to individual learning progress (Craft, 1996). Additionally, there is a dominance of whole-class teaching. This method fails to address the differentiated levels of student learning effectively, whereas LCT advocates for individualized or group teaching to better meet diverse student needs.

Student promotion is predominantly based on periodic, summative evaluations. In an LCT approach, however, students should receive continuous support to maximize their learning potential. This continuous assessment allows for ongoing feedback and adjustment, fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment. Classroom pedagogical practices are significantly influenced by teacher preparation and the transfer of training skills. This study examined the transfer of these training skills within classroom settings. Findings indicated that there are no significant differences in the classroom delivery practices between trained and untrained teachers. Moreover, studies in Nepal have highlighted that there is no substantial difference in the academic achievements of students taught by trained versus untrained teachers.

Studies on the impact of training have highlighted several shortcomings. Trainers often fail to serve as role models for teachers, which undermines the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, large class sizes and poor classroom facilities create environments that are not conducive to the implementation of improved pedagogical methods. Teachers frequently lack the competence to properly utilize LCT methods. The training packages themselves also have deficiencies, such as a lack of activity-based learning components. While the vision of pedagogical improvement through LCT and diversity education is appropriate for enhancing the quality of education, several critical questions remain unanswered. It is necessary to define what LCT means in the context of Nepal. Efforts to achieve LCT must be consolidated effectively. Additionally, appropriate assessment tools need to be identified and their purposes clearly defined. Classroom pedagogy must also account for the diverse population of children in Nepalese schools. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the conditions and activities necessary to enable teachers to identify their pedagogical needs and employ better approaches in their classrooms. This includes creating supportive environments, providing adequate resources, and offering continuous professional development to ensure that teachers can implement LCT effectively.

### **Research questions**

- How do basic school teachers, students and administrators perceive learner-centered teaching?
- How do basic school teachers and students implement learner-centered teaching in their classrooms?
- What challenges do basic school teachers and students encounter when applying learner-centered teaching methods?

## **Review of the Literature**

This section is divided into two parts: theoretical and empirical. The theoretical part offers an in-depth analysis of learner-centered teaching, examining its foundational concepts, theories, models, and pedagogical principles. It explores how these concepts are applied in practice, their rationale, and their implications for teaching and learning. The empirical part reviews previous studies on LCT, focusing on implementation, outcomes, and challenges. It synthesizes key findings, identifies trends and gaps, and discusses their implications for current practices and future research. Together, these analyses provide a comprehensive overview of LCT, combining theoretical insights with practical evidence.

### **Theories informing learner-centred teaching**

LCT can be interpreted differently by various scholars who emphasize the significant role of learners in pedagogical practices. One common definition of LCT includes the idea that students should have some degree of control and responsibility over the appraisal process, such as through peer and self-assessment (Falchikov & Boud, 1989; Klenowski, 1995; Topping, 1998). This perspective highlights the importance of students being actively involved in evaluating their own and their peers' progress. Additionally, LCT in curriculum design often involves empowering learners to make decisions about what to study and how to approach their learning. This approach allows students to take charge of their educational journey, which is a core aspect of LCT (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). This empowerment is not limited to learners alone; it also involves a shift in the roles of teachers. Rather than merely delivering content, teachers are expected to facilitate the learning process by helping students achieve their educational goals. According to Kember (1997), LCT emphasizes the outcomes of student learning rather than the content itself, placing the responsibility on teachers to support and guide students towards desirable results. Furthermore, LCT is often defined as promoting the development of learners throughout the learning process. In practice, this means that learners should receive ongoing, formative assessments rather than just end-of-course summative evaluations. Daily feedback and continuous assessment are crucial for reinforcing learning and helping students to grow and improve continuously (Brown, 2004; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). By incorporating regular evaluations, LCT strengthens the learning experience and supports student development more effectively.

LCT requires the adaptation of pedagogical processes to align with the needs, desires, learning styles, and contexts of individual children. According to Wiles and Bondi (1993), an approach centered on the child must focus on each student individually to provide comprehensive learning experiences across affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains. This approach underscores the importance of addressing the varied dimensions of student development and tailoring instruction to meet diverse needs. The principles of quality and equity in education are inherently linked to a child-centered approach. Hawes and Hawes (1932) further define LCT as an educational theory or system that prioritizes the pupil and their individual characteristics in the instructional process. This perspective shifts the focus away from subject matter, external authority, and rigid educational requirements, placing the student at the center of learning. Consequently, the curriculum is designed based on the interests and needs of the students, ensuring that educational content is relevant and engaging for each learner.

A critical issue in pedagogical practices is determining who should be the central decision-maker in a child's education: the teacher or adult, or the child themselves. In this context, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's perspective offers significant insights. Rousseau argued that children should be granted more genuine freedom and autonomy, allowing them to take a more active role in their learning experiences. He emphasized that experience plays a crucial role in learning and should precede formal instruction. Rousseau believed that education should not begin with the extensive body of information adults deem important but rather with what the child is capable of learning and interested in.

Rousseau's viewpoint highlights the distinction between children and adults in terms of perception and understanding. He argued that children should exercise reason based on their own experiences rather than on concepts beyond their comprehension (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). This approach suggests that instead of starting with predetermined subjects and skills valued by adults, education should begin with what is already within the child's experience and ability. By focusing on this, learning becomes more engaging and enjoyable, fostering a child's desire to continue learning and developing into a responsible member of society (Sutherland, 1988).

Edgeworth developed a methodology course grounded in the principles of LCT. In his approach, Edgeworth advocated for encouraging children to learn through invention and exploration rather than through traditional, rigid disciplines that may be beyond their comprehension (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). This methodology emphasizes engaging children in creative processes that foster their learning, rather than imposing external structures or content that may not align with their developmental stage or interests. Similarly, Pestalozzi, a prominent educational philosopher, championed the idea of nurturing a child's innate knowledge (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). Pestalozzi believed that education should begin with moral development and gradually integrate intellectual education as the child's awareness grows. He argued that intellectual education should start with object perception and then expand in alignment with the child's cognitive development. Pestalozzi viewed children as active participants in their learning process and critiqued the rote learning methods prevalent during his time. He stressed that the role of educators was not to impose knowledge but to facilitate and encourage the child's self-activity through sensory experiences (Doddington and Hilton, 2007). This approach aimed to foster an environment where children could actively engage in learning, thus moving away from traditional, passive methods of instruction.

The Plowden Report, published in 1967, is widely recognized as a seminal work in the field of child-centered education. Officially titled "Children and Their Primary Schools," this report is celebrated for its profound impact on educational practices and its enduring influence on the principles of LCT. The most frequently quoted passage from the report, "At the heart of the educational process lies the child" (CACE, 1967), encapsulates the core philosophy of LCT, which places the child at the center of the educational experience. The Plowden Report emphasizes that achieving the desired educational outcomes requires aligning legislation, curriculum, and other educational elements with the intrinsic needs and acceptance of the child. The report advocates for more formal and flexible training methods, such as group work, which were highlighted as pivotal in creating an effective learning environment. This approach contrasts with traditional methods and underscores the importance of adapting educational practices to the needs of the child. According to the report, the school environment should be designed to provide children with a supportive atmosphere that allows them to develop naturally, at their own pace, and in a manner that is appropriate for them. This philosophy reflects a broader vision of education that responds to the inherent growth patterns of children, emphasizing a curriculum that is both transparent and thematic.

The major philosophies emerging from the Plowden analysis advocate for a primary education system that is responsive to the developmental needs of children. The report promotes a curriculum that facilitates learning through the provision of resources and the encouragement of exploration, rather than relying solely on traditional, didactic teaching methods. The Plowden Report thus represents a significant shift towards a more child-centered approach in education, one that values the child's active role in the learning process and seeks to create a nurturing environment conducive to their holistic development (Doddington and Hilton, 2007).

Dewey, a prominent educational theorist, made significant contributions to understanding the relationship between education and society. In his 1899 work, Dewey emphasized the critical link between schools and the broader social context, arguing for necessary reforms in educational practices to better align with contemporary social needs. He was concerned that educational methods and materials were not adequately addressing the diverse and evolving needs of students within their local contexts. Dewey argued that schools needed to adapt their approaches to better reflect and respond to the social environment in which they operated. He believed that educational methods should evolve to meet the specific needs of students

and their communities, rather than adhering to outdated or irrelevant practices. This perspective underscores the importance of making education more relevant and responsive to the social and cultural contexts of the time.

Dewey's concerns extended to the availability of resources in schools. He noted that many schools lacked sufficient resources to provide meaningful learning experiences for children, particularly those from under-resourced regions. Dewey was critical of traditional methods that relied heavily on abstract instruction and theoretical content, advocating instead for practical exercises and hands-on learning experiences. He argued that science education, in particular, should involve direct, practical activities rather than relying solely on textbooks and lectures. In his 1915 work, Dewey further developed his ideas about the role of children's interests in the learning process. He stressed that education should be centered around the interests and experiences of the child, rather than focusing solely on prescribed curricula or external standards. Dewey viewed fiction and other engaging media as integral to the educational experience, recognizing that these tools could connect with children's lived experiences and stimulate their natural curiosity and motivation to learn. Overall, Dewey's educational philosophy emphasizes the need for education to be dynamically integrated with societal needs and to engage students through relevant, practical experiences. His work advocates for a more student-centered approach that considers the interests and contexts of learners, aiming to create educational environments that are both meaningful and effective.

### **Empirical Studies**

This section provides a comprehensive review of previous studies, divided into two subsections for clarity. The first focuses on research conducted in Nepal, analyzing local nuances, methodologies, key findings, and implications. The second subsection examines international studies, comparing and contrasting them with those from Nepal. This comparison highlights approaches and findings, identifying common themes and applications. The review synthesizes existing knowledge and identifies gaps for future research, offering a thorough understanding of the current state of research on the topic.

#### ***Nepalese studies on learner centred teaching***

Bajarcharya (1995) conducted a Ph.D. study on using a narrative approach to enhance the interaction between science and culture in education. The research examined science education within real school and social settings, revealing that social and cultural beliefs often permeate classroom discussions. This approach created dynamic interactions by merging scientific inquiry with cultural beliefs, leading to more engaging and interactive learning environments compared to traditional rote memorization methods. The study found that the narrative approach significantly increased student engagement, encouraging deeper discussions and explorations of scientific concepts within their cultural contexts. However, it also noted a paradox: while students found the learning process effortless and engaging, they felt anxious about not being taught science in the traditional sense, worrying about course completion. Overall, Bajarcharya's study highlighted both the advantages and challenges of integrating a narrative approach in science teaching. It emphasized the importance of cultural contexts in education and suggested that narrative techniques can make learning more interactive and meaningful. However, it also stressed the need to balance innovative methods with students' expectations and concerns about academic progress.

In 1997, Joshi conducted a comprehensive study titled "Determinants of Mathematics Achievement Using Structural Equation Modelling." This research aimed to identify and analyze the various factors influencing the success of students in mathematics. Among the many determinants, the study particularly highlighted the significant impact of teacher availability and competence on student achievement. Joshi found that the lack of trained and skilled teachers was a critical issue, especially in rural areas. This shortage of qualified educators was identified as a major barrier to effective mathematics education, impeding student progress and performance. In contrast, while urban areas had better access to trained and skilled teachers, these regions faced their own challenges. The study pointed out that the scarcity of adequate teaching materials in urban classrooms also hindered the teaching and learning process. This shortage of resources, despite the presence of competent teachers, created obstacles that affected the quality of education and student

outcomes in mathematics. Furthermore, Joshi's research delved into the role of peer involvement in the learning process. The study found that there were generally low levels of peer interaction and collaborative learning among students, both within and outside the school environment. This lack of peer engagement was identified as a significant factor influencing the learning atmosphere. The study suggested that increased peer involvement could potentially enhance the achievement of mathematics students by providing a more supportive and interactive learning environment. Overall, Joshi's 1997 study provided a detailed examination of the multifaceted factors affecting mathematics achievement. It underscored the importance of having trained and skilled teachers, particularly in rural areas, and highlighted the need for adequate teaching materials in urban settings. Additionally, it emphasized the potential benefits of fostering greater peer involvement in the learning process to create a more conducive environment for student success in mathematics.

In his 2006 Ph.D. study titled "Curriculum Standards: Implications of the Desired and Current Standards for the Reform of Mathematics Education in Nepal," Sharma investigated the discrepancies between the desired curriculum standards and the current practices in secondary education. Sharma identified a need for a pedagogical shift, recommending the incorporation of new content into the secondary level curriculum. His study proposed six innovative teaching methods: demonstration, response to questions, inquiry, practical application, inductive reasoning, and problem-solving. However, Sharma found that teachers predominantly adhered to traditional teaching practices, showing a reluctance to adopt innovative methods. This conservative approach was largely attributed to the backwash effect of the existing examination system, which emphasized rote memorization and repetitive drilling. Consequently, classroom instruction remained focused on memorization and reproduction of information to align with the examination requirements.

### ***Aboard studies on learner centred teaching***

Research studies exploring LCT have employed both positivist and interpretive/qualitative methods. Garret and Shortall (2002) conducted a survey with 103 college students in Brazil to evaluate their experiences with learner-centered versus teacher-centered activities. The survey utilized a questionnaire that included items measuring affective reactions (such as enjoyment and anxiety) and perceived learning value (learning outcomes) on a 5-point scale. In addition to providing ratings, participants were asked to articulate the reasons behind their responses. The findings revealed that students perceived learner-centered activities as more enjoyable, fun, and relaxing. However, in terms of perceived learning value, students rated teacher-centered activities more favorably. This suggests that while students find learner-centered activities more engaging and enjoyable, they are uncertain about the effectiveness of these activities for their language development.

In Vietnam, Van Dang (2006) employed observation as the primary research method, supplemented by interviews, to investigate the implementation of learner-centered approaches in an EFL teacher training college. The study revealed that the learner-centered approach significantly enhanced classroom interaction, with activities such as publishing bulletins and conducting mini-conferences being particularly effective. The EFL teachers involved were noted for their high proficiency and strong motivation. However, Van Dang observed that the success of the learner-centered approach was heavily dependent on factors such as class structure, physical environment, and classroom culture. These factors can be challenging to manage, particularly in large classroom settings. It is important to note that all of the studies mentioned were conducted in secondary schools or adult language teaching contexts, with none focusing on primary schools.

Rahman (1987) conducted a comprehensive case study to examine the implementation of a learner-centered curriculum in primary education across four schools in Malaysia. The primary objective of this study was to assess the extent to which the principles of learner-centered education were being practiced by primary school teachers. Despite the curriculum being in place for four years, Rahman found that the conceptual understanding and practical application of learner-centered education principles were significantly lacking in the observed schools. The study revealed that the teachers predominantly adhered

to the traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) methodology known as Present-Practice-Produce (PPP).

This approach involves presenting new language material, practicing it through controlled activities, and producing it in more communicative contexts. Rahman's observations indicated that the teachers were not effectively integrating the principles of learner-centered education, which emphasizes student autonomy, active learning, and a focus on individual learner needs and interests. The findings suggest that despite the formal adoption of a learner-centered curriculum, the entrenched teaching practices and possibly insufficient teacher training or support resulted in limited practical changes in classroom instruction. Rahman's study underscores the challenges in shifting from traditional teaching paradigms to more progressive, learner-centered approaches, particularly in contexts where established practices are deeply rooted. This highlights the need for ongoing professional development and structural support to facilitate meaningful implementation of learner-centered education principles.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Given the nature of the research questions in this study, a general qualitative research tradition was employed without adhering to a specific qualitative method. Qualitative research focuses on understanding and explaining issues through their social significance, making it useful for exploring complex or evolving topics. This approach provides a comprehensive interpretation of participants' perspectives and actions within the context of their overall lives (Ritchie et al., 2013). A key feature of this tradition is sense-making. In the present study, the researcher aimed to understand how educators, learners, and administrators perceive and experience learner - centered teaching.

### **Sampling procedures**

In the present study, a purposive sampling technique was employed. This method relies on the researcher's judgment to select specific units for investigation based on their relevance to the research objectives. Unlike probability sampling techniques, which involve random selection and typically yield larger samples, purposive sampling results in a relatively small sample size. This approach is chosen for its focus on obtaining detailed and contextually rich data from targeted participants who are deemed particularly relevant to the study.

### **Respondents**

In this study, the sample comprised twelve teachers and twelve students from four basic schools in Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan Municipality, Kailali District. Additionally, two administrators from the Education Section of Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan were included. The schools involved were: (i) Parbati Basic School, Purano Airport, (ii) Janata Basic School, Chatakpur, (iii) Rastriya Basic School, Taranagar, and (iv) Saraswoti Basic School, Bangarakatan. Each school contributed three teachers, with a total of eight female and four male teachers, aged between 20 and 55, and with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 40 years. The student participants, five boys and seven girls, were aged 8 to 14. All participants consented to take part after being briefed on the study's objectives.

### **Instruments**

The present study employed two research tools: in-depth interviews and classroom observations. In-depth interviews provided detailed insights into participants' perspectives and experiences, while classroom observations allowed for the direct assessment of teaching practices and student interactions. Together, these methods offered a comprehensive understanding of the educational environment and its dynamics.

### **Procedure**

In this study, trial observations and in-depth interviews were initially conducted at Parbati Basic School, Purano Airport, Dhangadhi. Feedback from a member of the Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City Education Section led to adjustments to ensure cultural sensitivity in the questions. Subsequently, three interviews and three observations were carried out at each of the four schools. Each interview lasted approximately

one hour, and each observation covered a single 35-minute class period. A focus group was held at each school, taking about 45 minutes. The research team, comprising three student researchers, visited the schools over three days, typically conducting observations on the first day and interviews and focus groups on the second and third days. A contact person from the Education Section accompanied the team during these visits. After completing the school visits, the team interviewed two Education Section employees at the Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City office. To ensure data reliability and validity, observations were conducted in pairs, and the first two school interviews, as well as those at the Education Section office, were also conducted in pairs. Subsequent interviews and focus groups were conducted individually due to time constraints. All interviews and focus groups were recorded with formal consent from the participants. The researchers used a consistent topic list and reviewed each other's recordings to enhance internal validity and reliability.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using qualitative methods with an inductive approach. Transcriptions were coded with labels to enhance transparency and verifiability, thereby improving reliability. To ensure internal validity, labels were closely matched to respondents' answers. The analysis involved three phases: open labeling and encrypting, defining and organizing labels into categories, and integrating and relating these categories. This process led to the development of core labels that addressed the research questions. The study's reliability is strengthened by the method's repeatability. Initial analyses of interviews and observations were conducted in pairs, while subsequent analyses were done individually. All data were processed carefully, anonymously, and not shared with third parties.

### **Findings**

This section addresses the key findings related to each research question, incorporating observational notes as well as interviews with teachers, informants, and focus groups with students. Each quotation is labeled to identify whether it is from a teacher (T), student (S), or administrator (A). Unless otherwise noted, the number of participants in each group is not specified. The results reveal four major themes, which are detailed in the following sections.

#### **Perceptions on learner centred teaching**

The main actor of the teaching learning process is the teacher. By implementing the curriculum, the teacher is doing the work of developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the students. Teachers are doing the work of bringing changes in the students during the school period. Therefore, teachers' perception and practice also play an important role in teaching learning process. In this section, the perceptions of teachers, students and administrators on LCT:

##### ***Teachers' perceptions on LCT***

Teachers pointed out that that every learner is different and learners have to be self-centered to succeed in life. Thus, almost all teachers agreed that empowering individuality was necessary in LCT. They all mentioned that there is something every person excels at. They also often made a distinction between skills and abilities when doing this. *'Some learners are not academically gifted, but in skills or imagination'* (9T). It was primarily about improving the academically underperforming pupils while reflecting on the value of acquiring practical skills. *'He couldn't understand much, but he was able to acquire something when you took him outside in the field, the yard'* (4T). In order to become autonomous, teachers want learners to learn abilities and skills are built as learner practically do things.

Teachers suggested that LCT indicates that the teacher presents and provides examples, but most tasks are done by the child. *'Teachers are expected to supervise, encourage and assist students'* (8T). In this way, the role of a guide is for teachers. Teachers will teach what life is all about, helping children build a view of life and become great people in life. Children should use creativity of their own. *'Students should not copy, but do it on their own'* (11T). Children can, in addition, express themselves. *'Students should learn about jumping and laughing'* (7T). Teachers also pointed out that often children are too quiet. Pupils also presume that the

tutor knows best. A supportive learning environment is important in order to let pupils express themselves. 'It is the teacher's job to build a free school environment in which students respected' (9T). There are also many items learned by children because children need to be interested to understand. One participant mentioned that free expression is more important than discipline. Nevertheless, all teacher stated discipline is very important, because there is no way an undisciplined child can pass school and too much freedom will not help the pupils. This does not always cohere with the learner-centered attitudes most teachers have: *'Children should not talk all the time' (2T)*, and *'some children are undisciplined without use of gain' (8T)*. However, most of the time disciplining happens by guiding and counselling: caning can do disservice to children, and being too strict makes pupils resistant.

### ***Learners' perception on LCT***

The learners also find it important that there is discipline in the class. *'I like discipline to remind us not to joke around' (2S)*. It became clear during the focus groups with the pupils that they did not really know what learner-centered education means or what the advantages are. The learners seemed unfamiliar with critical questions about their education, responding by describing the current situation automatically. A learner said after a brief explanation, *'this is not in our school' (1S)*. It is interesting to note that most students seem to prefer aspects that suit a more teacher-centered education. A student stated that he preferred listening to independent work. During class, another pupil liked to make a few notes and read at home what the teacher had said. A boy also gave an example of his old school: *'A teacher focused more on pupils in my old school than the exams, which caused the pupils to fail and not pass' (3S)*. The students also pointed out that their teachers are humble people who might ask questions about them. Some kids also preferred to work independently than to listen.

### ***Administrator's perception on LCT***

It seems that the secondary level curriculum has absorbed LCT principles. But for teachers, LCT is very challenging. *'Teachers are not able to implement this teaching method effectively' (A2)*. They have not been trained enough about it. It has not been possible to sensitize all the teachers across the country about the teaching learning strategies included in the curriculum. On the one hand, there is a lack of skilled teachers, on the other hand, there is also a lack of suitable environment for student-centered teaching in schools. *Conventional teacher-centered teaching is prevalent in all schools in Nepal (A1)*. It seems that the teachers are also teaching through the traditional lecture method. Teachers read the lessons given in the books and narrate them to the students and then explain them. It is very difficult to immediately change this kind of educational situation. Teachers are not skilled in teaching through activity method. *'There is not much space in the classroom for activities' (A1)*. Due to the large number of students, it is very difficult to implement the LCT in the classroom.

### ***Prevailing pedagogical practices in Nepal***

Pedagogical practices is the most important aspect of the educational process. If teachers are able to make their class delivery effective, the purpose of education can be easily accomplished. But still teachers' teaching is based on traditional thought and archaic thinking. Schools in Nepal are still based on teacher-centered teaching. Teachers and textbooks are the fundamental aspects of the pedagogical practices. Perceptions of teachers, students, and administrators regarding the pedagogical practices are presented in the following sections:

### ***Teachers' perceptions on LCT***

The teachers gave explanations of what they practically do in class during the interviews. There were different things going forward. The goal of teachers was to use multiple teaching methods. They listed elements that suit a learner-centered way of education on the one hand. Teachers believed that instead of classes, they could challenge citizens. Let children function in class independently: without being instructed, pupils will do things. *'If you just talk, children sleep' (5T)*. Teachers have said that real-life resources are used in the curriculum and confirmed that they use group work. In informal groups, children will discuss issues. The children have stated that they work in groups often and support each other in class.

On the other hand, certain teacher-centered elements were also stated by teachers. For instance, *'one teacher said that during class he doesn't talk to children in class, you just teach and offer information'* (4T).

### ***Learners' perception on LCT***

The students affirm this, *'the teacher sometimes comes and talks the entire class'* (S) and *'our teacher sometimes sends us several notes but no clarification'* (2S). The findings didn't fit the teachers' learner-centered expectations much of the time. LCT were often identified in the class, but the central role was performed most of the time by the teacher. This lecture was about listening and replying to the chorus. Children did not ask questions at all and occasionally took notes. Teachers also asked to check if the children were still adopting 'we are together.' The students then respond with a 'yes' chorus, even though some could not have heard or were not listening. The teacher called for a recitation of the material most of the time. This was often demanded by the class as a whole, sometimes even by individual children. There were just a few questions noted by teachers challenging kids to consider or reason logically. There was active use of textbooks in a few classes, but there were ample books for all the children only once. The class went outdoors in a few observations, for example to make a windmill or to practice counting through the use of stones. Pupils' seating arrangements were often in rows, but most frequently in clusters. Often the teacher proposed options for community work. There were only a few students directly involved in these programs. There was hardly any interaction with the students, only a handful did the job. The bulk of social events were held in secrecy. Overall, the most striking finding was that there were no questions posed by children in class.

### ***Administrator's perception on LCT***

It is not possible to bring about change in classroom delivery unless serious discourse is done on the process of transforming the knowledge gained in teacher education curriculum, teaching and training in the classroom to produce teachers. Training is provided to teachers every year. But teachers are rarely trained in the innovative teaching learning methods. *The knowledge and skills learned in the training are not reaching the classroom and the students* (1A). There is not serious thinking about how to bring the knowledge and skills acquired in the training to the classroom. *No matter how much knowledge and skills teachers acquire, they insist on rote learning* (2A). Because the traditional teacher-centered method is easier than other methods and teachers do not want to work hard. The teachers make the students read the textbook and make them memorize what is written in it. It does not develop critical thinking of the learners. On the contrary, it destroys their critical thinking.

### ***Societal influence on classroom delivery***

Society establishes schools. Schools are necessary for society and schools are also very necessary for society. Schools or teachers have an important role in social change. Only the children of the community study in school. There is unique relationship between schools and society. Therefore, school and society complement each other. The following paragraphs present the opinions of teachers, students and administrators about the impact of society and the family on education.

### ***Teachers' perceptions on LCT***

Social influences often put pressure on the teachers in the teachers' perceptions. Many teachers pointed out that the government is result-oriented, there is an exam-oriented structure that only requires children to comply and graduate. The government insists on the curriculum, and the government wants all lessons to be taught. *'Government forces kids to force teachers'* (8T). The government would like to reform the structure of education to make education more realistic. Multiple teachers state that *'earlier education was more teacher-centered and the government, however often promotes something verbally, but not realistic'* (6T). By wanting to see academic results, parents often placed pressure on the teacher's position. Nevertheless, parents also transfer duties to educators. Teachers have found out that the situation at home is often different from the situation at school: teachers communicate more with the kids, and at home there is no complete speech. *'Critical thinking is hard for kids because they are not used to it at home'* (2T). Teachers thought that the school can be a safeguard for a poor home situation: teachers can give kids a

picture that some do not see at home. In this the students were less evident, sometimes they said parents were more-strict, sometimes it was the school. Teachers can get parents' social support as well. Teachers suggested that the child should feel comfortable performing in class at home. As a team, parents and teachers should work. *'A house with books can't be compared with one without'* (8T). Apart from social influences, the experienced self-efficacy is also important for the perceptions of teachers. Teachers mentioned they were able to teach but also that it is difficult to teach. Most of the teachers mentioned that motivation of the teacher was also very important. Thereby, teacher preparation is important. Most teachers mentioned *'we have these skills'*. When talking about the consideration of the difficulty, teachers stated that teaching can be challenging in a large class, and focus on syllabus makes practical teaching hard. One teacher stated *he missed skills such as creativity and problem solving* (5T).

### ***Learners' perception on LCT***

Children studying in school also spend a lot of time at home and in society. Although it seems that the school teaches all the learning to the children, the learning taught by the home and the society is very effective. Therefore, compared to learning at school, learning at home and society is lifelong learning. *It is very important for children to be disciplined according to the values of our society and family* (7T). We cannot openly discuss any topic with our parents. Arguing openly with parents is against home and family discipline. Children should follow what their parents say silently.

### ***Administrator's perception on LCT***

Nepali society is still in the archaic way of thinking. Democratic values, recognition, culture are not given priority in the family. In a family, children should obey what their parents say. Children cannot refute the opinion of their parents. Whatever is right or wrong, children have to follow it. It is not enough to practice democracy only in schools. In this context, one administrator comment:

*Even if the teachers in the school openly discuss and interact with the students, that behavior cannot be practiced in the family. Because in the family, children can't talk to their parents about things they don't understand.*

In LCT, children actively learn by themselves. They learn by interacting and discussing with their peers. Children lead their own learning. But on the contrary, in the home, family and society, children should accept the leadership of their parents. They cannot go against the decision of their parents. Thus, *in this way, there is a contradiction in the approach of schools and society towards democracy* (1A). Even in Nepali society, democracy has not been properly practiced. Even though Nepali society has theoretically adopted democratic values, beliefs, and norms, in practice, hegemony still persists. There is still a huge gap between different classes of people in the society. There is a difference between rich people and the poor, backward and uneducated people. This has affected their children. Its effect has reached even the school classrooms.

### **Blockades in learner-centered teaching**

#### ***Teachers' perceptions on LCT***

Many things are needed to implement LCT. But there are many hurdles and obstacles to successfully implementing it in the secondary school classroom. First of all, the school environment is not suitable for implementing LCT. *Our school classroom are small where activities are not possible* (7T). *Forty to sixty students have to be taught in one classroom* (3T). The school lacks essential materials for teaching such as playgrounds, open spaces, desks and benches. There is a huge shortage of teaching materials and libraries in schools. *There is a lack of reading materials for teachers and students to understand LCT* (1T). If these materials were available in the library, teachers and students would benefit from it. It is very important to arrange books related to teaching methods in the library. There are several considerations that make the use of LCT difficult in context of Nepal. First of all, some children are very vulnerable in class. Many children are orphans, some pupils are hungry, and in the upper classes there are menstruation problems. Some pupils also have issues with the language of the English, which affects the quality of the education. The fact that all teachers point out that there are not enough teaching materials in school is a big barrier. *'We're*

*forced to teach teacher-centered 'without teaching aids' (8T).* Because of a lack of finance, the buildings are often in bad conditions. The use of LCT is made difficult by overcrowded classes. During the observations, the researchers also noticed these difficult elements in the environment. In the Nepalese context, there are fewer factors that ease the use of LCT. Teachers indicated that in the school, the community could play a protective role. The teachers have also stated that their strength is that the teachers work together and support each other.

### ***Learners' perception on LCT***

For effective teaching in the classroom, it is necessary for teachers to be trained and well versed in research. The teachers who teach us try to explain the lessons in our textbooks. There is no such thing as bringing them out of the classroom and doing activities. *We are not able to understand many topics (6S). I am very afraid to ask sirs (11S).* The teachers teach through the traditional lecture method. Teaching in this way does not require much effort and it is easy to control the students. It is necessary for the government to provide continuous training to teachers in pedagogical practices and to provide authentic books about LCT in libraries. It is also very important to arrange information and communication technology for teachers to learn pedagogical knowledge and skills.

### ***Administrator's perception on LCT***

There are also many people who criticize LCT as a travelling policy. This concept has been developed in western countries and now it has reached the undeveloped countries of the east like Nepal. Nepali society is based on traditional values, beliefs, customs and culture. *Nepalese society has not yet assimilated the culture of western countries (2A).* Therefore, it is challenging to implement LCT developed in western countries in Nepali society. Many teaching materials of LCT are written in English language. At the school level, children are studying in Nepali language and teachers are also teaching in Nepali language. Therefore, the medium of teaching is also a major problem. *All our educational policies are formulated in centre (1A).* The lower-level institutions (schools) have to follow the policy rules imposed by the center. The center has decided to implement LCT. But local level schools are not able to implement it professionally. At the same time, there is lack physical infrastructures in the most of the schools in Nepal.

### **Discussion**

The first research question focused on perception towards LCT. The teachers pointed out that LCT is essential. Their views were very optimistic about LCT. In a collectivist society, individualistic ideals have been promoted to a greater degree than anticipated. Teachers focused more on the value of empowering of autonomy than on topics as tradition and authority. In any case, social beauty can still be taken into consideration. The teachers pointed out in accordance with the assumption, the value of discipline, something associated with a collectivist society. In line with expectations, the contradiction in the position of supposed external pressures with respect to LCT was also something the teachers pointed out. With regards to the use of LCT, there appeared to be more pressure than support from the government and parents. This suits the hypothesis that the emphasis still lies on mastery of factual facts instead of practical and analytical skills owing to the exam-oriented education system (Metto & Maweka, 2014). It is important to realize that a few decades ago, Nepal's education was still focused on TCT. In the Western world, the Western opinion that infancy should be happy and a time to play as opposed to discipline is comparatively new (Ansell, 2005). The home condition does not lead absolutely to LCT either. Parents promote activities that are different from the elements applicable to this form of school.

While some teachers claimed that without further explanation, they had the requisite skills for LCT, the teachers in this sample did not seem to be thoroughly accustomed to kind of questions about experienced self-efficacy. As a teacher, reflection of their own competencies seemed new to them. This is in line with the literature that teacher preparation does not sufficiently concentrate on reflection, imagination or ingenuity (Metto & Maweko, 2014). The expectation that teachers have a low self-efficacy with respect to the use of LCT seems to be supported on the basis of these studies, even though it is found indirectly. The discovery that behaviors are not self-related or serious enough in some African countries is not recent (Evans et al.,

2008). In a report in Malawi, due to the lack of self-relatedness, it was found that teachers viewed improving education as a job beyond their responsibility (Van Straten, 2015). In this analysis, the same occurred. Teachers could not come up with their own behaviour but with problems in social situations while reflecting on the difficulty of the requisite skills for LCT. The role of the teacher is of great importance in the development of the child, especially because LCT coincides with the ideas of constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978).

The learner had as predicted, little perceptions regarding LCT. In comparison to the assumption, according to the teachers, the perception of the pupils appeared less optimistic towards. They primarily discussed teacher-centered activities when asked about the behaviors in class. The students' reported standards at school are often different from what they are accustomed to at home, according to the teachers. The culture of home does not fully cohere with the culture of education. The supporting position of teachers for most children is new, believing the view of the teachers. This also explains why LCT are not so positive: obviously because they are not used to it. During the experiments as well, the passive position was clear. In line with the philosophy of Freire (1970), students were not expected to challenge or be revolutionary. This leads to student injustice and a 'code of silence'. It seems that in schooling and education, pupils are not totally accustomed to learner-centered education. Otherwise with a critical reflection on their curriculum and what they deem important, the pupils will actually have less trouble.

Secondly, apart from the perceptions, this study tried to show the experienced environmental conditions of teachers with regard to LCT. In accordance with goals, the teachers pointed out the numerous environmental obstacles that make it impossible to use LCT curriculum. Protective factors were more difficult to find, but focused mainly on the role of colleagues and school management. For the improvement of the education in the schools, the school management could play a bigger role in the accomplishment of LCT. This study sought to explain, in addition to the expectations, the experienced external factors of teachers with respect to LCT. In accordance with goals, the teachers pointed out the numerous environmental obstacles that make it impossible to use learner-centered curriculum. It was more difficult to identify protective variables, but they concentrated largely on the role of peers and school administration. It is found that school administration should play a greater role in the achievement of LCT in order to enhance education in classrooms.

Thirdly, this article has concentrated on teacher and student activities with respect to LCT. Teacher-centered elements played a key role in teaching, in accordance with standards. This suits the perception that in Third World countries, LCT is not often used or interpreted in the best manner, and teachers often prefer to teach in the same way they did with their own teachers (Edukans, 2014). Teachers said they were using LCT to a greater degree than they really did. In the expectations of teachers, for instance, it was suggested that pupils should articulate themselves in class, but this is not what the findings revealed. In accordance with the theory of Metto and Maweka (2014) classes included a lot of listening and taking notes. There were also some child-centered elements observed during the observations. The way the children were seated in groups was different from the literature in certain classes than expected. It always seemed, anyway that the teacher-centered techniques were not necessarily used or interpreted in the correct manner. Teachers were able to use LCT because for example, they provided opportunities for group work, but instead of finding children talking in groups with each other, only one or two pupils were doing the job, whilst the majority of the pupils were not motivated to be involved.

In nutshell, it can be concluded that teachers' perceptions towards LCT is very positive. Although social desirability undoubtedly played a part, the teachers gave the impression that the LCT was to be used. In spite of these optimistic attitudes, the action in practice is also still different: in the classrooms studied, teaching learning process is still TCT. In line with results in an earlier study, teachers proceed with teacher-centered teaching approaches (Metto & Maweka, 2014). The purpose of individual actions is affected by expectations, although this is not necessarily the same as actual action. This is one of the study's most notable findings: the teachers' expectations do not quite align with the classroom activities. The continuity of teacher-centered schooling affects the qualitative education and LCT (Metto & Maweka, 2014). In terms of LCT, how can the disparity between perceptions and activities be explained? The government and

parents could further stimulate LCT. Their position is still inconsistent, and it seems like they still partially have different opinions on the standard of education. Another potential reason for why LCT in class is not entirely noticeable has to do with the conditions. Any situations in the community find it impossible for teachers to practice it unless teachers seem able to use the techniques. They are child-centered in their perceptions, but the situations find it impossible to do it. Teachers only speak about external aspects while learning about challenges, although they should also learn to see the advancement of education as their own responsibility. In addition, with respect to LCT, teachers should develop their ability. The teachers may potentially be a better counterweight to the government and parents afterward.

## **Conclusion**

While a majority of basic school teachers express support for the principles of LCT, their actual classroom practices tend to remain predominantly teacher-centered. LCT, emphasizes active student engagement, critical thinking, and the development of problem-solving skills, placing the learner at the center of the educational process. Despite teachers recognizing the importance of these methods, their classroom practices often reflect traditional teacher-centered approaches. In these environments, the teacher is the primary source of knowledge and controls the flow of instruction, while students passively receive information. This contrast between belief and practice points to deeper structural and contextual challenges.

One of the significant obstacles contributing to the persistence of teacher-centered practices is the poor state of physical facilities in many schools. LCT requires a flexible, resource-rich environment where students can engage in hands-on activities, collaborate in groups, and use various learning materials. However, in schools with inadequate infrastructure, such as poorly equipped classrooms, limited access to modern technology, and insufficient space for group work, implementing learner-centered strategies becomes difficult. Teachers, faced with these limitations, often resort to more rigid, lecture-based methods that do not align with learner-centered ideals.

Another major challenge is overcrowded classrooms. In many basic schools, class sizes are large, making it challenging for teachers to give individualized attention to students or manage activities that promote active participation and collaboration. In a crowded classroom, teachers often face difficulties maintaining order and ensuring that every student is engaged. As a result, they tend to adopt teacher-centered approaches, which are more manageable in such contexts but fail to foster the personalized learning that learner-centered teaching encourages. Insufficient parental support is another key barrier to the effective implementation of LCT. Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing the values of active learning, curiosity, and independent thinking at home. However, when parents are not actively involved in their children's education, it limits the opportunities for students to practice these skills outside the classroom. Without consistent support from home, teachers find it harder to sustain learner-centered approaches, which rely on collaboration between the school and the family to foster holistic development.

In addition to these structural issues, social influences can also impede the adoption of learner-centered teaching. In some communities, there may be a cultural preference for traditional, authoritative teaching methods, where the teacher is viewed as the ultimate authority. These social norms can create pressure on teachers to conform to expectations that prioritize discipline and control over interactive, student-driven learning. This societal expectation reinforces teacher-centered practices, even when teachers themselves may prefer more progressive methods.

To overcome these challenges and enhance the implementation of learner-centered teaching, various adjustments are necessary. One of the most critical changes involves increasing community involvement in the educational process. By fostering stronger partnerships between schools, parents, and local organizations, it becomes easier to create a supportive environment for learner-centered practices. Community members can contribute resources, participate in school activities, and help shift cultural attitudes towards more collaborative, student-focused learning. This greater involvement would not only provide the material and emotional support needed for learner-centered teaching but also create a shared commitment to transforming the educational experience.

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