Headteachers' Perspectives and Practices on Transformative Learning in Schools: A Narrative Inquiry

Dilli Bahadur Raut[1], and Binod Prasad Pant[2]

[1]First Author, Lecturer, Vishwa Adarsha College, Itahari, Sunsari.

[2]Assistant Professor, Department of STEAM Education,

Kathmandu University School of Education, Lalitpur, Nepal.

Abstract

This study aims to explore headteachers' perspectives and practices on transformative learning in schools for their and teachers' professional growth and effective learning of students. We used narrative inquiry as a research methodology for interpreting headteachers' experiences. The first author interviewed three headteachers leading the secondary level. Collected data were transcribed, coded, categorized, thematized, and interpreted with the help of literature. The research found that headteachers possessed the conceptual ideas for transformative learning and practiced it in their schools. Critical self-reflection, collaborative learning, and experiential learning were some of the techniques used to practice transformative learning in schools. They need to empower teachers more on the curriculum so they plan and design projects in a communicative approach.

Keywords: headteachers, transformative learning, critical reflection, collaborative learning, experiential learning

Introduction

Headteachers implement education policies and curricula prepared by concerned government authorities and develop their own schools' rules, regulations, and resource materials to meet contextual needs by changing their existing assumptions and practices. They are responsible for supporting teachers, developing students, maintaining a cohesive learning environment, and growing themselves as proactive professionals (Kim, 2020). Every decision and academic movement of headteachers directly affects students' and teachers' performance and schools' social image and culture. Headteachers ensure the expertise of teachers by providing instructional support and necessary resources to excel in their profession and be subtle towards individual students (Danai, 2021). Thus, headteachers should be keen adult learners as they have their own goals and motivations in connecting their ongoing leadership development (Joo & Kim, 2016) and play the role of adult educators to transform schools by promoting teachers' professionalism and students' active engagement and involvement in the learning process. It is necessary to create a trust-based supportive learning community in schools by involving teachers, students, and other stakeholders to sharpen teachers' skills and knowledge, guiding students to accomplish learning goals (Zhang & Koshmanova, 2021). Effective learning allows students to participate freely and fully in critical discourse involving the assessment of assumptions and expectations supporting beliefs, values, and feelings (Mezirow, 2003). Active engagement and involvement of headteachers in critical discourse fosters their knowledge, skills, and understanding which help to establish transformative learning in schools.

Transformative learning enables headteachers to question their assumptions, beliefs, feelings, and school practices. It helps them create a safe learning environment and encourages students to construct their meaning (Odell et al., 2020). They promote and empower teachers to bring change in students' lives by engaging them in different project work and practical works. The professional development of teachers through differential learning approaches and meeting each teacher's needs are some of the challenges for headteachers (Kose, 2009). Generally, in institutional schools, head teachers construct values and ideals of the school, introspect teachers' short-term

interests, and identify expectations of students. Their experiences, assumptions, and practices should be reconstructed to meet the diversified needs of all stakeholders of the schools.

In our context, institutional schools are portraying themselves as leading schools but scarcely practicing transformative learning. They measured their performance by the number of students passing board exams with good grades and improvement in physical infrastructures (Adhikari & Aryal, 2018) instead of promoting teachers and students for lifelong learning. Parents prefer sending their children to institutional schools instead of community schools by paying huge amounts as fees for the sake of quality education. They expect institutional schools to provide opportunities for children for personality development, English language proficiency, computer skills, and other transversal skills including dancing, drama, drawing, singing, public speaking, sports, etc. (Adhikari & Pasa, 2021). However, institutional schools focus on a technical learning approach rather than practical and emancipatory learning and are usually blamed for the production of technical manpower through rote memorization in the so-called disciplined environment. Teachers get fewer opportunities to attend training and workshops for their professional development. Generally, teachers hardly raise critical questions about the school system and process of teaching/learning, and the majority of students also follow the teachers' statements without questioning i.e. 'taken-for-granted' culture. How do headteachers empower and emancipate facilitators and learners in such a domineering environment? It seems too imaginative. Thus, school leaders i.e. headteachers need to intervene in this premises with suitable plans for teachers' professional development and student-centered learning approach to transform the entire learning culture of the schools. They need to develop circumstances for transformative learning to prepare global citizens for the 21st century.

In this context, this study explores headteachers' perceptions and practices of transformative learning in their schools' settings. Headteachers need to understand transformative learning and its components for the overall change in schools' teaching/learning culture. Thus, this study aims to find the perspectives and practices of headteachers on transformative learning for the holistic development of the school and

its stakeholders. This study aims to address questions: What beliefs do headteachers hold about transformative learning? How do headteachers narrate their practices of transformative learning in the schools? These will help to find the existing gaps between their assumptions and the practice of transformative learning.

Literature Review

Transformation is the process of changing our values, beliefs, and practices from one stage to another. In the context of this study, it refers to the change in perspectives and practices of headteachers regarding school culture, learning environment, teachers' professional development, students' participation and involvement in learning, implementation of curriculum, pedagogies, assessment, etc. Transformative learning has four major components i.e., critical thinking, discourse, individual experiences, and context (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021). Generally, it focuses on critical reflection or critical self-reflection and dialectical discourse (Mezirow, 2008). Critical self-reflection enables headteachers to assess critically taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations that support their beliefs, feelings, and judgments (Mezirow, 2003) which also help to validate new meaning perspectives. Critical self-reflection helps teachers to assess the source, nature, and consequences of their habits of mind in the profession. By participating in dialectical discourse freely and fully, with stakeholders they validate a best reflective judgment by including the epistemic nature of school culture (Mezirow, 2008) and issues. It also encourages them to find the true value of alternative solutions for their professional growth. Instrumental and communicative learning helps to change the frame of reference, the habit of mind, and the point of view (Mezirow, 2008) of professional practices and leads toward transformation.

Transformative learning theory provides the broad structure to transform our existing learning culture. According to Enkhtur & Yamamoto (2017):

 Indeed, transformative learning theory has emerged as an important tool in the 21st century to train young people and adults to become competent, interdependent, inclusive, and responsible human beings who are both intellectually and emotionally mature, engaged in lifelong self-learning, and who take actions against inequity (p. 202).

Transformative learning theory encourages learners to change their perspectives and beliefs by fostering their critical consciousness. It supports the cognitive, affective, and spiritual development of learners and develops soft skills i.e., intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, decision-making skills, etc. In the context of schools, headteachers make a plan to develop teachers professionally and create inclusive and equitable learning environments to prepare self-reliant civilized citizens. Transformative learning theory helps to explore how headteachers are involved in critical discourse to validate transformative perspectives and practices (Mezirow, 2008) by acquiring new skills and knowledge that build their competence and self-confidence. Transformative learning enhances headteachers' consciousness through self-questioning on the assumptions, beliefs, practices, experiences, and feelings. This process makes headteachers realize their past beliefs and practices, if they find them wrong, they get a perspective transformation and plan a course of new action to improve the entire school's culture. According to Enkhtur and Yamamoto (2017), transformative learning is a holistic, emotional, and spiritual development that encourages the adaptation of text reading and dialogue and also arts, literature, images, of films as tools for inner reflection and dialogue. It starts when learners' cultural and spiritual identities are challenged by disorienting dilemmas (Kim, 2020). Transformative learning is a change agent in education, headteachers need to practice it as change agents.

The role of headteachers is vital to the sustainability of schools and breakthroughs in transformative learning. However, I found less research on headteachers' role and practices in transforming the education system of our country. In particular, I hardly found any research carried out on the role of institutional school headteachers in practicing transformative learning approaches in their schools. Koirala & Neupane (2023) conducted research including three headteachers of community schools located in the Gorkha district to explore their understanding of the STEAM-based integrated curriculum and its implementation in classes 1-3. They tried to explore headteachers' perceptions and practices to implement the new curriculum and their actions to support transformative learning in the school through a participatory research

approach. However, this research did not discuss headteachers' perspectives and existing practices of transformative learning besides integrated curriculum. It is necessary to discuss different components of transformative learning approaches to apply them in the school setting. Danai (2021) conducted a phenomenological study on five headteachers of a community school located in the Dhading district. This study explored traditions of the headteachers' leadership in school and their role in the transformation of education. However, it hardly discussed institutional headteachers' practices on transformative learning. Dhungana (2020) conducted exploratory case studies on three community schools of Devdaha municipality of Rupandehi district which were transformed by the headteachers' transformational leadership. This study scarcely discussed how they implemented transformative learning in the school. Khalil (2021) conducted quantitative research on 872 teachers selected from multistage random sampling from 125216 populations to investigate the relationship between the transformational leadership behavior of headteachers and academic optimism in Punjab, Lahore.

Research Methodology

This study is a narrative inquiry based on the participants' narrative of principalship and their efforts to practice transformative learning in the schools. A narrative is a set of signs, which includes verbal, and visual elements that convey meanings (Squire, 2014). Narrative inquiry is claimed to be an effective method for educational research as human beings are story-telling organisms and they live a storied life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This study aims to unknot momentous landings of principals' professional lives as told by them in their own words and worlds. It focuses on participants' accounts of particular experiences and the examination of meaning implanted in their stories (Ntinda, 2019). It is an inquiry-based storytelling that depends on the truth value of the stories to best represent the headteachers' life world. This narrative inquiry attempts to frame the study of headteachers' professional experiences by capturing their problems in the form of storytelling and examining the underlying insights and assumptions analytically (Mertova & Webster, 2019). A narrative study

allows researchers to explore in-depth how headteachers make perspectives and practices of transformative learning in their schools.

Context of the Schools and Participants

The headteacher's experience is a rich source of data for addressing issues and the complexity of schools. This narrative inquiry helps to portray the human experience as a whole capturing the intricacy and richness (Mertova & Webster, 2019) of headteachers' perspectives and practices for transformative learning. This study was conducted at three institutional schools named Norland (K-12), Springfield (K-100, and Swan (K-10) (all pseudonyms) located in Itahari sub-metropolitan city by selecting the schools purposively. The institution schools are culturally diverse in Itahari and Nepal as well. The headteachers were selected as participants in this study. In the Norland school, classes are conducted up to twelve (K-12) and administered by a Brahmin headteacher named Mr. Raghu (Pseudonym) with 45 teachers and about 524 students. It has a newly constructed well-facilitated physical infrastructure with enough space to conduct various academic and cocurricular/extracurricular activities. Mr. Raghu started his teaching career in 2006 as a primary-level teacher (taught classes 1-3) while pursuing a Bachelor of Arts. He has worked as coordinator and vice-principal in two other schools. He joined this school as a coordinator along with investment and became principal in 2020. He aimed to become the principal while joining the school. He completed a Master in Arts (English) and is currently pursuing another master's degree in political science.

Springfield was running classes up to ten (K-10) and was led by Mrs. Lata, a woman from the indigenous community. It has 420 students with limited numbers of staff and undergoing financial constraints. This school does not have a building and has taken individual houses and a small piece of land for rent. Mrs. Lata worked as a secondary-level teacher in the other two private schools for six years. She along with colleagues decided to purchase this school and invested in 2019. The team recommended her as principal but she was not interested. However, she accepted it and became the principal of this school for five years.

Swan was conducting classes of up to ten (K-10) led by Mr. Daya, a male headteacher from an indigenous community. Mr. Daya started his teaching career in 1985. as a primary-level teacher in Kathmandu. He became the principal of the primary-level school in 1993. and principal of the secondary level a renowned school located in Ilam in 1994. He joined Swan in 2008 as principal. Swan has well-facilitated buildings and wide areas to conduct various activities for the holistic development of students. It has 770 students and a good number of staff with different levels in-charges and coordinators.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

I used interviews to explore headteachers' perspectives and practices of transformative learning. The interview is a qualitative data collection tool and scaffolding approach in narrative inquiry which allows participants to demonstrate their perceptions and experiences cohesive environment (Heilmann, 2018). I explored headteachers' stories of their professional journey through semi-structured in-depth interviews and other informal conversations. I took the participants' leisure time, built rapport, and shared my research issues with them. I made interview guidelines including open-ended questions to explore the headteachers' perceptions of transformative learning and how they implement it in their schools. I conducted interviews each lasting for an hour and ten minutes with the participants. Participants' mother language (Nepali) was used during the data collection. After getting oral permission from participants, the interview was recorded using my mobile audio recorder.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I listened to the audio recordings carefully and transcribed and translated Nepali into English. The generic coding method is used to code English transcripts. At first, I made code to make meaning of data and again used coding to develop patterns and themes out of the initial codes. The themes were developed and presented in a sequence for re-storying the participant's perceptions and experiences. I generated three themes: critical self-reflection as a catalyst of change, collaboration for fostering transformative learning, and experiential learning for empowerment based on the narratives of

headteachers on their perceptions and practices of transformative learning. The succeeding paragraphs present headteachers' perceptions and practices on transformative learning.

Critical Self-reflection as a Catalyst of Change

A thorough analysis of the lived experiences of Raghu, Lata, and Daya revealed that self-reflection and critical inquiry into previous, assumptions and practices were the main sources of learning to school leaders. They shared that self-questioning and self-investigation did not humiliate people externally but caused too much pain, anger, and frustration internally. Raghu claimed that being a principal no one questions his assumptions, beliefs, and practices in the past. But when he started to examine past activities and actions, a lot of ethical questions arose in his mind which made him sad. Questions such as; 'Why have I done this, or that'…… compelled him to turn the pages of his diary to write feelings, thoughts, and experiences. He reflected:

> As a student, I have had bitter experiences with physical punishment which made me believe that physical punishment is the best solution to bring changes in students' behaviors and make them devoted to study. Generally, every teacher carries a stick for the sake of discipline and good learning. Now I realize that these were wrong assumptions and practices and started to keep the statue of Buddha in my office instead of sticking. I encouraged teachers to remain calm and peaceful while dealing with students and to think before acting. Some years back, we expelled three/four students from the school every year in the middle of the session as we assumed that this was the only solution to maintain a disciplined environment and effective learning in the school…. Now, I realize that was wrong and not doing it. If any students committed mistakes, I let them practice self-realization through self-questioning. I remained calm and asked them; why they had done this or that.

Self-reflection is the main source of learning for Raghu. He responded to the problems with awareness and wisdom by reflecting on his own experiences (Joo & Kim, 2016) to change the school culture. He was influenced by the Buddhist philosophy which believes that rationality and enlightenment rest on a 'faith' (*Sraddha)* in the

human capacity for knowing courage, understanding, sympathy, empathy, and other forms of fine ethical and spiritual action based on our conscience or self-respect (Winter, 2003). His practices are not only the recollections and observation of experiences, but also an encouraging movement of analysis of action by describing the complex, rigorous, and emotional aspects of both personal and professional beliefs (Fraser et al., 2022) on the learning environment and students' discipline. It is a practice-based professional learning where headteachers learn from their own professional experiences rather than from formal learning or knowledge transfer (McBrien, 2007) by bringing together theory and practice. He encouraged teachers to reflect on their doing and critically question their assumptions and practices. He believed that teachers' professional development begins when they start to view things with a critical lens, by doubting their professional practices (Brookfield, 2017). His ability to doubt his past actions as a problem engages him to think systematically and make reliable plans for the right actions. Such practices of critical self-reflection by headteachers and teachers help to set the transformative learning (Mezirow, 2008) environment in the school. In the past, he believed that learning happened in a controlled environment but now he realizes the importance of freedom and autonomy for real learning. He encourages teachers and students for reflective practices for transformative learning.

Lata reiterated that her principal's act of dealing with teachers and students embarrassed her too much and vowed not to repeat such actions in the future when she held the decision-making position. She started to reflect on her experiences, practices, and assumptions critically which helped to change her mindset. She learned a lot from her own experiences and used previous experiences to solve current issues. She explained:

> While I was a teacher in the previous school, a teacher ordered one student to do ups and downs to improve his performance. The next day, the principal called her to his office and scolded her in front of parents and students. That incident struck me, I brooded a lot and finally deconstructed my assumptions and beliefs. Now, being a principal, I have never scolded anyone and hardly used any disappointing words to my colleagues, students, friends, and anyone

else. I have always encouraged and motivated teachers and students by saying 'You can do it! you can achieve more! lets' think, plan, and try once more!'.

Self-reflection became a powerful clue to Lata which brought a U-turn in her assumptions and practices. This is to say, self-reflection develops a deep understanding of doing and enhances headteachers' ability to challenge traditional practices (Shandomo, 2010). Critical self-reflection makes headteachers open to new ideas leading to a willingness to change. For example, the sense of empathy enabled Lata to realize the perspectives of teachers and students and increased the opportunity for them to reach a shared understanding of issues (Steyn, 2017) that supported the transformation of the learning approaches in the school.

Critical self-reflection helped Daya to maintain zero tolerance for physical punishment in the school which they practiced earlier for the sake of discipline. He also realized that the traditional approach to teaching/learning was wrong. He argued:

We used physical punishment in the past to control the students and create a safe and peaceful learning environment. I became principal at the age of 25 at my previous school, and my students were 18-20 years old. Physically they looked like friends and didn't obey teachers' instructions. According to their parents' request, we gave them physical punishment and they obeyed also. Once I read a book that made me think about my previous professional practices and decided to avoid physical punishment from school. I assumed that in a free and open learning environment student, remain obedient and honest. Now we counsel students and help them to find out the root causes and probable results of such activities. This practice reduces the behavior discrepancies in the school.

Critical self-reflection encourages headteachers to critique their past practices and assumptions. It helped them to solve problems or investigate everyday issues in logical sequences which enhanced their professionalism (Lysberg & Ronning, 2021) to encourage transformative learning in schools. Daya constructed new knowledge by interacting with teachers, students, and schools' needs and by reflecting upon his own experiences (Joo & Kim, 2016). He encouraged teachers to explore new ways to deal

with the issues related to professional life, set a plan, share with colleagues, act together, learn from their experiences (Joo & Kim, 2016), and transform school culture. Thus, headteachers need to give enough time to teachers and students for personal exploration (Taylor, 1998) which creates ownership in learning. It enhances their self-awareness so that they listen to the voices of teachers and students to develop an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Collaboration for Fostering Transformative Learning

Collaboration is the main quality for headteachers to develop transformative learning in schools. Collaboration among teachers improves the student's performance (Steyn, 2017) and the learning environment of the school. Educational leaders motivate teaching and non-teaching staff, guide them, design action learning projects (James et al., 2007), and envision wider benefits in learning through involvement and participation (Pant et al., 2023). Ragu, Lata, and Daya focused on interpersonal skills and collaborative competencies among teachers and students instead of competition in schools. As Ragu stated:

> *Though late I realized that collaboration, cooperation, and interaction among all stakeholders were pillars of schools. Now I set collaboration as the school theme and minimize the competition. Teachers collaborate in various activities and learn from colleagues who have more potential on the subject. Our IT teacher conducted a workshop session on ICT applications and Microsoft Office in which all teachers learned to make PowerPoint slides, type questions, and other content designing. In the same manner, the mathematics teacher guides all who are teaching mathematics, and social studies teachers also provide pedagogical support to others. I found the role of students' quality circle, scouts, children's clubs, and student council is very effective in convincing and counseling students. Their words are more powerful than ours to change the habits of students. I regularly discuss with teachers and students on issues in school and their ideas and opinions are noteworthy.*

The main role of headteachers is to create a caring school environment for learning by sharing their own experiences with teachers and students, providing resources for learning (Joo & Kim, 2016), and helping student to set their future goals. Collaboration and interaction focus on communicative learning and promote mutual agreement rather than testing a truth (Mezirow, 2003). Headteachers respect the opinions, interests, and ideas of teachers and students to create a cordial learning environment. Every individual can perform better if they are allowed autonomy and freedom. Lata also led the team with deeds instead of words. She shared:

> *Though we have provided fewer facilities to teachers, they are devoted and dedicated to teaching. I always believed in teamwork and my team helped me a lot. I cooperate and interact with teachers, students, and parents to create a sense of ownership of school activities among them. We became successful in conducting a 'School carnival' with limited resources due to team efforts. I involved all students according to their levels and capacities. All students were involved actively in their tasks; even those from kindergarten sold boiled eggs. I frequently visited different stalls and encouraged them by saying; good ... good keep it up... You are doing great.......*

Being a leader of schools, headteachers should create a safe environment, encourage trust, and promote learners' participation, collaboration, and autonomy (Odell et al., 2020) to foster transversal skills among teachers and students. Active involvement of learners with the concepts in group tasks enhances their social skills. Daya also respected the group's opinion and team spirit and encouraged collective performance rather than individual performance. He opined:

> *Our teachers discuss contents, students' performance, and other issues of the school in groups. I believe in group learning and wonder how I can create such an environment. I formed four departments consisting of subject teachers where they can share, discuss, learn, and make a plan for effective learning/teaching. We encouraged student leaders and teachers to give feedback and comments for the proper functioning of the school. Earlier I didn't believe in such inclusive participation and feedback and felt difficult to handle issues. But now, if*

anything happens, I discuss and collaborate with particular stakeholders to solve it. Students give genuine feedback which is hardly looked at by administrators.

Collaboration and interaction in school enable headteachers to understand more about how teachers, students, and parents might feel in a given situation (Kim, 2020). Headteachers' professional practices are the outer shell of the entire school culture and they always strive to promote cooperation, communication, and collaboration in schools. Social interaction within a purposeful group starts teacher transformation (Taylor, 1998). Such culture promotes the self-development of headteachers, teachers, and students by enhancing the capacities to tolerate differences and encouraging them in moral discourse and critical judgment (Mezirow, 2003). It enables them to work together to achieve the school's mission and vision.

Experiential Learning for Empowerment

Knowledge obtained through experiences remains long in our minds and learning hardly happens without experiences. According to Kolb (2015), "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 49). Learners acquire knowledge and skills by involving themselves in hands-on activities as they are at the center of the entire learning process. They construct knowledge by activating the head (thinking), heart (feeling), and hand (doing). It needs their active involvement to process knowledge, skills, and attitudes through cognition, affection, and behavior (Gentry, 1990). Our school curriculum focuses on experiential learning by keeping different projects and practical works from class four. In the past, Ragu, Lata, and Daya believed in rote memorization and percentage/division as they completed their education through that culture. Raghu reflected:

One question strikes my mind, how do I give some skills-based education to students using local resources? Last Friday, we arranged leaves of Saal and small sticks of bamboo. Our female teachers guided girls to make 'taparis'. We hired an electrician for three hours who taught boys how to change the bulbs in classrooms. We conducted a traffic awareness campaign in the school to make our students aware of traffic rules and that was very beneficial for me as I

learned so many rules. Our students do project work in groups. One student from a remote area joined this school. He couldn't speak in front of others at that time. A few days ago, he presented in class which I had recorded and sent to his parents which made them astonished.

Project-based learning is quite encouraging and motivating to students (Dobson & Dobson, 2021) as they enjoy working in groups. Active involvement and engagement of learners develop a sense of ownership in learning. A suggestion from a pass-out student made Daya shift the learning approaches of the school. He argued:

Our previous teaching approach was wrong as we limited students to four walls and encouraged them to rote memorization for the sake of the highest percentage. The students who secured ninety-eight percent marks in mathematics couldn't find out the area of the classroom. That incident struck me, I discussed it with teachers and purchased the materials required for measurement. Now, our students measured the height and distance of the school building, ground, classrooms, their bedroom, etc. We have prepared the school curriculum including basic life skills. Our students wrote the biographies of their grandparents and parents after reading the biographies of prominent personalities in the classrooms. They conducted interviews with eminent personalities of the school and society. They visited the community and society to learn about different social aspects and issues.

Experiential learning develops the self-confidence of learners and enhances their transversal skills (Hulaikah et al., 2020) which are essential to survive in this dynamic society and complex world. Lata also realized the importance of experiential learning and encouraged teachers and students in projects and practical works using locally available resources. She shared:

My teachers and students painted on locally available stones, and rocks and used them as resources in learning/teaching. We involved them in making pickles. They practiced knitting and put the buttons on shirts in the school. They brought flowering and non-flowering plants from home into the classroom for science presentation. We involved them in project work. We saw their happy

faces while they engaged in tasks. We allowed them to put the cultural dress and perform different activities occasionally.

Learning by doing is the best approach to learning. It promotes learners' prior knowledge, and experiences by engaging them wholly in the learning process (Andresen et al., 2020) which creates a sense of freedom and autonomy. Direct involvement and active participation of students empower them and prepare them to face global challenges in the future. In the state of freedom and autonomy, they become more creative and innovative. Headteachers make plans to replace the banking model of education in which teachers become a knowledge bank and transfer the knowledge to students. They focus on experiential learning by including projects and practical work in each subject. Raghu, Lata, and Daya also involved students and teachers in projects and practical works to some extent but it needed to be aligned with the school curriculum.

Conclusions and Implications

In the beginning years as headteachers, Raghu, Lata, and Daya practiced a strict and ordered disciplined environment in the school. They believed that effective learning happened in a formal and disciplined environment. However, self-study, students' feedback, and the dynamic change in society compelled them to deconstruct and reconstruct their practices. They realized that creativity and innovations occurred in the sense of freedom and autonomy of learners. They reflected critically on their previous beliefs and practices and focused on fostering understanding, sympathy, and empathy to meet the diversity of teachers and students. In this way, practices of critical self-reflection by headteachers became a catalyst to transform the learning culture of schools and the behaviors of students. It also helps to change the mindset of headteachers, teachers, and students by making them prepare their plans with multiple alternatives. Headteachers also need to critically examine the curriculum, pedagogies, and assessment system and encourage teachers to rational discourse on the learning process and locally available resources.

Raghu, Lata, and Daya believed that collaboration created a cohesive learning environment in schools where teachers and students worked together as a team to achieve the desired goals. They tried to establish a caring culture in schools. They

promoted communicative learning by giving autonomy and freedom to teachers in professional practices and involving students in various projects and practical works. Freedom and autonomy enhanced creativity and innovativeness among teachers and students and the headteachers encouraged teachers and students to reflect critically on previous practices and assumptions for effective learning. Interaction, cooperation, and communication among headteachers, teachers, and students enhanced transformative learning. Many practical works and project work carried out in schools reflected their understanding of the importance of hands-on activities in learning and prior knowledge of students. They encouraged teachers and students to use locally available resources in the classroom for effective learning. Students were involved in constructing and preparing local items to get hands-on experiences that support transformative learning. It enhanced their self-confidence and prepared them to face future posssible challenges. Teachers involved students in project-based learning and practical work to some extent. However, all project works needed to align with the school curriculum by empowering teachers and the concerned level in charge. Peer learning helped teachers sharpen their skills and knowledge but headteachers were in need of empowering teachers with multiple pedagogies especially art-based pedagogy, ethical dilemma story pedagogy, and critical pedagogy to practice differential learning approaches in classrooms.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID

Dilli Bahadur Raut: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-1730-3286

Binod Prasad Pant: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4129-575X

Corresponding Author

Dilli Bahadur Raut

Email: dillibahadur_mpsteam2023@kusoed.edu.np

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