

Gender in Nepalese Higher Education Curriculum: An Example from Tribhuvan University

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Abstract

This paper analyses the course entitled 'English Language Teaching (ELT) practices and materials' offered by Tribhuvan University for Master's level in English education from a gender perspective. The main objective of the paper is to explore and analyse gender inequalities underlying in the processing and production of the course. Taking the course documents as the primary source of data, this paper found that the course falls short in gender mainstreaming and has revealed gender-blindness in content selection and recommended/reference materials encouraging gender inequality during the course development process as well as in its production.

Keywords: Higher education programme, gender blindness, gender mainstreaming, gender incongruities and inequalities, access dimension, success dimension

Introduction

Gender has become the hottest issue in the recent educational arena. The attention of scholars has recently redirected towards the critical study of education policies and programmes from gender perspectives. Scholars are engaged to offer the meanings of gender and sex. AQU CATALUNYA (2019, p.13) clarifies that gender and sex are two different concepts. 'Sex' is the biological qualities of women and men, boys and girls in terms of reproductive organs and functions based on chromosomal complement and physiology. In contrast, gender is a social-cultural process (Guidelines of European Commission on Gender Equality, 2016). The gender perspective is not about women; instead, it is an imposed social category based on discourses that define social norms, stereotypes and roles associated with feminine and masculine characters of human beings. It eventually produces different forms of inequality and injustice in the community in various ways (Scott, 1986; Beckwith, 2005 cited in AQU CATALUNYA, 2019). A programme from gender perspectives allows the researcher to explore stakeholders' perceptions of gender stereotypes while providing input and the discrepancies, contradictions, and positioning of males and females due to the imposed social roles. By citing Lovenduski's (1998) and Minnarch's (2010) views, AQU CATALUNYA (2019) discusses that gender blindness is a failure to recognise the socio-cultural, economic and political roles of males and females that are imposed on long-rooted traditions of a community. Such gender blindness has multiple consequences in education, such as overgeneralisation of the phenomena based on men's experience, false

representations of expected behaviours, attitudes, and needs by ignoring the distinct nature of men and women. It is the tendency of stakeholders to treat men and women as if they were from homogenous groups by making their explanations blur.

Against the backdrop of critiquing gender-blindness, scholars are motivated to mainstream gender into educational programmes and practices. While avoiding partial interpretation, gender balances should be reflected in the processing and production of curricula (AQU CATALUNYA, 2019). It should ensure gender equality in all the activities such as policy development, curriculum designing, resource allocation and selection, participation, and practices (UNESCO, 2010, p.6). As Hey (2010) argues, the unequal distribution of men and women can be observed in the educational field like in other fields throughout Europe. In some contexts, the participation of women is greater than that of men, but in some, it is vice versa. Some educational programmes are gender-segregated. Similarly, according to the UNESCO report (2010), in the Asia-Pacific Region, women's access, retention, and completion of higher education are affected by the distance between their home and educational institution and the lack of timely transportation. The community's false understanding is not good for a woman to travel long distances alone. Early marriage, other cultural/religious constraints, as well as household chores are other major barriers for the girls students to complete higher education in this belt. These factors have strengthened gender contradictions and inequalities in the educational arena in various ways. These scholarships reveal that gender issue has become a serious issue in the educational arena all over the world.

Like in different domains, the gender issue in education is a chronic concern in the Nepalese context. Scholars are interested in studying educational programmes from gender perspectives, and, therefore, there is a growing number of studies in this area. Among the piles of studies, Bista (2004, p. iii) reviewed 20 studies carried out after 1990 in the field of school education and gender and found that educational research and evaluation activities in Nepal are male-dominated. The studies were carried out at national level and covered mainly four areas; i.e., barriers to girls' schooling, the role of women teachers, scholarship and intensive programmes, and gender disparity in education. Another important finding of the studies was 'educational policies, acts and programmes were not prepared in a gender-sensitive manner. The curriculum, text materials, teacher training and examination practices did not favour girls.' Girls have been facing numerous barriers to acquiring formal education (Bista, 2004, pp. iii-iv). His critical review reveals numerous constraints that obstruct girls to access and completing school education. He disclosed socio-cultural, economic, institutional and family-related, psychological, mental and physical, geographical, and ten-year armed conflict were the main barriers for Nepalese girls to get/complete school education. In the same line, drawing the illustration of the Solukhumbu district of Nepal, Wier and Price (2019, pp. 6-8) identified the pathways of girls for successful access and completion of higher education. Their study also confirmed Bista's (2004, pp. iii-iv) finding, which states that economic, social, cultural and geographic barriers prevent the majority of girls from the access to higher education. Very few girls reach a higher level, but with the support offered by NGOs and their families. I acknowledge the contributions of these scholars, who have provided a rich understanding of gender inequalities and their main barriers to the access and success of girls in education, especially at the school level. However, what I found is that these studies have missed the micro-level analysis of the higher-level education programme and the process of curriculum/course development that

is a core part of an educational programme. Therefore, based on their contribution, this study attempts to conduct a micro-level study of the higher-level course from a gender perspective.

While some hunches regarding gender and education were twirling in my mind, I thought that a study on this issue could be significant. Meantime, I got an offer from NORHED QUANTICT Project to review one of the currently practising Master's level courses in my specialisation area. It was accelerated to functionalise it immediately. I aimed to explore and analyse gender inequalities underlying the processing and production of the course entitled 'English Language Teaching (ELT) Pedagogy and Materials'. This study will be helpful to all the higher education policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders to understand how the course has created gender inequality and imbalanced positioning of male and female students. It will provide input to mitigate such problems in higher education while developing the programme, curricula, and practising new courses in future.

Analytical Framework

The analytical categories of the study are based on Hey's (2010,p.9) two-dimensional analytical framework: the access side and the success side. Here, the **access** dimension focuses on analysing the uneven allocation of material resources, symbolic resources and participation opportunities for men and women and the **success** dimension centres on the analysis of the lack of recognition of women and unequal evaluation. The study in this dimension attempts to explore how the concerned actors/stakeholders have reflected as well as have promoted traditional role assignments and concealed gender roles and concepts of gender stereotypes in their treatment and evaluation.

Hey (2010, pp.9-10) suggests to explore students' access to material resources, income and job opportunities, payment and job portfolios to women compared to men. It should focus on how the course has created imbalances, inequalities and positioning between men and women by encouraging gender roles and stereotypes, which shape the attitudes and behaviour of males and females. It should emphasise the analysis of the women's participation opportunities in the development of the educational programme, its curricula and courses. If they are involved, in which proportion they are involved; how actively they participated, and how willingly other actors/stakeholders obtained their ideas and considered content-wise suggestions they provided. Similarly, well defining the target group of the educational programme, their learning needs, course objectives and outcomes, selection and gradation of course contents, teaching materials and methods and forms of organisations are the main categories to analyse the success of women in the course. In this dimension, Hey (2010, p.10) suggests examining the set of fee structures and other related cost allocations from women's perspectives and exploring whether the course offers scholarships to compensate for the possible financial barriers to women. Similarly, observing the wider advertisement/media coverage of information about the offered course, detecting how explicitly these information materials encourage both genders to participate and analysing the status of participation of both genders are other important tasks of the investigators. She also recommends exploring whether the course objectives are as per the learning needs of males and females and whether it is inclusive to both in terms of contents, whether gender-blindness is avoided in teaching contents and the language they are presented. Similarly, in this line, the analysis delves into how many echoes of gender

stereotypes, one-sided representations and sexist examples exist in the course contents. Besides these, the focus of the study should be on the close observation of the compiled teaching materials and their compiling processes. While doing so, the questions like- Are teaching materials available to the female students who cannot attend the whole course with obligatory presence due to various gender-role assignments and household responsibilities? How explicitly do examples and language address both genders? Are the contents of the course found on web pages?

Has the course provided any web tips for them? etc. should be asked and answered. Analysing teaching methods is another crucial work of the researcher within the **success** dimension of studying a course. For this purpose, as Hey (2010, p. 11) suggests, the researcher should find out who (i.e., male or female) are encouraged to perform particular activities and how the teacher should behave to male and female students while teaching. Similarly, how he/she responds to the needs of should be addresses both genders during classes. Finally, while studying the forms of organisations within the **success** dimension, the researcher should ask- Have the curricula been developed considering students with less time/financial resources can have equal chances to complete the course and get their degree? Is the course organised in a way that room for child-care is available? Are students of both genders actively asked to participate in the evaluation and further development of the curriculum? Is entrance, graduate and dropout data compiled in a gender-disaggregated way? Although not all these questions may be equally used as toolkits in this study, by acknowledging and being based on the analytical framework (that focuses on the access and success dimensions) of Hey (2010, pp.9-13), I have analyzed the course with reference to the questions from both access and success perspectives.

Methods

The study is particularly based on document analysis. Among dozens of courses offered by Tribhuvan University for Master's Level in English Education, I was interested in analysing the course entitled 'English Language Teaching (ELT) Pedagogy and Materials' because course related to teaching methodology is the heart of the programme under the Faculty of Education. As the main objectives of this programme are to produce trained and methodologically acquainted teachers, the course should simultaneously address the national objectives of school education and higher education. The course objectives, contents, recommended teaching strategies, materials, and evaluation systems have to be set up, selected and graded with a greater alert so that maximum students from different linguistic/socio-cultural backgrounds can comfortably access and complete the degree.

These activities will reflect the mainstreaming of gender in the process and practice of school-level curriculum development. As it is a kind of training course, all the techniques, methods, and approaches have to be taught from different perspectives. Among them, gender is the most. This course helps to produce a teacher as a research incubator, as a social attorney who teaches students in a balanced way avoiding gender-blindness in classroom practices. Along with the course document, I also overviewed the recommended and reference materials for the analysis of texts and contents presented in the materials that are focused on the course. To analyse the participation of male and female students or teachers during the course development processes, I also applied my experience as a member of the subject committee, as a member of the course development task force, and my teaching roles in various levels of school education. Some arguments I have developed

in the analysis are based on my experience in teaching at the countryside constituent campus, my two decades and more observation of the students' enrolment, presence and completion of the degree. In this sense, I used multi-sited analysis by conceptualising the course documents and recommended/reference materials as the primary source of empirical data in this particular context.

Revisiting the Course

The course 'English Language Teaching (ELT) Pedagogy and Materials' (English Education no. 535) is recommended for the third-semester students of Master's level in English Education under the Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University. This course is theoretical in nature, for which three credit hours are allocated per week. The total given time for the completion of the course is 48 hours.

The course aims at exposing students to the theories and practices of English language teaching as a foreign language in the Nepalese context. The intent of the course is to develop students' skills to prepare teaching materials. The course consists of five different thematic units. Familiarisation with the macro and micro level contexts of English language teaching as a second language is the aim of the first unit. The second unit deals with a brief overview of English language teaching approaches, methods, techniques, and strategies that have been introduced and practised in various contexts all over the world. The third unit intends to provide knowledge of teaching aspects and skills of the English language to the students and some ways of correcting students' errors whose language backgrounds are different. Planning and assessing the learning of students is the theme of unit four. This unit delineates how the course is designed, how materials are prepared, how the planning of classroom teaching contents, classroom interactions, discipline is maintained, and learner differences are identified. It also discusses the strategies to address them accordingly. Finally, it provides students with knowledge of classroom assessment. Unit five deals with critical pedagogy, which attempts to provide a new understanding of teaching and pedagogy.

The main portion of the course has been presented in tabulated form. The first column enlists the specific objectives of each unit with relevant contents in details. The next column provides estimated credit hours for the completion of all the contents in each unit. The suggested instructional approaches have been enlisted just below the table. The techniques have been sorted out into general and specific instructional techniques. Lecture and discussion, seminar, guided study, tutorials, self-study and project work have been recommended as general techniques, whereas, specific instructional techniques have been presented in a table with unit, activity and instructional techniques and teaching credit hours. For unit one, the mini-project, which includes a review of the articles, participation in the discussion relating to their experience, has been recommended. Mini-project to review articles and book chapters following classroom presentation has been suggested for unit two. For unit three, it has recommended to prepare materials to teach language aspects and skills. Lesson planning, peer-teaching practices and development of seminar papers have been suggested for unit four. The critical review of the paper is the technique recommended for unit five.

The course has the provision for two types of evaluation schemes: internal (i.e., 40%)

and external (i.e., 60%) of the 100 full marks. The external evaluation will be done by administering the formal written examination. The internal assessment is done based on the students' attendance (i.e., 4 points), participation in learning activities (i.e., 6 points), first assignment/midterm exam (i.e., 10 points), second assignment/assessment (i.e., 10 points), and the third assignment/assessment (i.e., 10 points). It has been noted that the first assignment/assessment might be a book or article review or a term paper on specific issues or class quizzes, depending on the nature of the content. The second assignment might be project work, case study, seminar, survey/field study and individual/group report writing, term paper based on the secondary data or review of literature or documents, etc. Mid-term exams or term papers on a specific issue or unit test are suggested for the third assignment. Similarly, the course has provided types and numbers of test times developed by the examination division of the Office of the Dean, Faculty of Education (FOE), Tribhuvan University (TU), administered at the end of the semester. Accordingly, objective questions (multiple choice $10 \times 1 = 10$ points); short answer questions ($5 \text{ questions} \times 6 = 30$ points); Long answer questions ($2 \text{ questions} \times 10 = 20$ points). Nevertheless, this provision is not course-specific. It is for all the courses in this programme. The course has enlisted the following recommended and reference materials:

Recommended Materials

- 1) Brown, H. D. (2001). Teaching by principles. London. Longman. *(Unit I)*
- 2) Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching. London. Pearson Education Limited. *(Unit I, II, III, IV)*
- 3) Hedge, T. (2008). Teaching and learning in the language classroom. Oxford. Oxford University Press. *(Unit I, IV)*
- 4) Long, M. H. and Doughty, C. J. (2009). Handbook of English language teaching. Oxford. Wiley-Blackwell. *(Unit I)*
- 5) Norton, B. and Toohey, K. (Eds.) (2004). Critical pedagogies and language learning. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. *(Unit V)*
- 6) Richards, J.C. & Rodgers, T.S. (2009). Approaches and methods in language teaching. Cambridge: CUP. *(Unit II)*
- 7) Ur, P. (2013). A course in English language teaching. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. *(Unit III, IV)*

Reference Materials

- 1) Beckett, G. H. & Miller, P. C. (2006). Project-based second and foreign language education. Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- 2) Bhatta, T. D. (2012). ELT curriculum, materials and management. Kathmandu. Intellectual Book Palace.
- 3) Brown, H. D. (1994). Principles of language learning and teaching. London: Prentice Hall.
- 4) Chambers, A. & Bax, S. (2006). Making CALL work: Towards normalisation. System, 34, 465–479.
- 5) Cook, V. (2008). Second language learning and language teaching. London: Arnold.
- 6) Davies, P. & Pearse, E. (2008). Success in English teaching. Oxford: OUP.
- 7) Ellis, R. (2003). Task-based language learning and teaching. Oxford: OUP.
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- 11) Nunan, D. (1998). *Language teaching methodology*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
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- 14) Richards, J. C. & Renandya, W. A. (2003). *Methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge: CUP.
- 15) Scrivener, J. (2005). *Learning teaching*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- 16) Underwood, M. (1989). *Teaching listening*. London: Longman.
- 17) Waters, A. (2009). Managing innovation in English language education. *Language Teaching*, 42:4, 421–458. (Unit IV)
- 18) Woodward, T. (2001). *Planning lessons and courses*. Cambridge: CUP.

Results and Discussion

In manifestation, the written course has been developed in normal language. The contents have been presented as if it was for a homogenous group of students. The course has set up five general objectives and twenty-two specific objectives covering various important aspects of the subject area; however, no space is allocated for a gender-related objective, which can be one of the inevitable phenomena in new the dimension of English as a second language pedagogy. The course includes a number of specific objectives. They are: to explain the contexts of language teaching’, to relate English language teaching with the sociolinguistic and political context’, ‘to contextualise communicative and task-based language teaching,’ to use the various techniques of language teaching in class’, and ‘to describe second language education from multiple perspectives. However, they have been presented with blur differences between men and women and their gender role assignment in Nepalese society. The phrases and the word selection in the objectives reflect gender-blindness, ignorance of the possible influences of the habit, attitudes and behaviour of men and women in the classroom. This tendency of setting up objectives reveals that the course is knowingly or unknowingly encouraging and strengthening traditional gender role patterns, ignoring the female issues from the course. From the perspective of who was engaged in the course development process and its production, it has been found that the number of male participants is more than those of the females.

While analysing the course based on Hey’s (2010, p.11) success framework, I found that the course has made the most serious slips in defining the programme’s target group well. It seems that the course has been developed for all the students who have completed a Bachelor’s Degree in their respective specialisation area. Not only students from Nepal but also from other parts of the world who are eligible and interested can study the course. In one sense, it can be seen as a positive aspect of the course. However, such a tacit definition of the target group is found on the taken-for-granted concept. While the higher education programme was developed in the past, almost all of the male students who were better in class as well as better in school, whose families could invest time and money for their higher education used to join a higher study. Students, especially from village areas, used

to have fewer opportunities to join technical subjects like medical sciences, engineering and others. Therefore, regardless of their merits in school education, those students used to join the Faculty of Education. Those students with self-esteem, motivation and good marks at the school level were the students of the Faculty of Education. Female students would rarely reach this level. Therefore, higher education was male-dominated in terms of students and teachers. Nonetheless, nowadays, the situation has been completely changed. The definition of students (i.e., target group) of the higher education programmes under the Faculty of Education should be re-conceptualised. Nowadays, most of the students are female. Reverse to the past scenario, the number of male students is very low. The present tendency is that most of the students either male or female who has achieved higher grade in school education normally join science and technology-related subjects, those whose score lower than this normally join commerce related subjects and those who left are the students of Faculty of Education (but in very cases might be different from this). Most of the students from village schools of this rank are female. Again, there is also filtration in terms of specialisation subjects. It can be observed that among the filtered students, better students tend to study science education, then mathematics, and the third choice is normally English as a specialisation. These students are the target group in the programme. Most of them are female from village family backgrounds having relative low merits and low socioeconomic status. Most of them are married, some with a child/children. Those who are unmarried when they join the course in the first semester potentially get married during/ in the middle of the programme. It creates multiple barriers due to the possibility of increasing dropout rates in the third and/or fourth semester. Therefore, there is a dire need for defining the target group of the programme, but I found that this course falls short in re-conceptualising its target group.

As discussed above, the curriculum/programme has neither redefined its target group well nor analysed their learning needs. The common trend of curriculum development in Tribhuvan University is employing a top-down approach rather than tailoring it to suit the local context. Normally, Dean's Office mobilises the respective subject committee to develop the courses at different levels. The subject committees nominate their experienced teaching faculties to develop particular courses. While forming the task force, neither females are involved in a balanced way, nor has the gender issue been carefully addressed in work. The task force members develop the course, submit the subject committee, and approval processes go on step-by-step and finally, it is authorised by the Dean's Office. Most of the teachers, particularly those working throughout the country, get the readymade course. Thus, in the course development process, the need analysis of the target group or the local actors is a very important step, but this course has also missed this opportunity. It, in some cases, has created problems of being unsuitable for the target group (i.e., students) and lack of ownership of the core practitioners (i.e., teachers).

In the Nepalese context, as discussed above, most of the students are female; they are loaded with multiple gender roles and stereotypes. They are from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of the female students depend on other family members' financial supports. Therefore, there is a high risk of dropout, if their family members deny paying their fees. However, the course seems immature and strict on this issue. Although the constitution and other legal provisions have attempted to maintain gender equality, the perception of people towards girls, traditional stereotypes have not gone away in a different

community. The parents are still reluctant to invest time and money for their daughters' or daughter-in-laws' education. Most of them are imposed with by various roles such as taking care of their family members and the house. Moreover, in most of cases, it can be observed that marriage is more important for girls and their parents than the completion of an academic degree. It creates more complexities in the continuation and completion of the degree. Therefore, the girls' dropout rate increases as it is difficult for them to attend the class physically.

The contents of the course have been organised into five different thematic units. The first theme is 'English language teaching context', which is developed with the discussion of language teaching, its socio-linguistics contexts, policy and politics of language learning and teaching, the history of language teaching, various perspectives of teaching, and a framework for teaching and learning. Under this framework, learners and learning, classroom and contexts, the communicative classroom, and learner autonomy and learner training have been incorporated. All the contents compiled within this thematic unit are based on four books written/edited by veteran scholars in the field of teaching English as a second/foreign language, especially based on the content of Brown (2001). The contents 'learners and learning', and 'classroom and contexts' are mainly based on Harmer (2007, pp.81-106) as well as Brown (2001, pp. 86 -124). In his book, Harmer categorises the learners from the perspectives of age, intelligence and aptitudes, learning styles and strategies, individual variations, language levels, and motivation as if each category homogenously bring changes in male and female. Although the texts have been developed with strong arguments and are very convincing, they are presented without addressing gender and sex differences. Brown's (2001, pp.86-124) discussion under 'classroom and context' is well organised and well-developed based on multiple categories such as age, proficiency levels, and socio-political and institutional contexts. While explaining teaching children, teens and adults, he discusses multiple aspects related to all three. However, his discussions also seem plain in terms of gender perspectives. While discussing socio-political and institutional contexts, he has raised various issues such as socio-political contexts, second/foreign language contexts, the international status of English, language policy and institutional issues, but it has also missed discussing sex and gender issue. In this sense, these contents cannot be free from gender-blindness. Similarly, the content 'history of language teaching' also fails to see the gender representation during the history of language teaching. The content 'learner autonomy and learner training' refers to Harmer (2007, pp.395- 407). He has explained various ways to promote learners' autonomy except acknowledging gender-roles, stereotypes, and their effects on their autonomy in various communities. Similar faults can be noticed in the next contents 'learner and learning, and 'classroom and context', too.

The second theme, 'methodology of English language teaching,' includes various approaches. All the approaches have been selected and graded as if the target students were from a homogenous group regarding their intelligence and biological growth. The contents selected for teaching various techniques have skipped describing possible differences between male and female behaviour in the classroom. To what extent the female students initiate or respond and how instantly they get feedback are significant concerns in gender-balanced teaching. The gender roles, the expectation of the community in which female students are brought up determine their participation and involvement in classroom interactions. Other contents under this theme have also been compiled, ignoring gender

issues i.e., a very important side to be focused on for the present definition of the target group (i.e., female students as described above). A similar gap is found in the next theme, 'teaching language aspects and skills', too. Especially in the content, 'teaching vocabulary' has to be compiled with an adequate explanation of gender-sensitive vocabularies in different contexts as it is an explicit phenomenon that so many vocabularies cannot be referred to as male and vice versa. Some vocabularies cannot be used by males and/or females in certain contexts. Nevertheless, it falls short in this concern. The next theme 'planning and assessing learning' comprises the contents such as 'course design', 'the syllabus', 'materials', 'teaching content', 'classroom interaction', 'classroom discipline', 'learner differences' and 'classroom assessment.' But, it has also missed gender issues that are the hottest concerns in course designing, content selection, classroom interaction patterns to mainstreaming the gender and in the description of learner differences, disciplining them and so forth.

The last theme is 'critical pedagogy'. It deals with the 're-conceptualisation of second language education, 'challenging identities', 'researching critical practices' and 'educating teachers for change'. The book entitled 'Critical pedagogies and language learning' edited by Norton and Toohey (2004) has been recommended as the principal teaching/learning material for this unit. However, the content compiled within this theme of the course is not explicit regarding gender issue. Norton and Toohey's (2004) book comprises various themes. Each theme deals with multiple articles that are more or less same in terms of theme. Five articles are included within the theme 're-conceptualising second language education, 'Gender and sexuality in foreign and second language education: critical and feminist approaches. Similarly, in the third theme, 'researching critical practices, ' four articles are mentioned on various critical issues. One of them is 'classroom interaction, gender, and foreign language learning. Similarly, the fourth theme, 'educating teachers for change,' includes an article 'introducing a critical pedagogical curriculum: a feminist reflexive account'. However, it is embarrassing to say that the course has not explicitly selected any content under the theme 'critical pedagogy' and referred to any of the book's articles as teaching/learning material in the course.

While analysing the compilation of recommended as well as reference materials, I found gender imbalance explicitly. Seven books have been recommended, and eighteen books have been enlisted as reference materials in the course. Out of recommended materials, three were written or edited by females. Likewise, out of eighteen reference books, seventeen books were written by male authors. These books are not easily available throughout the country. The geographical barrier will affect the accessibility of these materials for the students from remote areas; neither are they accessible to females who cannot attend all units with obligatory presence due to their household chores and responsibilities.

Besides these, many works and studies have been accomplished worldwide regarding second language learning/acquisition and gender. Nevertheless, no such books or materials have been recommended in the course that discuss second language teaching and gender issue. One of the important books edited by Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller and Teutsch-Dwyer (2001) includes several studies carried out in the field from a gender perspective. The book has been organised in different themes such as gender, society, and ideology in multilingual settings. It includes various articles on new directions in the study of second

language learning and gender. All the authors are females and they have produced seminal research-based on second language acquisition from gender perspectives. There might be many other materials in this field. However, this course falls short on including even a single content regarding second language acquisition and gender. It could be more beneficial to the graduates to be aware of these issues and to develop a new understanding of second language teaching and its techniques and strategies.

While scrutinising the recommended instructional approaches, it has been found that they have been categorised into two: general and specific. General techniques are lecture and discussion, seminar, guided study, tutorial, self-study, and project work. Specific instructional techniques are: mini-project (maybe the reviews of the articles), participate in the discussion, relate their experience for unit one; for unit two, it is mini-project (maybe articles and book chapters' review) followed by classroom presentation and for unit three it is the preparation of the materials to teach language aspects and skills. Similarly, instructor-guided lesson plan preparation, peer teaching and seminar papers are recommended for unit four and, finally, developing a critical review paper has been recommended for unit five. However, it does not speak regarding gender issues in terms of involvement or the work itself. The language of the course indicates nothing about how the teacher treats girls and boys; neither does it specify gender-fair activities. The curriculum seems rigid for providing equal chances to those students who do not have alternative access and less financial resources to complete their degrees. The evaluation criteria are internal (40%) and external (60%) evaluation. Attendance is the first internal criteria to evaluate internally. But, the course fails to offer alternative ways for female students who might be irregular physically in the classroom, and so on. Finally, while analysing the course based on Hey's (2010) framework, I explored that the course has missed to develop entrance, graduate and dropout data compilation in a gender-disaggregated way.

Conclusion

Reviewing some seminal scholarships in the field, I realised that the volume of literature in the field of education and gender has been growing in recent years in Nepal. Most studies are centralised to the macro-level analysis of school education and gender, focusing especially on socio-cultural/religious constraints, economics, the role of women teachers, scholarship and intensive programmes and so forth. These studies have explored multiple barriers to girls' access to school education in the context of Nepal. However, the studies on how a course developed within a particular educational programme have presented its gender-balanced characters are still waiting for detailed exploration. In this background, by acknowledging Hey's (2010) analytical framework, I analysed the course from two main dimensions: access and success. Analysing the course based on the access dimension, I explored that the course has knowingly or unknowingly promoted gender-blindness, inequality and imbalance. Similarly, while analysing the course from the second dimension of the framework, it is found that firstly it has missed redefining and recognising the target group. Secondly, a compilation of contents has been made in a homogenous way, making male students more beneficial than the girls. The participation of females in course development is very low. Most of the materials recommended and referred to in the course must have been written or edited by males than females. There are various dimensions of analysis this study could not cover. Therefore, I suggest that the detailed, macro and micro-level study in this field is the dire need to understand girls' as well as other stakeholders'

perceptions regarding the higher-level education curriculum.

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