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Context-responsive equitable strategies for developing gender-responsive curriculums in Nepal

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Abstract

We argue that context-responsive equitable strategies support the development of a gender-responsive curriculum in the context of higher education in Nepal. This paper is our reflective journey of curriculum content analysis of the two Master's programs (Mathematics and English) from an inclusive cultural perspective of gender which engaged us to explore the answer to the question- How can we develop a gender-responsive curriculum? Adapting inclusive cultural perspective and participatory design we engaged with students and faculties and management representatives in the process of gender mainstreaming through action-reflection cycles. Further, we braided discussion with poetry, that is, a poetic inquiry to tell our praxis in a realistic and/or literary way. Finally, we discuss the three context-responsive equitable strategies such as (1) adapting the collaborative approach, (2) promoting 'the 3 pillars', and (3) enhancing inclusiveness that supported us for ensuring gender equality.

Keywords

inclusive cultural perspective, curriculum content analysis, equitable strategies, PAR

Introduction

Considering gender as a social issue and mainstreaming gender as an equitable strategy seems an empowering process when we give more value to power than to knowledge. If we culturally perceive gender (i.e. masculine and feminine) as two inherent human qualities that each of us possesses as a cultural understanding, gender and gender mainstreaming might not remain an empowering process rather become the process of cultural liberation. Seemingly, some Nepali people are de-cultured by non-inclusive modern worldviews which did not provide sufficient space to respect our deeply rooted cultural perspective, particularly of gender. Here, we are not against the modern worldviews in the educational context rather seeking "localness" while meeting globalization (Parajuli, 2015). Instead, we preferred to discontinue the illusionary perspective of 'gender equity through empowerment' as the only way of liberating from gendered situations. As illusion over clouds, our perception and obstructs for liberation and consciousness support us to shed light on illusion (Osborne, 2014), we need to go beyond the existing culture of blaming others and thereby recommending the framework. For it, we preferred to appreciate and critically reflect our cultural perspective and thereby continue the discussion of gender mainstreaming processes in the higher education curriculum development and improvement context.

According to Lamptey et al. (2015, p.11) gender mainstreaming, a strategy, addresses gender equality concerns in policies, programs and activities "to ensure that all development initiatives integrate the concerns of both men and women, and their needs are considered equal and equitably with the aim of attaining gender equality." The study shows that the development and/or improvement process of policy (i.e. curriculums or courses) of the universities plays a vital role not only in the learning of the students but also for gender mainstreaming to ensure gender equity. Here arises a question- what is gender? According to UNESCO (2015 (p. 9-10))

"Gender refers to the socially constructed relations between men and women… Gender equality

ensures that men and women enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities to exercise their

human rights and realize their full potentiality. Gender equality in education ensures that female

and male learners treated equally, have equal access to learning opportunities and benefit from

education equally. They become empowered and can fulfill their potential so that they can

contribute to and benefit from social, cultural, political, and economic development equally.

Special treatment/action can be taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that

prevent female and male learners from occurring and benefitting from education on equal

grounds."

Seemingly, the notion of gender equality of UNESCO that envisioned treating females and males treating equally (2015) is similar to the concept of gender balance that we have deeply rooted in our (Nepali) culture.

In our culture, Ardhanarishwar is considered an all-inclusive and balanced metaphor (Dhungana, 2020; Mishra, 2017) (see Figure 1). Ardhanarishwar, a Sanskrit word, refers to the union of the Hindu god Shiv and the goddess Parvati. Moreover, Ardhanarishwar is the metaphor of the "receptive, all-inclusive, holistic, integrated, self-sustained and balanced form of dialogic inquiry" (Dhungana, 2020, p. 52). The image itself shows our inherent male and female qualities metaphorically. With this reference, Ardhanarishwar seems a post-gender metaphor.

In other words, Ardhanarishwar can be used as a cultural harmonious lens of gender balance or gender equality. According to Hooks's (2002) we need to harmonize and generate better perspectives to enhance gender equity. Further, Hooks (2002, p. 117) claimed that "visionary feminism offers us hope for the future. By emphasizing ethics of mutuality and interdependency feminist thinking offers us a way to end domination while simultaneously changing the impact of inequality." Seemingly, Ardhanarishwar

can be a context-responsive metaphor of post-gender perspective metaphor as it is supported to ensure gender equity in the graduate curriculum content analysis process.

However, for many years, overlooking the strength of mutuality and disregarding our cultural framework of gender balance, school and university curriculums have used the western framework for gender mainstreaming that valued one gender (mainly female) over the other (male). We might be limited to analyzing the school level curriculum and proposing guidelines to look for gender-neutral language, traditional gender roles, gender stereotypes, pictures and images, and gender parity. However, exploring gendered situations examining the only physicality would not be sufficient. We see the possibility of influencing ourselves, others and social formation by living the value of equality promoting a deeply rooted cultural inclusive perspective of gender. It is because gender is not only a hidden curriculum (unintended learning outcome) but masculine (i.e. logical) and feminine (i.e. intuitive) perspective and quality in the form of an intended learning outcome. It is because seemingly intended learning outcomes highly control learners' gender knowledge. Here, gender knowledge refers to the knowledge about gender and/or knowledge about multiple perspectives of gender.

Being Master's level curriculum designers and implementers, in line with Lamptey et al. (2015), our engagement in content analysis can engage us in a continuous process of mainstreaming. We can explore the nature of the curriculum that we need to address the needs of 21st-century learners. However, we might not envision holistic development without questioning our own perspective. Moreover, without respecting our deeply rooted cultural values, we might not explore what matters to us and the people with whom we live. In addition to that, curriculum needs to address the everyday needs of the learners; curriculum needs to be changed regularly to meet the needs of the 21st Century Educational and to bring improvement in teaching as well as students' learning and also ensure the SDG Goal 5, gender equality. However, the Western framework might not be sufficient in our local contexts.

At first glance, it may seem like a given framework has been ensuring gender equity however they failed to address the diverse gendered situations. For instance, Acar-Erdol and Gozutok (2018) recommended that social awareness of gender equity is a prerequisite to implementing a gender equality

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curriculum. However, paradoxically, their prescribed "The Taba Model" could not help us in our context as we were yet to explore the gender gap. To explore the status of students who were possibly lagging behind to enjoy provided learning opportunities because of gender, it was our responsibility to dig out the gender gap and thereby address that gap. Then we found Manuel's (2018) study that motivated us to involve students in our project which could enhance students' academic achievement. Although the participation of the students via exchanging experiences, meeting new people and helping and having fun (Manuel, 2020), the COVID-19 context discouraged having face-to-face interactions and discussions. Meanwhile, we saw the opportunity of online methods of participating in them. Thus, we realized that we need a context responsive framework for mainstreaming gender in this period of COVID-19 context.

Therefore intending to enhance gender equity in the Master's course, we looked for a suitable framework but we could not find any. Perhaps, the change in the context, COVID-19 context, provided us with an opportunity to seek a new framework. Meanwhile, Hermans & Thissen (2009) also inspired us to develop our own framework with the help of stakeholders as they introduced actor-analysis methods for public policy analysis as a context responsive method. Therefore, adopting Kincheloe's (2005) active perspective of a researcher, we did not follow any prescribed framework rather looked for the possibility of context-responsive approaches. Like Tolhurst et al. (2012) post-gender perspective addressing women issues like gender parity, inclusion and gender mainstreaming, we could engage ourselves and also other stakeholders like students and teachers in the gender mainstreaming process. However, we believed that our cultural post-gender perspective could support the meaningful engagement of adult multiple stakeholders in a respectful environment.

If we continue to believe that the western framework is the only one, the standard framework, we'll never explore context-responsive, indigenous, relevant, practical frameworks. We'll never explore what works well in our context unless we acknowledge our framework. We'll continue to have trouble exploring other's frameworks to understand our problems and solutions. By rethinking, re-using the inclusive cultural perspective we can fix our local problems; we can address gendered situations in the school (Dhungana, in Press), university and that brings ripple effects to the schools and other educational

institutions in the country where the top-down approach is high; we can influence students, teachers by walking the talk.

Thus, as gender is in flux it needs to be dealt with in a context responsive way. Exploring the dynamic nature of gender and mainstreaming strategies, we took this as an opportunity to explore context responsive approaches for mainstreaming gender in our courses. As we were planning to design the Master's curriculum for Spring-2020, we began to ask- *How can we develop a gender-responsive curriculum?*

Therefore, the purpose of this content analysis is to explore context-responsive approaches adapting a cultural (inclusive) perspective of gender equality/equity. Before discussing the four context-responsive approaches, we discuss the research background and methods in the following sections.

Research background

The paper is based on our (the first, and the third authors, Ph. D. fellows and teacher educators) and (the second author, Post. Doc. and a teacher educator) collective reflective story on the actual gender-related experiences in the process of participatory content analysis of the two Master of Education Programs while developing a teacher's manual for mainstreaming gender in XXX University. We were engaged in content analysis and thereby gender manual development process from June 2020 to November 2020. In the process, we encountered manifold gender issues, which were more context-responsive than we find in literature which we discuss in the following paragraphs. In addressing the issues, we critically reflected upon those gender-related experiences and adapted our inclusive perspective of gender in mainstreaming our courses. Being global citizens and educators, we took this project as a social responsibility for enhancing gender equity in our work and an opportunity to connect other individuals in the COVID-19 context. We observed the ten courses of the following two subjects.

A course, YYY Master of Education, was launched in 2006 and another was launched in 2004. The course prepares the graduates to follow the latest principles and methodology of teaching, undertake small scale research to improve their own pedagogical skills, deliver short term teacher professional

development packages, develop appropriate curricula, textbooks, modules and projected and non-projected materials, and educate pre-service and in-service teachers for effective teaching. Furthermore, another curriculum of ZZZ prepares students to possess conference skills, work in a team, master ICT skills, be independent practitioners, and be able to facilitate teacher development workshops.

Both the courses were revised in 2013 and 2018 to prepare competent teachers, teacher educators, materials developers and researchers; have similar key features and they are need-based, pedagogical content knowledge, applied mathematics, modelling of pedagogy, project-based and skills oriented that helps students master the skills of collaboration, investigation, presentation; aim to develop teacher educators, school leaders, teacher education experts, teacher development organizers and material developers.

Research Methodology

We chose a critical participatory action research design (Kemmis, 2008) to examine the existing curriculum and thereby seek the possibility of improving gender mainstreaming practices by engaging in an action-reflection cycle with the students and colleagues through dialogues. Inspired by living-theory-methodology that integrated (i.e. both critical and appreciative) approaches which made methodological inventiveness possible, we adapted an appreciative approach (that is to appreciate deeply rooted cultural practices) intending to complement the critical approach of participatory action research (Dhungana, 2020). Aiming to engage in action reflection we adapted dialogue as a research method (Delong, 2020). Further, the study of Wolstenholme, Rosscobb, and Bowen (2016, p. 1218), supported us to work with adult learners with participatory design as their participatory design valued adults and thereby allowed them to engage meaningfully and develop shared understandings and goals. Roughly we divided our research process into four phases.

First phase: In the first phase, we conducted a context analysis. In June 2020 we began to review the two Masters' courses from gender perspectives as a part of a gender manual development program that intended to guide teachers to make their curriculum gender-responsive. At this stage, borrowing the

gender perspective from UNESCO (2015) we explored gender issues. Then we felt the need to participate in the content analysis process. In this phase, we felt to empower students or to make them able to critically self reflect the taken for granted assumptions of gender and contribute their views to improve curriculum. Then we planned for the second phase.

Second phase: In the second phase, we sent emails to the students of 2017-2019 batches to participate in the group discussions (on the issue of gender) voluntarily. We took their consent and conducted the FGDs with guideline questions via Google meet. We discussed (2 male and 2 female students). In this phase, we explored the reason for gender biases and context responsive ways out. However, we felt the need of becoming more inclusive and thereby exploring context-responsive ways out by involving teachers or faculty members. Meanwhile, we felt the need to explore more ways of being with colleagues.

Third phase: In the third phase, intending to explore context-responsive ways out we invited the representatives of the school management representatives (e.g. Head of Departments). Doing so, we had hope of receiving a safe environment and thereby making a positive influence. It is because we wanted to explore more ways to improve curriculum, appreciate teachers' best practice of mainstreaming gender to some extent, and enhance mutual relationships by engaging faculty and school management in gender mainstreaming processes. Our intention of gender mainstreaming was not to challenge existing practices rather improve best practices harmoniously and collaboratively. Then we sent an email requesting their voluntary participation in the Focus group discussion. We discussed it with six (5 males and 1 female) colleagues including the two Head of Department.

Fourth phase: In this phase, we revisited and reflected on our research and developed this paper. In the first phase while analyzing contents a question emerged - w*hat were the gendered issues in the curriculum?*- which guided our research. In the second phase another two questions emerged while discussing with students- *Why was gender a problem? How can we address the gender gap to ensure gender equity?*-that guided us further. We deepened our discussion with faculty and school management

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using all three questions. In short, the three questions emerged in the process and thereby guided the research, but not necessarily in a linear way.

Then, intending to make sense of our (authors, students, faculties and school management) lived and living experiences by engaging both mind and heart, we used poetic inquiry, 'the methodology of heart", (Owton, 2017, p. 103). Our intention of using poetic inquiry, which includes different forms of poetry, was to seek our essence of key experiences in the precise form that other modes of presentations (e.g. prose) might not bring forth (Owton, 2017). Therefore, we 'crystallized data' or framed poetry blurring field data and interpretation as we could not separate distinctly data and interpretation while writing (Jackson & Mazzei, 2018).

Results and Discussions

Our context analysis, discussions with students and teachers, and our reflective notes hold the evidence of (1) adapting collaborative approach, (2) promoting 'the 3 pillars', and (3) enhancing inclusiveness.

Adapting collaborative approach

We began inquiry with this initial question (*What were the gendered issues in the curriculum?)* which explored the need for a gender-responsive curriculum in graduate classes. In the process, we adapted collaborative inquiry (Belenky & Stanton, 2000). Here, collaborative inquiry refers to the inquiry of the two authors by engaging in action-reflection cycles. Such teacher-teacher collaboration in the context analysis process was new in our context, which we believe, made it possible for our gender awareness and or enhancement in our gender sensitivity. One of us could lead the project and another could assist, however, we felt we could work collaboratively. Perhaps we were going beyond the male/female binary construct through collaborative inquiry (Belenky & Stanton, 2000).

In collaboration, we chose one curriculum for each of us on the basis of our background. We shared our analysis, discussed and thereby tried to made sense of them through the following poem:

I'm happy for getting an opportunity
I am inviting you by reciting poetry.

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I am the program designer and implementer
a female teacher educator, sensitive in gender

My course promotes enough reflective and critical thinking,
include issues of gender equity with frequent revisiting.

I am very conscious of using gender-neutral language,
It would be challenging if I did not use the English language.

Books and reference materials; articles and literary pieces,
With my careful selection of not gender stereotyped texts.

I am aware of gender, gender roles, and authorship of women,
Dugas & Allard's article, Plath's poetry to name a few of them.

Teaching and learning by the individual, pair works, and group works
Through reading and writing, presentation, discussion and field works.

I instruct, I facilitate, and I teach what to teach, how to teach and why to teach,
Through the module, auto tutorials, CD, face-to-face, online, games, activity and research.

In-semester 50% and end-semester 50% , my assessment system,
I evaluate all the assignments and follow the letter grade system.

My teaching and assessment are not of learning but for learning.
I claim a gender-sensitive environment for conducive learning.

Finally, I would like to thank you all for listening,
Drop your queries as/for gender mainstreaming.

This poem reflects our lack of gender responsiveness which was the main issue in the existing curriculum. However, in the beginning, we could not explore it as we might make shallow observations in a single attempt. For instance, we explored that curriculum designers and/or developers had gender awareness and sensitiveness. It was because the language used in the curriculum was gender-neutral. We believed that gender neutrality would be enough for gender justice. Then we felt that our presence in our department was addressing gender disparity. We were kind of happy being representative of the females. We believed that our presence, gender awareness and sensitiveness would be enough for gender mainstreaming.

But when we discussed and made a second observation we explored that gender was not an intended learning area rather a hidden curriculum in Masters of Education. Hidden curriculum or

"informal curriculum", other than intentional curriculum or "formal curriculum", refers to those aspects of schooling that influence learners values, perceptions and behaviours UNESCO (2015). UNESCO defines gender analysis as the examining and exploration of the reasons for gender inequality, the disparity in given circumstances and situations. For examination and exploration of gender inequality, in the context of university settings, we first assumed that the curriculum had enough space. However, we continuously value gender as a 'hidden curriculum' that can influence the learning of the students (Schubert …) and teachers.

Then we explored the need of enhancing gender sensitivity. For instance, we thought that many times, teachers are aware of gender issues but they lacked gender sensitivity. To be gender inclusive, teachers needed to be aware of using proper learning material to ensure gender equity. There could be an inclusion of values, ethics, norms and beliefs. Besides that, a teacher could provide a safe learning environment where students can exercise human rights and challenge one's own deep-rooted cultural issues. By adopting peer learning, cooperative learning, collaborative learning, peer evaluation, group evaluation, and group work, one could provide a space for learning.

However, we felt enhancement of gender sensitivity alone falls short when we practice teaching, learning, and assessing promote individual learning rather than collaborative learning and/or evaluation. Meanwhile, we were inspired by Lebler (2008) who provided three functions of assessing students: (1) Assessment of learning (to examine the students' achievement to ensure learning outcomes); (2) Assessment for learning (to provide feedback and direction for future activities); (3) Assessment as learning (to produce learning in itself by involving students actively in the assessment process). That taught us that our practice of assessment should not be limited to 'assessment of learning and assessment for learning' rather move toward 'assessment as learning'. Here, we felt that we might need to embrace cultural and/or indigenous knowledge to develop a gender-responsive curriculum.

Reaching this stage, being aware of the gendered curriculum, we saw the possibility of improving learning resources as gender equity, which might support our students to enjoy a gender-equitable

learning environment.   We could use not only multiple resources like books, journal articles and literary

pieces but also artefacts, natural phenomena, media, family, and mythologies as learning resources.

We had some reflective queries. For instance, were the existing learning materials enough for

gender equity? We could connect values, ethics, norms and beliefs. For it, we thought a safe learning

environment is a must but had we given space in our curriculum for exercising our human rights? Was my

pedagogy enough to explore deep-rooted cultural issues? Perhaps not! But we were given space for peer

learning and group work. Are they enough for peer learning, cooperative learning, collaborative learning

and peer and group evaluation? No! We had highly promoted individual learning, not collaborative

learning and evaluation.

The answer to the question of uneasiness was because of building consensus for gender

mainstreaming without the involvement of the students and/or having students' consensus on a decision.

Participatory assessment could be for the betterment of the curriculum and while talking about students'

assessment, their involvement is equally important. Without their involvement, the empowerment of the

students could not be done. Furthermore, it is not about ending patriarchy and Western Modern

Worldview in higher education, it is about empowering those who are influenced by the patriarchy

(Shackelford, 1992) for "cultural emancipation" (Taylor, 2013) through nurturing inclusive perspective.

Then we realized that realizing gender as a hidden curriculum might not be sufficient in our

context. It is because students from diverse contexts come to the university and there might be genuine

gender issues in the higher education context, not limited to male and female issues (e.g. Paudyal, 2015).

Social inclusion and exclusion might function beyond male/female issues. Therefore, in line with

Lamptey et al (2015), we thought that gender-neutral content scope would not support us to disrupt

existing gender relations. Here emerged a question-*Why was gender a problem?* We explored the answer

in the following section.

Promoting 'the 3 pillars'

Our query-*Why was gender a problem?*- explored the hegemony of binary perspectives of gender

as male and female (Belenky & Stanton, 2000) but not as inherent (i.e. naturally gifted) qualities of

masculine and feminine of each individual (Mishra, 2017). We made sense of it through the poems, for instance,

When my two voices argued,

A separate topic/unit!
No! Be inclusive.

A separate pedagogy!
No! Be gender-responsive!

A separate quota!
No! Make me feel equal!

Continue 'research on'!
No! 'Research with'!

Gender parity!
No! Equity!

My third voice said,

"Curriculum, community, and university,
the 3 pillars!"

The third voice of the poem refers to the inclusive voice which broke the boundary of first and second voice or binary voices. The third voice suggested the connection of curriculum with the issues of community and thereby collaboratively work on it being like the 3 pillars. Similarly, the discussion with teachers and school management explored collaboration in a context-responsive way. So, the third voice came not to empower any other voice rather connect and collaborate. The sense of oneness provided us with the ways out to move beyond binary perspective. To move and dismantle binary perspective, the all-inclusive metaphor of Ardhanarishwar supported us.

We think our inclusive perspective that involved students in the content analysis process was our belief in students as 'critical students' (Johnston, Mitchell, Myles & Ford, 2011) who explore the hegemony of the binary perspective and move beyond. Like Johnston, Mitchell, Myles and Ford (2011), we believed that critical students having the following personal qualities and values:

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(1) a well-developed, robust, confident and aware self, able where necessary to challenge and reconstruct existing understanding and modes of operation; (2) an awareness of the values, priorities and power structures implicit in a context and a capacity to be constructively critical to them; (3) appropriate values such as respect for reasons, an inquiring attitude, open-mindness, independent-mindedness (p. 80)

A student of the 21st century is critically aware of self and others who challenge the hegemonic policy and practices. Moreover, this exploration was possible when we valued students' participation; their specific needs and multiple intelligences. From the discussion with the students, we saw the possibility of introducing varieties of contents of multiple contexts, including gender issues, in participation with the students to develop gender-friendly content. It was because, although the objective of my program was to foster students' critical thinking, however, the program itself lacked a critical look.

The notion of the 3 pillars (curriculum, community and university) seems a foundation for nurturing gender equity. For it, we needed to embrace the issues (e.g. gender) of community or society in curriculum contents. We need to invite community members to our class to discuss gender issues. We can bring artefacts in the class to discuss gender. Yes, curriculum, community and university are the three pillars of gender justice! The three pillars have equal value and also equal responsibility to ensure gender equity.

However, we should be aware of Schubert's (1986) notion of "curriculum as a cultural reproduction". In Schubert's words, the metaphor of "curriculum as cultural reproduction" refers to the curriculum that uncritically adopts and implements cultural and social practices mandatorily particularly in the school curriculum. We think, by promoting enough evaluation skills, creative thinking and affective domains of learning among teachers and students we can critically examine cultural practices to ensure gender justice.

Moreover, like us, teachers need to ask ourselves questions like- Is community-university participation necessary for the university curriculum designing and implementation? Do I need to give

equal value to community knowledge, indigenous knowledge, in the university class? Is my curriculum contextualized, and connected to the community fully?

Thus, embracing the issues of community, inviting community members in the class to discuss issues and bringing artefacts from the community are some ways to improve the curriculum. Curriculum, community and the university are the three pillars of gender justice that have equal value and responsibility to ensure gender equity. By not giving value to the community, by not incorporating indigenous knowledge in the classroom and by not participating with the community members, the curriculum is decontextualized. It is hard for one individual to contextualize the university curriculum. Feminist pedagogy might emphasize dialogue and collaborative culture (Shackel, 1992), however, in the Nepalese context to initiate the contextualization of the curriculum classroom interaction, collaboration and dialogue are prerequisites (Luitel, 2019).

In line with Parajuli (2015) our attempt was to explore a cultural gap in education intending to make education responsive to the local needs. In the school context, exploring context-responsive approaches for contextualizing curriculum was possible through collaborative approaches Dhungana, et.al, 2020) and through living collaboration as a professional value (Dhungana, 2020). Moreover, exploration of a cultural perspective (i.e. satvic framework) was possible within university classrooms through self-study (Dhungana, 2021).

Decontextualized and decultured curriculum of the university seems one of the major existing challenges of higher education which fuelled for ensuring gender injustice. Disregarding the collaboration and connection of curriculum with family issues, culture, society and community might not address gender issues in our context. For contextualizing curriculum and 'cultural emancipation' university-community collaboration might be helpful. Although contextualizing the university curriculum might not be possible by my individual effort, we can continuously attempt to do so. Here emerged a question- *who is responsible for gender equity?*

Enhancing inclusiveness

Who is responsible for gender equity? The inquiry led to explore a rarely discussed (at least in our context) issue of teachers' self-inquiry and "Self-enquiry" (Osborne, 2014). According to LaBoskey (2004, p. 826) "each self is different, all offer an important, yet necessarily constrained perspective. Therefore, the knowledge of teaching can only be developed in a diverse and inclusive, particularly of previously marginalized voices, teacher-learning community." However, self-inquiry might not be sufficient in the Nepali context which has a deeply rooted cultural knowledge of 'Self-enquiry.' In line with Osborne (2014), who was inspired by the teachings of Ramana Maharshi, we believe that 'self' might dwell in the egoistic self whereas 'Self-enquiry' might take towards pure consciousness or inclusive experience. Therefore, self-inquiry is the inquiry of 'self' based on our practices whereas 'Self'-enquiry is the inquiry of the 'Self' or our Pure consciousness (means a sense of inclusiveness or weness). In our context, besides 'self- inquiry' we feel the need for inquiry of 'Self' which might play a vital role, particularly in the educational setting.

For instance, we explored teachers' collaboration as a context-responsive way to ensure gender equity. Here collaboration was not only the approach (Dhungana et. al, 2020) but also a living consciousness (Dhungana, 2020), and inclusive context responsive cultural perspective. We made sense through the following poem.

> *My loud voice claimed,*
> *"I am pedagogy and I am fine."*
>
> *My mild voice said,*
> *"We, students, teachers, university*
> *family, culture, society,*
> *Content, learning materials, assignment,*
> *research topics, university policy, relationships,*
> *need improvement!"*
>
> *My low voice whispered,*
> *"collaboration with colleagues!"*

Discussion with the school management and colleagues explored a context-responsive way of 'collaboration'. However, we found it paradoxical because through curriculum teachers intended to

enhance collaborative learning (a few courses), but in practice, teachers themselves were overlooking the strength of collaborative culture which is deeply rooted in Nepali societies. In White Head's (2008) words, we were "living contradictions" by not living the value of collaboration fully. For instance, a teacher said, "I think teacher-teacher collaboration might work in our context." Although we had incorporated a few group activities for students in our curriculum, we needed to walk the talk!

Here, we realized that we all are responsible for ensuring gender equity. For instance, not only the teachers and school management, students also need to be inclusive and be able to accept change in the classroom; to bring change in our dualistic perspective.

Similarly, the university should encourage research on gender; should let the individual course facilitators make personal decisions about the course; should change their existing policy and be gender inclusive. Next, the issue of gender is an important content that needs to be integrated in the curriculum. Change in the curriculum is essential. There should be gender inclusion in content, learning material, assignment. Both males and females' voices (including texts) should be incorporated in the curriculum. Moreover, besides university, family and society need to acknowledge and contribute cultural or indigenous knowledge.

For all these, collaboration as an inclusive context responsive perspective is a prerequisite. Promotion of openness among teachers, the connection of curriculum with community or society and collaboration among students, colleagues and school management would create a gender-friendly learning environment and enhance gender equity.

Seemingly, we have been ignoring the third or the collaborative voice and promoting the egoistic (i.e. first voice) and the victim attitude (i.e. second) voice. We never heard our low voice, the problem-solving voice. Being adult professionals dealing with adults, role modelling could be a suitable strategy for transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) that could enhance gender equity in the curriculum. We can be role models to our students and colleagues by collaboration. Like "curriculum as currere" (1986), we can be living curricula. Collaboration with colleagues seems possible in teaching, learning and assessing

in our context but-How could we collaborate with our colleagues for enhancing gender equity in the curriculum?-emerged as an unanswered question that can be a question for further research.

Final reflections

The query-How can we develop a gender-responsive curriculum? -gave rise to the idea of all-inclusive context-responsive equitable strategies such as (1) adapting collaborative approach, (2) promoting 'the 3 pillars', and (3) enhancing inclusiveness.

At first, we explored collaboration as a gender gap that led us towards seeking the possibilities of respecting and nurturing the cultural perspective of gender equity. In other words, rather than focusing on problems and seeking ways for problem-solving, we could see what had been working well in our context and thereby continue being like a critical student (Johnston, Mitchell, Myles & Ford, 2011).

For instance, we can promote collaborative and cooperative learning communities of practices among students and faculty. Next, we can promote collaborative methodologies like action research, participatory action research, self-study methodologies which encourage collaboration, participation and improvement of professional practices. Similarly, cross-cultural projects like NORHED Rupantanran and NORAD QUANTICT can enhance collaboration among colleagues and the community. Collaboration between Nepali universities might be helpful in addressing gender issues. For global collaboration, mutual relationships within university members can sustain and thereby satisfy the stakeholders for the long run (Gaskins-Scott, 2020). University education can be a role model in the Nepali context if it has a foundation of collaborative culture and mutual relationships that might enhance gender equity in a sustainable way and support the community.

Moreover, the promotion of an integral worldview that moves beyond binary conflicts might be supportive for gender balance and equity. For it, the respect for both worldviews, Western Modern Worldviews and Eastern Wisdom Tradition seem the urgent need to realize their potentiality of complementing each other with their distinct potentialities. According to Timmers, Willemsen, and Tijdens (2010), a multi-perspective framework of policy awareness could help evaluate their gender equity policy measures. Therefore, being like Kincheloe's (2005) 'active researcher' and using van

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Manen's (1991) pedagogical tactfulness, we can integrate both world views respecting so-called indigenous knowledge and non-indigenous knowledge.

Similarly, the promotion of both critical inquiry and appreciative inquiry seems urgent to realize our cultural practices, explore indigenous knowledge and practices to address contextual issues rather than waiting for the best theories and methods from non-indigenous contexts.

An inclusive approach prepared us to 'walk the talk' and thereby prepared enough space for classroom reformation and policy development in the university setting (LaBoskey, 2004). The critical self-examination might create tension in the university setting (Savage & Pollard, 2018), however, university culture could be a role model to influence students, teachers and faculties, and the society and beyond (LaBoskey, 2004). Further, continuous mainstreaming of gender with pedagogical tactfulness in the classroom with the hope of students getting informed and empowered with the strength of cultural practices would support deconstruction and then reconstruct hegemonic policies and practices.

Conclusion

Finally, we explored that openness, the culture of inquiry, the culture of respect, mutual trust, and shared values like cooperation and inclusiveness are prerequisites for developing, improving and nurturing an all-inclusive context-responsive perspective. All-inclusive perspectives can evolve a new (i.e. context-responsive) framework for gender equity. Moreover, we envision university curriculum and policy developers in collaboration with students, teachers, school management and the community representatives to explore context-responsive equitable strategies in diverse contexts to develop curriculum and thereby to execute university policies adapting participatory approach.

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