

A STUDY OF THE APPLICATION OF LOCAL SKILLS IN CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS IN NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at identifying the prevalent status of the application of local skills in classroom instructions in study area in the context of government schools in Nepal and analyzes the reasons behind the available status of the application of local skills in classroom practices in study area. It also attempts to recommend some strategies for the development of local skill-oriented classroom instructions for the development of practical education through functional or task-based classroom instructions. Based on qualitative method, the data have been generated through PRA, classroom observation, and semi-structured interview. The collected data have been analyzed by using thematic analysis under interpretative paradigm. The study has revealed a poor status of the application of local skills based classroom instructions in study area along with the issues of teacher development, administrative supervision, local need, examination system and also emphasizes on addressing the development of skill-oriented local curriculum for the development of task-based classroom instructions in study area and in general.

Key Words: *Local skills, task-based instructions, practical education, local curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

Education in practical sense refers to the process of teaching-learning that emphasizes the application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings. It denotes the significance of the instructions that focus on hands-on experience and problem-solving, rather than just theoretical instructions. The goal of practical education is to provide students with the practical skills through the relevant knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen fields and to be able to apply their learning in the workplace. According to Dewey (1997), education is a continuous process of experiencing and revising or reorganizing experiences into practical skills through the adjustment in environment (1916, p.61). For Agrawal (1992), the productive aspect of education enables a person to do things by overcoming each and every problem through practical skills (p. 33). According to Nwabueze and Isilebo (2022) the modern trends of education include event and task-oriented learning that is based on the phenomenon of social learning. Task-oriented practical education through local skills can be developed in many forms, including internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and vocational education. For example, a student in a

vocational school might learn the local skills needed to become a carpenter or an architect through hands-on training and supervised practice, while a college student might gain practical experience through an internship in their chosen field (p. 545).

Local skills are the locally available skills that take account of a body of abilities, capacities and practices maintained and developed by local peoples, generally in suburb and rural areas, by extending interaction with the natural environment in solving day-to-day problems (Boven & Morohashi, 2002, p 13). Skill-oriented practical education through the application of local skills can be included in the curriculum of academic programs. For example, students might take classes that focus on local, real-world case studies, and simulations in order to apply their learning to real business problems. Similarly, students might complete laboratory work and research projects in order to gain practical experience in their chosen local field of study. Practical education is supposed to be an approach to teaching-learning that emphasizes the application of knowledge and skills in real-world settings, often through hands-on experience and problem-solving. It provides students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their chosen fields, and helps them to be more prepared for the workforce. Considering significance of the application of local skills in classroom instructions, this research was conducted to identify the status of the application of local skills in classroom instructions and analyze the underlying aspects in the study context.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- a) To identify the available local skills and find out the status of the application of them in classroom instructions in study area.
- b) To find out and analyze the reasons behind the available status of the application of local skills in classroom instructions in study area.
- c) To recommend the strategies for the development of the local skills-based classroom instructions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to deal with following issues:

- a) Are there local skills available in the study area?
- b) How can the available local skills be applied in classroom instructions?
- c) Are there possible applications of activity-based teaching learning in classroom instructions?
- d) What is the status of activity-based teaching learning in classroom instructions?
- e) What can be the ways for the development of activity-based classroom instructions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational development is a systematic process of improving the instructional activities in education for and individual and institutional growth. Educational development is a method of enhancing teaching and learning for individual and societal growth through innovative and creative minds. Educational developers usually carry out the studies relating closely with teaching learning environments making a connection with technology devices in classroom instructions as well as the development of other locally available resources to support staff and students in academic institutions globally (Nwabueze & Isilebo, 2022, p. 546). Open innovation in classroom instruction

is a paradigm shift in education that assumes that institutions can and should apply external ideas as well as internal ideas (internal and external paths) to education, as the institutions look to advance their technology (Alalfy, 2015).

The bases of the development of modern educational ideals focus on the practical aspect's education, relating it with functional, productive and skill developing aspects. In support of this, Dewey (1997) puts his view again that the main purpose or objective of education is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill which comprehend the material of instruction (p.18). Concluding the education as development of overall skill, Crow and Crow (2008) advocate that education is a dynamic force in the life of every individual, influencing physical, mental, emotional, social and ethical development resulting practical values, behaviours and skills in a society" (p. 53).

Highlighting the role of skill development in the process of education, Smith (2006) argues that education can be part of the problem as well as part of the solution. Policies and practices at all levels within the education system need to be analyzed in terms of their sensitivity to local diversities and skills including their potentials for the overall social development (p. 29). Smith's remarks here suggest that diversity provides various types of opportunities through the varieties of knowledge, experiences and skills available in the society. Application of these availabilities in the process of education equates to social development. Relating the local skills with socio-cultural construction, UNESCO (2011) puts forth the ideas that "socio-cultural diversity includes race, socio-class, ability, skills, different learning conditions and styles, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality and other dimensions that make up the identity of the individual and social group" (p. 2). This clarifies that a variety of abilities, experiences, skills and knowledge which in totality, is supposed to be a part of education. Connecting the diversity with education, Smith (2006) views that diversity including local knowledge and skills is supposed to provide an opportunity as well as a challenge for education. He reflects that diversity along with local skills is supposed to be an opportunity in the sense that a society is likely to achieve faster rates of economic growth and social development through the application of local skills available in the society. It is supposed to be a challenge in the sense that policymakers and educators are called to respond to the claims of disadvantaged minorities for whom education represents a key to greater opportunity and parity with other groups in society (p. 29). The application of local skills in the educational system according to Smith (2006) is fully consistent with the "outcome-based" educational practices that researchers agree are needed if societies are to achieve sustainable social and economic development in our globalized world (p. 29). Smith's statement clarifies that the inclusion of local skills in the education system of a country plays a vital role in developing task-based pedagogical practices that results the skill- based learning environment through the interactive activities of the various groups. Stressing on the development of education through the socio-cultural diversity referring to UNESCO's thinking, Daniel (2002) highlights the crucial role of the inclusion of local skills in education system of nation in order to achieve its goal of unity and progress towards the education for all (cited in UNESCO, 2002, p. 2). Chaining the context for the same, Smith (2006) in his study opines again that education for diversity via local knowledge and skills has the potential to propel growth and progress while reducing and perhaps preventing social conflict (p. 29).

Focusing on inclusion of diversified local skills in education policies for the sustainable development of a society or nation, Smith (2006) opines that there are many levels within a system that need to take diversified skills into account. Possible entry points mentioned by him include the need of change and modification in aim of education, educational policies, structural organization, teaching learning resources, teaching strategies, teacher education, examination system, parental education and community orientation (P.33). Adding on the same, UNESCO (2002) remarks, “Different systems of belief and local knowledge will figure strongly in the design of local solutions for sustainability, with particular regard to the role played by local groups as a storehouse of knowledge on biodiversity and sustainable development” (p. 12).

The literature reviewed above focuses on the significant role of local skills for the development of task-oriented practical education. Moreover, proper utilization of local skills lead to sustainable practices, such as sustainable agriculture, construction, architecture, tourism, conservation and many others. Hence, inclusion and application of local skills in education undoubtedly contribute to the identification, mobilization and preservation of local resources and socio-cultural potentials.

However, there is found to have been a lack of study on the reasons behind not applying local skills in classroom instructions in the schools of Nepal like developing countries. This study is supposed to find the responsible circumstances and factors affecting the inclusion of local skills in education by their application in classroom instructions and fill the gap through its findings and recommendations. The findings of this study will contribute some significant strategies to the teachers, educationists, policy makers and stakeholders to carry out the application of local skills in classroom instructions leading to the development of practical education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To find out answers of the research questions, qualitative research approach has been chosen applying hermeneutic phenomenology to find out people’s lived experience (Langdrige, 2007, p. 4) by using a method of making sense of the world as people experience it by interpreting the meaning of the experiences (Van Manen, 2014, p. 28). The aim of researcher through this phenomenology is to explore the hidden meanings of peoples' experiences their practiced knowledge and skills by applying ‘interpretive paradigm’ which is viewed as a social construction having a central goal of seeking to interpret the social-world (Higgs, 2001, pp.48- 49). Relevant phenomenological questions through unstructured or semi-structured interview are used for collecting experiential data from participants (Beck 2021). The experience contained data are utilized for proper phenomenological analysis and reflection which is meant to serve the purpose of producing categories to unlock meaning through the process of phenomenological interpretation, analysis, reflection, and writing through a thematic analysis (Stolz, 2023, p. 825). For the purpose, PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal), classroom observation, and semi- structured interview have been applied as research tools. Field notes, photographs and voice recording were also carried out as supportive tools and techniques.

The collected data were analyzed by carrying out six stages: immersion, understanding, abstraction, synthesis and theme development, illumination and illustration of phenomena and integration and critique of findings.

The participants of this study are from Tilottama Municipality Rupandehi, Nepal. The participants include: teachers, students, parents, SMC members and local representative from ward office.

I have done thematic analysis abstracting the information from the relevant categories or themes to obtain an interpretation. My research design which contains some validation strategies (Padilla-Diaz, 2015) and I have also provided a summary of the findings of major themes and issues. I have vigorously reported the findings through the use of direct quotations of the research participants and interpretation through descriptions rather explanation (Qutoshi, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to make the identification of available local skills inherent in local people, I carried out PRA in my study site in order to identify local resources including local skills inherent in local people and enable local people to do their own appraisal using group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis and action among stakeholders (World Bank, 1995). For this purpose I visited the study sites in advance, developed rapport with local dwellers. Then I conducted a transect walk through the study area with local informants to learn of the range of different condition of resources, problems and opportunities in each of the area having cross section of the area as observed by the walk (Paul, 2006). I gathered local community members in the village central point and described my purpose (Paul, 2006) and involved them in sharing the available skills inherent in. This helped me to get assess not only physical and socio-cultural resources but also the local skills they practice to solve their day to day problems in detail (Carey & Etling, 1997). I have identified the local skills and analyzed the possible application techniques in classroom instructions (see Table 1) as follows:

Table 1: Available local skills and possible application in classroom instructions.

Available Local Skills in Study Area	Possible Application in Classroom Instructions
Making Dhakiya, making fishing net, making Delia (fish keeping basket), making Dehari (granary), making pigeon house (made of mud), making Khunga (fish trapping device), making Dhadiya (fish trapping device), making Chhatari (traditional Umbrella), making Bidcha/Bida (straw made seat), making Dari (straw made mat), making bamboo ladder, carvings on door, making broom of Thakal (a typical plant) and other local plants, making Khapada (roofing material), making puffed rice, paintings on walls, first aid of snake bite, treatment of mud infection on feet and hands, pain relief massage on stomach, therapy for decreasing pain, feeding cattle, milking, breeding, planting, irrigating, swimming, crossing the flooded river, fishing, messaging orally to villagers, stitching clothes, making puffed rice, playing kusti (wrestling), dancing in a typical music, feeding medicine to cattle by using a bamboo made device, singing religious songs, practicing Dhami/Jhakri, making statues of elephant, God etc., making straw made seat and mat, milking and making dairy products stitching clothes, making Dhakiya, gardening, making hand fan and Nanglo with bamboo straps, making fishing net, Khadgodawa Dance, Biraha songs and dance, making hand fan of clothes, Making special cap of clothes, using herbs on cut wounds/cold, painting, constructing etc.	Demonstration, presentation, observation, field visit, participation, field work, modeling, realia, role play, dramatization, project work, problem- solving collaboration activities, discussion, pair work, group work, construction play resource package learning, discovery learning, concept mapping, modeling, simulation etc.

The Table 1 shows clearly that there is abundance of local skills available in study area and they can be applied in classroom instructions by using various techniques to carry out task-oriented activities in classroom.

In order to find out if there was any application or practice of available local skills in classroom instructions, classroom observation was carried out. The entire classes, regardless of subjects of grade viii were observed. I carried out my classroom observation followed by some prerequisites as I made a close observation of school surroundings, met some local dwellers and school committee members as well. I made an interaction with the teachers along with an introduction and explained the situational (Billett, 1996, p. 73) purpose of my observation making them an assurance of my study relevance.

Table 2: Status of the application of local skills in classroom instructions.

Days	Application of Local Skills in Classroom Instructions	Possible Applications	Remarks
Day 1	Text: making gardens Teaching: the teacher divides students into four groups and gives each group a topic; asks students to read the text and speak on the given topics. (Doesn't relate the garden located in front of class.)	Field/project works, demonstrations, observations, group/pair works, participation, interactions etc.	No application
Day 2	Text: seed Teaching: by definition Text: protection/storage of seeds Teaching: defining the terms and reading the text lines and explaining the lines. Text: use of flowers Teaching: just by reading the text lines and explaining them	Field/project works, demonstrations, observations, group/pair works, participation, interactions etc.	No application
Day 3	Text: practical activity on gardening/producing flowers Teaching: just by asking students to read the text at their homes and do given activities at home.	Field/project works, demonstrations, group/pair works, interactions etc.	No application
Day 4	Text: Fishing: concept /introduction Teaching: just by asking a student to stand up in the class and read the text aloud.	Field/project works, demonstrations, observations, group/pair works, participation, interactions etc.	No application
Day 5	Text: Fishing: methods and procedures Teaching: just by reading the sentence lines the text aloud and making a short lecture and asking some questions followed by the text.	Field/project works, demonstrations, observations, group/pair works, participation, interactions etc.	No application
Day 6	Text: practical activity on fishing/fishery Teaching: just by asking students to read the text at their homes and do given activities at home.	Field/project works, demonstrations, group/pair works, interactions etc.	No application

I carried out classroom observation throughout the whole school days entering the classroom before the teacher entered and remaining in the entire classes until the teacher went out. Each class was observed applying Resource-based Learning Theory (Beswick, 1977). From my thorough observation for six days, I found (see Table 2) the status of the application of locally available skills in classroom instructions as follows:

The findings from the above-mentioned observation represented a very poor status of the application of the locally available skills in classroom instructions and at the same time emerged a number of key issues. The teachers were found to have followed traditionally practiced deductive and theoretical instructions in the classroom, in spite of having many possible use of local skills oriented teaching-learning in the classroom. As one of the instances I observed, there was a garden just in front of the classroom and the teacher, who was the indigenous dweller of same locality, was teaching the topic "Gardening" just by reading the textual lines from the textbook. The teacher here, could easily have taken his students just out of the class and make them observe the garden and instruct them by applying his local experience and skills, create the situation to involve them there by providing a relevant task in a group or a pair or individually by applying various practical teaching learning techniques like: observation, demonstration, project task and many more. Such application could have brought real life learning in the students leading to the acquisition of practical skills. And at the same time, the irony I found there was that the garden was in a neglected and poor condition. All these make me raise many questions like: Are the teachers really unknown about the use of local skills in classroom instructions? Haven't the teachers got any orientation regarding the same? Haven't the teachers realized the need of the application of local skills in teaching? Why are reasons behind practicing traditional and deductive strategies in classroom? And so on. In order to find out the answers of these questions, semi-structured interview was carried out. The data collected from semi-structured interview were analyzed thematically. On the basis of thematic analysis, the emerged themes are as follows:

Theme 1: Conventional practices in school

We know the importance of task-based teaching- learning methods in our classrooms. We are aware of the vital role of such methods and techniques for the development of practical skills in our students but the irony is that we have been using traditionally practiced methods in classroom instructions. We have been doing so and almost every teacher does so. Frankly saying, we feel easy in doing so. The students, the teachers and all the concerned aspects from lower level to higher level are habituated and conditioned with these conventional practices. Everything seems to be well going we are satisfied too. Simply saying the environment, we have been following, is just conventional. (Manoj Sahani, a teacher: 21/11/2022).

Theme 2: Exam-centered practices

We need to complete the courses before the final examinations at any cost so we are often in a rush to complete the course. We know that applying task-oriented activities in classroom is a lengthy process and we need a long span of time. Moreover, our examinations and evaluation systems are of traditional type and based on "paper pencil" to a large extent. It is our compulsion to follow exams-based trends in classroom practices (Sabitri Kandel, a teacher: 21/11/2022).

Theme 3: Issues of teachers' dutifulness and liability

We have bitter experiences and it is also a reality that most of our teachers are not serious in the matter of our future, they don't seem to be worried about our study overall. At the beginning of

the session, they look as if they are feeling lazy in the class and always in hurry to finish the course at the end of the session. Most of the teachers don't seem to be well prepared; they just make a glance of subject matter to be taught after entering the class and begin their lecture. It is also a reality that some of our teachers they enter late in classroom and leave the classroom before the period is over. Therefore, our teachers need to think about it seriously and change their behaviours accordingly (Shyam Gupta, a student: 21/11/2022).

Theme 4: Regular orientations, refreshment trainings and follow up activities

Most of the teachers have got the degree from Education Faculty so they are well known about the participatory and task-oriented classroom instructions. However, very few of them have been found to practice practical classroom strategies. It is a big problem and raising a burning question regarding teachers' professional responsibilities and accountability. The school administration is planning to provide them refreshment trainings. In my realization we are lacking regular orientation, refreshment trainings strict supervision and follow up activities. (Kamala Gautam, the head teacher: 21/11/2022).

Theme 5: Primary focus of local administration

Teachers are role models of the society. I always have an honor and appreciation towards the works of teachers in our society. Some of our teachers are hardworking, sincere, dutiful and are worried about the future of their students. But some of them are found to have become careless and forgotten their roles and responsibilities. Some of them are in the influence of political parties and acting as the agents of those parties. Such teachers have forgotten their priorities. In many cases schools have become a platform for making political affairs. In my opinion, the teachers are primarily responsible in initiating task-oriented environment in classroom. In this matter the local government should also keep the schools in its priority for the proper mobilization of the teachers making them realized their priorities and accountability (Asbin Paudel, ward chairperson: 22/11/2022).

Theme 6: Inclusion of local potentials in curriculum

In my opinion, there should be inclusion of local potentialities in education. Our education system should address all the opportunities and possibilities that are available in our locality. There are many indigenous people having various experiences, knowledge and skills. Such potentialities should be included in curriculum through the collaborative involvements of the stakeholders in the society in order to have long term influence for the development of practical task-oriented education in order to develop skilled, efficient and salable manpower leading to the sustainable development of the society (Phoolpati Kandel, a social worker cum guardian: 22/11/2022).

CONCLUSION

As task-based classroom instructions play a vital role in the development of practical and skill-based education by providing students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, this approach requires the application local experiences and skills in order to bring real life tasks and activities that simulate the students to encounter with their problems in their future careers. Incorporation of the available local skills into the curriculum can develop a deeper understanding of their own culture and the cultures in students. Local skills lead the students to their careers that they may pursue in the future. Moreover, promoting local skills in

education can support economic development and create opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Regarding the responsible causes for the poor status of the prevalent status of the application of local skills in classrooms in the study area, mainly traditional practices in pedagogy, exam-centered classroom instructions, lack of teachers' dutifulness, liability, priority and accountability and lack of the inclusion of local needs or potentials in curriculum have been found from the interview. Curriculum should address the local needs and local potentials including local skills available in the community in order to bring real life situation leading to interactive activities in classroom and making the students enjoy participating in task-based classroom instructions. In the same way, examination system needs to be revised to measure performance and skills by the inclusion of formative activities in the structure of practical pattern. Moreover, teachers' sincerity, liability, accountability and teachers' primary focus on students' skill development should be taken into consideration. Most importantly, continuous follow-up of administration with scheduled supervision, conduction of relevant trainings or timely orientations seem to be taken into actions for the proper implementation of the application of local skills in classroom in order to develop skilled and efficient human resources through practical and task-based education.

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