Quest for an Indigenous Pedagogy: Learning from Tharu Festivals of Western Nepal

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Abstract

This paper attempts to evoke the underpinning pedagogy in Tharu festivals of Dangaura Tharus living in western Nepal. This study also focused on assessing the connections of the Tharus' pedagogies with that of the formal and non-formal schools. In order to explore indigenous pedagogy embedded in Tharu festivals, using interpretivism as a research paradigm and ethnography as a research design, I engaged with the Chairperson of Guruwas (Tharu Priests), 4 Barghars (village Chief) and 4 Tharu social elites (indigenous elders) of the western Nepal as selected purposively. The required information was gathered with the help of participant observation of cultural events and in-depth interviews with Barghars and traditional healers of Tharus. I identified the pedagogy embedded in Tharu festivals like Magh, Atwari, Guriya, Anatta, Dashya, Dewari, etc. and interconnected them to social theories like conflict theory, system theory, and functionalist theory. Based on my reflection and various methodological procedures on indigenous pedagogical practices in Tharu festivals, I theorize the objectives, contents, teaching methods, evaluation process and revision process embedded in Tharu festivals as indigenous pedagogy. Based on these findings, this article recommends specific culturally responsive pedagogical practices for the teachers, educational planners, and policymakers of formal and non-formal education through bottom-up approaches. I concluded that each culture has its own pedagogical process which can be applied to the education system of the nation.

Keywords: Tharus and their festivals, pedagogical practices, Tharu pedagogy, learning Theories

Introduction

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 states that Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, multireligious, multicultural country with geological diversities (Government of Nepal,[GoN], 2015). Tharus - one of the 125 ethnic/caste groups, 123 mother tongue languages, and 10 religious' groups (Central Bureau of Statistics,

2012, p. 4) - is the oldest and largest indigenous people (Fornarino et al., 2009) of Nepal. Based on the population as well as mother tongue, Tharus comprises the 4th largest population (6.6%) of Nepal. As a Tharu qualitative researcher, I self-consciously focused to evoke the issue of this paper (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). I also sought strategies to make connections between lived experiences, and larger social and cultural structures. I am eager to analyze the pedagogical practices envisaged in Tharu culture by linking them with western learning theories like behaviourist theories, Vygotsky's social theory, pragmatists' learning theory, and Bandura's social learning theory as well as Aboriginal pedagogy of Australia and Canada.

Morrison et al. (2019) argue that Indigenous nationalities in Nepal like Australian Aboriginal people's fundamentals of learning are based on such pedagogies which overwhelm the identities and cultural background of the students is termed Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). However, CRP includes learners' cultural experiences and learning is taken as a social phenomenon (Irvine, 2010, p.8). As Disbray (2014) claimed that bilingual culture-based education program is very successful for Aboriginal people in Australia in the name of a two-way programme. Further, in practice, Rigney (2001) elucidates four key points- empowering students, reinforcing the integrity of cultural knowledge, privileging Indigenous voices, knowledge, and interests, and finally, building community relations. The points stated above enable stakeholders of education and Aboriginal communities for implementing CRP.

Tharus are one of the 59 indigenous people (24 in the hilly region, 17 in the Himalayan region, and 18 in the Tarai region) of Nepal. They are mostly concentrated in the Mid-western and far-western Tarai regions (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In this regard, the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) act 2002 defines the Indigenous people as 'own mother language and traditional rites and customs' and scheduled 59 Indigenous people from 126 caste/ethnicity of Nepal. Indigenous people are recognized as indigenous nationalities, referred to as *Adivasi/janajati* in Nepali language (LAHURNIP et al., 2018 ; Jha, 2019). The famous Nepalese anthropologist Bista (2004) was the first one to describe the Tharu people of Nepal in his book *People of Nepal*. Then, followed Rajaure (1981), McDonaugh (1984), and Krauskopff (1989), who all focused on the Tharus of Dang and explained the various aspects of Tharu society and culture. McDonaugh (1989) describes the social organization, myth, and ritual of the *Dangaura* Tharu of Dang valley. As chaudhary (2012) claims that the descendants of Dang are referred to as *Dangaura* Tharus. Similarly, Krauskopff (1989, p. 49) focused on the relationship between hereditary priests and their clients, on which, she argues, the *Dangaura* social structure is built. Guneratne (1994) focused on subjects such as ethnicity, class, and the state about the Tharus of Chitwan district.

Neure (2014) notifies that eastern Tharus had their own teaching learning strategies that were used from generations. Likewise, Tharu learners used observation, trial and error, memorizing, action, reflection, dialogue, etc. as their learning styles to obtain various knowledge, skills and values embedded in the community. Similarly, Chaudhari (2014) has studied Saptari Tharu's womb to tomb practices and tried to figure out their pedagogical practices in them.

My literature review shows that most of the studies done on the Tharus are sociological/ anthropological in nature. Some deal with pedagogy embedded in transferring the indigenous knowledge and rites and rituals which belongs to the eastern Tharus. But my major concern is inexploring the pedagogy of Tharu culture i.e., feast and festivals of western Dangaura Tharus. As Rigney (1999) advocates for indigenist research epistemology which is the source for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) in Australia - emancipatory, integrity of Indigenous knowledge, and privileging Indigenous voices. Further, Rigney (2001) emphasizes empowering the students through CRP. In this notion, I have realized that pedagogically richen Tharus can be empowered through an appropriate way of CRP which requires documentation. My own experience in such type of critical condition is evidence of the necessity of exploring the pedagogy of Tharus. When I worship my deities on the occasion of Dashain and Deepawali, I couldn't complete the whole process alone. I always need the help and guidance of my mother. In this situation, I felt that how she learned it from her ancestors. I, being a Tharu, became unable to do this, why? Are there any pedagogical differences in our culture? Self-aroused questions like these made me curious to explore the underpinning pedagogy in Tharu culture – feasts and festivals of Tharu. Along with this, my study aimed on examining the connections of the Tharus' pedagogies with that of the formal schools too.

However, my study aims on the objectives, contents, teaching methods, evaluation process, and revision process of Tharu festivals. It is where I expect that the present study is of substantial importance for the educational planners, and policymakers of education.

Literature Review

Tharu concepts of *Purkhanke baat mano* (follow the elderly people), or the indication of structural function, and *chhot larkan ke baat suno* (listen to the babies) is critical. Structural functionalism was accused of such things as being politically conservative, unable to deal with social change because of its focus on static structure and incapable of adequately analyzing social conflict (Ritzer & Smart, 2000).

Functionalism views society as a self-regulating system of interrelated elements with structural social relationships and observed regularities. Comte viewed society as a functionally organized system, its components in harmony (Turner,

2014). Thus, functionalists view society from a system point of view.

Modernization theory seemed to guarantee automatic economic growth for developing countries. The most basic common understanding of the process of modernization is the transformation of 'traditional societies' to 'modern societies. Learner (1968) states that modernization is the social change whereby less developed societies acquire characteristics common to more developed societies (as cited in Bongartz & Dahal, 1996, p. 5).

From the Marxist point of view, there are two classes of Tharus in the society struggling in their daily life. In this regard, those who have were changing the feasts and festivals celebration phenomena whereas others who haves not were continuing them in traditional ways. Due to the impact of modern technology and western culture, Tharus are modernizing their ways of celebrating feasts and festivals. Tharu people are changing their culture gradually in the sense of utilitarian perspectives. They adopted the dresses and decorative materials in celebrating festivals from acost-effectiveness perspective.

Figure 1

Conceptualizing the Tharu's Pedagogy from Multiple Theoretical Lenses

In the aforementioned figure, aboriginal pedagogies indicate various names and forms of pedagogies established in Canada and Australia. Ladson-Billings (1995) culturally relevant teaching, Guthadjaka (2008) looking and listening- observation, Morrision et al. (2019) and Irvine (2010), culturally responsive pedagogy, Disbray (2014) Culture-based educational program, storytelling (Irvine, 2010; Smith, 2013) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alin, 2014 ;Mccanty & Lee, 2014) are the pedagogies which are directly or indirectly applied for interpretation of my study. Collected information was analyzed by using multiple theoretical lenses to elucidate a concept of Tharus' pedagogical practices in cultural aspects. I used different

theories at a time to understand particular phenomena found in the research process. Along with this, the collected information was analyzed from my own experiential knowledge and empirical sources. Thus, multiple theories as cited above were used as the theoretical reference of this study.

Whatever I felt in my daily life experience, empirical studies reviewed in the research process also indicate that Tharus have indigenous knowledge and skills. Most of the empirical studies have explored the indigenous knowledge and skills in various aspects of Tharus. Rajaure (1981) explained the daily life activities, Marriage system, and rituals, role of women, festivals celebrated by the Tharus and cultural norms and values. Dahit (2009) explained the indigenous medicinal knowledge of Tharus. But there is a lack of research on the pedagogical process of transferring the Tharu knowledge and skills from generation to generation in Dangaura Tharus. Empirical studies like Neure (2014) and Chaudhari (2014) also noticedthat most of the researchwere carried out on the eastern Tharus' regarding pedagogies on indigenous knowledge and rituals. Moreover, there is a lackofstudy on pedagogy envisaged in feasts and festivals of Tharus in Kailali district. In this regard, this research had attempted to explore the perception and practices of feasts and festivals of Tharu, pedagogical implications of Tharus' knowledge about culture in the formal education system and so forth.

Methods and Procedures

The Tharus of Kailali district was my study population. I selected this specific geographical location because it is densely populated Tharu. One chairperson of *Guruwa*s, four *Barghars,* and four social elite informants were chosen purposively. I did not categorize the informants from a gender perspective because these informants have sufficient information about the cultural knowledge regarding feasts and festivals of the Tharu community.

I was aware of the ethnographic study adopts many methods of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I, as an ethnographic researcher, used participant observation and in-depth interview for the study. I used qualitative methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews for gathering information about the Tharu culture. The practices of festivals were observed in natural settings and I applied multiple social theories for the interpretation of the data gathered. As per the nature of the study, I have analyzed and interpreted the data collated from depth interviews and participant observation by applying different sociological – conflict theory, functionalism, modernization theory, utility theory, etc. and learning theories-behaviorist theory, pragmatist theory, constructivist theory, and social learning theory have been employed to explore the pedagogy envisaged in Tharu feasts and festivals. Thus, the collected information was analyzed by using multiple theoretical lances to make a clear concept of Tharus' pedagogical practices in cultural aspects. I used

different theories at a time to understand particular phenomena found in the research process. Thus, multiple theories as cited above were used as the theoretical reference of this study.

Reflecting on the theoretical approaches above, I followed the ethnographical understanding which is applicable to my local context. Then I developed the following conceptual framework.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework
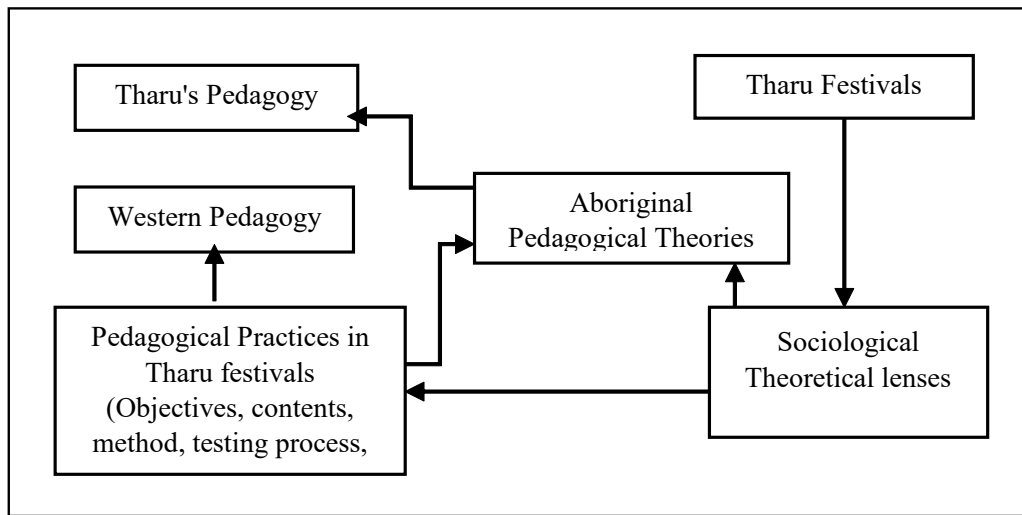
The framework above shows that sociological as well as pedagogical theories were used for the interpretation of information about the Tharu feasts and festivals. The framework above shows that sociological as well as pedagogical theories were used for the interpretation of information about the Tharu feasts and festivals. It also shows that every activity was looked in a natural setting. I used qualitative methods like participant observation and in-depth interviews to gather information about the Tharu culture. It indicates that collected that how I collected the data about Tharu people's perceptions about their feasts and festivals, how they perceive them etc. The practices of feasts and festivals were observed in natural settings and I applied the multiple social theories for the interpretation of the data gathered. Along with this, I analyzed and interpreted the collected information in the form of narration with various learning theoretical perspectives. This made me suitable for the production,

description, and explanation of the pedagogy (objectives, Teaching-learning methods, improving the process, and testing process) envisaged in the Tharu culture.

Results

Tharus have their own way of celebrating their festivals. They are *Guriya, Hardahwa, Astimki, Barka Atwari, Antta, Dashya, Dewari, Maghi, Hori*. The purposes of these festivals are individual as well as collective welfare of Tharu community and most of them are related to eco-friendly in nature. They have their own way of celebrating these feasts and festivals. However, there is no written and documented celebration phenomenon of these feasts and festivals.

Without pedagogy, knowledge cannot transfer from generation to generation. As nothing is static in the world, indigenous knowledge is dynamic (UNESCO, 2007, as cited in Chaudhari, 2014). Feasts and festivals of Tharu are changing due to the impact of modernization as well as a lack of pedagogical knowledge of culture. Some of the dances and songs are out of practice because of a lack of documentation. This is because all the Tharu dances and songs are transferred orally from generation to generation. I found that Mirdangiya and Morhiya are elders in Hurdangwa, Jhumra dances whereas supporters and audiences are youth groups on the occasion of conducting dances in certain festivals like Dashya and Dewari. Youth groups are interested in Tharu dances and songs but they can't read and sing those songs with traditional rhythm. This is due to pedagogical knowledge and lack of written and recorded documents of these songs.

Tharu people learn the process and procedures to celebrate feasts and festivals from the Guruwas, elders, family members, social elites, and their colleagues. There are no predetermined methods to learn them but I found that pedagogies embedded in them include objectives, contents, teaching methods, testing process, and revision processes.

Table 1

Generating the Pedagogies on the Basis of Major Tharu Festivals

| Festivals | Pedagogies | | | | |
	Objectives	Contents	Teaching methods	Testing process	Revision process
Maghi	To maintain the social relations among relatives To reconcile the annual statement	Culture, food, reconciliation, dance, tradition, farming, liabilities, empowerment, etc.	Discussion and dialogue near the Kaura (fire of dry paddy stem) about the reconciliation and many more topics of the annual plan, oral question answers to assign the workers and head of the family i.e., Khojnibojni in Tharu, observation of elders' behavior by the children, dance and songs performed in Maghi festivals through which empowerment of women and children. Storytelling and songs about the Hitwa's livelihood.	Experimental, the children show the learned behavior in the next Maghi for example rehearsal of MaghautaNaach and demonstration of the dance. Arguments of family members towards the head of the family for his effectiveness of leadership.	Guidance and counseling of the elders and discussions among the family members during the celebration of the festivals.
Anatta	To explain the lifestyle of the Tharu people in ancient time. To obtain the spiritual behavior.	Story of "Hitwa"(Hitwa is the main character of the story whose meaning is defeated person)	Fasting and establishment of the gods in hard Nut and wearing of weaved threads in the right hand for that day. 14 weaved threads of 14 years of fasting is called 1 Anatta.	Self-evaluation during the fasting and singing the song in appropriate rhythm. He/she have to show the Anatta next year.	If any one does the mistake in singing the song, his friend or elders corrects it with the demo.

Astimki	To devote with gods To maintain the rapport relationship between married sisters and brothers	Various drawings of natural creators, gods and evils like Rawan.	Children are self-inspired and follow the elders' activities during the fasting period, also imitating the elder's and friends' behavior. A Group of friends and family members go to the house where the celebration is conducted for worship and children follow the rules and regulations as elders do.	Self-evaluation during the fasting and observed by the elders.	Revised collaboratively through the discussion among the elders about how to celebrate and whose house.
Barka Atwari	To devote five Pandavas To maintain the rapport relationship between married sisters and brothers	myth on secure from devils and enemies by Bhewa (one of the Pandava i.e., Bhim). generating holy fire from special wood ganyari.	Children are self-inspired and follow the elders' activities during the fasting period, also imitating the elder's behavior.	Self-evaluation during the fasting and observed by the elders.	Revised by collaboratively through the discussion among the elders about how to celebrate.
Guriya/ Gurhi	To be aware the villagers on various diseases.	Gurhi (symbolic evil things like diseases made up of pieces of clothes) and sharing behavior, unity	Gathering of villagers in a collective way at the bank of the river or border of the village and some people throw the Gurhi and others started to beat them with Swainta(a whip made up of one type of grass) and people shouted "go away evil things" from their village. Then people share their typical foods and chat. All these things are observed by the children and learned sharing habits and unity is strength.	Observation of the activities of the participants by the villagers.	Encouraging the villagers for participating in the celebration by the religious leaders and elders.

In this way, we can see the objectives, content, teaching methods, testing process, and revision process in the aforementioned festivals of Tharu. The common objectives of the festivals are to provide entertainment, share feelings, empowerment, and preserve and conservation of the Tharu culture. The contents are related to farming, food, costumes, unity, individual freedom, reconciliation, cultural knowledge and traditions, and epidemic diseases. Most teaching method (delivery function) of the festivals can be seen as observing the behaviors of the elders and social relationships during Maghi festival, dialogue and discussion in Maghi as well as Atwari, social interaction and friendly way in Astimki and Gurhi/guriya, and story-telling in Anatta festival. Through these methods, Tharu traditions, culture, and awareness are transferred from one generation to another generation. Testing process what I found that self-evaluation and observation by the villagers and elders along with family members. Tharu Festivals are improved by the encouragement and guidance of the social agents like friends, parents, elders, family members, and villagers collaboratively as well as individually. Thus, I found that Tharus have a unique type of pedagogical practice in their culture.

Discussion

Culturally rich Tharu people celebrate many more feasts and festivals since the development of civilization. They perform dances and songs on the occasion of feasts and festivals accordingly. The lack of documentation of songs and ways of celebrating festivals is the major concern of Tharu community. Due to this reason, most of the cultural aspects of Tharus are in a declining stage. Feasts, festivals, dances, and songs are changing gradually. It is dynamic, as UNESCO (2007) described all indigenous knowledge as dynamic. Most indigenous knowledge is changing, modified, and disappearing due to formal education, media and fear of punishment, modernization, and globalization (cited in Chaudhari, 2014). If the cultural pedagogy of Tharu community is adopted in formal schooling, then it becomes a vital motivational factor for learning in formal school. Not only this, documentation of these songs and festivals can also enhance the learners to preserve their identity hidden in the culture.

Multiple ways of learning various phenomena of feasts and festivals are the specialty of Tharu people. They transfer the respective aspects of culture from generation to generation orally and informally.

The mechanism hidden inside the pedagogy of Tharu people is related to their social life. I found that the objectives of performing festivals are related to spirituality, duty and responsibility of daily life, social awareness, entertainment, maintaining better health and life as well as forgetting sorrows of life with love. The contents within them are related to religious events, social struggle (as in Story of Hitwa in Anatta), Health and Physical education (as in Gurhi festival), Human

relations, and brotherhood (as in Maghi and fasting festivals like atwari, astimki), etc. All the contents are theoretical as well as practical in the form of songs and stories.

There are multiple ways of teaching methods included in the cultural schooling in Tharu community. The teaching methods embedded in Tharu community are distinctly different from formal and non-formal educational systems. They use diversified teaching methods to transfer their culture (songs, dances, feasts, and festivals) on the basis of age, sex and maturity level of the learner, nature of contents, the context of the learner, etc. from one generation to another generation.

Guruwa (Tharu priest), *Morihya* (leader singer) and *Barghars* (village chief) play a vital role in transferring the feasts, and festivals as a teacher/facilitator whereas Barghar and elders have a supportive role in organizing them systematically.

The data collected from participant observation and in-depth interviews depicted that the teaching method embedded in Tharu community are generally as follows:

Storytelling (*Khisa/kahani* in Tharu language)

Storytelling is the popular method of teaching for delivering the knowledge, skills, and values in any community. Māori scholar Smith (2013) talks about storytelling as an indigenous pedagogy/method. Similarly, storytelling, and culturally responsive pedagogy, which escalates the meaning-making process in teaching phenomena, are considered 'responsive instructional strategies' (MacLean & Wason-Ellam, 2006). In this regard, Iseke (2013) emphasized conceptualizing the identity of the people and learning about the community, culture, and relations of Indigenous people of Canada- Metis- through storytelling.

In the Tharu community, most of the respondents said that cultural aspects are justified by telling the stories related to social life. Stories may be real events or religious or fictional events. The purposes of the stories are mainly to impart good behavior to learners, prohibit unsocial behavior, and encourage the people to do social goodwill. One of the informants, the social elite, said that popular stories in Tharu people are "*Satalsingh King's story*" and "*Hitwa* (The defeated person)". He stated that the main theme of the Hitwa's story is, "our lifestyle is like the character Hitwa and we should never be hopeless in life". This story is told by the elders on the occasion of the great festival *"Anatta"(*which falls in AnantaChaturdashi according to the Hindu calendar) to the fasting people. In this way Tharu transfer the social life and other activities of their ancestors in the form of a story to the new generations.

Observational Method

Aboriginal scholars in Australia also talk about observation as pedagogy. As Guthadjaka (2008) claims that the way for deep learning requires looking at and

listening to the events and engaging through action. Similarly, Tharu people believe in culturally responsive pedagogy which is possible through observing the learning matters in the community. In this regard, Ladson-Billings (2013) elucidated the culturally relevant teaching which maintains the notions of cultural competence and cultural integrity with the recognition of social inequities i.e., critically consciousness (p.142) and students' academic development. Observation is the typical method for learning cultural phenomena embedded in Tharu community. They use this method to obtain various contents of related fields which are presented by the parents, elders or Guruwa and peer groups, etc. Bandura (1997) stated that the repeated demonstration that people can learn and have their behavior shaped by observing another person and even film has tremendous implications for modifying tastes and attitudes (as cited in Hunkins & Ornstein, 2004, p. 103). In this regard,

respondents claimed that the observation method is an effective way of learning the activities like worshiping procedures for gods and goddesses, wearing dresses for dance and festival ceremonies, the whole process of fasting, interacting with elders, playing musical instruments, etc. When I was engaged in participant observation of the *Astimki* festival, I observed and felt what to do and how to do the traditional phenomenon, which is elaborated below:

> *When I was celebrating the Tharu festival Astimki in my own village, I also took fasting of the festival and I didn't know how to wear Tharu dress i.e., Dhoti. I observed carefully my father's wearing style of dhoti and I learned it by this method. Then, my sisters and cousins' way of worshipping various natural gods and goddesses drawn on the dehari (rice keeping huge box made up of mud and husk of paddy) of my neighbor's house, I followed them by observing whatever they did and completed the ceremony next day. I was motivated by those activities because the participants and elders praised me for doing the actions without any mistakes.*

In the above situation, I have learned how to celebrate the *Astimki* by the observation method. My father, sisters, and cousins are my role model of me and I observed their activities carefully and learn the methodology of *Astimki* as Bandura's observational learning theory.

Dialogical and Oral conversational Method

Dialogical and conversation is another popular method in the cultural schooling of Tharu. Dialogue means *'Baatchit'* in Tharu language. All the respondents indicated that baatchit is a universal teaching-learning process embedded in Tharu community. They claimed that social traditions, social norms, values, and rituals were handed over to the next generation through this method. Vygotsky argues that humans possess unique mental activity as the result of social learning that has occurred within an evolving cultural setting. Thus, human mental development

is a socio-genetic process shaped by the individual interactions, 'dialogue' and 'play' with the culture (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). In the same way, Tharu people who are interested in specific festivals or dances, interact with knowers like Guruwa and social elites, and peer groups continuously to learn the related subject matters. When I was interviewing Guruwa, his student Guruwa came there and I started to talk with him also about teaching-learning phenomena of Mantras, which are elaborated below:

When I was in the process of interviewing Bhuiyar (Head Guruwa) in his own home, suddenly, his student came there and I started to talk with him also. He replied in tharu language "hamrekono fen mantarsikhkeberguruwa o sanghariyan se batchitkarthi ". This means they learned any mantras by conversation or dialogue method with guruwa and friends. He further said that he learned Guruwa traditions as well as many more Tharu rituals and social phenomena by baatchit and discussion with their parents also (self-translation from Tharu to English).

From the above-mentioned narration, I found that Tharu people learned social behaviors, social activities, and cultural things by interacting with elders, parents, and Guruwas. Dialogue or conversation method enhanced them to learn social traditions and daily life activities. In this way, Tharu people transfer their cultural aspects by dialogue or conversation method from one generation to another generation.

Demonstration Method

The demonstration ('dekhaina' in tharu language) method is the traditional way for transferring the specific skills practically to the offspring in the Tharu community. Since, the demonstration is the visual presentation of the action and activities or practical works related to the facts and principles of the delivered lesson in front of the learner (Mangal & Mangal, 2009). During the feasts and festivals also parents and elders show the activities practically how to perform the certain process of worshipping gods and goddesses. When I was at the research site and engaged in participant observation during *Dashya* festival, a woman had used the demonstration method to teach her daughter to make *dashyadhikri,* she observed the methodology of making that special *dhikri* and practice it and learned to make the *dhikri.* She also learned the distinct feature of *dhikri* by listening to her mother's demonstration as well as an explanation. The next day, the villagers started to show the *Hurdangwa* dance, one of the singers had done a mistake and what happened is elaborated as follows:

It was the day of pittarasraina (ninth day of dasahain), I was in the research site and the time was 3O'clock, the villagers (both male and female) were enjoying the festival near the river. They were wearing the Tharu typical dresses but some are in modern dresses. One of the youth participants started to sing a song in his own

way and then morihya of the songs stopped him to sing and he sang the song with physical gestures in an attractive way like this "kehwai bole kaag kabuttar kehwai bole maur ho ………" i.e., somewhere crows crow and somewhere peacock. Then, the youth singer started to sing the songs ina joyful manner.

The above paragraph is the representative event of showing the demonstration method in teaching cultural activities by the Tharus. Most of the respondents agreed that this method had been in practice from ancient times to teach various aspects of culture. If the learners were interested to learn certain skills like playing a musical instrument as well as songs, then the experienced people demonstrated them and the learner learned them easily. In this way, the demonstration method is very popular in the cultural schooling of Tharu.

Imitation Learning Method

As Bandura (1977) talks about imitation as a learning method embedded in Tharu community. According to the social learning theory of Bandura (1977), learning involves four separate processes i.e., attention, retention, production, and motivation. Similarly, Morgan (1978) stated that "A person watches or hears someone else say or do something, then attempts to copy it" (p.104). During the process of participant observation, I found that most of the festival and religious activities were learned by the Tharu people by imitating the role behavior of the elders, parents, and social elites. Most of the respondents claimed that imitation is the major method of learning phenomena of celebrating feasts and festivals done by parents and elders.

The *Barghars, Guruwas,* and social elites stated that the new generations copied the major activities of elders during the celebration of the feasts and festivals. They learn to follow worshipping phenomena by imitating their seniors while practicing. While doing so they commit many mistakes but they are not punished for the mistakes. One of the respondents *Guruwa* expressed his experience of doing the rituals on the occasion of Marriage. He always imitated the *gurai* (the process of praying to the specific gods in Tharu language) whatever his teacher (*Bhuiyar*) has done. Thus, I concluded that Tharus learn indigenous knowledge, values, and skills about the feasts and festivals by imitating the elders, or senior role behaviors.

Memorization and Rote learning pedagogy

Memorization and rote learning are the other styles of learning embedded in Tharu community. One of the respondents expressed that *'petem dharbo tab Janbo'* i.e., learner should learn after storing the learning contents in memory which enhance learning. Tharus used this type of learning to get factual information, principles, songs, proverbs, and so on. In this regard, Mangal and Mangal (2009) stated, "memory level of teaching is confined merely to the memorization of facts

or associations related to the contents material of a subject" (p.155). Most of the informants indicated that songs, hymns (*sumrauti* in the Tharu language), proverbs, poems, worshipping gods and goddesses, and other daily life skills, and attitudes were learned by memorization and rote learning. For this, *Guruwa*s and elders present the factual knowledge and materials in front of the learner orally. The learner is supposed to retain the specific material to reproduce (recall and recognition) it when needed. During the interview, the *Guruwa* explained the process of learning his spiritual knowledge and skills above mentioned. The learner *Guruwa* should use the rote learning method for learning hymns and present materials by the main *Guruwa*. Thus, Tharus learned about many more events of feasts and festivals by memorizing and rote learning regarding with law of exercise.

Conclusion

Tharus are an indigenous people of Nepal with a unique culture. Most of the Tharu culture is not documented in written form. These cultural aspects are transferred from generation to generation by the elders, *Guruwa*s, social elites, *Barghar*s and parents in their own style. But most of the feasts and festivals are declining as well as changing stages due to lack of documentation, lack of systematic orientation and awareness towards culture as well as the impact of the western culture. Spiritual beliefs, entertainment, social solidarity, social unity and brotherhood, and sharing feelings are the major objectives embedded in the Tharu culture. The teaching-learning strategies mostly demonstration, role play, memorization, discussion, and imitation are found in Tharu culture. The improving and testing process are observation and providing guidance and counseling individually as well as collectively by the elders, peers or parents. That's why; various pedagogical practices embedded in The Tharu community can be fruitful in formal and non-formal education systems.

As Bessarab and Ng'Andu (2010) claim that yarning as an indigenous research tool, cultural conversation, in which sharing of ideas, experiences, knowledge, etc. between researcher and participants takes place. Similarly, Dean (2010) focuses on the positionality of the researcher, as a listener or learner through which the participants feel free to share their knowledge during yarning. Tharus also have their own way of sharing their knowledge and experiences through unique pedagogy termed *Baatchit*. This pedagogy refers to the traditional sharing or knowledge sharing of the elders with other, they may be within and outside the family members. The participants more than two seats around the elders in a circular pattern, then, the elder starts to share his/her ideas with the participants and each and all participants have an equal opportunity to express their feelings and experiences towards the issues of *Baatchit*. All the participants including elders feel relaxed, and culturally safety accountable for themselves. Mutual respect and relational

accountability are the basis of this Tharu Pedagogy. I felt this pedagogy while one of the household-head seating near the fire during the winter season. After that other member of the family, one by one seated around the fire, and the elder started to share his idea for the celebration of Maghi festival. No hesitation, free to express their emotions, ideas, strategies during *Baatchit.*

In any social system, culture serves as a perceptual framework that guides the interpretation of interactions and the construction of meanings (Cortazzi, 1993). This means after understanding the pedagogical practices in Tharu culture, will provide the basis for the curriculum developers as well as the teachers who implement the equity pedagogy in the classroom. In this sense, it is supposed to be supportive of the preservation and conservation of the Tharu culture.

The information collected from the research site indicates that Tharus have unique pedagogical styles that they use to convey their cultural knowledge. These pedagogies have also some educational implications in the formal education system as declared by the constitution of Nepal 2015, article 31 (5) **"every Nepali community living in Nepal shall have the right to acquire education in its mother tongue up to the secondary level".** Similarly, Morrison et. al. (2019) show the various literature including multicultural education pre-dates CRP in which schools conduct the program for addressing the culture and academic needs of the ethnic group in the aboriginals of Australia. The major educational implications, drawn from the information given by the informants and collected from the research site are given below:

Multiple Methods for Instruction

Tharus used various methods for transferring the cultural knowledge and skills to the next generation for a single content. But these days, teachers working in formal schooling generally use single methods especially lectures to convey contents outlined within the curriculum ultimately leads to the low achievement of the students. In this context, a teacher can use different methods of teaching at the same time to transfer prescribed content among the students.

Interest-based Teaching Method

Tharu learners who are interested in songs don't show interest in beating the *Madal. Those* who are interested in dance continue in that activity. Tharu children follow to learn feasts, festivals, dances, and songs on the basis of their interests, and ultimately, they become successful. But teachers adopt the teacher-oriented teaching methods in formal schooling. As in the Tharu community, teachers can use this interest-based teaching method in the formal schooling process.

Peer Teaching

Tharu children learn about religious activities performed during festivals by

discussingthem with their colleagues. If they forgot the contents and skill-relatedto the dances and songs, they learn by their *Sanghari and Sakhi*(peer group) in their leisure time. As in the Tharu community, there can be managed time or environment for peer learning in the formal schooling system.

Flexible Curriculum

Tharus have multiple ways of teaching methods for feasts and festivals. The teaching method is flexible in nature. And the evaluation process and improvement process are also flexible in nature. In the formal schooling system, predetermined methods are applied for conveying the contents in the classroom. So, the formal institutions should continuously change the curriculum to make it fruitful for the learners.

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