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Practice of Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education Classrooms

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Abstract

Relying on the context of university teachers to unveils their awareness of and practice different tenets of critical pedagogy (CP). This article focuses on how university teachers perceive and practise diverse values of CP regarding classroom relationships, interactivity, and assignment-based learning in the constituent campuses of Nepal. The lived experiences elicited from the in-service's teacher employing in-depth semi-structure interview within the frame of interpretative design have been interpreted in the article. In the context of prevailing classroom practices from the critical perspective, teacher holds the positive understanding towards using the critical pedagogy. Despite the importance of critical pedagogy, effectively, incorporating critical pedagogy in classroom pose the challenges related to teacher professionalism, collaboration, traditional mindset and administrative support as well as student-related issues. This paper suggests utilizing the critical pedagogy successfully; teacher requires to be more responsible, friendly, and professional.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, higher education relationship, interaction, classroom assignment

Introduction

The quality of education is a major concern at schools and colleges in Nepal. The quality of education is affected by many factors including the pedagogical approach of teachers

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in schools and colleges (Ministry of Education, 2016). Teaching learning approach is the crucial approach for quality education (CDC, 2007). Thus, the new methods of teaching in higher education is introduced for making the quality of higher education (HEP, 2019). Moreover, to make the quality of higher education, a practical based teaching and learning is essential (ADB, 2015). Despite many efforts to change the approach to teaching and learning, still many classrooms remain textbook and teacher-centered with didactic teaching methods that emphasize the rote learning and the uncritical absorptions of facts (Ministry of Education, 2016). In this line, the ADB's study report (2015) underlines that the practices of rudimentary teaching and learning process are crucial issues affecting quality of teaching and learning in higher education of Nepal.

The report of education commission of Nepal has emphasized on the methods of teaching that should be student centered rather lecture methods, but also should be focused on drills, groups discussions, library work, and homework (MOE, 1961; Sharma, 2059 B.S.). Moreover, the commission also suggests for employing the term papers, case study, fieldwork, and research activities (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). In addition, to maintain the quality in higher education, there should be given the internal autonomy and developing the sense of accountability in order to develop intellectual capacity and creative activities to the students (NEC, 1992 and MOEST, 2019). Similarly, to build the accountability and responsibility of the stakeholders i.e., student and teacher should participate in instructional policy making process (NEC, 1992).

The work of teaching and learning at Tribhuvan University is not satisfactory because of the prevalence of lecture and note-taking methods by the teachers (NEC, 1992). It is seen that the purpose of higher education is to practice the rote-learning rather than to develop the skills of thinking and creativity among the students. Although the teaching methods at the university level are still monotonous and unattractive or traditional, there has not been seen the possibility to arouse the interest of the students in their learning (NEC, 1992). Higher education is a part of unified system of education from early childhood and throughout the life. But it influences all level of education in particular secondary education should be a priority because the secondary education is a foundation of preparing the students as an active person for further learning (UNESCO, 1998). Similarly, increasing the learners' activeness in the learning, the educating process of school and college should be considered about the socio-cultural context of the students (Acharya et al., 2022). Though increasing the relevancy of education whether the secondary or higher education by employing the different methods of teaching is still an issue of classroom teaching and learning in our education system of Nepal (MOEST, 2019). In the same line, the Royal Commission of Education considered the students of higher education come with weak foundation of school-level education and poor

languages such types of teaching and learning process have not been practice in the college yet (MOE, 1961). The aim of critical education is to develop the individuals' human values, characters, and to make citizens who are aware of the glorious culture and civilization of the nation (MOE, 1961). The function of education is considered to transform the social injustice which are socially less accepted (Freire, 1970). The method of teaching and learning activities of the higher education policy acknowledges under the different education commissions to follow the critical pedagogical approach in education (NNEPC, 2011; NEC, 2049 B.S.; HEC, 2055 B.S.). Existing teaching in higher education has undermined such "transformation" which is the main responsibility of a university teachers (Rajesh, 2014). This study has attempted to explore how the university teachers persevere and apply the critical pedagogy in their classroom teaching. I was motivated to conduct this research based on my personal and professional experiences as a student and working as a university teacher.

After completing university education, I have been teaching at the university for fourteen years, by the same methods that the teacher would have used in the classroom while I was a student at the university. But, the pedagogical policy of university education has been constantly changing. Most of the teaching policies of higher education are prescribed towards student-oriented learning such as discussion, assignment, mini-project, research-oriented, and collaborative learning, but also it does not seem in practice (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). This gap between theory (policy) and praxis has appeared in classrooms at the university that inspired me to study the pedagogy of the university. Moreover, most of the empirical literature regarding the perception and practice of critical pedagogy focused on English language teaching whether in secondary or higher education classroom (Paudel, 2020). Therefore, this study will focus on the general educational classroom under the faculty of education, who are not self-identified as critical teachers. Though, the main objective of this paper was to explore the existing perception and practices of critical pedagogy in the classrooms at the faculty of education, through the critical pedagogical perspectives. I hope that this research can shed some new light on what extent CP can be implemented in certain educational contexts and possible challenges that teachers may face in the process.

Objectives

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To know how do university teachers perceive critical pedagogy?
- To explore how do university teachers implement critical pedagogy in their classroom?

Review of Literature

The study has mainly focused on examining the existing teaching-learning process in the classroom of higher education from the critical pedagogy perspective. In this section, the study has attempted to capture the major pedagogic development based on philosophical perspectives and social theories that led to the present understanding of the teaching and learning as well as the teaching-learning process in higher education. It also attempts to review the external factors that explicitly and implicitly influence the teaching-learning processes or pedagogical process in the classroom like ideology, socio-cultural aspect of the school community, and power that led to the remarkable ongoing transformation of the teaching-learning environment. It also reviews major innovative findings of the previous researches regarding pedagogical principles that inspire good teaching-learning practices, primarily critical change that can contribute to the mode of teaching in higher education.

Critical Pedagogy as a Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on critical pedagogy to analyze how the teacher applies critical pedagogy in the M. Ed. curriculum of Tribhuvan University. The educators' belief in their intention of teaching is to support the students as a vehicle for both personal and social transformation (Braa & Callero, 2006). By applying this framework, critical pedagogy views education as a social construction where the individual and the society are constructed (Costandius & Blitzer, 2015). So, it has been inherently influenced by the notion of socioeconomic and political power (Akin-Sabuncu, 2022). According to this framework, education is the liberation and empowerment of the oppressed and marginalized toward equitable and just societies (Bradshaw, 2017 & Freire, 1973). This theoretical framework is founded on the belief that education fosters a liberal school culture that seeks to transform class structures and practices that perpetuate an oppressive, unjust, and undemocratic life (Akin-Sabuncu, 2022). It views education as a process that helps students to develop the skills for critical thinking and practice of self-reflection about the knowledge and values in different subjects which they face in the classroom (Muszyńska, & Gómez-Parra, 2022). Subsequently, education is the practice of freedom whose aim is to liberate the oppressed students in schools and society (Freire, 1973). Liberation means a praxis - the action and reflection of the student upon their world to transform it (Freire, 1993). The mutual relationship between theory and praxis is the central idea of critical pedagogy. It aims to see how power works in the context of the production, distribution, and consumption of knowledge within the school. It also hopes that the student is an informed citizen and social agent (Steinberg & Freire, 2011). Through this framework, students must offer the opportunity to engage the multiple

positions that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and languages (Giroux, 1997). To achieve these goals, a teacher integrates knowledge, power, and ideology into their classroom pedagogy which led to the student's emancipation (Giroux, 2015). From this theoretical stance, teachers at all levels of education are potentially powerful agents of social change (Giroux, 1997). In particular, in classroom teaching, teachers have a pivotal role in the classroom situation is to awaken students' minds by teaching them critical thought rather than encouragement to the need for a revolution (Katz, 2014). Thus, through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study addresses how teacher performs their teaching activities in university-level education like TU.

Policy Provision on the Critical Pedagogy in Higher Education

In the history of formal education in Nepal, Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) is the first education plan that considers the essence of quality of education at all levels. In the context of methods of teaching for higher education, this commission has suggested that the teaching pedagogy should be improved based on modern practice, new instructional aids and ensuring the variety in methods and materials of learning (Government of Nepal, 2011 B.S.). The second is All-round National Education Commission (ARNEC) which has suggested for applying the individualized teaching approach in the teaching of higher education (MOE, 1961), but the commission has not seemed any influence on higher education because of illness in the planning and implementation of the education programs (Shah, 2020). The NESP is recognized as the most important plan in the field of education but it has not clearly said what kinds of teaching-learning activities will be adapted but only that scientific methods of teaching will be applied instead of traditional methods at all level-education (NESP, 1971). It can be disclosed that “it was the central system of education” (p. 321). The Royal Commission of HE is the fourth education plan of Nepal that also considers the method of teaching for effective teaching in higher education. They should maintain student-teacher ratio, manage tutorial classes, not to be only lecture methods in teaching but also, they should focus on drills, group discussions, class seminars, library work, and homework (MOE, 1961). Besides, the instruction policy should be taken to promote term papers, case studies, fieldwork, and research work at the university education. The other recommendation is that the job of educational guidance services to the student within higher education is to be taken as an integral part of teaching (MOE, 1961). All of the instructional activities concerning higher education that have been proposed follow the critical theory, but the plan has not been experienced in practice. In the same way, the NEC states that the faculties should, however, be given full freedom to determine the contents and standards of their teaching and research without interference from any quarter (NEC, 1992). In addition, the teaching methods for HE should be made more

student-centered rather than teacher-centered. Another education plan like Higher National Education Commission (HNEC) has also recommended that research-based teaching-methods and individual counseling services are to be integral parts of the teaching of higher education (Sharma, 2059 B.S.).

In early 1997, the Nepalese government felt the need for further reform in education. And then, High-level National Education Commission (HLNEC) was established in 1997 to study and analyze policies, programs, and the organization of existing education, with a hope of making education more appropriate to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This commission conceived the educational objectives as to the enhancement of national's cultural awareness and building individual's morals, increasing the creativity, analytical power, and scientific in thinking (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). Therefore, it has been seen that this commission has fully followed the principle of the critical perspective in the formulation of the objective of higher education. For accomplishment of such educational goals, this commission has proposed the student-centered methods of teaching rather than teacher-centered methods. Further, it has suggested that the research-based teaching to be an integral part of teaching in Higher education and provide counseling services to students to choose subjects and courses (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). Besides that, the teacher should be regular in their teaching work and to be arranged adequate physical facilities for effective teaching such as adequate classrooms, furniture audiovisual materials, textbooks, journals, reference books, etc. (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). Later, the National Education Policy has been introduced in 2019. It is guided by the principle of a federal democratic republic aimed at ensuring the right of every person to get an education and make education universal, relevant, competitive, and quality (MOEST, 2019). This policy focused on the pedagogical reform in the higher education, for pedagogical reform, it focuses on to employing the project methods, inquiry methods, and research-oriented activities while teaching in higher education.

Critical Pedagogy as a Dialectical Conversation between Teacher and Students

The dialectical view of the relationship between student and teacher (as authorities) has attempted to display its relevancy for critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1997). Herein, authority is perceived as a function of concrete human situation in which a person or group fulfilling purpose, where requires direction or guidelines from a source outside or inside of the school administration (Giroux, 1997). Encountering authoritarian relationships in the classroom is a central aspect of CP. Therefore, it is necessary to nurture its transformative aims (Vargas, 2019). As McLean (2006) remarks, most of the classroom pedagogy's aims have to open spaces of possibility, enable imagining, and become “other”, but the existing patterns of classroom performativity in terms of the student as a

consumer and teacher as a producer of commodities, transgress dualisms between teacher and students.

Freire criticized that banking education as completely detached from the social-cultural realities and interests of the learner. For him, the imposition of only informational or factual knowledge over the students, it is systematic oppression that they suffered (Freire, 2005). The purpose of classroom teaching has to enhance the student's critical thinking skills (Freire, 1973). Freier analyzes the term "dialogue" as a human phenomenon that has two fundamental elements – reflection and action - which make dialogue possible (p. 88). In a critical interaction, if one is sacrificed, the other merely suffers. And then, there is no true praxis. Thus, when the reflection and action come together within the classroom that only can transform students' understanding.

Dialogue is not the act of one's depositing 'ideas' in another, nor simply exchange of ideas to be "consumed" by dialoguer, nor search for the truth but rather to the imposition of their own truth. In the context at critical classroom, it is an encounter between students and teacher that help to those people who want to change itself and their social world.

Freire claimed that dialogical encounters help students to develop critical consciousness of social, political, and economic contradictions so that they can take action against them (Freire, 1990). Thus, to develop the skills of critical thinking among students, they have to require analyzing and to be interactive through dialogue (Schugurensky, 1998). Such way of learning that can help to the people to understand who is and is not allowed access over the resources and the opportunity, and how access is allowed or denied within the society (Freire, 1990).

Now, the world has been growing towards the global and social polarization, then, increasing levels of marginalization and new dimensions of poverty and oppression. In this context of Higher education, the ideas of Freire's dialogical method of teaching under the critical pedagogy need to be adapted in the schools and colleges to face the new challenges coming in the future (Freire, 1990).

Teachers' Role in Classroom Teaching

Teachers need to develop critical ability through which they can analyze their school and colleges sites. Specially, it will support to examine their educational goals, contents, learning resources, and context of the learning and to refine their promises (Bashyal, 2007). Each teacher needs to reflect themselves, what is needed for them to become a good critical teacher. It here is needed to appreciate at first their own history and cultural

experience. If they can appreciate their own background, they can better appreciate the heritage and culture of their own students (Bashyal, 2007). In this consideration, a research study found that the knowledge and skills that are obtained while teacher teaching in the classrooms that will facilitate the student to social integration and wellbeing (Shabashvili, & Gochitashvili, 2017). In critical classrooms, a teacher should ensure the support and facilitation to the student in terms of: First, selection of learning materials and adjustment to the learning goals. Second, they should remain as a facilitator to application of this materials into the practice, and lastly, they should support to make the favorable milieu for students to express their experiences with respecting student's social-cultural knowledge (Shabashvili, & Gochitashvili, 2017). Thus, CP considered teacher worthwhile to offer brief instructions and a list of the activities, resources, and combinations thereof which will facilitate the teacher to give knowledge to the students and make them develop the skills facilitating their social integration and welfare. (Shabashvili, & Gochitashvili, 2017). Many critical pedagogues contend that, for critical teaching, a teacher needs to move beyond theory to actualize the practical applicability of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1997; Freire, 1970). In a same line, Freire highlighted the real teaching as a practical activity hence, a teacher should be more interested in practice than in theory (Freire, 1987). The principles of critical pedagogy offer the teachers to be open to the students in a class to share their stories- stories of their experiences, culture, knowledge, language, etc. so that they will be able to walk into a class with confidence (Giroux, 1997). Critical pedagogy for higher education is mostly needed as the world continues to suffer from socio-cultural, economic, and political injustice (Jeyaraj, 2014). In the midst of such adversity, the aims of critical education seek to bring hope for an improvement and change future (Freire, 1970). Teachers who engaged in critical pedagogy should stand for justice and equity in their respective classrooms and striving to educate student to become social critic and conscience (Jeyaraj, 2014).

Method

I have employed qualitative research design while conducting this study under the interpretative research paradigm, where more emphasis has been laid on participants' experiences (Creswell, 2007). The intention of my study is to explore the perception and practices of pedagogy in the classroom which one influences of the thought-language of the participants (Freire, 1970). In this paper I believe on reflective experiences emerged from the dialogical relationship between student, teacher, and classroom setting (Freire, 1970). Thus, the findings of this paper have based on the subjective reality of the respondents (Ahmed, 2008). In doing so, the subjectivist epistemology is followed into this paper because the subjectivist research is in revealing how the participant teacher's experiences shape their perception regarding to the classroom pedagogy. Thus, this

study's finding constructed through the process of mutual understanding between researcher and participants, is the epistemological aspect of the study (Ahmed, 2008). Moreover, this study has adapted to the value-laden approach where more emphasis on participants' experiences rather than researcher (Creswell, 2007). In collusion, interpreting and analysis of the research findings mainly based on the classroom experiences of the research participants (Pervin et al., 2022). Five teachers of constituent campuses have selected through the purposive sampling technique to ensure live-experienced of the participants into the current study (Brown, & Sekimoto, 2017; Poulter & Tosun, 2020). As a research tool, in depth semi-structured interview is used for collecting the information from the teachers. The time for each individual interview was taken around two-hours. The pseudonyms have used to preservation of participant's privacy respectively *Laxmi*, *Rout*, *Roman*, *Maya*, and *Roshan*. In a data analysis procedure, I have organized my information analysis activities into four phases: In the first stage, I have involved in close reading of the transcript data repeatedly. In the second stage, I performed the coding with the help of transcribed notes. Ultimately, I chunked codes together as a way of identifying my initial themes. In this way, my next phase comprised of searching for connections and relationships among themes and placing them in clusters. And then, I clustered my initial themes which were developed from the complete list of coding categories that represented all possible themes and subthemes of the research phenomena.

During the information analysis process, I employed the phenomenological framework outlined by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012). It offers to the researcher to focus on uncovering the "essential meaning" presented in the data. With realizing this frame of analysis of information, I came to the conclusion of the study by taking the support of the related literature, the established principle of CP, and lived experiences of the participants while the analysis of the information.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study focused on how university teachers perceived and practised classroom pedagogy in their classroom through the lenses of critical pedagogy. The final thematic groups were generated as interactive classroom (culture of silences, communication and contextualization of teaching), students-teacher relationship (student's contributions, collaborative learning environment, and motivation), and assignment-based teaching (students' activeness, ability to construct the new insight, and engaging the practical activities). The study themes have been discussed in three layers including narrative quotations in participants' voices, conceptual analysis of narratives, and interpretation in relation to the relevant literature.

Perception of respondent on classroom interaction

A classroom is considered as a social unit. Most of the diversity is considered as an important fact in developing the classroom society. The classroom practices reflect the society of the future. The participants opined that making the interactive classroom practices to challenge status quo and learner's initiative learning process an important for university classrooms. The participant forwarded view that the questioning techniques in classroom teaching mostly valued for making the interactive classroom. The following narratives excerpt the glimpse of perception of teacher on classroom interaction:

Laxmi. "Discussion with the students during the classroom teaching helps make learner-centered teaching."

Rohan. "The task of teaching should be student-centered which means asking questions to the students and providing opportunities for them to present their experiences which can promote interaction."

Maya. "Teachers should not discriminate pupils in the classroom based on gender, caste, religion, and language..."

Angel. " ...providing opportunities for them to present their task in the classroom"

The experiences of the respondents of the study reveal that classroom discussion, opportunities for class presentation, and equal participation in the learning are the main ideas of the learning centered teaching (L C T). Based on the participants' statements teachers highlight interaction as a classroom discussion between students and teacher where students and teacher are equally responsible in the learning process. To provide the opportunities of classroom presentation during the classroom teaching is another idea to make the learner active in their learning process which is the active and responsible learner is one of the key areas of critical pedagogy (Acharya et al., 2022). It may have a general notion of CP but does not follow its complete procedures. They do not unfold and connect the idea about the social structure, culture, and domination. Thus, the findings of the study signal that the understanding of the teacher about CP is learner-centered teaching. Similarly, other participants' voices are, the classroom environment should be psychologically safe and free. There should not be discrimination based on gender, language and religions. It is assumed that CP only promotes interaction. Dialogical interaction between student and teacher in the classroom is an important strategy of critical pedagogy, where communication and interconnection between teacher and students come together are necessities for critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011). In this sense, teachers may have poor theoretical knowledge about the actual concept of CP. So, teachers do not understand the spirit of the CP properly.

Teachers' practices of interaction in the classroom

Interaction is an empathetic relationship between students and teachers where they are engaging in collaborative work for the achievement of common goals in the classroom (Freire, 2005). Respectful attitudes and teacher support are considered the basic things of the classroom for developing the interactive classroom in higher education (Makarov, 2021). The psychologically safe environment is significant for harmonizing the relationship with students for fostering interaction in the classroom. The views of participants emphasize that the teaching is supposed to be interactive to make the students active in the learning process. The perceptions of teacher practices on interaction in their classroom are presented as the evidence:

Angel. "As a teacher, I ask questions to students in the classroom. But I do not wait for answers. As I see the faces of students, they do not try to answer my questions. But they expect answers directly from me. The questions in the classroom act as the means for controlling their distractions. I think, there are some aspects such as personal support in the learning process is missing."

Roman. "I often ask questions to the students about having any problems with their previous lesson. Later on, I open the computer with the slide, and then I request the students to read this slide. And then I begin to explain with examples. They are listening attentively. I ask again to have anything else, at the end, students often request to summarize and then, I end the lesson by repeating it once."

Maya. "My way of communication in the classroom is one-way, students listen to me passively in the classroom but I am unable to make interactive classroom because of overcrowded classrooms, they are busy looking mobile, side-talking, and note-taking."

Laxmi. "While I try to make the class learner-centered, the students often tell me "We passed the exam by reading the notes...and here we are now...not having enough study materials. So, sir! you must give notes in class."

Roshan. "I ask the question to the students about the subject matter, at the beginning of the teaching, in the group. The students who answered the questions well, I more often say that woh! What a good answer! Thank You! I am so happy! The student who is passive in the classroom, I do not use any alternatives for their learning."

The finding highlights the question-answer techniques to make an interactive classroom in higher education. However, it could not properly be functioning in the classroom. In the interview, teachers shared their view "students are seen in silence in the classroom." The ideas they share aligned with teacher-dominated practices. The causes behind the silences of the students may have students' anxiety, an imbalanced relationship among students and teachers, the habit of taking more time to answer the questions, and extra support is needed to understand the questions. In this context, the study findings indicate that the teachers' role is missing for making the safe classroom environment at the university level. The respectful and safe learning environment is considered as the basic things for the interactive classroom (Melo, 2019). However, making the students active, providing the practical examples during the classroom teaching, and measuring the students' understanding regarding the lesson are the responsible teaching of a teacher. The opinion they shared in the interview signaled "the students as an attentive listener and teacher as a medium of passing the information through the structural questions" that limiting the students' freedom in the classroom. These findings of the study represent the existing teaching practices in higher classroom near about the characteristics of the banking approach of teaching where the position of a teacher as a subject of the learning process and students as the object (Freire 1970, p. 73). The overall insights of the participants acknowledge that the learning structure of the classroom is revolving around the teacher rather than students, which focuses less on the interactive classroom. Contextualization of the teaching is one of the aspects of the critical pedagogy, a teacher interested in practices than theory (Steinberg & Freire, 2011). The experiences of the teacher seemed towards connecting the lesson to the student's background by providing the practical evidence only through teachers' verbal explanation. In addition, a teacher needs to be open to the students in the classroom to share their experiences and cultural knowledge which is the prime indicator of the interactive classroom (Freire, 1970).

Motivation is considered a powerful technique for fostering the engagement of students in the learning process (Bashyal, 2007). The shared experiences of the participant teachers found that engagement and motivation are the core elements of the interactive classroom which can be developed by using symbolic motivation techniques in the classroom. Moreover, the proper use of different techniques of motivation can increase the learning habits of students inside as well as outside of school and college settings. The view of the findings can be aligned with tenets of the critical pedagogy. Contrary to this, the view of participants shared regarding poor skills and knowledge hinder teachers' ability to ensure equal participation in the learning process. Thus, the existing practices of teaching in higher education may create the gap between "good" and "poor" students. From the above discussion, the university teachers have seemed to practise the different question-answer and motivation techniques to make the classroom interactive. However, the lack

of independent learning habits among students, poor student motivation, and poor interest of the student are the significant factors hindering the interactive classroom in university-level education.

Teachers' perception on teacher- students' relations in the classroom

The frequently informative interaction between students and teachers is a presumption of democratic classroom learning where teachers and students are free for exercising the learning process. It could foster the students-teachers' relationship in the classroom setting. Based on the participants' experiences, positive attitudes to the students and the academic interaction with the students makes the students become positive toward the teachers. The findings of the participants' experiences asserted that the interaction with the students was academically poor. The relationship among the teachers, students, and other faculty members is crucial in school setting. However, some of the participants argue that the teachers' relationship with students has negative influences on students for taking their learning responsibility in the classroom. In this context, some of the voices of the participants are as follows:

Roshan. *"I feel that the relationship with the student should be academic. Forming a relationship with students through academic power can sustain the students' learning because a teacher always attempts to encourage positive aspects of students and provide feedback to improve the negative aspect of the students during the learning process."*

Angel. *The relationship among students, teachers, and administrators of the colleges is to be positive in how to improve the overall learning activities of the colleges because it is a teamwork.*

Roman. *"A democratic learning environment is essential for classroom learning. Where collective and individual way of teaching are the appropriate methods of CP."*

Maya. *"Mutual relation between students and teachers is more appropriate in the lower level-education than higher education."*

The study found that the power relationship, collaboration, and respect for the student in the learning process contribute to fostering democratic relations in the classroom. The participant teachers also know that power redistribution between teachers and students is an important aspect of critical pedagogy because it prefers to practise learner-centered teaching in the classroom (Kincheloe, 2008). Some of the participants of this study seem

opposed to the democratic relationship with students because such a relationship makes the students more dependent or passive in nature. Although teachers have the general information or knowledge about power, collaboration, and values of the learner in their learning process, but have no crux ideas about the collaborative learning culture among the university teachers. Some of the participants revealed that collaborative relationship in the college is essential. However, they seem in a hurry in how to control each other rather than improving the common goals of the students as well as the college. From the above discussion, although few teachers are found in opposition to the democratic relationship with the students, but most of the teacher' perception seemed positive towards the students' relationship. Theoretically, they realized the need for friendly relationship with students.

Practices of teacher- students' relations in the classroom

The relationship with the students in classroom is an important aspect of critical classroom where teachers acknowledge the students as central persons of the learning process. To encourage, motivate, and provide the feedback to the students is the core techniques to improve the relationship with the students. The participants' view of this study argued that teachers are not found responsible for their professionalism as well as students' learning because they are teaching without making the plan and preparation of the lesson and to provide the insufficient time to the students' learning. The study results also found that the unitary types of methods of teaching, learning resources, and learning activities would not be able to address students' needs and interests who come in the classroom from diverse backgrounds. This resulted that the relationship between students and teachers is poor. In this context, some of the voices of the participants are as follows: Maya. *"As a teacher, I always encourage the students for their learning by providing feedback when they feel difficulty in the learning process. But in practice, it is poor because the overcrowded (a large number of students) classroom limits the interaction with the students."*

Raout. "To build the relationship with students in the classroom, alternative facilities should provide to the students who are poor in the learning process that are guidance services, alternative teaching methods, and materials but it is poor in practice."

Roshan. "While I am teaching, I ask the question regarding the types of economy in the group. A student answers the question, who is irregular and no play the major role in a class. I am surprised and tell him woh! What a good answer! Thank you! " A better answer than me." I am so happy! In later days, I meet him often in the library."

Maya. Developing flexibility in relationships with students in the classroom learning process makes them more idle persons, does not make them interested to participate in internal activities of the classroom, be late to do homework, and twist the teacher's attention from the classroom issues on the other fields.

The democratic attitudes of teachers to their students are a significant predictor of the good practices of CP in the classroom (Turabik & Gün, 2016). Some of the study participants share their experiences as motivation, encouragement, providing the sufficient learning materials and individual support or teaching are playing the significant role in building the effective relationship with students. But in practice, due to the overcrowded classroom, spending the little time in college, insufficient learning materials, and lack of support from faculty members, teachers are found unable to create the space of collaborative learning inside or outside of college setting. A few of the participants argued that democratic relationship with students is possible in the school level education than the higher-level education. These findings are corresponding with the assumption of Freire' banking approach of teaching (Freire, 1970). It also revealed that some participant teachers have the knowledge about how to build the relationship with students. They are using the different methods of teaching for supporting students' engagement in their learning and different techniques of motivation in the classroom for instruction to the students for poor scoring in the classroom. The positive relationship with student in the classroom, teacher has three benefits: to get the opportunity to know their students very well, provide choices to the students, and encourage the students to become active learners everyday (Vargas, 2019). This study also covers such ideas in their practices in the classroom as a significant element for making the positive relationship with students. In summary, most of the teachers have the general knowledge about the concept of relation with students and its actual practices in the classroom and a few participants have the moderate knowledge about this concept, but lack of collaborative learning culture in the teachers, insufficient time, lack of responsibility of teachers, lack of learning resources, and lack of collaboration among the faculty members are the hindering forces for building good relationship with students in the classroom. Hence, the relationship with student is to be reciprocal to achieve common goals of the classroom but in practice co-operative relationship is still low. From this statement, it asserted that the narrative sickness relationship is still predominant in the classroom (Freire, 1970, p. 71). How the pedagogical power relationship to the different backgrounds of the student is relevant which is the crux idea of critical pedagogy. The finding of the study indicated that the involvement of the students in team activities, motivation of the students for teamwork, and facilitating students for teamwork refer to, theoretically, the teacher may have a general knowledge about the different notions of

CP. In a real sense, the university teacher has still a belief in hierarchical relationships with the students in the classroom which would seem in opposition to the notion of CP.

Perception of assignment-based teaching in the classroom

Assignment based-teaching is an important approach to teaching for transferring the responsibilities of learning from teacher to students. Similarly, assignment-based, research-based, and community-orientated practices of teaching are considered the key strategies for strengthening the implementation of critical pedagogy inside and outside the college setting (Jeyaraj, 2014). The participants' opined that perception of assignments-based teaching and learning are as appropriate methods for making the students active in the learning process. Some of the participants' narratives are as follows:

Angel. *"Practical activities of the student in the classroom is necessary to make the students more responsible citizen for a society because it supports not only to know the existing knowledge in practice but also develops the ability to construct new insight."*

Maya. *" Activities-based teaching and internal assessment system is the basic idea to make the student active in the learning process."*

Rohan. *"To change the curriculum into the practice (theory - action come together) can only be through the practice of assignment-based teaching in the classrooms."*

Roshan. *"Learning process can be linked to the daily-lives of the students."*

Laxmi. *"The teaching at the classroom should be through a learner-centered approach, it offered students to involve in different tasks or assignments and involved in research activities outside and inside of the college."*

Some of the participants' experiences are sought assignment-based teaching can make education relevant to students' lives. Some others' views are found near to the statement *" to make the students more active than a teacher in the learning process. "* This perception of the the teacher directly link to the assignment-based teaching as a teaching strategies of critical pedagogy like problem- posing learning (Freire, 1970). Based on the discussion, it has been signaled that teacher perception of assignment-based teaching only can break the hierarchical relation between the student and teacher in the classroom. Moreover, another concern of the participant is *"learning process can be linked to the daily-lives of the students"* which one is possible only the practices of assignment-based, project work

or research-based teaching in the higher education classroom (ADB, 2015). In the same line, another view of respondents was that the learner centered- teaching should practice in the classroom because it focuses on placing the students at the center of the learning process, in which the students' needs, interest and goals are accepted as a foundation of the learning process. A key aspect of learner-centered teaching is active involvement of students in various learning tasks and assignments that fosters the students to critically engage with their subject matter and takes ownership of their learning. This one concern of participants aligned with finding of Shor (2012), suggested that the real teaching is to be more practical activity than in theory. So, teachers should be more interested in activities-based teaching than traditional. Moreover, the aims of using the assignment-based teaching in the classroom is to make students able to give new things to their society (Jeyaraj, 2014). The critical classroom is a place where the teachers and students have to work collaboratively to change the theoretical curriculum in to the practical life. The findings of the study signal that activities-based teaching i.e., project work and involvement in the research activity are the core activities of the CP in the higher education. In conclusion, the university teacher has understood the need of practical based teaching in the higher education. Moreover, it is also found that teacher and students have to work co-operatively in the classroom that fosters the teamwork is the basic function of the CP. On the basis of findings, the level of understanding of the teachers about practical-based teaching is found positive.

Practices of assignment-based teaching in classroom

The assignment is an indispensable part of classroom teaching in higher education. It is perceived as a self-learning method, developing presentation skills, and enhancing the learning experiences of students (Uddin, 2020). But how it is practiced or assigned to the students is a serious problem for both students and teachers because they take it as an impediment to their learning life, which are the key aspect of the critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970). The opinions of the participants shared in the interview regarding the practices of assignment-based teaching represent here are as follows:

Raout. I give the assignment by matching it with the course of study of the programs. I provide feedback to the students who submit on time. But I have not used alternative measures for those who do not bring it on time.

Roman. Whilst teaching in the classroom, I \ we say that " many questions come from this unit", because it is important, so our study is seen poorly research-oriented. Of course, our teaching practice is not oriented toward the students' creative development.

Laxmi. The mandatory assignment of the classroom is linked to the internal assessment of the students by the curriculum. However, the student does not show interest to do this work, even I have blocked the internal number of the students. In opposition, the campus administration indirectly forces us to provide the internal number to students who are not participating in such classroom activities.

Maya. There is no! no !! no!!! "Equal participation in the task or assignment in my classroom", a few students participated in the seminar actively but many of the students come to class irregularly because they are busy in the other field during college time resulting that being partially involved in the research-based task or assignment of their respective course.

Roshan. What an activity! In the classroom, sir! I often go with lecturing...but I practice some activities partially which is provisioned by the semester system. For instance, field visit, classroom presentation, and writing research-based article is mandatory in our curriculum. Students show poor interest to do this work because of poor academic experiences at the previous level of education. I often teach them only about how this work is carried out theoretically in the class.

The experiences of the participants about the exercises of the assignment-based teaching in the classroom mainly concerned the teaching lesson of the students and the other experiences are connected to the internal assessment which is mandatory by the instructional policy of higher education (Faculty of Education, 2070 B.S.). Moreover, the experiences shared in the interview from the participant teachers, for instance, "*much of the question comes from this unit.*" This statement signaled that our teaching process is still traditional because the teachers are seen as busy for preparing the students to the final examination rather than preparing for the future. The findings aligned with the study finding of Uddin (Uddin, 2019). In the same line, one participant experiences i.e., "*There is no! no !! no!!! Equal participation....*" however the instructional policy of higher education has attempted to institutionalize the assignment, seminar, and research-based teaching as a method of classroom teaching (MOEST, 2019; NEC,1992 & UGC, 2013), but it would not be practically implemented in the classroom. Another experience of the respondent is "*our assignment system of the classroom is linked to the internal assessment.*" From the experiences of participants, to connect the students' assignment into the internal assessment process of the students that is the strong aspect of implementation of critical pedagogy in the classroom. According to Freire (1970),

assignments should enable students to reflect on their own lived experiences and question the dominant narratives. On the other hand, the authentic assessment promotes the social consciousness among the students (McLaren, 2012). A participant asserted that the existing policy regarding the assignment-based teaching is found in line with assumption of CP. Another view of participants is found some different, for instance, "*I often go with lecturing...but practise some activities partially.*" There are two types of assignments practised in the classroom. First, is used to engage the students in learning i.e., home assignments, project work, and other research activities, and the second is to complete the criteria of the student's final examination of the years that are standardized by the concerned authorities. The involvement of students in both types of assignments is low because of irregularity in the classroom due to the business of other fields at college time. Thus, the findings reveal that research-based or assignment-based teaching is partially practised in the classroom, however, the policy prescribes it as mandatory (Faculty of Education, 2070 B.S. & Sharma, 2059 B.S.). In conclusion, though, teachers have felt positive about the practices of assignment-based teaching as a method of critical pedagogy as with the findings of Safari (Safari, 2012). In addition, this study also found that the instructional policy is constantly changing within the higher education system by adapting practical work like assignment, project work, and research activities, considering as key aspect of critical pedagogy. However, due to the traditional mindset of the teacher, low level of motivation, and lack of responsibilities towards the students' learning, hence, it would not be properly practised in the university classroom.

Conclusion

The study examined the perceptions and practices of university teachers regarding interactive learning, the teacher-student relationship, and assignment-based teaching in the classroom. The findings revealed that while teachers generally had a positive understanding of interactive learning and recognized its importance, they lacked knowledge on how to effectively implement it. Communication and intercommunication were seen as crucial elements for creating a dialogical relationship in the classroom, but many teachers neglected the space for student reflection and feedback. Teacher-dominant interaction was found to still prevail in university classrooms, indicating a gap between perception and practice.

The study also highlighted the significance of a positive teacher-student relationship in fostering a collaborative learning environment. Teachers who established such relationships were able to motivate students, encourage active participation, and value diverse experiences. However, building these relationships posed challenges, and the study suggested that recognizing individual needs, providing personalized support,

employing alternative teaching methods, and offering diverse learning materials were crucial steps for establishing a good rapport with students.

Regarding assignment-based teaching, teachers recognized its importance in bridging the gap between theoretical curriculum and its practical application. However, the study revealed that few teachers had actually implemented assignment-based teaching in their classrooms, citing challenges in its implementation. Despite the positive perception of assignment-based learning, the research found that teacher professionalism, collaboration with faculty members, and traditional mindsets were obstacles to its effective implementation. Additionally, administrative issues such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of support from the administration, and student irregularity further hindered the use of assignment-based teaching.

In conclusion, the critical pedagogy is not just a method for classroom teaching, it is also a philosophy of education that provides the guideline to both teacher and student for building the critical learning environment of the students to gain critical thinking skills and to help create a just society. Although, the result of this study found that teachers have positive perceptions about CP, but the understanding level of the CP is poor in general that is like the findings of Kesler (2019), Aliakbari & Faraji (2011). Moreover, the perceptions of teachers are found in favor of implementation of different notion of CP in their classroom. However, its implementation in the classroom is found poorer. Overcoming challenges related to teacher professionalism, collaboration, traditional mindset, and administrative support as well as student-related issues, would be crucial for successfully incorporating critical pedagogy in the classroom.

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