

EDITORIAL _____

The fourth volume of *Interdisciplinary Research in Education*, previously known as *Nepalese Journal of Educational Studies* (upto 3th volume) is published to contribute to multidisciplinary scholarships in the field of education, bringing diverse issues of educational policies and practices to the fore. In ten different articles, the authors in this volume have looked into the critical and relevant issues covering multicultural education, teachers' professional identity, ICTs in education, early childhood education, mathematics, and Nepali language education. Most of these articles are derived from the authors' original scholarly work, mostly the field-based empirical studies, which reflect the contemporary knowledge and issues in the related field.

In the first article, Krishna Prasad Adhikari analyses the construction of gendered identity of mathematics students in higher education context of Nepal. In particular, he examines how girl students in Nepal struggle in constructing their identity in mathematics learning. Using the theoretical lens of Cobb and Hodge (2003) and data generated from three girls studying mathematics in Master's level at Tribhuvan University, Adhikari reveals that girl students faced with difficulties and struggle due to patriarchal system of society, false beliefs about mathematics and mathematics learning, and traditional and meritocratic system of teaching learning system. This results in low enrollment and participation of girls in mathematics, implying mathematics as a male-dominated subject.

Discussing the issue of ICT-integrated pedagogy in multicultural classroom and drawing on the narrative enquiry of two mathematics teachers, Lok Nath Bhattarai discusses the management of multicultural understanding through the use of ICT. His study shows that although teachers in Nepal are not fully familiar with the management of multicultural classroom, they try to manage the diversity of learners by supporting them personally through ICT-integrated pedagogy. His argument is that ICT integrated pedagogy is the best strategy to manage the multicultural classes by respecting students' differences, diversity and feelings. Bhattarai provides suggestions such as encouraging students to respond to each other's questions and comments, providing guidelines for group discussion and drawing on students' experience and interest and using ICT tools as a tool for both communication and resources are the best strategies for helping all students to learn mathematics regardless of their different identities and abilities.

In another article, Abatar Subedi's article has assessed the semester system at Tribhuvan University from the students' and teachers' perspectives. Drawing on the data collected through a survey questionnaire from a group of university teachers and students, his study shows a positive perception of teachers and students towards curriculum, teaching/learning environment, and regularity of classes and viability of semester system under TU. The major constrains of smooth functioning of semester system are the lack of learning resources and inadequate and ineffective use of ICT tools in day to day teaching/learning. In addition, as his article suggests, the students experience teacher domination in selection of teaching methods along with the difficulty in completing courses in time and not timely publishing the exam result.

Another paper by Dawa Sherpa has contributed to exploring the concept and needs of multicultural education in the particular context of Nepal. Based on an extensive review of literature on multicultural education, focusing on the need of Nepali socio-cultural context, Sherpa argues that multicultural education provides equal educational opportunities for all ethnic children to learn from each other. And, their cultural values, ethics norms and practices are key assets of the classroom rather than problems. His focus is on multicultural curriculum through which educators can prepare individuals and groups to live peacefully in a diverse society being a variety of racial, ethnic, culture, customs and languages.

Surya Prasad Adhikari's article explores the early childhood development (ECD) curriculum preparation practices in Nepal. Using qualitative information collected through unstructured interview and discussion with ECD facilitators, he reveals that the participants received Montessori basic training on pronunciation and curriculum preparation. While Curriculum

Development Center (CDC) has prepared ECDC curricula drawing on the Wheeler's cyclic model, private ECDCs are preparing curriculum themselves which are somehow similar to the curricula developed by CDC. Adhikari argues that ECD curriculum are inadequate, lacking spiritual development activities in particular. As all of the children learn basic vocabularies from their mothers and other members at home, facilitators help children use these words in schools and help them make correct pronunciation, and use the vocabularies in sentence and learn language through fun activities.

Min Raj Poudel analyzes comparatively between institutional and non-institutional direct private cost at Bachelor degree level in Nepal. Using a survey in a community college at Kathmandu valley with 90 Bachelor degree students, Poudel's study shows that per student average college related institutional unit cost is Rs 24730.57, university related institutional cost is Rs 5982.23 and total annual institutional unit cost is Rs 30712.80. Likewise, one student spends Rs 46411.63 as non-institutional direct private cost in a year. In this way, total annual average direct private cost of education (institutional plus non-institutional) in Rs 77124.43 at bachelor level of community based college in the capital city of Nepal. This suggests that a significant amount of money has been spent as institutional and non-institutional direct private cost in higher education in Nepal.

Drawing on an action research to investigate the learner perceptions and attitudes in the use of ICTs in the English language classes and to examine the role of ICTs in promoting the learner independence and motivation, Khem Raj Joshi and Guru Prasad Paudel has made a significant contribution in the field of English language teaching and ICT education. Their finding shows that the learners are well motivated and positive towards the use of ICTs in language teaching. Notably, the use of these types of tools has significant roles in making the learners more independent and autonomous. The results of the progress tests they took also suggests that students continuously progressed in learning English through the use of ICT-supported learning activities.

Written in the Nepali language, three articles have contributed in different areas of language education in general and mother tongue education and Nepali education in particular. In the first article of this kind, Geeta Khanal explores general perception and understanding of stakeholders towards the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Taking a case of two schools where the Newari language has been used as a medium of instruction, her study suggests that while mother tongue as a medium of instruction is appropriate among monolingual or bilingual children, using a mother tongue in multilingual classroom is quite complex, difficult and contentious. Significant to her study is that linguistic minorities are further marginalized if their languages are invisible and ignored in the classroom. Another article written by Umesh Kafle examines the proficiency of students in the Nepali language editing through a structured test. His quantitative study shows that language editing proficiency is high among girls, those whose first language is Nepali, and those studying in institutional schools. The final article written by Rajendra Khanal analyzes the language used in Nepali novel *Salijo* from a gender perspective. His analysis indicates that homosexuals and third genders are portrayed in a very sensitive way and the language used for them is unbiased and appropriate. This suggests that Nepali society is being positive and progressive towards gender minority in particular.

As the overview of the papers suggests, the authors, through their original studies, have made a significant contribution to interdisciplinary studies in education. Most of the issues discussed in the papers not only provide evidence-based findings in the issues they pick up, but also raises critical questions for both policy debate and academic studies. This helps all groups of stakeholders –students, academics, researchers, policy makers and others– to reflect on the context-specific issues and cases of Nepal, and enable them to bring some comparative dimensions looking the issues and cases from the global perspectives. As editors of this journal, we hope that the papers in this volume contribute to knowledge gap in the respective fields which will be reflected in contemporary academic writings, literature review, pedagogical and research applications and other scholarly works in interdisciplinary fields of social science in general and education in particular.

Editors