-- *ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE*

University Teachers' Motivation and Challenges: A Gender Perspective on Professional Development

Sakuntala Pageni
Department of Education, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara

ABSTRACT
This article has attempted to explore motivation for female teachers in the classroom and to find out the affecting factors in the process of becoming a successful teacher in the university. This study is theoretically based on motivation theory and critical theory. The female teachers' professional challenges have persisted for many years. In this study, motivation for the female teachers and their challenges that focus on the participation of all strata of gender, race, ethnicity and other aspects are two sides of teachers' professional identity. Therefore, motivation for female teachers in higher education is an urgent need for improving teaching and learning environment and for job security. This article includes a narrative inquiry based on an in-depth interview that includes three female teachers of the university. The thematic content analysis of this study is based on primary sources of data and theoretical observations. This study concludes that the female participation in higher education in Nepal is satisfactory, but they have not been able to improve their situation though they are capable of encouraging motivation for students to learn and face challenges in higher education.
KEYWORDS: Motivation, professional identity, effective learning

INTRODUCTION

Females are the children's first teachers whose roles increase when they become university teachers. Motivation is an incentive that helps teachers improve day-to-day classroom teaching and learning activities. It involves the holistic approaches of biological, social and cognitive forces that activate learners' behavior in education. The female teachers' motivation in higher education has raised an issue that is related to making gender equality dimension of resultant outcome of their professional growth

(Spilt, Koomen, & Jak, 2012). This implies that the gender difference is an underlying factor of teachers' professional identity in higher education and career development. This article acknowledges that the gender issue manifests itself across broad societal organizations and focus on its discussion on gender issues in institutions of higher learning, affecting the quality of the education system (Mabou & Nachouki, 2012). In the Nepali context, there are various obstacles in constructing professional identity in the case of university female teachers. This research tries to explore an overview and basic orientation to research on the female teachers' identity and motivation in higher education.

Nepal is a highly patriarchal society and in almost every step female teachers are worse than male teachers (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014). In 2016, the Global Gender Index ranked Nepal as 110th out of 144 countries for gender parity (Aryal, 2019). Women have been restricted access to education and employment. They are also forced to experience the higher rates of domestic violence and cultural dominance. Thus, women become dual victims of discrimination at the community level and disabled women have even greater levels of disadvantage (Forum, 2019).

The female teacher is not just struggling with her professional growth, but with her identity as a human, which indicates a weaker gender discourse in her classroom practice as compared to the male teacher. Gender perspectives of teachers' identity are always based on the gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the teaching-learning process. Female teachers' identity is related to the peculiar positioning for teachers' development in society as teachers who many times prepare different lessons through academic journey (Thorne, 2015; Jarvis, 2013). The different stages of learning become a respectful long journey of career growth in both social and national development (Palloff & Pratt, 2011). The identity of female teachers develops through a flight of participation, identity, and dignity of interaction in a teachers' community. Although different forms of participation may be involved in engagement, alignment and imagination; there are three important distinct modes (Wenger, 1999). The professional identity becomes the product of the appropriate use of the appropriate method in the field of educational growth. It focuses on humans' stories of life turning events of the past that can collect individual experiences and educational reconstruction of personal and social stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The historical notion of teachers' identity and their role could be considered in the 1980s when the teachers were supposed to be 'charismatic,' a ready-made person as identity. The teachers were supposed to be 'educational' persons, finally during 2000 as their oldest notion was changed as "pragmatic and smart personal identity" (Poore, 2019). Therefore, this fluidity of teachers' identity needs refinement through better performance, and for that training before the professional journey is always recommended before career development.

There are three significant aspects of teachers' professional identity belonging to a teacher's community: the relationship between knowledge and beliefs, classroom practice, and professional expectations for the future (Ertmer, 2010). Therefore, climate setting before starting the core class is always recommended for more attention from the students in the classroom. After setting the environment, the teacher always explains the facts with modern electronic media for clear explanations.

However, female teachers' professional identity is further broken down into different six factors: value, efficacy, commitment, emotions, knowledge and beliefs. The development of a teacher's professional identity is largely dependent on the quality and availability of these varied social and interpersonal factors (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

The teacher's professional identity stands at the core elements of the teaching profession. It provides a framework for teachers to construct their ideas of "how to be,"

"how to act" and "how to understand" their work and their place in society (Beauchamp, 2009). Importantly, the teachers' identity is something that is neither fixed nor imposed upon; rather it is negotiated through experience and interpersonal interaction (Sachs, 2005).

In the global context, many different researchers have involved the questions of teachers' professional identity in their research. Therefore, it is increasing in the field of research and teaching-learning process for the last few decades (Zembylas, 2003).

In Nepal, a very few research has been done about the professional identity of teachers from the gender perspective. They have focused on professional development and teachers training. If the teachers' professional identity is not explored in a proper way, they are not motivated to their professional areas. Professional growth is needed for the teachers' well-being. In fact, the teaching profession has not been able to be respectful and socially prosperous. There are three factors related to effective learning. They include the student, curriculum and the teacher. If the teachers are not satisfied in their profession, the performance in the classroom is not effective.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this paper is to examine the challenges of professionalism that are faced by university female teachers, resulting in lack of motivation as they grow their professional career. Apart from this, there are specific objectives, which are as follows:

- To investigate the level of motivation for female teachers for performance in the classroom.
- To find out the factors that hinder university female teachers to become successful.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The critical theory focuses on the hierarchies that exist among humans as social beings, creating unequal power relationships. Thoughts are mediated by power relationships; thus, power exercise helps to understand the relationship between power and thought. Power interacts with privilege and oppression of the different groups. It believes in the unjust and unequal social world and environmental phenomena that visualizes the social and economic exclusion of research.

Motivation for female teachers is constructed by the teachers' thoughts and their ideas, the perception by others and the attitude of society. If the teachers are related with a positive point of view, they construct a positive mindset about their profession they can establish their good identity and can give desired performance. If the teachers are victimized by the negative thought, they cannot be motivated to their work internally, resulting in poor performance that causes damage to identity. Therefore, the professional identity plays a vital role in effective learning. Generally, the teachers are known as an agent of social change. If they want to become successful teachers in a society, they should respect every societal norm, value and belief. Several theories are related to the professional identity and growth. Among them, the critical theory is suitable for the study of the female teacher's professional identity in higher education that needs to be enhanced to meet the educational achievement. Women's participation in higher education enables the empowerment of women through the local-level representation.

The gross enrolment ratio (GER) of Nepali women in the university has shown a steady rise in the past two decades. The GER of women surpassed men in the age group of 18 to 23 in the year 2018-2019. In 2019, only 52.20 % of the Nepali population was women. Nepal shows a negative trend concerning women entering the workforce despite

their increasing literacy rate and GER in higher education. In the parliament, only 33% of elected representatives were women in the lower house in 2020. However, due consideration of the age-old practice of the exclusion of Dalit, women, Madhesi and Janajati in civil service was never paid by the state. As the government figures show that Janajati has occupied only 15.7 percent of the total number in civil service and this is very low participation as compared to their bigger population size that consists of 37.5 percent. Similarly, the civil service is male-dominated as the number of women in civil service is only 9.1 percent in spite of their larger population size (Nepal, 2019).

Witenstein (2013) develops a conceptual model for examining the unique factors contributing to the gender inequality of post-secondary educational participation in Nepal This includes institutional, cultural and economic factors affecting differential access to education for males and females.

As discussed above, inequality in educational access and attainment of girls may be partially influenced by the gendered nature of teaching staff in the public school system. The Nepali education system faces financial challenges in the foreseeable future. While the public expenditure on education in proportion to gross domestic product (GDP) has increased in recent years, it was still only 3.4 percent of GDP in 2005. This is considerably less than many countries that spend closer to five percent (Nepal, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This paper explores the narratives of three female teachers using narrative inquiry method with thematic content analysis of their life learning stories. They were organized in a chronological order using in-depth interviews by gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of their experiences.

This study includes the in-depth perceptions of three female teachers of Tribhuvan University. The participants were selected by the purposive sampling process. The study focuses on analyzing the beliefs, values, morals, perceptions and assumptions of teaching profession in university teachers. Particularly the female teachers in their professional growth. Its emphasis is on the emotional aspects of teachers' professional identity and development. This study uses a narrative inquiry for three female teachers' experiences.

FT-1, FT-2 and FT-3 (code names of different participants) were born in different geographical and cultural backgrounds of Nepal. There are different academic environments, social contexts and economic conditions for them.

The purpose of narrative research is to study personal experience. In this study, narrative inquiry has been adopted as a methodological approach to construct reality in the form of the stories of informants, focusing on female teachers' motivation and demotivation in classroom learning and professional status, allowing to get an understanding of the complexities of human lives and endeavors. It is useful to explore individuals' experiences in professional identity of female teachers in the university.

The duration of the first interview was of one and half hours, which helped me to get the experience of their personal and professional experiences of different time phases. In the second phase, the interview was of one and half hours again, thirty minutes which helped the researcher to get the in-depth stories of teacher interaction. The last phase interview time was of thirty minutes, which helped the researcher to get the additional questions put forward during all phases of interview sessions. The stories and experiences of the respondents were organized in a chronological order. The interviews were transcribed, writing in a diary for field notes and theme generation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research explores the in-depth explanation of university female teachers on the following themes:

Professional Motivation and Challenges

Motivation for teachers is an important aspect that influences the teachers' behavior towards the students to help them in gaining educational goals and objectives. This psychological human aspect cannot be observed easily and directly due to many academic, physical, organizational, economic and environmental challenges that distress the teachers' professional development. In many cases, the teachers' disappointment, stress and exhaustion can negatively influence motivation, cognition and job performance in the course of accomplishing their tasks. In this context, one of the participants named FT-1 noted:

> The prestige of the university teachers is high in the society. This motivated me a lot. Additionally, being a woman spending the life under the different types of stratification, I wanted to uplift the society through education. I meant it from the bottom of my inner heart. When I was a child, I had a huge dream of being a successful person, so I want to be a respectful and responsible person to create a working environment for the future.

In Nepali societal setting, respect for the teaching profession was something of the past. It is being attractive as compared to other jobs. Another participant FT-2's view is different from FT-1. FT-2 expressed her discontent in this way:

> The uncertainty of the job due to a long part-time position, family economic burden, occasional discriminatory behavior of seniors and administrators are the major challenges faced by the novice university teachers.

It is reality of many of female university teachers' life. In FT-2's case, the university does not take any responsibility of appointing her to a full-time teacher even after nine years of continuous teaching in the university. It is really one of the demotivational factors for the female university teachers.

Self-Motivated Strategies

This study showed that the motivation of female university teachers was self-inspired as they were enlightened by the fact that they felt accountable towards their own job. For instance, students also need to feel motivated for their learning such as a sense of love from their teachers. It is said that motivation such as a desire to contribute to society, or a belief in the teaching profession of for the university teachers. Therefore, during the interview, the desire for a career change was one of the factors for the participants' motivation in their teaching profession. Here, FT-2 narrates her experience of taking part in the teaching profession,

> We want all our students should be given equal opportunity or access because the teaching learning environment is not student-friendly. The students need additional supports for those who are relatively weak and slow in learning. In doing so, we can create a good teaching learning environment in the classroom.

Motivation for the Participants

Female teachers' self-motivation is important to maintain a good relationship with students, colleagues and other stakeholders. In fact, learning is a collaborative process that always focuses on the active participation of learners. This suggests that a conducive work environment strongly supports the activities of teachers in a classroom setting. In this case, FT-1's views are contextual:

> *In our context, the practices of equity provision are found to be ineffective. The female teachers are more concerned about the equity in pedagogy, but it is limited only to sitting arrangement and group division in the classroom situations. They could not provide the adequate attention on homework checkup and individual teaching. Hence, it is necessary to organize the teacher trainings such as the professional development training on the issues like implementation of equity provision, equity in access, equity in process, equity achievement and so on.*

The constructivists believe that the learner should be the central active aspect of the whole learning process. Many studies show that when the learner is actively engaged in the learning process, it is possible for the teachers to make the whole learning process successful. Therefore, the teachers should focus on the contextual learning process of the students.

New Perspectives towards Teaching Profession

Motivation for female teachers is based on their involvement in teaching for professional development. In a general sense, newly appointed teachers are more inspired than the experienced ones because the junior teachers are much eager and their knowledge is fresher as compared to the senior teachers. The junior teachers always attempt to show their ability in developing teaching methods in their classes and give constructive criticism for the enhancement of the institution. The overall motivation indicator shows that the average score of the young teachers is higher than that of the senior ones. In this context, FT-3 has made this statement:

> *When I started teaching, due to the language barrier, I had to go through so many difficulties to manage my classes. Teaching is a two-way method and needs effective communication. In that situation, I used ICT as a medium to solve that issue by using PowerPoint presentations, online search engines such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and many other e-resources where the learner-centered learning methods like pictorial presentations of different conditions, charts and sign languages are available. Further, I took the help of those students who have some knowledge of related field. I also utilized them as a means to communicate and convey what is being taught to the rest of the class. Then, I used different project works and workshop-based learning methods for the active participation of my learners.*

As discussed above, the learning process always focuses on the students if the teachers are highly motivated in this process.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that there are many reasons to research on the female teachers' identity and development process by sharing the stories, which create the opportunity to reflect on their own and improve themselves. In this context, higher education provides a primary focus on the working environment for the teachers' development in classroom teaching (Nepal Nationl Educational Planning, 2011).

Developing an identity as a teacher is an important part of securing teachers' commitment to their work and adherence to professional norms (Ann & WittMarta, 2014). The identity of female teachers shapes their positions as they seek opportunities for their professional development. Barbara, Gerard, and Despina (2019) argue that the teachers' commitment is being diverted by bureaucratic changes at the management level such as the setting of performance targets, increased workload, increased accountability and changes in the curriculum.

The construction of a good teacher makes a respectful person as a member of a teaching community. In Nepal's context, there is less attraction towards teaching profession because it is considered to have the lower social status as compared to civil service. It lacks motivation for professional growth and development status. The nature of classroom teaching-learning practices, content delivery, subject matter, pedagogical knowledge, curriculum implementation and provision is also related to becoming successful teachers.

The change in profession implies that the pedagogical approaches that the university teachers have modeled and taught might not be the best way to engage a large number of students with diverse backgrounds and disciplines. A particular focus is placed on identity in pre-service teachers and new practitioners in the course of professional development. Overall, the results of this study are consistent with the study of Judyth (2013) who claimed that professionalism and teacher professional identity are interrelated with each other and now evident in many literature emerging from the USA, UK, China and Australia that focus on changes in working conditions, learning environment and professional expectations. It means that the issues of teacher professionalism and professional identity are being contested at the level of policy provision and practice.

CONCLUSION

In this study, it is concluded that the diverse roles of female teachers help not only in the social community but also for their own professional development. The university teaching job is considered the best job choices. But due to many pre-requisites in the higher education system in a developing country like Nepal, it is not easy for the female teachers to be motivated by their own desire. The respondents during the interviews strongly argued that the students' and male colleagues' attitude towards a female teacher is not fully positive in higher education. In addition, there is less female teachers' participation in higher education because of their part-time jobs that are not addressed by the university authority for a long time. Even though jobs are considered an attraction for female teachers, they have been facing more challenges socially and economically. The female teachers are also considered not fit for the university leadership positions due to the gendered and biased socio-cultural structures of the society in Nepal.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

Ann, K., & WittMarta, C. (2014). How gender conscious pedagogy in higher education can stimulate actions of social justice in society. *Social Inclusion 2*(1*)*, 12-23. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v21.30

Aryal, J. P. (2019). Untangling gender differentiated food security gaps in Bhutan: An application of exogenous switching treatment regression. *Review of Development Economics, 23*(2), 782-802.

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175-189.

Coldron, J., & Smith, R. (1999). Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*(6), 711-726. https://doi.or/10.1080/002202799182954

Connelly, F., & Clandinin, D. (1990). *Stories of experience and narrative inquiry.* Educational Researcher. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X019005002

Ertmer, P.A. (2010). Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. *Journal of research on Technology in Education, 42*(3), 255-284.

Jarvis, J. (2013). *Female teachers' religious and cultural identities and gender equality in classroom practice* (Doctoral Dissertation). North-West University.

Ministry of Education, Nepal. (2019). The National Educational System: Plan for 1971-1976. https://www.moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/2028_English.pdf

Naaj, M.A., Nachouki, M., & Ankit, A. (2012). Evaluating student satisfaction with blended learning in a gender-segregated environment. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research, 11,* 185-200.

Nepal Nationl Educational Planning Commision. (2011). *Report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission, 2011*. Kathmandu.

Neupane, G., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2014). Violence against women on public transport in Nepal: Sexual harassment and the spatial expression of male privilege. *International Journal of Comaparative and Applied Criminal Justice, 38*(1), 23-38. https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2013.794556

Palloff, R., & Pratt, K. (2011). *The excellent online instructor: Strategies for professional development.* Wiley.

Poore, M. (2019). *Constructing Teachers' Professional Identities*. Educational International.

Spilt, J., Koomen, H., & Jak, S. (2012). Are boys better off with male and girls with female teachers? A multilevel investigation of measurement invariance and gender match in teacher–student relationship quality. *Journal of School Psychology, 50*(3), 363-378. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2011.12.002

Thorne, A. (2015). *An investigation into the challenges facing educational leaders/managers from western developed contexts working for the first time in tertiary institutions in the United.* Semantic Scholar. https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/An-investigation-into-the-challenges-facing-from-in-Thorne/98540065169ae03103b0c08dab9b8ad57c95eafe

Wenger, E. (1999). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity.* Cambridge University Press.

World Economic Forum (2019). *Global Gender Gap Report 2020.* https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality

Zembylas, M. (2003). Caring for teacher emotion: Reflections on teacher self-development. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 22,* 103-125.