

PARADOXES OF SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PRACTICING INTEGRITY:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NEPAL

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A Thesis

Submitted to
School of Education

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Development Studies)

Kathmandu University
Dhulikhel, Nepal

January 2024

AN ABSTRACT

of the thesis of *Rupa Munakrmi* for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Development Studies) presented on 25 January 2024, entitled *Paradoxes of School Teachers in Practicing Integrity: An Ethnographic Study of Public Schools of Nepal*.

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Integrity is a complex and multifaceted concept that can vary depending on the cultural and social context in which it is understood and applied. It is crucial in education as it serves as a moral and motivational force and encourages individuals to think, act, and behave ethically and positively. Promoting and maintaining teachers' integrity is important for educational institutions, as it enhances the overall quality of education. Teachers are expected to have strong integrity and uphold ethical standards to create a positive learning environment, as they can inspire students and community people to act with integrity. As such, the purpose of this study is to explore the understanding of integrity among public schoolteachers in their workplace and how they practice it. Additionally, it aims to identify any paradoxes that arise when teachers encounter differences between their understanding and their practice of integrity.

This study unveils teachers' integrity based on fieldwork conducted between 2016 and 2018 and additional random visits to the study area in semi-urban and rural parts of the Kavre District. The study used socio-capital and socio-cultural theoretical lenses to comprehend teachers' integrity. I employed the meaning-making process to construct meanings collaboratively with my participants, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences related to what integrity means. I conducted interviews and observations and worked together to develop a shared understanding of the concept of integrity and how it relates to their work.

The study revealed that a teacher's understanding of integrity is a complex and multifaceted concept shaped by individual, cultural, institutional, and social aspects. Acknowledging teachers' diverse perspectives about their integrity was important because it ultimately impacted how they interpret and apply it in their teaching. It was essential to consider institutional context, socio-cultural context, and challenges from changes in the social, economic, and political landscape to understand the practices of teachers' integrity. Teachers in public schools emphasize the five essential values of integrity: time, task, transparency, trust, and teamwork. By emphasizing and prioritizing these values, teachers helped establish an environment where integrity is valued and encouraged in the school. Integrity was understood and practiced differently depending on the setting. The prevailing culture shaped how teachers understand, follow, and prioritize integrity in schools. Teachers with a strong sense of agency were more likely to adapt to the school context, enabling them to generate creative solutions when faced with challenges. Teachers with a strong sense of agency were better at creatively addressing the challenges they encountered. This adaptability benefited both their personal growth and the school's overall environment. The study showed a paradox between legal positivism and being proactive in schools. Maintaining proactive integrity can sometimes break legal positivist principles. Teachers try to find a balance between these two approaches when talking about integrity.

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This thesis entitled *Paradoxes of School Teachers in Practicing Integrity: An Ethnographic Study of Public Schools of Nepal* was presented by Rupa Munakarmi on 25th January 2024.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to two important people in my life. Firstly, to my late father, Shyam Krishna Munakarmi, who was my source of inspiration and guidance when it came to hard work, education, socialization, and honesty. He has been a great influence in my life, and I will always cherish his memories; secondly, to my beloved mother, Krishneswori Munakarmi, who has been a constant source of truthfulness and unconditional support throughout my life. She has always encouraged me to pursue higher education and be a responsible citizen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Enrolling in a PhD program was a dream come true for me; I feel extremely grateful for being given the opportunity to pursue a PhD. During my doctoral research journey, there have been numerous individuals who have directly or indirectly supported and inspired me during various stages of my studies. I am deeply grateful to them for their unwavering encouragement.

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful for the invaluable support and guidance provided by the organizations that have funded my PhD journey, including Martin Chautari (Kathmandu), Kathmandu University School of Education (KUSOED) (Lalitpur), and the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University (Denmark). Their collaborative project, "Locating Public Finance Dynamics in Education in Nepal", which is funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has played a crucial role in my research journey.

I am deeply grateful to my thesis supervisor, Prof. Mahesh Nath Parajuli (PhD), for providing me with technical guidance, continuous follow-up, and unwavering moral support from the very beginning of my research journey to the completion of this thesis. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Dr Pratyoush Onta for his invaluable guidance and support from the start of my journey. This achievement would not have been possible without my supervisors' valuable contributions. I am also thankful for the invaluable technical and intellectual guidance provided by Prakash C. Bhattarai (PhD), which has significantly enriched the content of my research. I am especially appreciative of his prompt reminders during times when I was lagging behind in my work.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Bal Chandra Luitel, the Dean of the School of Education Kathmandu University, for his mentorship and encouragement throughout the completion of my thesis. His support has been invaluable in shaping my academic journey. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Pramod Bhatta and Dr Lok Ranjan Parajuli from Martin Chautari, Dr Karen Valentin from Aarhus University, and Dr Uma Pradhan from the University of Oxford for their mentorship and guidance throughout my doctoral journey. I am also thankful to Prof. Stephen Carney and Prof. Chris Shore for their valuable feedback on my thesis.

Similarly, my sincere thanks also go to the faculty at Kathmandu University School of Education, especially Prof. Mana Prasad Wagley, Prof. Tanka Nath Sharma,

Prof. Laxman Gnawali, Prof. Jai Raj Awasthi, Dr Lava Deo Awasthi, Dr Dhanapati Subedi, Dr Tikaram Poudel, Dr Suresh Gautam, Dr Lina Gurung, and Dr Shesha Kanta Pangi, for their valuable feedback, encouragement, and support throughout my PhD study. Their insights and suggestions have greatly enriched my research and writing.

I am forever grateful to the late Dr Bhola Dahal for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout my PhD journey. I am thankful to Rebat Kumar Dhakal, Anila Jha, Kul Prasad Khanal, Sanjay Hamal, Durga Baral, Debendra Prasad Adhikari, Lal Bahadur Pun, Thakur Prasad Bhatta, and Prakash Kumar Paudel for their continuous support and engagement in the PhD Colloquium. We read and provided feedback on each other's papers and chapters, which helped in refining our research work. Similarly, my gratitude goes to my friends from, Martin Chautari, Devendra Upreti, Shak Bahadur Budhathoki, Sohan Shah, and Rukh Gurung for their support and companionship. I express my appreciation to the administrative, library, and support staff at KUSOED for their outstanding facilitation and management of the necessary resources. Likewise, I thank Dipu, Manila-Sailesh, Eva Lise, Aashika- Rajeshwor, Deepjyoti, Sophie, Josefine, Katja, Camilla, Mikkel, and Sasha from DFC and my friends, Lawrence, Frank from Ghana, Phong and Lee from Vietnam, for their support during my six-month stay in Copenhagen. I express my gratitude to Mr Devaraj Bhandari for his continuous encouragement and support in editing my grammar, which greatly aided me in completing my PhD. I am grateful to all the teachers, parents, and students from the two schools in Kavre who participated in my research. Their input, time, and cooperation were invaluable and made my field stay and study a convenient and memorable.

I am grateful to my siblings (Chandeswori, Nura, Rojee, Roshan, and Roshana) and sister-in-law (Roshana) for their constant support and encouragement throughout my studies. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my fufu, Krishneswori Sainju who has consistently prayed for me and showered me with her blessings. They have always provided me with a conducive study environment by lessening my responsibilities towards household chores. I feel incredibly fortunate to have all of you in my life, as your genuine care and unwavering belief in my abilities have propelled me forward. Thanks are also due to my brothers Suresh, Bijay, Dipak, Bikal, and Prabin and my friends Ramesh Chaulagain, Narendra, Kiran, Reshma, Muna, and Uttam Uprety for always supporting me.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my external reviewers, Prof. David Retinger and Prof. Shree Krishna Shrestha, for their thorough review of my manuscript and for providing invaluable feedback to improve the quality of my dissertation.

I appreciate your unwavering belief in me. Thank you for always standing by my side.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAS	Continuous Assessment System
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CEHRD	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
CIAA	Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority
DEO	District Education Office
DFC	Denmark Fellowship Center
DoE	Department of Education
DPU	Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet
EDCU	Education Development and Coordination Unit
EFA	Education For All
ERO	Education Review Office
GG	Good Governance
GoN	Government of Nepal
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HT	Head Teacher
I/NGOs	International/Non-Government Organizations
ICAI	International Center For Academic Integrity
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
LPP	Liberal Promotion Policy
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLJPA	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NVC	National Vigilance Center
OAG	Office of Auditor General
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPMCM	Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Minister
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association

SEE	Secondary Education Examination
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TI	Transparency International
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WB	World Bank

CHAPTER I

GETTING INTO THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

The concept of integrity is a complex and less precise concept than terms like 'honesty,' 'loyalty,' and 'fairness' (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2005; 2012). It refers to something that has many different qualities and is not just about one specific action or characteristic. For me, it is to behave with others with strong internal guiding principles of being good without any compromise. Integrity in education is an emerging and important concept (Huberts, 2018) because it motivates and morally obliges people to think, act, and behave 'good' and with a 'positive orientation.' It is important in education because a lack of integrity has been recognized as one of the main problems in education (Ertas, 2021). So, it is essential for educational institutions to take measures to promote and uphold the integrity of the teachers.

My position involved taking on dual roles as both a female researcher and a teacher within a public school setting in Nepal. With almost two decades of experience as an educator, I have a deep connection to the world of teaching. This background fueled my curiosity to explore educational issues further. My specific focus was on gaining insights into how teachers perceive and uphold integrity within their professional context and how they manage to maintain it while facing the challenges of their daily work. This dual perspective as both an active teacher and a dedicated researcher allowed me to approach the topic with a blend of firsthand knowledge and academic insight.

Being the eyewitness of day-to-day life, policies, and practices of integrity and corruption in public schools for more than a decade, I am personally and professionally interested and committed to exploring the various socio-cultural practices of integrity and its development, ingredients, and actors of promoting or resisting integrity in the education sector. In order to make our schools a vibrant place for learning and development, they must uphold the values of integrity. In this context, I carried out this research, "Paradoxes of School Teachers in Practicing Integrity." Since the lack of integrity in the public sector is challenging and is even worse in education (Transparency International, 2015), I want to explore teachers' understanding and practices on integrity in the public schools of Nepal. My argument

is that teachers' understanding of integrity is multifaceted, and there are differences in teachers' understanding and practices. The understanding of their integrity is not only based on themselves but also influenced and supported by societal, political, and cultural values. The differences in understanding and practices can create a paradoxical situation, and teachers do not get clear solutions and better understanding. Paradoxes are widespread and exist in various aspects of life (Koirala, 2003; Raghunathan, 2010). Paradox means to be in a contradictory situation, and it occurs when someone is unsure about which way to go or when they have conflicting thoughts or actions (Parajuli et al., 2012). It's like being stuck in a puzzling situation where they don't know what to do. Hence, through my research, I explore the understanding and practices of integrity and the paradoxical situation they face. I employed an ethnographic research approach from a socio-cultural perspective.

Integrity: Embracing Compliance and Proactive Principles

Integrity has been a social phenomenon since human civilization. The term 'integrity' came from the Latin word 'intigritas' means to be in the state of wholeness (Cox et al., 2014), and wholeness is regarded as a fundamental and central notion of integrity (Kaptein, 2018). In a simple form, according to OECD (2005; 2012), integrity is less straightforward and unclear than terms like 'honesty,' 'loyalty,' and 'fairness.' Some individuals can perceive integrity as the characteristics of possessing honesty and truthfulness in relation to the underlying motives behind one's actions (Federation of European Accountants [FEE], 2009). Aulich (2011) explains that the concept of integrity can also be viewed as a combination of various elements such as institutions, laws, regulations, codes, policies, and procedures. Together, they provide a framework of checks and balances to identify and address inappropriate behaviour, which includes corruption. Hence, different people have varying definitions and understandings of the term integrity (Duggar, 2009), and it also differs based on circumstances and different contexts (Panday, 2018). However, the definition of integrity can be limited to how one looks and practice it at individual and institutional levels.

Furthermore, Carter (1996 as cited in Ssonko, 2010) proposes that integrity requires three steps: firstly, identifying and distinguishing what is right and what is wrong; secondly, acting on this distinction even if it comes at a personal cost; and thirdly, openly acknowledging that one is acting on their understanding of right and wrong in order to achieve integrity. This suggests that integrity is not just about

recognizing what is right or wrong but also about taking actions based on that knowledge and being transparent about one's choices and decisions. This shows that integrity is identified by one's moral conscientiousness, moral accountability, moral commitment, and moral coherence (Audi & Murphy, 2006), and incorruptibility, honesty, impartiality, and accountability (Dobel, 2016). So, once the moral issues are brought into the picture, it is evaluated whether you act with integrity or not. Integrity, hence, is an important notion and has gained more importance in practice (Huberts, 2018) since people demand honesty and work with integrity in the workplace.

Transparency International [TI] (2012) believes integrity is fundamental in combating corruption, while different organizations, such as Global Integrity and Integrity Action, Transparency International's National Integrity System assessments, and the OECD's Public Sector Integrity Reviews, take the term integrity as the opposite of corruption (Heywood, 2018) and also defined as the act of adhering to widely accepted values and norms in everyday actions and decisions (Maesschalck & Bertók, 2009). The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2021) defines integrity with six key principles: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. This not only reflects our personal commitment to ethical conduct but also helps to maintain the trust and confidence of others in us. Regarding the term corruption in defining integrity, Integrity Action states that corruption control is just one of the elements. For example, Integrity Action (2015) notes that integrity is composed of four elements: accountability, competence, ethical behaviour, and corruption control. Consequently, it is necessary to have alignment with these four elements into one for integrity.

Hence, integrity is an important concept that goes beyond just following rules. It includes different viewpoints, such as being compliant and proactive. Some believe integrity is crucial to fighting corruption while emphasizing the importance of honesty, accountability, competence, ethics, and controlling corruption. Kautilya also believed that acting properly with good behaviour is more important than just having good qualities (Basu & Miroshnik, 2021). Looking beyond compliance, integrity involves taking proactive steps to ensure ethical behaviour and good governance. Hence, integrity forms the foundation for good governance by preventing corruption and encouraging proactive actions that uphold integrity.

In fundamental nature, integrity carries multiple meanings across different fields, but there is a fundamental commonality when talking about the base meaning

of integrity. The essence of integrity, regardless of the context, is rooted in the concept of wholeness, honesty, and adherence to principles. However, the practicalities of integrity can manifest differently in various fields due to each domain's unique demands and expectations.

The subsequent section delves into the rationale for conducting a study to understand the understanding of integrity, policy implementation, and practical realities within Nepalese public schools.

Rationale of the Study

I am interested in carrying out research on this topic as I found a huge gap between policies and practices in schools while conducting my MPhil research in Nepal's public schools. The question of integrity to a school or its teacher is a matter of ethical concern to the whole institution. When there is integrity among the school's stakeholders towards their duties and responsibilities, there is improved access to quality education and good management of staff and resources, which helps combat corruption (OECD, 2012). This suggests that the educational stakeholders must understand and be aware of their responsibilities and handle the situation honestly and fairly (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019) to create a positive learning environment. This fosters a person's integrity and helps run the school smoothly by providing quality education. And in the education sector, integrity is understood differently. Hence, this indicates that there is a need to explore the development of integrity and its relevant policies and practices in school.

Unless and until the education providers (especially teachers) show their integrity in the education process, one cannot expect any good results from them. Transparency International Nepal (2012) has also claimed that integrity is one of the elements to prosecute and detect corruption; it helps the educational stakeholders enhance the capacity for corruption detection with the resonance management of staff and resources. Teachers are central to socializing children for good conduct that promotes integrity and fights against corruption.

Moreover, being a public schoolteacher for over a decade, I have seen, exposed, and heard a few teachers and head teachers (HT) with school management committee's (SMC) support claiming the funds for textbooks and scholarships more than the total number of students from District Education Office (now as Education Development and Coordination Unit, EDCU). Not having regular dialogue and meetings among teachers on new provisions, curriculum, circulars, and budgets of

schools, teachers feel sidelined, discriminated against, and ill-informed. I have experienced discrimination for leave approval, routine allocation, and selection to attend TPD training. This has led to backbiting and frustration among teachers against HT and SMC chairs. I have also heard complaints about nepotism and favouritism of HT and SMC in teacher recruitment and promotion too. Such activities are performed in order to strengthen the school fund and also on the personal level. Therefore, there is a need to study the teachers' understanding and practices of integrity in their day-to-day school context.

Similarly, teachers who are close to SMC members and HT are involved in using school funds in their interest rather than on the need of the institution (World Bank [WB], 2014). This has led to the misuse of funds and more irregularities in schools (OAG, 2015), which raise questions about the integrity of teachers, HTs and SMC members. Therefore, there is a need to generate new knowledge on making schools more responsive and accountable to children and their learning by better utilising school resources for their intended purpose. It is not easy to protect the profession's integrity and have a life full of integrity. All try to live a life with integrity though there come different dilemmas which challenge us to make it hard to distinguish between right and wrong. So, it is necessary to observe the wider context of integrity in relation to teachers' performance. A particular understanding of certain things and practices differ from their understanding of colleagues, or administrators; this can raise unfavourable and uncomplimentary effects on the overall teaching-learning environment. Hence, this study can help identify disagreements and differences between teachers' understanding and their actual practice.

This research work adds research knowledge to the related researchers who are researching in the integrity and ethics field. In essence, this research could be significant to all teachers, stakeholders of the school, policymakers, school administrators, and those who are working in the education field. Specifically, this research could benefit the teachers who nurture for a rise in integrity among themselves and their students. It can affect their day-to-day teaching practice and content delivery as well. While researching, teachers' understanding and practices of integrity can help policymakers understand the characteristics and behaviours of teachers. They can help them to develop strategies for supporting teacher and their professional development. It can also conduct programs or training for teachers that help in developing a shared understanding of integrity. This study can further provide

recommendations for improving teachers' integrity and increasing their effectiveness in the classroom. This research in particular, can help communicate integrity to teachers using language and cultural competence that connect to teachers' understanding of the situation. By connecting to teachers through their own perspectives and experiences, the aim is to make communication about integrity more clear and relatable in their context.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' integrity has become a significant global issue, especially with the increasing focus on education and the allocation of public funds (Huberts, 2018). In Nepal's public education system, the integrity of teachers plays a vital role in creating a positive learning environment and shaping the school's reputation. Currently, there is a lot of discussion about value-based education in our society (Pokhrel et al., 2023). Many incidents have come to light questioning the integrity of teachers and are often in the news. Teachers are reported to be absent during class time, not fulfilling their responsibilities during school hours, not present at the school during scheduled hours, and misusing funds meant for teaching materials (National Vigilance Center, 2017). Teachers are often blamed for the presence of 'ghost schools', substitute teachers, teachers using fake certificates, and misusing textbooks and scholarship money (CIAA, 2015; Kirya, 2019). This issue is getting a lot of attention as it is taken as a significant problem.

Is it due to the power-centric culture of teachers and SMCs who do not prioritize education? Is this due to the poor governance and management system in the school? or is this due to being dishonest towards one's duty and responsibility? There can be several reasons behind the above-raised concerns. However, one of the main issues in education is the lack of integrity (Ertas, 2021), and different studies and media reports in Nepal have also shown a decline in teachers' integrity (Mathema & Bista, 2006; the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, 2015; Wagley & Regmi, 2015).

Teachers play a significant role in providing quality education. I observed and believed that a lack of integrity towards duty could obstruct getting quality teachers for better education and school performance. The quality of education provided to students cannot be better than the quality and dedication of their teachers (VSO, 2006; World Bank, 2012; National Institute for Research and Training [NIRT], 2016). Without good teachers, the quality of education suffers, and students may not reach

their full potential. In discussions concerning teachers' integrity, it is questioned in the news and media (Baral, 2013; Joshi, 2022). This raises important concerns about the role of teacher integrity in impacting students' education. Thus, there is a need to explore teachers' understanding and practice of integrity in school so that socio-cultural practices of school inculcate integrity among students.

Regarding integrity and building honesty in the education system, the different understanding among the different actors and agencies on integrity has weakened the integrity actions (NORAD, 2015). I think it is due to poor communication, collaboration, and coordination among themselves. This has also led to a rise in paradoxes among them. The study conducted in Nepal public schools identified paradoxes involving discrepancies between what is said and practiced and confusion about the direction, with the need for effective solutions to address these complex paradoxes (Parajuli et al., 2012; Raghunathan, 2010). This leads me to wonder what types of activities are termed as honest behaviour and how school stakeholders understand integrity in school. Also, I am curious about what kind of challenges and paradoxes teachers are facing in their roles. Many teachers are in the movement of 'if teachers want, they can,' but still, several questions are raised against some teachers. Are teachers internalizing the integrity of their profession? What are the challenges they face to maintain integrity in such activities? Little empirical research and study focus on school-level integrity to address these issues. So, a detailed ethnographic study examining the socio-cultural roots of integrity is needed to explore the existing understanding and paradox of integrity in public schools.

Purpose of the Study

This ethnographic study aims to explore the understanding of the public schoolteacher's integrity in school and how they practice it. This study also explores the paradoxes related to integrity that they experience.

Research Questions

I have set the following research questions to achieve the purpose of my study:

- a. How do teachers understand and practice integrity in their everyday school context?
- b. How do the ideas of integrity emerge in teachers?
- c. How have their understanding and practicing of integrity resulted in paradoxes?

Significance of the Study

This research work is a study of understanding and practices of teachers' integrity in public schools from the selected schools in the Kavre district. Integrity is essential in every field (Rahim et al., 2020), and it becomes important in education as teachers are the ones who teach the future of any other area. This study can help teachers understand their role and how they can practice making cordial relations with their students, colleagues, and community. On the other hand, school administration can access teachers' integrity perception and practices from which they can get insight into what teachers want and are facing in the given situation. Such understanding can help school administrators to create a positive and friendly environment that supports teachers' performance (Ford et al., 2019), which ultimately helps in students' success. This research can potentially reduce the conflicting pressures faced by teachers.

Further, this study can recognize different aspects contributing to understanding and practicing teachers' integrity. Doing this can help identify what affects their teaching and how to improve the teaching-learning. The significance of this study lies in its potential to develop theories and frameworks to understand the complex relationships between teachers' personal characteristics, beliefs, school culture, classroom dynamics, and student achievements in terms of integrity. As this research talks about teachers' integrity, it can help raise awareness about the importance of teachers' integrity, not only for individual teachers but also for promoting integrity within the larger school and community settings. By recognizing the importance of integrity in the teaching profession and its role in creating a culture of integrity in school, teachers can become more aware of their responsibilities in upholding ethical behaviour. This awareness can further contribute to the development of a positive school culture that emphasizes the values of integrity.

Moreover, this study also highlights the paradoxes arising from differences in their understanding and practices of teachers' integrity. When there is a particular understanding of a certain thing and the practices, differ from their understanding, colleagues or administrators can raise unfavourable and uncomplimentary effects on the overall teaching-learning environment. Hence, this study can help identify disagreements and differences between teachers' understanding and practice.

This research work adds research knowledge to the related researchers who are researching in the integrity and ethics field. In essence, this research could be significant to all teachers, stakeholders of the school, policymakers, school

administrators, and those working in the education field. Specifically, this research could benefit the teachers who nurture for a rise in integrity among themselves and their students. It can affect their day-to-day teaching practice and content delivery as well. While researching teachers' understanding and practices of integrity can help the policymakers understand the characteristics and behaviours of teachers and help them develop strategies for supporting teacher and their professional development. It can also conduct programs or training for teachers that help in developing a shared understanding of integrity. This study can further provide recommendations for improving teachers' integrity and increasing their effectiveness in the classroom.

Delimitations of My Study

My study is ethnographic research on the integrity of teachers at public schools in Nepal. In this study, the terms "integrity" and "professional integrity" have been employed interchangeably, with the concept of the profession being confined to the "teaching profession" alone, thereby limiting its broader applicability. Another delimitation of this ethnographic study is that it solely focuses on the concept of integrity within the context of teachers, which means that other potential aspects of integrity in the educational environment are not included. For example, this study doesn't delve into how students exhibit integrity in their interactions with peers, teachers, and assignments. Further, I focused solely on examining teachers' integrity through the lenses of socio-cultural and socio-capital perspectives.

Organization of My Chapters

The organization of my thesis comprises a total of eight chapters.

My first chapter brings background information about the term integrity in regard to its meaning relating to public school education. I have also mentioned my identity, experiences, and concerns regarding the research topic with few existing policies on teachers' integrity. I then discuss the purpose, objectives, significance, and delimitation of the study, followed by the organization of the chapters.

In the second chapter, I present a comprehensive review and analysis of articles and literature related to integrity, teachers' integrity, and school education. The review includes various aspects, including integrity in school as a most needed phenomenon, integrity in school as a burning challenge, integrity of a teacher, a theoretical review, and research gaps in the field.

My third chapter outlines the methodological part of my study, where I explore and provide details on the research paradigm, research design, and study area,

as well as the methods employed for gathering and analysing the data. I also present my research sites with a brief introduction and introduce my research participants. I sketched how I entered my research field, how I collected my information, and what complexities I faced. I also explained the lesson learned that I faced doing ethnographic research. Finally, I describe my study's quality standards and ethical issues while researching the participants in the research site.

I provide the empirical information in chapters four, five, and six. In the fourth chapter, I present the public school teachers' understanding of integrity and how they practice it. Similarly, in the fifth chapter, I illustrated what contributes to their understanding and how and why teachers choose the teaching profession. In this chapter, I explore why they choose to become teachers and how they approach their profession. And then, I present how the public-school teachers are experiencing changes in their understanding and practice of integrity in the sixth chapter. Here, I also discuss the paradoxes arising from differences in their understanding and practices of teachers' integrity.

After presenting the empirical information, I then picked out the actual findings of the study in my seventh chapter, which was followed by a discussion. With this, I concluded my research work in my eighth chapter. I also present implications after concluding my research finding.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I have reviewed various research studies, reports, journal articles, and dissertation/thesis around my research topic, "integrity in school." During my journey, I came across many facts and information about integrity in different sectors, including education. The literature I went through taught me more about my research topic and gave me an idea to select appropriate theoretical lenses and methodologies. Moreover, the literature gave me insights into what was done and where are gaps to explore on integrity. Hence, I have arranged the literature review in various subtitles as follows:

Understanding Integrity: Perspectives on It

Integrity in education is an emerging and burning phenomenon worldwide (Huberts, 2018) due to state obligation to rights to education and the increasing allocation of public funding. Integrity is a social phenomenon since human civilization has different meanings in different societies and cultures. Integrity is a multifaceted quality that incorporates several characteristics, including but not limited to honesty, morality, and ethical behaviour. According to FEE (2009), integrity is commonly defined as being honest and truthful about one's motive for their actions, i.e., being honest and truthful about why you do what you do. This statement by FEE shows that a person with integrity is not only having integrity in their words but also in action. Such a person is committed to acting according to their values and beliefs and feels responsible for doing so, even in difficult and challenging circumstances and when there is no one around to observe their actions.

Having integrity is important as it helps individuals to build and maintain a positive reputation and to earn the trust and confidence of others in personal and professional relationships (Udomkit et al., 2020). From a socio-cultural perspective, integrity is seen as a reflection of the values and norms of a particular community or society, and individuals are expected to uphold these values in their daily lives in order to maintain social harmony and earn the trust and respect of others. An ancient philosopher, Kautilya believed that having good morals and behaviour in society is important for keeping peace and following rules (Basu & Miroshnik, 2021). This

means that when people act with integrity, society stays calm, and the rules are respected.

Integrity is a crucial concept essential to comprehend the principles of governance (Huberts, 2018). Effective governance in countries, organizations, or any social setting becomes difficult without integrity. Integrity means being honest to oneself and fulfilling duties as a trusted leader and member of various social groups, including the community, profession, organization, society, or family (Panday, 2018). Some defined integrity as a combination of various institutions, regulations, laws, codes, policies, and procedures that function as a system of checks and balances to detect and address unethical behaviours, including corruption (Aulich, 2011). Banks talks about two different meanings of integrity based on philosophy and how people use the word today in work and public service. The first one is about doing things that follow common rules, and the second is about staying true to your important values even when things are tough (Banks, 2010). Somewhere, it is extended to moral conduct and refers to integrity as a characteristic or trait that is inherent in a person's nature or personality (Cox et al., 2021). Integrity is connected to behavioural and action-oriented aspects, grounded in a framework of moral principles that involve accountability, competence, ethical conduct, and measures to combat corruption (Integrity Action, 2015). This shows that integrity is defined differently by different scholars and organisations.

Hence, integrity goes beyond mere compliance and encompasses a proactive approach (Integrity Action, 2015). From one school of thought, integrity involves holding oneself accountable, demonstrating competence, adhering to ethical principles, and implementing measures to control corruption. This perspective emphasizes the importance of maintaining integrity through compliance, i.e. following the laws and norms (Huberts et al., 2022). And a study also confirms that when individuals comply with rules and regulations, it helps foster integrity among them while delivering public services (Khanal et al., 2022). However, on the other hand, another school of thought perceives integrity as honest behaviour that extends beyond merely following rules. It emphasizes the proactive aspect of integrity, where individuals take the initiative to act in an honest and principled manner, even when not explicitly required by regulations. This proactive approach involves going beyond compliance and actively seeking to do what is right. Therefore, integrity is not limited to compliance alone but also encompasses being proactive (Panday, 2018; Integrity

Action, 2015). It involves taking responsibility, upholding ethical standards, and actively striving for honesty and accountability, thereby fostering effective governance and combating corruption in various contexts.

It is readily accepted that every sector needs to maintain integrity, and especially in school (Rahim et al., 2020), integrity should be taught to both the teachers and students (Astore, 2009). But the problem I see here is the lack of understanding of integrity. There are many questions that are yet to be resolved. Does integrity in a particular context have the same nature and extent as in the global context? Is it necessary to identify the required socio-cultural context? Does integrity at every local level has a distinct character?

The literature shows that there is no universal meaning of teachers' integrity, and many scholars who studied in this area also claim that there is no elaborated definition of integrity (Cox et al., 2017; Dodd & Dodd, 2014; Panday, 2018). Each individual understands and explains it differently, and it can also vary depending on the circumstances and context in which the individual is in (Regmee, & Bhattarai, 2012). So, while studying integrity in school, I focused this research on teachers' integrity as it is necessary to understand what integrity is for the teachers and how they understand and practice it in their teaching profession.

Echoes in Integrity Policies: Continuity of Good Conduct

In Nepal, integrity has a broader meaning in practice. The Nepali word 'sadachar' has been etymologically constructed with two words 'sat' and 'aachar', which means good behaviour or conduct. Thus, in Nepali society and culture, integrity consists of wider behavioural aspects which are not yet explicitly addressed by the education act.

The integrity in Nepal was rooted in religious and ethical grounds. This was accepted by political leaders and administrators and had set a code of conduct for different professionals long before establishing an anti-corruption agency at a central level. Nepal brought a new Corruption Prevention Act in 2002 and also the first National Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2008 as a priority of the country to curb corruption with the promotion of 'proper conduct.' The Rights to Information (RTI) Act of 2007 and the Good Governance (GG) Act of 2008 give a platform for the public to make government authorities more responsive, transparent, and accountable and to reduce corruption (Dahal, 2014). The Ministry of Law, Justice, Constituent Assembly and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJCAPA) in 2015 introduced a new

constitution that guaranteed citizens' rights, which has been considered a step towards ensuring good governance from the state.

The Government of Nepal has developed a national integrity policy that aims to establish ethical codes for public, private, and civil society sectors. However, the draft policy still needs to be adopted, raising concerns about its implementation and effectiveness (Dhungana et al., 2018). The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (2015) further developed the national strategy and the Good Governance Act by creating an agency-wise Action Plan in 2010 and 2015. As a state party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the government implemented the second National Anti-corruption Strategy in 2011, as reported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) in 2015. This shows that Nepal has implemented a multi-faceted approach involving multiple agencies to combat corruption and promote integrity, including developing various laws and establishing anti-corruption agencies (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, 2015). These efforts demonstrate Nepal's commitment to promoting integrity and fighting corruption.

In the Education Act and Education Rules and Regulations, the term "integrity" is not explicitly stated. Instead, it is implied through the teachers' code of conduct and the duties and responsibilities assigned to teachers. Teachers are expected to maintain integrity by adhering to these documents' ethical standards and professional conduct. The Education Act 1971 and its amendments mention that teachers should conduct themselves with integrity. However, the crucial point to note is that the word "integrity" is used in the act without clear instructions on how to put it into practice. This lack of clear guidance is worrisome because it can be understood in different ways, and when there are problems related to integrity, people might not know what to do. This could result in not taking the right actions when needed. Similarly, the Education Act gives the school management committee the power to maintain integrity and take action against wrongdoers shown in audit reports (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010; His Majesty's Government of Nepal, 2002). However this has not been functionalized until today, as several studies show that neither teachers nor the management committee members can make the teaching profession determined in the Nepali context because of the increased corruption, nepotism, favouritism, and politics in education (Wagley & Regmi, 2015; Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority, 2015; and National Vigilance

Center ([NVC], 2017). Therefore, there is a public perception that no official work can be done easily without bribery (Regmee & Bhattarai, 2014). Bribery remains a top potential threat to good governance in many countries (Graycar, 2015). And the education sector is not far from this kind of perception (WB, 2014; Bhattarai & Gupta, 2023) as the Ministry of Education has high irregularities each year among ministries (Office of Auditor General [OAG], 2015) and more corruption cases recorded (Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority [CIAA], 2016). Integrity violation takes place because of educational corruption, such as misconduct and mishandling of the school fund (Ertas, 2021). When such practices occur, they can weaken the integrity of the education system, which can result in the poor academic achievement of the students.

Regarding the education system in Nepal, the Ministry of Education, which operates across 7 provinces, is responsible for overseeing Nepal's entire education system, encompassing aspects from curriculum development to school establishment. The education system in Nepal comprises three types of schools: public schools, private schools, and religious schools (MoEST, 2021). Public schools, often referred to as community schools, receive government support and employ four categories of teachers: permanent, temporary, relief, and privately funded teachers. As of the latest Flash Report I in the 2021-2022 academic year, Nepal has a total of 34,816 schools. Roughly 80% of these are community schools funded by the government, while the remaining 20% fall into the category of institutional schools (CEHRD, 2022). Regarding the teaching workforce, Nepal employs 127,896 teachers for grades 1 to 8, 19,520 for grades 9 to 10, and 5,859 for grades 11 to 12.

Nepal's education system includes at least one year of pre-primary education, eight years of primary education (grades 1-8), and four years of secondary education (grades 9-12). The constitution of Nepal mandates the provision of free and compulsory primary education, along with free secondary education. Public schools typically have school management committees and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) responsible for overseeing school infrastructure and maintaining educational quality. The School Management Committee (SMC) plays a pivotal role as the primary governing and administrative body at the local or school level within the education system (Nepal Economic Forum, 2020). Established by the 7th amendment (2001) of the Education Act 1971, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) is a school-level governing body that brings together teachers and parents from the local

community. The primary objective of the PTA is to monitor and evaluate student performance and attendance, ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. This collaborative structure and the roles of various stakeholders collectively contribute to the operation of Nepal's education system.

When we talk about the concept of integrity in education, it is connected to various issues that impact the ability of the education system as a whole to function effectively. It means doing things honestly and fairly at educational institutions to provide students with the best learning experience. According to the OECD (2012), no integrity in education can affect many things, like fair access to education, quality of education, proper management of resources and staff, and prevention of corruption in schools. And when there is a problem in working with integrity in schools, it can harm societies and increase education costs, making it difficult for everyone to have an equal opportunity to learn. This shows that promoting integrity in education is essential to ensure every student has access to a fair and effective learning environment.

Integrity in School: A Mostly Discussed Phenomenon

School is a social institution where maintaining integrity is most, as the school has direct influence by the social-cultural values, norms and beliefs of the society (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). Integrity is a key aspect of the education system, and it refers to the ethical principles and values that guide the behaviour of educators in schools. It involves being honest, transparent, and accountable in all professional interactions and upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct. Integrity in school is also essential for social advancement (Shaw, 2005), as integrity is fundamental for building strong relationships and achieving success in professional settings. It also promotes fairness, impartiality, and the responsible use of power and authority.

Integrity in school is essential for academic success and personal growth, as it ensures that teachers and students conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with ethical principles and values. Having integrity in schools means having an existence of moral values, rules and norms that aim to avoid corruption in education as it was announced in the World Education Forum (2000) that one of the major components of the effective use of educational resources is anti-corruption measures in order to get quality education. It is also true that when there is a lack of integrity within the educational sector, then it is obvious and more chances not to be able to achieve one of the main purposes of education, i.e., to produce democratic citizens

(UNESCO, 2014). This suggests that integrity is a fundamental element that must be present in the educational system to ensure the achievement of this objective.

A school is a place where students learn to respect laws and human rights and behave well. Schools are seen as institutions that are responsible for instilling ethical values and norms in students. Dahal (2014) argues that school education should teach the 4Rs (Rights, Responsibilities, Rule of the game, and Roles of the individual within the political, economic, and socio-cultural system of the society) from traditional 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic). Here the 4Rs emphasise the importance of teaching students about the societal norms and expectations that shape their behaviours and actions. Eventually, schools play an important role in promoting integrity and creating an environment that fosters ethical behaviour and responsible citizenship. So, in the context of schools where students learn and follow the rules and regulations, policies, and laws and behave positively, teachers are taken as their role models who guide and support children in their overall development (Weinberg, 2019; Martino, 2009). Teachers are responsible for producing a safe and supportive learning environment and also for spreading positive learning culture that ultimately promotes respect and responsible behaviour towards each other (Arthur et al., 2015). The teacher is a facilitator and helps students achieve their potential by providing the necessary guidance and support to facilitate learning and growth (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). Therefore, if corruption and dishonesty occur among the teachers themselves, how can the purpose of producing democratic citizens be fulfilled? So, to maintain integrity in society, an educational institution is mainly required to address this phenomenon. An important aspect of this process is making sure that those who break the rules face the consequences, which helps support the integrity of those who follow the rules. This is an important responsibility for teachers, school leaders, and political leaders.

Integrity in Education: A Burning Challenge in Nepali Society

With the national and international commitment to the right to education, Nepal reiterated the right to education as a fundamental right in the new Constitution of 2015 (MoLJPA, 2015). According to the constitution, every citizen has the right to access education, and the Nepal government is responsible for ensuring that education is available, affordable, and accessible to all. When we talk about the budget flow in education, it has about a 10 to 11 percent share of the national budget in the last five years (MoE, 2021; Unicef, 2021), which emphasizes access to quality education for

all as the fundamental right of each individual (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs (MoLJPA), 2015). Underneath the new federal structure, the Nepal government has given the responsibility to the 753 local governments for delivering public education. The federal government empowers local governments to deliver that service productively and competently (Nepal Education Sector Analysis, 2021). However, several reports showed that local governments are yet to be prepared to administer schools properly, as the mid-term review of the school sector development plan suggested that local governments were more connected with hard components and less with soft components like pedagogy.

Similarly, a study conducted by U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre [U4] (2006) revealed that widespread corruption affects societal, educational, political, and economic institutions negatively. The major issues which raise questions on integrity and are reported primarily on the news in the education sector consist of 'Jhole Bidhyalaye' (ghost school), 'Khetala Shikshyak' (Substitute Teachers), teachers' fake certificates, misuse of textbooks and scholarship money etc. (CIAA, 2015; Kirya, 2019). There is an increasing trend of misusing scholarship and textbook funds in schools as these funds are allocated based on the number of students (GFA Consulting Group, 2015). In our Eastern culture, it is said, '*Paisa bhanepachhi mahadev ko tin netra*', meaning when it is about money, God also open his third eye, so there arise many questions on the loyalty and integrity of teachers as well as of school stakeholders. This shows that education is prone to corruption, and one of the main reasons is the resources are allocated through multifaceted administrative layers, which need to be more effectively monitored from the central government to schools (TI, 2013). TI (2013) reports that corruption risks are prominent by the high chances of educational opportunity due to the poor integrity system in education and the large sums that are allocated to fund it. When the quota system gives funds but not as per the actual need of the school, it provides room to work against the education policies and school rules and regulations. So, in order to regulate schools and ensure their effective management, the government plays an important role in providing rules, regulations, and guidelines (Baruth, 2013). One can regulate schools with a clear and thorough understanding of policies and school-based management (Khanal et al., 2022). However, it is essential to raise awareness among teachers in Nepal about their duties and obligations despite the government's efforts to provide guidelines and policies (WB, 2012). Such lack of awareness can lead to poor school governance and

decreased integrity. TI (2013) notes that a school-based management system improves school governance, reduces corruption, and increases integrity through three main elements: 1) promoting active and effective participation of parents and communities; 2) utilising the potential of parents and communities to enhance schools; and 3) facilitating the accountability of all involved parties through interactions between the school and local government, thereby promoting effectiveness in school management. So, the research shows a need for a clear understanding of guidelines and policies provided by the government to regulate schools effectively and increase integrity.

Similarly, a study conducted in Honduras also found that the people in power and connected with political parties transfer DEO and HT who are not in their favour and do corruption (Sangroula, 2021; Fontana, 2008). Likewise, in Nepal, teachers were found persecuted by unfair evaluations, which lessened their motivation and promotion, and then this led to a worsening in the quality of teaching (GoN, 2012; TI, 2013). This widespread corruption in school socializes children negatively to be less accountable and responsive.

The prevalence of corruption and unfair practices in the education system is a significant challenge to maintaining integrity in schools (Ertas, 2021). Corrupt practices in schools create a culture of mistrust (Nunkoo et al., 2018) which ultimately affects the quality of education. These corrupt practices undermine the integrity of the education system and socialise teachers and children to be less accountable and responsive. It becomes difficult for them to uphold ethical values. Hence, the need for more awareness and understanding of roles and responsibilities among teachers and school stakeholders, the prevalence of corruption and unfair practices, and not understanding and implementing educational policies are significant challenges to maintaining integrity in schools. There is a need to address these challenges, which can be possible by providing clear guidelines and policies (Hope, 2009; Jeppesen, 2019), increasing awareness and accountability, and promoting a culture of transparency and ethical behaviour in schools (Chapman & Lindner, 2016) for performing with integrity. In this context, my study aims to explore paradoxes of integrity that influence teachers' performance under the socio-cultural practices in public schools.

Integrity of a Teacher: A Seed for Citizens with Integrity

Promoting integrity at the classroom level is a serious issue as it is directly connected with students and their upbringing. It influences the students as they get

quality inputs from teachers for better learning. In Eastern philosophy, the concept of Triguna (comprises sattva, rajas, and tamas gunas) provides valuable insights into defining teachers and their integrity. Sattvic teachers, with knowledge and happiness, embody strong integrity by prioritizing students' well-being and demonstrating ethical conduct in their actions; rajasic teachers balance ambition with ethical responsibility while guiding students' growth; tamasic teachers demonstrate integrity by recognizing challenges and actively seeking improvement to fulfill their duties effectively (Dhulla, 2014). From the perspective of triguna theory, an ideal teacher should embody sattva qualities, prioritizing students' well-being, demonstrating ethical conduct, striking a balance between ambition and ethical responsibility, and acknowledging challenges while actively seeking improvement in fulfilling their duties effectively.

Furthermore, for students, teachers are role models (Weinberg, 2019; Martino, 2009) and more authoritative than their parents. When teachers are with high integrity in school, children are socialised accordingly. The teaching profession is indeed considered to be one of the occupations that have a high level of ethical responsibility (Clark, 2004), and teachers are responsible for shaping the lives and futures of their students and other human beings (Coeckelbergh, 2020; Arthur et al., 2015). So, teachers' activities, like how they teach and make decisions in the given circumstances, impact the well-being and success of the students they teach.

In the teaching profession, integrity is the essential characteristic that each and every teacher must have. When teachers have to work compromising their integrity for any reason, teachers feel discouraged from working as teachers (Kelchtermans et al., 2009). When teachers feel discouraged from working as a teacher due to compromised integrity, it can have several negative consequences for themselves, their students, and the education system as a whole, so it is essential for teachers to have certain quality standards in teaching, i.e., responsibility, authority and discipline (Anuar, 2017). However, there are some incidents when the students who pay a bribe as a gift to get better grades and recognition from the teachers affect their moral values (Sevcenco, 2008) and later weaken the democratic norms, values and system of the society. As stated by Graycar (2015), this is because the act of bribery not only violates the principles of integrity but also poses a risk to maintaining integrity. It is important to eradicate such wrongdoings, especially in educational institutions, to preserve and strengthen integrity. I have witnessed a few teachers helping students cheat in exams and get scholarships, which allow a less deserving student to perform

better than a more deserving one. So, such behaviour of teachers for/against students in school shows manipulation of talented students (Shaw, 2005) and teaches students to do such activities in their day-to-day life. Teachers are considered ideal by many students, and when they learn to do such activities, the school can produce corrupt citizens for the nation.

Similarly, when teachers are absent for long periods and use *Khetala Sikshyak* (*Khetala* teacher, "*khetala*" here is when a government-appointed teacher gets someone unqualified and unemployed to work in their place at a public school) to cover their classes (Parajuli & Das, 2013). It can negatively impact students' understanding of integrity, ultimately affecting their overall academic growth. It hinders their learning and socialisation, and such activity becomes an obstacle to getting a high standard of basic education (Hallak & Poisson, 2002), and this further raises a question mark on the integrity of teachers towards their job on children's learning and socialization. As mentioned above, when teachers conduct cheating, lying or favouritism, students may perceive such behaviour as acceptable and emulate it, too, as they follow what teachers do (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). Consequently, when teachers demonstrate integrity and ethical behaviour in their actions, they can positively impact their students and guide them in developing moral and ethical values that align with cultural norms. The way teachers perform with integrity can either reinforce or challenge cultural norms and values, which can shape students' understanding of what is considered ethical and acceptable behaviour. So, the integrity of a teacher is an essential aspect that can significantly impact students' understanding of integrity.

A teacher with integrity is crucial to the development of citizens with integrity. Teachers help in promoting integrity in students' life as students follow and learn from their teachers as they are considered role models (Martino, 2009). Teachers encourage students to become actively involved in the learning process, take responsibility for their education, inspire them to strive for excellence and provide a safe and supportive learning environment that fosters mutual respect, trust, and responsibility. In a teaching-learning process, teachers and students do activities in educational settings to achieve goals through mutual relationships (Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). So, teachers' behaviour and actions profoundly impact the development of the school's ethical values and principles.

The integrity of a teacher means the demonstration of honesty, fairness, and ethical values in their day-to-day life and their teaching and learning. The students further follow this, and when they follow it, it is more likely to develop similar values and behaviours. Fenstermacher (2001) also opines that teachers are accountable for promoting their students' ethical and intellectual development, and teachers need to demonstrate the moral and ethical traits they want for their students. Hence, when teachers act with integrity, it creates a positive learning environment by building trust and respect among each other. As a result, this helps foster a culture of trust, positive attitudes, and ethical values among all school community members (Anuar, 2017). And such a positive work environment is essential for teachers to perform well in their duties as well (Budhathoki, 2021). Teachers must perform with integrity in their activities. Through their action, they can serve as seeds of integrity, promoting the growth of this critical value in their students and beyond.

Paradoxes of Integrity

Integrity is commonly associated with honesty, moral uprightness, and adherence to ethical principles (Maesschalck & Bertók, 2009; Dobel, 2016). It implies consistency between one's actions and values, maintaining a high standard of professionalism, and acting in the best interest of students' education and well-being. However, when we delve deeper into the role of a teacher, the concept of a paradox arises when discussing teachers' integrity. Paradox, in simple terms, refers to a seemingly contradictory situation or statement that, upon closer examination, reveals complexities. Paradoxes are situations where someone is unsure which direction to take or when they have contradictory thoughts or actions (Raghunathan, 2010; Parajuli et al., 2012). In this study, a paradox refers to a situation where the values of integrity that my research participants have expressed clash with certain challenges that they commonly face in their professional roles, which can bring internal struggle in teachers. These conflicts can create a paradox between the desire to adhere to integrity and the practical demands and constraints inherent in the teaching profession.

Teachers are tasked with conveying knowledge and facilitating learning, but they are also influenced by various external elements and constraints. Organizations like schools are living under social pressure, and such pressure has to function in line with societal values in order to be accepted as a member of society (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007). These elements can create conflicts that challenge their integrity.

For example, in the context of teachers' integrity, a paradox emerges due to the inherent tension between two fundamental aspects: professional responsibility and personal interest. On the one hand, teachers are entrusted with the crucial task of imparting knowledge, shaping young minds, and preparing students for their future endeavors. They bear the weight of ethical obligations and are expected to exhibit a high degree of professionalism, objectivity, and fairness. On the other hand, teachers are human beings with their own beliefs, biases, and values. Their personal experiences and perspectives inevitably influence their teaching practices. While they strive to remain impartial, the paradox arises when their personal values intersect with the pursuit of objective education. These conflicting forces can challenge a teacher's ability to maintain integrity and create a harmonious learning environment.

Similarly, teachers face a paradox when it comes to grading and evaluation. They are supposed to grade their students' learning based on their performance. However, teachers may feel pressured to give higher grades to keep students, parents, or administrators happy or to maintain positive relationships. This conflict between integrity and external pressures creates a difficult situation for teachers. So, conflict often arises due to external expectations imposed by educational institutions or government policies. In terms of understanding the policies, several reports and studies (e.g. Parajuli et al., 2012) show that there is less understanding of policies among the school stakeholders, including teachers. This study showed that several policies and provisions are designed for the betterment of schools, but teachers and other local actors have partial knowledge about them. The less understanding of policies has also led to an increased gap in practices. Policies are formulated for smooth and innovative intervention and to bring constructive change in the practices. But when there are differences due to less understanding of policies, then the change brings more conflicts and paradoxes (Raghunathan, 2010). So, the paradox within a teacher's integrity arises from the complex nature of their role, the external pressures they face, and the intricate interplay between professional responsibility and personal values.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects in Integrity: Evidence from Research

Using a socio-economic approach, the PhD research conducted by Dong (2011) in China offers valuable insights into the factors that influence corruption in the public sector. When there is higher payment for government employees, higher education attainment, access to media and representation of females in the legislature,

corruption is less possible. It supports the idea that creating a fair and transparent system can help reduce corruption and maintain integrity. However, the study also highlights the negative impact of social heterogeneity, deregulation, and large quantities of resources on ethical morale and integrity among actors. This suggests that corruption may be more likely to occur in environments with a lack of regulation and significant competition for resources or power. Hence, exploring ways to promote integrity in the public sector within the cultural, political, and social aspects is important.

Furthermore, Noor (2009), in his PhD thesis, focused on less governance and less integrity in the transitional societies of the developing world like Pakistan, following both case study and quantitative methodology under neo-institutional theory. He offers valuable insights into the relationship between institutional reform, socio-cultural norms, and corruption in transitional societies. He affirmed that improving institutions could enhance integrity in such communities, but he argued that unregulated and uncontrolled corruption and decaying governance were the consequences of institutional culture and economic and administrative aspects rather than the culture of those societies. This shows that institutional culture, economic and administrative aspects, and socio-cultural norms shape corruption and governance. From a socio-cultural perspective, it can be argued that a given society's shared values, beliefs, and norms shape corruption and unfair practices in the education system. When these values are not prioritized, it creates an environment where integrity is compromised, and unethical behaviour is more likely to occur. Therefore maintaining integrity in schools can be a significant challenge when corruption and unfair practices are prevalent in the education system (Ertas,2021). So, it leads me to explore that sociocultural norm also plays a significant role in corruption or working with integrity. Though this study highlights the importance of institutional reform, it is important to continue to explore ways to promote integrity, considering the unique cultural, political, and social aspects that influence corruption in different contexts.

In the context of educational integrity, a study on 'perceptions of secondary school head teachers towards integrity' by Khadka (2019) explores the views of head teachers at public schools in line with integrity following the ethnography method. It highlights the interrelatedness of accountability, integrity, and transparency. The study reveals insights into good and bad practices that can promote or compromise the

integrity of head teachers in schools. It does not explore the understanding of integrity, so there is a need to study teachers' perceptions and practices.

Similarly, with a quantitative research approach, Anuar (2017) explores the complex interplay between integrity, working environment and work motivation. The findings suggest that when employees perceive their working environment as supportive and characterised by high integrity, they are more likely to experience a sense of motivation towards their work. On the other hand, when employees perceive their working environment as unsupportive or lacking integrity, their motivation to perform their job may be negatively impacted. Anuar's study indicates that promoting integrity and creating a positive working environment is critical for enhancing work motivation and ultimately improving job performance. But integrity involves more than just ethical behaviour within the organisation; it should have ethical policies and practices that align with its values and principles and consider its actions' impact on the broader community, including its stakeholders and the environment (Huberts, 2018). However, from the methodological point of view, it is important to note that quantitative research methods are only sometimes the most effective approach for exploring complex and nuanced issues related to integrity.

Additionally, the study on the professional integrity of teachers in Uganda (Wabule, 2017) provides a valuable socio-cultural perspective on the challenges of promoting professional integrity among teachers. It emphasises joint learning and critical reflection to challenge taken-for-granted practices. It further suggests 'Professional Institutional Engagement (PIE)' as promoting collective action to empower teachers to shape their work environment and promote integrity in professional activity. However, it might be difficult to promote collective action in our context, where teachers have low social status and where power dynamics in educational institutions are hierarchical.

Similarly, the education integrity survey conducted in Indonesian educational institutions by Zulfadhli et al. (2022) provides a comprehensive perspective on integrity from a socio-cultural standpoint. It acknowledges that integrity is not simply a personal trait but a complex concept which is shaped by the social and cultural context in which individuals operate. Therefore, it is essential to understand and address the broader social and cultural elements that contribute to developing and maintaining educational integrity in our context.

Hence, integrity is a complex topic having several understandings and definitions with limited theories. There have been fewer empirical studies in this area, and those who have conducted research on integrity primarily focus on academic issues such as cheating, dishonesty, plagiarism or other forms of misconduct within the confines of a classroom or research environment. Those empirical studies conducted on the concept of integrity encompass highly non-academic elements, such as procurement, financial management, fund flow, administrative services etc. The review of the above empirical studies gave me the idea that my research topic demands qualitative study, i.e. an ethnographic study method under the interpretative paradigm to explore the teachers' understanding and practices on integrity in school from socio-cultural perspectives.

Theoretical Positioning: Socio-Cultural and Socio-Capital Perspective

I reviewed a few perspectives that deal with integrity in the education sector. I realised that to study integrity in school, there is overwhelming domination of Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective and Coleman's social capital theories that guide my entire study. Not only these but there also are several other perspectives to look at regarding understanding and practices of integrity by the teachers, which I have incorporated in my discussion chapter. I have described below some major perspectives that framed my research work.

Social-Cultural Perspective

I carefully adopted sociocultural perspective from social constructivism as my theoretical framework. According to Vygotsky, humans exist in a socio-cultural world, and it is necessary to understand the social and cultural perspective of the world from where we belong. Social interactions are important to help teachers learn the culture and context (Jurasaite-Harbison & Rex, 2010). According to this theory, learning and doing are developed by interacting and being with peers, family, community, and their environment (Miller, 2002). The sociocultural perspective suggests that society plays an important role in an individual's growth and development. This perspective hints that the development of individuals is highly influenced by the cultural context where they reside, besides their development through their genetic or personal experiences. According to Vygotsky, learning happens when people understand their world by creating thoughts and opinions through their interactions with others and the environment around them. In other words, the socio-cultural perspective recognises the shared relationship between

individuals and their environment, where people actively shape and are shaped by their society's cultural practices, values, and norms. Thus, the socio-cultural perspective provides a holistic view of human development that highlights the importance of understanding the interplay between individual and societal aspects.

Similarly, the people who are associated with schools build ideas about teacher's role and their integrity in their profession. And these ideas are also developed from social and cultural interactions. The socio-cultural perspective suggests that people's social and cultural context plays a significant role in shaping their beliefs, values, and behaviours (Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). It further asserts that the cultural aspect and social learning both are very vital characteristics for all human development.

In my research work, I explored how cultural and social structures influence a teacher's professional development and their perceptions of integrity within the broader social context of the educational system. The socio-cultural perspective is a combination of social and cultural aspects on individual development and learning, but its application is constrained by cross-cultural communication and behavioural patterns (McCarty, 2009). These constraints arise from differences in cultural norms and values and the diverse ways in which people communicate and interact. For example, a teacher's perception of integrity may be influenced by cultural norms and values in their community. Similarly, a hierarchical power structure within an educational institution may limit a teacher's ability to act with integrity. At the same time, a supportive school culture that values ethical behaviour can encourage and empower teachers to act with integrity. However, According to Kadam et al. (2019), having the skills and knowledge to work effectively in diverse cultural contexts can lead to improved outcomes and productivity within organisations. Here, cross-cultural competencies refer to the ability of individuals or organisations to understand, appreciate, and effectively navigate cultural differences and diversity. When people are able to understand and respect cultural differences, schools can create a more welcoming and supportive workplace environment. From the socio-cultural perspective, I see the prevalent cultural norms and values in the school and community and how these influence the teacher's actions.

My purpose in this study as a researcher is to see the several understanding and practices on integrity that have been developed in the teaching profession in public schools and what has contributed to it. As outlined by John-Steiner and Mahn

in 1996, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the interconnection between collective and personal processes in knowledge construction, which is rooted in the idea that individuals construct knowledge through their participation in social practices within their environment. This theory is found on the notion that knowledge is constructed and transmitted through social interaction and cultural tools. Teachers' knowledge, belief and understanding are created through understanding the social and cultural process. And it depends on the nature of the social interaction with members of the society or that culture (Jackson et al., 2006). So, through this theoretical framework, I looked at the contexts in which the understanding and practice occur and how they contribute to teachers' teaching environment.

Socio Capital Perspective

The socio-capital perspective has been the best for blending diverse effects of sociological and institutional aspects, especially on economic and institutional performance (Coleman, 1988). According to Woolcock and Narayan (2000) and Putnam (1995), social capital emphasizes that social connections are not only based on personal relationships but also influenced by broader societal structures and institutions. It highlights the importance of rules, norms, reciprocity, and trust embedded in social relations, social networks, and society's institutional arrangements. The purpose of social capital is to enhance the effectiveness of individuals and the community and to attain collective objectives despite differences in individual abilities. According to Lin (2001), social capital and social connections are not solely about interpersonal relationships but also about the resources and benefits that can be accessed through those social connections. It emphasizes the importance of having a strong social network and social structure. Teachers with a good amount of social capital can access and mobilize resources within their network to promote integrity in their professional practice. Likewise, teachers with integrity can take purposive actions such as building strong relationships with their students and the community, following ethical standards, and promoting a culture of honesty and respect to activate their social capital and benefit themselves and the community.

Social capital consists of bonds, bridges, and linkages where bonds mean linking people with a common identity, bridges mean sharing with all associates, and linkages mean linking people in the social ladder (Dekker & Uslaner, 2001; OECD, 2007). This helps to maintain a social tie with the people, which also helps to gain access to information and resources. Social capital refers to the value of social

networks and how they can be used to create bonds between individuals who share commonalities, like teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders of a school. It also helps in bridging the gaps between those who are staying together for a purpose but from different backgrounds and have distinct perceptions. Sørensen (2016) explained that bonding is the trust and connections between individuals within their community, and bridging social capital refers to the connections that individuals have with people and groups outside their immediate circle, which can be valuable for accessing information, resources, and opportunities that may not be available within their community. When there is strong social capital in the network, they can help and support each other, which develops mutual trust and respect that leads to maintaining integrity in the school. Putnam (2000) defined social capital as the bonds and connections that exist between individuals, which are important for fostering a supportive and positive learning environment. This certainly helps to handle and face opportunities and challenges regarding integrity among the school stakeholders.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is valuable because it enables individuals or groups to achieve things they would not be able to achieve on their own. Social capital can be understood as a combination of both personal and group knowledge (McElroy et al., 2006). Teachers who have strong connections with other teachers or educational stakeholders can have access to information, resources, and support (Rienties et al., 2015) that can help them maintain their integrity in challenging situations.

Social capital involves specific parts of social organization that make it possible for people to take collective action (Adam et al., 2003). Also, the teachers who earn trust and honesty from their students, parents, colleagues, and community people are likely to receive support and encouragement when they face challenges in working with integrity, and they can have support from the community, which can help them maintain their integrity in challenging situations. Similarly, Enai (2014) argued that a teacher can only exhibit qualities like teamwork, trust, honesty, respect, and value for students when they possess a good amount of social capital.

Warner (2001) argued that the local community is a place where one can create social capital, and regarding the school as a part of a community, it is in a good position to promote social capital within the school community by implementing different interventions. And by promoting social capital in this way, schools can help to strengthen the bonds between teachers, parents and community people, and it can

further create a more unified and strong community. This ultimately helps in maintaining teachers' integrity.

Research Gaps

While reviewing policies, study reports, journal articles, and academic write-ups on integrity in the education sector, I realized that Nepal has few studies on public expenditure tracking, school funding, and school governance issues. Despite the existing research on integrity, there is a noticeable gap when it comes to understanding and exploring the multifaceted nature of teacher integrity in the context of public schools, particularly in Nepal. On top of that, there is no specific empirical study on how school teachers understand and practice integrity in the diverse socio-cultural context of Nepal and what changes they are experiencing in that understanding and practice. Therefore, this study aims to bridge these gaps by delving into teachers' perceptions of integrity and exploring the reasons behind their behaviour regarding integrity.

Existing research on teacher integrity often focuses on its conceptualization and measurement from a general standpoint. However, limited research investigates how socio-cultural norms, values, and practices shape teachers' understanding and practices of integrity within the specific context of Nepal's public schools. This study provides a nuanced understanding of how cultural and social factors influence teacher integrity in this unique setting. Similarly, the socio-capital perspective, which considers the role of social networks, relationships, and community ties, has been relatively underexplored in the context of teacher integrity. This study aims to address the existing knowledge gap by investigating how teachers' social capital, which encompasses their relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and the broader community, influences their capacity to uphold integrity in their professional duties.

When it comes to research methods, the majority of previous integrity studies have relied on quantitative approaches. However, these methods might not fully capture the intricate and multifaceted nature of teachers' experiences and viewpoints. There are limited studies that have taken an ethnographic approach, and I believe that conducting research with an ethnographic approach grounded in the interpretative paradigm can offer in-depth and contextually relevant insights into how teachers perceive and enact integrity in Nepal's public schools.

Crux of my Chapter

Throughout this chapter, I have gained a deeper understanding and learning of various important ideas, concepts, and theoretical frameworks relevant to studying teachers' integrity in educational settings.

This study's literature review has presented five main themes related to the concept of integrity. The first theme highlights the challenge of defining integrity, i.e., the definitional dilemma encompassing the understanding of integrity. The second theme explores the prevalence of integrity discussions in the context of schools. Then, the third theme focuses on the specific challenges related to promoting integrity in schools within Nepali society. The fourth theme looks at the role of teachers and emphasizes the importance of teachers in promoting integrity as a foundational quality for developing people with integrity. In the fifth theme, I discussed the socio-economic and cultural aspects of integrity, which is supported by evidence from different research work. And then, I explored the significance of the sociocultural and socio-capital perspectives; these perspectives evolved throughout my field visit. This chapter provides insights into the multidimensional nature of integrity, which is influenced by various social, cultural, and economic aspects. I briefly reviewed existing and related empirical studies on teachers' integrity at national and international levels to identify the research gap and justify the need for this study. Hence, in the upcoming chapter, I will elucidate a detailed overview of the methodology I used to conduct my research.

CHAPTER III

DESIGNING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I have written a journal article using the information presented in this chapter, which has already been published. Thus, this chapter is a slightly altered rendition of the subsequent publication.

Munakarmi, R. (2016). Reflection on Researching Teachers' Professional Integrity: Being in the Setting of Ethnography. *Journal of Education and Research*, 6(2), 83–89. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jer.v6i2.22155>

This chapter presented a detailed account of my methodological journey throughout the study. It encompassed various actions and choices I made to address the research questions effectively. I began by discussing my philosophical assumptions, which served as a guiding framework for the entire research. One significant aspect of this journey was my engagement with research participants during fieldwork. I describe how I interacted with them and gained valuable insights into their perspectives and experiences related to the subject of my study. This direct involvement in their natural settings allowed me to gather in-depth information. A crucial part of the research process was the method of making meaning from the field information, I explained the process of interpreting and analysing the gathered information, enabling me to draw meaningful conclusions. The chapter provided extensive details about the research design, including the rationale for selecting the study area, site, research participants, and my positionality and roles as an ethnographer. I also emphasized the ethical considerations and quality standards that guided my conduct during the study.

Paradigm and Philosophical Consideration

In this study, I have followed an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is well-suited for uncovering a contextualized and comprehensive understanding of how people think, feel, and act in response to social and cultural aspects (Taylor et al., 2009). This helped me regulate my research as understanding teachers' integrity can be best explored through interaction in their natural settings. Life is constructed from experiences, and these experiences are perceived and interpreted differently based on

their unique social and cultural contexts. In other words, different teachers have their perspectives on defining, understanding, and practising integrity in school. The integrity that is perceived by a person in a particular place and context might be viewed and perceived differently in other cultures and social settings. This led me to understand this issue through socio-cultural aspects with interpretive paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to analyse multiple perspectives or realities of a given phenomenon as perceived by the multiple participants (Creswell, 2012). This is because there can be different interpretations and understandings of integrity that are strongly influenced by the culture and context of different groups. While doing this, it guided me to explore the understanding of teachers on integrity in school and interpret the context of the participants as it cannot be measured and quantified. I have also included my experiences, understanding and conceptual point of reference (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as I have witnessed this culture for over a decade.

Therefore, since integrity is truly widespread and is essential, there is a need to understand different realities to know the teachers' understanding on integrity. My ontology is such a type of perception and understanding and practices on integrity (Flick, 2009) within the socio-cultural aspects of integrity in school. And to explore it, I need more than the objective dimension. Therefore, I explored the subjective meaning of integrity as viewed by the stakeholders of the schools. This study is an opportunity to co-create knowledge (Muskat et al., 2018) with my research participants in the public-school context. By this, I get a rich and thick description from the experience of the people rooted in their everyday life (O'Reilly, 2012). I provided a clear description of the context in which the social activity was observed and interpreted the observations based on their understanding of the situation. This approach is in line with the methodological recommendation of Ponterotto (2006) to interpret social activities within their actual context.

Ethnography: Exploring and Understanding Real-Life Contexts

I have adopted an ethnographic approach in this research work since the research topic pertains to an emerging phenomenon within the school culture. To get the actual information regarding the integrity of the public-school teachers, it stressed the research to be conducted in their natural or real-life settings (Madden, 2022) and also to comprehend social processes in the actual context or situation (Esterberg, 2002; Schatz, 2013). Ethnographers seek to open up the rules of action where most of

the rules of social behaviours are unspoken and unstated and are recognized only after interaction and not those imposed by others (Yanow, 2021). The study that I conducted also demands observing the social context, participant behaviours, and their interaction in the setting to get the meaning of their understanding and practices of integrity and how it emerges in them.

The research issue is sensitive due to its impact on the trust and confidence that students, parents, and the public have in the education system. And ethnographic methodology (Hilário & Augusto, 2020; Markkanen, 2018) is appropriate for studying sensitive issues as it allows for a detailed and authentic portrayal of the cultural phenomenon and helps researchers understand by observing why and how people behave in real-life contexts (Tileagă et al., 2021; Schatz, 2013). Toohey (2008) suggests that ethnographic research has helped identify connections between everyday practices and broader social trends. This method allowed me to immerse myself in the social setting and gain a rich understanding of the social actions related to my research topic. Moreover, this method allowed me to uncover empirical insights into social practices that are typically not visible to the public eye, i.e., which usually are 'hidden' from the public gaze (Reeves et al., 2013). Following the "I-witnessing" ideal, as Van Maanen (2011) said, I relied on my personal experiences and observations on the topic of integrity in specific social settings. By employing ethnography, I gained insight into the group's perspective from an insider's point of view (Fetterman, 2010). This was achieved through active observation and participation with the participants within their natural environments and settings, as recommended by Madden (2022). This involved observing the day-to-day activities of teachers within the school premises.

Nayak (2006) explains that ethnography entails human experience and representational issues within cultural settings through sign, language, and metaphor. And in line with Anderson-Levitt (2006), ethnography is a way of studying people's behaviour, beliefs, and practices within the context of their cultural existence, which involves observing people in their natural environment, understanding their culture and traditions, and interpreting their experiences from their point of view. I think ethnography is important to gain a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the cultural context with prolonged engagement with the participants (Markkanen, 2018) and how individuals and groups make sense of their experiences and the world around them. Several other researchers, including those conducted by Del Valle (2022),

Atkins (2018), and Yanık Özger & Yaşar (2022), have employed ethnography in their studies to explore different aspects related to teachers, schools, and integrity. This methodology allowed me to immerse myself in their social setting and engage with them personally, which helped me understand their cultural perspectives.

Ethnography allowed me to get first-hand information by engaging with public school teachers through formal and informal conversation, observation, and discussion. This method focuses on what people do and how they do it (Boylorn, 2008). As Tileagă et al. (2021) emphasized in their ethnographic research, I actively participated in and observed the social setting and its activities. This means that I am not only observing from a distance but also getting involved in the community to gain a better understanding of their perspectives and experiences. The benefit of using ethnography as a research method is that it allows the researcher to engage in a dialectical relationship between participation and observation (O'Reilly, 2012). For instance, as a researcher, I was engaged in activities alongside the participants and observed their interactions. Through this approach, I captured their everyday contexts and tried to find out how they chose the teaching profession through which I account for how their understanding and practices develop. Considering my epistemology, I interpreted the knowledge of the research issue based on the interaction with my research participants, their experiences, formal and informal talks, observation, etc. Hence, to establish my epistemological position, I established a good and cordial relationship with my research participants, had a meaningful and evocative engagement with them, and maintained regular communication' throughout my research work (Ocejo, 2013).

According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), ethnographic study means examining a single social group or situation to understand its cultural and social aspects (as cited in Powell, 2007). In this study, I used an ethnographic approach to understand and explain the culture of teachers, who are a crucial part of the school, from a socio-cultural perspective. For this study, "culture" in this context refers to the general day-to-day life practices of teachers and other stakeholders under which they understand and practice integrity. This study used ethnographic characteristics to describe and interpret the culture of the group that shares similar practices and beliefs (Angers & Machtmes, 2005). Hence, the methodology I used in this study was noteworthy as I gathered information within the teachers' natural setting and cultural context, as recommended by Madden (2022) and Anderson-Levitt (2006).

Purposive Selection of Schools and Participants

During this study, I considered teachers at public schools as my research participants, where Head Teachers (HTs), School Management Committee (SMC) members, parents and students of public schools also are the participants of my research to supplement teachers' research on integrity. To select multiple sites with different characteristics, I purposively selected different schools from the Kavre district with different ethnicities, diversity, and places (semi-urban to rural) as well. By doing so, I have captured diverse information. Similarly, there are different types of schools categorized according to their performance. Within the district, I selected schools that are reported as poor and good results performing schools in the consultation with District Education Office (DEO)¹. Hence, it was in the semi-urban and rural social settings where I acknowledged the new cultural patterns interactively following the open-ended emergence (Whitehead, 2005). With this specific methodology, I tried to find out how the public-school teachers of both settings navigate and respond to the cultural context in which they exist, i.e., being (Goldbart & Hustler, 2005), as well as the actions they take in relation to it, i.e. doing. In my research work, my interaction and observation involved a comprehensive exploration of the public school teachers' beliefs, values, socially constructed behaviours, and their interpretations of social phenomena (Forsey, 2010). As my study was to dig out the understanding and practice of teachers' integrity in the education sector, I selected my participants purposely from a particular setting to gather information that would not be as readily available from other options. Hence, my research participants are schoolteachers selected purposively from each school.

In the first stage of my fieldwork, I conversed with sixteen community school teachers from different levels (primary, lower secondary and secondary level). After getting informed or understanding the phenomena of teachers' integrity, I set criteria for selecting my research participants. I selected those teachers extensively in their context of living (distance from school) and have served as a teacher working for several years (at least five years). In doing so, I also kept in mind the differences in their teaching years. Further, I also selected the teachers who were from the local

¹ In 2016, I selected my research sites in consultation with the District Education Office (DEO). However, there has been a significant change in the governance structure since then. This transformation has entailed the substitution of the District Education Office (DEO) with the Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) under the federal setup, leading to the automatic discontinuation of all DEOs across the country.

community and who had come from other places too. The participant selection process was conducted without any influence from political or external factors. It was carried out based on the research objectives and the natural dynamics of the community under study, ensuring that the choices were driven solely by the research focus and not influenced by any external considerations.

I engaged in the field frequently based on the emergence of new perspectives leading to other new ideas (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) of their way of understanding and practising integrity. I adopted several strategies, such as selecting gatekeepers, building rapport and trust, and iterative interaction with the research participants to have intense and meaningful fieldwork (Rai, 2020). This created an environment of open communication with my participants, which allowed them to openly disclose their opinions, understandings, and experiences during the research process. This was made possible by the cordial relationships that I had established with them.

Subsequently, it is essential to understand the setting where I conducted my research and the circumstances I encountered before discussing the field. In the subsequent section of this chapter, I provide a concise overview of the two public schools (my research field) and my research participants.

School Profile and Participant Description

The schools were selected purposefully from the Kavre district, where I belong to. In ethnographic research, it is beneficial for the researcher to conduct their research in a setting where they are already familiar with the language and culture of the participants (Gelir, 2021). This can help in collecting and analysing data, as the researcher already understands the context and can better interpret the information gathered. One of the schools was located in a semi-urban area with high learning achievement, and the next one was in a rural area with a relatively modest level of learning achievement. The first school, Sungava Secondary School (Pseudo name, referred to as Sungava school), has a mixed ethnic composition of students, and the second school, Jagriti Secondary School (Pseudo name, referred to as Jagriti school), has a homogeneous community (Tamang).

Sungava Secondary School was established about sixty years before. The school building is near the road where tippers run frequently. The school's playground is insufficient to conduct games openly, but they still have some space. Few flowers are planted just before the school building. And a small stage (trust) is below the

school building made up of corrugated galvanized steel to conduct programs. Neither the students nor the teachers can go outside during the school time. There are fewer houses around the school, but few are within a minute's walk. Teachers working at this school are from different regions of Nepal, with five from the same municipality.

Furthermore, I traveled approximately 35 kilometers from my hometown to visit Jagriti school for my research. The road to the school is rough and bumpy, with a limited public bus schedule of two daily trips, one at 6 am and the other at 5 pm. One must walk around 2-3 hours from the highway to reach the school. There are altogether three buildings, out of which the earthquake partially damaged one, but still, the school is using it as they do not have enough rooms (one building is under construction). Teachers are few in the same locality, and others from other districts are staying in rent near the school.

As far as my participants (teachers) are concerned, I first talked to all the teachers of those two schools, which initially was started by an introduction and informal talks. However, later, I focused on eight teachers deeply though I was interacting and observing other teachers' activities, as their activities were connected in one way or another. The teachers I focused on were at least having five years of working experience in a public school with different sex and ethnic backgrounds, and two of them were the ones who belonged to the same school locality. In order to protect the anonymity of the research site, school, and participants, I have changed the names and have given pseudo names.

Here, I provide some detailed information about the participants involved in the research. I chose to focus on eight teachers to gain in-depth insights. These teachers were carefully selected to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives. The participants showcased diverse backgrounds, teaching experiences, perspectives on the teaching profession and integrity, and personal circumstances, all of which shaped their approach to the teaching profession. The selection criteria for the eight teachers include age, gender, teaching level, years of experience, and their involvement in various aspects of school life. This diversity was essential to capture a comprehensive understanding of how integrity is perceived and practiced across different teaching contexts. The selected participants are:

Laxmi: Laxmi is a primary teacher at Sungava school and is in her early 30s. Her father was also a teacher, and she is married. She has to travel about half an hour from her in-laws' house to reach the school. Laxmi completed her +2 and married

while still studying in college. At the time of my research in 2017, Laxmi was living with her husband, her one-year-old child, and her in-laws. She has already finished her bachelor's degree in education, focusing on English, and she is pursuing her master's degree in the same field. Her teaching career began six years ago in a private school, and later, she got the opportunity to teach as a volunteer in a public school. Eventually, she was selected for a permanent position through a relief quota system, thanks in part to her father's connections. During my fieldwork, I observed Laxmi's active involvement in schoolwork and close interaction with students and colleagues. She appeared to maintain a friendly and approachable demeanour with the students while also engaging with the school administrator on various school-related matters. My first encounter with her was during her leisure period when she was busy preparing teaching materials for her classes.

Manik: A 38-year-old married man with a son and a daughter. He holds a master's degree in education, specializing in math, and also teaches +2 classes in the morning session. Initially, when I met him, he held the position of a secondary math teacher in 2017. He committed long hours to the school, starting from 6 am until 5-6 pm, and even conducted extra classes to enhance the school's SEE (Secondary Education Examination) results. He decided to move with his family and rent a room near the school. This choice allows him to stay late and fulfill his responsibilities at the school with dedication and commitment. I observed Manik's influential presence during my first two weeks of field visits. He confidently led the morning assembly and took charge of maintaining discipline in the school. His excellent rapport with the school administration, SMC, parents, students, and community members was evident. Notably, he chose to enroll his children in the same school, stating his trust in the school's quality and believing that it improves when teachers admit their children to the institution they teach. In 2018, Manik was appointed as the HT with the acceptance of the SMC.

Kuber: He is in his early sixties, completed his SLC and received several government-provided trainings. He is a resident of the same locality as the school. He has two sons, one of whom lives abroad with his wife and daughter (Kuber's grandchild), and two married daughters. He lives with his wife, younger son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. During his childhood in the 1960s, access to education was limited, with only a few schools available for students near the city area. He considers himself lucky to have had the opportunity to attend school among

the few who could access education at that time. Originally from a business background in his family, Kuber was supposed to engage in his father's shop. However, his life took a different turn after he appeared in SLC in 2037 BS (1980 AD). Due to a lack of teachers in the neighbouring school, he was forcefully brought in to teach without his will and was appointed as a primary-level teacher. For him, teaching is a noble profession. Initially, during my field visits, he appeared quiet and avoided interaction with me. However, over time, after a few visits and informal meetings on the bus, he became more open to sharing his decade-long teaching experience while travelling to the school. As of the time of thesis submission, he has retired from his teaching position.

Shyam: Shyam, aged 53, is a dedicated lower secondary teacher with a permanent position at Sungava school since 1985. He lives with his wife, who was dealing with some health issues during my fieldwork. His children and grandchildren reside abroad. Shyam hails from the same village, although his residence is about 2 kilometers away. He holds a management certificate but has undergone numerous education-related trainings provided by the government. During the initial phase of my fieldwork, Shyam stood out as one of the most active teachers I interacted with. He has extensive teaching experience and prefers traditional teaching methods and the rules established by teachers in the past. Interestingly, Shyam raises his voice against certain school rules that he believes contradict education rules or policies.

Ram Krishna, aged 48, serves as a Nepali teacher for secondary level students at Jagriti school. Originally from a different district, he has rented a room near the school for convenience. In his family, he lives with his wife, four daughters, and a son. During my fieldwork, I noticed that Ram Krishna often had a newspaper in hand. When I conducted interviews with other teachers during their leisure period, he would stay there and then head to his class after ten or fifteen minutes. He was quite forthcoming in sharing his experiences about the teaching profession. Interestingly, Ram Krishna frequently encouraged me to complete my fieldwork sooner, expressing concern about the challenges I faced in traveling to the school. This piqued my curiosity, and I was particularly interested in interviewing him to understand why he preferred a shorter duration for my stay at the school.

Sushma: Sushma, in her late thirties (37 years old), is a lower secondary-level teacher specializing in social studies. She holds a bachelor's degree in education. She is teaching social studies at a lower secondary level and population for secondary-

level students. Sushma is married, and her husband is also a teacher at a different school. Together, they have two sons. No public vehicles are available in the area, so reaching the school is quite challenging for her. She needs to walk for about two hours to reach the school each day, as she cannot stay in a nearby rented room like her male colleagues due to her family responsibilities. She started her teaching career in a private school, taught there for five years, and was later appointed in Jagriti school. According to her initially, she was enthusiastic, committed, and disciplined, bringing those qualities from her experience in the private school. However, as time passed, she felt her enthusiasm waning. She does not blame her fellow teachers, but she believes that the way things were being handled at the school and the ongoing activities contributed to her feeling less motivated. Eventually, she found herself becoming less proactive, even to the extent of feeling less engaged during class time.

Seman: Seman, aged 45, is a married man with two daughters and a son. He has rented a room close to school and visits his home on weekends. Seman has been a dedicated teacher at Jagriti school for many years. Even though the school is far from his hometown, he feels emotionally connected to it as he was appointed there at the beginning of his career. Due to this attachment, he prefers to avoid getting transfers to other schools. During my fieldwork, Seman was appointed as a secondary-level teacher after appearing in the teacher service commission. Having a room nearby the school, Seman made use of each interval and leisure period to go there. From his perspective, his primary responsibility was to efficiently complete the course and teach effectively. He believed that staying in the school or classroom full-time after fulfilling his objectives was not necessary for him to fulfil his duties as a teacher.

Sarita: Sarita, 34 years old, is an English teacher for lower secondary students at Jagriti school. She lives in a joint family with her father-in-law, mother-in-law, husband, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and her two children (one of whom is 2 months old). Sarita has been working as a permanent teacher at Jagriti school for 2 years. Prior to that, she taught as a temporary teacher in a relief quota at another public school in the same district for 6 years. During the early days of my fieldwork, Sarita was on maternity leave. After finishing her maternity leave, I met her on her first day back at school. She was expressing her frustration with anger to her colleagues about being constantly called from the account section to rejoin the school. She felt that there was inequality in the way maternity leave was granted to her compared to others.

In addition to these eight teachers, I also interacted with and observed other important stakeholders in the school community to enrich the information and provide a holistic view of the research topic. These stakeholders included other teachers from two researched schools, parents, students, School Management Committee (SMC) members, and community people. These interactions were informal (guffgaff) in nature. Engaging and hearing with this diverse group was essential for gaining a deeper understanding of the information shared by the teachers. Their insights not only added depth to my findings but also supported and substantiated the information I received from the teachers. When presenting details from these other stakeholders in my research chapters, I made it a point to be clear about their identities. For example, if the information came from someone in the community, I explicitly mentioned it. The ethnographic tradition involves conducting extended fieldwork to understand the relationships between local events, institutional frameworks, and socio-cultural patterns within a specific context (Erlandson & Karlsson, 2018). Engaging with these diverse stakeholders was vital for getting the in-depth information obtained from the teachers.

As an ethnographic researcher, delving into the experiences and perspectives of teachers provides a unique and in-depth insight into their understanding and practice of integrity in the teaching profession (Markkanen, 2018). By immersing myself in the daily lives of these teachers and engaging in meaningful interactions, I have the opportunity to explore their beliefs, values, and actions related to integrity (Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). By observing their actions, conversations, and decision-making processes, I can gain valuable insights into how integrity manifests in their teaching practices and interactions with students, colleagues, and the school community. Furthermore, this ethnographic approach allows me to identify potential paradoxes or contradictions that teachers encounter when their understanding of integrity clashes (Raghunathan, 2010, Parajuli et al., 2014) with changing educational contexts or institutional demands. For instance, teachers may face paradoxes between adhering to traditional teaching methods that align with their understanding of integrity and adapting to innovative approaches required by new educational paradigms.

Information Collection Experiences in the Field

I was juggling multiple roles as both a female researcher and a teacher at one of the public schools in Nepal. As I have engaged myself in the teaching profession

for around two decades, I have always been interested in researching the issues related to education, and I wanted to delve deeper into this topic. My goal was to gain a deep understanding of how teachers view integrity in their profession and how they navigate the paradoxes of working with integrity in their daily work. Given the sensitive nature of my research topic, I found that some teachers were hesitant to speak openly about school-related issues in my presence in the earlier days of my research work.

Since I had a teaching background, I thought gaining access to a school and conducting research would be relatively easy. Despite this belief, some ethical dilemmas I encounter during my research arise unexpectedly, and I have to face them without prior preparation (Morris MacLean et al., 2019). For instance, initially, I faced a few unspoken challenges in gaining access to the schools. Although I was given a warm welcome in person, I could not shake but sense that they were not fully supportive of my research endeavours and did not want me to conduct research. At first, I chose one of the schools from the neighbouring community where I live. I knew the first school, and the teachers were familiar with me. I spent a week there, but I didn't get much support from the teachers and administration. Since I'm from a nearby community and also work as a teacher in another school nearby, we were all acquainted. However, I sensed they were uncomfortable, perhaps worried that I might share sensitive information in the community or other schools as I am researching a delicate issue. Despite my efforts to convince them, even though they welcomed me verbally, their gestures and responses weren't supportive for my research. So, I changed my research site. The schools were understandably cautious about allowing a researcher to come in and observe their teachers, especially when the topic could potentially lead to negative publicity. There are some areas where ethical challenges are so significant that conducting research is inappropriate (Wood, 2006; Angrosino, 2007). They may have been hesitant to share their internal school activities and decisions with me because they may have been concerned about me sharing the information with others. I found it true that ethnographic research can be affected by the researcher's identity and their role within the environment (Krause, 2021). Hence, facing these early challenges, I think switching to a different school for my research was a smart move. It helped make the research more successful, letting me make better connections and get the information I needed for a thorough study.

Similarly, in another school, they had unrealistic expectations that I could finish the research within two to three days, which was a significant challenge for me as an ethnographer who requires ample time to conduct thorough research (Millar, 2018). One of the teachers from a school even said that I might visit their school for two days and let them fill out the form and return it. They might be saying this because they have the habit of researchers who came for short-term research work. Another reason is that my research topic is sensitive; they may not have wanted anyone to observe them. Or, they might have assumed that as a female researcher, it can be difficult for me to stay in a remote place or visit there for an extended period. Krause (2021) suggests that conducting research, even with limited and uneven participation, can still be ethical and yield valuable insights. So, despite these difficulties, I remained committed to my work and tried to navigate the situation as best I could. So, I did not withdraw from this site.

Once I gained access to the schools, I spent several months observing teachers in their classrooms, as ethnographic fieldwork usually starts with observation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015; Angrosino, 2007). I attended staff meetings, involved myself in extra-curricular activities, and conducted formal interviews and guff-gaff² (informal interviews) with teachers and administrators. It was not easy to gain the teachers' trust and build rapport with them. The researcher must be able to get access and build strong rapport to ensure the effectiveness of a research project (Kondowe & Booyens, 2014). Building a close rapport with my participants created a comfortable environment to share their experiences and express themselves freely (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012). This leads to a more comprehensive collection of detailed and rich data. However, many were understandably cautious of outsiders coming into their classrooms and scrutinizing their every move. To overcome this, I devoted considerable time to building rapport with the teachers, familiarizing myself with their characteristics, and showing a sincere interest in their profession (Ocejo, 2013).

Another exciting experience and observation are, being a female researcher, I experienced different cultural expectations around gender roles and social interactions, as many in Asia when building rapport with participants (McAllister,

² "Guff-Gaff" is a Nepali term used to describe informal interactions and conversations, especially with people you know well. It encompasses a range of informal activities, including informal talks, informal interviews, casual interactions, and informal conversations. In essence, "guff-gaff" captures the idea of relaxed and unstructured communication that occurs in everyday, informal settings.

2013). As I researched rural and semi-urban localities, these two sites' rapport building was different. In rural contexts, it was taken as inappropriate for a female researcher to engage in certain forms of physical proxemics or to spend time alone with male participants. They did not tell me openly that I could not talk or walk with them outside school, but the hesitation from the participants made me feel so. Bucerius & Urbanik (2019) state that sometimes researchers must agree with gender stereotypes. I was aware of this fact and was cautious. Female participants were closely talking to me. So, I experienced that female researchers need to consider how their gender identity shapes their interactions with participants and the data they collect (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012). It should be noted that these differences are not applicable in all cases, and male and female researchers have different experiences when they do research depending on various factors, like where they do the research, their backgrounds, and the research questions they are exploring. However, it is crucial for researchers to be mindful of potential gender differences in ethnographic research and to take steps to address any challenges or biases that may arise.

I experienced the openness and frankness of female teachers with me during and after the interview more than male teachers. There might be several underlying reasons behind it. I am sure it was not because of the influence of age or experience factors because the senior female participant was also talking frankly with me. In this case, female teachers from the same teaching background may have felt more comfortable opening up to another woman with good rapport-building skills (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012) because they felt I would be more empathetic and understanding of their experiences as women. And we had clear communication about our mutual expectations (Gaetano & Gaetano, 2016). While saying this, I do not mean that male participants did not open up, they shared their experiences, but they seemed to be reserved to some extent compared to the female teachers, particularly from the rural setting. If there was a male researcher, they might have spoken up more openly in an informal setting too. Furthermore, during my fieldwork as a PhD researcher from Kathmandu University, I was given a higher social status and viewed as an "honorary man," as described by McAllister (2013). As a result, my research was facilitated. So, it is essential to consider this observation while conducting research or interviews to avoid gender bias and ensure that all participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions.

My participants were more comfortable opening up to me about their experiences and challenges because I was from a teaching background. They believed that I would empathize with the struggles of their teaching and learning processes. As mentioned by O'Reilly in 2012, I also have experience working in the field of education and am familiar with the everyday situations and challenges that arise when working in the education sector. It gave me insights into the challenges and pressures that teachers face and a nuanced understanding of the social dynamics within schools and classrooms. As I spent more time with the teachers and involving in their teaching-learning activities, I gained a deeper understanding of the challenges and issues faced by the participants, as well as the strategies they used to address and tackle them (I have illustrated those challenges and strategies in my empirical chapters). It helped me foster a sense of trust and understanding with my participants, and I got into how they perform, which would not have been possible only by interviewing. This also helped me to understand the more profound and underlying meaning of the social setting. Hence, having a teaching background, I faced challenges and opportunities in gaining access to schools and collecting in-depth information. Overall, my ethnographic research on teacher integrity was a valuable learning experience.

Entering the Research Site

Before going to the field, I had a specific objective in mind for my fieldwork; however, I encountered the difficulties of not achieving my purpose for the first few weeks of my fieldwork. I felt like I was just sitting on the research site and could not talk about teachers' perceptions and practices on teachers' integrity. The difficulties in talking with the participant to get information on the issue, the awkwardness of digging out their understanding and the uneasiness to see the practices on it made me realize that it was not as easy as I thought and did not go as planned before entering the field.

Getting into the Field: Access and Entry

While conducting ethnographic research, one of the important steps is accessing and entering the research site. It allows the researcher to observe and understand the daily lives of the research participants (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). In my research, I had to choose a suitable setting from five public schools. I spent a week in each school to make the right choice of research site. Finally, I selected two public secondary-level schools by the end of 2016. My social network among teachers

helped me to finalize these schools. I knew a few teachers from my college life who were working in those schools. This made my interaction with other teachers easier and helped me to conduct research on teachers' integrity.

Likewise, I agree with Fetterman (2010) that an introduction by a member is the best way for researchers to enter a community, especially when researching a sensitive topic like teachers' integrity. I got access to my research sites with the help of community intermediaries (Okely, 2017). And when it came to selecting the participants for my study, I decided to choose teachers who had been working in their respective positions for at least five years. This was important because teachers with more experience are likely to better understand the ongoing practices and issues in their field. Furthermore, selecting experienced teachers helped ensure that the teachers I spoke to understood the education system well and were familiar with the school environment. By selecting experienced teachers, I hoped to get more in-depth and insightful information about my research topic.

Once I had selected the schools, my next step was to enter the site to interact with school administrators, teachers, and other school stakeholders as a researcher. Since I had been a teacher in the same district for more than 15 years, many of the school actors welcomed me warmly as a known face. However, some schools were initially hesitant to allow me access.

Correspondingly, it is crucial to have the support and cooperation of HTs and teachers at the research site. It is important to make HTs understand the purpose of my visit and support the research process, as Beattie (2005) recommended. So, to ensure this, I shared the purpose of my visit with the HTs and teachers. This helped to establish trust and build rapport with the participants, which is ethically important for the research process.

On the first day of my visit, I went to Sungava school with my relatives who live 5 km from the school. He helped me enter the school, whom I take as an informal outsider. I get access through a teacher (formal gatekeeper) on another research site. There was no difference in how the teachers perceived my entry as a researcher though I entered with different gatekeepers. It was about my entry point, but to get access to the teachers and to make them feel comfortable to interact with me and to be able to remain on the site easily, I needed other levels of gatekeepers as well. For that, I met an assistant headteacher, a Nepali teacher and an association of teachers from another school, which helped me to build a strong connection with my research

participants. This means that gaining entry to a site is an ongoing process that may need to be revisited throughout the fieldwork (Duke, 2002). Hence, access to a research site is not just a one-time event but a continuous process that requires the cooperation of different levels of gatekeepers.

In Sungava school, I was expected to spend much time as my relative mentioned my possibility of a long stay, and in Jagriti school, I was taken as a few days' guests who had come to fill out a few forms to complete the study. In other words, they thought I was there to let them do some formalities. One of the teachers even asked me, "*Khai kaha sign gardeu ta mam*" (where should I sign madam). This showed that the researchers still need to be taken seriously. According to Beattie (2005), it is essential to clearly explain the purpose of the study to the participants in the research work. This helps them understand why the research is being conducted and what they can gain from it. So, I took time to let them understand my purpose of visiting. But the activities that the teachers were doing in the first few days showed that they were doing to show it to me as I am there to evaluate them, and I am an outsider and a researcher who might write wrong things if they do not perform properly. They seemed to be scrutinized. This showed that the information that a researcher gathers in her/his first few days/weeks might get changed in the long run, and it is a beauty of ethnography that it demands prolonged engagement in the field so that researchers come with a full hand of in-depth information.

In the first few weeks in these two schools, during my research, I found some teachers who were hesitant to discuss my research topic due to its sensitive nature. This situation made me feel helpless, as Fine (1993) mentioned, where I felt ignored and isolated. This does not mean that I was not prepared and have come unplanned. However, after a week, I realized that researching sensitive issues like teachers' integrity requires researchers to engage with participants. Through my experience of selecting the research site purposefully, I understood the importance of choosing a location where the researcher is welcome, familiar, and can gather in-depth information on the topic at hand. This highlights the significance of the purposeful selection of the research site for qualitative researchers, especially ethnographic researchers. However, I dedicated a significant amount of time to assessing and understanding the teachers' behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs and interpreting what they reveal about teachers' integrity, which enhances the inner reality. As discussed

above, the difficulties and challenges I faced during the selection of the research site actually proved to be a valuable learning experience for my research work.

Ethnographic Researcher: Active Listening, Active Observation, and Emotional Attunement

At the initial stage of my fieldwork, I could feel that the school and teachers were friendly and supportive. However, I still felt I needed to figure out how to interact with them, even though I was observing and being there in their day-to-day activities in the school. Making my participants talk freely with me was not an easy task. I realized I needed to do something different to understand what was happening. Although the teachers were willing to help, I found asking them about their understanding of integrity difficult. Even when I tried to interview them, I still felt like I wasn't getting the information I needed. It was like I was only seeing the surface of things and not the deeper, more important aspects of my research topic. Then I remembered something my professor had said during my research proposal defence. He had asked me how I would connect with my research participants, especially since the topic was sensitive. When researching a sensitive topic like 'teachers' integrity', I agree that it is important to carefully consider potential sensitivities during the planning and design stages (Becker & Bryman, 2012). This is because it can impact all stages of the research process.

After encountering such difficulties, I had a telephone conversation with my supervisor, and at that time, I decided to leave the research site and meet with my supervisor to discuss my difficulties and the problems I was facing. He advised me to be more open with my participants and not to focus solely on research questions or try to get all the answers quickly. He also reminded me that it's okay to face difficulties while building rapport with the participants. I learned more about being an ethnographic researcher through this discussion with my supervisor. By participating in activities like helping teachers with their classes and extracurricular activities, I was slowly able to have the trust of the school administration, teachers, and students. This helped me to gather valuable information on integrity issues and made me feel more present and engaged in the research. I then felt like 'being there' in an actual sense.

However, while we were continuing the guff-gaff (informality of interaction), I noticed that when I requested their time for an interview and took out my recorder and notebook, they became self-aware and conscious. It seemed as though they were

responding as if I were an evaluator or supervisor from the government. The participants seemed uncomfortable when they knew they were under observation while talking (Savage, 2013); this ultimately may have led them to behave, speak, and perform their everyday work differently than they normally would, although I had built a good rapport with them. I noticed that the participants shared information differently depending on the setting. When I conducted formal interviews with a recorder and notebook, they seemed more cautious and spoke formally as if I were a government evaluator or supervisor. However, when we interacted casually as friends in the canteen during lunch breaks or while walking home, without the formal interview setting, they spoke more freely, and some teachers even shared their opinions, frustrations, and experiences more openly as colleagues rather than simply responding to my research questions as a researcher. From this, I learnt that it is important for ethnographic researchers to build good relationships and trust with the people they are studying and to understand their social and cultural environment. Researchers could also adapt to how participants communicate and the social setting they are in. In this case, I found that researchers can collect more honest and detailed information by being more informal and building personal connections. This learning highlights the need for researchers to be adaptable and open-minded in their approach and aware of how different types of interactions can affect their findings.

During my research, some of my participants trusted me enough to share their complaints, personal grievances, and biases about the school administration and management's decisions on various teachers according to the school policy. However, I didn't use a recorder or notebook to take notes during these informal conversations, which made it challenging to remember all the small details they shared. Nevertheless, I made an effort to be a good listener, as described by Eriksson et al. (2015), and it was an additional task for me to remember the information they shared as much as I could. After each informal interaction, I immediately wrote down all the points that I gathered from the conversation to avoid forgetting them later. I learned that the participants' gestures and activities while sharing their experiences helped me remember their shared information.

Fine (1993) identified ten common misunderstandings (ten lies) in ethnographic research and advocated for researchers to be kind, friendly, and honest with their participants. During the initial two weeks of my research, I worked on establishing a good relationship with the participants by being friendly and kind.

However, there was one male teacher with whom I faced initial difficulty interacting. To overcome this, I supported him in his class. This gesture helped to build trust with the teacher, and he became more comfortable sharing his experiences and opinions with the researcher. This worked well, as he felt comfortable talking with me, and later, he became one of my research participants. From the time we shared the same vehicle to reach the school, our guff-gaff (informal interview) started at the same time.

Furthermore, I conducted interviews and observations together during the first three months of my fieldwork. However, to better understand the cultural settings and natural interactions among participants, I began to observe the teachers' activities. One teacher even asked if I needed more support to talk to them and assured me they were happy to share their experiences. Although I had a good connection with my participants, there was one incident that stood out. On entrance exam day, the school management committee (SMC) called an urgent meeting for all the teachers. The outgoing HT invited me to join, but the SMC chair suggested that I cover the entrance exam and other classes since the teachers were in a meeting. Although the HT invited me to attend other meetings before and after that one, I was not invited to the meeting of HT selection. While I was initially asked to stay in the meeting, the SMC chair eventually asked me to support them by looking after the exams in three different classes. This indirectly showed that the SMC chair did not want my presence in that meeting.

As an ethnographer, it was important to remain impartial and not interfere with the school's management decisions. Although I accepted the SMC chair's request, I took the opportunity to talk with parents who were there for admission. This incident showed that different participants had different levels of engagement and ways of dealing with me as a researcher. It was crucial for me to observe natural interactions among participants to understand their practices. While building trust and connections with my participants was necessary, it was also essential to remain impartial. As an ethnographer, I realized that I would encounter different types of participants in the same field, each with their own way of engaging with me.

Generating Ethnographic Text

According to Hobbs (2002), researchers must choose a data collection method that considers the research topic's sensitivity and the research subjects' vulnerability. For the data collection, I employed multiple sources to understand the cultural root of

integrity. This allowed me to explore participants' lived experiences and gain a deeper understanding. Moreover, as an ethnographic researcher, I wanted to explore the topic of teachers' integrity, and my research design was interpretative. So, I planned my fieldwork process to be adaptable to any changes that may come up during the research. I used various strategies to gather comprehensive data and employed various data collection techniques, such as interviews and observation, to gather information from participants. These techniques helped me understand the cultural root of integrity and the participants' experiences. I kept an open mind to take advantage of any unforeseen opportunities that may arise for data collection.

Particularly, to gain a deep understanding of each, I stayed at each school for at least one week in one stay to understand what was happening there. I only left when an important event occurred at another school I was researching or when I faced urgent personal matters. During these times, I temporarily halted my research to address these issues. Once everything was resolved, I resumed my work, which entailed observing, conversing with individuals, and gathering information within the school. After returning from my research stays at both schools, I would carefully review the notes I had taken. This process involved jotting down observations, thoughts, and questions that had arisen during my previous visits. Reflecting on these notes often led to the emergence of new inquiries and areas of interest. To further explore these questions and gain a deeper understanding, I would make return visits to both Sungava School and Jagrity School. In total, I revisited Sungava School approximately 23 times and Jagrity School nearly 18 times throughout the course of my research. These return visits were essential for maintaining continuity in my research, uncovering additional layers of insight, and ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the complexities surrounding teachers' integrity in the school.

The in-depth interviews served as one of the tools for generating thick data from the field in an informal setting. I had in-depth interviews, which I also recorded for the transcription (Merriam & Grenier, 2019) with the prior information and approval of my interview participants, though at some point, a few participants asked not to record (I respected their request and did not record but I wrote it in my notebook). Before conducting an interview, I have guff-gaff and briefings on my study purpose to make my participants open to sharing. I was able to conduct interviews and guff-gaff with the teachers after school hours. Erlandson and Lau (2021), emphasize the importance of 'hanging around' to gain a deeper understanding

of the culture being studied, and I took guff-gaff as such in my research. This approach allowed me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural context and phenomena being studied. I was involved in the field as an observer, a careful listener, and an interviewer to explore how they acted, reacted, interacted, and performed (Hammersley, 2006).

Regarding the interviews I have taken in my research, formal interviews were conducted in a formal setting, and participants were informed beforehand about the interview. I used recording devices and notebooks to document the conversation during formal interviews. These interviews followed a set of predefined probing themes (see annex I) that guided the discussion. In addition to formal interviews, I also conducted guff-gaff characterized by their relaxed and spontaneous nature. These guff-gaff occurred in informal settings, and I did not use recording devices or notebooks to capture the interaction. Instead, I relied on my memory and notes taken after the conversation. I coined the term "guff-gaff" for these informal interviews, drawing inspiration from the Nepali language. In Nepali, "guff-gaff" signifies an informal and casual discourse or conversation between individuals. The guff-gaff frequently occurred throughout my fieldwork, including various periods, such as lunchtime, leisure time, and during my commute to and from the research location and other informal occasions. These guff-gaff sessions allowed for more candid and open discussions with participants, as the absence of recording devices and formalities created a comfortable atmosphere. In summary, my research employed both formal and informal interviews. Formal interviews were conducted with prior information, recording devices, and probing themes. On the other hand, informal interviews, referred to as "guff-gaff," were conducted in informal settings without recording equipment, fostering candid and open conversations with participants. I jotted down the notes in each interview and also tried to capture the participant's expression and emotions in the words. After that, I get back to them again to see if they have anything to share with me or add regarding what we talked about previously. I not only met them personally but also had a telephone conversation. And my participants were fully engaged with me during my whole research period with their freedom of withdrawal at any time.

Along with interview, I also made observations, as one of the distinct characteristics of ethnographic research is to observe the participants' activities in their daily life to get additional information about the research topic (Lopez-Dicastillo

& Belintxon, 2014). I observed and interacted with teachers, students, HTs, parents and SMC members during this time. In line with this, Gans (1999) stated that ethnographic observation is the only method that enables researchers to observe people's behaviour in real-life contexts, providing detailed and authentic information that cannot be obtained through other research methods, which is necessary for exploring sensitive issues like my research topic. However, as soon as I got permission to research in those schools, an observation started from that very moment (Eriksson et al., 2015). As I undertake an interpretive paradigm, it helped me to collect information about their everyday life and interpret them to make meaning (Schatz, 2013). Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggested that observation allows researchers to obtain honest and context-specific information that may not be accessible through other means. It also enables a deeper understanding of the world by allowing researchers to observe and experience it firsthand. This approach is particularly valuable in ethnographic research, as it provides for exploring complex and nuanced phenomena that cannot be fully understood through other research methods.

I agree with Yin (2011) that many different things from the research site and participants can be observed and documented in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. So, being an ethnographic researcher, I observed their gesture, get-up, way of interacting with me, and their mood, and my focus was on their behaviour and language (Hammersley, 2006). This involved actively immersing myself in their environment, listening keenly to their discussions, and closely observing their behaviours and reactions. I also noted their non-verbal communication, such as body language and facial expressions, to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives and experiences. During these interactions, I occasionally contributed my own insights and experiences to the discussions. This exchange of ideas was not only informative but also served to build trust and rapport with the teachers. It fostered an environment of open dialogue and mutual understanding. I gained a fundamental understanding of the basic rules by observing how people behave and interact with each other in their day-to-day activities (Krause, 2021). This practice helped me to see what the participants say, how do they say and what was there in practice. I also observed my participants and the contexts and surroundings they belonged to during the interview. Importantly, I strived to appreciate the cultural context in which these interactions took place, recognizing its

significance in shaping the teachers' views and actions. Recognizing that culture plays a significant role in how individuals perceive and practice integrity, this contextual understanding was crucial for interpreting their actions. And I noted all the details of my observation in my field note and later reflected on them. At times, when interview sessions with teachers and observations (inside and outside the class) were ongoing, students and parents would visit teachers to discuss their own matters. I would observe teachers and see how they behave with students and parents. This made substantial volumes of informal information through experiences in the field (Atkinson, 2015; Delamont, 2014). This helped me distinguish the differences between preaching and practicing.

I collected data in three different phases during my fieldwork. The first phase was about building a good relationship with the participants and observing their everyday lives and behaviours (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015), where I was keen on observing teachers' behaviour and how they dealt with the situations they were facing at the moment. Phase two involved interacting with the participants on the research issue; I conducted different interviews with teachers, and HTs, and also gathered supplementary data. Furthermore, I have involved myself in the process of teachers' meetings, different activities that are conducted in the school, guardians meeting, extra-curricular activities and different functions that were organized by the schools and conducted interaction with the participants with the support of early themes that were emerged from earlier phases. Phase three involved thanking the participants for their engagement and involvement in the research process. It also involves contacting them through telephone, messages, social media, and occasional visits even after completing the actual field stay. In all the phases, observation, note taking and writing my diary was going concurrently.

Data Unveiled: Strategies for Ethnographic Analysis

As I used multiple tools such as interviews and observation of data collection, I gathered rich information by studying things from the natural setting (Madden, 2022). The rich information demanded me to have multiple strategies for data analysis. Creswell (2013) advised researchers to prepare and organize their information before analysing it. Therefore, following Stake (2000), I start to scrutinize the information from the early phase of data collection. I corrected, edited and jotted down my field notes on my computer (Microsoft Word) and read it. I did it several times, which helped to get a picture of my field information, and I became familiar

with my empirical data (Eriksson et al., 2015). According to Sangasubana (2011), it is important for researchers to begin analysing their data while they are still collecting it. This approach ensures a more comprehensive analysis of the data collected during the study. For my study, I followed this approach by analysing the data as I collected it. This allowed me to identify new themes and topics that emerged during the data collection process, which in turn guided further data collection and analysis. Additionally, it allowed me to assess the quality of the data and determine if any changes need to be made to the research design. Hansen (2006) also emphasized the importance of a thorough and careful review of data by researchers. I followed this guidance, and transcribed all interviews and observations with great care so that the participants' words and perspectives were reflected in the transcripts. I also cross-checked each transcription against the original recording.

Data transcribing was a regular activity in the fieldwork, where I was also coding it to identify the categories out of those codes. Data analysis is not mechanical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I analyzed the data by developing themes. I explored the possible themes in relation to the experiences, feelings, and opinions of my participants. The themes were generated through rigorous coding (O'Reilly, 2012)—however, the themes kept emerging even at the end of my writing process. For example, as I discussed the various perspectives of teachers regarding their understanding of teacher integrity, divergent viewpoints emerged regarding the importance of time and completing tasks on targeted time. It was a challenge to determine whether to categorize these perspectives under time or task. The same issue arose while coding for information and observations related to practicing integrity. I had to scrutinize and re-read the data to determine whether they fit into existing themes or if new ones needed to be created. I came up with new themes for ones that were not fit to my existing themes. After I got the themes, I started writing on the themes with the feelings, opinions, and understanding of my research participants. In the meantime, I also explore multiple experiences based on the nature of the participants. I learned that analyzing gestures, proximity, and the context in which participants speak enhances the depth of analysis, making it easier to interpret their expressions and body language and draw important insights.

In such examination, I comprehend several dimensions, such as saying versus doing, diversities versus homogeneity, etc. Then, I interpreted the findings with theories, policies, literature, and my personal experiences (Sangasubana, 2011) both

from the point of a researcher and from my long experience of being a teacher at a public school.

My Quality Standards

Determining quality standards is important in any scientific work. However, there is an ongoing discussion within the research community about what constitutes quality in qualitative research (Mays & Pope, 2020). One of the primary reasons for the debate is the absence of a consensus or universally accepted set of criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research (Rolfe, 2006). As a qualitative researcher working within the interpretive framework, I followed four important principles recommended to ensure the trustworthiness of my qualitative research findings (Lincoln & Guba, (1985, 2005). They were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure the quality and trustworthiness of this qualitative research, I followed a rigorous process from the beginning, including the study's design, data collection in the field, data analysis, and the writing phase. At every step, I maintained a strong focus on methodological rigor and reliability.

One of the duties of a researcher is to maintain credibility in research work to regulate the quality standards of the research and its findings. Credibility means checking if the research findings match the collected data to ensure that the interpretation is trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As my research is focused on teachers' integrity, it requires a rigorous and systematic approach to ensure the credibility of the findings. To maintain credibility, I had a prolonged engagement with my participants in their natural settings (Madden, 2022). While collecting data for my study also, I completely immersed myself in the context of my research, which allowed me to gain a better understanding of the context and experiences of the participants. I established a trusting relationship with my participants by showing respect for their perspectives, listening to their concerns, and being transparent about the research objectives. And it is well known that when there is a level of trust established between the researcher and the participants, a researcher can get a better understanding of the cultural and contextual aspects of the study. This understanding enhances the reliability of the research findings. So, I followed the guidelines and built trust with the research participants to keep my research honest.

When conducting research on a sensitive topic like teachers' integrity, it was challenging for me to ensure that the views of my participants were true. I adopted a multi-source approach to gathering information to address this and avoid false

statements. This included conducting formal interviews, engaging in informal conversations, and making keen observations. I engaged with additional school stakeholders, such as the SMC, PTA, community members, and students, alongside my primary research participants. This allowed me to supplement the information received with diverse perspectives. I consistently sought reaffirmation of previously expressed statements and information from multiple sources, even when exploring and discussing new themes or when interacting in different settings. Given the topic's sensitive nature, I remained mindful that participants might be inclined to present themselves in a favourable light, showcasing integrity or portraying themselves as being good. From the outset of my research, I maintained awareness of this potential bias. By employing these strategies, I aimed to ensure the trustworthiness and integrity of the ethnographic research findings on teachers' integrity.

Likewise, I use the member-checking technique to ensure credibility in my research. I presented the research findings and interpretations in the form of summaries to my research participants and sought their feedback and input. I consulted my participants to get their views on it (Merriam & Tisdell, 1998). I used both individual interviews and group meetings with my participants. There was a need for an individual member check as there was some confidential data regarding their school that I could not share with other research participants. I requested my participants to review the provided information and provide me with their feedback. While doing so, when my research participants asked me to tell them in detail, I explained it to them. I made sure that their feedback and corrections were valued and taken seriously. I was open to making changes to the research interpretation based on their input. By doing this, I ensured that the participants' perspectives were presented truly, which became an asset in my research for exploring more in-depth data. This also helped me to have meaning-making on the right track, and it means the same as they want to convey (Carlson, 2010). This enhanced the credibility of the findings. Additionally, I took the participants' informed consent and ensured that their identities were not revealed without their permission.

Transferability, a quality standard in interpretive research, involves considering how my research can be useful to others (Luitel, 2012). I assessed transferability by considering how applicable the insights gained about teachers' integrity in one context might be to similar educational settings or cultures beyond the scope of my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I ensured the transferability of my

research findings by providing a detailed description of the research context, events, and experiences. This included information about the participants, such as their demographics and backgrounds, as well as details about the research setting and the methods used to collect data. This allowed my readers to see how my research might be relevant and applicable to their own situations. As Smith et al. (2009) suggest, I made the research-rich and transparent enough so that the readers can note the specific details of the research context and methods and compare them to a similar situation with which they are more familiar. I also analyzed the findings using existing literature, theories, and reflection to assess their generalizability to other contexts or populations.

Likewise, to maintain the quality standard of my research work, I followed the approach of the criterion of dependability. I provided a detailed description of my research methods and all stages of data collection and analysis (Schensul & LeCompte, 2012). I discussed, disseminated, and interpreted the analysis and implications of my work, supported by the field text received from my participants to participants (Cohen et al., 2011), and used their feedback to further enhance the dependability of my research findings.

I paid close attention to the principle of confirmability in my research. This means that I aimed to ensure that the findings I presented were supported by the data I collected (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, as cited in Anney, 2015). To achieve and ensure this, I provided a detailed and transparent description of my research process and data analysis methods. I ensured that the collected information was from the fieldwork, and meaning-making of it was done through various analytical and theoretical interpretations. Additionally, I disclosed my own values to increase transparency and objectivity in the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

My Ethical Approach

There is a need of ethics in day-to-day life. Moreover, from a socio-cultural perspective, there is a need to look at multiple ethical concerns in a sensitive issue like integrity. Therefore, I use multiple methods of ethical concerns. Ethical standards are crucial in research as they aim to protect the participants and others who may be affected by the study from any potential harm. These standards are based on a system of moral principles that guide researchers on how to conduct their studies responsibly and ethically. This shows that one needs to be good, respectful and fair to both

participants and readers (Morrow, 2008). So, to maintain it, I was polite and true to my participants and had the patience to hear and observe them.

In the context of a study on teachers' integrity, I used "situational ethics", as defined by Tracy (2013), which allowed me to consider the specific cultural and contextual aspects that impact the participants' views on integrity. Through ongoing discussions and by engaging in continuous communication with my participants, I developed and acquired a deeper understanding of the ethical practices and values that held significance to them. I talked with the participants throughout the study to make sure their perspectives were represented, adjusting my approach as needed.

I agree with Burgess (2005) that ethical consideration is all about the importance of accuracy, confidentiality, consultation, access, and continuity of purpose. I considered the well-being and rights of the participants involved. To address ethical concerns in this study, I made sure to address ethical issues by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and the site, ensuring anonymity. Throughout the study, I also upheld ethical standards such as I respect my participants, taking their convenient time to interact, making them feel comfortable to express their views, respecting their privacy and consent, avoiding harm, promoting reciprocity, and treating participants fairly. By doing so, I minimized the potential harm to participants and promoted a sense of equity in the study. Ultimately, by engaging in ethical research practices that considered "respect for persons," "concern for welfare," and "justice" (Creswell & Poth, 2018), I was able to conduct a study on teachers' integrity in a responsible and respectful manner, prioritizing the well-being and rights of the participants involved. However, during my study, I faced ethical dilemmas, though I have behaved ethically with my ethical principles and practices, which I have discussed in the following section. Here I present the challenges that I faced during my study and the concerns and realization of it.

I gathered information about teachers' understanding of integrity. This information was based on their perceptions, beliefs, and practical experiences. I found that there were significant differences between what teachers believed about integrity and what they actually practiced in their classrooms. While they talked about the importance of integrity in their professional duties, they didn't always put it into practice in their teaching activities. I also learned that sensitive research like mine could pose special ethical problems, as highlighted by Sieber and Stanley (1988). This means that I had to be especially careful to protect the well-being and rights of the

participants involved in my study. I faced difficulties not only in raising the issues in the field but also in analysing the information as there seems to be a contradiction in what they preach and how they practice.

As an ethnographic researcher, I developed close relationships with my participants over time, which allowed them to share personal and sensitive information with me. However, in some cases, participants expressed concern about sharing certain information that they felt was too personal or private. For example, one teacher even hesitated to share information, expressing that she was not supposed to let me know about it. Some participants even asked me not to include certain details in my thesis. As a researcher, I am faced with a challenge in how to respond to these situations. If I exclude this information from my research, it could impact the trustworthiness of my findings. However, if I include it without the participants' consent, it could damage my personal credibility and harm the participants. Therefore, I have to find a way to balance the need for detailed research with the ethical considerations of protecting participants' privacy and well-being. In some instances, I observed situations that were so sensitive that I was unsure how to discuss them in my research without violating the do-no-harm principle. To address this, I can still include these incidents in written form, but I would not reveal the person's identity without their explicit consent. This approach allows me to maintain the confidentiality of the participants while still providing valuable information in my research with the consent of my participants. However, I have not included such information, which my participants did not want to explore, although they have shared it with me during our informal guff-gaff.

As being an ethnographic researcher, I encountered various ethical issues in my study. Despite making my study overt, I faced challenges in portraying my participants' perspectives in written form. Some issues were challenging to articulate in writing, as words may not capture the nuances of the situation. To navigate these ethical dilemmas, I adjusted my level of involvement by participating as an insider while also observing as an outsider. Through my fieldwork, I realized that the ethics of participant observation should be considered in light of the research topic's sensitivity, the vulnerability of the individuals being studied, and the flexibility of the participants. It is essential to prioritize the well-being and privacy of the participants while also maintaining the integrity of the research. As an ethnographic researcher, it

is crucial to approach the study with an open mind, remain transparent with the participants, and be flexible in adapting to unexpected ethical challenges.

Crux of My Chapter

In this chapter, I described the research methodology that I adopted for the sensitive topic of teachers' integrity. I presented my ethnographic research methodology for exploring and understanding real-life contexts in education. I started my chapter by discussing the philosophical underpinnings of the interpretive paradigm and ethnography as a means to generate a context-based understanding of the teachers' thoughts, beliefs, perceptions, and values. The chapter then outlines the information on the purposive selection of schools and participants in the Kavre district, Nepal, and provides a description of the school and participants. I explained how I gained access to the research site and engaged in active listening, observation, and emotional attunement as an ethnographic researcher. Then I discussed my journey in this research work, including entering the research site, getting into the field and difficulties, and the lesson learnt.

I employed multiple sources of evidence for data collection and generation, including interviews and observation, to get a deeper understanding of the teachers' experiences. The chapter concludes by outlining the data analysis strategy and the quality standards employed to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. I also described the ethical approach used in the study, including considerations for ethical dilemmas encountered in the research process.

The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology used in the study, including my personal experiences and insights gained from the research journey. I emphasize the importance of building rapport and trust with participants and adhering to ethical standards throughout the research process. Overall, this chapter serves as a valuable guide for researchers interested in conducting ethnographic studies in education.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLORING TEACHERS' INTEGRITY: FROM UNDERSTANDING TO PRACTICE

Schools are also termed as social institutions (Frankovic, 1970) as in addition to support in having academic achievement, it also plays a crucial role in safeguarding, motivating, and inspiring students through teachers to transform, learn and develop new things from a critical point of views, and to work in collaboration with others (OECD, 2018) and guide them to do right. According to Lumpkin (2008), teachers play influential roles in the lives of students in schools, and the public also trust teachers and expects them to exhibit activities with good moral and character, such as fairness, honesty, trustworthiness, respect, and responsible.

Schools were traditionally established by religious groups (Khaniya, 2009) like 'gurukul, gumba,' to socialize and educate children with good morale and character. Nepal's education system also expects teachers as role models (Shein & Chiou, 2011) for students with good character and morals (*'Ashal-acharan'* and *'imandari'*), which means being good and doing rights (MoE, 2008, p.17; MoFALD, 2017). This is linked with moral foundations. However, teachers in Nepal are affiliated with various political groups for their professional safety and security (Muktan & Bhattarai, 2023). Teachers are an important part of the school, so their professional integrity matters a lot. However, teachers in public schools are losing the respect and trust of the general public as they are repeatedly blamed for not performing their duties (Ham, 2022). This has been reflected in the increased number of children enrolled in private schools, as there were 10% in 2009 and it has been 16% in 2017 (MoE, 2017). More students are now enrolling in private schools in Nepal because they are performing better academically, and public schools have lower academic achievement than private schools. This is even increased by the propensity to blame teachers for disseminating poor standards (Campbell, 2003; Sahlberg, 2011). Hence teaching as a profession is not as gratifying both communally and psychologically (Van Veen, 2008) though teachers are working in the social institution. This has raised questions about the integrity of teachers and also of the teaching profession. Hence, this chapter aims to explore the understanding and practices of teachers regarding their professional integrity.

Banks (2010) described integrity as following good morale and behaviour, which is of universally accepted standards and the practice of upholding and acting in accordance with personal and professional values that are of great importance to an individual. The integrity of the teachers is difficult to define and is not limited to a few actions of the teachers. The MOE and Teacher Union Nepal, 2007 have outlined a code of conduct (see annex: VI) for the teachers which includes commitment towards the profession, commitment to teaching-learning, commitment towards students, schools, parents, colleagues, co-workers, school managing committee, and commitment towards social justice in order to maintain their professional integrity (MoE, 2008). Commitment here refers to feeling positively connected to one's work (Hussen et al., 2016). From my fieldwork, I found that there is multiple understanding of teachers' professional integrity, and it is contextual. Teachers' understanding of integrity is basically based on what they have been believing, witnessing, and experiencing, as well as understanding from their upbringing.

Furthermore, I, being the ethnographic researcher, have observed teachers' activities and had in-depth interviews with them to dig out the practices on their understanding of professional integrity. I found while the core principles of professional integrity remain the same, the way they are practiced is according to the school cultures in which teachers work. So, I applied socio-cultural and socio-capital theory to look into the understanding and practices determined by the school's structure.

Hence, in this chapter, I scrutinize the perceptions and understandings of public schoolteachers regarding the meaning of 'integrity' and 'integrity in school'. During my fieldwork, I started by asking the opinion of teachers regarding education and teaching, and then only I asked them about their perception of integrity in teaching. While they were talking about their understanding, I also dug out the practices they were doing in their schools. It was substituted by observation as well. The overarching themes that emerged from my fieldwork while researching understanding and practices of integrity are time, task, dedication, self-satisfaction, and self-realization, portraying the practices on it.

Integrity as Timeliness: Contested Evidence

It was the first day of my fieldwork; I started my walk early in the morning to reach the research site, i.e., Sungava school, as directed by one of the teachers of the same school I had talked with. I was supposed to reach there on assembly time, but as

I was unknown about the way, the estimated time did not work and reached an hour late, i.e., 11 am. It was because of the gravelled and dusty road where trucks run in each 2-3 minute interval. And it affected my walk as I was also unknown about the alternative way. When I reached the school premise, there was no one in the school compound, so I went directly upstairs to the office room. There were three teachers (two males and a female) in the room who had their leisure time. The male teachers were talking while the female teacher was quiet. I greeted them and asked for the Head teacher (HT) with whom I had communicated to have my research work there. As the HT was absent that day, I then conveyed to them my purpose for coming to school. They welcomed me and asked to talk with the assistant HT. One of the teachers, Shyam, a lower secondary permanent teacher who has been working there since 1985AD, initiated the interaction and asked me about my profession.

When I was having guff-gaff, he said, "*Yo school ma kaam garnu ra falam chapaunu ekai ho* (to work in this school is as hard as to chew metal)." I then asked him why he was saying so. There was no change in his expression and was just speaking on his own and clarified that the teachers who worked in other public schools could not work in this school as there are certain rules for the teacher that are very strict such as time, regularity, and others. He also said that a teacher who got transferred to this school again made his transfer to another school as he could not work there for more than six months following the strictness. Giving this proof, he again trashed out that 'working in this school is not easy'. He was walking here and there in the office room and was repeating the same sentence: "*Yo school ma kaam garnu ra falam chapaunu ekai ho*". By saying this, he was referring to the strict rules that the teachers must follow in the school.

While he was sharing with me the difficulties of working in that school, the bell rang, and the assistant HT came with a smiling face, and when he saw us talking, he greeted me politely. I stated my purpose of the visit at the time of introduction. During this time, there were a few more teachers too, as there was a gap of five minutes to start another class. I was introduced to other teachers as well, and his remark, "Thank you for selecting our school for your research; you are welcome, and we are happy to support you for this", made me feel welcome. There was another bell ring; again, all the teachers moved to their respective classes except two who had their leisure time. I observed that not any teachers entered the office room before the bell rang, and in the same way, every teacher having classes left the office room as soon as

the bell rang. I could see the habit of punctuality among teachers in attending and leaving class on my first visit. This clearly shows professionalism has been practiced in this school as a compulsion, not as an ethic or a professional duty.

As there were only two teachers having leisure time in this period, I then mingled with them, introducing myself. One of them was Laxmi, who was in her leisure time and said that she was going to the next room to prepare materials as the coming school session was dedicated to enhancing the quality of education by using local teaching and learning materials in the classroom. She agreed to my proposal to help her in preparing the materials. When we started our conversation, she stated that integrity for her means a teacher being "*imaandar* (honest)" to perform the professional duties and responsibilities. She further explained, "Within that, 'time' comes in the forefront". Saying this, she reminded me of the consciousness of teachers on arriving in school and class taking time. And she also mentioned that all the teachers arrive at school before 10 am (10 am is the assembly time) and remain in school till 4 pm as there is a strict rule to follow time.

Another teacher was also listening to our conversation and was making a chart of the multiplication table, and he added, "Teachers should not cheat (*thagipan*) to their students and profession". By saying this, he was stating on teachers' arrival and departure in school and also in terms of taking classes, which means completing their tasks. He further said that in the particular school, all the teachers come on time and follow the timetable given by the school. The responses from the interview indicated that teachers in this school are conscious of time, and for them, maintaining punctuality is one of the important things that teachers should follow to show respect towards the profession. This has been made compulsion by the school administration, and teachers are following it as a professional obligation.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the case which I found in this school during the exam period. I was standing in the corridor when a primary-level teacher, who seemed to be tired, came to the office. I also entered the office room with her, and at that time, she was saying, "Today, students finished writing their paper early and were making noise, so I let them go and told them to study at home for tomorrow." She had not finished her lines when the assistant HT came and asked who had left the students outside. Before she could make any explanation, he said,

Miss, did you leave the class? Please do not leave the class even if there are only a few minutes left as you know they make noise which disturbs senior

students. And the most important thing is that they try to cross the road where many trucks run continuously on the side of the school. Now please take them to the class and help them cross the road afterwards. (*Assistant HT, 2 February 2017*)

Without saying a single word, she went to the class. Through several visits to this school, I noticed that the teacher's punctuality matters a lot. And as there is a risk of crossing roads because of trucks running, there is an issue of students' safety as well. With the help of community people, SMC, and the truck management committee, they had agreed not to run trucks for one hour in the school arriving and leaving time (i.e. 9 am-10 am and 4 pm- 5 pm). But as it was exam time and it was 1 pm, there was a risk for the children in crossing the road. Despite the significant role that the teachers play, a few incidents showed that though one is working under the strictness of time, such incidents which are mentioned above expressed the feeling of dissatisfaction with the behaviour of the teachers to the HT. HT, on the other hand, seemed annoyed with the let-down of the rules by the teachers. Such kind of practices where teachers were not living up to professional integrity gives rise to a mixed reaction of how they perceived integrity (Wabule, 2017).

Moreover, as I was conducting my research in two different public schools when I first visited another research school (Jagruti Secondary School), I arrived there at the assembly time by motorbike with one of the teachers working there with prior communication. The road was roughly gravelled. Throughout the 45 minutes drive, I could not see any children walking but could see a few female teachers walking with umbrellas in their hands, and it took around 1-2 hours to walk. It was already 9:45 am, and I was wondering if they could reach school on time. On the way to school, I was talking with the teacher who was driving a bike. He told me that it could be difficult for me to visit this site as there is no place to live nearby and the road to travel is also dangerous.

When I reached school, I saw that HT was commanding the assembly while a few teachers were observing it from the passage outside the office room, and students also were running to join the assembly. I also saw a few teachers walking towards school while I was driving to reach school on a motorbike. When I reached this particular school during assembly time, I got a chance to have a formal introduction with all the teachers before they moved to their respective classes. I was just sitting in

the office room as all the teachers went to their classes except the Assistant HT, who seemed busy reading the newspaper.

I initiated to talk with him by enquiring about the school and his roles. He was continuing his newspaper and was talking with me too. The first thing he asked me was why I selected the school, as there was nothing that I could get from there. His question and his statement surprised me. He said, "It is not easy to reach this school from the highway, and you have come so far with the hope of getting something good to write about teachers, but the condition is different here." At that very moment, two female teachers walked inside, greeted him and me as well, took the students' attendance register, and went to their classes. He referred to this case of late arrival teachers and said, "Look, teachers are coming 20 minutes late, and we cannot do anything here; it is like this only '(yeha ta yestai ho). No one is worried about the profession here". He further said, "I think it can only be a trouble to you to carry out your research here." His statement shows that teachers are neglecting time which is one of the essential things that teachers should follow and understand it as one of the essential professional standards.

When I had a discussion with the teachers in this school, they also said that teachers should be on time and do their duties timely, which they were not practicing. One of the Nepali subject teachers, Ram Krishna, in the interview said,

Being a teacher, we must be punctual as students, as well as parents, learn from us. If we do not do our duty on time, then how can we complain to students? Even when parents are called, and they do not arrive on time, how can we ask them to come on time for meetings or other things." (*#Ram Krishna, Guff-gaff, 9 February 2017*)

The same teacher was good at sharing things with an example, but I observed that he was the one who was saying about punctuality, and he himself was not going to the class even after the 15 minutes of the bell rang. Here, my research participants perceived punctuality, regularity, and completing the duty on time and properly as part of the professional integrity of a teacher. However, they are not practicing as they have not internalized this as their professional duty, and teachers in this school seem to be noticing and blaming that the other teachers are neglecting punctuality but are forgetting their own actions.

Hence, the scenario of punctuality and school timing was different in Jagriti school. Teachers hardly arrived on time. It is the teachers' duty to maintain positive

discipline inside the school for a better learning environment, and for this, the teacher herself/himself needs to be in discipline first, as honesty begins with self and extends to others (The Centre for Academic Integrity, 1999). Teachers at this school seemed less serious about punctuality and regularity as teachers were arriving at school late, and so were the students. The HT was conducting the assembly, and teachers and students were continuously arriving. I found teachers' timing (arriving late and leaving early) also reflects on students' timing and behaviour. However, Benninga (2003) also stated that teachers with that sense of commitment to time demonstrate their moral professionalism by coming to work regularly and working effectively. It was seen that the school where there is a compulsion to remain within the school boundary from 10 am to 4 pm had forced the teachers to be in class on time too. According to Kuber from Sungava school, "When all the teachers follow the instruction of the school, no one goes against it" This seemed true too in the context of the researched schools. And contrary to this, when there is no obligation on time, other teachers neglect their understanding and go for their own benefit. Here, the most important thing that I noticed was the effect of the system and culture developed in schools which determines the teachers' arrival and leaving time.

Furthermore, regarding the class time in Sungava school, there was an hour-long class instead of 45 minutes in the last ten years. And this one-hour class system was set specially to avoid teachers' late arrival in class (SMC Chair, personal communication). New young teachers readily accepted this rule, while the experienced teachers were not satisfied at the beginning but later were compelled to follow it. One of the 35 years experienced teachers, Shyam, teacher of the same school, said, "I was not accepting it, but thinking that it might be for the betterment of student, I supported." It clearly showed that HT and SMC do not consult teachers while making any rules. This makes teachers feel the imposition of restrictions rather than taking ownership. However, according to him, he is a servant of the government, and he must be fully dedicated to schoolwork during school hours. The dedication towards the job and faithfulness towards students was seen in the teacher's words though he did not appreciate the rules that were made by the administration. This showed the strict administration with strict rules for the teachers to follow, which they have not accepted and owned as professional norms.

On the other hand, the newly appointed young teachers seemed satisfied with the class duration. They were smiling when Shyam was bucketing his views. There

still seemed to be a silent conflict in this rule. Shyam and a few other teachers debated that when one teacher remains absent, then s/he loses one period out of five in a week, which can be a significant loss for the students. While the other teachers who are in support of the one-hour period defended that students must walk for hours to reach school, so it is easy for them to carry books too. Both groups have their own points where they were thinking about the students rather than defending for self-gain. In my research time, this was always a hot topic for them, and by the end of the session, teachers agreed to change the time of classes for a year time and see which was better for the students learning. However, the above depiction demonstrated a difference between newly appointed and experienced teachers, as the new ones are ready for change while experienced ones are a little bit more rigid to leave many years of practice and adopt the new (Arthur et al., 2015). They have been practising one way for several years, and most of the other schools are also practising 40-45 minutes classes, and it is difficult to replace by other systems.

Thus, the system of the school that is developed as traditions often guides the behaviours and practices of the teachers too. But still, it cannot be denied that the structure that the school has formed paves the teachers to work accordingly though they have their own perception of that as the teachers are taking one-hour classes for ten years.

Regarding the structure and working culture of the two researched schools, here is the experience of two teachers from two researched schools. First, Sushma from Jagriti school, shared her story and said,

I entered this particular school after working in private schools for five years. I came with strong discipline, enthusiasm, and commitment. But as days passed, I found myself being dull than in my previous school. I am not blaming other teachers, but I think that the activities that were running and the way teachers were working drove me towards that. No sooner, I found myself being lazy even to stay full time in class. (*#Sushma, Guff-gaff, October 28, 2016*).

The above statement showed that the school culture and environment of the school and its surroundings also have an impact on teachers' attitudes and behaviour.

Another respondent of Sungava School, Manik also shared his experience. He said,

I used to work in a remote public school where there were very few numbers of students compared with the number of teachers. I did not have to take more classes, but as I moved to this particular school, I found strict rules and

regulations of the school which every teacher must follow and was following. It was difficult for me to cope for a few days, but now it is set as a habit. Now, I am enjoying my work here. I still remember one teacher saying that working in this school is difficult; this school is more strict than others. But I think I had done my job properly, and even if I fail to follow the school's rules, I am informed by the teachers and HT as well. (*#Manik, Guff-gaff, October 29, 2016*).

No matter where you come from and how you used to work, the above experience of two teachers from different schools demonstrated that the system and rules that the school sets as a culture determine how you continue your task in new places and institutions. It was argued that when teachers face complicated settings and environments in their workplace, they maximize the exercise of maturity and reasonable decision based on self-competence and minimize the externally imposed rules governing work (Banks, 2009). The information presented above suggests that a teacher who demonstrates integrity in one setting may not necessarily exhibit the same behaviour in another context. One potential reason for this variation is the impact of organizational culture. From my empirical evidence, I argue that teachers rely more on institutional culture and practices than their own personal experience and competence in their profession.

Integrity as Performing Task: Get a Hold on Self Satisfaction

It was the month of April 2017; teachers were given various tasks with the formation of different committees for the student's admission. Female teachers in Sungava school were sitting on chairs on the school ground, keeping some registers on the table. They were waiting for parents and students to come and fill out the admission form. I was also sitting with them and having guff-gaff. A young woman walked towards the teachers carrying a small child in her arms. Sabita was happy to see her, brought the child, took out money (Rs.100), and kept it on the child's forehead as a blessing. There is a tradition in Nepal that when one sees a newborn baby for the first time, the child is taken as the form of God and are seen only after offering money as gifts and blessing for her.

From their conversation, I came to know that she was an ex-student and was there to visit her parents. As her house was near the school, she came to show her child to her teachers. Sabita said, "Look, the students come to meet us after several years of their school life. And such behaviour of students makes me feel that they

remember us for years for the way we teach, behave, and care for them. So, I always have a feeling in my heart (*'aatma dekhi palayeko bhabana'*) that I should care for my students and teach honestly. I should have self-satisfaction with my teaching, which surely satisfies others as well."

During my fieldwork, I have always seen this teacher with a big smile on her face, and as she is one of the oldest female teachers working there, she knows her students' parents and has very lovely and loving behaviour toward all the students. When we walked together in the morning to get to school, she used to talk about her ex-students and the stories she gained during her teaching profession. And she shared, "I sometimes get frustrated by the school administration and management committee, but when I enter into the classroom and see the innocent face of the students, I forget all the frustration and fall in love with them, and this might be the reason why I am satisfied with my job." According to her, it does not matter to her how others judge her, the happiness she gets is from the love and appreciation of the students and seeing their learning achievement and progress. This is an example of how social networks can build and maintain social capital. And further, her experience highlights the importance of social networks and social capital in fostering positive relationships and achieving shared goals within a community (Enai, 2014). She was tracing others' judgment on her task as the discipline in-charge teacher observed her sitting while teaching a few days back. She then was called by the head teacher (HT) who had told her not to sit in class time. She shared this with me the next day with anger at how she was judged. She said,

Inside the classroom, the most important thing to monitor is how a teacher is teaching. But I was scolded for sitting. I was not asked once why I sat at the desk. I am also human, and I do feel tired. Sitting inside the classroom was like a crime I had committed. (*Sabita, Guff-gaff, 5 November 2016*)

She was upset about the way she was evaluated. She said she would be happy if her way of teaching and students' understanding of that particular class were evaluated.

Similarly, Laxmi, from the same school, said, "When I feel that my stay of one hour in class is meaningful and my students understand what I taught in that period, then I become satisfied with my work. I am so attached to my students that when I see any of them upset and not concentrating on their studies, then I talk with them separately. When they share their problems and hear my suggestions, I feel satisfied

with my job. What a teacher needs more than that when s/he is satisfied with the work s/he is doing." She seemed happy to share that the school administrator calls her to counsel and convince students even when she is on leave. And she is also assigned to the group for counselling students. She believed that the teaching task is the obvious thing a teacher must listen to and care for students. She said,

Taking classes as assigned is the nature of the profession. But for me, I do not take classes to get praise from other colleagues or only in the name of completing a class or course. I always keep in mind that though the children are small and cannot show their evaluation of my teaching now, they are the ones who praise me in the future too, if I can teach them effectively without cheating on my profession. (*Laxmi, Guff-gaff, 5 February 2017*)

She thinks every teacher gets the meaning of teaching if it is valued by the students in the future. Taking classes and completing tasks here is linked with the appreciation that a teacher can get in the future from the students as a lifetime achievement. Hence, from my research participants, I explored that doing assigned tasks is perceived as one of the significant parts of the teaching profession. When the perceived perception is done in practice and it gives you self-satisfaction, one can feel fulfilling the professional integrity. I also believe that getting self-satisfaction on the task is possible only if you have done it with all your heart without cheating and committing fraud towards yourself, students, and the profession.

In Jagriti school, I observed that most of the teachers remained in the office room after the bell rang too. They slowly finished their talk and entered their respective classes. I have even seen some teachers give students classwork and do their personal things inside or outside school. On the second week of my field visit, after taking the first period, assistant HT reminded me that teachers should take tests on their subjects in their classes. This teaching-learning activity was already mentioned in their academic calendar. Pratik hurriedly said that they had forgotten about it and had not informed the students. He queried, "How about taking it tomorrow after informing students". Assistant HT and Seman disagreed and told the teachers to take the test from the second period. It was already the second period, and teachers then went to their classes.

When I asked them about the questions to be asked and students' preparation, Seman said, " Teachers can make it in the classroom and write it down on a whiteboard, and regarding the students, if they are informed also, they write without

preparation." I can easily visualize the annual calendar hanging in the office room where there was a plan to take a monthly test, but the plan seemed to be neglected. Integrity is being friendly with students and creating a learning environment they shared with me while I interviewed them. For Pratik to teach in an effective way, a teacher must enter into the class with the lesson plan and relevant learning materials of the topic and subject. Similarly, Seman also has given importance to using lesson plans for an effective classroom but in practice; teachers are not even aware of their own annual plan. There was no compulsion made by the administration, so teachers also remained passive. They are taking their duties and profession easily, and it is working for a long. There seems to be a culture of why I should take the extra burden to prepare the class and make materials when it is not asked and monitored. This makes me think why teachers who understand their roles and professional duties do not follow until the administration tells them. I observed that teachers themselves are not fulfilling their duties without follow-up and monitoring from HT and SMC.

Similarly, Seman from Jagriti school said, "We are here to teach and complete the course, so when teachers finish their classes, they leave school early." Teachers do not bother about students' learning achievement and make them enable for the desired level of competencies. And this has been copied by other teachers as well, and as a result, in the last period, you can find hardly five teachers in the school. The school is situated far, and teachers leave school early in order to reach their homes on time by ignoring their duties in school. When I was there in the school, I also witnessed that even the teachers staying in the local community also left school mid-day or earlier than that time. The structure of the education system is unclear by the concern about the motives of the various participants (Hallak & Poisson, 2002). The educational context that teachers themselves set determines whether to be punctual and work properly or leave on time. The prevailing culture among teachers in Jagriti school appears to prioritize personal convenience over professional commitment. Teachers leaving school early without fulfilling their duties demonstrate a lack of accountability towards students' learning outcomes. The reason for teachers leaving school early without completing their duties could be due to various reasons, and it's not possible to determine the exact cause as it depends on the individual. It might be a willful failure to fulfill responsibilities, indicating a lack of commitment. On the other hand, it could also result from a difference in understanding, perhaps related to communication issues, workload perceptions, or other aspects. But the incident

presented above shows that by seeing other teachers not working properly and leaving school early, their fellow teachers also do the same.

Hence, one of the important codes of conduct of a teacher is to give quality education to all the students enrolled in the school to achieve better learning achievement (MoFALD, 2017). And it is possible when teachers perform their tasks. My research participants also took teaching-learning activities and completion of the task as an intrinsic part of teaching (Klassen, 2002). Empirical evidence suggests that some teachers are highly motivated to perform well regardless of the school environment, while others only perform well when the environment is strict. This indicates that teachers' performance is not only influenced by individual characteristics but also by the context and environment in which they work. Van Veen (2008) observes that teachers are more competent and motivated when having autonomy in their work. However, the evidence shows that teachers actually perform better with external interventions and culture developed in the schools than with their self-belief in what they want to do. From this, it was found that while some teachers thrive with autonomy, others benefit from external interventions and a supportive school culture. Ultimately, teachers who focus on their own growth and development rather than competing with others are more likely to feel satisfied and motivated in their profession.

Integrity as Accomplishing Roles and Responsibilities in Team

During my fieldwork, I found that teachers perceived students as at the education system's centre point, and teachers' duties and responsibilities remain around them. When the teacher performs better, then the direct effect is seen in students' presence in the school and their academic performance (World Bank, 2012). When teachers are assigned specific roles and they internalize them, then the teacher performs well with high integrity. For this, Ramesh from Sungava school said,

I feel that if my students' performance degraded each day and failed in school, then I am responsible for that. Many students in higher grades are enrolled here just because of trust in us and our quality teaching, so I must do my duty with full integrity". For this, he recalled his entrance to the new school. He said, "When I was appointed to a public school from private school background, I was asked what changes I would bring to that school with the experience of teaching in a private school. Then I said I could give my best to make all the students succeed in grade 10. I felt that I was not only challenged

but also given the responsibility of students. I kept it on my shoulder with high morale, responsibility, trust, and hope. We then planned to run the class effectively and were serious in our commitment to taking classes and supporting each student for their success. And as a result, all the students except one got good results and were credited by their parents. Since then, the school has followed the same system and is having good results. And I must say that the school had never got first division or distinction in SLC earlier, but now few students hold such grades. (*Ramesh, Guff-gaff, March 29, 2017*).

The success cases presented by Ramesh showed that teachers become responsible and work with integrity in their jobs when they are trusted and are given shared leadership. Similarly, Seman from Jagriti school said, "The relation between school and teacher is like the relation among family members at home." When there is a feeling of belongingness, responsibility, and love towards work/relation, then the school/family runs smoothly though it is continued with regular arguments or discussions. And same is with the institution." There is a need of respect to teachers and some shared responsibilities to be done by both parties for a common cause, i.e., "success of students and their learning."

Manik shared his learning habit, which he thinks is because of his responsibilities in his profession. He said,

Teaching profession is not easy; if I have to become an ideal teacher, I must have the feeling of sacrifice and dedication." I then asked him what kind of sacrifices a teacher should make in his profession to be known as an ideal teacher. He elaborated and said, "Look miss, I got my job in teaching after completing SLC (SEE now), and I was continuing my study. I continued it till I got a bachelor's degree. I fought for the post of secondary level, and I got it. Then I got more responsibilities (appointed as HT) at school and at my home too. I stopped my education after my bachelor's as I had thought that the certificate of a bachelor's degree was enough to work as a teacher. I used to spend most of my time at school; I used to clean the school by myself too. But as the year passed, I felt that I should enhance my study as my profession also demands higher degrees. From the time, I have started to work I am fully devoted to teaching and whatever I do, I keep my profession in my mind. I love my profession as much as my family. (*Manik, Guff-gaff, 9 February 2017*)

During my field visit, I found him talking straight, and he is among the few teachers who have updated himself according to the need of the profession. He himself believed that if he was not dedicated and making self-updated then he would have lost the respect of students and colleagues. He illustrated the example of one of his colleagues with whom he started his teaching profession. That teacher was not given any classes but was still on the list of teachers. He was there just to have a round at school and to remain in school till 2 pm. Manik said, "I would have remained the same if I was not devoted to my profession and have not updated myself according to the time and need." He was holding the position of head teacher (HT), which made him feel more responsible towards the work, and that forced him to be updated. He seemed to be prone to competing with himself as he worked on his own without support from others (Sahlberg, 2011).

In Jagriti school, teachers were not assigned any specific roles and responsibilities, they were meant just to take classes from 10 am to 4 pm. All the roles and responsibilities were only held by the HT. I observed that HT himself conducts assembly and deals with parents, and other issues also remain with him. Even assistant HT has a problem with this type of attitude of HT 'doing all by self, being self-superior'(as per assistant HT), and with this, there seems groupism among teachers. This resulted in a decreased feeling of ownership and belongingness. According to the HT, he did not get any support from his colleagues even though they were requested to do any work, so he himself became responsible for all. However, on the other hand, teachers said that they wanted to take responsibility for their work with full trust and consultation but HT only orders them to work, and they cannot keep that in their self-evaluation form which is essential in getting promotion. Botha (2011) suggests that when there is a pitiable relationship between teachers and their school leaders, it can have a disapproving influence on the motivation and passion of the teachers.

The research participants from both researched schools perceived to work in a team is better for the development of the school and students' academic achievement. In Sungava School, teachers have made departments for each subject and also for other extra-curricular activities. There were teams according to the level of classes like pre-primary teachers group, basic education group, secondary education group, exam preparation group, etc. The assistant HT explained, "We have given responsibility according to the department we have separated. They work accordingly.

If there are any issues, they try to solve being in the group, and if the issues are not solved, then only it is brought to the HT or me.” I have also seen the meeting schedule of different departments. The team is divided, the roles are distributed, and teachers are made feel to work in a team with responsibility. According to my participants, it not only enhances the working culture in the team but also strengthens integrity in school as everyone is under surveillance by another teacher, and they feel like learning from each other. The presence of teamwork in Sungava school not only improved the working culture but also contributed to a stronger sense of integrity within the school. Teachers had opportunities to collaborate, share ideas, and learn from each other, which positively impacted their professional development and classroom practices. Contrary to Sungava school, there was no such team formation, and it was complained by teachers against HT as well. The participants from Jagriti school also perceived that teamwork is essential to work effectively and efficiently. One of the participants said, “Here is not such sharing culture. When one doesn’t know about any topic, they hesitate to share or ask other teachers.” This might be because they have not developed such a culture in their teaching-learning process. Such practice within a school can create differences among teachers working.

One of my research participants from Jagriti school said, “When teachers are not getting respect, rewards or recognition, then teachers forget about their responsibilities and gain an ego of 'Why should I'. Hence, these statements from the teachers showed that there is misunderstanding and distrust among teachers regarding their roles and responsibilities. The empirical evidence presented above showed different sides of dedication and professional integrity. On one side, it was found that the higher the roles and responsibilities, the higher the feeling of ownership and belongingness. On the other side, teachers wanted to work for the students and get appraisals in return. Hence, the empirical evidence emphasized the crucial role of roles, responsibilities, and teamwork in shaping a school's overall effectiveness and success.

Needs and Aspiration of a Teacher: Living a Life with/without trustworthiness

The research participants relate integrity to the needs and aspirations of a teacher. There is a common understanding among teachers that their needs and aspiration should focus on their profession. One research participant, Pratik from Jagriti school, summarized that integrity is based on living with high morale and principled life, keeping the needs and aspirations of self into it. He said, "It is easy to

be a teacher but difficult to be a good teacher", as a teacher needs to devote her/himself fully to the profession and children's learning.

Regarding this, Shyam of Sungava school expressed his frustration, "What to do? I am fully devoted to this profession and have been working honestly for more than 35 years, and it is sad to hear bad things about this profession. When I say that I am in the teaching profession, people say, '*aananda hola hai jagir ta*' (your job must be relaxed one). They do not even value our dedication towards our profession." A teacher's honesty plays a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining trust with others. The teaching profession in Nepal is taken as one of the easiest found jobs, which as a result, lacks rewards both publicly, sensitively, and psychologically (van Veen, 2008). This shows a trust deficit between teachers and the public as well as a lack of communication and collaboration between schools and society. This type of notion is intensified for continuing the poor standards by some teachers (Campbell, 2003; Sahlberg, 2011).

However, the practice of how one's personal needs, wants, and goals tempt one to act with or without integrity are poles apart. Manik from Sungava school said, "Teaching is a full-time job, and the pay we get from the government is not enough for the survival of the family. And I am taking tuition³ classes and teaching in colleges in the morning and evening time though the government of Nepal does not allow it legally." This sometimes is taken as an act in a selfish and rent-seeking manner by the authority and people. But when there come questions on the survival of self and family, the teacher focuses on self at first and then towards integrity or principles of the profession, one is undergoing. He has internalized that he is doing his full-time job properly, so there should not be any problem. He also has taken written permission from the Ministry of Education, with the help of the school administration, to take such classes (Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Minister [OPMCM], 2018). This shows that integrity is degraded, and corrupt practices prevail with blame for low salaries, even though all government staff and teachers have the same salary scale.

The demand side story is different from parents and community as they blamed that, in order to take tuition classes, teachers do not teach properly in school and call students to join tuitions. Private tuition is taken as a challenge to maintain

³ Tuition classes are extra lessons taught by a teacher outside of regular school hours. Students usually have to pay for these lessons to get additional help with their academic subjects.

integrity in the education system (Biswal, 1999). For this, during guff-gaff at teatime, one of the teachers from Jagriti school said that for some teachers, schools are meant to have some rest and preparation for other businesses and college classes rather than a full-time job with responsibilities of children and their learning. Here, the teaching job is taken as easy (Graycar, 2015) and effortless as they are not given much workload and responsibility. This showed that few such teachers and cases are seen by the public, and teaching professions become a curse to all the well-performing teachers (Labaree, 2010). Laborious teachers also are blamed together with such teachers as a whole, saying that teachers focused on their needs, extra money, and aspiration without doing their jobs.

For such blame, Shyam said that we are blamed though we do our job properly because of the few teachers who forget about their profession. He said, "Some take the pension by sleeping and knitting and webbing sweaters (doing nothing in teaching job), and some get it by devoting all their time to the profession." Here, Shyam indicates those teachers who leave school after a few hours and enjoy their time doing personal stuff and enjoying in the tea shops, having big political talks. Neither are they questioned nor are they properly monitored and punished. In each talk, he used his common word, "*K garne yeha yestai cha*" (what to do, it's like this only). The situation described suggests that some teachers are not doing their job properly in schools. Instead, they encourage students to take private tuition classes. This can make parents and the community lose trust in the education system because they expect teachers to be honest and teach well in schools. When teachers prioritize private tuition over their school responsibilities, it can lead to questions about their dedication to their main job as educators. Additionally, some people think that some teachers see their job as easy and don't put in much effort. This perception can further damage trust. It raises doubts about whether these teachers are truly committed to their student's learning and if they are acting with integrity. Moreover, if a few teachers behave in a way that doesn't meet the standards of honesty and dedication, it can affect how everyone sees teachers in general. This means that the actions of a few can make people mistrust all teachers. It's important to remember that trust in education depends on both individual teacher honesty and the efforts of the whole education system to address these issues.

Besides this extra work done by the teachers, a few teachers pointed out the teachers' training and workshops. One of the teachers of Jagriti school said teachers

attend training and workshops organized by the DEO. My research participants said that those who have a connection in DEO or education training centers under NCED are called to attend training regularly, and they are seen less in school. A few other participants raised questions about such teachers- "When they are far from classroom activities and more on training only then, what is the meaning of participating in training". They neither share their learning with other teachers nor put those learned knowledge and skills in classes. It has been their extra earning and building networks with authorities. Another experienced teacher supplemented with a big laugh and said, "*Training bata aayesi narayan hari* (after returning from training, teachers forget to implement it into the classroom)".

Teachers understand that training is given in order to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills which are essential things for professional development. But the continuous attainment of training by the same teacher because of their personal, professional, and social network discourages other teachers and raise questions about their presence and performance in class. My participants poured their dissatisfaction on such teachers misusing social networks and training for their personal needs and aspiration as the learning remains within themselves only during the training period.

Accordingly, teachers expect to have equal and continuous professional development opportunities not only to sharpen their knowledge or to fulfil their needs and aspirations but also to upgrade their skills and teaching methodologies. The selection of the right participants and appropriate delivery of teachers' training linking their classroom challenges only make better understanding and application of training into classroom practices. The poor selection of participation and poor management and delivery of training remain only theoretical and less practical, which further makes poor implementation and application in the classroom. Thus, poor management and delivery of training to teachers also erode the integrity of teachers for not being able to do their jobs in classrooms after such training.

Integrity as Transparency: Synthesizing Policy and Actual Needs

Integrity in Education is deeply rooted in the religious and ethical grounds of teachers and the school community. This has been recognized by policymakers and administrators, which has been reflected in the code of conducts (see annex III- VI) for teaching professions a long time before the establishment of anti-corruption agencies at the central level. Similarly, the code of conduct for teachers in Nepal is presented in the seventh amendment of the Education Act and also in the education

regulation. This has been further strengthened by the Eighth Amendment in 2016 (see annex V). However, there are some policies that are not clear and flexible, the stakeholders can adapt according to the circumstances and situation of the school. When I observed the actual situation of the school, teachers were not clear on what they should do to work with integrity and what they should not. There was confusion on the educational policies to implement according to the need of the school or to mould the policies to make the work easy. Teachers were confused about what is termed as behaviour with integrity and what is not (Herlihy & Theodore, 1995, p. 131). One of the participants, Laxmi, from Sungava school, said,

I try my best to teach meaningfully to all the students. When I am spending a period in one class in a day, then that time should be fruitful to both the student and teacher, but I am helpless to those students who hardly come to the school. But the pain is that the school administration forced teachers to upgrade these students who are not regular in class in the name of a liberal upgrading system. (*Laxmi, Guff-gaff, 9 April 2017*)

She is frustrated by the compulsion they were made by the school administration and seemed to be confused about her actual duty. When there is a system of liberal upgrading to all the students with remedial classes, no matter whether s/he is regular in school or not, the policy and the administration of the school make them work accordingly. Continuous Assessment System (CAS) and Liberal Promotion Policy (LPP) have intertwined policies, but understanding and practices among teachers and schools differ. Teachers have forgotten their roles for CAS and to run remedial classes to recover the lost classes of students. The research conducted in Ghana also identified that one of the barriers to supporting students, especially lower attended students, is the larger classes and lack of training of the teachers (Hayford, 2008), and it is similar in Nepal while following CAS. Schools, on the other hand, are following CAS for evaluation purposes only. The CAS is known as a fundamental part of daily classroom activities (Rai, 2019). According to the experience of the participants, most of the teachers have understood CAS is only a way of liberal promoting policies by giving away any grades. Teachers were found to be using CAS as a letter grading system only, and for that, also they seemed to be unclear of the concept and its applicability procedure (Kafle, 2020). The teachers are experiencing confusion and misunderstandings in their attempts to understand the provisions stated in the policies (Parajuli et al., 2012). Here, the policy of CAS and

LPP in evaluation seems to be manipulated and not transparent, or they are using it not in a daily classroom activity but are using it during the time of evaluation. So here, the question is raised what sort of integrity is this in their performance? And such absence of clarity in practising the policy brings paradoxes to them.

Likewise, it was admission time, and four teachers, along with Laxmi, were counselling the withheld students in the presence of their parents and were convincing them to repeat the same class as they had scored minimum grades to be promoted to another level. That grade was also given because they cannot give less than that, according to the administration. They cannot fail any students and must succeed all students. Teachers themselves seemed to be unclear of the system and were feeling that they were helpless, and they could do nothing but can convince parents to repeat the class. They were convincing parents as, according to the evaluation system (LPP), they cannot make the students fail. However, when they get assurance from parents to make students work hard, they are upgraded with a commitment letter both from the parent and the student. A few students were very weak performers, and for those, teachers were not showing much flexibility. Here, the LPP and CAS were used according to the benefit for teachers only. Laxmi said, "We are tired of teaching and focusing on them in the classroom, so if they do not want to repeat the class, we are not going to admit them to this school." She sounds frustrated with a few students who were not promoted and were also irregular in school. Teachers were trying to convince to repeat the class to those to whom they could work a year more, and they were not forcing the irregular and weak students to get admission or repeat the class. They want children at the school to retain their jobs, too (teachers' quota depends on student numbers), and at the same time, they also want them to perform better in the days to come. In the researched school, there was no clear instruction on CAS and LPP. One of the challenges the teachers face seems to be a lack of training in CAS (Rai, 2019). The incident presented above showed that teachers were promoting students to save their jobs.

Are the teachers fulfilling their responsibilities or keeping them on an aside when it is not favourable to the school and themselves? When I was working as a teacher, I also saw that the failed students were given passing marks and were suggested to join other neighbouring schools. According to the teachers, keeping them in school means getting low learning achievement, which reduces school quality and public credibility. The demands of school and community compel one to perform

accordingly. This showed the challenges of acting with integrity as teachers were unable to do it because the system was not consistent in its values.

As the time of admission was different from other school running days, I found that teachers were staying in the school dealing with parents and newcomer students till four o'clock, and after that, they had their staff meeting where they planned for another day. Generally, teachers must stay till 4 pm, but I can observe teachers working before and after school hours, too. Shyam said, "The pain is with us due to a smaller number of students enrolled in the primary level. I have taken the salary of the Nepal government, so I should show sincerity towards my work (*nun ko sojho garnu paryo*)." The integrity of teachers towards the teaching profession is not only about improving the learning achievement of students and increasing the pass rate but also meant to have self-satisfaction in the profession. Teachers feel disappointed at the beginning and/or at the end of the academic year for not doing proper care and support to weak students in their learning and behaviours as they get low student enrolment.

From the interaction with School Management Committee (SMC) and head teacher (HT), it was seen that they also have a fear with the new education policy that as the number of students decreases, the teacher quota can be transferred to other places where there are more students. This may eventually lead to the merger of two schools if they have a low number of students than the prescribed ratio (1: 40 students).

Moreover, the scenario was different in Jagriti school. The date of result publication was different in this school, so I was able to witness the result distribution in both schools. In Jagriti school, the name of the promoted students was displayed on the notice board, and the students spotted it and returned. Teachers also left the school within the first two hours of school time. Pratik, a teacher at the same school, said, "There is nothing to do by staying here; all we get is scolding from parents of failed students. So, it is better to leave." It clearly shows that there exists a lack of collaboration and communication between teachers and parents regarding the learning and academic progress of students. I explored the reasons and found that it is the only public school in that locality, and they have a monopoly. Parents do not have any choice but to enrol their children in other schools. So, teachers do not fear losing the students and are not performing their jobs thoroughly. It seems like the notion of quality education has not been understood and applied by teachers in this school.

But if the students are not getting proper education or even enrolment in school because they are weak in education, where should they go for their rights to get an education? Do the teachers who claim to understand better teaching as having self-satisfaction get satisfaction from such practice? One of the parents said “When there are no options, we are bound to send our children to those schools where we know that teachers do not do their jobs properly and take admission of our weak performing children”. This raises a question of professionalism on teachers, whose responsibility is to teach the weak performer students. Are they meant to remain failures forever? Are not teachers failed in their jobs and performances? When the teachers understand well that their duty is to enroll all the students of the catchment area and provide quality education (MoE, 2016), the teachers throw them and focus on talented students. Teachers are trying to meet the new trends of the education system by following the CAS for evaluation; however, it has resulted in unequal treatment of a few weak-performing students.

Teachers in my researched schools are not only facing dilemmas in implementing the policy of CAS and LPP, which I mentioned above but are dissuaded by the budget that the district education office is distributing. The school is in need of one thing, but the budget is allocated for another thing. And the scenario is one cannot present a bill of actual use; they have to spend it on what it is actually allocated for. HT and the administrative staff, along with the teachers, know the system very well. They are also aware of the need for school and the freezing of the budget if not spent. HT of Sungava school showed me what they have done with the budget they had received this year, i.e., 2016. He said, "Madam, you talk about integrity in work, but see, I have not misused a single rupee, but as the need of school was different than what they were directed to spend on by DEO, we have bought this furniture instead of building toilets." He also showed the bill they had kept. It was being done in a transparent manner, but still, there arose question marks on their understanding and the actual act they were performing. In Jagriti school, the activities are similar; the only difference is they are not transparent as in Sungava school. As a result, there seems to be conflict among themselves, i.e., between the teachers and HT.

This showed that there is a flow of funds to the schools according to the interest of educational officers but not according to the need of the school. And in the name of showing it as proper utilization, they make fake bills, and they still do not consider it as cheating, but it is being considered as utilizing it for school benefit.

They are using the funds to spend on the actual needs of the school, and while making bills, they are making them fake as they have to submit them to the district education office. They are making such bills in a transparent way within their school administration and teachers. This is now evidence that for the betterment of the school, one can lie and make fake bills. Though it is properly utilized but still is termed as working against integrity. Here, the teachers perceived integrity as fulfilling the duty according to the need and betterment of the school, but still, they were blamed for working against integrity. A teacher's understanding and practice of integrity are contributed by the educational context they are facing. Cheating becomes the proper use of funds when DEO officials do not value and understand the necessity.

Crux of My Chapter

In this chapter, I presented the empirical information of my first research question (i.e. How do teachers understand and practice integrity in their everyday school context? The purpose of this chapter was to draw the perception and practices of teachers on integrity. In the earlier section of this chapter, I discussed the perceptions that teachers have regarding their own integrity, and in the subsequent section, I explored how these perceptions are put into practice. I brought the discourse of understanding and practices of teachers about their own integrity. Hence, I scrutinize the meaning of integrity for the teachers at my researched public schools.

After carefully studying the participants' views, I identified five different themes that describe how they understand and practice integrity. These themes provide valuable insights into the concept of integrity among teachers in the researched schools. The research participants took time as the most needed aspect for teachers' integrity. Additionally, teachers' integrity remains intact when they perform their tasks and fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The research participants took teaching-learning activities and completed the course as an intrinsic part of teaching (Klassen, 2002). The research revealed that teachers' trustworthiness is influenced by their needs and aspirations, emphasizing the importance of adhering to policies to address genuine needs. The participants also perceived integrity as transparency in adhering to government and school rules and policies.

When I asked my participants about their understanding of teachers' integrity, I also observed and dug out the practices of their day-to-day teaching activities. The understanding of teachers' integrity was quite similar among the participants from

two different researched schools. While the practice was different regarding the practices, it varied from one school to another and one teacher to another. It seems to be contextual.

After addressing the first research question in this chapter, now in the next chapter (chapter 5), I will address my second research question, i.e., What has been contributing to the understanding and practices of teachers' integrity?

CHAPTER V
TEACHERS' INTEGRITY: TEACHERS' LEARNING AND PERFORMING

***“Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo, Maheshwarah,
Guru Saakshat Parabrahma, Tasmay Shree Guruve Namah //.”***

Teachers in the gurukul stage were perceived as the incarnation of God Vishnu (Segall, 2017), and teaching was taken as worshipping. The words they say and the behaviour they show become as *dibya bani* (divine saying) for the students and the society itself (Awasthi, 2004). In most parts of Nepal, teachers are still considered educated persons who can deal with the situations and show the right way to the community (Beijaard et al., 2000). Teachers get respect for that too. But nowadays, teachers and teaching have become more of a profession than worship. There also raise several questions on teachers' integrity and the teaching profession in the global (Shukor & Abdullah, 2016) and Nepali context. The aim of this chapter is to explore the origin and realm of Nepalese teachers' integrity. Thus, the focus of this chapter centers on the emergence of teachers' understanding and practices of integrity. I do not assess teaching practices as good or bad, as my objective is solely to explore how integrity is perceived and manifested among educators.

In this chapter, emergence refers to how teachers understand and practice their profession. This is about how teachers are inspired, motivated, learned, socialized, and cultured, which build their understanding and practices into day-to-day work in their profession. In doing so, I present the sharing of three different teachers from my researched schools in terms of understanding and practices. I have talked with many teachers from my researched schools and these three teachers are distinct from others. I have presented detailed information from three teachers but also kept other participants' views and information. When I interacted with my participants, understanding the teachers' perspectives on integrity was basically based on their understanding of the influence from their experience about the profession and from the biography of those influenced persons that have inspired them as well for the teaching profession. For this, Dahl (2015) explains that teachers' life experiences and backgrounds are influenced by various cultural, social, economic, and political contexts in Nepal, and such context plays a significant role in shaping their

understanding and practices in teaching, which in turn influence their teaching practices in Nepal. This means that teachers' personal and professional experiences are not isolated but are part of a larger context that shapes their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours.

While conducting interviews during my fieldwork, I realized that an individual's understanding is shaped by their interactions with the environment they are born, raised, and educated in. In other words, the individual's perspective is influenced by the environment in which they have lived and learned. So, this chapter brings out the more localized and contextualized epistemologies which are being derived from the day-to-day perspectives of teachers from my researched school. Our views about the world are shaped by various elements such as peers, family, school, workplace, media, and socio-cultural values. These elements have a significant influence on how we formulate and strengthen our beliefs and opinions. Hence, I narrated three teachers' experiences with their diverse backgrounds and presented how their understanding and practices of integrity resulted from. This ethnographic research enabled me to learn and understand the teachers' way of living and their unique socio-cultural constructs, principles, beliefs, and values. Here is a brief account of my research participants.

Table 1: Background information of key participants (pseudonyms)

Teacher participant	Kuber	Laxmi	Manik
Gender/age/marital status	Male/56/married	Female/32/married	Male/38/married
Qualification/teaching experience	Masters/38 years	Bachelor/6 years	Masters/16 years
Post/teaching subject	Primary Social	Primary English	Secondary Math

The above-mentioned three teachers from the researched schools (Table 1) are from different age groups and have different duration of teaching experience, and are teaching at different levels. I got a different perspective on the emergence to the understanding and practices of the teaching profession and how their teaching perspective became fruitful in their professional life. In other words, I was curious to know and explore how they think about the teaching profession and why they chose it and are continuing it.

Laxmi: Upbringing and Influenced by a Role Model

Laxmi works as a primary teacher at Sungava School, which is located half an hour away from her home. She is married and had a child of 11 months at the time of my initial fieldwork, i.e. 2017. She has done her bachelor's degree in education with a major in English and pursuing her master's degree in the same field. She started her teaching career at an institutional (private) school six years ago. After a year, she got an opportunity to work in a public school as a volunteer for the first few months as her father was retired, and the school approached her to take a few classes till they got another teacher from DEO. When there was a relief quota to be filled in the same school she volunteered, she applied along with three other applicants and got selected for the relief quota. The social network of her father informed her about the vacant post in school, and with her ability to teach, she was selected.

Regarding her family background, Laxmi is the only daughter of her parents with three brothers. Her father was also a primary teacher in a public school near her home. Laxmi describes her father as a strict person at home and friendly with others outside. She describes her father's strictness in terms of following rules, obeying the elders, reading properly, and doing things on time. Her father gave much priority to education and honesty in his life despite poverty, so he managed to educate all his children. That is the reason teachers at that school keep good relationships with her father and update them about school progress. Laxmi shared, "My father was a government employee and the only person to look after the whole family. But still, he admitted us to the private school as he wanted us to be good at English. He was a math teacher and always wanted to see his students performing better in each aspect. However, he was disappointed with the poor level of English in public school. That is the only reason he admitted us in the private schools despite his weak financial status." Laxmi along with her brothers continued their primary education in the private schools, but they all were forced to be shifted to the public school when the school administration made compulsion to admit the children of public school teachers in the public schools. Still, her father did not take them to the school where he was teaching but shifted them to another public school where English was used as the medium of instruction. Her father's interest in English was not only limited to his children but he had a hope that his children would become English teachers and serve in public schools. For Laxmi, her father was thinking of his students and was worried about their weakness in English subject. She always has seen her father loyal to the

profession. Though Laxmi presented a good motive for his fathers' intention, it sounds inappropriate to some extent as other children in her class were not getting proper teaching in English subjects in that public school.

During the interviews, Laxmi repeatedly returned to two incidents as the most influential in her life to become a teacher: the enthusiasm and loyalty of her father in the teaching profession and a role model teacher in her school life. When Laxmi was in her school life, she was highly motivated by a female English teacher, Gayatri. She used to stare at her each teaching activity. She said,

I liked the way she teaches and care for the students. She is polite and friendly and always comes with a neat and beautiful dress. I even used to stare at her hands when she wrote on the blackboard. I used to imagine myself being like her when I grew up. I thought that after being a teacher, I would be wearing beautiful clothes and people would like me as I liked her and would respect me too. Not only students but parents and community people also showed huge respect towards her and rely on her for better suggestions for the development of the school and community. Unlike other teachers, Gayatri miss not only used to spend a lot of time in class with the students but also outside the class with students and parents. She used to play with us and taught us to dance too. For me, there was nothing that she could not do.

(Laxmi, Guff-gaff, 9 April 2017)

This showed Laxmi wanted to be in the teaching profession to get respect from the people and to have a decent life as she has visualized of her teacher. Laxmi said, 'Gayatri miss is my ideal person and best teacher. She was always on time, and hardly miss any of her classes. She was an influential teacher following all the rules set by the school and made her students follow them as well.' For Laxmi, she was a role model in the teaching profession for students, parents, and other teachers due to her dedication, competency, pedagogical process, and focus on time, tasks, and learning of students, bridging students with parents and parents to schools.

Her ideal teacher was never late in class and always inspired her pupil to complete the task on time. For this, Laxmi said. "Once my friend has forgotten to bring her homework and with the fear to get punishment, she asked permission to get it from her home during the lunch break. As Gayatri miss was the class teacher, she strictly asked her to bring it before the lunch break bell rang. But, when my friend was ten minutes late, she did not allow my friend to enter the classroom but was allowed

to learn standing outside the room." This incident made Laxmi feel that to be good in the profession one should be strict on time and full engagement on students but still not let the students stay far from the learning activities.

Laxmi was sure that she can choose the teaching profession as soon as she finished her school education. Eventually, after appearing in the school leaving certificate examination (10th grade), she started her career in the teaching profession in a private school. From the expectation of her father and the inspiration of her idol teacher, she taught English subjects. Laxmi also was very careful in terms of punctuality, she carefully followed lesson plans and was involved with students and parents directly. During my field observation, I observed her being alert to class timing. One of the students also said that she is never late in her class and never leaves her class early. I still remember her interrupting an hour-long interview between us, saying that I feel like cheating in my profession even if I enter five minutes late in the classroom. Her father's strictness on punctuality and the timely presence of her ideal teacher contributed to her understanding of timeliness as a part of being good in the profession. She learned from her childhood that to be good and moral is to be punctual, well prepared and presented, focus on the learning achievement of each child, complete task/curriculum, mingle and be friendly with students and make each child get success in study. Literature suggests that the student-centred teaching-learning process promotes students to construct and learn knowledge actively (Mtika & Gates, 2010). Laxmi was inspired by the pedagogical method of her ideal teacher.

As Laxmi was brought up in a family with a teaching background, she has seen her father listen to the radio for recent information to share with the students and check their homework copies at home in his free time. From childhood, she realised that being a teacher is a rewarding job, but one needs to be dedicated to that profession. However, she shared that it is difficult for her to spare time at home as she is a daughter-in-law and has to do all the household chores by herself, and only after that she could spare time for class preparation. Nevertheless, no matter whether she finds time for preparation at home or not, she always remains busy in her leisure period correcting homework, preparing lesson plans and teaching materials, and counseling students when necessary. One of her co-teacher, Pramila said, "Laxmi is always on time and she is friendly with the colleagues and always help other teachers whenever we need suggestion and support." Inspired by her father and her teacher,

she has a good relationship with most of the children and their parents, and she believed in learning by adding much fun to it.

Laxmi was a well-groomed, communicative, responsible, and friendly teacher. And the most noticeable thing I observed that made her different from other teachers was her soft, polite, and convincing language to the parents, students, and colleagues. From her father, she has learned how to deliver in simple words and language to make her students understand easily. When she was a child, she saw how her father taught in a simple way to make the students understand easily. So, her motive is to make her students understand well rather than make things complicated. She said, "I feel that my 45 minutes of teaching is interactive, meaningful, and productive when my students understand and interact with my teaching". This showed that for Laxmi, to achieve self-satisfaction in performing a task means to become good in the profession one is in.

Laxmi consistently performs well in her work. Despite the prevailing culture of blame, her dedication to maintaining high-quality work is evident. This is further supported by the praise she receives from both fellow teachers and parents. I have substantiated her outstanding performance through cross-examination (see para 5th and 6th). Laxmi's commitment to excellence persists, even in situations where her efforts may not be duly acknowledged.

Hence, Laxmi's story shows that being a good teacher is not just about following rules but also about weaving together values, commitment, and ethical dilemmas. Despite financial challenges, her father's dedication to education reflects a commitment beyond academics. The decision to change schools introduces ethical complexities, showcasing the delicate balance teachers face. Laxmi's experiences teach us that being a good teacher involves personal values and professional integrity. Her commitment to being on time, interactive teaching, and finding joy in her work reflects how her upbringing and role models shaped her view of professional integrity. Overall, Laxmi's journey helps us understand the challenges teachers face in making ethical decisions and how personal experiences shape their integrity.

Kuber: Religious Service Motive and Reflecting

After the 10th grade study, Kuber was appointed as a permanent teacher in 1980 (April 3rd) at the Primary level in the Kavre district. I selected Kuber as one of the participants for this study for mainly two reasons; he was of 57 years at the time of the interview with 38 years of teaching experience, and was on the verge of

retirement (He was retired at the time of thesis submission). Secondly, he was not active in teaching learning activities during my field visit. During my field visit, I noticed that Kuber was not actively involved in teaching and learning activities. His presence was only noticeable until lunchtime, and afterward, his responsibilities at the school seemed to be over. It appeared that he was not keeping himself up-to-date with the changing needs of the education system, which was also mentioned by some other teachers from the same school. Interestingly, the School Management Committee (SMC) chair recommended him as the most suitable person to participate in my research work. Despite having nearly four decades of teaching experience, Kuber seemed to have distanced himself from classroom teaching. However, this presented a unique opportunity for me as I was keen to have Kuber as my informant. I was eager to explore his perspective on the teaching profession, his reasons for choosing it, and his decision to continue in this field until his retirement age.

During his childhood in the 1960s, there were few schools where only a few students near the city area used to get a chance to study as there were a smaller number of schools and it was impossible then to get access to the school in the city area from the village side. He felt lucky among the few who had the chance to attend classes. He recalled his student life and said, "Students of his period respected teachers as god and think of school as their own". He proudly shared how he used to care for the school property as a student. He said, 'During our school days, there used to be rooms surrounded by bamboo, and have to sit on a mat (Gundri) taken from the home. And each weekend, I, with my friends used to plaster the floor with red mud and cow dung. He continued and said, 'In our school time, the teachers' instruction was like the *'divyabani'* which cannot be disobeyed. Teachers during that time were taken as a source of knowledge and an ideal person with high respect and social status in the community as they were the only source of information, good knowledge, and character as well as skills for better livelihood.'

He recalled his student life and said that the head teacher (HT) and the math teacher were strict, and all the students were afraid of the teachers and used to be attentive and disciplined. As the rules for the students were strict, teachers also used to be role models with high respect for rules, profession, and their duties as they used to come to school on time and mould students with deeper knowledge, understanding, and social character. He said, "During that period, teachers were all good and dedicated towards their profession." When I asked how they took teachers as good

teachers, then he said, 'All the teachers come to class on time, help students deeply and complete the course on time with high motivation and dedication to their profession. And more on that, teachers were strict but were worried and serious about student's learning achievement and future career.'

Comparing the situation of past and present, he said, 'If my teacher found me playing outside regularly and was not good in my studies, then my teachers scolded or suggested me to focus on studying and guide me continuously for success. And sometimes, they directly meet our parents. But these days, teachers hardly remain on duty in school from 10 am - 4 pm.' By illustrating this, he was trying to portray the loyalty of a teacher toward their profession. He also mentioned that teachers during his student life were so much respected that students along with their parents came to work in school as volunteers in their one call. Talking about the teachers, he recalled his student life and said that the school did not have any good infrastructure and learning facilities when he was there as a student. And teachers used to bring books and learning materials on their own and were a source of knowledge, and students respected them as gods. The cleanliness of the school, their classroom, and the surroundings fall on the students' duty. He still remembered sweeping school and rubbing the floor with a cowshed and red mud every friday second half or saturday morning. Teachers used to order, and students followed it. Teachers during that time with their dedication and good morale had earned the respect and love of the parents and the students. Teachers used to lead and work for educational excellence as change agents for social transformation and socializing students with good morale and character.

Bearing this in mind, Kuber liked the teaching profession which he had entered accidentally as he and his family had never thought that he would become a teacher. He was from a business background in his family and was supposed to engage in his father's shop. But the situation came in such a way in his life after appearing in SLC in 2037 BS (1980 AD) that he was forcefully brought to teach in the neighbouring school as there was a lack of teachers at that time. When he started teaching young children, he found himself deeply engaged and enjoyed. He was happy getting children to learn and mingled with him with good character and high respect. Unknowingly he started enjoying his teaching profession and appeared in the teacher's service commission. Very soon, he became a permanent teacher in a public school which was nearly an hour to reach from his home. He was praised by his

family members, relatives, and neighbours for being a teacher, and was started to call him a 'master'. The term 'master' is particularly used for male teachers to show respect and acknowledge their knowledge.

As Kuber is the eldest son and had to support his family and the study of his brothers and sisters, he then focused only on his profession as he wanted to support his family. He wanted to join the campus for further study, but the campus was in the other direction of his working place. He had to choose either profession or higher study but not two at a time. Being the elder son, and getting a government job, he chose to work as a teacher and thought to make his brothers study well. He could have gotten involved in the family business i.e., the grocery shop besides the school time, but he was giving that time to take extra classes for weak students. Hence, his degree was limited to SLC only. But he was not worried about it as he used to teach most of the subjects well at the primary level for what he was appointed for. Thus, he continued his early job and supported the economic condition of the family. He did not have any better option rather than continue the respected teaching profession and make bread and butter for this joint family.

After two years work in the appointed school, he got an opportunity to shift schools with another teacher in his hometown where he had studied his basic education. He was very happy to get transferred to his own community. He was excited to educate the children and serve his own relatives and community. He said, "I felt more energized when I was appointed in this school as I will be working and educating the children from my own community." Along with that, he was happy that his work could be respected by all the community people, and not only that, but his family also got much respect as the teacher's family.

Once when he was returning home from school, he saw one of his student's fathers fighting with his wife and the student was crying bitterly. He went inside and counselled them not to fight, and as the student seemed so upset and terrified, he took him toward his home. He elaborated, "I then asked them to meet me in school the other day with a promise that they will not fight with each other again rather they discuss and mutually settle the issue." Kuber has a good connection with parents and the community and as teachers are respected, their suggestion matters to them. Kuber said that the teaching profession requires the overall responsibility of the students so there is a two-way relationship between school and parents. This clearly shows that

the teaching profession is not only for students but also for parents as a glue and change agent on family issues of parents and other social issues in the community.

Kuber took the teaching job as the responsibility, so it doesn't matter who is watching and who is not. He said, "I do not work to show others, I work for ourselves". By stating 'ourselves', he meant to include teachers, students, and parents. To enhance the quality of students learning, Kuber used to call the students who were weak in their studies at his home and teach them without taking any extra charge. His teaching style included sitting with the children on the floor and walking here and there with a stick in his hand. He said that before 30 years, the more the teacher is strict, the more the students are disciplined and focused on their studies. His professionalism included a stifled cultural practice. His disciplinary teaching style and relationship with their parents, and students gave him the reputation of a competent teacher. Teachers of that period gave priority to the relationship and emotions of students and parents. They used to create learning environments for students both in schools and in the community as they used to take their success and motivation on students learning and success.

However, the case has been different in recent days (Kuber's case). Kuber's teaching life and the respect he used to get changed over that time. He seemed so frustrated and when I saw him in the school, most of the time he was seen walking here and there in the corridor of the school or sitting alone in the office room. I have tried to talk with him many times, but I failed in each attempt. I felt that he wanted to escape from me. Luckily, one day when I was walking towards the school, I saw him. I approached to talk and then he slowly opened up. He then shared what contribute to his understanding of professional integrity (presented above) and how he used to teach (practice).

Nevertheless, the situation is different at the time of my fieldwork. He said, "School has started to teach in English medium from last 10 years. And I was taking classes only in Nepali subject to the primary level as I am not comfortable teaching in English medium. But from last year (2016), I am not taking any classes. As you know, I am from the local community, so the School Management Committee (SMC) chair and head teacher (HT) suggested appointing another teacher as the alternative way instead of shifting me to another school. I am still here only because I am from the same locality." The change in the education system brought him bewilderment. He said that he felt humiliated because of such a change in his profession. It is a

challenge for professionals to reconcile traditional values with contemporary realities, particularly within the cultural and socioeconomic dynamics (Kunneman, 2005). These challenges arise due to the clash between the expectations set by traditional values and the rapidly changing realities of the modern world. Teachers like Kuber face difficulties in striking a balance between the two, which can cause significant challenges in their work. Kuber's understanding of teaching has changed over time. The study of a public school teacher in Nepal life histories found that teachers' attitude and culture in regard to teaching shows that teachers follow the traditional way of teaching despite following different modern teaching interventions which are developed by the government of Nepal through curriculum, textbooks, and different teacher training (Eikeland, 2014). Kuber is one of the examples of a such teacher who could not follow the change in the teaching-learning process (Arthur et al., 2015). And, as a result, for Kuber, the teaching did not remain as teaching but has changed as giving a round of school and remaining till half session without teaching as he could not adopt the modern teaching pedagogy. When I asked him about upgrading himself as per the pace of the time, he said, "*sakinu lageko batti ma tel (oil) halera kati nai ber balxa ra*". He meant to say that he is going to be retired soon and what is going to happen even if he upgrades himself. He further said, "I have taught in Nepali medium for more than three decades and have not used the English language since then. I have found new teachers facing difficulties teaching in English medium too. Then how can I think to learn in a short time and then teach." From his statement, it showed that there is no meaning in learning English and upgrading when he has to retire in a year's time.

Kuber was best known for having a good relationship with students and parents, but the change in the education system and environmental change in the school increased the gap between him and the parents. Here, I still wonder, having more than thirty years of experience in teaching, why he was not given to teach Nepali subjects after they shifted to English medium instruction in teaching. Hence, according to Kuber, the traditional system of education seemed to give teachers high respect and made them work with morale. Teachers also feel responsible and accountable towards their teaching profession and also towards the students' and communities' requirements and safety (Eikeland, 2014). Kuber follows the traditional image of a teacher when it comes to his professional identity (Voinea & Pălășan, 2014). However, according to Kuber, the modern structural changes in teaching have

changed such behaviour and feeling from many traditionally dedicated and devoted teachers as it has destroyed their belief in their capacity by reforms that focus on teaching in English medium. One of the research participants from the same school said that the effort and his continuous teaching seemed to be disrespected by imposing new rules. For him, it was not his choice to remain passive and stay without teaching and receiving a salary, so it is not unethical for him. It somehow seemed to disvalue the ability and experience of teaching of committed traditional teachers. However, few other teachers raise a question mark on his integrity.

According to the school administration, the scenario is different; they don't take it in a bad way. HT said, He is capable and has given his life to the school, but now his previous capability seemed to be limited and insufficient to be compatible with new school rules. Now the school is giving him that facility of half salary payment as providing support and offering respect to him for his decades-long teaching career in the same school. Though there arose issues with their integrity on such a step, HT claims that they did it with the acceptance of all the teachers and the management committee. Their motive is to show respect and give him a nice farewell.

Hence, Kuber's journey as a teacher shows how important it is for teachers to be dedicated, committed, adapt to changes, face challenges, and be recognized by the community. His commitment, struggles with new teaching methods, and the importance of being recognized as a teacher highlight the different aspects of what it means to have integrity in teaching. Kuber's involvement in community matters also emphasizes the role of teachers beyond academics, contributing to both minds and morals. However, his reduced duties for less pay raises ethical questions about how experience is valued. In essence, Kuber's story is like a guide for teachers, reminding them that personal choices and cultural values work together to shape teacher integrity.

Manik: Bird's Eye of Community on the Profession

Manik, a 38-year-old man was holding the post of head teacher at the time of my study, but when I first met him, he was working as a secondary math teacher. In our interaction, he shared two reasons for becoming a teacher. One was his own aim since childhood to become a teacher and another one was the inspiration and motivation from his father to be a math teacher. He also shared his confusion as he grew up. His aim of being in a teaching profession was changed due to decreasing trend of respect and professionalism among teachers and more blame for public

school teachers. Manik had the assumption in his early student time that teaching was a rewarding profession. But when he was in grade 8, he started hearing much blame from the parents and community against the teachers. He was in a dilemma about whether to go or not to go for the teaching profession, however, he finally chose this profession as it pays for his life and livelihood, and also hopes that he receives identity, respect, and self-satisfaction from his work. Here, I spot he was guided from Maslow's hierarchy of needs from physical, and psychological to self-esteem and self-actualization.

For Manik, the teaching profession is highly rewarding and self-regulatory with high autonomy and professional ethics which can have a direct impact on the socialization of children and their emotions. Being in the profession for a decade, he shared his experiences and thoughts on constantly changing his understanding and practices of integrity in the teaching profession. According to him, when more system and structure for teachers' attendance and professional monitoring was set up, teachers started paying attention to their duties and performances. Moreover, he thinks that students' motivation to study and respect teachers were gradually eroded by low learning achievement among students and less parental engagement in school governance and management. He said he had seen the teaching profession as a respectable job when his father was working as a teacher.

Likewise, as he is recently working as an HT, he finds challenges in the leadership role and has been weakened by the engagement of teachers in party politics for their job security and promotion (Shrestha,2008). Teachers' involvement and active participation in politics have not only brought difficulties in administration but also in the teaching-learning period, which now has become one of the threats to the education system, (Shrestha, 2008). Politicization in education with more nepotism and favoritism for party-affiliated teachers and parents/SMC resulted in the degrading teaching profession and its accountability (Kirya, 2019).

With 7th Amendment of the education act and donor funding to the education sector with the EFA movement at the global level made school management close to the community leaders with more power and resources. This amendment was done to enhance community participation in school governance and maintain integrity in the education field. However, according to Manik, the focus of SMC/HT continued infrastructure development and hiring their own relatives as teachers with local resources and government funding, but less attention and priority was given to

students and their learning. This made SMC/HT dishonest and promoted nepotism and favoritism to manipulate the school resources and power with the protection of their political leaders/parties.

When schools started getting resources for scholarships, textbooks, and learning materials, it made HT and SMC less transparent and collaborative with teachers and education stakeholders for its optimal use. Having said this, it is not wrong to empower HT/SMC through any means, but research participants suggest for transparency in their work. Furthermore, politicization in schools made groupism among teachers and parents which made school management weak. Teachers were divided by party politics as they have many teachers' associations as per their political ideology (Shrestha, 2008). SMC and political leaders started giving protection and preference to their own teachers even if they did not go to school and teach students. This made professional ethics and morality of teachers eroded and the integrity of teachers is in questioned.

The change in the education system and the changes he has seen in the teaching profession have forced him to change his childhood aim, but as he can work and study together while being in the teaching profession, he chose this as means of earning capital and social recognition. Here, Manik was attracted to teaching as it was for him a noble profession. Later on, although he changes his mind, he again thinks that it was a matter of perspective and cultural values. He wanted to do his best in whatever he decided to do. Manik said that he was influenced by his teachers especially his English and Math teacher who were role models in his school life. One of the reasons for selecting Math as a major subject in his study was to become the best teacher of the students as during his school life, most of the students used to like Math teachers. The important thing he liked about that math teacher was his competency in math as well as his way of raising his voice for students and their learning. The HT was so strict and rude towards the students and used to give strict punishment even for small mistakes. In such a situation, his math teacher stood against HT and saved students from being expelled. Manik felt that the teaching profession is the only profession where one can mould the future of children. He said that a teacher is just like a potter (kumale) who can give the proper shape (future of children) to the crude mud (children) according to children's ability and desire. He has learned that this profession can give immense satisfaction, but teachers need to have a sense of responsibility towards the future of the children, and once the person

is in this profession, s/he should work with honesty. Though he was afraid to follow his childhood aim seeing that teachers' integrity is in question, he says if one works hard in the profession and becomes loyal and has honesty, a teacher can earn respect for that profession.

During our guff-gaff, Manik shared about his school life. He was a school topper in each grade and used to cover leisure classes in lower grades, as told by the teachers. This has somehow strengthened his interest and qualities of becoming a teacher. He also started to take tuition classes with his own friends, which made him more knowledgeable and competent on math subjects. After his SLC, he was so conscious and determined about his job, so he joined I. Ed to be eligible for teachers. With his outstanding results in school and good competency in math, he was hopeful to get a job in a private school in his own village. With no doubt, he got an opportunity to teach math in that same school. Community people already knew that he was a talented student because of his good performance in and outside the school. By the time he was to enter the profession, he was doing it not to fulfil his childhood aim but in order to support the family and his own living. Manik still had hope though there was eroding faith and confidence in the teaching profession, that he would be able to bring change in the concept of people's minds regarding the teaching profession. So, in order to support the family and his own living, he entered the teaching profession. When I asked him why he chose the profession in which he had doubts and is not it unethical to enter a job one does not really like. He answered,

I had doubts, but I accepted it as a challenge, and I have a belief in myself that I am good at this profession as I have been teaching my juniors and friends. I do not doubt my capability, my hesitation was on the people's perception that I have witnessed regarding the teaching profession. But you can see now I am working well in this school and the community people are also appreciating it.
(#Manik, Guff-gaff, 2 June 2017)

During his school age, there was mushrooming of private schools, and it was easy to get a teaching job as soon as one completed the school education. His father had a strong connection and social network with the community people as a reference to get a teaching job. He was one of the talented students produced from the nearby public school, so he was sure enough to get the job. His childhood aim, his father's motivation, and his belief in earning early made him choose the teaching profession. Since he was the elder son, he had to support his family and their livelihood. He said,

I started teaching in a nearby private school as soon as I completed my school education and that is how my journey of teaching started. After working nine years in a private school, then I was appointed as a temporary teacher in a public school which was located in a remote place. Though my aim was to be a teacher, I had not thought that I would be doing this teaching profession for a long period of time as I found this a humiliating and challenging profession. But see, it's 16 years of my teaching career. And slowly, the passion to do something in this profession has raised within me though there arise several questions in this profession." He also said that if he quits this profession at this moment, he will not be able to get a better job in another profession. He further said, "I have been teaching in this school for more than 7 years where I became permanent just two years before. I have to work hard and perform better to make my all students learn better and a few more students get enrolled with our name and belief in our job, so that also makes me feel responsible towards this job. (Manik, Guff-gaff, 2 June 2017)

He then shared his different experiences of working in different schools. He said,

After working in a private school for six years, I then got a chance to teach in a public school in relief quota for two years. The school where I was appointed was not running properly, I was given responsibilities, and then I made some rules in a consultative manner and made the teachers follow them with compulsion. The rules were neither made with personal interest nor for personal benefit. It was not an easy job to make all the seniors and older teachers follow the rule as most of the teachers were not even taking classes regularly, but as all were compelled from a participatory decision, no sooner did all the schoolteachers follow it. After a couple of years, I was transferred to another school in the same district. It was so difficult for me to leave that school as I had earned respect and had left some rules/lines as a legacy that all were following happily. When I attended the new school as a temporary teacher, it was a well-established school, and many senior teachers were working in education. So, I only had to take classes as assigned to me and after completion of school, I could go home early. There were certain rules of school which we had to follow. Concurrently I also appeared in the teacher service exam with the hope of getting a permanent job in a public school.

Now, after getting through the teacher service exam, I feel I am full-on energized (*Josh/jangar*) to work. (*Manik, Guff-gaff, 2 June 2017*)

Different educational institutions have been the source of Manik's understanding and practising professional integrity in teaching jobs. During his profession, he came across primarily three distinct types of educational institutions. The first was the institutional school, the second was the public school in rural areas, and the third was the recent school located in semi-urban. His understanding and practising professionalism as a teacher in the rural area appeared to be the one with a sense of responsibility and belongingness. This sense of responsibility and belongingness makes a person contribute positively to maintain integrity. Integrity is the foundation of being successful, which requires a delicate balance between showing respect and taking responsibility (Shahid & Azhar, 2013). From the second school, he experienced that already set school system and the behaviours of the senior colleagues paved the way to work accordingly. He was strategic; being new and junior in this profession in his second school, he was simply following the rules that were out there. The enthusiasm to work and to set examples in the profession faded away when he was not given an opportunity to work. In the previous school, he was given the right to make rules, which were followed by the schoolteachers, but on the contrary, he felt his talent was not being used and was not given any extra roles and responsibilities rather than his main responsibility of teaching. He said that because of the inferiority of senior teachers, he was not comfortable even doing good things. He felt he was unheard. Different research also shows that promotional opportunities and social support from colleagues and HT can have a positive impact on job performance (Sahito & Vaisanen, 2020; Yuh & Choi, 2017).

Similarly, from the third school, he got the energy to work competitively as all the teachers seemed energetic and responsive in their duties. With that, he got the responsibilities with the trust of colleagues and SMC as praise for performing better and being loyal towards school and children. The SMC chair and the immediate HT also said that he is so gentle and loyal towards his work. It rewarded and encouraged him to do more as he was given the post of exam coordinator, in which he created different innovative ideas to conduct the exam peacefully.

Likewise, as there was healthy competition among teachers, Manik also wanted to be an ideal teacher, so not only at school, but he also used to plan at home too regarding the activities to be conducted in school. The school where he was

shifted after being permanent is known as one of the model schools in the district, where there were strict rules on timeliness, following rules, and performing duties. His experience of working in three different public schools with different natures made him feel that the performance of a teacher depends upon the school environment. As mentioned above, in the first school he taught, they have not set their own rules, and he was suggested to lead to set it. In the second school, he felt inferior and was not able to perform better under colleagues' pressure, and in the present school, there was already a certain set of rules of the school. According to him, the environment of the school that creates a role in creating a favourable context supports teachers in working with integrity. And it also contributes to understanding the teaching profession and working with integrity. It was his point of view that the school environment plays a role in teachers' performance, but in this same research work, one of the participants also said that although she faced inequality in treatment by the administration, she still worked with honesty and maintained agency to remain with integrity on her own. Ultimately, through such views from my research participants, they perceived that a combination of school structure and personal integrity is necessary for maintaining teachers' integrity. When a school environment is supportive towards the teachers, it can help to reinforce a teacher's duty to act with integrity.

By the time Manik was fully devoted to the profession that after seven years of experience in working in the current school, he was offered to take the responsibility of the HT at the school by the school management committee. He was working with passion and was giving his full energy to the teaching profession, so the community, SMC, and colleagues praised him. This praised him more, and he started to work with full dedication. The development in social networks and the trust that he has developed in his colleagues, parents, and SMC members compelled him to be punctual, work properly, and have a sense of responsibility. Duggar (2009) also notes a strong correlation between integrity and trust. He said he was already committed to his profession, but such elements enforce him to maintain it. Becoming HT from a teacher, he realized that in order to gain the cooperation and support of teachers, the HT or administration should ensure and enhance their active participation in decision-making and other daily activities and make them work with integrity (Amos et al., 2021; Chaudry et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Manik shared that he always sensed that there is somebody who is looking at his performance which encourages him to work honestly, so he suggested having proper and regular monitoring. He strongly believed that people work with integrity when they are afraid. When the teachers are afraid of someone supervising them, they work properly, which later develops as their habit, and that habit becomes 'culture' (Schein, 1992), and this culture further helps to strengthen the integrity of a teacher. According to him, a fear factor must be there to develop integrity in teachers. He was focused on the importance of monitoring part. But parallelly, there is a need for self-awareness, self-dedication, and honesty towards work. For this, different literature shows that integrity is understood to be a positive quality that is developed through personal honesty and commitment (Gea, 2016; Barnard et al., 2008). In contrast, Pramila from the same school said rather than showing fear; it is better to emphasize offering positive incentives like recognition, rewards, and professional development opportunities for the honesty and hard work of teachers.

Manik further said that when he was appointed as a head teacher with the agreement of all the SMC members and teachers, he felt so obliged with more responsibilities on his shoulder. He was taking morning classes in two different colleges, and with the added responsibilities, he left his part-time job. He felt that he was trusted by the community people and his friends, so he must be devoting his time to the betterment of school and leaving other jobs which he was continuing for better earnings. Manik then took the responsibility of the morning classes of the same school with very less payment and remained in school from morning six to evening seven. One of the teachers from the same school said that he is not even living for his personal life and is fully dedicated to maintaining the quality of both the morning (+2) and afternoon shifts.

In my further inquiry regarding his personal life, he said, "As I am getting much responsibility in my workplace, I am struggling to find a balance between my personal and professional life, and I need to learn how to do so." He agrees that one should not ignore or neglect one's personal life or relationships, but rather find a balance between personal and professional responsibilities. It is argued that personal and professional integrity are intertwined, and if there is negligence in personal one, it can have a negative impact on the profession i.e., teachers' integrity (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2021; Mulyani et al., 2021). Hence, whether he thinks that there should be

fear within teachers to maintain integrity, the experience he shared showed that the social network and good relations between students and parents contribute to practicing duties with integrity and the responsibility which is given with trust.

Hence, Manik's teaching journey teaches important lessons about integrity and what makes a good teacher. His commitment and sacrifices for education, despite challenges, stand out. The connection between a teacher's identity and community recognition is key, highlighting the importance of external acknowledgment in maintaining integrity. Engaging with the community beyond teaching duties is crucial for professional integrity. Manik's experiences in different schools emphasize how the school environment influences a teacher's sense of responsibility and honesty. A supportive environment is essential for teachers to stay committed. In essence, Manik's story shows that integrity in teaching involves societal perceptions, community engagement, recognition, and adapting to the school environment.

Crux of My Chapter

Basically, in this chapter, I discussed what contributes to the teachers' understanding and practices on integrity. For this, I explored the different backgrounds, experiences, interests, beliefs, etc. of the research participants in detail. More particularly, it showed how teachers' understanding of integrity was developed and what contributes to their performance. During the fieldwork, I also explored how and why they are in the teaching profession.

From my research participants, the dimensions that contribute to understanding integrity include personal value, lessons learned from role models from their real-life experiences, traditional thoughts on the teaching profession, and school environment and networks. Such aspects help in a deeper understanding of the integrity of education. Teachers' personal norms, values, and beliefs also help to shape their understanding of integrity. Teachers are also bound by social networks and connections that outline their responsibilities and make them work with integrity. When they find role model, it motivates them which consequently influences their behaviour and practices. These different information and experiences presented collectively reveal that teacher integrity is a multifaceted concept shaped by personal values, commitment, ethical decision-making, community engagement, and societal recognition. They emphasize that being a good teacher involves a holistic approach that goes beyond following rules, highlighting the intricate balance between personal and professional aspects.

Similarly, the school environment and culture can have a significant impact on a teacher's understanding of integrity. Schools prioritizing work with honesty and ethical behaviour create an environment where integrity is valued. Overall, a teacher's understanding of integrity is shaped by a range of personal, professional, and contextual aspects. Different aspects that the research participants discussed from where their understanding and practices of integrity developed, have their own values in themselves. The development of integrity within teachers varies but such diverse aspects bring differences in working culture. It is not necessary or possible to have all such aspects in a particular teacher, but their understanding from different aspects comes together when they work in one workplace i.e., a school. All these aspects have their importance. Correspondingly, it helps in setting the environment and it further develops agency. This chapter also tried to justify the argument that the school environment and the teachers' self-integrity are interlinked and are necessary for the development of teachers' professionalism (This is explored in the following chapters).

In the following chapter, I attempt to address the third research question posed in this study (i.e., How are they experiencing changes in their understanding and practices of professional integrity?)

CHAPTER VI

TEACHERS' INTEGRITY IN THE CROSSROAD: PARADOXES CAUSED BY DIFFERENCES IN UNDERSTANDING AND PRACTISING INTEGRITY

In the earlier chapters of this thesis, I articulated the understanding of teachers' professional integrity in the researched public schools of Nepal and their practices. The empirical evidence gave rise to five thematic areas of analysis. These included integrity being perceived as timeliness, the link between performing tasks and achieving self-satisfaction, the importance of fulfilling roles and responsibilities within a team, the impact of teachers' needs and aspirations on their trustworthiness, and the significance of following policies transparently to address actual needs. Each of these themes provided valuable insights into the multifaceted understanding and practices of integrity among teachers. These five themes indicated how the teachers at the researched schools perceived and practiced integrity. And in chapter V, I explored various aspects that contributed to how teachers understand and practice integrity. I focused on understanding how the ideas of integrity take shape within teachers' perspectives and actions. In this chapter, I have explored how such understanding and practicing integrity have resulted in paradoxes in them. In doing so, some information in Chapter IV is also elaborated in this chapter. I used social capital and socio-cultural perspective to envision the phenomena of changes in understanding the concept of integrity and its practices in the school context.

Hence, I explored the experiences, ideas, and incidents that the teachers are witnessing in their day-to-day life which contradicts the national policies (I have mentioned such policies below) and their understanding of the practice level. Das (2010) discusses how things happening today are linked to old virtues and lies, showing how hard it is to stay with integrity. In the context of this study, facing paradoxes in understanding and practicing integrity in today's complex educational setting can also be influenced by traditional and current aspects.

Time is Relative: Contextual in Different Situations and Environments

Most of the research participants take punctuality in teaching as the crucial requirement to be a teacher with integrity. However, the definition of it depends on the individual. In the earlier chapter i.e., IV, I illustrated that teachers from both researched schools perceived punctuality as the foremost thing to consider in

becoming a good teacher with integrity. Referring to that chapter, Sungava school seemed to be 'strict' on punctuality while Jagriti school was 'flexible'. Strict in the sense that teachers were asked to be in-out of school at the fixed time that the school administration had set, and it is the same with the class time as well. And flexibility in the sense that teachers were allowed to arrive only during their class period. This showed that the understanding of timeliness is normative, whereas practice differs according to the context of the school.

I have observed that teachers in Sungava school arrive at school before assembly and they are strict towards students' arrival too. For this, the assistant head teacher was responsible to ensure those things. Laxmi from the same school said, "When we have some important work or if there are any emergencies, then the school gives us permission to leave in the middle. We work according to the school rule and the school also understands our situation. Though there is strictness in terms of following time, the administration understands the situation and deals with it accordingly". This showed that the school has strict rules in terms of timeliness but still understands the circumstances and is flexible for the teachers' needs. It shows when the institution understands and values the situation, then that particular person/teacher respects the norms of the institution and works accordingly.

Once, I was talking with the assistant head teacher from Sungava school with a few other teachers, and at the same time, Manik came and asked him if he could leave the school earlier as he had an appointment with a dentist and he is having pain too. And he also asked a leave for another teacher so that he could take him to the hospital. The assistant HT cast a brief look at me and then was back to him and said that if he is having pain then he certainly can go. He was looking at me and was trying to convey the situation he has to deal with, and with that, he seemed to be showing support on humanitarian grounds. It was exam time, and teachers were supposed to stay three hours a day in an exam hall as invigilators. When Manik asked, it was only half an hour before the exam started. Regarding this issue, after some time, a few teachers shared their thoughts. Laxmi said, "It is good that school administration showed softness towards the teachers but at the same time, if that teacher had had an appointment, then he could have taken a whole day leave. Pramila also said, "He has already signed in the register which showed his attendance for that day and there is no system of giving half day leave too in our school, he is saving his leave only". She

further said that the administration become more flexible for secondary-level teachers as they have brought good results in the SEE exam.

Here, it is laudable to mention the incident of sending a primary-level teacher back to her class by the same assistant head teacher when there were five minutes left to ring the bell. It shows the power dynamics where a primary teacher is forced to abide by the rule. Is there a difference between dealing with secondary-level teachers and primary level? or is it because of the relationship between the teachers and the administrators? There is a similar understanding among the teachers at the school regarding timeliness, but one can visualize the changes in practice. It was seen that the teachers felt the discriminatory practices of rules and norms of school between primary and secondary teachers.

Because of such changes in understanding and practice, Pramila said that she sometimes felt humiliated and discriminated. She said that most of the school issues are shared with the secondary-level teachers, and they are also given space to voice, but primary teachers are not included. She even expressed her frustration, "I also hold a master's degree and have the capability to teach in the higher grades, but still working under such practice makes me feel like I have learned nothing and my degrees from the university is not of any value". This feeling put a damper on her teaching and discouraged her from being creative in the classroom. This raises issues of integrity and professionalism of people who are in leadership positions. The incidents raise concerns about rules and flexibility in following them depending on the teachers' situation and the circumstances. However, teachers were found to be in the paradox of making good relations with the administrators or following the rules as they experienced differences in binding with rules and getting flexibility in following them.

Laxmi on the other hand explained her frustration optimistically but still, her meaning was similar to that of Pramila. She said, "Secondary level teachers perform their duty well, and they knew how to portray it before school administration, including the School Management Chair (SMC) and when it comes to me, I do my duty dutifully, but I failed in portraying, expressing, and showing it to the administration. Instead, I expect them to look at my actions and my efforts, but look, madam, here the person who can speak can sell flour while people who cannot openly speak cannot sell rice (*bolne ko pitho bikcha, nabolne ko chamal ni bikdaina*)". This shows the feeling of injustice. However, she says "It might be my mistake that I could

not attract my co-teachers and school administration, but sometimes I feel like what to work (*k kaam garnu ra*) as there is no respect to our effort and all the credits are given to secondary level teachers only". She stressed that her extra effort was neither recognized nor rewarded compared to the secondary-level teachers. She was expressing a feeling of helplessness and confusion when things do not go as expected from the profession.

Here, I found that the higher the level you are teaching, the closer the relationship is with the administrators and management among teachers and administration. From the perspective of the administrator, they are being strict in the matter of time with all the staff but the experience that the participants share shows differences. Laxmi said, "When there is such a scenario, I hesitate to say anything that I feel. This does not mean I have never shared with my colleagues, but if I feel equal treatment to all the teachers by the administration, can add fragrances in working and sharing." It showed there is less harmony and cooperation among teachers to build each other's capacity and enhance high morale on work as a team. When a teacher feels continued tension and less appreciation in the working place, then it diminishes their sense of motivation to work (Campbell, 2003), whereas when a teacher receives support from their colleagues, it affects their motivation to adopt changes and innovations (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). School administration, on the other hand relied on secondary level teachers as they are medium to increase the number of students, and they are taken as the support system to the school when there arises any kind of problems in school. When I was doing guff-gaff with the parents during result publication and admission days, one of the parents, who is also a member of the parent-teacher association, shared that the school gets different recognition after school got a 100% pass-out rate in SEE. It was once too null in pass out of SEE, but the hard work of teachers (he was giving credit to the senior teachers) helped in bringing good results." Another parent who was also sitting with us said, "Teachers started coaching classes and gave special attention to the SEE appeared students". The local people of that area also showed trust in the ability of secondary teachers as they have been giving better results in the last few years. Thus, the school administration appeared to be adaptable in making necessary adjustments according to the context. Once a teacher has gained the trust of the administrator and community through their hard work, the school administration becomes more flexible in adhering to school rules.

Furthermore, the situation highlights the tension between following strict rules and building positive relationships with colleagues and the administration. On the one hand, the teacher values adhering to the school rules and maintaining their integrity by following the prescribed rules and regulations of the school. On the other hand, when teachers perceive that certain colleagues or groups have more flexibility in following the rules, it can create a sense of unfairness and resentment. They feel that their colleagues who show and inform their performance to head teacher (HT) and have built strong bonds are receiving preferential treatment from the administration and the HT. At the same time, building social capital and positive relationships with colleagues and administration is important for creating a supportive and collaborative school culture. This can lead to increased motivation and commitment to the school's goals and values. However, when the same rules are perceived as strict and inflexible, it can create a sense of distrust and reluctance to collaborate. Here, the HT needs to clarify how he made decisions on the same policy for different teachers.

However, the school culture and unequal treatment inside the school were found to be dominant in making teachers work according to the school culture, overlooking the self-motivation of the individual teacher. Such doing has brought paradoxes of binding with rules vs flexibility.

From Bell to Bell: A Closer Look at Teachers' Commitments and School Engagement

Considering the diverse understanding and practices, I tried to explore the teachers' engagement in terms of taking classes. Within this particular section of the chapter, I have limited engagement only with respect to time. According to my research participants, maintaining punctuality in attending and conducting classes is considered an important attribute of a good teacher. In Sungava school, there was a practice of having one-hour classes for each period. They had been practising it since the academic year 2005/2006 and were continuing till my field visits in 2017. Teachers had different views on that as few teachers were against such practice. Shyam said, "I always had an argument with other teachers regarding the timing. I do not understand why the school wants to show superior to the educational policy." According to him, school administration is neglecting the rule and guidelines of the government as education policy says a minimum of 40-45 minutes period. Another teacher of his similar age, Hari, agreed with Shyam and added, "The time allocated by the government of education is perfect to achieve objectives of the class, and when

the time is added, teachers have to come up with different level of objective. Ok, I am a teacher, and it makes no problem to me to have preparation for one hour of class, but my concern is, are not we giving more stress to the students?" The teacher is showing concern for the children and their ability to capture the knowledge. On the other hand, the teachers supporting the one hour also claim that it is helping students as some students walk more than an hour to reach school and are not given the burden of carrying heavy bags. The HT even stated that this had brought changes in learning achievement in the last ten years.

During my field visit, I observed that teachers at Sungava school strictly follow the timetable. However, they have issues only with the allocated time for each period as a group of teachers takes it as a practice against policy. However, one of the teachers from the same school said, "Our few senior teachers are arguing on the time period of class based on policy but as far as I know, there are no such hard and fast rules regarding class duration." Hence, as there is a contradiction in the teacher's perception of teaching-learning time for a period, looking at the curriculum, one can modify it as per the need of the situation. But still, a few teachers from Sungava school were arguing that the teachers' guide is prepared for 45 mins for a class, and they were also demanding school administration change the one-hour-long class to 45 minutes. It was at the end of the academic session, so they were putting their views and were claiming it by giving examples of the teachers' guide provided by the Ministry of Education. Keeping these confusions from teachers' understanding of teachers' guide and school class duration system, there arise tensions among teachers and administration. Furthermore, teachers and school management have not built a common understanding of this in line with the jurisdiction of the school and HT.

The educational instructional book (MoE, 2015) for each grade has kept allocated teaching periods, which are understood as 45 minutes for each class. But the curriculum is designed in such a way that it is directed to complete the course in the given time frame (in hours). The issue of allocated teaching-learning time is a complicated matter (Texas Comprehensive Centre, 2012) in Sungava school. The quality of teaching time is dependent on how the teacher makes appropriate use of time in relation to curriculum and instructional quality (Baker et al., 2004). However, the use and decision of setting time in school are solely dependent on the school itself as they know the perfect outcome of the time, they have set under the circumstances the teaching and learning is taking place.

The scenario of teachers' engagement is different in another researched school, Jagriti school. Research participants have the understanding of being punctual in their work, but the practice was different than in Sungava school. The instances presented in chapter four also illustrated that teachers arrive at school only to take their prescribed classes. If the teacher has no class in the first period, then s/he arrives only after that period, and if they complete their class before school time, then they leave school early too. One of the teachers said, "The school is situated in the rural part and few of us have to walk more than an hour to reach to road head, so we do not take the first period so that we can come late." For such a scenario head teacher was worried in this setting, but he portrayed himself as helpless and said, "What to do, I have told them several times to the teachers, but they do not follow it. When there is any leisure class, I myself try to cover it." It showed that HT had not fulfilled his duties professionally as he should guide and lead teachers and the teaching-learning process in school. It further raises issues of division of labour among teachers, ownership, and mechanism of managing day-to-day issues of the school. Pratik, one of my research participants said, "The ultimate duty of a teacher is to achieve the teaching objectives and learning achievement of all students, so when I achieve it within 20 minutes then I do not think a teacher needs to stay for the whole period in the classroom. I give them the task and come to the office." He then pointed to the teachers who remained in class full time and did not teach properly and neither complete their course on time. For him, punctuality means completing the task despite the mentioned time. He challenged the education policies and curriculum framework for 40-45 minutes a period.

This practice has brought paradoxes in schools on their understanding and practices. Teachers seem less aware of curriculum objectives and the learning ability of students. I being an ethnographer was also taking classes sometimes when teachers were absent. When I was taking classes in grade nine in Jagriti school, it was the first period and few students arrived late. I asked them the reasons, they seemed afraid. One of the students who were already there in the classroom said, "Our sir also does not come to the class on time, so we also come late some are playing outside the school compound as they know sir is not coming to take a class on time." I have also heard this type of complaint from the parents. There is a tea shop near the school, and when I was there, the shopkeeper (a parent of one of the students) said, "What will you get here madam, teachers themselves do not come to the school on time."

Students along with parents also blame teachers for not having proper classes and neglecting school time.

On the one hand, students were unsatisfied with the teacher's arrival and on the other hand, parents also blame teachers for the exact cause but have no care about that. There seems to have less effectiveness of HT and SMC as well as supervision from the DEO. HT said, "All the teachers here are permanent, and their job is secured, so they seemed to have less fear of losing it too". Here, teachers thought that they were doing their task though they were not fully engaged in terms of taking classes, while the HT and parents found it going beyond the rule of school. It raises teachers' professional ethics and integrity in their day-to-day work and meets students' expectations and learning achievement (Bhattarai, 2010).

As illustrated by Kusumaningrum and the team (2019), my research participants from both schools perceived that teachers should perform their tasks in a reasonable manner and complete their duties with their full engagement. In practice, there is seen contradiction in both researched schools. Some argue about class duration and some on staying entirely in that time period. Hence, school culture is the main element of differences between schools, even if they have the same policies in place (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). This shows that policies are only sometimes implemented uniformly across different schools as they are implemented through the lens of the school's culture, which may differ significantly from other schools. Such situations and practices bring contradictory elements simultaneously, and paradoxes arose of proposed versus performed time.

Duality in Education: The Paradoxical Dance of Trust and Transparency

My research participants from both schools were aware that they should not cheat in the teaching profession and should be fair towards students each day in their duty. At the end of the session 2016/17 and starting of the new session of 2017/18, there was a teacher meeting after lunchtime in Sungava school. Teachers were busy filling out the form for new and old students for enrolment. In the staff meeting, they were focusing their talk on the admission of new students at the primary level and heard about the resignation of the HT from his post. Teachers were surprised by this news, and before they could talk more about that, one of the ex-teachers, Usha, entered the office room with her husband and greeted all. After a few informal talks, she then stated her purpose for visiting the school. She wanted to have the record of her remaining sick leave during her teaching period in my research school. I was

expecting the HT to say to visit the next day/time, but he turned his head towards assistant HT and told him to prepare it urgently in the middle of the meeting. Assistant HT brought attendance registers for the last six years and started to look at Usha's earned sick leave. While doing so, in one year, they noticed that there was no sick leave left due to her extra maternity leave. The noticeable thing I observed is that neither she had crossed out that day nor signed; it was just empty in the attendance register.

They looked at each other, and knowing my presence in the meeting, Usha said it was due to the sickness of her newborn baby. The exchange of glances indicated that they felt uneasy discussing the situation, possibly because they didn't want an outsider to be aware of breaking the school norms—like signing in the register despite not attending—creating a sense of discomfort. However, HT permitted her to sign in the empty dates where she had already taken leave but had not mentioned it. This violates the norms and policies; however, it was practiced in this school, leaving room for cheating in the government system. There is a rule mentioned in school grant directives to send the details of teachers' attendance once every four months, after that, only DOE releases salary of the teachers (DOE, 2017). But when there is empty in the place of signing, it raises questions on the integrity of both in school and DEO level. To clarify it, before other staff who were passively listening, HT said, "We all know that she has worked actively till she was here, so at least we can do a favour to her, as school is not losing anything". I thought it might be their silent acceptance, or they might not be in a position to question that practice or might be the practice they are following for all the teachers. Usha and her husband were happy too.

The situation has prompted three significant questions: The first one is what is the school's priority when all teachers are in meetings? They could first finish the meeting respecting the time of all teachers and the priority of schools, and deal with Usha's case later on. During the meeting, Usha had to wait for an extended period, which raises concerns about respecting the time of all teachers and the school's priorities. To avoid unnecessary delays for teachers like Usha, the school administration could have considered finishing the meeting promptly. Alternatively, if the teachers were engaging in informal discussions, it would have been considerate to keep Usha from waiting for too long. Our cultural practice of "*atithi devo vabha*," ("guests are treated as gods"), which emphasizes treating guests with respect

and hospitality, could also be applied to colleagues, valuing everyone's time and presence. The second question is why some teachers remain silent when they witness activities breaking rules and regulations?. This silence raises concerns about their integrity. Is their silence due to feeling oppressed within the system, where they fear the consequences of speaking up? If that's the case, it leads us to question the schools that operate within the system. If they admit that they are part of the system, then it prompts us to wonder whether such schools follow the rules and regulations to maintain integrity. And the third question revolves around the transparency and accuracy of the school's administration and documentation. Proper documentation and adherence to rules and regulations are essential for schools. However, I observed that the school's administration and documentation might not adequately reflect the true and fair facts and data of the school. This raises concerns about the integrity and reliability of the information presented. Transparent and precise documentation plays a crucial role in making informed decisions and maintaining accountability within the school.

HT seemed to be too flexible to play with the government rules when it comes to their own benefits. According to the Labour Act 2074 BS (MoE, 2017), teachers can take 12 days of casual leave and 12 days of sick leave a year. If sick leaves are not consumed, then they can get paid for it at the time of retirement or while leaving the job. Teachers know well about the cash payment of the sick leave earned during the service by the government. If the teachers do the same as stated above, it will not affect the fund of the individual school but of the government. So, there is no voice against the wrong dos.

At the time of returning home, Shyam was murmuring, referring to the incident he just agreed on. He said, "A boss can do anything for the 'aafnomanchhe' (*'thula le aafno manchhe ko lagi jay gardani huni'*)". He was angry as he was not allowed to take casual leave which he had saved till the end of the academic year. HT had made strict rules that no teachers are allowed to take leave in the final month of the academic year until and unless they have emergencies. This rule was made to avoid the absence of more than one teacher a day at the end of the academic year to have a better system and communication in place. Formation of this rule within the school revealed HT's seriousness and strictness in making teachers regular in school, which contradicts the flexibility in allowing Usha to sign in the spent sick leave. According to him, pressurizing and compelling a starving person to work is similar to

trying to extract milk from an unfed cow. Similarly, managing and controlling somebody who is discouraged and have no interest in working is not very simple and easy-going, and this matters against the children's education. So, HT seems to be flexible in terms of providing benefits to the teachers with no loss to the school.

However, most of the teachers save their casual leave to use for emergencies, and when it is used in the last month of the session, this remaining leave cannot be cashed. HT said, "If all teachers take this leave at the end, the school has to face teacher scarcity at some point as many teachers try to use the casual leave at the last moment". However, Shyam argued, "Teachers have to face strict rules to take the earned casual leaves while few teachers of HTs side are getting the pay off of the already taken sick leave." The important thing here is, it is against the law and policies. Teachers like Shyam are raising the issue because he wanted them to stay by the rule and get a similar benefit from HT. Seeing the context of implementing the same policy differently with teachers, one of the research participants said, "HT might have taken that decision as he is leaving his post and want to portray himself as an understanding and friendly HT."

Furthermore, the scenario of another researched school was different in terms of taking/giving leave to the teachers. I was having an interview with one of the female teachers, Sarita, as she has joined the school after two months of maternity leave. She seemed upset and worried about her child and wanted to leave early to home. Her concentration was not at school, though she was physically in school, her mind was not there and was not focused on students learning. As in our interaction, she was saying how much she was worried about the two months child. She left her class before the bell rang but was stuck in school as the SMC chair and HT were talking in the passage. She said that her child might be hungry, and she has to walk around 20-25 minutes to reach home from school. She disappointedly shared that another teacher has not joined the school though she had started her maternity leave before her. I was amazed by this and asked her the reasons. She said, "Gita (another teacher) is a relative of our head teacher, and though it is more than 75 days of her maternity leave, neither school has called her, nor has she reported at the school. When I was to complete my maternity leave, I was called by the accountant to inform me that my maternity leave was over." Teachers generally attend school after their leave period but getting notified before it ends is a new practice that I saw in this school. This might be a good practice to notify teachers to avoid more absenteeism, or

it might be because teachers in this particular school do not attend school right after their long leaves. She further stated, "I was being called again and again when I took two more days to join the school, but Gita (another teacher with maternity leave) has not yet joined, then why are they calling me to join? We are on the same leave, but the school is giving more privileges of maternity leave to her only. My other friends told me about that, so I also was staying home after completing the leave too." The female teacher who was standing next to us also nodded her head. Interestingly, when I spoke to Seman, another teacher from the same school, he also mentioned witnessing such instances of inequality, particularly when it concerned people close to the HT. These observations raised important questions about fairness and integrity within the school's practices. This evidence showed that a different rule for different teachers affects its implementation as Sarita was not fully teaching though she was attending school. There is a feeling of injustice and discrimination. Here, it is affecting not only the teachers' feelings but also the teaching-learning activities because it was seen that she hardly stayed for two hours in school and walked back home. Students and their learning are not the priority of the teacher and HT. This practice is neither ethical nor professional.

Furthermore, in Jagriti school, teachers are from two different political backgrounds so sometimes there seemed to have conflict among those groups and biased behaviour among the teachers on the same issue. Sarita said, "HT gives more facilities to the teachers who are from the same political background. His behaviour and the rules he made are different for his relatives, politically influenced friend and others." HT is blamed for supporting only his political side, and other teachers are not working properly as they feel they only are working. In such an unseen political fight, students are the one who suffers the most. Teachers are ignoring their duties and the meaning of being a teacher in the race of getting equal personal benefits. However, the views from HT and Pratik were different. For the case discussed above, HT said that he approved a month more leave for Gita as she was living far from school and needed two hours to reach. Unlike Sarita, Gita cannot use her break and leisure time to feed the baby. On the other hand, Pratik blamed Sarita and other teachers supporting her for working against HT and school rules just because they thought that HT favors a few teachers from his side, which, according to him, is not correct. However, the school and HT does not have the authority to give extra leave for

teachers from a distance. This is against the education rules and norms but is being practiced in this school.

The above two cases of two different public schools showed the negative effect of politics and personal relationships in dealing with the everyday activities of teachers and, consequently the poor learning time and support to students. There are also differences in treating teachers with similar ethnicity and in the relationship one holds with the other. Those from the same ethnicity and family background as the HT or SMC chair are supportive, while they are strict with others. When there are such practices in the school, the small things matter to the teacher's motivation and commitment toward students and their learning. This has brought paradoxes among teachers as they face inequality in the name of *aafnomanchhe* versus others.

Act with 'Need' than with 'Choice': Personal and Professional Need

The learning achievement of public schools is low (ERO, 2019), and there is always a question mark on the quality of public-school education and teachers' performance. Government of Nepal has initiated different interventions to improve it as preparation of SIP, teachers' professional development or training, letter grading, and continuous assessment system, etc. From the teachers and parents level also, they chose to pay extra tuition fees and time for coaching classes for the children. This step looks good and positive but has many challenges like blaming for conducting it to take money from parents, not teaching in school properly, and calling for tuition, etc. (Kirya, 2019)., while some take it positively as for the betterment of the children education (Subedi, 2018; Choi & Choi, 2016).

In my researched school, most of all the secondary level teachers were busy from morning to evening time in taking tuition classes with extra payments. This is the individual payments directly to teachers for getting better classes or remedial classes of unlearnt sessions in school. At the start of my fieldwork, I walked with Manik to reach school as he also lived nearby where I used to stay. But after a week, he said he would go to school early and return late as his tuition classes had started. It is like an extra workload for a teacher. After spending six hours in school, he was to take two more tuition classes of an hour for each. This can be challenging and time-consuming, as it requires additional preparation and teaching outside of regular school hours. He said, "I have been taking tuition classes from the time of my teaching career. It is demanded by the students and parents both as they are weak in English and Mathematics, which I am teaching." However, some parents blame that poor

quality of mainstream education, and the irregularity of teachers in classes; students are weak, and they ask for tuition classes (Pallegedara & Mottaleb, 2018). When I asked him about the blame teachers are getting for not doing well in school but taking tuition classes with extra charges to parents, he replied, "Look the reality miss, students are weak, and they ask for it. I provide private tuition services to undergraduate and graduate-level students after taking two hours of tuition for the students at this school. I got more pay when I take tuition classes for college students but still, I dedicate two hours of my time to my students in our school, with the expectation of achieving better academic outcomes." Here, he was trying to say that he was working not only for the extra pay he was getting for the tuition classes but also with a motive to have improved students' learning achievements for better credibility of himself and the school. He was in a dilemma when I raised the issue of blame by parents, so he again said, "I am also a human being, and I become tired too, but I have to make my students better, so I am taking the tuition classes, and yes, it is true that I make them pay for that time. I am a family person, and I need to earn much; if I were not taking tuition to them, then I would have been doing it to others where I might have charged higher than this." He portrayed that he was doing a favour by taking tuition classes for weak students. He does not want to take tuition classes by himself, but he was forced by his parents and attracted by the extra income source. He does not feel guilty for not teaching properly during school time so that all his students are able to learn. The Education Amendment Act of Nepal (2017) states that educational institutions are required to obtain government authorization to provide services such as educational counselling, bridge courses, language classes, and other preparatory courses (MoLJ, 2016). It has not clearly stated whether taking tuition classes comes under those categories or not. In the researched school, teachers have not taken permission from the government, and they said they are not aware of such rules.

However, the practice of how one's personal needs, wants, and goals tempt one to act with or without integrity are poles apart. Manik further said, "Teaching is a full-time job, and the pay we get from the government is not enough for the survival of the family. And I am taking tuition classes though the government of Nepal does not allow it legally." This sometimes is taken as an act in a selfish and self-seeking manner by the authority and people. But when there comes question on the survival of self and family, then the teacher focuses on self at first and then towards integrity or

principles of profession one is in question. However, as per the national treasury, all teachers under the government quota are paid with equal salary to the civil servant, which is much higher than most of private schools. He argued that he is doing his full-time job properly, so there should not be any problem. He knew it was against his own principle, but he had to do that to make the student better in his subject and earn money having a better life. He further said, "Being a teacher for a decade in a public school, I tried my best to make all my students learn better during school time, and I did not insist on tuition class."

Furthermore, there is blame on teachers by parents and community people for taking tuition classes. They are blamed for not teaching properly in school, which increases the demand for joining tuition (Jayachandran, 2014). Inviting students for private tuition is taken as a challenge to maintain integrity in the education system (Biswal, 1999). For this, Pratik from Jagriti school said in our informal guff-gaff that schools are meant to have some rest and preparation for college and tuition classes. Here, the teaching job is taken as effortless as they are given little workload and hard labour. Research also showed that teachers are not doing their duty properly while they are in permanent positions (Shahi, 2020). Because of such views and doing by few teachers, laborious teachers also are blamed together with such teachers as a whole, saying that teachers focused on their personal gains, needs, and aspiration rather than their duties and professional work. For such blame, Manik said that teachers are blamed though they do their job properly, but there are few teachers who forget about their profession. It might be true, but parents make up their minds from these wrongdoers' teachers who are visible to the people and society. It clearly demands parent-teacher interactions in each school for each grade so that teachers and parents can build better trust and relationships for collaboration to improve their children's learning. Because meaningful learning occurs when the individual is engaged in social activities and forms social connections (Jackson et al., 2006) due to of the social capital.

While talking about the tuition classes, Manik also highlighted the morning classes that he is compelled to take in higher secondary school. In most of the secondary-level public schools, classes run from 1-12 as per the new guidelines from SSRP. Schools are compelled to run up to grade 12 or limit the education to a basic level (Grade 8) only, so Sungava school has also started +2 in the last three years. There is a limited number of teachers who can take classes at a higher level in the

morning, and for that, school administration themselves wrote to the DOE to get permission to teach in the morning. The situation got worse when teachers forgot to teach in school and used school time to prepare for teaching in grades 11 and 12. The situation even worsened when teachers started to come late with the excuse of dealing with +2 work. One of my research participants, Pratik, said that he was not going to school in the first period as he needed to be in the exam centre of grade 11 to support them. He said, "I cannot deny my students' request who are appearing in the exam. And school administration also has asked me to see the students and motivate them. I know if I stay there for three hours also, I may not be able to help them, but still, I must go as per the request of school and students who can have more confidence for the exam." This is a psychological problem when students have to go to other schools for the final exam. Teachers are perceived as fair and honest people, but when they are involved in helping students during exams, then the meaning of teacher would be changed. Not only that, but teachers are also not being honest about their duty as well as in the name of +2, they are also avoiding classes at their own school.

From the teacher's point of view, they are compelled to do that. Conversely, I agree with Maxwell that teachers must be self-restraining, disciplined, and self-conscious to act and react the right thing no matter how difficult the situation and circumstance is (Maxwell, 2005). This can be possible when their personality and originality are comprised of uprightness, loyalty, honesty, and fairness to give rightness to their profession. However, such gaps in understanding and practices, as presented above, give rise to the paradox of professional versus personal values.

Unraveling Policy Paradox: Teachers' Tightrope Walk in Balancing Policies and School Demands

Policymakers and administrators have formulated a code of conduct for teaching professions long before establishing an anti-corruption agency at the central level. Similarly, the seventh amendment of the Education Act in 2001 and the following education regulations have outlined the code of conduct for teachers. This has been further strengthened by the Eighth Amendment in 2016 (see annex V). However, teachers revealed that there is a lack of clarity in the policy, which brings a change in their practices (Ham, 2022; Parajuli et al., 2012). Some policies are not clear and are flexible, and the stakeholders can adopt them according to the circumstances and situation of the school. When I observed the real situation of the school, my

research participants were confused about what is termed as good behaviour with high integrity and what is not (Herlihy & Theodore, 1995, p. 131).

One of the participants, Laxmi, from Sungava school, said that she experienced awkwardness when the school administration pressurized her to promote the students who were irregular to school. She further shared that such kinds of forceful promotion of the students hinder the ethos of CAS, and she remained in the dilemma of promoting students and reflecting on the student's achievements. Sometimes, she reflected that CAS never exist in its actual process and outcomes because it has been taken for granted to promote students into upper grades. This is not only the experience shared by Laxmi but other teachers in the school shared such a paradox of learning achievement versus liberal promotion.

When there is a system of liberal promotion to all the students, whether s/he is regular in school or not, the school's policy and context make them work accordingly. The CAS and LPP have intertwined with each other in policy (I have discussed this in detail in Chapter IV), but school's understanding and practices among teachers and schools differ. The school was supposed to apply CAS by providing training to teachers and doing remedial classes for weak students during school time so that all students are eligible for promotion with appropriate learning levels. However, CAS was not practiced but was applied to LPP while making the results. She even said there is no such value for good-performing students when they are given equal or similar remarks to irregular and bad-performing students. So, such behaviour of teachers for/against students in school shows manipulation of talented students (Shaw, 2005). Laxmi expressed her frustration against such doing but seemed to be compelled to do so with the pressure of the school system. The structure of the education system was vague by the anxiety about the motives of the various participants (Hallak & Poisson, 2002). Although parents and teachers acknowledge the significance of learning, they prioritize passing exams (Parajuli et al., 2012). And the educational context in which the teacher is working is not far from the motives of different stakeholders, and such motives force them to follow the misunderstood rules against their understanding. The teachers, on the other hand, do not have the desire and any support to counter such misconduct (Rogers & Sizer, 2010). Such incidents bring rise to the paradox of implementing CAS versus forceful promotion of the students.

Furthermore, teachers in my researched schools are dissuaded by the budget that is being distributed by the district education office (cf. case of the fund). I was visiting Sungava school after a couple of weeks, and when I entered the staff room, they had furnished it with a new round table and chairs. There was a partition for the HT room and assistant HT room, which used to be in the same staff room. It was well equipped, and each teacher was given a certain chair to sit with at their respective desk. I was asked to use the absent teacher's chair, which showed that teachers were strictly instructed to use their respective chairs. I was excited to know how they managed to furnish it. HT told me that they had asked for the budget for the library updating and furnishing of the office room. But they got the budget for making toilets which they had built a year before with the help of government funds. They again got the budget for a similar heading which already was fulfilled. The school requires one thing; however, the budget has been assigned for a different purpose. The pity situation is that they have spent the money for the actual school need, but still, they cannot submit that bill to the district officials, as schools are directed to spend on what the budget has been sent for. It does make no sense on the necessity of the school. Such happenings bring tension in following the rules, and even though they are spending it for the school itself, it indirectly compels teachers to go for fake bills. Such conduct in making fake bills though doing it for the right purpose, gives rise to the same for other irrelevant things (manipulation). A similar case is mentioned above in Chapter IV where the school is manipulating the budget to stop freezing it. They used the fund with the teachers' and parents' discussion and participation in school management and administration. This results in acting as per the actual needs of the school rather than following the topic DEO (now as has directed without looking at the demand from the school side (Karki, 2016). On the other side, such activities can also lead to wrongdoings. With the global movement on education, including EFA, MDGs, and SDGs, each country has a high concentration of human development with a particular focus on education and health services as the fundamental rights of citizens. This has brought more donors, funds, and scrutiny for better financial management with transparency. My researched schools are also getting funding from different sources, but Nepal's planning and budgeting system still needs to be bottom-up. Thus, schools get funds but not on their needs and priorities. This is now evidence that for the betterment of the school, one can lie and make fake bills. However, it is properly utilized but still is termed as working against integrity. When the whole

school is with the decision, then though the entitled fund is used in different topics, they feel proud to use it according to the need.

Similarly, during the time of my fieldwork in Sungava school, I witnessed one teacher, who seemed passive, and most of the time, he seemed to sit alone and walk around the school. After a month of fieldwork, when I greeted him, I could feel his discomfort talking with me, but as time passed, I managed to talk with him when I met him walking towards school from the bus station. Kuber was appointed as a permanent teacher in 2034 BS (Baisakh 3rd) in his hometown, where he got his basic education. He was happy to serve in the same school as a teacher. He was appointed around 38 years ago (as of 2017), and English subject was not prioritized as it is nowadays, so he is not good in English. When the SMC and school administration decided to conduct classes in English medium, it became difficult for him to take classes. He was taking classes to the primary level, so for some years, he took classes, but when it was made compulsory from grade one in the year 2015, he had to stay away from the classroom teaching learning activities. He was in the phase of his retirement, so school administration, along with the acceptance of school management, kept a substitute teacher who gets half of Kuber's salary. Kuber is being provided 50% of his salary only for staying in the school till lunchtime (I have presented this case in chapter V in detail). By the time of developing this chapter, he retired from school and was given farewell with great respect. But the important thing is he was not satisfied with the decision of the school as for a teacher, dealing with students and teaching them is the biggest thing. At one point, the school tried to do justice to him by taking away his half salary and making him stay in the school until lunchtime only. And with the remaining 50% of the salary, they have hired one female teacher. The school administration takes this step with the SMC members' and teachers' support and agreement. This brought the fact that one can modify the rules, beholding the transparency and harmony within the stakeholders, but still, it seems to be working against the educational policy. This step taken by the school administration is similar to what Banks (2011) mentioned: the situation, actual setting, and work environments influence a teacher or administrator in having the kind of alternative and preferences.

Teachers perceived that they were to follow the rules and regulations suggested by the DOE. However, there were some cases (as stated above) where there was an alternative interpretation of the policy. For the betterment of the children and

institution, meanings and the interpretation of policy are established, developed, and modified according to the need of the situation during the process of collaboration and execution (Haralambos & Heald, 2004). Most of the research participants take this as a right doing' as the implementation is done according to the needs of the school's current situation. The behaviour of the teachers described here exemplifies what Banks (200) and Kunneman (2005) refer to as going beyond what is expected of them in their job role or duties and instead taking on additional responsibilities or tasks as teachers working in that setting can only feel and know the right thing or decision to make for the betterment of institution at the given context. However, this can also lead to negative results for the school when the meanings are developed and modified for self-interest. Here, the teachers practiced their loyalty in their profession by fulfilling their duty according to the need and betterment of the school. Subsequently, teachers in Nepal confront challenges that evolve due to the ambiguities and conflicts between policy expectations and teachers' belief systems (Harley et al.,2000, cited in Griffin, 2012). The cases presented above regarding the interpretation of policy according to the school's interest or need have brought policy versus practice paradoxes among teachers at my researched school.

Crux of My Chapter

As I reflect on the overall information presented in this chapter, it showed that teachers understand that being in integrity and doing the right thing is crucial in theory, but they don't always do it in their everyday teaching. They know that integrity is important, but they sometimes have trouble actually using these principles when they teach. This suggests that there could be different challenges in the school environment that make it hard for them to act with integrity in their teaching and learning.

Rather than expressing their perception of teachers' integrity, they seem to say what a teacher with integrity should be. I have presented the experiences and practices that my research participants shared and witnessed during my field visit. And further, I have drawn the paradoxes that the teachers at my researched schools face due to the gap in understanding and practices. With some incidents that my research participants faced, they felt more paradoxical. The paradoxes raised from the above discussion are the paradoxes of binding with rules vs flexibility, proposed versus performed time, *aafnomanchhe* versus others, professional versus personal values, and policy versus practice.

I have presented the field information in three empirical chapters (i.e., Chapters IV, V, and VI) by incorporating it with my personal reflection and literature. Now in the following chapter, I discuss some of the main ideas that have emerged from these chapters. I also draw insights from relevant literature, my reflection, and theories to shed light on the text; it will further help me to draw meaning.

CHAPTER VII

FINDING AND DISCUSSION: DELVING INTO THE DEPTH OF TEACHERS' INTEGRITY

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the future of society by imparting knowledge and instilling values in the next generation. In recent times, there have been growing concerns about the integrity of teachers. In this research work, I have delved into teachers understanding and practicing integrity in their everyday school context, their ideas of integrity and paradoxes they face in understanding and practicing integrity. This chapter is the synthesis of the discussion I have made in three previous chapters of this thesis, revolving around the main themes of this research work I just mentioned in the previous sentence. While doing so, this chapter also aims to discuss the primary insights and reflect on the learning gained throughout the research process with its analysis by reflecting on my experience, theories, and other literature.

Insight from My Study

The insights drawn from this ethnographic research offer profound understanding of how teachers perceive and embody integrity within the educational context. These revelations provide a nuanced view of integrity, highlighting its multifaceted nature and the complex interplay of cultural, ethical, and practical dimensions. Firstly, the study underscores the complexity of integrity, revealing that it encompasses various facets, including punctuality, completing duties, rule adherence, self-satisfaction, and collaborative efforts. They believed that it was a powerful display of their professional integrity, demonstrating their deep commitment and respect for their role as teachers. Being on time symbolizes their commitment to tradition, respect for students, and recognition of the importance of order in teaching. This earns them the respect of their the trust of students, parents, and administrators. This multifaceted nature of integrity underscores that it is not a simplistic or one-dimensional quality; rather, it represents a blend of ethical, professional, and social attributes that guide teachers in their roles.

Secondly, the influence of socio-cultural values emerges as a significant aspects in shaping teachers' integrity perspectives. The importance placed on punctuality, adherence to rules, and respect for tradition reflects the profound impact

of cultural norms within the educational community. Understanding these cultural underpinnings is essential for comprehending the intricate dynamics of integrity within this context. Furthermore, the concept of sociocapital plays an important role in teachers' considerations of integrity. Teachers who embody integrity are respected and trusted by their peers, students, parents, and administrators. This trustworthiness enhances their professional reputation and credibility, leading to tangible benefits in terms of career advancement and influence within the educational community.

Additionally, the study highlights the collaborative nature of integrity, as teachers perceive it as a collective effort within their school community. This collaborative approach aligns with socio-cultural values emphasizing unity and shared responsibility, emphasizing the significance of teamwork in achieving educational goals. The study emphasizes the context-dependent nature of integrity. It is not a universally defined concept but is shaped by the unique cultural and social context of the educational setting.

I also delved into understanding their practices, which were distinct in the research sites. It may be a common understanding that whatever and however we as teachers understand, we show that understanding in our practice. However, it is not always the case. We may have somehow deeper understanding of some principles and concepts, but adopting that in our everyday personal and professional life may not be easy – given the compounding contextual and personal aspects. Similar was found when exploring teachers' understanding of integrity and how they adopt it professionally. In fact, teachers were more or less cognizant of the idea of integrity; however, when it was in practice, their approaches and practices varied from individual to individual and from school to school. On the one hand, it is determined by the school context and the culture developed in the school, and on the other hand, the teacher's agency plays a role in working with integrity. When there are strict rules, teachers believe that they are more aware of their time and task, and when school rules are flexible, then the teacher can focus on making the work easy rather than fulfilling the duty. Kautilya said that if people in a country are ethical and do the right things, it helps to maintain law and order (Basu and Miroshnik, 2021). However, contemporary research has indicated a complex dynamic in the application of these principles, particularly within the context of educational institutions. While an individual teacher might possess strong ethical values, their behaviour within an organization can be significantly influenced by the rules and regulations established

by the school when it brought easiness to their work (Neupane et al., 2022). One school of thought found that teachers relied more on institutional culture and practices than their personal experience and competence when they faced bewilderment in their profession. As the proverb '*Jasto desh, Ustai bhes*' '[When in Rome, do as the Romans do]' indicates, teachers tend to act according to the school environment. Therefore, school culture and structure have a domineering effect on teachers' practice of integrity, irrespective of their understanding. On the contrary, from another school of thought, individual teachers' agency can also demonstrate professional integrity despite the loose school culture. However, I observed only few such cases to be exceptional in my researched school.

Few teachers from the researched school find it difficult to adopt change and forget yearlong practice. They have been practicing one way for several years, and replacing it with other systems is difficult, although they understand it is for the betterment. This is because they are secured in their job and have no enthusiasm to update themselves. On the other side, teachers perform better with external interventions and culture developed in the schools. It was found that when one takes the duties and responsibilities given by the school authorities positively and develops them as a habit, this leads to a good culture in education.

I also explored that there were differences in the behaviour when teachers got different (discriminatory) treatment from the school administration based on what grades they were teaching. This finding highlights the importance of treating all teachers equally and fairly and providing them with support and facilities, regardless of their grade level. Any discriminatory treatment leads to a negative work environment, ultimately impacting the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, multiple actors, incidents, sources, interactions, evidence, contexts, and characters contribute and lead to the evolution and modification of understandings and practices of teachers' integrity. Due to changes in one's understanding and practices on religious behaviours, upbringing, and socialization of each person in its family and school and the public imagination of students and parents towards the teaching profession, there is a gradual modification and development of teachers' understanding and practices on integrity. From the empirical evidence, different aspects of emergence to understanding and practicing professional integrity learned with the discussion, interaction, and observation of the teachers, such as a) upbringing and influenced by the role model, b) cultural and traditional belief on

service motive profession, and c) need for survival along with interest and for traditional and social prestige. However, teachers' understanding and practices varied over time due to substantial changes in their lives and the education system.

Similarly, the experiences that the teachers hold from the changes in understanding and practices create paradoxes in some cases, which are portrayed above in the empirical chapters in the form of cases. Teachers perceived time as one of the elements that a teacher with integrity has. In practice, the present research has revealed that the implementation of school and class timings varied across the two schools I researched. Though the teachers perceived time as one of the important elements, their performance showed contradictory action at practice level. Some teachers believed that after completing the teaching objective, it was unnecessary to remain in the class. After meeting their teaching objective, sometimes teachers stop dedicating their efforts. This raised a paradox among the teachers regarding actual versus performed time as my research participants saw that without staying full time in class, teachers are getting benefits.

Likewise, teachers in my researched school face a paradox between their professional duties and their personal values or beliefs, which can manifest in several ways. For example, teachers in researched schools are expected to adhere to strict academic standards and follow prescribed rules of promotion of the students even when they conflict with their values of themselves. At the same time, teachers feel a personal responsibility not to upgrade students who are incapable of that and re-admit them in the same class, which conflicts with their professional obligations. Moreover, teachers in my researched schools encounter situations where their individual beliefs or principles conflict with their professional duties and responsibilities, such as when they are asked to enforce disciplinary measures that they view as unfair or unjust. In such cases, teachers may struggle to balance their professional responsibilities with their moral and ethical commitments, leading to a paradox between their personal and professional values.

Furthermore, there are differences in understanding and practicing the same educational policies in the different schools and with the different actors within the same school. Hence, teachers in my researched school felt unfairness when the same rules and policies were implemented according to the interest of the person in power for the benefit of their favourable teacher. My research study has identified that the aforementioned situation has given rise to a paradoxical dilemma concerning the

alignment of policy and practices within their school context among the concerned teachers.

Teachers in my researched schools perceived transparency as one of the components of teacher integrity, but still, they are not only facing dilemmas in implementing the policy of CAS and LPP but are dissuaded by the budget that the district education office is distributing. The study revealed that the appropriation of funds through dishonest means for the benefit of the school could be rationalized as a justifiable use of resources in cases where the District Education Office (DEO) officials fail to recognize and comprehend the urgency of the school's needs. A study carried out in a public school in Nepal similarly revealed that teachers were willing to slightly adjust the rules to make sure the school get its intended goals (Karki, 2016). Specifically, the act of cheating in spending funds for the intended purpose can be justified under such circumstances.

Additionally, leadership matters in each school that makes local decisions based on individual teachers and students and his/her relationship with them. Here in my research; party politics play a critical role in favouritism and nepotism between head teacher (HT) and School Management Chair (SMC) chair and the individual teachers from the same party while they are strict with others. Similarly, ethnicity and family relationships matter while applying the same rules differently to different people. It was seen that teachers from the same ethnicity and family background are getting more favour than others. As such, nepotism (*aafnomanchhe*), favouring people with their own kinship and ethnic ties, is seen to be a catalyst for violating professional integrity and poor performance (Kirya, 2019; Bazerman & Gino, 2012) and this gives rise to the paradox of *aafnomanchhe* versus others.

Teachers' Understanding of Integrity: 5Ts

According to the teachers from my researched school, several key attributes are associated with integrity, including punctuality, adherence to rules and regulations, teamwork, being transparent in their work, keeping honesty, and being trustworthiness in her/his performance. This shows a descriptive account of the characteristics that teachers in the school associate with integrity. It suggests that the teachers in the school have a shared understanding of what constitutes integrity. The statement implies that these values are important for teachers to uphold, as they are central to maintaining a positive and supportive learning environment.

There are some common understandings of the teachers regarding integrity, such as punctuality, sincerity, dedication, self-internalization of any work, etc. The understanding I developed from my research participant seems generic, and their understanding seems to be of not what they are practicing in their day-to-day life. However, it came from how a teacher with integrity should be from their point of view.

Through the extended period of fieldwork, it became evident that multiple understandings of integrity exist. It was found that what they perceived was not the reason behind their actions but the actual actions they understood that a teacher should possess. The understanding of professional integrity is not limited to fulfilling the internal demands by following the commonly accepted codes and conduct but is beyond the external demands of the profession and concerned with a capacity of reflexive sense-making (Banks, 2010), which reaches self-satisfaction and realization. It is implied both from the sociocultural and organizational contexts to where they belong.

Teachers connecting their integrity with punctuality, i.e., time, was perceived in general (Mohammaditabar et al., 2019). Time is the most important thing in any profession because when someone assembles, plans, prepares, and organizes their time to achieve objectives (Mohanty, 2003), they can meet their goal easily. Time cannot be easily controlled or managed, as it is an intangible concept that flows on its own. In terms of teachers' giving priority to time and utilizing it to the best of their ability to fulfil their professional obligations is vital, as proper management of time in the teaching profession reflects teachers' effectiveness and academic achievement of an institution (Master, 2013). Wagley and Regmi (2015) also focused on punctuality as they said that a not punctual teacher is termed as committing academic crimes, which is related to teachers' integrity. Likewise, the main reason a teacher needs to focus on time is that a teacher is the one who influences the children in their class. Mostly, teachers are taken as role models (Shein & Chiou, 2011), and in Nepal, they have also been respected from age-old. Teachers are termed as '*Acharya Devo Bhava*' (teachers as God) (Khadka & Bhattarai, 2021), who play a glorious role in students' character formation (Hasnah, 2017). The research participant focuses on time as they think that when the teacher effectively manages time, students receive and employ it in their life, which ultimately is a great achievement for a teacher. It is well known that when time is managed effectively and properly, one can succeed in different

fields, including teaching. Teachers understanding of their integrity remains on arriving and leaving school on time, properly engaged time during school hours, completing tasks, and mentioned duties on time and time management behaviour.

One of the important duties of a teacher is to deliver knowledge, i.e., teaching. Teaching refers to following a particular curriculum, and teachers are supposed to complete the course on time and ensure that the students understand the teaching. This ultimately entails the performance of a teacher. When we talk about the performance/task of a teacher, it is to inspire, motivate, encourage, and educate students. However, the quality of being a good teacher is not just about having natural talent but also about acquiring the necessary skills through learning and experience (Azer, 2005). A good teacher must also uphold certain ethical and professional standards in planning, preparing, and delivering lessons within the school environment. According to Triguna theory, when teachers show Sattva or goodness, they behave ethically and show care, empathy, and compassion towards their students (Dhulla, 2014). They treat their students with kindness and understanding, always considering their feelings and well-being. As such, a teacher's integrity is essential in ensuring that they fulfil their duties and responsibilities to their students to the best of their abilities. Apparently, teachers from my researched schools perceived performing such tasks with integrity as another element of teachers' integrity. Integrity is also taken as performing the task efficiently, satisfactorily, cautiously, and responsibly by the teacher, taking together all the relevant interests to make the task effective (Karssing, 2007). The act is praiseworthy because it displays the characteristics that constitute integrity; and the context in which the act was performed.

In the context of the educational setting of my researched schools, my participants perceived honesty as an important element that requires careful consideration and contributes to a teacher's integrity. In this context, honesty is the trademark for maintaining integrity (Danielson, 2007; ICAI, 2021) and refers to the quality of being truthful in one's actions and communication. According to my participants, they believed and perceived that when teachers showed honesty in their behaviour and performance, their students can learn accordingly and develop trust among students and parents. Teachers do not only teach knowledge, but they also help with character-building as well (Lian et al., 2020). Cohn et al. (2019) suggest that honesty is fundamental in building trust among individuals, which is essential in developing and maintaining social capital. By being honest, individuals can establish

and reinforce trust among each other (International Centre for Academic Integrity [ICAI], 2021), which, in turn, strengthens their social capital. So, honesty is essential for promoting positive social relationships and building strong, cohesive communities.

My research also showed that when a teacher demonstrates honesty, they convey a message that they are accountable for their actions, giving rise to trustworthiness in the profession. According to Duggar (2009), there is a strong connection between integrity and trust. A study on 'improving schools through teachers' leadership' also found that trust among teachers was critical to the success of school improvement initiatives and that honesty was an essential component of building that trust (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Honesty and trustworthiness are closely related because trust is built on honesty. When a teacher is honest, it means they are telling the truth and performing well. When someone is consistently honest, they show that they are trustworthy. Trust is an important issue in organizations as it can significantly impact performance (Bello, 2012). Teachers who are trustworthy are more likely to be trusted by the administration, students, and community people as well.

One noteworthy aspect that emerged from the study is the strong spirit of teamwork exhibited by the teachers. Teamwork here means involving more than a teacher in a process, which helps easily meet the objective (Don & Raman, 2019). Teachers in this study consistently expressed their belief in the value of collaboration with co-teachers, parents, the community, and other professionals to ensure the quality of education and to fortify the school's foundation. This collaborative ethos goes beyond the mere sharing of responsibilities; it embodies a collective commitment to improving the educational experience for students (Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Teachers coming together as a team enhances the quality of education and fosters a sense of shared ownership of the school's mission and goals.

Several elements may have contributed to the strong emphasis on teamwork among teachers in the study. First and foremost, the Nepalese cultural context places a significant value on collectivism and community involvement. The idea of working together as a team aligns with these cultural norms, making it a natural choice for teachers who are deeply embedded in their communities. Moreover, the creation of a strong learning culture within the school, as suggested by Vanblaere and Devos (2016), is an important outcome of teachers working together in a team. This learning

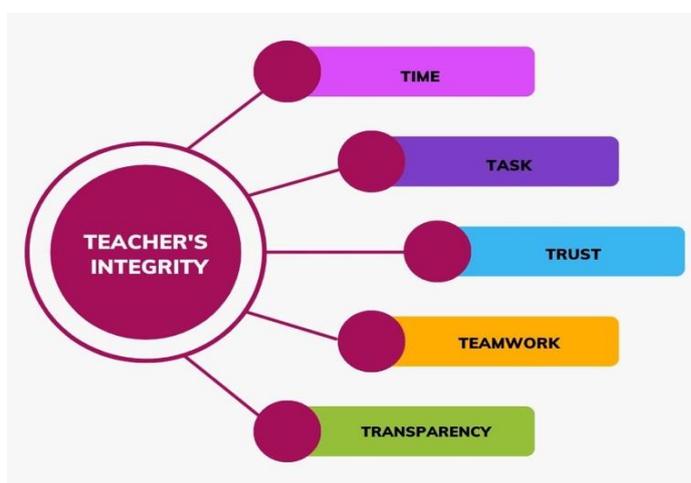
culture not only benefits students but also contributes to teachers' professional growth and development. The study indicates that teamwork is perceived as an element of integrity that influences relationships with stakeholders and public perception of the teaching profession. This aligns with Friedman et al.'s (2014) idea that collaboration strengthens interpersonal relations and internal capacity development among educators. It also resonates with Hani et al.'s (2022) assertion that teamwork brings new ideas, provides support, and aids in problem-solving.

Similarly, teachers believed that their teaching and the activities they performed were meant to be transparent to the school, colleagues, parents, and students. This ultimately builds trust among each other and is one of the strongest elements to have integrity in the teaching profession. Creating an open and transparent atmosphere is important to allow everyone to express their views and share their knowledge and experiences honestly and openly (Gustafsson et al., 2021). This can promote collaboration and communication, leading to a more effective and efficient workplace or learning environment. It also helps to build trust, as people feel more comfortable when they can express themselves freely without fear of being judged or criticized (Reina & Reine, 2009). Here, teachers seek transparency from both the administration and the teachers themselves. By being transparent about actions and interactions (Hyland, 2009), it demands for openness and equal treatment, which results in maintaining integrity.

Hence, there are different schools of thought in understanding integrity. And the diverse perspectives on integrity among various actors and agencies have resulted in weakened integrity (NORAD, 2015) due to inadequate

communication, collaboration, and coordination among them. International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2021) characterizes integrity as six essential principles: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. Similarly, Integrity Action (2015) claims that integrity is composed of four elements, i.e., accountability, competence, ethical behaviour, and corruption control which is also portrayed as

Figure 1
Teacher' Integrity



Integrity= ACE-C. However, teachers from my researched schools describe integrity in terms of 5 basic values: time, task, transparency, trust, and teamwork (shown in Figure 1). My research does not deny the values illustrated by ICAI or Integrity Action, but it differentiates from others in terms of the actual context teachers face in their daily lives.

Unpacking the Complexities: How Context Shapes Teachers' Integrity Practices

There is some understanding of teachers' integrity, and when it comes to the practices, it varies from one school to another and one teacher to another. On the one hand, it is determined by the school context and the culture developed in the school. The level of strictness in school rules impacts the behaviour of teachers. This seems to have opted from the organizational culture concept, where the culture of an organization or institution is shown as a set of collective principles, opinions, potentials, and expectations by describing suitable conduct for various situations (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). This means there is a development of such a system in an organization where the organization holds a certain belief that guides behaviour and makes a difference in people's interaction with each other. Teachers from different cultures with different experiences and understanding of teaching come to teach, and when they are affiliated with one organization, they acquire the culture of teaching at that place. In a simple way, teachers adopt how things are done (Deal & Kennedy, 2000). Teachers' behaviour and performance in teaching are influenced by the school's values, goals, and practices (Geijsel et al., 2009).

In my research, initially, I was trying to understand how teachers perceive and practice integrity. Interestingly, when teachers shared their thoughts, a pattern emerged where they tended to point fingers at others, indirectly questioning the integrity of their colleagues. During my fieldwork, I noticed that even when talking about their own integrity, they did it in a way that indirectly hinted at what others might be doing. The school has a culture of blame, and our teachers work within that culture. When a teacher blames another teacher, it's like saying they did something wrong on purpose or because they were not capable enough (Harber & ball, 2003). Firstly, I found a challenge in openly and honestly discussing integrity issues among teachers. The habit of indirectly blaming others showed a hesitation to discuss concerns openly. Secondly, it showed that that the cultural norms and social dynamics strongly influence the way teachers see and handle integrity in their educational community (Mavuru & Ramnarain, 2020). The blame game and indirect responses

can be linked to what's culturally expected and how people interact within the school environment. Thirdly, as a researcher, this encourages me not only to focus on individual views on integrity but also to dig deeper into the collective cultural aspects that shape these views. The blame game and indirect responses showed how personal beliefs mix with the wider cultural context in the school. The whole situation seems to be a result of the complicated interplay between what individuals think and the overall culture in the school.

When integrity is put into practice, several elements play a vital role. The most important thing that affects practicing is the school culture. School culture here means the set of underlying assumptions and values that shape the beliefs and behaviour of the teachers within a school community (Maslowski, 2003). Having said this, we cannot deny that each teacher possesses unique values and approaches to teaching (Smith & Cook, 1992). I adopt Tylor's perspective in defining teachers' culture in this research (Tylor, 2021). This implies that when we refer to the culture of teachers, we are encompassing everything they understand, trust, adhere to as rules, perceive as right or wrong, and all the abilities they acquire while being members of the teaching community. Teachers generally are inspired to perform their duties with honesty to uphold their self-integrity (Cohen & Sherman, 2014, p. 336) to have self-satisfaction in what they are doing. Kautilya believed that behaving well and acting properly are more important than just having good qualities (Basu & Miroshnik, 2021). And the research participants said that such teachers perceive themselves as good persons and want themselves to recognize as role models in teaching, so they are supposed to perform their duties with well-intention. It is because integrity is understood as working honestly with full commitment in any situation and circumstance without compromising (Bank, 2010). However, in practice, it was found that in the absence of stringent regulations, teachers tended to operate in accordance with their own preferences, such as arriving late to school and failing to adhere to a regular class schedule. Such a scenario showed that although teachers hold distinct values, integrating individual and organizational values is critical for effective teaching.

In some cases, it was seen that it does not matter how self-motivated the teacher is towards their profession and vice-versa; the school culture enforces them to work accordingly. According to self-determination theory, teachers are more likely to perform their duties naturally and spontaneously when they feel a sense of autonomy and can follow their inner interests rather than being controlled by external elements

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to Panday (2018), integrity extends beyond just following rules and involves being proactive. But, the context and situation come in such a way that, no matter how much proactive a teacher is, s/he cannot go far from the actual context. This raises tensions between individual agency and social context. Teachers are guided by the context and culture of the surroundings, which fades away their internally perceived understanding and practice. In addition, it can be argued that professional integrity is not something every teacher has, but it is something that gives them a meaning or sense of becoming a teacher within the context they are in.

In one of my researched schools, the administration had different rules and behaviour for different teachers. As a result, it was difficult for administrators to enforce school-wide policies and maintain a consistent standard of behaviour. The differences in rules and behaviour can be understood as a response to the complex interplay of contextual factors, cultural norms, relational dynamics, adaptive responses to challenges, and the negotiation of meaning. School leaders argued that these variations are tailored to accommodate individual teachers' diverse needs, backgrounds, and circumstances and reflect cultural norms and values within the school's community. They explained that these differences are also influenced by the unique relationships and histories between teachers and administrators, as well as the evolving challenges and ongoing negotiations within the school environment. However, it led to misunderstandings and conflicts between teachers and administration and between teachers themselves. According to Fullan (2006), it is essential to treat each other with respect and care in order to build integrity as a part of a teacher's integrity. I strongly agree with Fullan's (2008) assertion that the conditions under which teachers work can either foster or hinder their ability to develop professionally and improve student outcomes. And schools need to create a supportive work environment that encourages professional growth and development. Thus, it is beneficial for individuals to have a personal stake or interest in the improvement of a situation or environment (Stronge, 2018). Individuals with a vested interest are more likely to actively work towards improving the situation and are more motivated to make positive changes.

The practice of favouritism and nepotism can create a negative atmosphere in the teaching environment, ultimately hindering the progress of teachers and students. Such practices can lead to the unfair distribution of opportunities, rewards, and recognition, which can create feelings of resentment and demotivation among

teachers. Nepotism remains a significant problem in various domains, including education (Osipian, 2020). People who are in power seek to keep and praise the work of *aafnomanchhe* as a teacher rather than qualified one *ramro manchhe* (MoE, 2012). Hence, undoubtedly teachers have agency, but the school environment plays a significant role in their practice (Datnow et al., 2002). With a positive and supportive school environment, teachers can utilize their agency to implement new ideas. In contrast, in an unsupportive environment with nepotism and favouritism, teachers may neglect their duties, limit their agency, and negatively impact their teaching effectiveness (Bazerman & Gino, 2012). This notion is supported by existing research, which underscores the role of contextual elements in shaping teacher behaviour and outcomes (Wilcox & Lawson, 2018). From the socio-cultural perspective, context plays an important role in shaping individual behaviour and learning. It argues that social interactions, cultural norms, and institutional practices shape how individuals perceive and engage with their environment (Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of my study, the school environment and the context influence teacher agency and effectiveness through different contexts where they are in. While saying so, teachers' own agency cannot be ignored. So, teacher agency is shaped not only by individual aspects but also by the school environment. Therefore, creating a positive and supportive school environment is crucial in enabling teachers to exercise agency effectively and improve their teaching effectiveness. The research findings indicate that the predominant elements influencing the work of teachers are the school culture and instances of unequal treatment within the school. Bandura (2002) also argued that cultural tools and practices influence a person's individualities and actions in their community, so it is necessary to understand the role of culture to comprehend how a teacher adapts and changes over time.

Despite teachers' perception of being obligated to follow the rules, regulations, and policies the Ministry of Education (MOE) set forth, significant evidence indicates that they often have alternative interpretations of policies. For the betterment of the children and institution, meanings are not fixed or predetermined but are created, developed, modified, and changed through interaction and implementation (Haralambos & Heald, 2004). According to Das (2010), integrity means not just following a set of rules but also listening to your inner sense of what's right. Therefore, it is important to consider the context and the audience when communicating to ensure that the intended meaning is effectively conveyed. Most of

the research participants take this as a right doing' as the implementation is done according to the school's needs. It raises questions about the integrity of teachers in the face of conflicting demands between following rules and regulations and promoting the institution's best interests. While teachers are expected to follow policies, they also were found to have the autonomy to create, modify, and change meanings during the implementation process. This autonomy can lead to conflicts between personal values and policy requirements, which can result in corruption when personal interests take precedence over the interests of the institution.

While I was working as a public school teacher, the appointment of HT's daughter as an office assistant was taken as an act of favouritism, disregarding her actual qualification and capabilities. It raises concerns about nepotism in the school system. But, when the HT of my research school replaced an old teacher, who was going to retire in a year (refer Kuber's case), the new energetic teacher with an English background was accepted and welcomed by all. These two incidents raise concerns about ethical conduct and integrity in the school system. The appointment of an unqualified individual based on personal connections rather than merit can be seen as a violation of integrity (TI, 2017). This kind of behaviour weakens the trust of other staff members in the school system and negatively impacts their morale and motivation to work. There arise issues and challenges for teachers to perform their duty when they encounter a conflict between their values and the policies they must follow (Harley et al., 2000, cited in Griffin, 2012).

On the other hand, the second situation, where HT replaced an old teacher with a new energetic teacher, was accepted and welcomed by all, despite not being in accordance with existing laws and policies. While this decision may seem to contradict policies and regulations, this was viewed as an example of practicing integrity by considering the school's specific needs and goals by the teachers of that school. According to them, this decision was made with the intention of improving the quality of education provided by the school and, therefore, was considered ethical and in line with the principle of integrity. Here, the teachers practiced integrity by fulfilling their duty according to the need and betterment of the school. In other words, corrupt do's become proper dos' when the necessity or context of the institution is not valued (cf. case of fund flow). This brought the fact that one can modify the rules, beholding the transparency and harmony among the stakeholders. Hence, when making decisions that go against existing policies and regulations, it is

crucial to ensure that any decision is justified and consistent with one's principles of integrity. This means that the decision should be made in an honest, fair, and respectful way, and it should align with the teacher's personal and professional values.

The integrity of the teachers often encourages and requires them to be highly committed to their profession (OECD, 2020) when they are given responsibility for their tasks, and when teachers are committed to their profession, they spare no pain to fulfill the organizational commitment of the school. Somech and Bogler (2002) conducted research on teachers in schools and argued that teachers having less commitment to organizations are the withdrawal teachers that are the real concern to schools. Likewise, it was believed by the participants that the higher the roles and responsibilities, the higher the feeling of belongingness. So, when the school has a culture of sharing the roles and responsibilities among teachers, they take it as an opportunity to prove themselves. In this context, self-determination theory claims that humans, by birth, want to engage themselves or exercise their capacities within social groups (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When teachers are obliged or forced to perform activities and learn something, the learning and performance become less effective. Whereas, when the teachers are motivated and given the opportunity or responsibilities to decide for themselves, they learn efficiently (Estefan et al., 2021). So, when involving teachers in school activities is set as school culture, then teachers feel that they have a feeling of belongingness in the locality they are in, and they become determined to show their high capacity and commitment, which further helps to strengthen their quality of work with full integrity.

Teachers are considered the driving force of morality and educators of values and principles (Campbell, 2006). And another aspect that teachers perceive as their integrity is being social and loyal to their profession and the children. It is the responsibility of teachers to contribute to the ethical and academic growth of their students. So, before playing such an ideal role for the students, teachers themselves should hold ethical, honest, and intellectual behaviour (Fenstermacher, 2001). This study found that teachers who build positive, friendly, and cordial relationships with their students tend to have a stronger attachment to their profession and students, making them more inclined to continue teaching (Worthy & Patterson, 2001). They seem to have a feeling of responsibility for the future of the students, and such characteristics of teachers can promote their influence in class, school, and beyond towards the students (Addi-Racciah, 2021). Other participants also knew that they

were taken as educators, but when their work is not recognized and they are not given respect, they think only about passing the time and the month to get the payment. The relationship with community people, including parents, also determines this. I have observed that there remains some kind of fear from parents and the community if they do not perform their duty well. On the contrary to this, when community people do not respect teachers and behave accordingly, teachers also forget that a child's future is in their hands. Teachers work with emotion to express their objectives, values, and identities, so emotion and respect are considered a crucial parts of understanding and practicing teacher integrity (Day & Lee, 2011). Hence, the relationship of teachers with the community people and parents matters to live out the understanding as teachers' emotions are attached to the school and its community.

Furthermore, one of the participants' fully accepted understandings of integrity is a self-realization of one's performing task. Actually, integrity gets reflected in the actual performance of an individual (Arora & Saxena, 2014). SMC chair of Sungava school shared that unless and until teachers perceive integrity as the needs, wants, and goals, i.e., internalization and self-realization of one's work, one cannot work with integrity (Field Note, April 29, 2017). The connection between integrity and the needs and aspiration of an individual seemed directly linked, as integrity is associated to be with one's innermost desires, needs, and aspirations (Walther et al., 2020). However, the needs and aspirations of a teacher also take steps as a possible threat to integrity because personal needs and aspirations can lure a teacher to act in self-interest. It is well known that teachers play a role both as moral, norms, and values educators (Campbell, 2006), and teachers with integrity are often called good teachers, and for such, teachers' duty and responsibility are major concerns that are fulfilled without fail. But still, despite the code of conduct developed by the education system, several questions arise regarding teachers' professional integrity. A study conducted on head teacher' integrity also explored that integrity hasn't received enough attention from policymakers, despite some codes of conduct (Khadka, 2019).

Emerging Aspects to the Understanding and Practices of Teachers' Integrity

Teachers' integrity is understood in terms of time, task, trust, transparency, and teamwork in teaching. Moreover, the practices of teachers on professional integrity are guided by the sociocultural norms, beliefs, and practices of the school they are working in. So, here I am exploring how these understandings and practices have

evolved and who/what contributes to this that the teachers of my research site are holding and abiding.

From the empirical evidence presented above in chapter V, different aspects of contribution to understanding and practising integrity are explained with the discussion, interaction, and observation of the teachers, such as upbringing and role model (Laxmi), religious aspects (Kuber) and needs and social network (Manik). But teachers' practices changed over time due to considerable modifications in how they live their lives and the education system. The finding of this study is consistent with the study of Kenyan primary school teachers on their life stories in terms of the influence on the teaching profession by having splits and modifications in teachers' lives (Dahl, 2015). The three cases of three different teachers and the views of other research participants show that they shared a common occurrence of organizational culture among teachers and belonging to a teaching profession from different social and economic backgrounds. Being in a teaching profession was not only a personal matter or choice for the research participants; it basically depended on the moment in time, context, and specific situations in the socio-cultural landscape (Hundeide, 2005). Among the three participants, Laxmi, Kuber, and Manik are of different ages, demographic, and social backgrounds as well as different reasons to hold the teaching profession.

Regarding Laxmi, she revealed that her father's dream and the lifestyle of one of her female teachers, who she considered a role model, played a significant role in her decision to pursue a career in teaching. She emphasized the significance of role models and personal motivations in shaping career choices (Weinberg, 2019). These findings suggest that external elements, such as the influence of role models and personal aspirations, can profoundly impact an individual's professional trajectory and ethical conduct. Laxmi's father's dream and her female teacher's lifestyle have helped shape her understanding of integrity in the context of her career aspirations. However, it is important to note that while external elements such as role models and family expectations can be motivational, the individual's passion and interest in the profession determine their long-term commitment to work with integrity (Day, 2004). The literature has widely documented the importance of role models in shaping ethical behaviour. Different research suggests that individuals tend to emulate the action of those they admire and respect, particularly in the context of professional conduct (Gibson, 2004; Weinberg, 2019). From the social cognitive theory of Bandura

and Walters (1977), most learning occurs through observation which role models highly influence. Furthermore, personal motivations, such as a desire to align one's career with one's values and interests, can serve as powerful drivers of behaving with integrity. At the same time, these external elements likely helped to shape Laxmi's understanding of integrity in the context of her professional aspirations.

Regarding Kuber's understanding and practices of integrity in the school, Kuber shared that he was compelled to teach at his village school due to a lack of educated individuals in the community who could take up the teaching profession. Teaching was not a matter of choice for him (Bali, 2015) but a means of earning a livelihood and gaining social prestige. Kuber's belief that teaching is a godly and prestigious job played an important role in his decision to become a teacher, although he wanted to do business. His belief in the principle of "*Karma gara tara fal ko ashha nagara*", which means "Do your duty without expectation of reward", also highlights the importance of selflessness and service to others in shaping our understanding of integrity. These findings underscore the importance of contextual elements, such as economic and social circumstances, in shaping an individual's professional trajectory and ethical conduct. Kuber's decision to become a teacher was not driven by personal aspirations or interests but by the practical need to earn a livelihood and gain social standing in his community. However, his perception of teaching as a noble profession (Ancho & Bongco, 2019; Elkhaira et al., 2020) provided him with a sense of purpose and identity within his role as a teacher. This study highlights the complex interplay between personal aspirations, external influences, and cultural norms in shaping an individual's understanding and practices of integrity in the school environment.

Kuber's situation raises two important questions about the intersection of integrity and education. On the one hand, Kuber's decision to teach in his village school demonstrates a commitment to his community as, in most cases, especially new teachers, do not accept teaching in rural schools (Huysman, 2008). At the same time, the fact that he was forced into this role due to a lack of other options raises concerns about whether he is truly suited for the job and whether his lack of enthusiasm undermines the integrity of the teaching profession. Hence, his case highlights the potential for different cultural or religious perspectives to shape the understanding and practices of integrity and the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse perspectives in shaping our own ethical frameworks.

Furthermore, the teachers from my research sites are influenced by various aspects, including personal interests, financial needs, social expectations, and opportunities in the teaching profession (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). From an integrity perspective, it is important to comprehend the underlying aspects that contribute to it, to ensure that their commitment and contribution to the profession are not compromised (Hussen et al., 2016). In the case of Manik, it is clear that a belief in the value and importance of education drove his desire to become a teacher. In his childhood, he aimed to become a teacher because he was influenced and attracted by the way teachers hold positions, mostly in the Western setting. He took this profession that holds high standards, values, and opportunities for themselves and other teachers (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2005). However, the negative perceptions of teaching in his cultural context posed a challenge to be a teacher, as he had to weigh his personal values and aspirations against the societal expectations and pressures that surrounded him. Ultimately, Manik chose to pursue teaching out of financial necessity. Youth seems to move into the teaching profession if they remain jobless and they are under pressure to work for survival. Though teaching is considered a noble job (Danielson, 2007) from earlier, people try for the teaching profession after they failed to get other better jobs. However, his commitment to changing negative attitudes towards the profession reflects a strong sense of integrity and a desire to align his actions with his values. It also portrays personal values' role in shaping the understanding and practices of integrity.

Hence, teachers understanding of integrity is emerged and is influenced by many things, such as their background, how they were brought up, what they learned at home and school, and how they see their job as a teacher. This suggests that a teacher's understanding of integrity is complex and multifaceted, shaped by various aspects throughout their personal and professional lives. Integrity is essential for teachers to maintain their credibility and foster a culture of honesty and respect (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020). However, a teacher's understanding of integrity may vary depending on their individual experiences and beliefs. Laxmi's emphasis on the role of family upbringing and social norms and values underscores the importance of cultural and social context in shaping integrity. Kuber's perspective, rooted in religious and cultural values, highlights the potential for different belief systems to shape our understanding and practices of integrity. Meanwhile, Manik's decision to adopt teaching as a profession out of necessity and his commitment to challenging

negative perceptions of the profession reflects the role of personal values and aspirations in shaping ethical decision-making.

Together, through my research participants, it is evident that integrity in the teaching profession is shaped by a complex interplay of individual, cultural, institutional, and social aspects. As such, it is important to acknowledge and respect the diverse perspectives that contribute to teachers' understanding and practices of integrity.

Navigating Integrity Paradoxes: Differences in Perception and Practice

With my ethnographic study approaches to explore the changes in understanding and practices of professional integrity among teachers over a time period and different contexts, I want to state that there are multiple understandings of teachers' professional integrity. The practices on it are contextual and individualistic. And the experiences that the teachers hold from the changes in understanding and practices create a paradox in some cases, which are portrayed above in the form of cases in Chapter VI. Teachers shared their experiences and discussed the challenges and paradoxes they face in daily practice.

Based on the participants' ethnographies, paradoxes in integrity for teachers are rampant in their daily activities. The empirical evidence and the sharing of the experience of the teachers show that there are different types of paradoxes that the teachers are experiencing in their teaching profession. They are the paradox of individual agency versus social context, the paradox of binding with rules versus flexibility, the paradox of proposed versus performed time, the paradox of policy versus practices, the paradox of professional versus personal values, and the paradox of *aafnomanchhe* versus others.

The argument is that timeliness in school, completion of tasks, and dedication to duty are essential components of a teacher's integrity that reflect the values and norms of a particular society. However, the way teachers practice it can change from the way and level they work, their feeling of belonging towards school and community, and their skill to work. These elements are influenced by the practices and structures within the school context and the broader social and cultural context within which they operate (Leibowitz et al., 2015). Such context brings the paradox of individual agency versus social context. Hence, teachers' working with integrity is directed by school practices and broader cultural contexts that are not always in their control. However, teachers also have individual agency (Imants & Van der Wal, 2020)

and can choose how they respond to these elements. This raises the question of teachers' responsibility for their actions and how much they can be held accountable for different aspects beyond their control.

Consequently, throughout this research, when I discuss teacher integrity, there is a recurring theme in discussion on the paradox of individual agency versus social context. In my researched school, it was found that school practices and cultural norms influence teachers, and at the same time, they hold their own agency and can choose the way to respond to these elements. The paradox raised questions about how teachers deal with their actions and how they can be held accountable for contextual elements simultaneously (Garrison, 2013). In a study on teachers' integrity, researchers found that teachers' responses to the sociocultural context were shaped by a combination of personal beliefs, institutional policies, and broader societal values (Pillay & Adler, 2015). Overall, the paradox of individual agency versus social context highlights the complex interplay between personal agency and broader sociocultural aspects in shaping teacher integrity.

Schools and HT do not have the authority to interpret the national laws, policies, and guidelines, however, it was found that the same rules and norms were being practiced differently based on the individual teachers, their identity, status, and relationship with them. The issue of integrity within educational policies is multifaceted, with differences in understanding and practices among schools and teachers within the same school. It is evident that a uniform approach is lacking, with no clear rule of law to ensure justice and fairness among the teachers. Rather, a "play with the rules " exists (Hamal, 2021) that adopts a targeted approach and results in varying practices of the same norms and values over time. Here the rule of law refers to fairness and equality for all the teachers (Kmezić, 2020) and play with the rules is formed by the group of people in power to use it to their advantage. Here, 'play with rules' means that a school has a legal system, but it does not necessarily provide equal opportunity for all teachers. Teachers were found to have faced both rules in law and play with rules from my two researched schools. The school implements the rule in law to all the teachers when it can be applicable to the teachers equally. However, teachers experienced school administration playing with rules when their *aafnomanchhe* needed it.

Consequently, teachers find themselves in a paradoxical situation where the boundaries between right and wrong with respect to integrity and morale are blurred.

It is important to recognize that policy implementation can be a complex and multifaceted process with different stakeholders having different perspectives and objectives (Guarneros-Meza, et al., 2018). Such activities have raised the paradox of policy versus practices among them. When teachers are treated differently and policies are not implemented fairly, it can lead to demotivation and a lack of job satisfaction, ultimately affecting student learning outcomes (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019). And few teachers were demoralized in my researched school because they were discouraged and hopeless of conflicts on school policies (Santoro, 2018). To solve this, everyone needs to work together to ensure that policies are interpreted and followed consistently. This helps to create a better sense of fairness and teamwork among teachers.

Similarly, it was found that flexibility in playing with the rules gives rise to favouritism and raises paradoxes of *aafnomanchhe* versus others. Subedi (2014) explains that *aafnomanchhe* can go beyond connections and relationships based on kinship and ethnicity and can be intentionally cultivated among individuals who are not related by blood or cultural ties. Thus, *aafnomanchhe* creates a vicious circle that usually weakens professional integrity. Likewise, a social network of teachers with people in power matters a lot while abiding by the rules in school. Foucault (1988) suggests that power is not inherent in the individual but rather is attached to the position or role they hold in society; local networks of teachers as well SMC and PTA are sources of power to maintain integrity as well as means of corruption. The study conducted in Africa revealed that unfair and unequal treatment to teachers by misinterpretation of educational policy cause numerous paradoxes for teachers (Griffin, 2012). Teachers with close networks and relationships with higher authorities in the education sector and political leaders get more opportunities, advantages, and liberties. It is because they can influence in educational landscape (Henry et al., 2013). That is why teachers are seen to be extending their political network rather than focusing on enhancing their professional efficiency. In fact, some teachers have received personal benefits (e.g., being promoted to HT, getting transferred as per their wish, etc.) by serving the political leaders and parties (Sangroula, 2021). Therefore, this trend is still high – given the political party-affiliated teacher unions, who advocate mostly for teachers' rights but not integrity (Bhattarai, 2015).

From my research participants, time is perceived as one of the important elements of teachers' integrity. However, some teachers were treated differently in the two research schools based on school working time. Some teachers were allowed to leave early for personal reasons, but others had to stay in class until the bell rang. It is paradoxical to hold time as an important element of integrity but allow some teachers to leave early while forcing others to stay in class. Also, in my researched school, a teacher relative to the Head Teacher got an extra month of maternity leave, while another teacher got it per the policy. This made some teachers confused and not trust the rules. In this case, the teacher's perception of integrity is undermined by the unequal treatment of teachers in the two research schools. The teacher perceived honesty and following the rules as elements of integrity. But in practice, the inconsistent treatment of teachers and the unfair advantages given to some teachers based on personal relationships undermine the teacher's efforts to maintain integrity. These create a paradox of *aafnomanchhe* versus others. The term "Aafnomanchhe" is a Nepali expression in the Nepali language that means "one's own people" or "own group". In this context, the paradox of *aafnomanchhe* versus others refers to an individual being treated preferentially because of a personal relationship with someone in authority rather than being treated fairly based on the same standards as everyone else. This discrepancy creates a moral dilemma for the teacher, who feels conflicted about whether to adhere to the rules or follow the example of those who are treated differently. Such incidents demoralize teachers in their duty (Santoro, 2018). Similarly, Shahi (2020) suggests that such incidents can result in less commitment to their work and other activities within the school.

In my researched schools, funds allocated for specific purposes were being utilized for other school needs. Although the schools may be using the funds for urgent and important requirements, such as improving infrastructure or purchasing teaching materials, this practice raises concerns of mismanagement of policies. This creates a paradox between the implementation of policy and actual practices. Similarly, the conflict between the intended purpose of the policy of CAS and LPP in the evaluation and the actual implementation of it by teachers created a paradox. Although the policy was designed to promote liberal education and facilitate student-centered learning, the teachers use it as a letter grading system without fully comprehending the concept and its applicability procedure. The misalignment between policy and practice can raise questions about the integrity of the evaluation

process and the ethical implications of using a policy in a manner that contradicts its intended purpose. Likewise, a policy is developed for yearly leave for teachers in the education sector. However, it was revealed that the policy was manipulated in favor of a particular teacher. Despite being absent, the teacher was allowed to sign the attendance sheet, thereby obtaining the benefits of the policy. Another incident in my research school where a teacher who has been teaching for more than three decades found teaching difficult, and a young teacher replaced him. Such manipulation of the policy for individual gain creates a paradox between its intended purpose and its actual implementation.

These types of activities raise questions about the integrity of the education system and the ethical implications of deviating from established policies. The paradoxes of policy versus actual practices highlight the need for greater transparency and accountability in the implementation of policies to ensure their intended purpose is upheld. When policies do not work in practice as they should, it can be because people resist change (Huczynsk & Buchanan, 2001). And until school teachers resist change, policy implementation cannot be met as intended (Hope, 2009). Similarly, when there is no clarity on how a policy should be implemented, it worsens the paradox, resulting in a lack of transparency and trust. While schools may find themselves needing to interpret or manipulate the existing policy, they should ensure that such decisions are made transparently, responsibly, and in accordance with established policies. Research shows that the paradox of policy implementation occurs naturally because of changes in discourse or the context of the policy implementation (Hope, 2009).

On the one hand, modifying rules while maintaining transparency and harmony among stakeholders can be seen as a positive step toward ensuring quality education. However, on the other hand, these modifications conflict with the educational policy and raise questions about the process's integrity. If modifications are made that go against the educational policy, it could be seen as a rupture of integrity. Educational policies are put in place to ensure that students receive the best possible education, and if these policies are not being upheld, it could lead to a breakdown of trust between stakeholders and negatively impact on students.

Similarly, teachers consider performing tasks well as an important aspect of teachers' integrity. This includes delivering the curriculum effectively and ensuring that all students are entitled to equal opportunities to learn and grow. The expectation

from teachers is that teachers will teach well in class and not take extra payment for tuition classes. This situation highlights the paradox for teachers between their professional and personal values. On the one hand, teachers have a professional responsibility to ensure quality education in the classroom and also additional support for their students to help them succeed, but on the other hand, they may also have a personal desire to earn extra income through private tuition classes. This dilemma can lead to conflicting priorities, as taking on extra work outside of school hours can impact their ability to prepare for and deliver quality lessons during regular class hours. And it can raise perceptions of unfairness or favouritism, as some students may have access to additional help outside of school while others do not (Kirya, 2019).

Likewise, when implementing CAS and LPP, teachers in my research school face a conflict between their personal values and professional obligations. This conflict arises due to the school administration's expectation that teachers pass students who have not attended regular school. However, these paradoxes can create a dilemma for teachers as they try to balance their professional responsibilities and personal values.

From a sociocultural perspective, these paradoxes can be seen as a clash between individual and professional values, where in individual values, teacher prioritize their own values and beliefs, and in professional values, the value of a group or institution is given priority. When facing such experiences, teachers face a comprehensive array of paradoxes, bringing a new approach to understanding and practising to fulfil their responsibility (Banks, 2009). And when there arises paradoxical thought between personal and professional values, it can cause troubles in both values (Daliri-Ngametua & Hardy, 2022). Since paradoxes can arise in various situations and contexts, and the way it is addressed depends on multiple aspects such as the specific context and environment where the paradox arose, the professional integrity and personal experience of the teacher, and the norms and values of the profession (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2010). So, to address such paradoxes, it is essential to have a complete understanding of the specific context and adopt a nuanced approach. As a solution to a paradox that worked in one context may not work or be effective in another.

Crux of My Chapter

In this chapter, I make a move to discuss some key ideas that emerged from my empirical chapters. From the overall discussion of this chapter, Integrity for my

research participants is determined by the 5Ts, i.e., Time, Task, Target, Teamwork, and Trust. Reflecting on the practices of teachers' integrity, I can draw those school cultural aspects are dominant to the teacher's agency. Teachers work on contextual aspects rather than following their agency. Therefore, in the integrity practice of teachers, there is a necessity to empower teachers' agency.

Similarly, the concept of a teacher's integrity is shaped by various aspects such as societal values, cultural norms, beliefs, and institutional practices. When there were differences in the understanding and practices in researched schools, it raised paradoxes. The paradoxes that were raised in this study were the paradox of agency versus social context, policy versus practice, professional versus personal values, binding with rules vs flexibility, proposed versus performed time, and *aafnomanchhe* versus others. These paradoxes can create challenges in promoting fairness and consistency in educational practices, which can impact the integrity of the education system. Hence, in the following chapter, I attempt to summarize my research work and conclude my research with its implications.

CHAPTER VIII

RECAPITULATION, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS OF MY STUDY

Recapitulation of my Study

The integrity of teachers has become a matter of professional concern in the field of education. They have a significant role in shaping the quality of citizens in any country; thus, the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers (UNESCO, 2009; Gemeda & Tynjälä, 2015). It is a fact that the quality of teachers is a crucial aspect in determining the effectiveness of an education system (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), so it is suggested to give priority towards teachers' motivation and needs (Ofojebe & Ezugoh, 2010). Teachers' integrity has always been the common talk. There are several news and several reports reported on teachers' integrity. The fundamental question that had struck my mind being involved in the education sector was -why had teachers' integrity been questioned, and why they are blamed for not performing their duties and responsibilities? So, I got interested in studying teachers' integrity. I was willing to know how teachers themselves actually perceive integrity and its practices.

In society, teachers are considered role models (Martino, 2009; Shein & Chiou, 2011). Integrity in the life of a teacher is considered imperative because a teacher with integrity is supposed to maintain quality education. The ethical principles and values drive and teachers' commitment to their work inbuilt into the teaching profession (Belogolovsky & Somech, 2010). However, there are several confusions and questions about teachers' integrity. For instance, during my decade-long teaching experience in a public school, I have witnessed issues raising questions about teachers' integrity. This consequently hampers the teaching environment in schools, communities, and in the education system. Hence, exploring, analysing and practising teachers' integrity is necessary. This study basically sets out to perceive the understanding and practices of teachers' integrity. And this study helps teachers to equip themselves with integrity to overcome the raised issues and to have integrity in the teaching profession.

To the best of my knowledge, no such research has been conducted in particular regarding teachers' integrity in public schools in Nepal. So, the aim of my study was to explore how teachers understand and practice integrity in their everyday

school context, what contributes to their understanding and practices, and how they are experiencing changes in their understanding and practices. I observed that there are several understandings of integrity. This study explored and analysed the concept of integrity within the available socio-cultural and contextual context.

As this study demands to study in the actual context, I employed ethnographic methodology, which helped me to have a thorough and prolonged engagement with them. The methodology I selected helped me in the research process but also helped in establishing the theoretical and philosophical aspects of my research. It helped me understand my participants' day-to-day activities and formal and informal interactions in their natural context. This methodology helps me to explore my participants' behaviour, action, and interaction in their natural settings. The ethnographic information was collected from eight teachers of two public schools in the Kavre district.

The objective of my research work is to look at the understanding and practices of integrity by the teachers in the local context by reaching what Fine (2003) calls "expected participants in social life" (as cited in Vesa, 2013, p. 24). Therefore, my research participants are public school teachers and head teachers. During my research, I have interacted with other educational stakeholders like SMC, the PTA chair, and the community people. The participants involved in the research had been in their respective positions for a minimum of five years, so they have substantial knowledge and understanding of the current educational practices. Likewise, the schools that I selected are from different settings.

I recorded the interviews to facilitate transcription and took notes during the data collection process, which helped me write reflective field notes. I captured my participants' reactions and actions during interaction, observation, and while having informal guff-gaff. I observed my participants in the natural setting, which made me feel like a part of the group. During my ethnographic research, I interviewed teachers to explore their understanding and practices of professional integrity. While most teachers expressed positive views about their profession, I found it challenging to assess whether they were truly committed to their ideals or were just merely putting up a show. This created a sense of discomfort and unease for both me and the teachers. As a result, I found it necessary to supplement my interviews with observations of the teachers' activities in their natural, cultural settings. So, to gain

deeper insights, I also spent time observing teachers' natural interactions and activities in their cultural settings as an outsider.

In the process of meaning-making, I re-read the field information, reflective notes, and observation notes and organized those field materials employing thematic codes and categories. I chose several theories and frameworks (as they were not pre-set) to give thick descriptions and make multiple interpretations of my field information. Hence, the meaning-making of the field texts involved the interpretation of the meanings of participants' actions, ideas, values, and experiences concerning integrity, understanding, and practices at the local level. This process involves deriving meaning and insights from the gathered information to better understand the studied phenomena. I took oral informed consent from the participants by informing them about the purposes and procedures. I intended to use of the research with full autonomy in participating and deciding not to participate in my study. I made sure that the dignity of my research participants was respected. I took measures to maintain the confidentiality of the data provided by the participants, including the audio recordings and transcripts. I made sure that their identities and the names of their schools were not disclosed to the public. Though I got consent for the interview, a few participants declined to be recorded, and a few shared their experiences and asked me not to write them in my thesis. As per the sensitivity of the research topic with few sensitive information, I documented the issue in written form without disclosing the identity of the person or their affiliation with respect to the principle of doing no harm.

The principal concerns were that integrity is important, especially in the teaching professions, as teachers are the source to teach the students, and teaching is primarily considered a moral and ethical activity (Campbell, 2003). Teachers' understanding of integrity is beyond the external demands of the profession and illustrates the code of conduct of the profession, and it is not limited to a single definition. The understanding was multiple and contextual. Teachers understand integrity as 5T (shown in Figure 1), i.e., time, task, trust, teamwork, and transparency.

The practising understanding of integrity varied from one school to another and one teacher to another. Practice is affected by the school context and the culture developed in the school. The culture that the school has formed paves the teachers to work accordingly though sometimes it is not according to what they believe. The school's socio-cultural context and the culture developed within the school and the

community impact teachers and their teaching (Cai et al., 2022). The higher the roles and responsibilities given to the teacher, teachers have the feeling of ownership and belongingness, and they employ themselves for the betterment of their teaching. They do not hesitate to practice what they understand is better for their work and the school when they get a cooperative environment. It was found that the activities that teachers perform are deeply connected with the school culture.

When my research uncovers the understanding and practices of teachers' integrity, I explored there are multiple actors, happenings, causes, interactions, evidence, contexts, and characters that contribute to and lead to the evolution of the understanding and practices of teachers' integrity. Regarding understanding teachers' integrity, the concept of integrity among the researched teachers is shaped by multiple aspects such as societal values, traditional values, cultural norms, personal beliefs, and institutional practices.

Furthermore, I also discussed the paradoxes of understanding and practices of teachers' integrity. The understanding of integrity was explained and perceived differently by different individuals and practices it according to the school culture they are working in. This creates several paradoxes among teachers in their teaching profession, such as agency versus social context, policy versus practice, binding with rules versus flexibility, proposed versus performed time, professional versus personal values, and *aafnomanchhe* versus others. When there rise paradoxes, it can create challenges in the workplace and affect the teachers' integrity. So, discussions on paradoxes are crucial for managing disagreement and ambiguities (Fernandes & Viera, 2013). This could gradually positively impact dealing with such paradoxes and working with professional integrity.

Conclusion of the Study

Teachers hold crucial positions within the Nepali school education system. Undoubtedly, they are the main source of inspiration for the students and contribute to the transformation of the society. Their professional activities and practices are watched carefully both by the students and the parents. The activities that the teachers do, the way they behave, and the way they follow the rules and regulations of the school, and perform their duty become the integrity of a teacher that students learn from. So, it is crucial to consider how teachers practice and behave in school. As a result, school teachers perform proactive integrity.

There are multiple understandings of integrity. For a teacher, integrity is embodied in the 5Ts (time, task, trust, teamwork, and transparency). Teachers interplay with them through their professional commitments, responsibilities, and actions. Importantly, the understanding of integrity for the teachers has its uniqueness. It is constructed from the process of their action and interaction. In this sense, integrity is the product of a culture and it cannot be limited to a single definition because it varies from culture to culture and context to context. Hence, a teacher's integrity is understood as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon, shaped by various elements such as personal values, societal values, cultural norms, and institutional practices.

To understand the practices of integrity among teachers, it is essential to take into account the institutional context within which they work, the socio-cultural context that shapes their behaviours, and the challenges that arise from changes in the social, economic, and political landscape. The culture that the school has formed paves the teachers to work accordingly, though they have their own perceptions. On the one hand, teachers who feel a strong sense of agency are adaptable to their context, flexible, and develop new ideas when faced with challenges. On the other hand, those who feel constrained by institutional policies are more inclined to conform to established norms and practices.

Teachers' understanding and practices on integrity emerged and developed from different aspects: Upbringing, traditional beliefs, social networks, and influence by role models. This shows that teachers' integrity cannot be understood in isolation from their socio-cultural context; rather, it is a product of their experiences, values, beliefs, and interactions with others in the community where they are born, raised, and educated. In this context, the individual, cultural, organizational, and contextual elements contribute to the exposure and advancement of understanding and practices of teachers' integrity. When there is a mismatch between how they understand and practice running the school, it creates a paradox among teachers. In addition, professionals often face significant challenges in balancing traditional beliefs, customs, or practices with the demands and conditions of modern times, particularly in the context of cultural and socioeconomic dynamics.

The study concludes that legal positivism and proactive integrity have emerged in the school culture as a paradox. While legal positivists follow only the established laws, proactive integrity goes beyond that. When maintaining proactive

integrity, there can be violations of legal positivist principles. When teachers discuss integrity, it's often about balancing these two approaches. Similarly, teachers usually do not intend to work without integrity, but rather that their values conflict, creating paradoxes. Therefore, their behaviour lacks integrity concerning some of those values.

Implications of My Study: My Learning and Add-on

After the conclusion of my study, it is important to reflect on the possible contribution that my study can make. In my study, I have emphasized the need for further discourse on the issue of integrity, highlighting its importance. In this section, I am presenting possible additions for the policymakers, the school actors (especially teachers), and the future researchers who are expected to conduct similar research in the near future.

Implication for the Policy Makers

In the context of the education sector in Nepal, the policy is designed for the whole education sector and for the schools, which cannot explain the context of the public school teachers. In the eighth amendment of the education act, there is mentioned code of conduct for the teachers in a general form. Such a code of conduct prepared for all teachers in Nepal cannot explain the local context. Local schools and teachers themselves practice rules and codes of conduct in the local context for the betterment of the school, which is not articulated in the national policy. When the national policy does not have any place to practice such rules and codes, it cannot be carried out in the long run though it benefits the school and the students.

Similarly, policymakers prepare a policy with a blanket approach. There has been less talk on teachers' integrity in policy. In this regard, this study will help inculcate the term integrity specifically for the schoolteachers at the micro level as this study suggests different elements that a teacher should possess being a teacher.

Through this study, the add-on to policymakers is that policy has to be formulated to facilitate the process where it can give liberty to formulate a local code of conduct with the active and compulsory presence of the local education stakeholders. The availability of some space for individual freedom to practice integrity in the school helps teachers protect their own integrity.

Implication for the Education Practitioners (Teachers)

Teachers perceived that when teachers focus on time, task, trust, transparency, and teamwork, they promote their role and work with integrity to become good teachers. This study can provide some dynamic knowledge on integrity to education

practitioners. Teachers can be aware of the gap between understanding and practice, which creates a paradox in their teaching profession. This study and its finding could help teachers resolve the paradoxes that they might encounter in teaching.

The integrity of the teachers is not only limited to the sphere of the school compound but also it stretches outside of it. After teaching, teachers are expected to abide by the appropriate ethical and moral values as they are fit to teach and become ideal for the children. In this connection, my study will be helpful for the teachers to work with integrity and become good teachers by behaving and teaching good conduct to the students.

In my study, teamwork and trust-building among the teachers, students, and community people are crucial in understanding and maintaining integrity. Elaborating and implementing these requires significant time and effort, but it is worth it. It is harder to implement than formal rules as they are not written and mandatory for a teacher to follow. But this study of mine helps teachers to understand the importance of it. Such shared elements developed from the understanding of integrity among the teachers at the public school play a vital role in ascertaining a positive working environment which helps to foster trust, respect, and care among the stakeholders. As this research identified a trait of the 5Ts, it can become a useful framework for teachers to evaluate their beliefs, performance, and colleagues. This study on teachers' integrity could serve as guidelines and procedures for the schoolteachers to perform with integrity and also make them aware of the possible paradox that they may face and could become ready to face it with solutions to it.

Implication for Future Researchers

As there is little research conducted in the integrity field, this study can leave implications for future researchers conducting research in this field. The upsurge in interest in the integrity practices of teachers through my research work can lead future researchers to view this phenomenon through other development, pedagogical, and academic lenses. The nature of integrity may have similar or different characteristics in every institution, and this study can pave the path for the other sector to study integrity in their section within their context. Future researchers could also explore outsiders' perceptions of teachers' integrity to gain insights into how external stakeholders view teachers' integrity.

I have researched the paradoxes of teachers' integrity; future researchers can further research how they influence teachers' performance and how they experience and express the influence.

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4. Specific incidents or examples shared by students/parents/SMC/community people related to teachers and integrity
5. Collaborative efforts between teachers and the SMC in fostering integrity.
6. Regarding school activities, like tuition classes, school assemblies, etc.

Conclusion

Thank you for participating. Your insights will aid our research. Your responses are confidential.

Note: Your information will be used for research purposes only, and your participation is voluntary. You can withdraw anytime without consequences.

Annex II: Observation Components

1. Interactions with colleagues, parents, community people, and students
2. Any discussions or actions involving integrity among teachers.
3. Teachers meetings and ongoing classes.
4. Different programs of schools like school days, entrance exams etc.
5. Body language, expressions, or gestures indicating discomfort or paradoxical situations.
6. Handling of integrity during class.
7. Discussions about integrity-related topics.
8. Reactions to school policies or guidelines.
9. How teachers communicate integrity matters.
10. Cultural norms influencing integrity practices.
11. Adaptations in response to situational demands.
12. Casual discussions with teachers.
13. Interaction between teachers and school leaders.

Conclusion

Thank participants for allowing observations and reiterating the confidentiality of observations.

Note: Ethnographic observations will be conducted discreetly and respectfully to capture the authentic experiences of teachers practicing integrity within the school environment.

Annex III: Policy Measures to Teachers

S.N.	Policy Document	Key Provisions
1	<p>The Policy Recommendations on Teachers' Code of Conduct and Roles, 1996 BS (AD 1940)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The <i>Badahakim</i> (Local Governor), also the chairperson of the School Management Committee (SMC) of his jurisdiction, shall be responsible for the recruitment and dismissal of teachers. The case will be reported to the Director for necessary action for conduct and ethics-related trivial issues. • SMC shall be responsible for deciding the granting of leave, increasing or decreasing salaries according to the capacity and in case of offence by teachers and the pundits on deciding the fines from one aana to Rs. 2000/-. The decision should be reported to the Director-General. • Teachers should obtain approval from SMC for private tuition. Approval shall not be granted if the private tuition being applied for harms school teaching, and except where special reasons are given, teachers with an academic qualification above grade 8 should not be permitted to give private tuition to his/her students on his/her own subject. • Teachers should obtain the approval of <i>Badahakim</i> or the Director-General to become members of any organisation.
2	<p>Recommendation of Nepal National Education Planning Commission,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There cannot be impressive teaching unless the teachers are trained. Incompetent teachers should be

2011BS(1955 AD)	<p>removed and gradually trained and competent teachers should be deployed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As teachers become more trained and learned, their practice in the classroom will improve. Teachers should be trained every year. • Teachers should be trained in modern methodologies and educational psychology. • There should be careful selection in the recruitment of teachers. • There should be regular monitoring of teacher performance. • Teachers' minimum pay scales should be fixed and the pay increase should be based on result-based teaching performance. All-Round National Education Committee Report, BS 2018 (1962)¹. The teaching profession should be made attractive.
<p>3 All-Round National Education Committee Report, BS 2018 (1962)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teaching profession should be made attractive. To achieve this:— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the salary scale of teachers should be higher than that of civil service personnel;— ○ teachers should be selected with the utmost care to ensure recruitment of people with good morale and character, who are well-learned, competent and dedicated to teaching with the utmost will;— ○ There should be uniformity in

the salary scales of teachers and teacher positions should be made pensionable and permanent;—

- There should be provision of health coverage for teachers to ensure the treatment of illness.
- Secondary-level teachers should have minimum qualification of a Bachelor of Arts (BA), B.Sc. or Shastri at the entry stage, considered the first stage. In the second stage, the teacher should be experienced and have acquired honours or achieved a distinction or first class, and be trained in their subject.
- A teacher should be of high moral and ethical standing.
 - A person who has been convicted and punished should not be recruited as a teacher;
 - Alcoholics and persons addicted to hashish and opium cannot be teachers;
 - A teacher should not smoke in the presence of students;
 - Private tuition classes should not be run in the school compound and during school hours;
 - A teacher who is 15 minutes late by school starting time should be warned; those who are late by more than 15 minutes should be considered absent;

- Every teacher/personnel should sign in the register mentioning the time of arrival and departure.

National Education System Plan, 2028 BS (1972)
Teacher's Code of Conduct in Education Regulations

- Teachers should take teaching and learning as the main goal;
- The feeling of national unity should be developed/raised through the school or educational institution;
- These latter should not propagate any sentiment and feelings among teachers and students that are offensive to other language groups, ethnicities and religious groups:
- Students should get equal and impartial treatment in school:
- Teachers should promote obedience, discipline, good will, co-operation, good manners, sympathy, patience and good character;
- Teachers should not perform any activities that reflect the dominance of one teacher over another and should not bring forth malice in students;
- Teachers should play the role of an example to the students in following codes of conduct;8. Teachers should undertake the life of simple living and high thinking;
- Teachers should not go against the Panchayat system.
- Records detailing whether the codes of conduct are followed or not by the teachers should be maintained by the HT

and of the HT by SMC, with a copy being sent to the District Education Office.

National Education
Commission Report, 2049
BS (1993)

- Teacher training is mandatory for those joining the teaching centre.
 - Management for providing training to those who have entered the job but not been trained should be made compulsory.
- Females should be given priority for recruitment and training.
 - Salary and other benefits should be increased according to the level of training.

Annex IV: Teachers' Code of Conduct (Education Rules 2002, Article 133)

Teachers shall abide by the following codes of conduct:

- a. To carry out prescribed tasks at the place where he/she is assigned
- b. To be present in school regularly at the prescribed time and sign on the attendance register mentioning the time of coming in and going out, and shall not be absent in school without getting prior permission for leave,
- c. Not to influence or attempt to influence anybody politically with the intention of fulfilling vested interest in connection with his/her service.
- d. Not to publish any article in his/her real or nickname or give any information, statement or speech to communication media like press or radio or television or any other media jeopardizing the harmonious relation between the Government of Nepal and the people and the relation of Nepal with any foreign country,
- e. To regard teaching and study as his/her main motto with the objective of making students good citizen,
- f. To encourage obedience, discipline, good faith, co-operation, morality, sympathy, patience and good conduct,
- g. Not to spread feelings of hatred against any language, religion or amongst teachers or students,
- h. Teacher working in a community school shall not work outside the school where he/she has been appointed without taking permission from Management Committee and District Education Officer,
- i. To work for bringing emotional unity in the country having raised national spirit through the medium of school or educational institution,
- j. Not to hold demonstration, *Gherao*, strike, lock-up, so as to undermining the sovereignty and integrity of Nepal or disturbing public peace and security, foreign relation, public decency or resulting in contempt of court, or causing obstruction to any government authority or officer in performing his/her duties as provided by law.

Annex V: Addition of Provisions through the Eighth Amendment (2016)

- a. Teachers and his/her spouse should declare themselves regarding their possession of Emigrant Diversity Visa like Permanent Resident, Green card etc. Otherwise they will be punished as per law.
- b. No one should run bridge course, educational counseling, language class, foreign course etc. without prior permission from concerned authority.
- c. Teachers should not be made to work in other sectors except teaching-learning and administrative work. However they can be mobilized during election, census, rescue operation, natural disaster etc. without hampering daily school activities.
- d. There should be SMC for proper execution, monitoring and management of school. SMC consists of following members: parents representative – 4 (at least 2 female), representative of local government – 1, school founder, educationist, local intellectual, person helping school continually for more than ten years or donating goods/cash up to ten hundred thousand (lakh) or more – 2 (at least 1 female), and Head teacher as member secretary.
- e. For higher secondary teachers of math, science English, computer, account, law, agriculture, veterinary can fight for temporary teaching license within 6 months of commencement of this law.
- f. School is declared as zone of peace and should be free from violence for providing excellent education.
- g. Government run public school should not take any fee from student. However, if any parents give any gift, donation, cash or voluntary service may be accepted.
- h. Teacher should not be member of any political party neither do part time job. They should not do any sorts of business or work elsewhere in school working hour.
- i. No students should be given any type of physical torture, mental harassment and expelled from the school.
- j. For appointment of Head master, teachers and others staff there should be open competitive written exam followed by interview. If committee finds his/her performance satisfactory then the him/her can be called for practical examination conducted by teacher service commission as of qualification, functions, duties, powers, facilities mentioned in act for that post.

Annex VI: Teachers' Code of Conduct (MOE and TUN Guidelines)

A. Commitment towards the profession:

- a. Keep entirely dedicated and faithful towards the concerns, development and good of their profession;
- b. Gear continuous efforts towards professional efficiency, dedication, regularity, responsiveness, and strive continuously to enhancing morals of character;
- c. Secure support of entire profession towards democracy, human right and social justice. Each teachers to undertake demonstration lesson once a week with provision to integrity;
- d. Strive to political, socioeconomic and cultural promotion and development of the nation by ensuring relevant and quality education to all;
- e. Secure entire stakeholders' individual as well as collective effort, influence and capacity for enhancing educational and professional development;
- f. Be critical as well as creative in the use of relevant knowledge, information and their promotion while representing professional communities and groups;
- g. Establish culture of transforming teaching and subject matters of teaching relevant to multicultural context and documenting knowledge, skill and experiences;
- h. Engage in continuous dialogue, interaction, research and study with students, teachers and parents for establishing effective methodology to securing mutual benefit from the knowledge, information and skills learnt;
- i. Discharge entire professional, class as well as educational roles in accepted and responsive manner;
- j. Involving in training and sharing knowledge and skills acquired with fellow teachers in view to promoting professional status.

B. Commitment to teaching learning:

- a. Prepare, implement, coordinate, supervise and manage instructional plan considering student centered approach to learning and curricular anticipations to subject matter;

- b. Undertake continuous educational as well as social monitoring, supervision and evaluation of students' progress and proficiency in learning;
- c. Devise and implement group activities, social and community works with a view to fostering students' socialization, inclusion and collective personality;
- d. Provide effective social response to student diversity through teaching learning;
- e. Integrate teaching subject with information technology and incorporate it in teaching learning, classroom management and documentation of students' progress as well as teachers' own professional development;
- f. Develop capacity and efficiency to make clear presentations, verbal as well as written, in questions of teachers' own profession and educational responsibilities in public discussions, interactions, seminars as well as medias;
- g. Observe teaching practices of fellow teachers, especially of senior teachers and exchanging feedback in order to upgrading teaching skills;
- h. Refrain from influencing teaching learning on the basis of political beliefs and pay attention to making the classroom attractive, conducive and accessible for all;
- i. Collect varieties of instructional materials in the classroom and make their best use in classroom practices.

C. Commitments towards students:

- a. Teachers shall demonstrate respect to the child right as reflected in the UN Convention and endeavor to facilitate them to benefit from the provisions and express their own adherence in areas of their work;
- b. Acknowledging individual specialties and specific as well as separate needs of all children, strive to facilitate fostering their innate potentialities and capacity development to the fullest extent;
- c. Respecting the good and welfare of students in all respect protect children against corporal as well as mental punishments and other forms of misbehaviors;

- d. Demonstrate high level of respect, affection and sympathy to all children;
- e. Refrain from disclosing student related specific information to anybody except student's parents and teachers;
- f. Keep alert in respect to distorting, inflating and aggregating information on students giving rise to any kind of misunderstandings;
- g. Keep detached from cheap and loose comments in respect to lacking, family background and socio economic background of students;
- h. Identify strengths and positive aspects inherent in students, adopt culture of easy acceptance of own weakness and realization of mistakes;
- i. Identify each child's learning achievements and provide remedial treatments as and when necessary;
- j. Do not take any intoxicating things, disclose bad habits and associations with ill elements;
- k. Recognize potentialities and weakness of students and provide encouragement for their development.

D. Commitment towards schools

- a. Cooperate to protect and promote schools assets of all kinds and refrain from indulging in any kind of affairs damaging the school reputation;
- b. Help declaring schools a peace zone and contribute to maintain it;
- c. Inculcating cordial relationships among teachers, communities and launch school activities in coordination with stakeholders;
- d. Encourage involving stakeholders of education during the preparation of SIP.

E. Commitment towards Colleagues and co-workers:

- a. Keep refrained from denouncing, and indulge in harming fellow workers during professional and union activities;
- b. Refrain from threatening against fellow teachers and help protecting them against psychological, physical and sexual exploitations;
- c. Coordinate relations in such a way that associated political faith of any one without affecting professional, personal relationships to protect human rights;

- d. Encourage mutual collaboration in educational activities including planning, implementing and evaluating.

F. Commitment towards School Managing Committee:

- a. Fully acknowledge and respect the legal, managerial roles of persons involved in SMC, furnish continuous cooperation in implementing the understandings and agreements reached between teachers and SMC;
- b. Abide with decisions of SMC. Develop pressure including legal, administrative actions against such decisions in case the decisions happen to go against professionalism, interest and security of profession;
- c. Prepare and maintain an environment in which the provisions of Education Act and Regulations are observed.

G. Commitment towards Parents

- a. Provide information to concerned parents relating to their children's achievement status adhering their rights to aspire, know about educational, emotional and psychological progress;
- b. Initiate continuous discussion with concerned parents relating to psychological, emotional and educational progress;
- c. Adhering parents' concerns considering teachers professional ethics provide suggestions to concerned parents in regard to their children;
- d. To encourage roles of parents and guardians as an important and compulsory element of teaching process;
- e. Be alert in maintaining neutral behaviour with students in respect to political, social, cultural and other backgrounds of their parents;
- f. Establish a culture of regular meeting with parents and sending their children's progress report.

H. Commitment towards teacher unions

- a. Draw attention of unions towards the interests of overall teaching communities, built effective pressure and provide continuous support in achieving its objectives;
- b. Keep union membership always alert, updated, extend all kinds of support for strengthening the union organizationally, morally and financially;

- c. Show commitments towards union, respect results, mandates of election, and build participation in all activities expressing full dedication to represent them in social activities.

I. Commitment towards social justice

- a. Building public opinion against social discriminations, regional disparities and contribute social campaigns abolishing them;
- b. Initiate against caste discriminations, women empowerment, different abilities within and outside classrooms and invite guest speakers to deliver talk program by organizing special education programs

J. Commitment towards natural, environmental protection and sustainable development:

- a. Express behavioral and ideological respect, dedication towards the values and notion of natural and environmental conservation;
- b. Be active in implementing “Johannesburg Plan of Action” and social mobilization activities for increased awareness;
- c. Building effective participation in democratic, scientific, moral and behavioral programs relating to sustainable development, and life values;
- d. Be active in establishing social, environmental balance by demonstrating high regards to all organic, natural and cultural diversities.