

SENIOR CITIZEN EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN NEPAL: A
CRITICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of *Jyoti Singh Bhandari* for the Master of Philosophy in Educational Leadership presented on 25 May 2025, entitled *Senior Citizen Education Policies and Practices in Nepal: A Critical Narrative Inquiry*.

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The research entitled *Senior Citizen Education Policies and Practices in Nepal: A Critical Narrative Inquiry* was chosen based on my curiosity about finding suitable programs for my mother, who insists that learning is beyond formal education. The research explores policies concerning educational opportunities for senior citizens in Nepal, focusing on the narratives of those responsible for implementing those policies and the challenges they face.

The study inquired of senior citizens above 60 from various Community Learning Centers (CLCs) of Kathmandu and duty bearers from ministries, municipalities, CLCs, and INGOs. The study embraced narrative inquiry and three theories: the human rights-based approach, social justice theory, and distinctive learning theory. I rigorously studied the policies concerned with SCE in Nepal, gaining insights from both categories of participants. This helped me understand that these policies fail to address evolving needs, focusing on basic literacy and neglecting digital literacy and financial management. This neglect threatens senior citizens' participation in development. However, I understood that despite challenges, Nepal has seen positive developments in SCE, highlighting the need for effective policy implementation and collaboration with stakeholders like senior citizens, NGOs, and policymakers.

.....

25 May 2025

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शोध सार

शैक्षिक नेतृत्व तथा व्यवस्थापनमा दर्शनशास्त्रको स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि ज्योति सिंह भण्डारीको शोध प्रबन्धको शीर्षक "नेपालमा ज्येष्ठ नागरिक शिक्षा नीतिहरू र अभ्यास: एक आलोचनात्मक कथात्मक अनुसन्धान" ११ जेठ २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।

राज कुमार ढुंगाना, पीएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

नेपालमा ज्येष्ठ नागरिक शिक्षा नीतिहरू र अभ्यास एक आलोचनात्मक कथात्मक अनुसन्धान शीर्षक मेरो आमाका लागि उपयुक्त कार्यक्रमहरू खोज्ने जिज्ञासाका आधारमा चयन गरिएको हो। यस अनुसन्धानले नेपालमा ज्येष्ठ नागरिकहरूको लागि उपलब्ध शैक्षिक अवसरहरू सम्बन्धी नीतिहरू अन्वेषण गर्दछ, विशेष रूपमा ती नीतिहरू कार्यान्वयन गर्ने व्यक्तिहरूका कथाहरू र तिनीहरूले सामना गर्नुपरेका चुनौतीहरूमा केन्द्रित रहेको छ।

यस अध्ययनले काठमाण्डूका विभिन्न सामुदायिक सिकाइ केन्द्र (CLC) हरूका ६० वर्षमाथिका ज्येष्ठ नागरिकहरू, मन्त्रालय, नगरपालिका, CLC, र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय गैरसरकारी संगठन (INGO) का नीति कार्यान्वयनकर्ताहरूलाई समेटेर सर्वेक्षण गरिएको छ। गुणात्मक अनुसन्धानले कथात्मक अनुसन्धान विधि प्रयोग गरी मानव अधिकारआधारित दृष्टिकोण, सामाजिक न्याय सिद्धान्त, र विशिष्ट सिकाइ सिद्धान्त गरी तीन सिद्धान्तहरू समावेश गरिएको छ। मैले नेपालमा ज्येष्ठ नागरिक शिक्षासम्बन्धी नीतिहरू गहिरोसँग अध्ययन गरेँ, जहाँ सहभागी दुवै समूहका दृष्टिकोणहरूबाट प्राप्त अन्तरदृष्टिले यी नीतिहरू विकसित आवश्यकताहरू पूरा गर्न असफल भइरहेका छन् भन्ने बुझाई रहेको छ। यी नीतिहरू आधारभूत साक्षरतामा केन्द्रित छन् तर डिजिटल साक्षरता र वित्तीय व्यवस्थापन जस्ता महत्वपूर्ण पक्षहरू उपेक्षा गरिएका छन्। यो उपेक्षाले ज्येष्ठ नागरिकहरूको विकास प्रक्रियामा सहभागितामा बाधा पुऱ्याउँदछ। यद्यपि, चुनौतीहरूका बाबजुद पनि नेपालले ज्येष्ठ नागरिक शिक्षामा सकारात्मक विकास भएको पाइन्छ। यसले प्रभावकारी नीति कार्यान्वयनको आवश्यकता औल्याउँनुका साथै ज्येष्ठ नागरिकहरू, गैरसरकारी संस्थाहरू, र नीति निर्माता जस्ता सरोकारवालासँगको सहकार्य अपरिहार्य रहेको देखिन्छ।

११ जेठ २०८२

ज्योति सिंह भण्डारी

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

This dissertation, entitled *Senior Citizen Education Policies and Practices in Nepal: A Critical Narrative Inquiry*, was presented by *Jyoti Singh Bhandari* on 25 May 2025.

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I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

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DECLARATION

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

.....

25 May 2025

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my mother, this study would not have been possible without your dedication and faith.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CEHRD	Center for Education and Human Resource Department
CLC	Community Learning Center
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DPSP	Directive Principles and State Policies
DSPD	Division for Social Policy and Development
EFA	Education for All
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoN	Government of Nepal
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
KOPA	Korean Older People's Association
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MIPPA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoWCSC	Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NPC	National Planning Commission
QoL	Quality of Life
SCE	Senior Citizen Education
SERD	Seti Education for Rural Development
NLC	Nepal Law Commission
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

SSDP	School Sector Development Program
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
ToR	Terms of Reference
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
U3A	University of the Third Age
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Background of Research

To explain my research interest in the presented topic, I want to begin this narrative work by introducing myself and my family.

Senior Citizen Education: Development of Interest

Coming from a joint family where women are mostly expected to spend their time on household chores, and often regret their loss of potential. I vividly remember my mother saying that *my life was wasted; I am glad you have more educational opportunities*. Those words used to pinch me. Gradually, I understood that everyone wants a sense of achievement that comes from the self. My parents had to give up their formal education at a tender age due to family responsibilities. Despite being immensely talented, they never had opportunities to continue their formal education. My mother, who was married at a tender age, repeatedly mentioned that she wanted to study further, but circumstances did not support her wishes. One day, I asked my mother if she wanted to study further. She responded that she would continue her education in case of any suitable opportunities. However, she denied it as she feared that the courses of study were challenging. Like my mother, many of my relatives and her friends also expressed that they wanted to study further for a sense of achievement, make new friends, share ideas, and learn new skills, but were afraid of joining the formal education system, which is complicated. Then I started wondering what a possible option for them could be, and here I first saw the phrase Senior Citizen Education.

Exploring Senior Citizen Education

As a law lecturer, my study and work revolve around education and policy provisions. While teaching and advocating for human rights, the term ‘universal access’ to rights to education crossed my mind. In Nepal, education is free and compulsory, but the path to easy education is neglected, as having rights in policy and having access to rights in practice are different. For example, there are literacy programs, but they cannot serve the needs of people like my mother, as the formal education system offered by the government is not relevant. Furthermore, formal school every day from 10 am to 4 pm cannot be practical for senior citizens. Hence, I

wanted to know if any tailored programs could cater to the needs of people like my mother.

While inquiring about the educational programs, my quest led me to a relevant and essential context in which the population in the world, including Nepal, is ageing faster than ever. The World Health Organization [WHO] (2021) points out that people in most nations expect to live above sixty, and this change in the population trend is known as population ageing. Furthermore, the study warned that it would impact the country with lesser earnings as they have to invest more in social security and health, burdening senior citizens. The danger is that these nations might forget the ideas, expertise, and range of experience this age group has. However, the reality is that to achieve the desired contribution from all populations, the countries shall make a smart move by using the ideas and experiences of older people to accomplish progress (Aryal, 2019).

Discussing the context of Nepal, Chalise (2023) highlighted that the number of senior citizens reached 2.97 million in the 2021 census, with a whopping increment of 38.2% from the 2011 census. Additionally, the shocking part of the study was that in a decade, the average growth rate of the senior citizen population accounted for 3.29%, compared to the growth rate of the average population, which was 0.92%. The United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] (2017) projected that Nepal's senior citizen population will reach 3.5 million by 2031. The study further highlighted the importance of ensuring rights enshrined in Nepal's laws and policies. Ardently, Chalise (2023), while sharing about the potential social, demographic, financial, wellness, and care-related problems, also hinted at its link with chronic diseases, depression, loneliness, sleep disturbances, functional impairment, and abuse impacting the Quality of Life (QoL). After learning about such national-level challenges, I wondered if the nation had ever thought of a way to understand the needs of senior citizens and pay tribute to their experience.

This context motivated me to explore the policy and practices of access to education for senior citizens in Nepal. I was aware of the MPhil program at Kathmandu University in 2015, but due to family responsibilities, I could not join the program. It was in 2022 that I finally gathered the courage; again, my mother helped and encouraged me to join the course. Then, I decided to study more about educational opportunities for people like my mother and find out their background, current situation, policy provisions, and how they are being implemented.

Whenever I discuss senior citizen education, I am asked about its definition. Hence, I try to explain it to senior citizens from the Nepali perspective. According to the Senior Citizens Act (2006), a person is considered a "senior citizen" in Nepal if they are 60 years or older (Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens [MoWCSC], 2006). Discussing the age threshold, the rising life expectancy is reflected in discussions of raising the threshold to 65, and since the benefit eligibility is earlier for marginalized groups, underscoring the need for inclusive and customized policies for a range of older citizens (Pandey, 2022). However, looking at the benefits and services provided by the government, I, too, was inclined to accept this age threshold for the study. As per Sigdel et al. (2023), senior citizens in Nepal are a wealth of information and expertise who provide a source of income, caretakers, counsellors, and ethical education. Also, the authors point out that they are sociocultural change agents and living examples of history. Having been an asset, it is undeniable that this set of learners confronts distinct difficulties, such as social isolation, health problems, and economic reliance, especially in the aftermath of shifting family dynamics. Hence, understanding how educational policies and programs meet their requirements requires an awareness of these qualities, which serve as the basis for this study.

While reviewing the literature on senior citizen education, I repeatedly encountered two terms: Adult Education and Continuous Education or Life-Long Learning (LLL). Through literature review, I understood that adult learning can be categorized into (a) the whole field of adult education lying beyond the formal degree-and-certificate granting system of schools, colleges, and universities (b) the sub-field of a broader term (continuing education or permanent education representing organized programs in liberal arts, recreation, and handicrafts excluding up-grading and re-training (c.) the historical term rapidly became outdated in describing educational activities after the completion of formal schooling (Leckie, 1974, as cited in Rampersad, 1978, p. 5). Lifelong learning refers to consistent learning over life, beyond formal learning, highlighting multiple facets of the learning journey (Laal et al., 2014). I also found that the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2024) elaborated on lifelong learning as a vital tool to define education for senior citizens. It explained that societies need to help senior citizens adapt to advances in ICT (Information Communication and Technology), assuring they actively engage

and foster learning and camaraderie among generations. Throughout my study, I discovered that various terms, i.e., adult education, elderly education, and senior citizen education, are interchangeably used by many authors and reports. In my understanding, senior citizen education is a specific subject rather than adult education; it is about citizens' rights to access continuous, relevant, and quality learning opportunities.

Normative Frameworks and National Plans on the Rights to Education of Senior Citizens

After learning that continuous, relevant, and quality education for senior citizens is vital, I was curious to figure out how the international platforms consider educational opportunities for senior citizens. Here, I wanted to explore the evolution of SCE as one of the fundamental human rights at the global and national levels.

International Frameworks on the SCE

In 1982, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) introduced a resolution (37/51) by the name of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing (United Nations [UN], 1982). It was the first international instrument, a guideline for governments and civil society, focused on elderly needs, with over sixty recommendations for research, data collection, training, and education.

Almost a decade after the Vienna Plan, the UN adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (UNGA 46/91) resolution in 1991. It called the member nations to address the self-care, self-fulfillment, participation, self-esteem, etc. agendas in their national provisions (UN, 1991). This UNGA encouraged governments to include autonomy, involvement, concern, self-fulfillment, and self-respect for senior citizens in their national policies. Even though in 1992 a proclamation on ageing was adopted, a UN General Secretary report published in 2011 highlighted concerns in member nations' policies regarding the rights of older people and the absence of a robust institutional mechanism for accountability and participation (Fredvang & Biggs, 2012). A little concerned after learning about these reports, I explored some literature to understand senior citizen education in other countries.

Xi et al. (2018) highlighted global provisions for senior education, i.e., China having various levels of senior schools, North American countries using community institutions, and Australia using charity. Similarly, in the UK, U3A

(University for 3rd Age), a self-help group, has been instrumental in senior citizen education since 1981, and a senior university founded by the Korean Older People's Association has been doing the same in Korea (Jun & Evans, 2014). This information made me understand senior citizen education as a significant global topic, especially in nations with better economic conditions.

The studies point out that education for senior learners is an essential component of education, striving to promote the overall development of the human as one reaches the pre- and post-retirement age (Sukhobskaya & Bozhko, 1998 as cited in Taziev, 2015). The educational institutions also advocate for these programs as the elderly benefit from educational engagement, enabling them to be active and handle the problems of contemporary society (Cabedo & Escuder, 2014). I noticed that education for senior citizens is addressed as education for older people, and some articles mention it as education. Throughout my research, I have chosen senior citizen education to represent the continuous, relevant, and high-quality educational opportunities for senior citizens from a human rights-based perspective.

The international platforms repeatedly called out nations for missing out on the education needs of senior citizens. With my background as an advocate, I was naturally drawn to figure out how the national policies had addressed the educational concerns of senior citizens.

Senior Citizens' Education in Nepal

The available literature began with a historical glimpse. For example, a report prepared by Smart Private Limited (2017) submitted to the Non-Formal Education Center described that Seti Education for Rural Development (SERD, 1980), initiated by UNESCO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), established reading centers around Nepal to support the continuous learning programs after literacy achievements through the various training programs. Furthermore, the report elaborated that the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP I) (1992–1998) and the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP II) (1999–2004) led to the establishment of the National Committee on Community Learning Center (CLC) with various objectives, i.e., promoting literacy and lifelong learning. With the millennium, Nepali national provisions witnessed the introduction of three major plans and policies concerning older people: a. National Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2005), b. Senior Citizen Act (2006) c. Senior

Citizen Rule (2008). These plans and policies mention senior citizen clubs and daycare centers focusing on recreational activities. Regarding the fundamental aspect, the right to basic education is a fundamental right of all Nepali citizens, as enshrined in Article 31 of the Constitution (Government of Nepal [GoN], 2015). Complementing this, the Education Policy (2019) envisions the nurturing of continuous education through alternative and open access to education (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MoEST], 2019). Additionally, the goal of education for all, which includes senior citizens, is directly and indirectly acknowledged in Education for All (2004-2009) and Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) (United Nations Nepal, n.d.).

Developing countries like Nepal choose the welfare model and stand by progressively committing to physical measures that are needed to implement senior citizen education (Fredvang & Biggs, 2012). It was apparent from the literature review that Nepal does not currently have a dedicated senior citizen education program. However, Nepal's education plans have reflected the value of adult education. If adult education is considered, it too can be an asset for several issues, i.e., it enhances critical thinking and skills for daily activities, empowers marginalized communities, addresses poverty and lack of access to education, encourages social equality, etc. (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). Similarly, Acharya et al. (2023) too pointed out the lack of a system of addressing educational concerns in national policies, however the study does not specify the specific lacunas in the policies, the challenges in the implementation of the existing policies and what modifications should be made to attain the goals for amelioration of senior citizen education. Villar et al. (2017) pointed out that informal learning occurs in everyday situations like talking to family or peers, studying books or papers, watching Television or radio, visiting museums, or attending lectures and symposiums. The government recently introduced the Senior Citizen Act (2006) amendment act in 2022, which recommended conducting symposium seminars that, if followed, can be game-changers (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs [MoLJPA], 2022).

As a researcher, at one point, I felt that the nature of senior citizen education could be truly understood only if I gained in-depth stories and narrations of the senior citizens or those working for them. Narrative research focuses on probing individual stories that help describe experiences and interpret those

experiences (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, regarding law, narratives play a crucial part in the execution of the policy (Saibih, 2020). With senior citizens as the beneficiaries or right holders, various stakeholders appeared to be important, i.e., the Ministry at the central level, and municipalities, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and Civil Society Bodies (CBOs) at the local level for the implementation of policies concerned with senior citizen education.

Often, policy research is based on the criticism of the policies. I, too, used to do so. Still, I consider it imperative to pay attention to the stories of the right holders and stakeholders responsible for executing the policies and programs for senior citizen education for advocacy and to resolve the problems associated with its implementation.

Statement of Research Problem

Along with population demographics, support for programs that enhance senior citizens' Quality of Life (QoL) is expanding, too. Joshi (2023) mentioned that European nations consider 65 to be the retirement age, whereas in Nepal, it is 58 years for civil servants and 65 years in the context of constitutional commissions. He pointed out that compared with the global trends, the retirement age in Nepal is much earlier, even though, using their rich experiences and skills, this age is where they can give their best. He also shares his awareness about the nations with early retirement age, i.e., China, where the retirement age is 54. However, China has many alternative arrangements for seniors, i.e., universities for the senior population, as education can play an affirmative role in the life of senior citizens. Despite the importance of senior citizen education, UNESCO (2023) pointed out that only 22 out of 146 nations allocate around 4% of their public budget to the learning of seniors, pointing to the inadequate level of investment in such a vital area.

Manuel and Mollón (2014) insisted that ignoring the learning needs of the ageing population creates additional challenges, as the seniors are at risk of social exclusion with poor access to information technology. As per UNFPA (2017), as of 2011, the population of 60 and above was approximately 2.5 million. In the case of Nepal, challenges are higher as around 70% of senior citizens are illiterate and therefore have limited career opportunities (Acharya et al., 2023). It is imperative to note that the number of senior citizens is increasing and will continue to increase. These facts warn that increased ageing populations will impact a nation's socioeconomic, financial, and development aspects (Aryal, 2019).

Furthermore, circumstances like these can have an adverse impact as the unstable economy and financial challenges are sure to trigger more problems in the context of senior citizens (Subedi, 1999). Hence, most policymakers in nation-states perceive the elderly population as a burden (Tang et al., 2022). They fail to consider that the proficient use of their abilities, invaluable experience and wisdom is sure to benefit the prosperity and development of the nation (Aryal, 2019). In reality, having active senior citizens who need fewer social services and contribute to national development is an asset, and policies that promote active ageing can aid in preventing inter-generational chaos (WHO, 2002, as cited in Manuel & Mollón, 2014).

Senior citizen education in Nepal has not significantly changed despite calls for particular attention and many initiatives, i.e., promotion of lifelong learning and promotion of tech literacy. Reagan (2018) gives an example of John Dewey, how education is not a preparation for life but is life itself, which points to the importance of lifelong learning. Also, Dangal and Khanal (2019) noted that despite having distinctive educational needs, senior citizen education has not been well addressed by laws and regulations named legislative provisions, which mention education and leave out the "what" of senior citizen education, reflecting a discriminatory attitude that defies social justice. The policies concerned with senior citizen education shall not only include mere literacy but shall be relevant and functional, including vital aspects, i.e., financial literacy, legal literacy, tech literacy, etc. The general criticism of the law is that it is neither helpful in finding the intention behind it, nor does it help reach any conclusion for the amelioration required.

Harper (2022), a professor of gerontology at Oxford University, argued that age-based biases are best controlled through a proactive policy approach, where awareness-based action is essential. The professor pointed out that in the coming two decades, the concerns of billions of Asian senior citizens cannot be seen only as a social security issue. Instead, their engagement in the intergenerational aspect, family life and community engagement shall be considered with enormous respect. Thus, it is imperative to understand the policy provisions and challenges in implementing senior citizen education in Nepal.

The key trouble in the given context is that the government is not serious about dealing with the educational requirements of senior citizens. Similarly, many senior citizens as rights holders lack the knowledge and understanding of their

rights to relevant and quality education, which is vital to make them understand that they are capable of being productive and are not a burden to society. Hence, this study is essential to address the growing population of senior citizens in Nepal as advocacy or support for senior citizens, aiming to empower them through awareness of their rights and access to quality, relevant learning opportunities.

Purpose Statement

This study charted the development (emergence and progress) of the policies that ensure the rights of senior citizen education in a national context. More specifically, this study critically examined those policies through narratives of people mandated to implement the policies and plans, and, therefore, to explore the various challenges faced in implementing the guidelines.

Research Questions

I have developed the following research questions to navigate the objectives of the study:

1. How do Nepal's current policies protect and ensure the educational rights of senior citizens, as perceived by key stakeholders?
2. How do the stakeholders responsible for implementing the senior citizen education-related policies and the beneficiaries experience the issues and challenges of implementing these policies?

Rationale of the Study

With the increasing ageing population, improving the quality of life by providing continued learning opportunities is becoming an emerging issue in Nepal. However, little research has been done on the challenges, problems, and concerns that senior citizens have been experiencing, as well as to understand the existing policies and how the government stakeholders are engaged in implementing those policies. Access to quality and relevant senior citizen education is a human right realized in international legal instruments, a fundamental right as affirmed in the constitution, and an obligation in response to international commitments such as Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goal (MDG), and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

The literature review shows that the idea of learning for senior citizens has been embraced internationally and recognized as a significant national concern. In the foregoing context, the critical evaluation of the policies through the narratives

of stakeholders involved in implementing these policies can serve as an asset in addressing this national concern.

Delimitation of the Study

Despite multiple aspects related to senior citizen education, i.e., economic, social, political, etc., the extent of this study is narrowed to understanding the experiences of beneficiaries and stakeholders responsible for implementing senior citizen education-related policies in Nepal. This research is limited to studying Nepal's national policy provisions and examines the implementation challenges in Nepal.

Furthermore, this study looks at how these policies meet the learning needs of senior citizens without classifying them according to their educational backgrounds. It investigates whether policies provide inclusive support that accommodates a range of knowledge levels, learning objectives, and personal development needs rather than classifying seniors according to their previous education.

Chapter Summary

This part presents the reasons behind my interest in senior citizen education in Nepal, emphasizing the autobiographical linkage with the study. This chapter explains the reason that sparked my keen interest in the prospects and challenges of senior citizen education, particularly in Nepal, where the ageing population is growing rapidly. The study's objectives are to examine national senior citizen education policies critically, evaluate their execution, and comprehend the difficulties beneficiaries and stakeholders face. It highlights the necessity of senior citizens receiving specialized, timely, and high-quality education as a fundamental human right for individual fulfillment and the country's advancement.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I highlight theories and the background of senior citizen education policies and underline the key trends from empirical studies. I have cited the national and international journal articles to describe the concepts associated with senior citizen education, i.e., continuous education and adult education, and explain how it is distinct from them. I have reviewed the relevant policies concerning senior citizens in the timeline pattern to understand the development of senior citizen education in Nepal. I have used three theories to analyze data from the narrative fieldwork: Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA), social justice theory, and distinctive learning theory. I have done a substantive review of the existing literature, and finally, I have shared the gap in the literature.

Conceptualizing Senior Citizens' Rights to Education

While reviewing the literature on senior citizen education, time and again, I encountered terms such as 'adult education' and 'continuous Education' or 'life-long learning'. Beginning with understanding senior citizens, there is no universally agreed-upon age defining senior citizens, which varies depending on cultural, legal, and social contexts, ranging from 55 to 65 (Hoyt, 2024). The UN and Nepal consider a population above 60 senior citizens, typically 62 or older in the United States. Families and communities, however, may have different definitions depending on sociocultural elements like being a grandparent, noticeable physical changes, or ageing-related health problems (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], n.d.). In general, a senior citizen refers to those who have reached an age associated with retirement, and functionally, it signifies a transition to retirement involving lifestyle changes, reliance on pensions or savings, and eligibility for age-specific benefits like senior discounts (Hoyt, 2024). The objectives of this study have led to an adaptation of the age prescribed by the Senior Citizens Act of Nepal (2006), which is 60 years (MoWCSC, 2006).

Lifelong learning refers to steady learning over life beyond the formal education system, highlighting the multiple aspects and processes of learning (Laal et al., 2014). Knowles (1913-1997), who is also regarded as the father of adult

learning, was right to predict that lifelong learning would become an indispensable part of adult life following the rapid growth in technology, a shift in demands in human resources, and globalization (Gaymer, 2006). As cited in the earlier data, it is alarming that the population expansion rate of older people in Nepal is rapid compared to the population growth rate of its entire population. Like children, adults also have education and development requirements suitable to their age, context, and life. However, the learning methods, tools, and approaches must be different, using activities, crafts, social work, and games (Laal et al., 2014). Also talking from the right approach, in 2018 rights-based approach to ageing adopted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018) seemed to replace the idea that ageing is a burden with an embrace of all human rights, respect for equality and non-discrimination, collaboration with seniors, tracking the advancement of their rights, and accountability of governments.

Whenever we talk about the right to SCE, it makes no sense without learning suitable mechanisms and access to learning. As per the Commission of the European Communities (2001), lifelong learning aims to improve ideas and skills related to civic sense, job opportunities, social networks, etc. Regmi (2020) pointed out that most European and North American countries consider lifelong learning a vital tool to enhance economic knowledge, and most developing nations use lifelong learning to provide basic literacy. He added that with the rapid transformation in ICT, science, changing population trends, and market competition, it has become imperative that Nepali citizens, too, should update and upgrade their knowledge. Despite non-formal and informal education being the centre of lifelong learning, the lack of a policy and monitoring organization for formalizing the learning process is unfortunate (Chitrakar & Maddox, 2008, as cited in Regmi, 2020). Acknowledging non-formal and informal learning modalities is a critical first move in advancing lifelong learning (Lamichhane & Wagley, 2006, as cited in Regmi, 2020). With the importance of lifelong learning gaining momentum, it will be safe to consider that senior citizen education is sure to be one of the key agendas for the Nepali education system.

Regmi (2020) points out that there are various reasons for continuous learning, i.e., the professional need to upgrade and update knowledge, and those forced to leave education for multiple reasons need an opportunity. Rapid ICT advancements can be a threat to senior citizens, causing them to be left behind.

Further education in ICT is crucial; hence, it must be tailored to their limitations and curriculum considerations (Vacek & Rybenská, 2015). Adult education is viewed as a new approach focusing on foundational knowledge, training, and the ability to teach living skills to those without formal education (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). The authors express regret that it is not given much importance despite adult education in Nepal having a nexus with the societal system, relations, culture, norms and customs. The authors agree that education for adults is imperative, though indirectly. Still, the advocacy favouring continuous, adult, and lifelong learning ultimately builds a base for senior citizen education.

Manuel and Mollón (2014) shared that the idea of education for senior citizens varies in various countries, i.e., Università delle LiberEtà in Italy provides a range of senior courses, the Palmenia Center for Continuing Education in Finland encourages lifelong learning, and the Personality Socialization Research Institute in Latvia focuses on the social integration and general well-being of older adults. The authors point out that these programs emphasize the importance of education in enhancing elders' quality of life, social interaction, and personal growth.

After conceptualizing the terms and examples associated with senior citizen education, it was imperative to clearly understand the policies concerned with the study.

Policy Review

As clarified in the title, the research deals mainly with senior citizen education-related policies and the implementation of programs and plans in Nepal that are directly or indirectly connected with senior citizen education. For this purpose, I reviewed various international human rights instruments, conventions, and action plans on senior citizen education. Since my study involves a critical examination of the policies and a narrative inquiry based on them, I have dedicated chapter four to reviewing the policy. I have used a human rights-based approach, social justice theory and distinctive learning theory to examine and assess the policies and practices.

Theoretical Review

I have reviewed three theories to guide the analysis and discussion of the research findings: a. human rights-based approach, b social justice approach, and c. distinctive learning theory.

Human Rights-Based Approach

Education is a fundamental right protected not only by the Constitution but also as a fundamental human right. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) pointed out that education has been recognized as a human right since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and outlined in various human rights treaties, including the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education. Soken-Huberty (2020) explains the human rights-based approach as a perspective that ensures that the rights of people are asserted and protected, focusing on basic services like food, healthcare, and education, promoting activism, strengthening rights holders' positions, and raising accountability standards.

Kornfeld-Matte and Belloni (2017) pointed out that older people have had limited access to education throughout history. Also, the study pointed out that schooling assists in making informed decisions by helping seniors in the context of employment, social security, health issues, and medical attention. Katarina Tomasevski's Manual on Rights-Based Education emphasizes the human rights-based approach to education, which ensures access and dignity for all, including seniors, by addressing age-based discrimination, fostering participation, and promoting independence (Tomasevski, 2004). Delors (2013) mentions UNESCO's learning to know, do, and live together ideas, which promote lifelong learning, real-world application, and social inclusion. The author adds that learning to live together fosters social cohesiveness and empathy, helping elders stay involved and valued in society; learning to do allows them to use skills for independence; and learning to know aids in knowledge acquisition. These ideas enable older adults to live fulfilling lives.

This way, education paves a path in the form of awareness and builds access to attain other forms of rights. In addition to that, the UN, while elaborating on embracing a human rights-based approach within education, called for the realization that, firstly, it is a human right by itself and, secondly, a crucial tool for achieving other human rights (National Human Rights Commission Nepal [NHRC], 2020).

The concept of senior citizen education essentially supports the notion that senior citizens have a right to education and that, as rights-holders, they should have access to education. Furthermore, it also puts forward the duty to ensure that the right is respected without bias. It insists on ensuring that one's living standards

are sufficient for development on all levels: moral, social, mental, and spiritual (NHRC, 2020). The human rights recognized in treaties come with obligations, i.e., respect, protect, and fulfill. Hence, it is vital to critically analyze the policies regarding senior citizen education through a human rights-based approach to rights holders' concerns. The human rights-based approach is a critical aspect of my research, as in the current era, we often talk about educational opportunities for all, but in practice, the policy usually prioritizes children and youth and neglects senior citizens as one of the major groups of rights holders. In addition to the human rights-based approach, I used social justice theory, considering senior citizens as one of the groups experiencing injustice, discrimination and neglect in Nepali society.

Social Justice Theory

There is no ideal definition of social justice. However, we can tie the concept put forth by the Greeks and Romans in the past, who saw it as a political authority for the organization of society. It is often associated with ideals of equality, equity, and justice (Ramblrltch, 2018). In other words, the social justice approach recognizes the power dimension that gives rise to social and cultural inequalities and inequality in the distribution of resources and decision-making that aims to improve people's circumstances (Hargraves, 2021). The social justice approach to education motivates learners to be active and assist teachers in fostering a supportive, critical environment, including empowerment, equitable resource distribution, social equality, accountability, and balance of power (Hackman, 2005 as cited in Ramblrltch, 2018). Senior citizen education provides equitable access to relevant education that empowers senior citizens to live in advancing ICT and complex economic, political, and cultural contexts. It includes basic skills in advanced ICT and diverse economy and social structure, including functional literacy, i.e., technological literacy, financial literacy, maternal and childcare, as a more sustainable method (Dulal, 2022).

Discussing along similar lines, the freedom of seniors calls for the presence of the courage required to combat the adverse socio-economic impact that exists as a result of the ageing policies of neo-liberalists (Formosa, 2011). Additionally, education for senior citizens is something that the entire community, regardless of age, should comprehend and take seriously (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). As mentioned earlier, justice is about equality and equity; hence, senior citizens

deserve the right to education and the opportunities that build access to education as rights holders.

Fraser (2005, as cited in Hodgkinson-Williams & Trotter, 2018) highlights the focus of social justice theory on redistribution, recognition, and representation for equitable resource access, cultural inclusion, and meaningful participation in decision-making. Applying this statement in the national context, we can say that the resources in Nepal should be redistributed to underserved senior citizens, customized programs should be addressed, and senior participation in policymaking should be encouraged.

Damme (2022) mentioned social justice and equity, emphasizing removing structural obstacles and encouraging meaningful engagement to provide inclusive education for elderly adults. The author also emphasized the significance of equity and social justice in education, highlighting the need for a comprehensive curricular framework that considers exclusion, marginalization, and socioeconomic inequities, thereby promoting upward social mobility. Hence, it is safe to say that SCE can promote lifelong learning, empower individuals, and improve intergenerational fairness by putting these ideas into practice.

Distinctive Learning Theory

The origins of the idea of distinctiveness in learning can be found in the theories of early cognitive psychology, especially about memory. Distinctive learning theory in education emphasizes individuality, capacities, preferences, and learning styles, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and addressing each learner's unique needs and experiences. De St Jorre et al. (2019) mention that evaluation should concentrate on pertinent learning, distinguishing between accomplishments, conveying learning objectives, and honoring remarkable work. Furthermore, the author noted that many times, the methods used now fall short of assessing these requirements, and hence, it is vital to have assessments of need to serve the best interests.

While recognizing the value of senior citizen education, it is crucial to remember that this set of learners, who are going through physical, social, and psychological transformation, has particular teaching and learning needs (Tam, 2014). The studies also suggest in the same line, i.e., an organization Ageing Nepal during conducting a pilot literacy class in Kathmandu, observed that learning ability is impacted by age, meaning the learning ability is diminishing with the

growing age (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2018).

Institutions teaching seniors must apply different methods and draft special courses and course materials, blending formal and informal activities. Manuel and Mollón (2014) define the concept of active ageing and relate it to education, emphasizing informal education. They explained it further with examples from daily life, where services, banks, financial institutions, and the internet demand ICT skills. Also, they pointed out the changing patterns in rearing the children and the role of grandparents, indicating how new learning can help them handle the roles in the family with changing social dynamics (Glaser, 2010, as cited Manuel & Mollón, 2014).

I used distinctive learning theory in this study because the generalization of education for senior citizens under continuous education lacks the characteristics that set senior citizens apart from children and other individuals. This theory proved an asset while gathering data and interpreting the results.

Theoretical Framework

Theory	Basic Idea	Nexus with SCE
Human Rights-based Approach	It ensures that all persons have equal access to human rights and promotes measures for executing those rights. (NHRC, 2020).	Education is a fundamental human right of senior citizens. Condemns age-based discrimination in an educational context. Advocates for inclusion and participation in the educational decision-making process.
Social Justice Theory	Advocates for the equitable distribution of opportunity and resources. Calls for social empowerment	Addresses hindrances in equitable distribution and access to learning resources for Seniors.

	condemning systematic oppression and marginalization (Campbell, 2021).	Empower senior learner by enhancing their critical skills.
Distinctive Learning Theory	Recognizes unique learning abilities, needs and styles of learners. Advocates a suitable learning mechanism for best results (Tam, 2014)	Demands need assessment before designing programs for senior citizens. Tailored programs and curricula addressing those needs.

As a student of educational leadership, I used these three theories to guide my study as they covered both aspects of the stream: Leadership and Education. The human rights-based approach and social justice theory demand active advocacy regarding the educational rights of senior citizens. The distinctive learning theory indicates that it cannot be kept in the same genre as adult or continuous education. As a researcher, I believe that the integration of the human rights-based approach, social justice theory and distinctive learning theory can be a great strategy to advocate for the implementation of human rights principles, principles of social justice, and means to address the diversity, creating an inclusive and participatory learning opportunity for senior citizens. The theories can significantly aid in analyzing stakeholders' existing policies, curriculum, and efforts for educational rights, learning opportunities, and access to resources for effective implementation of senior citizen education in Nepal.

Empirical Review

There have been studies on the various aspects of senior citizen education. An investigative study on senior citizen education in China by Xi et al. (2018) pointed out interrelationships between government policy and education, i.e., converting old school buildings to senior education hubs, aiding senior citizen education.

Authorities from the government have evaluated the needs of senior citizens in several studies. In 2006, the Ministry of Education of Taiwan conducted a study on older people's learning needs and intentions, revealing that they wanted

to learn to fill gaps in their knowledge. This study classified learning needs into various categories, i.e., private needs, social needs, leisure, health, entertainment, politics, self-realization, retirement plan, etc. (Huang, 2008, as cited in Yang & Hung, 2015). Similarly, a study conducted by the Singapore Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (SMCYS) and SIM (Singapore Institute of Management) in 2008 discovered that most of the respondents felt that the learning environment for older people in Singapore was favorable (Tan, 2008). However, because the respondents ranged in age from 40 to 74 years, the study was not conducted honestly among senior citizens, so the study does not represent the voice of all senior citizens. Tragically, there was a 30% gap between learning enthusiasm and engagement in learning activities. It is where a surprising positive perception of the government emerged about the difference between the senior citizens' interest in engaging and their actual engagement in learning activities.

A survey of 350 elderly persons in Yelabuga, Russia, found that they were interested in learning new jobs that were preferred in the nation (Taziev, 2015). The study revealed that most people were interested in data technology and the rest wanted to expand their knowledge about medical science, engineering, law, history and education. These different interests of senior citizens served as a reminder that, rather than making senior persons the focus of the study, the syllabus for seniors should consider their distinct interests and add value to what they have already learned in the past.

Also, the regional survey on ageing conducted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UN ESCAP] with the support of the administration of Macao, China, disclosed that the nations face challenges in developing and implementing suitable policies for Senior Citizens (UN ESCAP, 2004). The study also disclosed that the lack of funds, resources, and issues in interdepartmental coordination were prime challenges to drafting policies in nations.

To improve the quality of life for senior citizens, the GoN: MoWCSC asked the UN DESA for technical support in 2010, and the department accepted the request (UN DESA & Division for Social Policy and Development [DSPD], 2010). Based on this, an operation was conducted to review policies and resources on ageing. The study's findings emphasized the urgent need to address the ageing population, highlighting the lack of a human rights-based, participative, and

evidence-based approach. Furthermore, it called for full implementation of existing policies, coordination among government bodies, prioritizing access to essential services, and participation of senior citizens.

In a study conducted by UNESCO (2017) aiming to find the current status of CLCs and solutions for their problems, there was nothing noteworthy from the perspective of senior citizen education, but it pointed to the importance of literacy and lifelong learning. The study also highlighted how CLCs have not yet been used to promote senior citizen education.

In the policy review, two authors, Mittal and Misra (2021), explored policies related to lifelong learning in India in the context of senior citizens. This study was quite relevant and analogous to my research, as it analyzed the policies concerning seniors that could provide me with ideas to relate to the context of Nepal. Second, the authors' opinions, ideas and suggestions were vital lessons for studies concerned with senior citizen education in Nepal.

Despite limited research on senior citizen education in Nepal, studies like Sigdel et al. (2023) highlighted the significant role of older people in societal development, emphasizing the importance of education and social engagement for their well-being.

Research Gap in Senior Citizen Education in Nepal

I have presented the research gap in senior citizen education policies that evolved through the literature review. The study focused on the review of the policies on senior citizen education. Since none of the policies mention senior citizen education, I had to understand how to relate it to the educational opportunities for seniors in Nepal. Hence, firstly, in terms of concept, there is no single piece of paper that explores the academic policies of Nepal from the perspective of senior citizens. The papers either focused on the policies concerning senior citizens or are concerned about their learning needs with the changing demographics.

However, in the context of an empirical study, I was fortunate to come across one grey piece of writing that mentioned educational opportunities for senior citizens. This reminded me that this was not a novel concept, given the background of Nepal, as research concerning similar education for adults was conducted in 1966 (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). Unfortunately, the authors merely mentioned the survey but did not quote or cite it, limiting my ability to study the

claimed survey. Also, the same source criticized the national policies that do not address the importance of senior citizen education, but failed to mention which policy. Similarly, while looking for relevant literature, I found a study that examined social security provisions for senior citizens in the Tokha municipality. The study disclosed that compared to ethnic people in general, Brahmin and Chhetri have stronger educational backgrounds and are well aware of their rights and procedures, i.e., social security (Sapkota, 2016). It was an eye-opening piece of literature regarding social justice, education and senior citizens; however, the paper mainly focused on social security and did not explore much about education.

While connecting the nexus of senior citizen education with other nations and the government reports, I found that most studies I mentioned above were conducted in the era around 2006- 2008 or before, making the relevancy outdated. With time, new technology and lifestyles have changed, which would demand the various needs of senior citizen education in Nepal. Even though programs like EFA and SDG have goals, there has not been a global study regarding the scope, practice, and necessity.

Though the available literature explored the concept and modalities of senior citizen education, it massively fails in policy review. As there is a substantive lack of information regarding existing policy on senior citizen education, review of such policies, recent research on senior citizen education, studies with rights approach and human rights-based approach in senior citizen education, and ironically even grey, literature on senior citizen education itself hinted at the urgency to study senior citizen education (Dangal & Khanal, 2019).

Another substantive gap I noticed in the methodology part was the selection of the respondents. The available secondary literature on the context of senior citizen education is either a textual review of policies or a narrative inquiry with the senior citizens. As a result, most of the papers are written from the perspective of the right holders, summing up with recommendations for the policy makers and policy implementers. With grey literature pointing to the need for more research on senior citizen education, it is imperative to hear the narrative of the institutions implementing these policies regarding the concerns associated with developing and implementing them. Rampersad (1978) suggested that policymakers should explore educational initiatives to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens. Hence, to support the policy-making process, it is vital to conduct further studies

and consider extending services to the increasing number of senior citizens who are often ignored and marginalized, particularly elderly citizens, and those with poor educational status in the Nepali context. Understanding the policy provisions and how the stakeholders are implementing the policies is explored using qualitative methodologies.

Also, discussing the line theories, I noticed that a few literatures viewed senior citizen education from the Human Rights Approach, and fewer pieces of literature viewed it from the perspective of distinctive learning and social justice theory. Literature that remotely touches on the aspect of senior citizens in a national context misses out on distinctive learning and social justice theory.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored the theories and policies surrounding senior citizen education, distinguishing it from adult and continuing education through empirical studies and literature. The chapter reviews Nepal's policies on senior citizen education, using three key theories: human rights-based approach, social justice theory, and distinctive learning theory to analyze fieldwork data. It emphasizes lifelong learning, customized educational programs, and policy development while identifying global and local research gaps. I advocate for inclusive and participatory learning for senior citizens, calling for the recognition and implementation of their educational rights.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I have mentioned the overall methodological dimensions of my research. Research methodology refers to the field in which a researcher outlines the steps to address a research problem. (Mishra and Alok, 2011 as cited in Purwanto, 2023). Hence, this chapter outlines the philosophical foundation, research design, research participants, instruments, content analysis process, meaning-making process, and ethical standards and credibility.

Philosophical Foundation

My philosophical stance, along with my research process, is briefly further below.

Ontology

Typically, researchers make presumptions about the nature of reality and its existence. The ontological question then prompts the researcher to consider whether there is a single, provable reality and truth or several socially constructed realities (Patton, 2002, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). My study explores the various laws and policies related to senior citizen education and analyzes their impact on this area. These policies, directly and indirectly concerned with senior citizen education, suggest that the government has made efforts to promote adult literacy, continuous education, and lifelong learning. To evaluate whether these programs are effective and adequate, it was essential to interact with various concerned stakeholders.

From this perspective, the discovery of reality in my study is derived from the lived experiences of senior citizens and the stakeholders responsible for implementing policies related to senior citizen education. The ontological assumption emphasizes the nature and understanding of truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, as cited in Ahmed, 2008). In this context, the individuals involved may perceive the impact and role of these policies in diverse ways. Rather than a single truth, my study acknowledges the existence of multiple realities, as understood through my interactions with various respondents. Therefore, my ontological belief aligns with recognizing these multiple realities, shaped by the experiences of

senior citizens and the stakeholders tasked with implementing policies related to senior citizen education.

Epistemology

Moser (2010) described epistemology as the philosophical study of knowledge that focuses on knowledge's nature, scope, and foundation, encompassing objective and subjective facts. In alignment with the ontological view of multiple realities, epistemology emphasizes how knowledge is understood and constructed. As discussed earlier, humans should not be studied as objects of natural science; instead, researchers must establish a rapport with their subjects and comprehend events in their contexts (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This perspective was relevant to my research, particularly as I was engaged with policies and their implementation concerning senior citizen education in Nepal.

During the initial phase of my research, I analyzed the policies connected with senior citizen education in Nepal. To achieve this, I conducted a rigorous textual analysis of these policies. However, I gradually realized that understanding the challenges in policy implementation required dialogical interaction with the stakeholders. Hiller (2016) pointed out that epistemological presumptions support research choices and express beliefs about how the knower and the known interact. In my study, this interaction was crucial to comprehending the stakeholders' perspective, including senior citizens as beneficiaries, policymakers, and implementers at ministries, municipalities, and CLCs.

While the primary focus of my study was on reviewing policies, it became evident that implementation of these policies often faced challenges, despite containing well-intended provisions. To uncover the truth about the state of its execution, I relied on in-depth inquiry with the beneficiaries and implementation agencies. My epistemological stance is grounded in understanding knowledge as socially constructed and contextual. The body of knowledge in my research was thus derived from multiple sources: (1) insights from the literature review, (2) the stories, views, and opinions of research participants—including both beneficiaries and implementers of senior citizen education policies—and (3) my personal experiences throughout the research process.

Axiology

Every study includes suppositions about the world and information that guides the queries. Thus, no research is free from values (Creswell & Clark, 2007,

as cited in Klopper, 2008). Researchers are not disassociated from the topic they are investigating; they are inextricably a part of the social reality being studied (Grix, 2004, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Honestly, the value of the participant affected my study, and as a social science researcher, I was aware that my research study would not be an exception to this rule. As per Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), axiology entails identifying, assessing, and comprehending ideas of correct and incorrect conduct in the context of the study. I was willing to engage in this after hearing the story of my mother and her reflection about education. Also, I could not help but be interested in policies because of my law background.

Hence, this study considers the weights given to the different study elements, the respondents, the information, and the audience to whom the results will be presented. I have also made the point that axiology responds to the question of ethics or ethical behavior; in doing so, it is essential to consider how everyone interested in or participating in the study project will regard human values. Here, I have valued the thoughts and information of each participant as the knowledge source for this study. This research analyses the participants' views on senior citizen education policies, valuing their understanding and forming balanced values based on the findings and beliefs of the researcher (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Research Design

The study is based on a Critical-Interpretivist paradigm, which combines the interpretivist focus on comprehending subjective experiences with the critical theory focus on analyzing inequality and power dynamics. Using a qualitative methodology, the study used narrative inquiry to investigate how policy implementers and senior citizens perceive and understand educational initiatives aimed at senior learners. In-depth interviews with stakeholders involved in the implementation of these policies and beneficiaries of the same policies have been used to gather data along with the textual analysis of the policies. Purposive sampling has been implied to ensure the richness and relevance of the data. The thematic story analysis was used during the study to understand the awareness of policies, perception regarding the policy and the power dynamics in its implementation. The study has been carefully conducted, adhering to the ethical norms, i.e., Confidentiality and informed consent. The ultimate aim of the study is to identify the gaps between policies and their implementation and present vital

information that facilitates the development of policies related to the educational rights of senior citizens of Nepal.

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm that matched my research's ontology, epistemology, and axiology was the critical paradigm and interpretivism, or the combined Critical Interpretivist Paradigm. According to Klein (1999), one of the most fruitful directions for future research is the full elaboration of all possible connections between interpretivism and critical theory (as cited in Pozzebon, 2004). The discourse in this research approach emphasizes the benefits of using different viewpoints, especially interpretative and vital ones.

The critical paradigm concentrates its research on social justice issues to address the sociopolitical and economic problems that lead to injustice (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism rejects the idea that knowledge is only there to be recognized and gathered, instead arguing that humans generate knowledge as they analyze their experiences in and with the world (Pascale, 2011, as cited in Hiller, 2016). The Interpretivist paradigm majorly targets understanding the subjective characteristics of individual experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, as noted in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). As mentioned earlier, my desk review of policies related to SCE alone was inadequate in figuring out if it was being practiced beyond what is written in the laws. Interpretivism involves working in two directions: first, until the researcher feels sufficiently informed based on how they interpret the data to create their narrative based on the research data; and second, until the researcher takes what is effectively a final position (Walt, 2020). Applying it in my research context was vital for me to know the policies and finally reach a conclusion regarding the policies. Furthermore, this method tries to penetrate the minds of the researched subjects to comprehend and understand their thoughts or what the context means to them (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, the mixed approach (Critical interpretivist) was vital in my context to critically examine the existing policies and the senior citizens' engagement in lifelong learning processes through the narratives of the people involved in providing senior citizen education.

Research Approach

This study explored senior citizen education in Nepal using interpretive research, incorporating qualitative rather than numerical data. Also talking about criticalism, Horkheimer suggests that, a critical theory must meet three

requirements: it must be explanatory (i.e., explain unfair practices), actionable (i.e., suggest actions that can correct unfairness), and offer unambiguous guidelines for critique and change (Horkheimer, 2005 as cited in Asghar 2013). He also points out that with the method above, critical theorists can investigate issues and pinpoint tactics for effective societal influence. Open-ended interviews with varying levels of structure, i.e., formalized, quasi-open-ended, and unstructured observations, field notes, etc., are just a few examples of methods for collecting data that produce qualitative information (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Additionally, investigations using the interpretive paradigm adopted as narrative study methods allow for storytellers' detailed thoughts and feelings (Tuli, 2010, as cited in Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). The narrative inquiry supported me in verifying the information on policies and the implementation of policies concerning SCE acquired through the literature review.

The narrative inquiry encourages the researcher to analyze what is present and absent in the collected data. It aids in the detailed investigation of how they discuss and interpret these events (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Also, the critical paradigm presumes transactional epistemology, which involves the researcher engaging with respondents (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, the narrative study was chosen to understand the challenges associated with implementing senior citizen education policies in Nepal.

Study Site and Selection of Participants

The participants for the study were chosen using purposive sampling. It was assessed what information was necessary and then searched for respondents who were able and ready to provide data (Lewis & Sheppard, 2006 as cited in Tongco, 2007). Additionally, I used the snowball approach to find the senior citizens in the CLCs. While selecting the participants, I looked for the ones who could answer the concerns regarding senior citizen education in depth and provide me with an idea of the challenges related to implementation. Researchers have options for studies conducted following the interpretivist paradigm, i.e., narrative inquiry and case study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Hence, the narrative inquiry with participants helped me understand the context in-depth and also aided in the triangulation of information gathered from the policy review.

Hence, while drafting the proposal, I proposed CLCs, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Women, Children and

Senior Citizens as the site for the study, as the literature review guided aforementioned, as the implementation units of education policies related to senior citizens. However, my supervisor guided me to consider the local government as one of the major stakeholders responsible for providing school education and operating CLCs. Furthermore, with the new perspective, I focused my study on the local government, CLC, and the Center for Education and Human Resource Department (CEHRD). Furthermore, the literature review and the participants retained the role of UNESCO in supporting governments to promote SCE. Hence, I interviewed one respondent from MoWCSC, CEHRD, three CLCs, three municipalities, and two senior citizens.

Furthermore, I interviewed facilitators of CLCs and an officer from the UNESCO country Office in Kathmandu. I also conducted an FGD with the learners of one of the CLCs. As the ministries are located in the central region, Kathmandu district, it was in tandem with the research to visit the municipalities, CLCs, and the UNESCO office in Kathmandu. Furthermore, there were opportunities to add credibility to the research as I could frequently meet the participants and follow up on unclear issues during initial meetings.

I figured out the study sites gradually, but the journey of meeting the participants was a roller coaster. I had to follow the social media pages of the CLCs to locate and find information about them; compared to that, it was easier to approach the ministry, municipalities and CEHRD as I could identify them through their website and contact them.

Since I did not know the participants personally, I approached them formally. After the first contact, I had frequent meetings with the participants. The initial meetings were formal, where I introduced myself, the study, and the objectives of the study. Then, eventually, we had a couple of informal talks over the telephone and had informal meetings. Gradually, they became more casual and open about their experience and opinions regarding senior citizen education. The table below illustrates the research participants and my interaction with them.

Participant Profile

As my study was based on the narration of the various officers and managers who work for the government and semi-government institutions, I felt I should not reveal their names. During the fieldwork, I thought these people, because of their knowledge, experience and service for the nation, are an asset to

the country. Hence, after giving it a lot of thought, I decided to present them as national heroes (*Rastriya Bibhuti*) of Nepal, as they, too, have served as leaders in their capacity in their institutions. The participants have been divided into 3 groups: senior citizens 60+ (Pasang, Falgunananda and senior learners from the CLC), stakeholders responsible for providing senior citizen education (Ram, Pritihvi, Janak, Bhimsen, Balabhadra, Bhrikuti, Buddha and Sita) and others (Amshuverma). The different beneficiaries and stakeholders were selected as participants to facilitate an understanding of the stories being told by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

Pasang: An Exemplary Female

Pasang was an 80-year-old female born in the heart of Kathmandu, Asan, and now living in Swayambhu. She had a good learning environment in childhood since she was an only child. However, after marriage, she could not study much. She became a mother at 18 and had a lot of responsibilities. She often felt bad that she could not continue her education as her friends became engineers and doctors. After her retirement, she became engaged in community work and was connected with the CLC. She also became one of the executives of the CLC and joined the daycare program run by the CLC. Despite the cancer, her enthusiasm was intact, and she became an active member and learner in the CLC and is still contributing from her side as a member.

Falgunananda: A Believer in Education

Falgunananda was a 68-year-old female, living in *Naikap, Teenthana*. Despite her age, she had to learn enthusiasm and seek an opportunity to study. When she saw older women on the premises of the CLC and saw the same on Facebook of her children, she took it as an opportunity and joined the CLC. She claimed to be one of the regular students, minus some busy household days and bad health days. She appreciated being literate and looked forward to learning more as she believed in the power of education.

Senior Learners: FGD

Apart from the interview, I had an FGD with the learners of *Ujyalo CLC, Teenthana Naikap*. There were 12 senior citizens above 60 years. All of the learners were female. The senior learners were there as part of literacy classes, and the facilitators referred to them as *Amma* (Mothers).

Ram: A Follower of Standard

Ram was a female civil servant who did not want to disclose any information about her personal life, as it could create hurdles in her professional life. However, she opened up about being focused on her career since childhood. With time, she became aware of civil service, prepared for it, and joined it. She wanted to provide ideas on senior citizen education as she took it as an essential topic, yet she was careful about maintaining the standard image of her institution.

Prithvi: The Leader of Unification

Prithvi was a 45-year-old male born in *Syangja, Thaparthum*. He was the youngest of three brothers. His father studied in Banaras and was the head teacher at a school. His father was well-versed in English, Sanskrit and Nepali. Hence, he was raised in an educated family. Initially, he studied at the community school and then graduated from *Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara*. He has degrees in planning and management and sociology. He also worked in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for four years and has been involved in the education sector since 2060 B.S. His ideas on senior citizen education reflected the need for the involvement of various stakeholders, which could be owed back to his diverse work background.

Janak: One with wise ideas

Janak was a 43-year-old male born in *Jajarkot* and currently living in Kathmandu. He has degrees from *Tribhuvan* and Mid-Western University. He has been engaged in civil service for more than 20 years. He also worked in the District Education Office and Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) before joining the municipality. He was keenly interested in education as his father was a teacher. Motivated by his father's work, he wanted to contribute to education. Since he was involved in the CDC, he values senior citizen education as a tool to enhance and improve the lives of senior citizens.

Bhimsen: The Long Period Server in Education

Bhimsen was a 57-year-old male education officer. He was born into a family where his parents were uneducated, so his brothers motivated him to study. He completed a Master's degree and served as a teacher. After working as a teacher, he applied for civil service and has been engaged in civil service for a long time. His perspective towards senior citizen education reflected the necessity to be

understood and supported by children, plus the various levels of governance and community.

Balabhadra: The Defending Education Administrator

Balabhadra was a civil servant who had worked in the education sector for a long time. He did not want to share much about his background. However, he gave ideas on CLCs and various other programs that have directly or indirectly been helpful for senior citizen education.

Bhrikuti: A Promoter of Education

Bhrikuti was a 42-year-old female whose birthplace was *Hetauda*. However, when she was 3, her family shifted to Kathmandu. She was the youngest in the house and keen to study. After visiting Kathmandu, she saw a program run by tourists who distributed food and gave education, which impressed her. Unfortunately, with family obligations, Bhrikuti could not continue her education. Recently, she gave an exam for class 12 along with her daughter. She did many things, i.e., business and tailoring, and finally, she discovered a literacy program in her area. After the program, the females involved in the class wanted to study beyond literacy. Despite the effort to open a school for women, they did not get permission. When they found that CLC was made compulsory in every ward, they registered it and continued the education programs through CLC.

Buddha: A Light-bearer of Education

Buddha was very young when an organization named *Sewa-Sadan* initiated adult literacy classes in his house. His sister (now dead) was the leader of that female group. After her, his family continued to conduct the adult literacy class, honoring the initiatives made by the deceased sister. With the concept/charter of the UN, regarding eliminating illiteracy in Nepal, he registered the CLC in the district education department. After registration of the CLC, more than 120 classes were conducted in his Municipality. Furthermore, not limiting it to literacy, the post-literacy courses were run to empower the residents of his area.

Sita: A Patient Educator

Sita was a 57-year-old female born in Kathmandu. Her mother and father were illiterate; they did not have a son. Despite the social norms of that time, her parents were very progressive and were keen to teach their daughters. She shared that she was not excellent in her studies, but studied well. Her bachelor's was from the management stream. After marriage, she wanted to continue to work. Since her

family members were cooperative, she joined the CLC. Following her passion for studying, she joined the Patan campus to study *Nepal Bhasa*. She joined the MA program in 2015, and in 2017, she completed her Master's degree. She managed household chores, education, and work together. Her patience and persistence made her part of CLC. Despite the low salary, she joined CLC as a social mobilizer, as her need was more than financial; she needed to serve society. She worked in CLC for 10 years and then started teaching in a community school. However, owing to the work she had done in the past, she joined as a board member of the CLC.

Amshuverma: A Lover of Culture

Amshuverma was a 60-year-old male born into a family of educators. He grew up among his brothers, and his father served as a teacher and principal in a school. He also started his journey as an educator and eventually became a principal and joined an INGO. Apart from working in various sectors, he has degrees in multiple subjects, the highest of which is a Doctorate.

Story Collection Strategies

After defending the proposal, I started reviewing the literature and contacting relevant stakeholders I identified from the literature review. Specifically, the policy review was instrumental in preparing the guidelines for the narrative inquiry.

Talking about the stakeholders, I began the search with CLCs. I struggled to find information about CLCs as few of them in Kathmandu provided their contact numbers. Firstly, I contacted the participants to whom I could access their numbers and scheduled meetings in their offices or CLCs. In cases where I did not have contact numbers, I directly visited the offices and asked them for their contact numbers to schedule the second meeting. Since most of my participants were busy during their office hours, the chances were that they would often be disturbed during their official work. Hence, I took their contact number and chose to talk at a time that would be suitable as per their work schedule. In addition, I made sure to get their consent before recording the interview and would transcribe it after the field visit. Likewise, Adhikari (2021) stated that for a practical study, the participants' activities at work should be observed using a field note or an observation checklist. Hence, I recorded my personal experiences and opinions in the field notes each day after my field visit. I formally interviewed the participants

in the initial rounds, and the follow-up rounds were more informal as they mostly revolved around follow-up questions. I had to officially interview the participants in the initial rounds as we did not know each other much, and due to a lack of time, they expected me to provide them with a set of questions. As followed by Mahat (2022), I also maintained silence where necessary, and to verify the accuracy of the information and events, I sometimes had informal phone conversations with my participants. Gradually, I found the participants were franker and more comfortable in the telephonic discussions as they had more time and fewer judgments.

During the entire research, I realized that my participants have busy schedules and have their institutional image to maintain. Hence, I did not force any participants to provide me with responses. In a study by Butina (2015), she clarified that her interview guide comprised broader primary questions, each followed by probing questions. Similarly, I made my best effort by adhering to their request by sometimes following up on the questionnaire modality, stopping the recording, and using the probes to encourage, but with caution, not to lead the answers.

Instrumentation for the Study

I used a narrative inquiry research approach and explored participants' views, stories, and experiences from interviews, FGD, literature review, and observation (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Key Informant Interviews (KII) are being used more gradually to have ideas about the elements that have at times aided and at times obstructed the improvement of initiatives and also to investigate why some efforts succeed in some situations but not in some (Goodman et al., 1993, as cited in Riley & Hawe, 2005). As per Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), a primary method of an engaging interview enables researchers to examine things we cannot view, allowing researchers to probe participants' ideas, beliefs, biases, views, sentiments, and opinions. Therefore, as a researcher, I developed the questions in tandem with the research questions and the study's objectives. I started with guiding questions and asked non-leading questions with careful probing when required. Based on this, I interviewed the beneficiaries (senior citizens) to evaluate whether the commitments made under the various policies and plans regarding senior citizen education are practiced.

Narrative inquiry has the potential to guide policy and aid in reforming policy via a greater knowledge of how a person lives and how they use storytelling

to make sense of the world (Gavidia & Adu, 2022). Critical narratives, to gain ideas from stories and storytelling, must prioritize the voices of their participants and knowledge providers. By narrating the experiences of the key stakeholders carrying out senior citizen education policies, researchers can add credence to their stories (Baker, 2015).

In addition to the narratives, I conducted FGD to interact with several beneficiaries who could share the narrative from the perspective of access to the right. Mishra (2016) also justifies FGD as a vital tool to explain, supplement, qualify, or prove or disprove information gathered using different techniques. He suggested I have an FGD with both male and female learners of the CLCs that I would visit to identify the research participants or seniors who can provide me with enriched information. But the great tragedy was that among the 3 CLCs I visited, only one had a substantive number of senior learners to conduct FGD. I conducted FGD there, but all the learners were females, as males were very coy to come to a CLC full of females. Similar was the story of other CLCs, and in addition to that, the CLC also lost the regular senior citizens benefiting from the programs of CLC to Covid death, the threat of eye infection, and was waiting for them to come back, owing to the construction of the new building dedicated to senior citizens. Hence, I could only get an in-depth interview with one of the beneficiaries after an extended follow-up. Finally, the third CLC discontinued the literacy program long ago, owing to full literacy and inability to connect with the beneficiaries.

Field Work

After finalizing the study site, strategies, and participants for the research, I contacted the key respondents and participants. In social research, key research informants are crucial intermediaries for gaining access to study locations. They could be individuals with access control authority within organizations. In addition, these key research informants perform many tasks, including protective ones, i.e., parents and caregivers, social workers, education leaders, teachers, administrators, or those who handle data, etc. (Kay, 2019). The administrators at the Ministry, municipality, CLCs and INGO who had access to the senior citizen education programs were gatekeepers in the context of my study. Before approaching them, I prepared all the necessary documents as evidence regarding the study. The key issue for the gatekeeper in negotiating entrance is reciprocity, which is established by the advantages the research can provide the organization as

a whole or the gatekeeper's and other managers' careers (Broadhead & Rist, 1976). Since the key research participants were also interested in my study, I assured them I would share the final version. Also, a few of them invited me to be part of their discussion as the topic was related to their field. Singh and Wassenaar (2016) pointed out that permission to conduct research in an institutional setting must be acquired from the institutions' valid authorities by respecting the independence of the research participants. Hence, I approached the participants with their permission and adhered to all ethical considerations linked to the research during and after the study.

Data Organization and Analysis

Some scholars break down the qualitative analysis process into key phases: text reduction, text exploration, and exploration integration. However, the qualitative analyses are not limited to these three steps (Klopper, 2008). He mentioned that the tape-recorded details can be transcribed and read together to have the meaning, written into themes. The close themes are combined and divided into essential themes, distinctive themes, and remnants. Klopper bases this on various qualitative research regarding the analysis of data

Additionally, it is later taken, returned to the data, and written with codes and acronyms adjacent to the relevant text. As suggested by Stirling and Klopper, I recorded the interviews, transcribed them, and thoroughly read the narratives. I carefully transcribed all the recordings, listening repeatedly with the help of *oTranscribe*. Meanwhile, I was transcribing and tried to connect it with the field notes, too. Then, as suggested by my supervisor, I added my comments to those transcripts while reading them. Hence, keeping this in mind, I continued the process till I reached data saturation. When a researcher does not observe the production of new findings about the topics or philosophies, it is referred to as data saturation. (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, as cited in Adhikari, 2021). Though data saturation is regarded as a controversial topic in qualitative research, when defining and defending a saturation strategy, researchers should make sure that it doesn't conflict with crucial qualitative research criteria, i.e., dependability, diversity, confirmability, credibility, and trustworthiness (Sebele-Mpofu, 2020). (The task was breaking down into various themes. I compared those themes before finalizing them and coded them with different colors for ease of study. After spending hours on dividing themes, I finally figured out six themes. While

generating meaning through interpretation, I viewed it from critical and interpretative perspectives. I triangulated data, literature reviews, and my experience as an educator, advocate and researcher. I anticipated that after conducting the study, I would be able to create a strategy for promoting senior citizen education in Nepal.

Quality Standards

Quality standards must be maintained as an imperative criterion in all kinds of research where various techniques are applied (Mahat, 2022). Guba and Lincoln (1994) offered a list of standards to estimate the reliability of an interpretive study (as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). They further claimed that a study of supreme nature possesses features, i.e., credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Insisting that a study meets a quality standard when researchers sincerely and diligently try to approach the truth, the findings apply to people in various circumstances, and the procedures and methods are thoroughly disclosed. Korstjens and Moser (2018), citing the exact definition of Guba and Lincoln, provided additional clarification on each term, i.e., as per them, credibility is the confidence that the findings represent plausible information and correct interpretation of the view of participants. Abiding by the author's clarifications, I recorded and transcribed the interview to avoid ambiguity. Furthermore, a thick description of transferability and an evaluation of findings were done for dependability, and a peer review was done for conformability.

Also, the requirements for critical interpretive research are authenticity, rationality, criticality, and reflexivity. Real-world experience is referred to as authenticity (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 1993, as cited in Pozzebon, 2004), and plausibility means the capacity of the document to relate to the worldview of the audience (Walsham & Sahay, 1999, as cited in Pozzebon, 2004), and reflexivity refers to reflecting on how the study is conducted and knowledge of how research shapes its outcomes (Holland 1999, as cited in Pozzebon, 2004). Hence, as a researcher, I ensured the honesty of the research from tip to toe. Beginning from the literature review, I extensively reviewed the documents to complement the study and followed the proposed research design. Regarding the efficient execution of the credibility, I was conscious of the critical self-reflection about myself as a researcher, including my own biases, i.e., interaction with the participants, and how it influences the individual's answers to questions (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Most importantly, Haydon and Van Der Riet (2017), citing Clandinin and Connelly, quoted temporality, sociality, and spatiality as the basic elements of narrative inquiry. I vividly remember the suggestions to keep these three things in mind as a narrative inquirer by the proposal selection committee. In addition to this, I have also made an effort to maintain the trustworthiness of the research as the narrative inquirer.

Temporality (Time)

Connelly and Clandinin (2006, as cited in Jha, 2018) pointed out that the past, present, and future influence people. The interconnection between the more profound knowledge becomes apparent as the researcher examines the connections between all these elements (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, as cited in Haydon & Van Der Riet, 2017). As a narrative inquirer, I was careful about the concept of temporality and how it connected with the various lived experiences and actions that occurred in the respondents' lives. I concentrated on comprehending the narratives of all events, i.e., past, present, and future, and how their perception and experience have transformed with time. It was vital to understand how the various events in the past have influenced their understanding of the current policies and their perception regarding the status of implementation in the future.

Sociality (People, Social Influences)

Similarly, I was also cautious not to miss the element of sociality and was mindful to consider the social and personal situations of the research participants. The relational aspect of narrative inquiry is the connection between participants and researchers, highlighted by the sociality dimension (Downey et al., 2014). Hence, I established a good rapport with the participants, and, rather than quick interviews, I was involved for a long time to gain their confidence. The process demanded connecting the social conditions, events and experiences throughout the investigation and comprehending individual feelings and aspirations.

Spatiality (Space, Environment)

Downey et al. (2014), quoting Connelly and Clandinin (2006), stressed the significance of location in narrative inquiry, emphasizing that the researcher must consider how each area affects the experience. I was also cautious that the space the participants have been living and working in impacts their stories. I could not sideline the linkage of my participants with the space, as most of them were involved in government authorities, and some were the beneficiaries of those

institutions. Hence, I carefully investigated how these various contexts have shaped their opinion towards senior citizen education and implementation challenges.

Trustworthiness

Along with temporality, sociality and spatiality, trustworthiness is crucial for legitimacy and credibility, which can be improved through consistent methods, openness, and reflection in qualitative research (Ahmed, 2024). Hence, I was careful as a researcher while collecting data from the in-depth interviews and FGD, and tallied it with my field observations. Furthermore, the study's credibility was enhanced by identifying.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration is vital to research and holds an important position, especially in qualitative research. Four pillars of privacy, accuracy, ownership, and availability are prioritized when applying ethical issues (Sidgwick, 1907; Slote, 1985, as cited in Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). As a researcher, I considered all those above, as I was cautious not to release information about the participants without their permission and was careful to use pseudonyms. Also, I focused on selecting the participants and the study site for accuracy. I understood that the participants were the actual owners of the narratives. I was also careful not to commit plagiarism and acknowledged all writers in various sections, following the citation rules. I have complied with the ethical standards Kathmandu University School of Education set forth regarding other moral issues.

Furthermore, Kang and Hwang (2021) insisted that researchers must be kind and honest, respect the participants' privacy, confidentiality and consent, and develop cordial relations while conducting the qualitative study. Keeping in mind the prior beginning of the inquiry, I was careful to inform the participants about the objectives of the study, followed by verbal and voluntary consent from them. In qualitative research, dishonesty can result in fabricated findings and the use of participants to provide information that is at odds with what they were told before the research. I also acknowledged that developing a relationship of mutual interest is a desired ethical practice that qualitative researchers should adhere to (Kang & Hwang, 2021).

The narrative inquirers must consider ethics as concerned with negotiations, compassion, reciprocity, and openness towards many points of view.

Hence, the investigation shall be more than the submission of paperwork to the academic research ethics committee (Clandinin, 2006). Bearing all this in mind, I was continuously mindful to adhere to the research guidelines of Kathmandu University and learn about research ethics as discussed in the classes.

Chapter Summary

In summary, my research design took a multiple realities philosophical stance, with dialogical interaction as the epistemology. A qualitative research approach was used, and the critical-interpretivist research methodology was used in the study. An FGD was used in addition to in-depth interviews as a research strategy for this study. Purposive sampling was used to select research participants, while Kathmandu was chosen as the study site. The data was examined using content analysis, and subsequently, the study was carried out embracing ethical and credibility considerations.

CHAPTER IV

NATIONAL POLICIES ON SENIOR CITIZEN EDUCATION

This chapter deals with the evolution of policy and provisions concerned with senior citizen education in the context of Nepal. The chapter has been separated into two sections, where the initial half covers international history and the second half covers the context of national policy. First, I presented a brief overview of the existing international policies on senior citizen education.

International Policies and Framework

The UDHR (1948) recognized the right to education for all, including senior citizens, emphasizing education as a fundamental human right. This was followed by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966), which promotes lifelong learning and the right to education, indirectly supporting education for senior citizens (UN, 1966). As discussed in the background, the Vienna Plan (1982) and Madrid International Plan of Action (2002) had various recommendations concerned with SCE. These policies focused on equal chance in education, training, and retraining for senior citizens, particularly those with disabilities (UN, 2002). The plan warned about the high growth of senior citizens in developing nations with limited literacy and access to opportunities. It also warned that rapid changes in ICT could lead to alienation, particularly for those without basic education (UN, 2002). The plan emphasizes the importance of effective teaching, research, and collaboration between governments and CBOs for resource mobilization (ibid.). Also, with the introduction of the CLC Project 1982 in the Asia Pacific as part of EFA, literacy programs flourished in the region (Regmi, 2009, as cited in Regmi, 2020).

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UN ESCAP] (n. d.) mentioned the importance of retraining programs and lifelong learning for senior citizens, highlighting their potential for employment and neglect. It also highlighted the role of government and national actors in implementing senior citizen rights and recommending evidence-based studies. The purpose of the *Research Agenda on Ageing for the Twenty-first Century* was endorsed by the Valencia Forum in Valencia, Spain, in April 2002 as a guideline (UN, 2007). Additionally, it pushed for the creation of metrics to assess the

effectiveness of strategies to support national stakeholders for the better implementation. Apart from that, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) emphasizes inclusive education for all, including older adults with disabilities, indirectly benefiting SCE (UN, 2006).

International instruments like the Vienna Plan and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPPA) guide national policies promoting education equality for senior citizens, leading to Nepal drafting acts, rules, and plans to promote their quality of life. Unfortunately, these policies mostly envisioned children as the primary recipients of education, and the idea of education for adults revolved around literacy, continuous education and lifelong learning. These policies fail to consider senior learners' distinct and genuine learning needs. Now, considering a human rights-based approach, substantial policies seem progressive, i.e., envisioning the recreational centers and taking the responsibility to provide education in institutions of choice for senior citizens. Still, the lack of procedural guidance makes it a sheer failure.

National Policies and Framework

Historically, in the context of Nepal, non-formal and informal education served as the cornerstone of the educational system until the Rana Regime. Around the time of the First Five-Year Plan (1955), the Ministries of Education, Health, and Local Development (Panchayat) jointly launched the first non-formal education program focused on literacy (Chitrakar & Maddox, 2008, as cited in Regmi, 2020). Regmi (2020) also pointed out that the National Education System Plan (NESP, 1971) divided education into two divisions: first, the expansion of the literacy program, and second, the practice of all learning programs. Furthermore, he mentions that most initiatives at the time focused on rural development, such as the Seti Zone's Education for Rural Development, which aided female literacy, flexible learning systems, and learning centres. Seti Education for Rural Development (SERD, 1980), initiated by UNESCO and UNICEF, established village study centres throughout the country to enhance education post-literacy through various training programs (UNESCO & UNDP, 1994).

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (n. d.) pointed out that the government launched the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP I, 1992–1998), which converted the village reading centres into Community Learning

Centers (CLCs). Furthermore, it mentioned that the government subsequently launched the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP II, 1999–2004) and established a national committee to look after these CLCs. The Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC) was established by the National Committee on CLCs and UNESCO Nepal, with the primary goal of literacy, lifelong learning, and community development by using lifelong learning as a tool (UNESCO, 2017).

The millennium marked a significant period in terms of policies related to senior citizens. Firstly, the Senior Citizen Policy and Working Policy (2001) aimed to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens through initiatives such as supporting NGOs in starting senior citizens' clubs, creating resources fostering dignity and respect for older people, adding subjects to school curricula, and offering government support for senior service centers (MoWCSW, 2001). It also mentioned community outreach programs to foster a family atmosphere and knowledge transfer. However, the Working Policy was more focused on utilizing the knowledge of senior citizens rather than addressing their learning needs. One positive aspect of the working policy is its encouragement of NGOs to assist citizens' clubs in growing into venues for lectures, entertainment, and education.

The Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2005) highlighted the establishment of senior citizens' clubs for recreational, spiritual, and philosophical engagement purposes (MoWCSW, 2005). Academically, rather than serving as a forum for senior education, the plan insists on including gerontology at various levels and the establishment of a college of gerontology. Ambitiously, the plan also tasked the MoWCSW and the Ministry of Education with free learning for senior citizens in their chosen teaching institutions. On the positive side, the plan acknowledged the importance of protecting and implementing the human rights of senior citizens, which is recognized in various international instruments (MoWCSW, 2005).

The Senior Citizens Act (2006) is pivotal as it defines senior citizens as individuals aged 60 years and above. The Act emphasizes protection, social security, and utilizing senior citizens' knowledge through its preamble. However, it ironically overlooks the distinctive learning needs of senior citizens (MoWCSC, 2006). Regarding SCE, the Act recognizes the importance of skill development centres and acknowledges that education extends beyond traditional classroom learning. It promotes senior citizen education by empowering them to acquire new

skills, pursue hobbies or interests, and remain actively engaged (Ibid).

Complementing the Act, the Senior Citizen Rule (2008) calls for the establishment of senior citizens' clubs along with daycare centers in different districts under the Senior Citizen Welfare Committee, and the clubs include recreational sports (e.g., swimming) and libraries (MoWCSW, 2008). Interestingly, the rule categorizes senior citizens into five groups: senior citizens above 70, senior citizens below 70, infirm senior citizens, single senior citizens, and helpless senior citizens. Despite special provisions for senior citizens above 70 and infirm citizens, it fails to clarify or address the needs of powerless citizens.

Similarly, the goals of Education for All (EFA, 2004–2009) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2015–2030) indirectly acknowledge the importance of education for senior citizens. (United Nations, 2015). The same study mentioned that the EFA (1990), initiated by organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF, aimed to provide all children, youth, and adults access to high-quality basic education. Regarding the quality of education for senior citizens, three of the six objectives of the movement—improving adult literacy, encouraging learning, and promoting lifelong learning—could have been significant in Nepal's context (United Nations Educational Scientific Organization International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training [UNEVOC], n.d.). However, the critical review report on EFA's application in Nepal (International Alert et al., 2006) highlights its limited focus on the lifelong learning needs of older adults, primarily emphasizing youth, children, and adult literacy.

In the context of SDG 4, which advocates for access to quality education and lifelong learning for all, the emphasis on lifelong learning is crucial for educational opportunities for senior citizens (United Nations Statistics Division, n.d.). It highlights the necessity of including underserved groups, such as senior citizens, in education agendas. In countries like Nepal, where senior citizens often struggle with basic literacy, implementing such global agendas can bring substantial change.

The Three-Year Plan (2010/11–2012/13) recognized the need to utilize senior citizens' knowledge and ideas while addressing their needs and vulnerabilities (Age Care Nepal, n.d.). The Constitution of Nepal (2015) identifies

education as a fundamental right, inherently encompassing senior citizens, who deserve equal access to educational opportunities irrespective of age (GoN, 2015). The Constitution lays the groundwork for laws and initiatives supporting senior citizen education, forbids discrimination based on age, and emphasizes lifelong learning opportunities. From the perspectives of social justice and human rights, the constitution demonstrates a progressive attitude towards senior citizen education.

The Education Policy of Nepal (2019) aimed to address diverse concerns within scattered education-related legislation, which mentions the creation of CLCs for continuous and lifelong learning and advocates for informal and open learning to achieve Nepal's goal of complete literacy (Karki, 2017). Though it does not directly address senior citizen education as a stand-alone issue, its emphasis on inclusivity and lifelong learning indirectly fosters an environment conducive to promoting senior citizen education. Similarly, the Free and Compulsory Education Act (2018) guaranteed equal access to quality education, including lifelong learning and inclusive teaching, and highlights the significance of CLCs in benefiting senior citizen education initiatives (MoEST, 2018). However, the Act primarily focuses on children and youth, leaving the distinct educational needs of senior citizens unaddressed.

Regmi (2020) noted that various national education plans—such as the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009–2015), the School Sector Development Program (SSDP) (2016–2023), the Non-Formal Education Policy (2007), and the Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework (2007)—acknowledge the importance of non-formal and informal learning. These policies are instrumental for senior citizens who miss opportunities for formal education. However, these policies often prioritize school-aged children, sidelining senior learners as stakeholders. SSRP, for example, describes processes for students to transition from non-formal to formal structures, though these have not been fully implemented. Linking non-formal education and lifelong learning to senior citizen education, these policies can support promoting education for senior learners (Regmi, 2020).

The Fifteenth Five-Year Plan (2019–2024) highlighted the lack of public libraries and resources for lifelong learning (National Planning Commission

[NPC], 2019). It promised arrangements for lifelong learning for all citizens and the development of a “National Qualification System” (NQF) to promote and record formal, informal, and alternative education. The plan envisions libraries and e-libraries at the provincial and local levels to promote lifelong learning. However, like earlier policies, it primarily focuses on children and youth, overlooking the unique learning needs of senior citizens (NPC, 2019).

The Standard Related to the Operation and Management of Community Learning Centers, 2078 (2021), is a key document governing SCE (MoEST, 2021). It is considered CLCs' vital for implementing SCE through informal and lifelong learning. The Standard specifies facilitators' roles, management duties, and required infrastructure (e.g., libraries, ICT rooms, and disabled-friendly facilities). It outlined 20 programs and services that CLCs can offer, such as literacy, skill development, intergenerational learning, and modernization of traditional knowledge (ibid). Financial constraints are addressed by mandating government support and encouraging alternative fundraising mechanisms. However, the Standard lacks emphasis on needs assessments to identify the distinctive learning needs of senior citizens (ibid). Despite this, its proper implementation could be a milestone for SCE from a social justice perspective.

In recent years, the Senior Citizen Act 2006 Amendment Act (2022) introduced the concept of service centers, including care centers, nursing homes, and skill development centers (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, 2022). It assigns local governments the responsibility to collect information on senior citizens and organize programs to transfer their knowledge. However, the amendment fails to acknowledge senior citizens' distinct learning needs beyond knowledge transfer. While it could have addressed these needs comprehensively, it missed an opportunity to adopt a human rights-based approach and social justice.

In addition to these policies, several policies are remotely related to SCE. Similarly, the National Broadcasting Act (1993) focused on leveraging radio and television to disseminate educational content (National Law Commission [NLC], 1993). The National Information and Communication Technology Policy (2015) highlighted using digital platforms for public engagement (Ministry of Information and Communication, 2015). The Local Governance Operation Act (2017) empowered local governments to engage citizens through these media (NLC,

2017). Nepal's Social Security Act (2018) provided senior citizens with allowances, health services, and social and cultural participation support, incorporating awareness initiatives to educate them about their rights and well-being (NLC, 2018). The Geriatric Health Service Strategy (2021–2030) emphasized enhancing health services for senior citizens while advocating for healthy ageing through health literacy and community education (Ministry of Health and Population, 2022). This policy indirectly supported SCE by empowering older adults to make informed health decisions. Collectively, these policies promote inclusive and indirect means of senior citizen education in Nepal.

Chapter Summary

The Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right, with the education policy promoting continuous education through alternative and open access, and the developmental plans emphasize non-formal, informal learning, and lifelong learning. The standard related to CLCs is a crucial document; progressively, the functions of CLCs mentioned in the policy give importance to continuous education and functional literacy, but regressively, it fails to value need assessment to address the distinctive learning needs. Likewise, the amendment to the act on senior citizens aims to ensure the welfare of senior citizens by establishing committees at all levels. Still, it fails to recognize the ongoing need for learning and skill development beyond seminars, which is crucial for their well-being and social inclusion.

The progressive approach of Nepal towards full literacy and lifelong learning through open, alternative, and informal means lays the groundwork for senior citizen education. However, no specific legislation exists on the subject. However, as a researcher, I deeply felt that there is room for improvement in ensuring that educational opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the diverse groups of senior citizens. This process involves offering flexible learning formats and relevant curricula that understand the need for functional literacy, i.e., digital, financial, legal, technological integration, etc., along with basic literacy.

Name of Policy	Key, objective, and strategic actions about the SCE	Comment on the policy
Constitution of Nepal (2015)	<p>Acknowledges education as a fundamental right.</p> <p>Builds a base for senior citizen education through fundamental rights and directive principles and state policies, i.e., the Right to education, protection against discrimination, and the right to social justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A fair system through inclusion, involvement, and social justice. - Insists on using the ideas, abilities and experiences of ex-public servants. - Prioritizes linking population data with development plans. -Aspires to have competent human resources through practical education. -Make higher education free and accessible for all. 	<p>Article 41, which is related to senior citizens only, mentions protection and social security.</p> <p>Though it does not address senior citizen education directly, it assigns responsibility to the government to ensure progressively greater access to educational opportunities.</p>
The Senior Citizen Act (2006)	<p>Describes senior citizens as people 60 and above.</p> <p>Lays the groundwork for lifelong learning for senior citizens.</p> <p>Formation of the senior citizen welfare committee at the central and district levels.</p> <p>Acknowledges the club established by seniors as a senior citizen club responsible for</p>	<p>Most focus on care and maintenance.</p> <p>Ensure inclusive, accessible, and responsive processes addressing senior citizen education.</p> <p>Need to discuss flexible and relevant learning formats and curriculum.</p>

	<p>protecting their rights and interests.</p> <p>Acknowledges education beyond the classroom.</p> <p>Points out the need for community engagement.</p>	
Free and Compulsory Education Act (2018)	<p>Advocates for the right of equal access to quality education.</p> <p>Discusses the right to literacy and basic education.</p> <p>Mentions about non-formal and open schools.</p> <p>Identifies the urge to develop comprehensive education policies addressing diverse populations, including senior learners.</p>	<p>Children are the primary recipients of education.</p> <p>The idea of education for adults was mainly concerned with literacy.</p> <p>Indirectly addresses SCE, and its implementation can impact future policies.</p>
The Education Policy 2019	<p>Values informal education, i.e., adult literacy</p> <p>Advocates of continuous education through alternative and open access to education.</p> <p>Establishment of CLCs for continuous and lifelong learning.</p> <p>Emphasis on open and informal learning is needed to achieve the goal of a fully literate nation.</p> <p>Emphasizes the role of public libraries and CLCs as the center of resources for continuous and lifelong learning.</p> <p>It assigns the responsibility of drafting necessary policy regarding informal learning,</p>	<p>It does not acknowledge the urge to address education for senior citizens as the current need or challenge.</p> <p>It does not explicitly address senior citizen education but emphasizes inclusion, non-formal education, community engagement, and innovation, favoring SCE.</p>

	continuous learning, alternative learning, and CLCs to local governance for the proper monitoring, evaluation and implementation.	
The Senior Citizen Rule (2008)	<p>Divides senior citizens into five categories: below 70, above 70, helpless, infirm, and disabled</p> <p>Mandate clubs and daycare centers in districts under the senior citizen welfare committee.</p> <p>The day care center should have basic facilities, i.e., a library, study room, gym, and drinking water.</p> <p>Daycare centers must arrange a pilgrimage at least once a year.</p> <p>Discusses the existence of senior clubs with infrastructure for recreational sports and a library.</p> <p>Establishment of a club aimed at refreshment and engagement.</p>	<p>Progressive in envisioning recreational centers, but misses the procedural aspect.</p> <p>They miss out on the educational activities that can be conducted in centers.</p>
Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2005)	<p>Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to arrange free learning for institutions of seniors' choice.</p> <p>Use the senior citizens' club as a platform for spiritual discourse, leisure, intellectual pursuits, and self-advocacy.</p>	<p>Ambitiously puts the responsibility on ministries to arrange free learning opportunities for senior citizens.</p> <p>The plan perceives senior citizen as subjects of study rather than understanding their learning needs.</p>

	Protection and implementation of human rights of senior citizens and endorsing the planned, organized, and goal-oriented development of senior citizens.	
Standard related to Operation and Management of Community Learning Center (2021)	<p>Outlines the establishment, function, duty, and power of the CLC.</p> <p>Acknowledges CLC as a central unit for implementing informal education and lifelong learning.</p> <p>Prescribes financial support and monitoring.</p>	<p>It focuses on continuous education but fails to discuss the needs of senior citizen education.</p> <p>There is a need to address the assessment for senior citizen education, pedagogical approaches, and resource allocation.</p>

CHAPTER V

EXPERIENCES OF SENIOR CITIZENS: ACCESS TO SENIOR CITIZEN EDUCATION

After exploring the literature on senior citizen education and figuring out the evolution and existing policy directly and indirectly concerned, I needed to listen to the beneficiaries. I tried to understand the perspective of rights holders through an FGD followed by an interview. Unfortunately, there was only one CLC with many senior learners, and I could not conduct a proper FGD there. There were 12 female participants above 60 and no male learners in the FGD. Post FGD, I identified a participant from the respective CLC and another from another CLC I had visited. I have introduced the participants in chapter three of the study without using their names to protect their privacy.

This chapter includes my data collection journey with participants. The literature review insisted on the right to education as a fundamental human right of senior citizens and access to it as a measure to achieve social justice that must address their distinct learning needs. The constitution of Nepal (2015) mentions education as a fundamental right of all citizens, along with progressive realizations to improve the quality and access to education in Directive Principles and State policies (GoN, 2015). Furthermore, the NHRC (2020) insists that education is a tool to achieve other human rights, enabling economically and socially marginalized individuals to engage in their communities fully. Hence, I collected the narratives to understand senior citizens' perceptions of SCE and whether the existing policies addressed them. After reading and rereading the narratives, I have divided the data into five themes that emerged from the participants: Learning needs and policy relevance, learning opportunities and existing policies, current policy program and its effectiveness, barriers and challenges in policy implementation, and stakeholder-informed future directions.

Learning Needs and Policy Relevance

During FGD, I wondered what motivated the senior learners to join the classes, and I started talking to them about their learning needs. The participants from the FGD shared how learning from CLC helped them. One of the participants mentioned: *We did not know abcd, ka, kha, and now I am happy that I can write*

down my name and can-do sign by our names. Another participant mentioned: While travelling, we did not know where we were, but now, we can read the boards. Another participant added: We know the names of fruits, vegetables, and pet animals in English. We know addition and subtraction. One of the participants, acknowledging the importance of learning, said: Rather than sitting at home as an illiterate, we can come here and learn, which is very lovely.

Similarly, Falgunananda, while sharing her personal experience in the CLC, gleefully mentioned that *I did not know much. Here, I learned the Nepali alphabet and can recognize numbers; the madams have taught us well.*

The participants' sharing boosted confidence as they could read boards, do signatures, know the alphabet, do sums, etc., pointing out that basic literacy is their learning need.

Sita indicated the need for the company as she faced many challenges as a retired citizen. Speaking for people like her, she shared: *We have targeted retired people and tried to create a senior citizen society. People come here and then stay alone. They come here because there are some activities. Along with the company, Falgunananda believed that CLCs are the space for peer learning. As she shared: I wish many more elderly would come and join so we can have company. Many of us have skills; those who have them can share and make progress. Even though I cannot, I feel it for others. Similarly, one of the participants from FDG shared: Previously, we used to sit at home; now we are coming here and learning together.*

The participants pointed out the need for entertainment as an essential motivation for attending senior citizen education was pointed out by participants. Falgunananda, correlating it with the role of CLCs, very satisfactorily mentioned that *they have been teaching us, providing us with stationery, and, at times, taking us on a tour. For older people, this is very entertaining; what else do we need?* Likewise, Pasang mentioned: *I am very weak, but the CLC programs have helped me stay fresh and active. One of the FGD participants appreciated the CLC classes and noted that they helped us pass the time.*

The participants verbally and nonverbally reflected the importance of various programs on their mental health. The necessity of health-related programs could also be found in Pasang's narrations. As she mentioned, *I learned a lot from the health volunteer training. I learned about health care, preventing dengue by destroying mosquitoes, tips on childcare, etc.*

Apart from health, Pasang shared some income-generating skill-related programs. She said *there was training to make pickles, snacks, and candles. It was all beneficial, but unfortunately, I could not initiate any business based on this training as there was no partner, and I was very sick.* One of the participants from the FGD mentioned that:

Miss told us that if we had any skills and could make any products, they could take us to the fair and demonstrate our products. But there has been no class regarding skill development.

It seemed the classes were helpful for some skills. Still, they were incomplete as she had no idea about starting a business, collaboration, registration formalities, etc., which are needed to run a business. Somewhere, the mere motivation and lack of substantive class were an issue.

According to academic data, a pragmatic teaching strategy that considers senior learners' varied needs, interests, and skills should also address the physical, mental, and sociocultural challenges of growing older (Tam, 2014). It came true in the given context as senior learners highlighted how educational opportunities have boosted their confidence and addressed their needs and interests, i.e., literacy, company and entertainment. They appreciated CLCs for providing opportunities for peer learning, basic learning and facilities, stationery and tools, and health-related programs, i.e., health volunteer training. Still, they noted incompleteness in business start-up ideas and skill development programs. Policies in Nepal, such as the Senior Citizens Act, senior citizen policy, and the education policy, indirectly address some of these needs by emphasizing literacy, lifelong learning, and the role of CLCs in promoting inclusion and community development. However, these policies often lack specific mechanisms to align with the distinct learning needs of senior citizens, focusing more on knowledge transfer and general inclusivity. Here, I felt that the fifteenth five-year plan and the standard related to CLCs provide a framework for enhancing lifelong learning opportunities. However, I fall short in conducting needs assessments or addressing gaps in skill development and business startup support. While the policies reflect a commitment to literacy and engagement, a gap exists in comprehensively addressing the sociocultural, economic, and educational challenges unique to senior citizens.

Learning Opportunities and the Existing Policies

Falgunananda and Pasang linked learning opportunities with the establishment of CLC and highlighted the role played by World Vision in supporting the CLCs. As Pasang was sharing about her life post-retirement, she shared:

I got engaged in the community; we had to construct roads, and no one took responsibility. Then, I came forward and got connected with the ward. Once hooked, I engaged in most of the ward's activities. The government introduced the idea of CLC. Two hundred people gathered, collected signatures, and went to the district education office, and we were selected to open CLC. Later, this CLC was supported by World Vision.

Falgunananda, describing her journey of joining CLC, mentioned: *On the ground of this CLC, we saw old mothers being taught, as in winter, the classes are done outside. Also, I noticed something called Facebook, and I saw it there, too.*

The participants applauded the efforts made by CLCs that complemented their learning journey. One of the participants in the FGD mentioned that *compared to the past, it is better; random people used to come here and ruin the toilets, but now it is cleaner.* Another participant added: *It has been a good experience, and Miss has been teaching us well.* While describing her learning process, one of the participants in FGD shared: *There are three English, Maths and Nepali teachers. There are volunteer teachers, too.* This statement hit me hard, as, apart from it, the calling for volunteers could be a game changer in cases of a lack of budget.

The participants owed the learning opportunities to CLCs and appreciated the role of NGOs and INGOs in strengthening them. Furthermore, they appeared grateful to their mentors in CLC, who they felt had gone out of their way to help them manage the CLCs, ultimately aiding the learning opportunities. Policies such as the Senior Citizen Act, education policy, and the standard related to CLC acknowledge CLCs as hubs for lifelong learning. These policies promote literacy and skill development while advocating for inclusivity and community engagement. However, the accounts highlight gaps in resource allocation, budgetary constraints, and the absence of a structured volunteer program, which could be transformative in addressing these limitations. While existing policies have laid a foundation for enhancing learning opportunities, integrating

community-driven initiatives and targeted interventions is essential to address the nuanced learning needs of senior citizens and ensure sustainable outcomes.

Current Policy Programs and Their Effectiveness

While discussing the policies and programs related to senior citizen education, most participants shared that they were unaware of the exact policy. i.e., Falgunananda shared:

Previously, I used to wonder what law could be there for us. I used to feel it was for people with power who would care about us, but the CLC opened our eyes, and I thank and congratulate them.

In replying to the same concern regarding the educational policies, Pasang mentioned:

I did not take part in legal awareness; I do not know if there is a law that mandates children to care for children. But mostly, it is the moral responsibility of children. I learned about these rights from CLC.

Furthermore, regarding stakeholder involvement, Pasang insisted that the communities work more than the government and the local government. One of the participants in the FGD appreciated the role of CLC and said *that CLC facilitators teach us. They love us and they buy water. We do not know who the king is and who is in the government; we only know Miss.*

I also wondered what the perception of these right-holders was regarding their right to access to education or their perception of senior citizen education. Falgunananda shared: *Senior citizen education is for older adults like us; it is about teaching us the basic ABCD, kha kha.* Where Falgunananda related education to literacy, Pasang had a different opinion. As she shared, *Most Seniors are old, and health is a significant issue, so I am unsure what they can learn or cannot. Most of them come to CLC as they are hurt, as there is no support or love from their family. In the gatherings, we forget our misery; we do bhajan (prayers) and become friends.* It was notable that Pasang, who is suffering from cancer, related more to the importance of company and service than education. Her perspective reflected health as a barrier to accepting education as a right of senior citizens.

Respondents had different ideas when I asked the participants if they thought the government was making adequate efforts. i.e., Falgunananda mentioned: *I do not feel there is a little bit of an allowance, but that's it. A*

participant in the FGD repeated the same thing, as she mentioned: the *government only provides an old-age allowance*. Another participant from the FGD added: *I don't think there has been any arrangement about education. There has been nothing*. While few of them were satisfied with the government's effort, the rest of the participants seemed indifferent, and one of the participants appreciated the government and exclaimed: *There is a government; that is why we got it; else, who can give it?*

Most of the research participants, especially FGD, appeared naive about the senior citizen education policies, and they were not content with the government's efforts; instead, they believed in the community efforts. One of them seemed to be optimistic about the government's effort and appreciated the learning opportunity she had. Some opined that senior citizen education is closely related to literacy programs for senior citizens, and some opined that it is not as essential as health services and company.

The effectiveness of current policies and programs on senior citizen education appears limited, as participants lack awareness of policies. CLCs are seen as more impactful than government efforts, with participants associating senior education primarily with literacy and social engagement. Many viewed government provisions, like old-age allowances, as insufficient, highlighting health issues and family neglect as barriers. While some appreciated CLC-facilitated learning, most believed community efforts were more effective, emphasizing the need for better policy communication and integration of health, education, and social support.

Barriers and Challenges in Policy Implementation

After discussing the policy and programs, I discussed the various obstacles in their learning journey. The participants came up with multiple barriers:

Almost all participants discussed adverse health as the first barrier in the learning journey. Pasang expressed her grief over wanting to study more, but the circumstances did not turn in her favor. She shared:

I got breast cancer, and now I cannot study much. So, I do not take training, but I go there to attend programs. Also, before COVID-19, we used to go to CLC, gather there, and have tea and snacks. Sometimes, we used to go out and visit temples. But it all got destroyed after COVID-19; a few died, and then there was dengue, now an eye infection.

Similarly, participants from the FGD also insisted on health-related concerns. One of them mentioned: *To be honest, we are very old, our stomach aches, we do not have a proper toilet, and there is no water. Sometimes there is a long queue.* Likewise, another responded: *One problem is that the teacher teaches us now, and after some time, we forget.* Also, Falgunananda mentioned that sometimes we cannot attend class because we fall ill or *work in-house*. Along with physical health, Pasang shared her doubts about the senior citizens' learning capacity (memory), yet she could not deny the importance of the activities in CLC. Explaining what she shared:

Most Seniors are old, and health is a significant issue, so I am unsure what they can learn. Most of them come to CLC because they are hurt, and there is no support or love from their family. In the gatherings, we forget our misery; we do bhajan (religious songs) and become friends.

One of the participants from the FGD pointed to finance as a crucial challenge, as she shared: *Previously, there used to be 60-75 people, but now there are fewer, as many do not have money.* Another participant sadly pointed out: *Previously, we used to study free of cost; now we have to pay.* The evidence for this narrative could be found in the story of the CLC facilitators, too, i.e., Sita mentioned:

We cannot say the salary, but we provide some allowance for the facilitation. Initially, it was 2,000, then it became 6,200, and now it is 8,000 per the rules. This amount is hardly enough for tea. So, the education division told us that this is the amount we can give; if you conduct training or classes, you can use the amount from there. Sometimes we get 200, 300 from them; sometimes we take 500 for teaching three months.

Similarly, when I asked Bhrikuti if the money provided by the government is adequate for CLC, she shared: *We do not rely on it only; we raise 150 from everyone who studies here.* From here, I came to understand that the participants were right to mention that they have to pay for the education they receive. Still, the narratives of the facilitators indicated that the amount they raise is minimal, which is also permitted by the law and higher authorities.

The participants from the FGD suggested that more people would have come if the local school shared space. One of the participants clearly stated:

A school nearby has promised to provide some space for classes. It would be great if we could shift courses there. Actually, after us, many could join if better arrangements are made.

The participants also criticized the government's random initiatives that did not require assessment. One of the participants from the FGD shared: *Previously, the ward used to care. It provided us with blankets, umbrellas, and curtains. This year, there has been no support.* Meanwhile, another participant made a satirical remark about the government's indifference. She said: *Our government is like CID; it keeps on waiting, observing, and only cares when one dies.* Sharing her idea about education programs for senior citizens, Pasang showed some reluctance. As she said, *I feel that rather than education, the government should focus on maintenance, i.e., daycare centers free of cost.* However, she appreciated the learning opportunities when she said: *I am very weak, but these programs have helped me stay fresh and active.*

Seniors who want to access facilities lack the idea of governance and where to express grievances, and their complaints are often limited to the CLCs. One of the participants from the FGD said:

We do not know who that government is. We only know Miss, and we complain to them. If we knew who the government was, we would tell them to provide water. Our teachers provide us with pens and paper, and we must buy two jars of water daily.

Pasang pointed out the excessive formalities that even senior citizens have to face. She said: *Some of them have money, and some can pay, but even in free service, they are asked to bring sifarish (recommendation letter). How can they do so?* The dissatisfaction and the lack of awareness also demonstrate the relationship between the senior citizen and governance, demonstrating a lack of implementation of their rights and negligence shown towards them. The participants in the FGD also indicated the negligence of the public representatives. One of them aggressively pointed out *that while asking for votes, they promise this and that after the election, they forget all their promises.*

In a nutshell, the participants discussed adverse health, financial challenges, and lack of family support as some of the personal difficulties in having access to education. They also criticized the government's random initiatives without a need assessment. It was also witnessed that seniors who want to claim facilities often

lack an understanding of governance, and their complaints are frequently limited to CLCs. The participants highlighted the importance of CLCs for senior citizen education and expressed concern about indifference and a lack of support from the government and people's representatives. Authors, too, pointed out that acquiring skills and values through systematic and ongoing training is the goal of adult education. Still, these progresses can be hampered by issues, i.e., time management, family obligations, finances, and transit (Taziev, 2015).

It could be understood that the implementation of senior citizen education policies faces significant challenges, such as poor health, financial difficulties, lack of family support, and inadequate government funding. The participants highlighted the absence of basic facilities, excessive formalities, and insufficient awareness of rights and governance processes. These barriers limit access to education, revealing gaps between policy goals and practical implementation and emphasizing the need for better planning and support.

Stakeholder-Informed Future Direction

The needs assessment needs to be taken seriously as, with time, learners' learning needs and requirements change. i.e., one of the participants from the FGD pointed:

Miss told us that if we had any skills and could make any products, they could take us to the fair and demonstrate our products. But there have been no skill development classes. Likewise, another participant shared: Many of us know how to make incense candles and leaf plates. Miss told us we could take our home products to the fairs.

One participant from the FGD shared her expectations from the government and mentioned *that if there was support from the government, more could come and learn. Decide to acknowledge that older adults are coming and learning.* Falgunananda had a wish out of thankfulness for her mentors: *It would be great if the government could help our Miss with a higher salary.* Similarly, a participant from FGD mentioned: *We want a better facility for Miss and the upcoming new students.* Nodding and adding more, one participant shared:

If the government could provide a salary to Miss, it would be better than the 150-200 rupees we gave Miss. The water alone is very costly. They have taught us without a salary.

The participants emphasized the need for thorough assessments to tailor senior citizen education programs to their changing needs. They called for skill development classes alongside basic literacy, highlighting the importance of peer learning. Aligning with the Senior Citizens Act and education policy, they urged the government to offer better financial and logistical support for CLCs and their mentors. They also sought recognition for their learning efforts and greater government involvement to ensure sustainable educational opportunities for senior citizens.

Chapter Summary

The learners expressed gratitude for the learning opportunities as they boosted their confidence and addressed their literacy, company, and entertainment needs. They appreciated CLCs for providing peer learning, basic learning facilities, and tools. However, they expressed dissatisfaction towards government policies and criticized random initiatives without a need assessment, failing to take note of their distinctive learning needs. Addressing the educational barriers and introducing programs that support continuous learning and lifelong learning provisions mentioned in policy are crucial measures to address the pursuit of social justice in senior citizen education. However, the senior citizens were not content with the government's effort, wishing for programs based on need assessment; skill development classes expected government support and visibility. Hence, the various levels of governance need to make the most out of their limited resources while prioritizing limits and the impact of their efforts on other SDGs (NHRC, 2020). Aligning with the existing policies, the beneficiaries advocated for better financial resources for CLC mentors and improved facilities for the learners. Their feedback underscores the necessity of stakeholder-informed strategies to enhance senior citizen education and ensure continued government involvement and support.

As a researcher, I felt that the government had not prioritized the learning needs of senior citizens and merely perceived it in terms of literacy. Now, the need of the hour is the policy provision, and its implementation shall focus on achieving the need-based functional literacy to implement the fundamental right to education for senior learners.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLEMENTATION OF SENIOR CITIZEN EDUCATION POLICIES: EXPERIENCES OF DUTY BEARERS

This chapter presents the narration of the participants from the Ministry, CLCs, municipality and INGO, and the duty bearers. I have provided a short introduction of the participants in Chapter Three under the topic selection of participants without using their actual names to protect their privacy. The participants were the facilitators of the CLCs, the officers from the Ministries, the officers from the municipality, and an officer from an INGO. Among the participants, four were male, and five were female.

The policy review revealed policy gaps, gaps in intergovernmental cooperation, and weak regulating bodies, which are significant barriers to ensuring equity and equality for elders (Geriatric Center Nepal, 2010). I collected the narratives of the duty bearers as I wanted to know if there were any bottlenecks in implementing those policies and, if so, how the stakeholders concerned with the implementation of SCE perceive and tackle those challenges. It is vital for implementing fundamental human rights, i.e., education, that distinctive learning needs are considered to fulfil the pursuit of social justice in the long run.

While listening to the stakeholders, I found various ideas that complemented my previous learning about policies through the desk review. While going through the narratives, I realized that to understand the challenges associated with implementing SCE policies, one must know well about the concerned stakeholders and how the duty bearers perceive senior citizen education. Complementary to the difficulties, most participants provided information on positive changes and the future expectations associated with the challenges in implementing policies. Thus, narrative stories and perspectives of the duty bearers are presented in six sub-themes.

Evolution of Senior Citizen Education

The development of senior citizen education in Nepal is covered in this section, mainly from the participants' viewpoints. The participants' stories shed light on how their individual experiences, organizational histories, and neighbourhood-level initiatives have influenced how senior citizen education is

perceived and implemented. Even though their stories are based on their own subjective experiences, they also draw attention to more significant institutional and historical developments consistent with the development of senior citizen education in Nepal.

When I think back to my LLB days, I remember that my procedural law instructor frequently stressed how crucial it is to comprehend the development of any system or procedure before interacting with it. This method has always directed my research, and I sought to document the growth of senior citizen education through participant descriptions in this study. This information serves as an aid to understand the concerned stakeholders and associated challenges better.

Starting with Bhrikuti, she had her memories attached to establishing the CLC where she works. As she shared: *It has been a year since it was registered as CLC in 2079 B.S Before that, we provided education to women and senior citizens.* Additionally, she explained that the reading enthusiasm of the learners in the literacy classes was instrumental in shaping CLC and the continuation of such programs. She added:

A literacy program was going on, and after the program was over, the females in the class wanted to study more. We wanted to open a school for women, but did not get permission. When we found that CLC was made compulsory in every ward, we registered for CLC and continued our education programs.

Similarly, Buddha recalled his nexus with literacy programs from childhood as he mentioned: *While I was a student, my sister was in charge, and after her, we continued to conduct the adult literacy class.* Furthermore, he shared that the UN's agenda to eliminate illiteracy was instrumental in establishing CLCs. He said: *After the concept of the UN, which was to eradicate illiteracy in Nepal, we registered CLC in the district education department. We ran literacy and post-literacy classes and had around 120 classes.*

Amshuverma, too, connected his perception regarding senior citizen education with various platforms and those he was working for. He mentioned:

In the past, we also had Pati Pauwa (rest places for passers-by) to conduct meetings and gatherings. Other countries had similar practices, i.e., Kominikan from Japan, which has influenced a lot, where people of all

ages gather and exchange ideas. CLC, or whatever name is given, is where the community gathers and is community property.

He also expressed the impact of urbanization on community learning and explained the role of UNESCO in recovering it. *He said:*

When urbanization expanded, the idea of sharing started to deplete, and cultural and intergenerational harmony was built in the shade. Then, around 1994 A.D., UNESCO organized the Asia Pacific conference, where it discussed how it could revitalize CLCs. UNESCO also initiated and supported two CLCs: One in Lumbini and another in Baitadi.

Amshuverma furthermore shared how the government moved in tandem with UNESCO, supporting its vision to revitalize the community-sharing platform. He explained that

UNESCO started to work at the conceptual level in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, and later, the Ministry started to take ownership of those programs. The Ministry provided guidance on it and began expanding CLCs as a wing of non-formal education and part of it. Since there were schools that promoted formal education, CLCs were established at the local level in favor of non-formal education and lifelong learning.

Amshuverma elaborated on CLC as the basic unit promoting lifelong learning at the ground level and shared the role of UNESCO as the partner organization. He said:

This is a rich part of community development, cultural harmony and intergenerational linkage. Talking about formal education, you will be engaged for 15-20 years; the rest is lifelong learning and non-formal education. Through its programs, UNESCO has supported these CLCs in capacity building, making them vibrant by addressing them in programs, and the government has also taken ownership.

Further elaborating its nexus with policy, he mentioned:

There is little mention of CLCs in the Education Act. The Ministry of Education has developed specific guidelines, and UNESCO is supporting the development of such guidelines. Now, the policy is in place, i.e., Education Policy 2019 has addressed it as a learning centre and has targeted to develop it as a study centre.

Amshuverma historically linked various platforms and concepts, i.e., lifelong learning, with the evolution of senior citizen education in Nepal.

Balabhadra related learning opportunity for senior citizens, with the progressive attitude of the Municipality he worked for. He made the statement: *In CLC, there are programs, i.e., awareness, bhalakusari (conversation), and skill development, where senior citizens are also involved, and there are programs for sharing their experience.*

Balabhadra indicated that CLCs provided learning and sharing opportunities for community members, including senior citizens.

Similarly, Prithvi also related senior citizen education to the role and contribution of CEHRD. While sharing about senior citizen education, he connected it with the literacy campaign. He shared:

The initiative to declare Nepal a literate country began around 2065/2066, and till today, 64 districts have been declared literate, and 13 districts are yet to be declared literate. Concerning literacy, we have only considered a population from 15-60, and there is the concept of literate and fully literate.

He pointed out that literacy programs focus on the 15-60 age group, but he assured us that senior citizens are not entirely ignored. He said: *Concerning the 15-60 age group, 95% of the population must be literate, and those above 60 must be considered in the second phase and cannot be left behind.* Furthermore, discussing the implementation of senior citizen education, he clarified its components and essential actors. He stated: *Senior citizens have not been covered by formal education. Somewhere, it has been addressed by non-formal education, and the structure of governance that has addressed the issue is at the local level, the CLC.* He also highlighted the role of CLCs, explaining that there are 2151 CLCs; that way, there is one or two CLCs at the regional level. *In the past, it was primarily concerned with adult literacy; however, CLC Management Standard 2078 explains 18-20 activities that CLCs can do.* While describing this policy, Prithvi pointed out how senior citizen education mostly meant adult literacy, and now it has moved toward lifelong learning. He said:

Now, education is need-based; even if a person is too old to study, they should get to do it, and if they need a certificate, they should get it even through self-study. If they are above that, how do they enhance their quality

of life and earn a living? What kind of programs are required, as everyone has their own needs? Now, need-based education is based on non-formal learning and lifelong learning; such a program has been mentioned in the School Education Sector Plan (SESP) since we are the central unit that looks at non-formal education and lifelong learning.

He mentioned the other developments: *We have developed some curriculum and learning materials. Another is NQF; previously, the reading material for adults and children was the same, but now we have prepared different ones. We are even concerned about digitization, making small videos, and keeping them in online portals.* His curriculum statement marked a significant development in terms of senior citizen education.

Buddha made a similar statement: *This year, the CEHRD has prepared a format, as I was informed by one of the officers, that is available online. I think it should have been passed by now. It has a good arrangement as the seniors who have studied through informal education can get certificates like SEE.*

Janak also mentioned the role of the Municipality in conducting literacy programs and the role of CLCs. Sharing his idea on the policies related to senior citizen education, he pointed out: *There is the Senior Citizen Act 2063 and regulations governing it; apart from that, there are policies on social security, too. New guidelines, too, and new policies for senior citizens are coming.*

In European nations, public and private institutions and businesses participate in senior citizen education by teaching, reflecting the public conscience, and honouring the term "*Senioren*" (Agapova, 2000, as cited in Tam, 2014). In the context of Nepal, the participants shared how the various events, programs, organizations and initiatives contributed to the development of senior citizen education. Among that, the participants indicated the role of CLC as the core of the informal education where senior citizens could learn.

Importance and Relevance of Education for Senior Citizens

After going through the narratives, the duty bearers also explained the relevance of SCE. When I reread the answers, I found specific patterns and had to group them into the following sub-themes: Literacy, Companionship, and Addressing Need and Interest.

Literacy

The participants insisted that most semi-urban and rural areas still have a lot of illiterate senior citizens.

Bhrikuti, linking to the issues in the area near her CLC, pointed out:

There are many senior citizens, and in the past, there were very few government schools. They mostly used to work in the field, look after homes, and have little or no time. After CLC was opened, many of the senior citizen mothers were included with the intent that at least they could write their names.

Likewise, Bhimsen indicated that despite the declaration of a literate area, some still need learning. He said:

Nearly more than 97% of people between 15 and 60 years are literate as per the standard of literacy. Some people migrated to the Municipality after the declaration of the literate area. Unfortunately, there is no exact measurement of the migrated population, and along with them, some people above the age of 60 are remaining literate.

Similarly, Balabhadra said that *Kathmandu was declared the literate Municipality in 2078; however, people from many communities migrated there, and it is difficult to have an actual record.* Likewise, Sita shared: *We teach 15-60 age groups, most locals of Kathmandu are literate, and those who migrate from outside Kathmandu come to study here.* The participants' narratives hinted at the continued need for literacy programs for senior citizens.

The narrative of Janak hinted at how the declaration of a literate area based on the one-time survey is unreliable, as he shared: *Currently, more than 95 per cent are literate, and this has been declared a literate municipality. However, the 2078 census shows a decline in literacy.* Buddha shared the literacy rate with reluctance: *As per the concept of UNESCO, when 80-90 per cent of people are literate, eliminating illiteracy is to be declared.* He, too, was reluctant to accept this as full literacy.

To understand more about the nexus between literacy and senior citizen education, I inquired with Prithvi about the initiation of CEHRD, as he has been working in the institution for an extended period. To whom Prithvi very patiently clarified:

An initiative was started around 2065/2066 B.S. to declare Nepal a literate country; today, 64 districts and three provinces have been declared literate. Concerning literacy, we have only considered the population from 15-60, and there is the concept of literate and fully literate. Regarding literacy in the 15-60 age group, 95% of the population is focused, and those above 60 have to be considered in the second phase; they cannot be left out. The 2080/81 is the target year to declare Nepal literate, as only 163 local levels from 13 districts are left to be declared literate.

Prithvi, highlighting the value of senior citizen education, hinted at the second phase of literacy, which would focus on senior citizens.

In addition to justifying the need for literacy, he also addressed the recent paradigm shift. As explained, *if you look at the past, non-formal education was mainly concerned with senior literacy. Now, it is broadened.* The participants hinted at the impact of migration on learning trends. Bhrikuti elaborated: *It is very relevant in today's context, as education used to be oral or written, and the use of technology is new. Currently, many family members are outside of Nepal. So, they want to take them to visit or stay there, for it will be easy if they are literate.* Explaining the need for functional literacy, she added: *Now it is more than learning the alphabet. It is technical education with presentations, i.e., on how to use mobile phones.*

Janak pointed out an underlying issue that senior citizens are likely to face. Janak said: *Now the era of print media is gone, and it is difficult for them to study, so it is essential to update them with the news. It is vital to have digital literacy.* In this era where governments are discussing e-governance and a paperless economy, the point raised by Janak raises a significant concern at a time when tech literacy and digital literacy have been evident, and we are still thinking of basic literacy. Similarly, Buddha indicated the importance of post-literacy programs in areas where literacy has been achieved and discussed plans to resume them.

Along with digital or tech literacy, Amshuverma associated the concept of literacy with various aspects of lifelong learning. As per Amshuverma:

UNESCO's perspective of education is divided into formal and non-formal. Where non-formal includes ideas from literacy to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is about updating. This way, 70-80-year-olds can use mobiles and computers, making their life easier. They should

know about the basic diseases that happen at their age, ways to deal with them, how to consume medicines, and ways to connect with a new generation. It is targeted to contextualize these through lifelong learning based on the needs, and to create a support system.

Amshuverma reflected on lifelong learning as a tool to enhance educational opportunities for senior citizens. In Nepal, non-formal education, alternative education, and literacy are the main focuses of lifelong learning owing to the landscape and socio-economic constructs essential for equitable, constructive educational methods (UNESCO, 2018, as cited in Dangal & Khanal, 2019).

The participants noted that despite literate areas, senior citizens remain illiterate. I felt the government's plan to address this underlines the decline in learning abilities with age. Hence, the government should recognize that current literacy programs are insufficient for the high demand for functional literacy.

Company and Mutual Learning

Bhimsen seemed worried as he pointed out the loneliness faced by the senior citizens in the municipality where he worked. Regarding which he shared:

These days, I feel senior citizens have converted into lone citizens as most youths are outside the house or nation, and mostly older people remain in the house. There is an absence of a person to share their feelings and experiences, and a lack of help on difficult days, making them feel alone psychologically.

He added:

After 5-10 years, the number of senior citizens in the municipality will surely increase. With the youth migrating, most households have only senior citizens. Hence, if the local governance cannot make programs addressing their concern, the question will be raised about its existence.

He seemed to insist that the senior citizen education programs can contribute to changing the lives of senior citizens.

Bhrikuti also shed light on the fact that education programs in CLC served multiple. She said:

Sometimes, it is not only education they come for; when their relatives join CLC, they find it convenient to meet at one forum, and it motivates others, too. There are different reasons people come to CLC to freshen up.

Similarly, Amshuverma mentioned how CLC can serve as an intergenerational meeting point for both young and senior citizens. He said: *There, one can share, record, or provide learning from ancient scriptures, i.e., Ramayana and Mahabharata, and share an experience. This learning could even be documented and included in the curriculum.* Prithvi, too, had a similar say to what he mentioned: *There are two things: One is intangible cultural heritage, and the other is tangible cultural heritage. Nepal is a multicultural nation, but if the knowledge, ideas and experience of those senior citizens cannot be transferred to another generation, Nepal will no longer be multicultural.*

Amshuverma, pointing at the growing generation gap, shared:

They get less support as their children also start seeing them from different angles, i.e., they tell them to rest and not yell. Their understanding and learning are rich as they have seen different things, but they are criticized for nagging. We shall create a family environment and transfer our knowledge to society.

Upon sharing his concept about education for senior citizens through CLC, he said: *I feel this; it refers to two ideas: taking care and utilizing their knowledge.*

The rapid technological advancement and migration have made retired senior citizens mostly miserable, as most youth in families who can assist them are leaving the nation. Hence, rather than staying alone or remaining inactive, engagement with educational activities is better for them to share with peers, learn, and pass the time. The research indicates that the lives of senior citizens can be eased with technology as they can manage their work, be updated, and ultimately attain prosperity and maintain their happiness instead of living lonely and dissatisfied lives (Pradhan, 2023). For such purposes, CLCs can serve the purpose of collaborative learning centres where ideas are shared, and emotional bonding serves the purpose of counselling, enhancing their access to learning.

Addressing the Needs and Interests

While reading the narratives of the participants, I frequently encountered two terms: need and interest. Most participants indicated that SCE should be mindful of broadly addressing their interests, hobbies, and needs, i.e., healthcare, and providing access to it.

Talking in the same line, Amshuverma, taking a deep breath, tried to explain the context with an example of the incident he experienced during a cultural dialogue event. *He said:*

There was a retired head teacher, around 70-75. She said she wanted to go to a bar, have a drink, and sing songs as she did not feel old, and her interests and hobbies were the same. She continued the social narrative that one cannot do much when old age holds me, but as long as my brain functions, I want to be active.

Citing this incident, he shared his opinion about senior citizen education. He said:

We need to materialize senior citizen education by addressing their interests, hobbies, and requirements. Addressing their interest and feelings, they need health care. They need a proper infrastructure and a suitable support system, starting from the home ambience for senior citizen education. They need it all.

Furthermore, he added, the *learning opportunities improve the learning capacity, create financial opportunities, improve the standard of living, and ultimately bring benefits and knowledge to the family too.* Interestingly, Amshuverma associated education for seniors as a tool and means to address the needs and interests of senior citizens, which can ultimately lead to improving their lives. Bhimsen shared how CLC could be instrumental in running such programs. He said: *A CLC or any organization shall run programs targeting senior citizens; it shall be skill and technology-based and connect senior citizens with earning opportunities, connecting their knowledge and experience.* Some authors contend that education for older people should be like education for people of any age: it should be a personal journey that begins where the individual is and is guided by their curiosity to make their surroundings meaningful (Percy, 1990 as cited in Tam, 2014). Sharing his perception about education for senior citizens, Janak mentioned:

I believe it is an important topic, as when I worked at the CDC, we made a curriculum about it, too. Senior citizens are an asset to the nation because of their knowledge and expertise. Education is an essential element for the quality of life of senior citizens, but we are failing to do justice to it.

Sita and Bhrikuti shared some practical examples of this kind. Bhrikuti shared: *One lady said she has a daughter abroad and needs to learn English.* Sita had a similar experience of teaching, as she mentioned:

It is essential to be educated over time. Currently, in an era of technology, they have come to learn to use mobile phones and laptops to talk with their children who live abroad. If they go to the hospital, they shall know which ward to go to and which bus to take while travelling by bus, and when calling relatives outside Nepal, they need not rely on others. One of the ladies from our CLC could not use Messenger, and now, she calls us through it. We teach them whatever is necessary for them. Previously, it was elderly education, then literacy, and now it is called lifelong learning, in which anything can be taught.

This way, the CLCs have been a robust unit in promoting need-based learning. Sharing about other needs, Bhrikuti mentioned:

One is technology-related education. Some municipalities and wards have funds, and they provide goods to the senior citizens. Still, rather than delivering them stuff, it would be wise to conduct various classes and technology-related programs and run day care centers to provide entertainment in one place.

Talking about health, Amshuverma pointed out the significance of orientation on health. He pointed:

If only they could know about the basic diseases that happen at their age, how to deal with them, and how to consume medicines. Sita, too, shared: *I feel the necessity of health orientation for them; we have been doing it, too.*

Most participants pointed out the necessity of health-related programs.

Discussing the need, Prithvi insisted that lifelong learning should be need-based. For example, he pointed out *that a 25-year-old young man failed the SLC, and now needs a certificate. He can self-study and get a certificate as per the NQF. If they need a certificate, they should get it even through self-study.* Shedding light on some progressive development, Buddha shared: Now, the CEHRD has developed a curriculum and *decided to provide academic recognition for people from alternative education.* The excitement shared by Buddha could be a game-changer as it would motivate a lot of people, including seniors looking for academic recognition.

Amshuverma had a similar say, as he mentioned: *Contextualizing these through lifelong learning based on the need and creating a support system, customizing it is what the UNESCO targets. Since non-formal education and lifelong learning are two of the components of EFA.* Similar to EFA, Nepal has also reaffirmed its commitment to international law with a focus on SDG-related targets, i.e., education, which is critical to ensuring that no one is left behind (NHRC, 2020).

Despite pointing out the need for various forms of educational activities, i.e., health orientation, skill-based training, and digital literacy, some participants seemed confused regarding the need for education for senior citizens. For example, Sita said:

I do not feel they should study as they have crossed age; they have to stay at home alone, and at times, they do not even have someone to provide them food, as some children are abroad, and some are busy at work. The CLCs can build daycare centres and keep them comfortable by looking after their health and providing food and facilities.

The need for education for senior citizens is a fundamental and constitutional right that is often underrated. However, the reflection of their distinctive learning necessity can be seen in things like this, i.e., the necessity to learn the basics of mobile and computer, have income generation activities, and focus on health.

Existing Programs and Stakeholders

Despite most participants sharing about the lack of programs tailored to address the educational needs of senior citizens, some participants pointed out that programs by various stakeholders can be, in a roundabout way, associated with senior citizen education. And to understand the challenges, the narratives hinted that it is a must to know about certain stakeholders. The stakeholders discussed by participants were:

Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC) and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST)

The Ministry is the government's organ that focuses on implementing policies. The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens mainly focuses on financial implementation and guiding the local governance through procedures, directives, and notices. Ram, an officer from the aforementioned ministry, explained the role

of the ministry in SCE. She shared: *It provides a budget to local governance and organizations that organize programs, events and awareness related to senior citizens.* However, she mentioned that the works of the Ministry are divided in the ToR. She said: *We cannot work as per our wish as the ToR mentions various roles, i.e., management of old age home, day-care centre, and policy review.* Pointing at future planning, she mentioned:

The ministry acknowledges senior citizens as the source of knowledge, so there is a plan to create seven provinces and seven programs. Ministry focuses on Intergenerational sharing programs and has designed and kept them in the budget where seniors can share their ideas, and the young generation can learn from them. Adult literacy is also a subject of concern, as not all are literate. Still, since it is a cross-cutting theme, we are trying to collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

However, pointing at limitations, she said:

It has to be in tandem with the national and international policy and national circumstances, i.e., the necessity of new CLCs. Also, sometimes, the personal interest of the minister can influence it. Informing about major steps that could be game-changers in the aspect of education, she said: *The senior citizen policy is in the process of discussion, and we are collecting the opinions from stakeholders.*

Upon inquiring about the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, I was told that the unit concerned with education for senior citizens was CHERD. Describing the nexus of senior citizen education and CHERD, Prithvi shared that *previously, there were programs for the elderly (praudsikshya), then literacy programs came (15-60), and now there is lifelong learning. Lifelong learning covers broad areas where anything can be taught.* Prithvi highlighted how CEHRD's contribution to monitoring and regulating CLCs, which are regarded as a basic unit for the execution of senior citizen education.

Furthermore, Prithvi also highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation of the CLCs and mentioned:

We have been trying to do this for one and a half years, and we had no idea about the whereabouts of CLCs. I felt we should not sit still and make their report online. Now, we have created an Excel file of all CLC, and CLC shall keep a record of, i.e., how many have gone abroad, how many senior

citizens are there, how many people do not have certificates of educational achievement, how many are outside school, etc.

Furthermore, he explained the effort of CEHRD in promoting lifelong learning with relevant examples, as he shared:

A 25-year-old man who failed SLC, now, if he needs a certificate, can self-study and get a certificate as per the NQF. Also, if a person over 42 has knowledge, skill, and energy but does not want to go for a job, and no one has tested his knowledge and skill, he gets them tested.

He jubilantly shared:

Previously, the books for adults and children were the same, but now we have prepared different reading materials for them as they have more ideas and experience. Nationally and internationally, the curriculum is more relevant and useful. We are even concerned about digitization, making small videos and keeping them in online portals.

It could be observed that Prithvi also linked lifelong learning and adult learning with senior citizen education.

Municipality

Talking in terms of the role of local governance, Ram described it as a vital unit in the assessment of need and implementation of SCE-related policies. As she said:

The local units play a significant role as the learning needs of Kathmandu and Jumla are different, and ministries are only at the policy level. Since local governance is the major unit that covers education, they understand the need better.

A similar sentiment was of Janak, as he shared:

Comparatively, local governance is more or less stable; if local governance wants, it can bring policies and programs for citizens. Seniors can be divided into special categories, i.e., 60-70, 70 and above, ensuring they are in guardianship.

All the participants working in the local government agreed that there is no tailored program for senior citizen education yet. Still, they mentioned that some existing programs could be linked to senior citizen education. For example, Balabhadra shared that there *has not been anything specific for senior citizens, but the Municipality has guardian education focusing on guardians*. He also indicated

that the CLCs that run programs that can be linked to senior citizens receive a budget through the Municipalities.

Upon being asked if there has been an initiative or activity that could be related to education, Bhimsen recalled the attempt made by the wards. He said:

The religious visit has been done through the ward office, but I do not think only the people who could not afford to go were selected. Similarly, Janak said: Currently, we are not running any literacy programs, but our municipality has four CLCs that conduct training on income-generating skills to senior citizens and women's groups.

Elaborating on the plans, he said:

Shortly, we are bringing a program to connect three generations who can share their learning and experience. We have started programs to make learning effective, meaning rather than theoretical learning, we are focused on practical knowledge, i.e., teaching how to use mobiles.

In light of current socio-economic trends, creating contextual, creative, and educational programs for senior citizens is imperative (Manuel & Mollón, 2014).

Community Learning Center

As mentioned earlier, CLCs have been working directly and indirectly to provide education to senior citizens, even before their formal registration.

In the same line, Buddha shared:

I feel CLC is the organization that works to initiate education for those deprived of formal education as a responsible organization i.e., after registration, we worked in the literacy area for the next 10 years. We provided lanterns, too, as there was darkness because of load shedding, and some were so poor that they could not pay electricity bills, and we felt their necessity. Others do it, but it is for personal interest or as a hobby.

Upon inquiring about currently existing programs, he expressed his regret over the fact that *CLC has not been able to do anything specific for senior citizen education. Still, we annually organize programs where we honor senior citizens.*

When asked about specific programs for senior citizens, she mentioned:

Before COVID-19, there was a daycare service for senior citizens, and most people were from the age group 45-82. It was opened with the initiation of an old mother who is one of the founders, too. Looking at our daycare, a politician was very happy with our work and donated 50 Lakh to

us, and we have built a new building for the daycare. Post-COVID, the program got a bit halted. Those who come rather than stay alone come here; some activities exist. Previously, we used to have a bhajan (prayers) program for them, and we took them to temples for religious visits.

I further wondered if there have been any programs to address their specific educational needs, to which she replied: *They request us to teach mobile, and we teach them, but there is no particular education program for those who have crossed age. They come here and feel fresh, that's all.*

Bhrikuti shared about the contribution of CLC in promoting literacy in the region, especially for senior citizens:

Currently, we have mothers up to 60-84 years old, and CLC has three levels of classes for senior citizens. These three levels are for three years; after that, they are regarded as equivalent to five classes and can join class six.

Upon being asked if there were other programs apart from literacy, she pointed out that in that area, people were still struggling with literacy concerns. She shared:

We conducted a literacy program for one year, but could not cover much; we could cover 15 wards, and since this area is large, many old women could not come. In the upcoming year, we are planning to launch a program for senior citizen women, at least making them able to write their names by having classes in a nearby place. Many of them have their own set of skills. If possible, we would want to include them too.

She also shared: *Previously, there were 30-35 senior citizen mothers; now, 10-15 come regularly rather than learning. They come to freshen up. Also, while discussing catering to specific learning needs, she shared: Some say I want to learn English as I want to travel abroad. Now, at least, she has become able to say her name in English.*

From the previous statements of Bhrikuti stakeholders, it is clear that CLCs are teaching life skills, i.e., plumbing, sewing, and weaving; some provide beautician and health training and are taking trips. Though these programs target the 15-60 age group, in one way, they do not exclude senior citizens; somewhere, seniors benefit from these programs.

Amshuverma, pointing out the important role of CLCs, shared that *CLC is a rich part of community development, cultural harmony and intergenerational linkage. Talking about formal education, you will be engaged in for 15-20 years, and the rest is lifelong learning and non-formal education.*

Participants insisted that the CLC is the unit that has worked on senior citizen education through basic literacy programs, informal education programs and major lifelong learning programs and is the one to work on it in the future. They have worked on teaching and training and made learning accessible, i.e., distribution of lanterns, reading material, free learning, etc.

NGO/INGO/CBOs

Reading the narratives of the participants, I realized that apart from the government, various international and national organizations have contributed to promoting education for senior citizens, too.

Buddha and Amshuverma frequently appreciated UNESCO's program to eliminate illiteracy, which led to the formal registration of CLCs. Amshuverma further elaborated on its support for institutions dedicated to senior citizens. He said: *UNESCO has been supporting CLCs in developing and running non-formal and continuous learning programs. There is no targeted program here; it's lifelong learning only, and we are working through it.* Regmi (2020) also pointed out that the integration of lifelong learning in educational policies promotes human resource creation in the current era, with major agencies like the UN and sister organizations coordinating these efforts, justifying the efforts of UNESCO. Amshuverma further elaborated: *UNESCO has internationally recognized this subject and is awarding the organization, i.e., Ageing Nepal, which works for senior citizens, motivating them.* Along with Amshuverma, Bhrikuti also appreciated the organization as she said: *Ageing Nepal has suggested CLCs take classes on technical education, involve them in sanitation and plantation programs, and guide them in taking care of the plants they have planted. Also, provided us with around a Lakh for 10 months for the course to run technical classes for senior citizens. The organization appeared to have been guiding in shaping educational programs for senior citizens.*

Balabhadra pointed out that *about senior citizens, the community has arrangements, i.e., libraries, clubs, and guthi, that work for the senior citizens.*

Buddha peculiarly pointed out that small CBOs can be instrumental in bringing changes in education with their targets in various forms. As he said:

Lifelong learning need not be only academic; it is about bringing change in society. Some organizations can initiate financial institutions that can claim change through finance; the religious institution could claim change through bhajan (prayers), but I can speak for my CLC, which focuses on informal education. For example, one organization in Chitwan opened a library and created change by opening a savings group, teaching people to save and making significant changes.

The Nepali government has prioritized technology education for youth, but senior citizens are also in need of training to improve their living standards and technical skills (Pradhan, 2023)

The implementation of senior citizen education is a multifaceted process involving ministries, local governance, and Community Learning Centers (CLCs). Stakeholders in the process include INGOs, NGOs, and CBOs, but a dedicated program is needed. The local government must prioritize social justice and education. It appears that CLCs have made learning accessible, but more effort is needed to implement senior citizens' educational rights. Finally, the proactive participants are well aware of policy issues, but sadly, an information gap exists among those advocating for these rights.

Implementation Challenge of Senior Citizen Education

During the literature review, I figured out a few challenges regarding the execution of senior citizen education-related policies. When I read and re-read narratives, I discovered the challenges were much deeper and more deeply rooted. Based on narratives, I have categorized the challenges as follows:

Relevant Learning: A Challenge for Seniors

Various concerns impact the learning capacity of senior citizens, i.e., their health and lack of basic facilities, which affect the learning process.

While sharing such challenges, Sita pointed out: *We targeted retired and lonely people to create a senior citizen society. However, many cannot come to the CLC because of their health.* Similarly, the rights holders shared narratives regarding health and mental health-related challenges in the previous chapter.

In addition to that, Bhrikuti pointed out:

Currently, there are no male learners; we heard that one male wanted to study. Since there was only one male, we sent a message that if he could bring a group, it would be comfortable for him. I feared that if he were alone, he would be teased, as most are female. But if he comes and approaches, we have no issue.

Similarly, Sita pointed out: *Initially, there were around two males. However, many females used to joke around, which was quite the opposite of the nature of males, and their thoughts would not be aligned.* Bhrikuti and Sita shared that the inferiority complex among male learners became a barrier to learning.

Appropriate Space and Programs

The participants identified the lack of programs and space to conduct the programs as one of the key issues in the implementation of SCE. Balabhadra acknowledged the lack of educational programs designed for senior citizens. He said:

If there is anyone who wants to learn and is active, they are included in programs for 15- to 60-year-olds. Those who are not active sit in Chautari (a relaxation area typically located on remote Nepali footpaths) and go to Guthi (a trust created for altruistic religious or charitable purposes), where they share their experience.

Senior citizens in the Kathmandu municipality are primarily included in the management of *community schools*. Many schools respect their contribution and learning. Despite inclusion being a positive step as a tribute and the best way to utilize their experience, it leaves their learning needs unaddressed. Bhimsen also shared a similar story, as he said: *There have been programs targeting women. To my knowledge, there has been no program targeting senior citizens run by our program department.*

Sita acknowledged that the working area of the CLC is broad, but the limitations bind the CLC. As she claimed, *we can teach drop-out students in the age groups 15-60 and 8-15 who are under non-formal education and income-generating skills.*

Similarly, Prithvi shared:

Since we are in the formal structure, it is also about the quality of students. Most of the development partners are interested in child education.

Sometimes, I feel they should invest in the parents and senior citizens, as we believe in community education.

Amshuverma linked education for senior citizens with key components and current programs. He mentioned that the *SDG goals are half formal education and half non-formal education. 98% of 98% of preparedness is there for formal education, but there is not even 2% preparedness for informal education.*

As shared by Prithvi, the attention of development partners is essential in helping nations create and oversee the implementation of periodic plans based on the SDGs (NHRC, 2020).

The educational reforms for senior citizens are mostly limited to literacy programs, and the age group 15-60 is prioritized in literacy campaigns, making one program focused on senior citizen education compromised. The participants seemed aware and positive about the need for programs focusing on senior citizen education.

Physical Facilities

Lack of infrastructure is one of the issues faced by learners. Buddha explained it with an example of an incident:

We worked despite all the darkness, rainfall, and winter. We went to a place called Kakrebari an old woman used to come from the hill, walking half an hour to study with the lantern. Unfortunately, she broke her leg due to darkness. Still, the executives do not see that the passion for education is because of CLC.

Bhimsen, too, had a similar opinion; he pointed out that there might not be good buildings, there are few rooms in the building, and the facilitators may not be well-trained. Sita highlighted the other side of a financial challenge as she shared:

Finance is a major challenge, as along with education, we have to provide food, and sometimes they get ill, and we need a bed too. The new building has been made, but the operational cost is still a huge challenge.

Pointing to the administrative challenges raised by finance, Bhimsen said: *They are provided with around two lakhs, from which they have to manage the office expenditure and salary. You can imagine their motivation level; motivating them has been a challenge, too.*

Similar was the narrative of Sita; she explained the financial constraints in detail as she said:

Previously, the district education office and the Municipality used to give the quota for education, and we used to operate accordingly. Initially, the quota came for 6 months, then gradually 3 and 4 months for the short term. After that, we said we would pay, and we gave a small amount to the teacher or facilitator. We cannot say salary; rather, let's call it an allowance for facilitation. Initially, it was 2,000, then it became 6,200, and now it is 8,000 as per the rules, which is hardly enough for tea. The education division told us that this is all they can give; if you conduct training or classes, you can use the amount from there. So sometimes we get 200, 300 from learners; sometimes we take 500 for teaching after 3 months. Also, there are no poor people in Kathmandu who cannot afford that much, and the amount they give is of their own will.

Likewise, Bhrikuti also shared that the CLC raises Rs 150 from the senior learners; otherwise, they have to rely on the government's tight budget (around a lakh) and occasional support from I/NGOs. Regarding lifelong learning, Bhrikuti pointed out: *In the absence of a budget, we do not have a skill development class now, but we target to do it next year.*

Despite the CLC standard mentioning multiple sources, the participants highlighted the lack of infrastructure, human resources and financial resources as major concerns.

Continued Needs Assessment

The participants disclosed that most programs related to senior citizens focus on the distribution of materials rather than programs based on need assessment.

Buddha expressed regret over the fact that the CLC has not been able to do this specifically for the senior citizens. He mentioned that *once a year, they organize the program in collaboration with another organization, and they give them shawls as a respect. Rather than providing them with shawls, it is vital to give them what they need.* Regarding the distribution, Bhrikuti commented:

Some Municipalities and wards have funds, so they provide goods to the senior citizens, but rather than providing them with stuff, it would be wise to conduct various classes and programs and run daycare centers to teach them about technology and provide entertainment in one place.

Bhimsen, too, criticized programs done by the local governance for senior citizens without properly assessing their needs. He pointed:

The Municipality, in collaboration with various organizations, groups, cooperatives, and consumer forums, organizes limited programs, but these programs, too, are programs for the sake of programs. Comparing the achievements with the investment done in the program, it has only provided temporary satisfaction to a limited number of people without any long-term impact.

Hence, Bhimsen insisted on conducting programs based on an analysis of the actual requirements. He pointed:

In the coming days, the Municipality and the local government shall compulsorily run programs addressing senior citizens. How to run these programs shall be based on the pre-planning and the study, utilizing the resources and taking time, not in a haphazard way, but in a real manner.

Ram insisted: *Talking about the learning needs, the need assessment should be done to figure out what they require.*

Instead of using national data based on a study of the population of Nepal, the programs have influenced understanding of senior citizens' status and needs by relying on the presumptions of Western, developed countries and recommendations from international bodies (Tausig & Subedi, 2022). The lack of substantive educational programs for senior citizen indicates the lack of need assessment, valuing, and identifying their real needs.

Family Support

One more barrier in executing senior citizen education-related policy, repeated in many narratives, was the lack of family support. Amshuverma said:

There is less support, and as their children age, they also start seeing them from different angles. Their understanding of learning is very rich, as they have seen different things, but they are criticized for complaining a lot. Senior citizens are often neglected, and their desires are not considered important, which holds them back. Despite the fact that they are vast sources of knowledge, the lack of a forum to express and apply, and the lack of support from the children, makes them more helpless.

Senior citizens should be looked after by family members, as better management of concerns of senior citizens requires compassionate behaviour (Shrestha & Dahal, 2007).

Janak pointed it out as one of the major concerns after digital literacy. He explained: *Along with senior citizens, their children need to be educated or reminded about their responsibility towards parents and grandparents. The old age homes need to be reduced, as it is the responsibility of children to take care of their parents. We have policies and programs, but the problem is in the implementation.*

The physical health and lack of functional literacy can sometimes make senior citizens miserable when they need aid from family members.

Education for Senior Citizens vs. Education by Senior Citizens

Some participants insisted that seniors do not need educational programs, as they are a source of knowledge themselves. In contrast, those participants insisted on having health orientation, digital literacy classes, etc., for senior citizens.

While discussing the existing programs on senior citizen education, Balabhadra denied the presence of any tailored program. However, he said a few *management committees of the schools and the teacher-guardian association have included senior citizens with experience in education in the advisory board. The private and public schools are including senior citizen on the board as a tribute, which is a good way to use their skill, but the question is, does it cover their personal need to receive education? Similarly, Ram mentioned that they have a lot of knowledge that must be passed on to another generation, rather than teaching them that they are a source of education. If they could be valued, they could earn, too. Janak also acknowledged senior citizens as a source of knowledge but insisted on sharing knowledge. As he said, shortly, we are bringing a program to connect three generations where all three generations can share their learning and experience.*

Sita denied the need for education for senior citizens, but by a senior citizen, she meant one who has been residing in the valley. As she pointed out:

Most of the senior citizens in our community are intellectuals. They are retired and are a source of knowledge, and they do not need such, but those

who have come from outside, as they come in later age, and we do not have a program as such for them.

Again, the contrast could be found in her other statements when she said: *Previously it was elderly education, then literacy, but now it is lifelong education in which anything can be taught, and we teach everything based on necessity.*

Such contrasting statements reflect the confusion surrounding the necessity of senior citizen education. However, no matter how much the denial was made about the necessity of education for senior citizens, no participant could completely negate its significance.

Lack of Coordination for Cross-cutting Themes

When I read the narratives, I discovered that senior citizen education involves multiple stakeholders and that the lack of coordination and cooperation is one of the major challenges.

To begin, Ram shared:

Sadly, the Act on senior citizens came before the policy, but the policy is being drafted now. It is a cross-cutting theme. There is a Ministry of senior citizens, education, health, technology, etc., which involves various stakeholders starting at the central level. Adult literacy is also a subject of concern, as not all are literate. Since it is a cross-cutting theme, we are trying to collaborate with the Ministry of Education. Also, there is the home ministry, local governance, and provincial governance.

After indicating various forms and levels of stakeholders, she highlighted the coordination issues. She said:

We give the budget to local governance, and we work through them. However, the work was not done properly owing to the lack of coordination among the various levels of governance. Since most of the themes are cross-cutting issues, more resources are required.

Buddha, sharing the plight of CLCs, mentioned: *The tragedy is that there are rare people in bureaucratic administration who understand the concept of lifelong learning. Some executives in the municipality feel that CLCs are getting money for nothing.* Not only that, but also, during my observation of CLCs, I noticed that most of the CLCs have a management body comprising a president, secretary, and treasurer. And, mostly, the treasurer or secretary is the active one, and the rest are often busy.

Another important cross-cutting theme I noticed during observation was the gender balance among the learners. I have discussed the inferiority complex felt by male learners in previous themes based on the narratives of Sita and Bhrikuti. Even Buddha shared: *With the declaration of elimination of illiteracy, the second phase has come. It would be great if we could open schools for women and post-literacy classes.*

The fact that many women in the past were illiterate could be a contributory factor in focusing on female learners. In a previous theme, Bhrikuti shared how complications in opening a female school led to opening CLC, which was much more convenient. The participants repeatedly mentioned that the need for literacy has been surpassed by functional literacy. Hence, male senior learners, too, need a forum that addresses them and their needs.

Systematic Exclusion and Excessive Formalities

While going through the narrations, I figured some participants indicated the systematic exclusion and burden of excessive formalities they had faced or seen others suffering. For example, Bhimsen said:

The religious visit has been done through the ward office, but I do not think only the people who could not afford to go were selected. Those who have homes and resources and could invest in themselves went instead of those who could not. I wish they had gone, and the result of these programs was refreshment for them without achievement.

Even this remotely related program could not serve a good purpose.

The marginalization and exclusion of the beneficiaries create barriers to exercising their right to education, mocking the aims of social justice reflected in the Constitution and various laws and policies.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

While discussing applying substantive rights to senior citizen education, Amshuverma indicated that implementation begins when there is a policy but no resource or law to bind the structure. *Local government has been unable to take ownership, which is the main challenge for implementation.*

Furthermore, Bhimsen exposed the sad reality of the CLC in the region. Upon inquiring, he said that *not a single CLC has been functioning since the start of the municipality. Those registered were not functioning; hence, we did not continue them.* Furthermore, explaining the current status of those CLCs, he

elaborated: *They have not been renewed and are not functioning, and it did not make sense to keep them for their namesake existence.* This fact was also found in Amshuverma's narration, as he pointed out: *Some CLCs exist, but more than 90 % of CLCs exist in numbers. If you look in the records, they do not exist.* Upon further follow-up with Bhimsen, it was actually because of a lack of monitoring. He replied:

It was during our monitoring that we informed them that they could not stay still and function, and they stopped coming into contact. They did so until they could keep it in the bag. Hence, we told them to either work or leave.

Here, Bhimsen asserted that the municipality is concerned with monitoring and that accountability shall be placed on the community.

He said:

I do not think the municipality should be involved in establishing a CLC; rather, the community should be active. There are specific provisions through which the organization can be established, and these programs can be run, as well as awareness and orientation, which could be part of the municipality. People's representatives should be concerned about opening and monitoring it at the ward level. If the leaders, especially in the municipalities, people's representatives, and politicians, were active, it could have been nice.

Bhimsen, elaborating on accountability, said:

It is a lack of honesty from the leaders and government stakeholders, as the presence of attitude is why I should be concerned about speaking and being bad. The people's representatives and members of political parties are being protected, thinking these are our people, even when they are making mistakes, and the bureaucrats are enjoying their interests. Regarding the educational programs for senior citizens, Bhimsen said: *It shall not be the program for the sake of the program, but programs that target senior citizens, monitoring it and calling for strict implementation.*

Local governments that are closest to people should increase investment in infrastructure, i.e., education, for promoting awareness and accessibility of rights among senior citizens (Saibule, 2019)

As discussed in previous themes, CLCs have to cover a large number of learners and are struggling owing to a lack of space and human resources. There are a lot of formalities to be abided by, including tasks to keep multiple records. The CLC already has various tasks, and the additional duties with fewer resources can add more burden unless there is some resource-wise relief. Systematic exclusion and favoritism are barriers that, in the long run, ruin the pursuit of social justice. Hence, monitoring and evaluation can be instrumental in establishing accountability among various stakeholders.

Positive Changes

Along with the challenges, participants shared determination, good practices and plans that could help in the execution of SCE policies in Nepal.

Though there are no dedicated programs for senior citizen education, some are looking for ways to introduce skill development classes. Like Bhrikuti shared, *in the absence of a budget, we do not have a skill development class now, but we have a target to do it next year.*

Prithvi indicated a paradigm shift in the context of senior citizen education: *If you look at past non-formal education, it was mainly concerned with senior literacy; now it has broadened. It is going to be about non-formal and alternative learning.*

Relating again to the CLC as an implementation partner in previous narratives, Balabhadra also shared that more CLCs are being initiated in Kathmandu. Balabhadra shared: *Through CLCs, there are programs, i.e., awareness, bhalakusari (conversation), and skill development, where senior citizens are indulged; also, there are programs for sharing their experience.* Although the CLC is not necessarily concerned with SCE, there is no denying that educational programs have been helpful for seniors.

In previous narratives, Prithvi shared the effort of the CEHRD to prepare different reading materials for adults, whereas in the past, it was the same for children and adults. This development was also evidenced in Buddha's narrative. He even appreciated the other moves of CHERD as he pointed out: *It has good arrangements, as the seniors who have studied through informal education, too, can get certificates like SEE, which is very good.* Regarding the positive initiatives, Buddha did not seem concerned only about senior citizens' literacy, but

he had more plans. He mentioned that: *Most probably, we will start a post-literacy class of three months and fully develop it.*

The CLC seemed to introduce a variety of programs for the learners. For example, Buddha shared: *Since many people are going outside, we have been providing training under lifelong learning, i.e., plumber training. We are targeting different ones, weaving, beautician training, legal literacy, or health education.* He owed these programs to the provision of lifelong learning. In the previous narratives, the participants, i.e., Bhrikuti, Sita, Balabhadra, and Bhimsen, shared various programs run in the CLC and wards. However, apart from special literacy classes for senior citizens in a CLC, no program targets learning for senior citizens. Yet, even in the lack of a specific curriculum, the variety of programs being included under lifelong learning could be considered a beginning point that appreciates the diverse learning needs of diverse learners.

It was discovered that the service providers were trying to learn from the improvisers by learning from contemporary organizations. Buddha shared that: *We have been visiting various places for learning, i.e., we went to Sikharapur CLC last year, and this time, we are going to Panauti to observe the library as we want to establish a library soon.* Amshuverma, supporting this growth mentality of the organization, pointed out:

Some are doing well, too; they are self-sustaining, have a source of income, and can channel the international community and donors. I suggest you look at Sikharapur CLC in Dakchinkali. It can be said that they are the best nationwide and are inspirational.

The proof of this was even shared in the writings of authors who mention that now the community has access to opportunities for lifelong learning and continuing education, thanks to the foundational infrastructure that Sikharapur CLC has built for open and distance learning (Sharma, 2015). Here, I remembered how Amshuverma pointed out that the Japanese traditional system, i.e., Kominikan, still serves as an educational platform for intergenerational learning. And somewhere we have forgotten the existence of Nepalese concepts like *Chautari*, serving as an open discussion platform mostly for senior citizens. Hence, understanding other educational traditions acts as a transformative crossing that deepens and renews our understanding of our educational heritage (Reagan, 2018).

Sita also explained the role of seniors in the protection of the culture. As she said:

In our Newari Culture, there is a function for small girls called Ihi, and there is a gufa where the girls are kept in the house for 12 days. Since it is now not possible to take leave from school for 12 days, parents also have to go to work, and most live in single-family homes, the function is completed in 3 days under the guidance of senior citizens. This practice has attracted people from various districts.

Regmi (2020) highlights that the benefits of lifelong learning are not acknowledged in Nepal, where informal education, including Indigenous knowledge and skills, needs contextual understanding. Though these efforts do not address senior citizens' learning needs, they appreciate seniors' cultural and traditional knowledge, reminding them that the learning can be mutual, where CLC can act as an intergenerational learning hub.

Amshuverma, in previous narratives, applauded the coordination between the ministry and UNESCO. Buddha, in his narratives, time and again appreciated CHERD and its effort to support CLC. Although there were bad experiences of stakeholders during collaboration, i.e., sometimes CLCs were indifferent towards their duties, and at times CLCs were misjudged. However, certain sparks of coordination could be noticed among the stakeholders. For example, *Buddha pointed out that I have not had much help from the ward, but the municipality has been helpful.*

In brief, despite all the challenges in the policy implementation, the participants shared some positive changes, aspirations and good practices down the line. Maybe not exactly as a fundamental right, but these practices appear in tandem with the directive principles and state policies tilted towards senior citizen education. These steps can be instrumental in making learning accessible and attainable. The realization of the need for assessment is also a positive move that addresses the distinctive learning needs and capacities of senior citizens. These positive changes could serve as an example of good practices to resolve the implementation issues identified by the participants and, hopefully, a step towards senior citizen education rather than making it a part of lifelong learning.

Battling the Challenges

While talking with the participants, I thought that whenever we talk about any policy implementation, we discuss challenges and rarely discuss ways to tackle them. Meanwhile, reading the narratives, I found that the participants not only discussed problems but also appreciated positive steps and provided suggestions for battling the challenges in policy implementation related to senior citizen education.

Talking specifically about implementation, Amshuverma said that: *Talking in terms of implementation challenges, one starts with law, then resources, and then ownership of local governance. Since the private sector has invested well in formal education, local governance could look after non-formal education.* The issues in ownership were pointed out by other participants too, i.e., Buddha, appreciating the support received, had suggestions on what could make it better to make governance robust. He pointed:

In some municipalities, there are officers from the district education; hence, the situation is good, but in some municipalities, the people do not have an idea about the importance of CLC. It would be great if the ministry could have a different department for CLC and lifelong learning. Previously, there was a non-formal education center, and now it has been merged into CEHRD as a department. I feel the government has taken a step back.

The participants suggested or insisted on having strong regulations, monitoring, and, most importantly, a guiding government agency for senior citizen education.

The participants pointed out various issues in resources and resource management. However, they had a plethora of ideas to resolve it. For example, talking about financial resources, Amshuverma suggested that *budget management isn't a complicated issue, and it can be represented in the nagarsabha (municipal assembly).* The government, opposition, bureaucrats, and civil society need to be active. Buddha had a similar opinion as he pointed out: *The government does not provide full donations to CLC, as it is under the PPP model. Additionally, Buddha insisted: Rather than providing those shawls, I feel it's important to give what they need, and shall be in tandem with time, i.e., sometimes taking them for a visit, as it*

is difficult for them to travel because of health. Buddha pointed out the need for assessment as one of the measures to properly utilize the resources.

Again, in relation to the context of the CLC, they have been considered a forum to preserve the ideas of senior citizens. For example, Amshuverma said that *the CLC shall be a meeting point for both young and senior citizens.* His idea was basically about the transfer of ideas from one generation to another. It could be vice versa, too, thinking in favor of senior citizens.

Some also pointed out the role and significance of family in providing education to senior citizens, i.e., Buddha shared that *some of the wards in Bhaktapur are fully literate because their graduate children taught the parents.* Similarly, Amshuverma also shared the importance of engaging elderly women:

There are communities where women are less engaged in financial activities. If training programs could be arranged for them, it could impact family literacy. If they become able, their children can support them, and as a result, their home environment, income and lifestyle would be sustainable. This is very crucial for the transformation.

The learning opportunities improve the learning capacity, create financial opportunities, and ultimately improve the standard of living by bringing knowledge to the family.

After reading all the participants' narrations, I felt that various causes are barriers to implementing policies concerning senior citizens. The recognition of education as a fundamental right and an urgent need demands awareness and advocacy. Social justice envisions a society with access to and implementation of rights, where the barriers to implementation are discussed and addressed. However, all stakeholders must work closely together to address these issues, making them manageable and solvable.

Chapter Summary

To recapitulate the statements from the participants, show positive changes and aspirations despite challenges to implementing senior citizen education. The participants acknowledged learning for senior citizens as a necessity rather than their fundamental human and constitutional right. The stakeholders emphasized the need for practical programs, i.e., technical literacy, income generation activities, and health orientation, which address their distinctive learning needs and are a part of lifelong learning. The participants acknowledged various barriers; it was

believed that the issues could be resolved with coordination from all stakeholders. Talking about senior citizen education and policies concerning the implementation of these policies, the participants believed that the overall well-being of senior citizens and the ultimate measure must be to achieve social justice for senior citizens.

CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study includes the major findings and the discussion based on those findings. The study aimed to know about the policies concerned with senior citizen education in Nepal and then critically evaluate them through narratives of people involved in implementing those policies. While going through narratives and field notes, I was glad to find new additional information that complemented the literature review.

While going through the literature, I found that Acharya et al. (2023) used the narrative inquiry in a study that involved the concern related to senior citizens. He elevated individual tales and gave a chance to the voiceless to be heard in the policy formulation process. Furthermore, the author appreciated it for understanding and guiding policymakers to identify gaps and mismatches between policy and lived experience, as well as addressing socio-cultural biases. Hence, I felt the narrative analysis was relevant to explore the experiences of senior citizen education, as my research revolved around the policies. The research participants were also an aid for exploring the policies, as their narrations revealed the policies that I had missed during my policy review. Participants not only shared the challenges related to the execution of senior citizen education in Nepal but also highlighted the stakeholders involved and provided positive examples and ways forward.

Additionally, the human rights approach, social justice theory and distinctive learning theory aided in critically analyzing the narrations. Despite that, all participants involved in this research were from various levels of governance and different families and educational backgrounds. Some common patterns could be noticed in their answers. The literature review, my observation and narratives collectively provided information, which I have summed up as the key findings, and I have shared the discussion based on those findings.

Policies Overlook Senior Citizens as Resourceful Contributors to Society

The policies fail to address the fact that senior citizens are resourceful, social, cultural, and financial capital. If given further educational opportunities, they can influence local-level decision-making.

The policies miss the fact that senior citizens have vast cultural and social significance, making them a distinct set of learners

The cultural and social advantages of educating senior citizens were discussed, with Mercken (2004, as cited in Manuel and Mollón, 2014) noting the benefits, such as sharing life experiences, volunteering, and preserving cultural traditions. A practical example was provided by Sita, who shared how senior citizens played a key role in protecting the Newari culture through rituals for young girls. Manuel and Mollón (2014) further highlighted that those seniors are invaluable to society with their deep wisdom and life experiences. Similarly, Tam (2014) insisted that educational programs for seniors should respect their age and experiences, helping them overcome age-related challenges and allowing them to continue contributing to society. Hence, the educational opportunities that value, acknowledge and blend senior citizens' cultural and social significance, acknowledging them as distinct sets of learners rather than generally dividing them as adults, can be an asset to the nation.

The narratives of participants and the literature both hinted at the importance of senior citizens and discussed inspirational and progressive ideas to include them in inter-generational sharing. Though some policies, i.e., standards to manage CLC, had aspirations to address the cultural and social significance of senior citizens, the absence of policies with proper procedural guidance is a concern.

Most policies miss lifelong learning as an important element of social justice for senior citizens

Education for seniors is beneficial for the individuals and a matter of social justice, as highlighted by Y. Klergk (2000, as cited in Taziev, 2015), who praised the Dutch approach where senior citizens are active participants in education. This aligns with the findings of Dench and Regan (2000, as cited in Jun & Evans, 2014), who found that learning in later life promotes an active lifestyle and community involvement. Participants like Amshuverma, Janak, and Buddha advocated learning opportunities for seniors since learning is a continuous process. The National Human Rights Commission, Nepal (2020) also insists that a human rights approach to education can promote sustainable growth, stable employment, and active participation of disadvantaged groups, including seniors, in society. Requiring that the aspirations regarding lifelong learning mentioned in the various

policies be fulfilled procedurally, too. Though the substantive laws of Nepal progressively address lifelong learning, the procedural guidance for the same is missing. Discussing it in line with a human rights-based approach from the aspect of accessibility, a few new procedural laws, i.e., standards to manage CLCs, have procedural guidance to include lifelong learning, yet the lack of training, ideas and budget on the same is creating challenges for its implementation in units like CLC.

Policies concerned with senior citizen education lack direction for the future

Despite the numerous benefits of education for seniors, the challenges remain, i.e., lack of educational and career opportunities can lead to financial dependence, a decline in quality of life, and limited prospects for the elderly (Risal et al., 2020, as cited in Acharya et al., 2023). Practical examples from Amshuverma, Sita, and Bhrikuti highlighted the need for specific educational activities, such as learning English, using technology, and generating income. However, as Bass (1986, as cited in Tam, 2014) noted, despite the ideas for intergenerational learning, there is a lack of substantive programs to support these initiatives. As mentioned by Saibule (2019), the state must invest in education for seniors to make their lives safer and more fulfilling, as education and lifelong learning are now essential for adapting to changing world requirements (Manuel and Mollón, 2014). This underscores the need for pre-planning and resource management to meet the distinctive learning needs of senior citizens, ensuring their contributions to society are noticed and valued.

Groombridge (1982), as cited in Swindell & Thompson (1995), underscored the importance of education in later life for the elderly, society, and policymakers. He made the case that education strengthens contributions, lowers resource demands, copes with issues, encourages self-awareness, and helps lessen the dependence on the government. Despite the progressive realization, the greying population and change in the migration trend, the government still seems indifferent towards the learning needs of senior citizens. On a positive note, the amendment to the Senior Citizens Act makes an impression by calling on local governance to have more seminars and discussions on the various aspects related to senior citizens, but the lack of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the impact of these programs is a major fallout.

Buddha mentioned that apart from formal schooling, the various groups, i.e., the farmer's group, library, savings group, women's group, and a group of

people whose jankhu rites had been performed, could be used as a platform regarding senior citizens. However, apart from Buddha, none of the other respondents discussed how the various groups could serve as platforms for senior citizen education.

Discussing from the perspective of distinctive learning theory, it strongly emphasizes the various learning requirements and experiences that distinct groups, especially senior citizens, have. It implies that offering seniors individualized learning opportunities can help them reach their full potential and have an impact on local governance procedures. Similarly, the Human rights-based approach advocates that those seniors should be recognized and given opportunities to contribute to society. Furthermore, it promotes inclusive platforms for senior citizens' voices and works to eliminate obstacles like ageism. Finally, the idea that elders should have equal access to participation and that their contributions should be valued on par with those of younger generations is supported by social justice theory. To promote equity and a more inclusive and just society, it is important to ensure that seniors have a voice in local governance.

Educational policies keep senior citizens in the shadows

Senior citizens are viewed as an 'unproductive population,' leading to education policies, institutions, and practices that focus on children, making senior citizens the lowest priority.

Policies and programs in Nepal undermine the distinct learning needs of senior citizens

The study reveals that policies and governance mechanisms fail to adequately recognize and address senior citizens' distinct educational needs. Senior citizens are often viewed as sources of knowledge rather than as individuals with distinct educational rights. This is evident from the frustration and dissatisfaction expressed by senior learners, as well as the lack of advocacy from stakeholders who should be supporting senior education. Some participants, i.e., Sita and Pasang, believed that seniors do not need educational programs as they are a source of knowledge themselves. But again, contrasting with their statements, they insisted on the importance of health orientation and digital literacy. Purdie & Boulton-Lewis (2003) highlight that older adults have distinct learning needs, such as understanding digital financial management, which is often overlooked. Mittal (2020) emphasizes that in India, senior citizens are encouraged to pursue education

for personal enrichment, which can enhance their quality of life in a rapidly evolving technological world.

One of the officers pointed out that the municipality had organized a sports-related program for citizens above 40+, but the program did not have substantive participants. Here, I could not help but analyze that the program that is done without the assessment of need and interest cannot bear much fruit and achieve the goals of social justice. In the suburban area where literacy for those 60 and above is still a concern and is going to face challenges with advancement in technology, I felt as a researcher that educational programs that demand less physical effort can be a better idea than sports programs. This is also attributable to societal changes as the emergence of an "information society" necessitates a shift from basic literacy to lifelong learning, enabling individuals to acquire knowledge throughout their lives (Manuel and Mollón, 2014). From physical health to social conditioning, the senior citizens in Nepal have distinct circumstances, making them a distinct set of learners for reference. The participants in the FDG repeatedly mentioned that their willingness to learn was heavily impacted by the loss of memory, household tasks and health issues. Hence, viewing from the lens of distinctive learning theory, the policies and implementers of those policies need to be mindful that senior citizens are distinct learners with different learning circumstances and capacities.

Evolving needs of senior citizens are not acknowledged by the policies

The study points out that the educational needs of senior citizens are evolving due to rapid changes in ICT, migration trends, and demographics. However, current policies fail to adapt to these changes, leaving seniors vulnerable to the digital divide, which could lead to loneliness and dissatisfaction. Pradhan (2023) noted that by 2050, the well-being of senior citizens will increasingly depend on digital technology, and those without access may face significant challenges. Additionally, the lack of programs that address the evolving needs of senior citizens and the growing digital divide can be a major hindrance to achieving the goals of social justice.

Here, I could not help but note that participants have repeatedly mentioned that the need for literacy has been surpassed by functional literacy, i.e., the beneficiaries Pasang appreciated the skill development classes from CLC but were unable to open business in lack of the procedural guidance for same, and the

respondents from FGD wished there were classes on skill development that would aid them financially. Also, the narratives of the stakeholders pointing to the absence of male learners hint that male senior learners need to update themselves, and the forums shall address their needs. In addition to that, the stakeholders criticized the declaration of literacy, especially those working in local governance, for missing the literacy needs of the migrating population and senior citizens. From the social justice perspective, it is tragic to witness that, to date, most policies observe senior citizens as the beneficiaries of basic literacy programs in the era where internet access is being argued as a basic human right.

Educational rights of senior citizens are neglected by the policies

The narratives hinted that the policies fail to address the importance of education for senior citizens, despite their significant impact on their quality of life and societal contributions. Various research participants, including Janak, Amshuverma, and Prithvi, emphasized that education enhances seniors' quality of life and contributes to national success. According to Manuel and Mollón (2014), education equips seniors with new abilities, attitudes, and skills, such as self-discovery and social support, which are crucial for maintaining or improving their quality of life. Similarly, Jost (2016, as cited in Dangal & Khanal, 2019) highlighted the role of education in equipping seniors with relevant skills for daily life.

The participants' narratives underscored that learning opportunities for seniors enhance learning capacity, create financial opportunities, and improve their standard of living. For instance, Pasang, a senior citizen, shared how she learned about controlling communicable diseases through health training at a CLC. This aligns with the findings of Geriatric Centre Nepal (2010), which reported similar efforts in various countries to make basic health education more accessible to older people by partnering with neighborhood healthcare providers.

Despite such evidence, national policies related to education largely neglect senior citizens as vital stakeholders. These policies often limit their focus to literacy programs, overlooking the broader educational needs of seniors. Prithvi noted that literacy programs primarily target the 15-60 age group, with little effort to include those above this age. This neglect creates barriers to functional literacy in areas like technology, legal, and financial literacy, ultimately contributing to social injustice and undermining their fundamental rights.

From an HRBA, education is a fundamental right for all, including senior citizens. Various international human rights instruments, researchers, and study participants advocated for the multidimensional benefits of education for seniors.

Groombridge (1982), as cited in Swindell & Thompson (1995), stressed the importance of education in later life, noting that it strengthens societal contributions, lowers resource demands, and helps seniors cope with challenges, thereby reducing their reliance on government support. Lifelong learning institutions, such as CLCs, offer seniors creative opportunities, social environments, and outreach programs, which further highlight the need for inclusive educational policies.

Programs like EFA aim to ensure access to quality education for everyone, yet they fail to recognize and address the distinct learning needs of senior citizens. This oversight neglects their fundamental rights and excludes them from programs designed to promote literacy and education, focusing instead on younger age groups. To address this gap, policies must prioritize the educational needs of senior citizens, ensuring their inclusion as key stakeholders in literacy and educational programs. Recognizing education as a fundamental right is essential to achieving social justice and empowering seniors to contribute meaningfully to society.

Implementation of senior citizen education programs is inadequate

The study criticizes the implementation of senior citizen education programs, noting that they often lack proper need assessments, leading to ineffective outcomes. As suggested by Prithvi, programs are frequently tilted towards children and formal education, with little attention given to senior citizens. Discussing in line with Reagan (2018), SCE is a particularly non-formal and experiential learning method for older adults, which is frequently overlooked due to its misalignment with traditional, literacy-focused definitions of education. Hence, it is necessary to advocate for a wider, more inclusive perspective on educational practices. Manuel and Mollón (2014) argued that senior education should offer a wide range of options and opportunities, emphasizing lifelong learning.

Surprisingly, during the research, I realized that senior citizens and education are cross-cutting themes that can be addressed by the policies made in either sector to empower senior citizens. Unfortunately, policies made in both sectors fail to do justice because education for senior citizens is a fundamental human right and, most importantly, a need of the hour. The lack of equitable

distribution of educational opportunities to senior citizens also misses out on the opportunity to empower them to realize the principles of social justice.

The human rights-based approach (HRBA) asserts that every individual, regardless of age, has the right to education, including senior citizens. The study reveals that current educational policies in Nepal neglect the rights of senior citizens by not prioritizing their inclusion in literacy and lifelong learning programs. As a critical interpretivist, I also focused on understanding the power dynamics and social constructs that shape policy decisions and practices. Here, I felt that the lack of clear and coherent policies for senior citizen education in Nepal can reflect broader societal attitudes that devalue the contributions and distinct needs of older adults. The conflation of senior citizen education with lifelong learning can obscure the specific needs of senior learners, leading to policy gaps. Also, distinctive learning theory suggests that older adults need specific educational programs tailored to their evolving needs, such as digital literacy, financial management, and health education.

In a nutshell, the marginalization of senior citizens in educational policies reflects broader societal inequity, with the focus on younger populations contributing to social injustice. Social justice theory advocates that those policies must be reformed to ensure equal access to educational opportunities for senior citizens, enabling them to live with dignity and independence. The findings of the study call for a national policy to address these issues, informed by the voices and experiences of senior citizens, ensuring their perspectives are central to the decision-making process.

Unclear Policy Guidance on Senior Citizen Education

Policies and guidelines related to senior citizens in Nepal are scattered, and therefore, they fail to provide clear guidance to the federal, provincial and local level governments to provide the right to access quality and relevant adult education for senior citizens.

A. Lack of Specific Policy Addressing the Educational Rights of Senior Citizens

After the policy review and literature review, I had a clearer idea about the policy concerning education in the context of senior citizens. While I was trying to connect the dots, I realized that, as identified by Karki (2023), there is no policy identifying the needs, desires, interests and abilities of senior citizens. Discussing in nexus with Nepal's constitution, it guarantees every citizen a fundamental right

to education, aiming to develop human resources, empower individuals, and reduce hunger and poverty, thereby promoting sustainable development (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). Yet, the absence of a policy addressing the concern substantially, the lack of procedural measures to access the right, the plan of action missing an educational angle and the lack of ownership regarding the programs hints that Nepal not only lacks education programs in the context but also lacks entire direction in the subject matter.

The distinctive learning theory advocates that it is vital to address the unique learning abilities, needs and styles of learners to achieve educational goals (Tam, 2014). The participants working at the central level criticized the lack of curriculum and definition of substantive core ideas related to senior citizen education, i.e., lifelong learning. Ensuring that senior citizens have equitable access to educational opportunities is a necessary part of acknowledging senior citizen education as a human and fundamental right based on HRBA.

Educational Policies Concerned with Senior Citizens are Scattered

As mentioned above, no particular policy concerns senior citizens' educational opportunities. Nepal has implemented policies and programs to recognize and benefit older adults, focusing on economic support, health needs, biological decline, and disability (Tausig & Subedi, 2022). However, the policies have not been generous when addressing senior citizens' educational concerns.

However, viewing it from the other angle, educational rights are based on human and constitutional rights, followed by policies, acts, rules, regulations, guidelines and action programs. Ghimire (2021) also pointed out that despite increasing senior citizen populations, adequate programs and resources for senior citizens are scattered, and the act on senior citizens needs an amendment to align with the federal system. Additionally, it was sad to witness that only a few participants working as stakeholders in implementing these policies were aware of the educational rights scattered throughout them.

Scattered Laws Lack Clear Procedures Regarding Educational Activities

Even in the event of scattered laws, there is ample scope for stakeholders to create programs for senior citizens, as the policies in Nepal progressively hint towards the inclusion of senior citizens in educational activities through the means of lifelong learning. Many participants in the FGD also shared the plight that despite the ability to share the learning among peers, the lack of substantive

guidance to do so has not promoted the peer learning trend. Apart from that, even the procedure for the transfer of knowledge and skills mentioned is unclear, and coordination for long-term plans is lacking (Ghimire, 2021). Addressing the educational needs of senior citizens enhances their chances to keep growing, learning, and contributing, ultimately advancing social justice for all.

Somewhere, I agree that though not interchangeable, lifelong learning is a part of senior citizen education and while interpreting the participants' stories, I found that despite its gradual introduction and realization of its importance, it has not been that effective. The findings indicated that the guidelines related to CLC management outlined activities related to functional literacy, making it an important unit in the implementation of senior citizen education. However, participants like Bhrikuti, Sita, Janak and Amshuverma pointed out the lacunas in making literacy functional.

Viewed from the lens of social justice, although Nepal has taken steps to acknowledge the rights of senior citizens, ongoing discrimination, inequality, and inefficient policies impede development (Tausig & Subedi, 2022). The MIPPA country report suggests that the Government of Nepal should address the under-representation of senior citizens in society by developing policies, strategies, and initiatives for quality of life. Dahal (2023) suggested that a national policy must be decided upon quickly to address the issue of senior citizens. A separate policy to address the educational needs of senior citizens might not be necessary, but it is unfortunate that neither the policy related to senior citizens, i.e., the Senior Citizen Act, addresses it well, nor does the education policy address the distinct learning needs of senior citizens. This ultimately questions the progressive realization of the implementation of human rights and principles of social justice enshrined in our constitution.

Policies Concerned with the Educational Rights of Senior Citizens are Tilted towards Lifelong Learning.

The literature and participant narratives consistently reveal that terms like senior citizen education, lifelong learning, and adult education are often used interchangeably and perceived as the same concept. However, this understanding overlooks crucial distinctions. Regmi (2020) describes lifelong learning as learning from infancy to death, encompassing various forms like adult learning, recurrent education, and continuing education, though its meaning varies by context (Regmi,

2020). It is a relatively new term in educational policy, emphasizing the development of human capital over traditional educational methods, with a focus on social justice, equality, and personal growth (Edwards, 2008, as cited in Regmi, 2020).

Dulal (2022) suggested that adult literacy programs should include practical topics such as financial literacy and social welfare, while Regmi (2020) distinguished adult learning as self-initiated. In contrast, adult education is more structured and government-supervised. After reviewing the literature and participant narratives, it becomes clear that senior citizen education should be viewed as a distinct concept focused on continuous, relevant, and quality education tailored to the specific needs of senior citizens. The tendency to use it interchangeably with lifelong learning and adult education is problematic, as it fails to address the distinct circumstances of senior learners.

While lifelong learning often involves less structured and cognitive non-formal and informal learning, senior citizen education can also encompass structured formal education (Regmi, 2020). Manuel and Mollón (2014) argued that while part of lifelong learning, senior education is distinct, blending formal and informal learning to foster participation and self-improvement among seniors based on their interests.

From a human rights perspective, both lifelong learning and senior citizen education are rights; however, using them interchangeably misses critical aspects. Senior citizen education is not just another form of lifelong learning; it addresses the distinct learning needs of seniors, which differ from those of school dropouts or illiterate adults. From a social justice perspective, senior citizen education requires a broader framework than what is provided by community learning centres (CLCs) alone, particularly in Nepal. Hence, it is vital to have clear, substantial law and procedural guidance that acknowledges senior citizens' educational rights and needs.

Challenge for Implementation of Senior Citizen Education: Gap in Policy and Practice

Existing policies concerned with educational rights and educational opportunities for senior citizens primarily focus on basic literacy over functional literacy and relevant programs. This results in a lack of structured education and lifelong learning programs for seniors, addressing their needs.

A. The Policies Related to Senior Citizen Education Fail to Address the Various Elements of the Right to Education.

The right to education, as outlined in the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), includes several essential elements: availability, accessibility, acceptability, and adaptability, covering primary, secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education (NHRC, 2020). However, when these elements are applied to the context of senior citizens in Nepal, they often fall short of meeting the required criteria.

Availability: Globally, dedicated systems, syllabi, and modalities exist for senior citizen education. For example, special education programs for seniors are being developed in Europe and America, with universities catering to the "third age" group (Taziev, 2015). Similarly, the University of the Third Age (U3A) discussed in the background of the study operates in two models: the French model, which requires university affiliations, and the British model, which relies on self-help and minimal external assistance (Swindell & Thompson, 1995). While adult education institutions offer various courses for seniors, including philosophy and social science (Manuel & Mollón, 2014), there is a lack of tailored courses specifically designed for senior learners in Nepal, as emphasized by Amshuverma. Yang and Hung (2015) stressed the importance of course designs for lifelong learning, suggesting that content should be relevant to seniors' needs and delivered through appropriate tools and environments. Most of the participants in the study pointed out the absence of programs catering to the educational needs of senior citizens. Viewing it from a distinctive learning theory, the absence of structured programs failing to address senior citizens' distinct learning abilities and circumstances contributes to their marginalization, contributing to social injustice.

Accessibility: Accessibility remains a significant challenge, as highlighted by Bhrikuti and Buddha. Bhrikuti mentioned that many interested senior learners could not participate in literacy programs due to a lack of space and distance. Buddha shared an example of an elderly woman who broke her leg while trying to attend a literacy class during adverse weather conditions, illustrating the physical and logistical barriers seniors face. Here, I could not help but remember that education for senior citizens is something that the entire community should consider seriously (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). With growing age, not only does the learning capacity of a senior citizen but also their physical health gets

compromised. Viewing it from a distinctive learning theory, every learner has unique circumstances along with their capacity. Hence, advocating for any rights from the HRBA perspective stresses not only the availability of the rights but also their accessibility.

Acceptability: This element focuses on ensuring that educational activities are tailored to the target population. Manuel and Mollón (2014) emphasized the need to consider who, what, why, and how educational activities are organized to ensure effective communication and appropriate methods. However, the findings of the study suggest that existing literacy programs do not prioritize senior citizens' educational needs, and facilitators often lack the funds, training, and guidelines necessary to address these needs.

Adaptability: For seniors to continue learning throughout their lives, professional educators with knowledge of gerontology and a positive view of ageing are crucial (Manuel & Mollón, 2014). Tam (2014) further argued for Critical Educational Gerontology (CEG), which emphasizes knowledge, power, and control, and advocates for open communication and action-based theory to support senior learning. The NHRC (2020) underscores that the right to education includes the duty to prevent discrimination and ensure adequate development in moral, social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions.

The current focus of Nepal's literacy initiatives primarily targets the 15-60 age groups, neglecting the unique needs of senior learners. Although the government's plan to include those aged 60+ in future literacy programs is a step forward, it fails to address the distinctive challenges faced by seniors due to their age. Furthermore, many senior citizens are unaware of their educational rights, governance structures, and grievance-handling mechanisms, limiting their ability to exercise these rights (NHRC, 2020). Education for senior citizens is not only a legal and constitutional right but also a fundamental human right protected by various human rights instruments, and its implementation is crucial for achieving social justice.

Viewed from the HRBA, the policies that fail to address the elements of the right to education, such as availability, accessibility, and adaptability, cannot fully realise this right. As the NHRC (2020) pointed out, the right to education must be upheld and realised in all these aspects, making it necessary to incorporate these elements into indicators that measure adherence to these commitments.

B. Literacy is a persistent challenge in both rural and urban areas.

Adult education in Nepal has historically focused on rural development, but this goal has been largely neglected by the government and the educational system (Tausig & Subedi, 2022). The narratives of both beneficiaries and stakeholders highlight a significant lack of attention to functional literacy programs, which urban senior citizens equally need. Stakeholders like Bhrikuti, Sita, and Amshuverma, along with FGD participants, emphasized the need for skill development classes and additional resources to support the distinct learning needs of these learners.

Literacy remains a major concern for senior citizens in Nepal, with many still not literate despite government efforts. Participants like Bhimsen, Balabhadra, and Sita pointed out that even in areas declared literate, many senior citizens, particularly women and migrant populations, remain illiterate. Manuel and Mollón (2014) underscored that lifelong learning is a right for everyone, especially for rural elderly populations who face significant barriers to accessing such programs. Most importantly, I felt it was alarming that concerns were also raised about the accuracy of literacy data, given that the 2078 census showed a decline in literacy rates, suggesting that demographic changes might be influencing these statistics (Jun & Evans, 2014). Hence, viewing from HRBA rural or urban, it is the right of every person to have access to basic human rights, i.e., education, helping in truly achieving the goals set in the global agendas, i.e., EFA and SDGS.

Concept of Literacy Needs to Be Expanded to Functional Literacy.

Despite the focus on basic literacy, there is a growing recognition that it is insufficient to match the concept of the right to education in the current era. Participants like Bhimsen and Buddha stressed the importance of digital literacy for senior citizens, advocating for post-literacy programs and lifelong learning opportunities that include mobile and computer use, basic health knowledge, and intergenerational connections. The concept of non-formal education has expanded to include technological literacy, which is now seen as essential. As learners age, they face unique challenges that require tailored educational approaches (Tam, 2014).

Migration has also impacted the learning needs of senior citizens, with many expressing a desire to travel abroad to visit their children, which underscores the importance of functional literacy. This type of literacy goes beyond basic

reading and writing, including technical education, such as using digital devices. Bhimsen suggested that CLCs could run skill and technology-based programs tailored for senior citizens, helping them connect their knowledge and experience with earning opportunities. Such initiatives could be instrumental in ensuring their educational rights are met regardless of age, ultimately achieving true social justice for senior citizens enshrined in the constitutional provisions.

Policies Need Amendment Based on Need Assessment and Focus on Implementation

The narratives of participants emphasize the critical need to address senior citizen education in the context of population changes, technological advancements, and the broader national interest. Tam (2014) noted that older learners have unique needs that require education that considers advanced age, life experiences, and effective teacher-student communication. FDGs highlighted barriers like pandemics, hunger, and inadequate healthcare, aligning with Manuel and Mollón's (2014) finding that while lifelong learning is possible at any age, health risks can diminish motivation. Gender disparities in literacy further complicate the issue, with male learners feeling out of place in female-dominated classes (Dangal & Khanal, 2019). The participants also expressed concerns about the lack of programs tailored to seniors' needs, such as technology classes and day-care centres.

Financial constraints add another layer of difficulty; the participants from the FGD pointed out that many learners are not willing to join CLCs, as one now needs to pay for education. Though the national policies advocate the right to basic education, the formalities, i.e., fees, can be a learning barrier for senior citizens who lack a source of income, defying the principles of social justice. Some participants criticized programs focused on material distribution without proper need assessments, emphasizing the importance of functional literacy for seniors (Manuel & Mollón, 2014). Acharya et al. (2023) pointed out that despite the Citizen Act of 2006 addressing senior citizens' concerns, there is a significant policy gap between state intervention and the actual needs of senior citizens. They recommended qualitative research and policy review to bridge this gap. Additionally, the studies suggested that cross-cultural research is essential for understanding the changing learning circumstances of senior citizens (UNESCO, 2010, as cited in Jun & Evans, 2014).

Discussing in tandem with distinctive learning theory, tailoring educational programs to meet seniors' specific needs and preferences is crucial for creating an inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment that advances social justice.

The social justice theory, critical interpretive paradigm, and distinctive learning theory all emphasize the need for equitable access to resources and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of age. In Nepal, the current policies fail to meet the specific needs of older adults, resulting in social injustice and marginalization. The emphasis on functional and technological literacy is crucial for seniors to promote equality and empower them to participate fully in society. The distinctive learning theory emphasizes the unique needs of seniors based on their life stages, experiences, and contexts. In Nepal, the absence of tailored courses and the failure to create a learning environment that supports their distinctive needs highlight gaps in current policies and programs. The human rights-based approach highlights the state's obligation to ensure education is available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable for everyone, as outlined in the ICESCR. The lack of awareness among senior citizens about their educational rights further exacerbates the issue. To achieve social justice and uphold the human rights of senior citizens, it is essential to develop and implement educational programs tailored to their distinctive needs, informed by their experiences, and supported by a coherent and inclusive policy framework.

Uncoordinated Governance and Systematic Challenges in Policy Implementation.

Weak cooperation and coordination among the three spheres of the Government: Central authorities struggle with coordination, local governance lacks dedicated programs and ownership, and NGOs and CBOs face issues with a lack of national standards. In addition to that, analyzing from the social justice theory, lack of accountability, systemic barriers, and family support serve as other challenges in the context of the execution of policies related to senior citizen education.

Central Level Struggles with the Horizontal and Vertical Coordination of Various Units Responsible for Implementing Senior Citizen Education.

The findings reveal that central organizations primarily focus on planning and resource allocation. Ram clarified that the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC) is responsible for financial implementation,

budgeting, and policy review. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), through the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), oversees lifelong learning and monitors CLCs.

The MoWCSC has made some progress in addressing senior citizens' needs, but it lacks substantive educational planning, whereas CEHRD is gradually improving the implementation of educational rights for seniors. Shrestha (2019) explained that different Ministries have sector-specific responsibilities, including policy development, program monitoring, and evaluation. However, a significant challenge is the lack of coordination among ministries involved in senior citizen education, including the health, agriculture, and home affairs ministries (Subba, 2021). The evidence was found in senior citizens' narratives highlighting the need for health-related education programs.

Despite CEHRD's efforts to certify informal education shared by the participants, the formal process has yet to begin. Buddha attributed this to a lack of understanding of lifelong learning within the bureaucracy, causing challenges for CLCs. Subba (2021) also highlighted the difficulty of aligning initiatives across different departments and levels of governance.

From the perspective of non-governmental organizations, Amshuverma criticized the government's lack of preparedness for informal education, a crucial aspect of senior citizen education. The central government's inefficiency in managing horizontal and vertical units creates hurdles in policy implementation. The political instability in Nepal further complicates coordination efforts. Manuel and Mollón (2014) stressed the importance of cooperation among stakeholders, including state and non-governmental organizations, to address the issues faced by senior citizens. The HRBA advocates for the recognition of rights in policies and access to the same. Since the central government is the one to make plans and disseminate the budget, a lack of vision and understanding of the distinct learning needs of senior citizens results in their being vital stakeholders in educational concerns. Despite these challenges, there are hopeful signs, such as MoEST's educational policies targeting CLCs, which are supported by UNESCO, as pointed out by Amshuverma. These positive practices can serve as examples of how to overcome coordination challenges in implementing senior citizen education. Furthermore, the central government, while lobbying for the policies and plan of

action for senior citizens, must evaluate the program from HRBA and see if it empowers the senior citizens, upholding the principle of social justice.

Local Government (Municipality and CLC) Lacks Dedicated Programs and Ownership of Such Dedicated Programs.

Local government lacks specific programs for senior citizens.

Despite the recognition of senior citizens' distinct learning needs, local governments, particularly municipalities and CLCs, have not developed dedicated educational programs for this demographic. Tragically, all the participants working in the municipality agreed that there are no dedicated programs for senior citizen education. Manuel and Mollón (2014) pointed out that rural senior citizens face greater barriers to accessing lifelong learning programs. The absence of such programs in suburban areas undermines the principles of social justice theory despite decentralization efforts intended to address local needs. Even though the policies now demarcate education as the subject matter to be governed by local government, the lack of acknowledgement of senior citizens as education stakeholders aids in social injustice.

Lack of Ownership of Existing Programs by Local Government

Local governance, described as the level of government closest to the people (Saibule, 2019), often fails to take ownership of existing educational programs. Participants, including Bhimsen, Amshuverma, and Janak, emphasized the importance of local governance in resource management and the need for community-based programs that are more accessible to senior citizens. The lack of functional CLCs and the indifference of various stakeholders negatively impact program monitoring and accountability, hindering the realization of social justice. The narratives of the stakeholders and the satirical remark about the presence of governments also point to the plight of the stakeholders and how the government has turned a blind eye to their distinctive needs and circumstances.

Local Government Fails to Recognize the Importance of CLCs

Despite being crucial for the implementation of educational programs for senior citizens, CLCs are often overlooked by formal educational structures. Falgunananda and Prithvi highlighted the role of CLCs as centres for peer learning and intergenerational knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the participants painted a picture of the interrelationship between literacy classes that have provided senior learners with awareness, conversational platforms, and skill development

opportunities, making CLCs central to informal education. The Ministry of Education's Master Plan on ICT (2017) recognized CLCs as vital for disseminating ICT knowledge within communities (MoE, 2013). CLCs go beyond basic literacy classes, targeting post-literacy and lifelong learning programs.

However, financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of support from local governance limit the effectiveness of CLCs. This is corroborated by Manuel and Mollón (2014), who note that similar institutions in Poland play a vital role in senior education. Financial difficulties faced by CLC were even confirmed by the senior learners in FGD, who expressed disappointment that the government could not provide enough salary for their facilitators. This fact could be corroborated in the study of UN DESA & DSPD (2010), which pointed to the lack of funding as one of the implementation challenges of senior citizen-related policies. The government's lack of resources and support further exacerbates these challenges, making it difficult for CLCs to fulfil their potential in promoting senior citizens' educational rights. Here, I felt that it is the primary duty of the government to support educational institutions, i.e., CLC, to help senior citizens who cannot afford education by providing grants, funds and scholarship opportunities in realizing and attaining social justice.

Overall, the study underscores the need for local government, which is the closest form of government to people, to prioritize the educational needs of senior citizens by identifying their distinct learning needs, then developing tailored programs, taking ownership of existing initiatives, and recognizing the critical role of CLCs in achieving these goals.

NGOs and CBOs Face Challenges with the Lack of National Standards.

The research findings highlight the supportive role of INGOs, NGOs, and CBOs in implementing senior citizen education policies in Nepal. The participants emphasized the significant contribution of INGOs, particularly UNESCO, in developing over 2,000 CLCs and promoting a shift from adult literacy to lifelong learning. This transition has been largely driven by UNESCO's guidelines, which have shaped various educational aspects in Nepal. Regmi (2020) supported this, stating that donor pressure and the need for competitiveness in developing countries have introduced lifelong learning as an SDG.

Viewed from HRBA, INGOs and NGOs have empowered senior citizens by increasing access to lifelong learning opportunities; the lack of national

standards has created confusion about the importance and structure of SCE in Nepal. This reliance on external concepts without thorough research underscores the need for local approaches to SCE. Despite the critical role of INGOs, the absence of national guidelines, curricula, and experts specific to senior citizen education remains a challenge. Additionally, development partners' focus on child-centric programs has led to a gap in addressing the needs of the growing senior population. Mittal (2020) argued that societies and governments must develop lifelong learning initiatives tailored to senior citizens, as they are an underutilized resource.

Despite these challenges, the study highlights successful local practices, such as the work of organizations like Sikharapur CLC, which have been praised for conducting lifelong learning programs. CBOs, including libraries, clubs, and Guthi, as well as NGOs like *Sewa-Sadan* and World Vision, have played crucial roles in strengthening CLCs and running non-formal and continuous learning programs focused on lifelong learning and technical education. However, viewing from a social justice angle, issues like favoritism in program implementation were also noted as a barrier.

Senior Citizens Lack Family Support, a Necessary Element to Achieve Educational Goals.

The narratives emphasize the critical but often overlooked role of children and families in the lives of senior citizens, particularly in their education and overall well-being. Manuel and Mollón (2014) argued that listening to seniors' personal stories is essential for understanding ageing, enhancing senior education, and developing effective lifelong learning strategies. Given the unique learning needs of senior citizens, recognizing the value of family support and including it in senior citizen education is crucial.

Subba (2021) highlighted how globalization has led to the migration of younger generations to developed nations, leaving senior citizens isolated and stressing the humane need for family involvement over government intervention. The involvement of children is especially important in assisting seniors, such as parents or grandparents, who may face difficulties accessing learning centres. Historical examples cited by Amshuverma, Bhimsen, and Janak illustrate the importance of family support in senior education, with Buddha attributing literacy success to children's support for their parents.

The narratives also reveal that senior citizens face unique challenges compared to other learners, such as health issues and limited learning abilities, supporting the distinctive learning theory. On a personal note, I recall assisting my grandmother while making telephone calls or reading the news. Chalise and Brightman (2006, as cited in Acharya et al., 2023) pointed out that the increasing elderly population in Nepal exacerbates the helplessness of senior citizens. Acharya et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of recognizing the role of children in enhancing the happiness and contentment of senior citizens. Young people can play a vital role by mentoring and teaching the elderly, particularly in technology (Landsberg, 2012, cited in Manuel & Mollón, 2014). Nepal's policies overlook families' crucial role in advocating for and implementing senior citizen education, which is a significant loss from a social justice perspective.

Systematic Exclusion and Excessive Formalities Create Learning Barriers for Senior Citizens

Participants like Bhimsen strongly criticized the uneven distribution of educational opportunities for senior citizens. He pointed out that substantive programs are lacking, and even programs like excursions, which could serve an educational purpose, are inaccessible to economically disadvantaged populations. Stakeholders from CLCs, such as Bhrikuti and Buddha, echoed similar concerns. They highlighted that excessive government formalities and requirements thwarted their plans to open formal schools for female learners from CLCs. Manuel and Mollón (2014) argued that the growing elderly population in towns and villages challenges social, political, and economic inclusion, necessitating effective strategies by local governments to prevent the marginalization of older adults. The social justice lens views this as a barrier to empowering senior citizens.

Acharya et al. (2023) emphasized that addressing ageing issues requires a deep understanding of senior citizens' perspectives and experiences. They argue that authorities should prioritize economic independence, kinship, health, and well-being in policy-making. The narratives of senior participants highlighted the government's lack of support in acknowledging, accommodating, and raising awareness about senior citizens. This reflects a broader indifference towards the elderly, particularly in the context of educational opportunities.

Sandra Cusack (2000) suggested that empowerment should be interpreted as providing power to senior citizens through policies and initiatives, which

requires research to ensure participation across different settings and cultures (Jun & Evans, 2014). During observations, it was noted that many senior learners experienced insecurity and inferiority complexes due to their lack of literacy. They expressed how even basic literacy programs empowered them by teaching them the alphabet and aspects of governance. This suggests that more educational opportunities, based on need assessments, could boost their confidence, employability, and independence.

Despite the potential benefits of educational programs for senior citizens, the narratives reveal a prevailing sense of favoritism and government indifference, especially post-election. This attitude undermines the goal of creating a socially just educational system, as the concerns and needs of senior citizens are often overlooked. The government's lack of proactive support and awareness-raising efforts further exacerbates the marginalization of senior citizens, quashing the dream of a truly inclusive educational system for all.

Need for an Accountability Mechanism to Implement Education for Senior Citizens.

There is no doubt that the human rights instruments, constitution, various national acts, policies and programs acknowledge senior citizen education directly or indirectly, but it all remains within the black and white letters of the law unless there are efforts from the implementation agencies. Though most national policies are child-centric and the education for senior citizens is mostly limited to literacy programs, it needs to be replaced with functional literacy. Most of the participants pointed out the lack of monitoring, evaluation and accountability in senior citizen education for the proper implementation of policies. The last takeaway from the story of the participants was that despite the positive changes in the application of senior citizen-related policies, there are many unaddressed concerns. The needs assessment is complementary to amendment, as by understanding the root cause, the government can develop effective policies and programs to support senior citizens (Shrestha & Dahal, 2007).

In a nutshell, HRBA stresses the importance of recognizing senior citizen education as a fundamental right, which requires effective accountability mechanisms to ensure the proper implementation of policies and programs. Viewing as a critical interpretivist, I attempted to understand the subjective experiences of various stakeholders. Here, I found that central and local

governance struggle with coordination, program ownership, and the involvement of multiple units, highlighting the complexity of implementing SCE. Similarly, distinctive learning theory underscores the unique educational needs of senior citizens, such as the necessity of family support and tailored programs that consider their specific challenges, like health issues and access difficulties. In addition, social justice theory criticizes the lack of equitable access to educational resources and opportunities, especially for rural and economically disadvantaged seniors, pointing to the need for more inclusive policies. The study strongly suggests that despite some progress, a more coordinated, inclusive, and rights-focused approach is necessary to achieve the educational goals of senior citizens in Nepal.

Chapter Summary

The research highlights the importance of tailored education for senior citizens, showcasing their role in society as key social, cultural, and financial contributors. It highlights the importance of education for seniors in enhancing their quality of life and promoting social justice. However, it notes that Nepal's current policies largely neglect their educational needs, focusing instead on younger generations. As a result, fewer programs fail to address essential areas like digital literacy and financial management. Senior citizens often face systemic barriers and a lack of family support; furthermore, the lack of national standards and coordination among central authorities further hinders the implementation of senior citizen education. This oversight leads to the marginalization of seniors, underscoring the need for a cohesive national policy that prioritizes their education, ensuring they are included in lifelong learning and recognized as equal contributors to social justice and community engagement.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION, REFLECTION AND IMPLICATION

The study explored the implementation challenges of the policies related to senior citizen education. Based on the literature review, experiences and narrative of both the beneficiaries and service providers, followed by my observation, I stand here with the following conclusions, reflection on my research journey and the future implications.

Conclusion

First and foremost, senior citizens are a vital resource with significant social, cultural, and financial capital, capable of influencing local decision-making when provided with opportunities. However, their potential is largely overlooked by the education system as they are perceived as an unproductive population, leading to educational policies that give importance to younger generations.

Education for senior citizens is essential, not just for personal enrichment but as a crucial aspect of social justice. It is vital for basic literacy, functional literacy, providing company, and addressing the needs and interests of the senior citizens, especially the rural elderly. Additionally, lifelong learning enables seniors to continue contributing to society and maintain their dignity. Senior citizen education not only addresses the needs and interests but also is fundamental and a human right recognized in various international treaty conventions, the constitution and legal provisions of Nepal.

Unfortunately, in Nepal, current policies fail to recognize and address the evolving needs of senior citizens, offering inadequate and poorly implemented educational programs. The policies concerning the education of senior citizens are firstly scattered, and secondly, they focus predominantly on basic literacy, neglecting essential areas like digital literacy and financial management, which are crucial for senior citizens. The fragmented policy framework in Nepal, characterized by a lack of clear guidance and coordination across various levels of government, further weakens support for senior citizen education.

Additionally, this weak cooperation among central authorities, local governments, NGOs, and CBOs, combined with systemic barriers and a lack of family support, hinders the effective implementation of education programs for

senior citizens. This neglect leads to the marginalization of senior citizens. The study foresees that education for senior citizens, if not prioritized with rapid change in technology and demographic trends, i.e., population ageing, migration of the young population and single families overlapping joint ones, the senior citizens will be at risk of exclusion and alienation. As a result, Nepal cannot graduate to the status of a developed country, sustain its economic growth and compete in the global market.

In a nutshell, through the literature review, the narrative of the participants and my field experience, I unearthed that the new policy for senior citizens shall also prioritize their education, promote lifelong learning, and recognize them as equal contributors to society and social justice. It also calls for making space for procedural application, monitoring and accountability in the implementation of senior citizen education. Finally, it is vital to have an advocacy campaign that creates awareness about the educational rights of senior citizens, involving various government agencies, INGOs, NGOs and most importantly, academic institutions. Embracing the principles of distinctive learning theory, human rights-based approach, and social justice theory, educators can work towards nurturing educational environments that are inclusive, equitable, and empowering for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds or identities.

Reflections

Often in class after our presentation, my then lecturer during MPhil and my current supervisor used to make us add a reflection in our submissions. Initially, I found the task daunting as we had to write more after the submissions. Gradually, I realized the importance of writing the reflection after a lot of literature review, research, class presentation and feedback so we could share what we learned and reflect on our journey.

This is the third dissertation I am writing. My previous dissertations on LLB and LLM were related to aviation law. Those studies discussed the bilateral air service agreement and merger in the Indian aviation industry, respectively. My findings at that time mainly were criticism of the existing policies on the topic. My intention this time, too, was the same, but after I was enrolled in educational leadership, I got acquainted with the narrative inquiry method, which made me realize that I should contribute to creating new knowledge rather than mere comments.

As I mentioned in the background earlier, coming from a joint family made me hold immense respect for my grandparents. My father lost his father when he was a child; my father and uncle were always finding ways to pay tribute to their late father, which left an impression on me that I, too, shall pay tribute to them, including my grandparents. I was often motivated to study by my parents and grandmother, as they wanted me to have opportunities they never had. But in my mind, I was adamant about sharing the opportunities with them, too. I wanted to be a lawyer, but growing up, I became too busy to achieve my target. After completing my Master's degree, I wanted to work in the research sector and teach legal research in law school. When I went for frequent field visits for various projects, I got to understand the rural population and their sufferings.

While teaching in law school, I wanted to do a PhD in law focusing on policy related to senior citizens, but I was in a dilemma as to how to relate it to my studies and my intentions. It was during this time that I came to know about the MPhil in educational leadership at Kathmandu University in 2019, but due to family obligations, I was not able to join the evening course. This made me relate to my mother and thousands of seniors who were not able to learn. I do not undermine their pain by this, but some sense of empathy was born. Finally, I could join in 2022, but again, this was not an easy journey, as it was the post-pandemic world. I had a new job, household chores and a three-month-old child in my lap. When the entrance results were published, I looked at my mother with eyes full of doubt. I vividly remember that she promised to be there for me and that I must study, and this day, I promised in my heart that, the way I was provided with this opportunity, I must make a payback to her and society to be an advocate for SCE in Nepal.

Due to the recent pandemic, our whole session was online, and there were some physical classes. The initial months were more unlearning than learning, as I belonged to a different stream. There were so many topics I had never studied, and there were also some cross-cutting themes. As someone who always enjoys learning new ideas, I felt that some classes were like an adrenaline rush to me, and some were full of dilemmas. With time, we were asked to choose a broad area for research, and I was sure about SCE. As a student of policy, I was sure that I wanted to do policy research. However, my lecturer pointed out that if I wanted to discuss the implementation challenge, I must consider the narratives of the

stakeholders. I, too, found the narrative methodology interesting, and I decided to collect the narratives of the stakeholders related to the implementation of SCE. For that, I first had to figure out who they were, and I started an extensive literature review. Then, I submitted my proposal to the research committee. I must admit that the presentation before the committee was very tough, as I was not sure if my study made sense, but I received constructive feedback. Then, I submitted the revised paper with the other required documents and the correction matrix. After the submission of all formalities, my proposal was passed, and I was jubilant to have permission to work on something I had wanted to work on for a long time.

I restlessly started to search for information about the SCE, spending hours online and reading dissertations that could guide me. The dissertation on narrative inquiry was my first choice, as I needed more ideas on the methodology. It was an enriching experience as a researcher as I got acquainted with the various aspects associated with SCE and narrative inquiry. However, it was difficult to find a dissertation on the particular topic, but with extensive research, I separately reviewed the research on narrative inquiry and policy review, which, in combination, helped me select the critical interpretivist paradigm as my research approach. After that, I looked for the theories that represented my realm of study: education, law and leadership. Hence, I found two to three relevant concepts in my context of social justice, HRBA and distinctive learning theory.

After a thorough literature review, the participants were chosen purposively. The study was proposed to include the MoEST, MoWCSC and CLCs and complement them with the advice of my supervisor. I visited various municipalities and beneficiaries, i.e., CEHRD and UNESCO, for the narrative inquiry. Meeting participants were a roller coaster ride, with most respondents being officers and managers appointed at the study site. Initially, formal meetings were held with participants, followed by informal meetings and discussions over the telephone. The participants gradually opened up about their experiences and opinions regarding policies on SCE. With the participants' permission, I recorded the narratives, and when I read them, I found them rich with information. Along with their narratives, I was also careful to dig a little bit into their background and was mindful of writing my field stories in field notes. After each field visit, I transcribed the stories, as suggested by my supervisor. Before dividing the themes, I thoroughly went through the narratives and added my comments. After that, it

was very easy for me to decide on the themes. The division of themes aided in writing the further sections of the research. I must admit here that during the journey of my research, my supervisor thoroughly supported me, and the two years spent on this journey have enriched me with ideas on new methodologies, streams and policies related to SCE. During this journey, my respondents appreciated the research and motivated me to continue the study. And finally, I can gladly say that this journey has proven to be one of my best learning opportunities.

Some participants, like Buddha, Amshuverma and Ram, were well-versed in policy and aware of the new developments. As I introspect on my experience of ideas on policy related to senior citizens as a student of policy, I knew only about the acts and policies and had no idea about the various guidelines that some participants mentioned. This made me comprehend that access to information also comes from more experience and exposure to opportunities.

Implications

The purpose of this study was to determine the history of senior citizen education policies in Nepal and pinpoint obstacles to their implementation. Hence, these findings shall be majorly useful for: senior citizens, government stakeholders and policy makers.

Senior Citizens

Senior citizens, primarily being the major beneficiary of the program, are sure to benefit, aware and most importantly, empowered at so many levels. The study focuses on benefits for senior citizen and their empowerment through intellectually stimulating activities like studying. It emphasises the importance of continuing learning for cognitive function, reducing cognitive decline, dementia risk and transfer of traditional knowledge. It also equips seniors by updating them with rapid technological growth and societal shifts.

Stakeholders: Government and Non-Government Agencies

This study on SCE is vital for the stakeholders, both government and non-government, as they are the ones who are involved in the implementation of the policy, program evaluation, identifying best practices, addressing knowledge gaps, promoting equity and inclusion, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. The study can aid in addressing knowledge gaps, revealing disparities in access to education, supporting decision-making, allocating resources, and promoting collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, INGOs and NGOs.

Policy Makers

Policymakers must address concerns related to senior citizen education for reasons, i.e. as demographic shifts, the necessity of lifelong learning, social inclusion, health concerns and economic development. They must take into account the fact that lifelong learning is distinct from senior citizen education. SCE is a human and fundamental right, and it is vital for social justice and inclusion. Supporting senior citizen education through inclusive policies and policies that ensure their implementation can aid in the ultimate development of the nation.

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ANNEX-I**Interview Guidelines- Community Learning Centres****Location:****Date:****Age of Respondent:****Sex of Respondent:****Duration:**

1. Can you share about the CLC and your engagement in it?
2. Can you share about the current situation of literacy in this area?’
3. Can you share about the various kinds of learning activities in the CLC (Probe, discussion)?
4. Does the CLC have a record of providing any learning opportunities targeting senior citizens?
5. Are you aware of any policies and programs related to the education of senior citizens? If so, what is your opinion about them?
6. How do you think CLC can contribute to senior citizen education?
7. Do you have any recommendations regarding senior citizen education?
8. Do you have any questions for me?

KII Interview- Municipality**Location:****Date:****Position of the Respondent:****Age of Respondent:****Sex of Respondent:****Duration:**

1. Can you describe this municipality and your engagement here?
2. Can you share information about the literacy status of this municipality?
3. What kind of educational programs are run by the municipality? (Probe: discussion, experience sharing, training)
4. Is there any program particularly related to educational opportunities for senior citizens?
5. How do you view the role of CLC in promoting education among senior citizens?
6. What is your opinion regarding senior citizen education? Do you have any recommendations?
7. Do you have any questions for me?

Focused Group Discussion Guidelines

Location:

Date:

Group name:

Total Participants:

Group Composition by age: **60-65:** **65-65+:**

Group Composition by sex: **Male:** **Female:**

Indigenous Person present:

Vulnerable Group (Disabled):

Duration:

1. Background

I am Jyoti Singh Bhandari, an M.Phil scholar at Kathmandu University School of Education. I am writing a dissertation on policy related to senior citizen education in Nepal. Hence, I would like to hear your experience and opinion on the topic.

Free Prior Informed Consent

This study is not related to any governmental or non-governmental organization, and there are no rewards attached to the participation. There is no pressure to be part of this discussion, and you can choose not to answer the questions. The names of the participants shall be maintained with anonymity. The purpose of this discussion is to have an understanding of access to education among senior citizens and include the knowledge gained from the discussion as part of my study. The discussion shall last for about an hour. I shall be using a recorder to record the answers for transcription. Do you consent to be part of this discussion? Shall I begin the recording?

2. Greetings and ground rules

Good morning/afternoon to all. I shall be asking some questions regarding the education opportunities you have received through the Community Learning Center. I am interested in knowing the opinions and experiences of everyone here, and I encourage everyone to speak. Everyone doesn't need to provide answers, but they are of immense value for the study. Also, diverse opinions are welcome; hence, please feel free to answer.

3. Introductory questions

Firstly, I request you all to share with the community about yourselves, the community you belong to, what you are currently doing and about your family.

4. Access to learning

- a. Are most senior citizens in your community literate?
- b. What was your first experience of formal/non-formal education? I.e., Probe: Did you go to school, or did you go to literacy programs, or did someone in-house teach you?

5. Awareness about learning

- c. How did you get to know about this community learning centre? Why did you choose to come to a community learning centre?

6. Learning Opportunities in the Community Learning Centre

- d. What kind of activities are conducted in the centre? (Probe: discussion, experience sharing, training)
- e. Were you asked about your learning needs in the centre?
- f. Did you have any learning opportunities in the centre? If yes, what learning opportunities did you receive?
- g. What do you feel about these learning opportunities? Were you able to adapt it to your daily life?
- h. Were you able to gain anything from these learning opportunities? (I.e., financial opportunity, development of skills)
- i. Do you have any idea about any law, policy or program that emphasizes learning related to senior citizens?
- j. Do you have any expectations regarding learning from the community learning centres?