

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
TEACHERS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Kamala KC

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## AN ABSTRACT

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Title: *Professional Development of Women English Language Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry*

ABSTRACT APPROVED BY:

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Prof. Laxman Gnawali, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor

Men and women are created equally; they are companions to each other. They both have equal contributions to make this world a beautiful place to live in. Education is one of the key components of the civilization of human kind. If teachers, both men and women, develop their professional skills, it will benefit the nation's educational system. However, women have to perform a variety of responsibilities i.e. from the biological responsibility of bearing children to the social responsibility of rearing them and familial responsibility of domestic crafts in the context of Nepal. As a result, it certainly impedes their ability to advance professionally for women teachers. This negatively influences their profession. Despite this, women teachers play a significant role in improving Nepal's entire educational system.

This research aimed at exploring the understanding and experiences of women English teachers on professional development and the challenges that come their way. This study was conducted with women English teachers teaching at the secondary level in community schools in Rupandehi district. It is a narrative study. I collected the data using interviews. I used interpretive research methodology to give meaning of the participants' responses.

The findings revealed that the participants have a good understanding of professional development. Professional development entails upgrading professionalism, learning and sharing the skill of teaching through formal and informal TPD activities and events, and improving students' overall performance. Apart from formal training; they are involved in professional development activities on their own. However, they think that

the existing TPD of the government is not sufficient and context-sensitive because these are not designed based on real needs identified by the teachers in their day-to-day activities in the classroom. A few women English teachers are facing problems with the recent adaptation of EMI in public schools. Public schools have adopted EMI without any plan and training for the teachers and students.

All of the participants began their teaching jobs early and pursued their studies simultaneously. This enhanced their professional empowerment. They viewed in-service education, in-service training, and participation in PD activities as opportunities, but social and biological responsibilities and workplace discrimination were regarded as barriers in their career path.

Despite all these, these women English teachers are found to be goal-oriented and independent decision-makers about their education, career and reproduction in comparison to the women teachers a few years back in Nepal. The main reason for this was that these women teachers began their careers before marriage and were financially independent. Financial independence led them to empowerment. Therefore, the study also concludes that it is very important for girls to get educated and settled down in careers prior to marriage in the Nepalese context.

The study has implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, administrators and teacher educators. TPD of the government should be made adequate and context-sensitive. It should also provide special training for teachers who are having difficulty coping with EMI in public schools in recent years. The study further suggested conducting online training opportunities for women English teachers because they are beneficial for them as they can attend it from home without being bothered by lodging and travel. The study also proposed that training institutes undertake gender-related training for female teachers in order to raise awareness about gender issues. As a result, they learn about workplace rights and advocate against gender discrimination in educational institutions. Motherhood was identified as one of the barriers to the women teachers in the study. However, the study concluded that reproduction is biological, but motherhood is not, therefore, parenting can be done by either a man or a woman. This should not be a consideration when nominating women teachers to jobs.

Furthermore, teacher education programs should also include women English teachers' professional development in their course, so that the pre-service women teachers get aware of their professional enhancement from the initial phase of their career in our context. Education is a great weapon for creating a bias-free society; therefore, texts need to cover gender-related issues from the very grass root to higher level education for creating respect for all types of gender.

30 May, 2023

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Kamala KC

Degree Candidate

This dissertation entitled *Professional Development of Women Language English Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry* presented by Kamala KC on 30 May, 2023.

APPROVED BY

\_\_\_\_\_  
30 May, 2023  
Prof. Laxman Gnawali, PhD  
Dissertation Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
30 May, 2023  
Assoc. Prof. Hem Raj Kafle, PhD  
Head of Department

\_\_\_\_\_  
30 May, 2023  
Prof, Ganga Ram Gautam, PhD  
External Examiner

\_\_\_\_\_  
30 May, 2023  
Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel PhD  
Dean, Chair of Research Committee

I understand that my dissertation will become part of permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader for any academic purpose.

\_\_\_\_\_  
30 May, 2023  
Kamala KC  
Degree Candidate

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

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May, 2023

Kamala KC

Degree Candidate

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my late mother, Man Kumari Kunwar, who, although being uneducated, constantly supported her children's education and independence throughout her journey. Additionally, I owe my great respect to all women teachers throughout the world.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

B Ed	Bachelor of Education
CEHRD	Central for Education and Human Resource Development
PD	Professional Development
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EFL	English as Foreign Language
ELP	Ealing Learning Partnership
ELT	English Language Teaching
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ITAEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
KU	Kathmandu University
MA	Master of Arts
M Ed	Master of Education
M Phil	Master in Philosophy
NCED	National Center for Educational Development
NELTA	Nepal English Language Teachers Association
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
RC	Resource Center
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
STFT	Society of Technology Friendly Teachers Nepal
TPD	Teachers' Professional Development
TSC	Teachers' Service Commission
TU	Tribhuvan University
UGC	University Grant commission
US	United State

VJ	Video Jockey
DoE	Department of Education
EMI	English as a Medium of Instruction

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## CHAPTER-I

### INTRODUCTION

This study explores women English teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding Teachers' professional development (TPD). TPD involves varieties of activities a language teacher performs throughout their career i.e., reading, writing, researching, publishing, and getting trained and educated for enhancing the profession.

This chapter commences with the background of the study where I share my own experience of professional development incorporating related literature from the past to now. It further encompasses the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and research questions followed by delimitations of the study.

#### From There to Here: My Tale

I was born in Krishnanagar, Kapilbastu in 1981. I studied there up to grade four. My father worked at Nepal Bank Limited, and he got transferred every three years. Being the youngest sibling in the family, I kept moving to different places with my parents and had changed four different schools till SLC. I passed SLC in 1996 from a community school in Butwal.

After completing my School Leaving Certificate (SLC), I intended to pursue management at the intermediate level. I took the entrance exam at a management campus with my other friends and was selected too. But my father did not like my decision. Rather he wanted me to study education with a major in English. He thought teaching job was suitable for girls. As a result, he did not allow me to join management. I could not go against his decision, therefore, joined education faculty with major English at a public campus in Butwal.

I started my teaching career at a private school in Butwal. I was a bachelor's second-year student then. I still recall the lovely July day in 1999 when I and a male classmate of mine were selected out of thirteen candidates and appointed as primary English teacher. I was excited as well as nervous in the beginning days. I was excited to begin my career at a private school but nervous to adjust myself in English speaking environment. However, I was happy to start my career early and continue my higher

studies. The following year, although, my colleague was upgraded to a lower secondary level, I was not. I questioned myself, ‘Am I less capable than him?’ This experience made me feel to have inferior complexity. Fortunately, I passed my bachelor’s degree in 2002, left that job and moved to Kathmandu for pursuing further studies at Tribhuvan University. To my great surprise, my fellow colleague who was trusted by the institution for promotion did not pass that year. I completed my master’s degree in 2004.

In 2004, I joined Tribhuvan University as a part-time lecturer. I, a young girl aged 23, was assigned classes for Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. I remember the very first day of my master’s class. It was the day of August 2004; I entered the class. There were nearly thirty students. Out of them, three were the head teachers of the locality. They were quite seniors to me in age and teaching experience. Despite the confidence I had in the content, I felt less confident in the presentation in front of them. However, I felt comfortable taking classes in the bachelor’s level as most of the students were younger than me. Nevertheless, I put every effort to pretend my full confidence in the class. Thereafter, I thought to observe the classes of men counterparts to see the level of their confidence secretly. I found them more confident in presentation than I was. I asked to myself, ‘Why do I feel nervous in front of these senior schoolteachers?’ ‘Why are my male colleagues more confident in presentation than I am? At that time, I realized I had an inferiority complex and put much effort into my teaching.

At this level of my career, I realize that there was nothing wrong with me and my teaching then. I was teaching as well as the men teachers in the campus. In this prospect, Thompson (2003) argues that women are as capable and productive as men are in the classroom, if they are treated well. Now I realize that I felt odd in front of those senior school teachers due to the socio-cultural construct of my society where boys are trained to be confident and leaders since childhood whereas girls are expected to be quiet and inferior to men members in the society. I guess, I was representing the stereotypical role of a woman unconsciously in my class.

Apart from this, I was a novice teacher in the campus without any practice of induction and mentoring which are very important to support and guide to novice teachers in the early stages of their careers. According to Mohan (2011) induction in universities helps new professors become familiar with their new workplace

environment. It gives them technical and professional information so they may get committed and constructive without any risk in the adjustment process. In the same way mentoring can be best used as a model for inducting novice teachers in the first year of their teaching career. Especially mentors are the experienced teachers of the institutions who can help and guide novice teachers in content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and contextual knowledge for better adjustment in teaching. For Diaz-Maggioli (2004), mentoring is a mutual progress in which mentor and mentee get involved and engaged in cycles of active learning activities that improve practice and empower both involved. Furthermore, in our context, despite having qualifications and experiences, women teachers are often asked about their marital statuses and motherhood while appointing them to jobs. I share my own experience as an anecdote here. After having two years of teaching experience at a public campus, I desired to teach at a private college in the day shift. As a result, on one fine morning of November 2008, I went to a reputed private college in Butwal for an interview. My interview was good. When I got back home, one of the administrative personnels inquired about the state of my pregnancy on the telephone.

*Administrator: Mam Namaste!*

*I: Namaste sir!*

*Administrator: Mam Your interview was good. But*

*I want to confirm if you are pregnant.*

*I: No sir, I'm not. Who told this to you?*

*Administrator: I heard it from one of your colleagues on the campus.*

It was a great surprise for me because instead of focusing on my qualifications and teaching experiences, they were concerned about my personal affair. However, I spoke lie to save my job; in fact I was in the initial phase of pregnancy. No matter how well a certain group of people performs or how much they know about their work, institutional discrimination refers to human resource policies that are essentially biased against that group of people (Stamarski & Son Hing, 2015). After my enrollment, I put my full effort into my teaching to do justice to my students; my pregnancy was not a problem. After delivery, I got 45 days of maternity leave. When I got back to my job after maternity leave, I did not have the same schedule as it was before. To my great

embarrassment, my teaching periods and my salary were decreased. I could not accept the situation. Therefore, I raised the question to the authority. In response, the authority said that he had doubt about my time and responsibility for college due to my motherhood. In response, I replied, ‘Motherhood is my problem. I can manage it’. In this case Oakley (1974) writes reproduction is biological but motherhood is not (as cited in Jenainati & Groves, 2007). I got my periods back after putting the counter-narrative to him. Counter-narratives provide a challenge to dominant cultural narratives, either implicitly or openly (Andrews, 2002). Institutions must come out of practicing these types of narratives.

I recall another incident in 2010 when I felt the practice of power politics of men teachers at my workplace. Being the only woman teacher in the English department, there was a communication gap with the men teachers most of the time. On one morning of the month of March, I was sitting in the staff room. I heard two of my colleagues from my faculty talking about a seminar that had happened in Pokhara in the near past. This seminar was on the new course ‘Expanding Horizons in English’ for bachelor’s degree second year. From their conversation I knew that a male colleague from the English department had attended that seminar. To my great surprise, I was the only teacher who was teaching that course in the campus. As a rule, the department had to send me to attend that seminar. This incident gave me a bitter experience of exclusion from being productive (Jenainati & Groves, 2007). In other words, I felt a sense of politics in the workplace of so-called powerful.

Despite these hurdles in the professional path, I continued to move on. After a few years of teaching experience in campus, I became a life member of Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association in 2006, and also an executive member of the NELTA, Rupandehi Branch. NELTA Rupandehi had organized a ‘Mini Conference’ in Butwal in 2006 and I got an opportunity to attend it. I learnt about the teaching strategies in the conference. Similarly, I got opportunity to attend the International Conference of the NELTA in the same year in Kathmandu with the team of Nepal English Teachers’ Association (NELTA) Rupandehi. These events helped me develop teaching skills. I further developed the reading habit of the ELT journal and articles as I would receive the NELTA journal every year as a life member. Reading habits encouraged me and

enhanced my writing skill as I started writing articles and publishing them in journals publish in the campus. Ganser (2002) writes professional development encompasses both formal experiences like attending seminars, professional meetings, and mentorship as well as informal experiences like reading journals and articles and watching academic television documentaries or YouTube videos etc (as cited in Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Social media are supportive of professional development activities and events for English teachers.

Additionally, I learned that two of my classmates who were teaching in Kathmandu completed M Phil in 2009. They were attending conferences both nationally and internationally, where they were delivering papers. I also considered studying M Phil, but I was unable to do so, on the one hand, the campus in Butwal did not offer that chance, and, on the other hand, I was a mother of a kid at the time. I was unable to leave my child and travel to Kathmandu to further study. At that time, I regretted returning to my place for the job opportunity as I believed Kathmandu offered numerous professional opportunities. But in 2019, I finally had the chance to continue further studies by enrolling in the M Phil program at Kathmandu University. It would also have not been possible, had it not been the Block Mode. The journey of further studies kept me involved in reading, writing, researching and publishing. I could further polish my presentations and write through the feedback I received from my colleagues and professors. The research journey in M Phil at Kathmandu University helped me travel to the USA this year. I attended 'The Hawaii International Conference on English Language and Literature Studies (HICELLS 2023)' held at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, USA. These activities have been very vital to growing me professionally as an English language teacher. Collegiality, constructive feedback, and other elements that can be acquired through a variety of professional development activities (PD) can all boost a teacher's job satisfaction (Frase & Sorenson, 1992, Murray & Christison, 2011). PD activities increase teachers' job happiness as a result. From these types of practices, I felt more empowered as an English teacher; therefore, empowerment is not a thing but a state of being that takes a considerable amount of time, patience and practice. People feel a sense of ownership and satisfaction in their work when they are empowered, and

rewarded for their contributions to the overall success of their organization (Dew, 1997). As a result, the individual teacher and his/her teaching institution succeed together.

Research towards Women English Language Teachers

*When professional development is created for  
teachers by teachers, everyone wins.*

-Kristen Swanson

Teachers need to constantly update themselves for their sustainable professional development. As a result, they can have a positive impact on the outcome of their student's achievement, and the entire institution succeeds. Opportunities for professional development are beneficial for long-term development of teachers and the teaching institutions (Richards & Farrell, 2010). Essentially, educational institutions must offer PD opportunities to teachers because the professional growth of teachers is closely tied to the success of educational institutions and their students.

My interest grew in women English teachers' professional development because I want my own stories to be heard and want other women English teachers to share theirs. We learn and grow personally and professionally from each other's tales. Additionally, I want to study women English teachers' professional development using the lens of empowerment and feminism.

Nevertheless, in the case of women teachers in Nepal, they constantly need to be empowered professionally to be topnotch in their profession. For that they need to go beyond formal training to advance professionally as English language teachers. Passion and commitment to the field, their capacity to devote time to training, their attitudes toward PD providers, their interest in peer education, their experience and practical knowledge, their capacity for independent learning, and their professional aspirations are keys for them to pursue their careers (Quadhi & Floyd, 2021). Furthermore, they can learn on their own through self-reflection, mentoring, in-service education, training and many more.

For the professional empowerment of women English language teachers, opportunities for education and training are vital. Therefore, Teachers' professional development (TPD) is extremely crucial for sustaining the profession. Only pre-service education and induction trainings are not sufficient for teachers (Padwad, 2011).

However, there are ample opportunities for professional development for teachers in Kathmandu. Although, many men teachers seem to grab the opportunities, most of the women teachers lack them due to multiple responsibilities. In fact, women teachers not only have professional responsibility; they are supposed to perform familial responsibility as well in our context. Additionally, they are born with the biological responsibility of bearing children. These significantly impede their professional development. However, the pandemic time during covid-19 helped to decentralize TPD opportunities through online mode. This professional opportunity benefited the women teachers mostly. In this context, Mody (2022) in a plenary session at NELTA conference stated that online PD activities are great opportunities for women English teachers for their professional development as they can attend these without being bothered by travel.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Professional development helps an individual teacher acquire pedagogical content knowledge, teaching skills, and understanding of the learners, curriculum, and materials production. As a result, teachers' professional development activities and events improve learners' outcomes as the final goal (Murray & Christison, 2011). Furthermore, professional development is a cyclical process that fosters the professional development of both teachers and researchers (Abbott, Dunn, & Aberden, 2012). From the institutional perspective, professional development not only enhances the performance of the teachers but the development of the institution as a whole. In the institution, it encourages collegiality among the staff, and promotes research-based activities, curriculum initiatives and instructional initiatives. Alibakhshi and Dehvari (2014) write experts in the teaching of English think that professional development is significant especially, in a society that is changing quickly, consistently, and technologically. The findings of this study are significant for all English teachers, teaching institutions, administrators, teacher educators, students, researchers and other concerned stakeholders.

Through this study, I want my stories to be heard and want other women English teachers to share their stories because these stories help women empower each other and get aware of their personal and professional rights.

There are many stories of other women English teachers regarding their professional development. These stories need to be studied and shared in the ELT forum so that

English teachers in general and women English teachers in particular including the girl students aspiring to be English teachers are encouraged and motivated towards professional development and made aware of gender issues that come in their personal and professional paths. In the words of Romero-Ivanova (2018), it is important to constantly expand a forum that acknowledges women's storying of their big events in order to enable marginalized and mistreated people to share memories of their experiences.

This study is also expected to be significant for revising the policy for English teachers' professional development in general and women English teachers in particular. To dig deep into the professional development of women English teachers, it was important to study how women English teachers perceive professional development, practice professional opportunities, and encounter professional challenges.

### **Problem Statement**

Teaching is a challenging job. Having theoretical and practical knowledge in the respective subject matter is not sufficient for teachers for long-term development in the teaching profession. Teaching methods have been changing. In Nepal we used to have teacher-centered method in the past, then, it shifted to student centered and now it is more context-specific. On the one hand, a teacher has to perform different roles i.e. facilitator, mentor, guide, etc. in different contexts in a class. Educational thinkers and writers have emphasized various aspects of the teaching role, including the teacher as a subject expert, facilitator of learning, motivator and source of inspiration, and supporter of moral standards (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Notably, they have to be updated methodologically, pedagogically and technologically every now and then. According to Candy (2020), widespread adoption in professional development programs reduces traditional ways of teaching and brings considerable changes in the profession. Therefore, they need to be trained and educated continuously to address the need and levels of the students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Appropriate training, qualifications and experiences enable them in teaching (Quadhi & Floyd, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to be updated every now and then.

In the case of women English language teachers in Nepal, they have to go through lots of discriminatory treatment due to the rooted patriarchy in Nepal. With a few



exceptions, men teachers with the same qualifications are assigned classes in upper level thinking that they perform better and are better at handling upper-class students, while women teachers with the same qualifications are assigned to basic level teaching believing they are good at nurturing. Poudel (2017) mentions that women are biologically nurturing as they give birth to children and take responsibility for rearing them. Moreover, the same role is expected from women teachers at schools. As a result they are assigned classes either at Montessori or basic level. Bhusal (2015) also found many women teachers teaching at the basic level and men teachers in upper level in Kathmandu Valley with similar qualifications. She herself is one of the examples, she shared. This type of practice discourages women teachers from developing confidence for teaching at a higher level. In the study, she shares her own experience of being inquired about her marital status and family planning in a reputed school in a job interview. Women teachers work primarily in elementary sections, where a teacher's position is low and which is still under the control of high-school head teachers, and they are less competent and consequently paid less than their male counterparts (AKES, 1996b, as cited in Sales, 1999). This is prevalent in the context of Nepal in all the sectors. Pageni, (2021) reported that there is an urgent need of motivation for female teachers in higher education for strengthening the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, job security serves as female teachers' primary source of motivation in higher education. Her study concluded that although there is a fair amount of female participation in higher education in Nepal, they have not been able to change their condition although they inspire students to learn and overcome obstacles in higher education. These types of conditions hinder women teachers from professional development.

Apparently, women in our country have been suffering due to socio-cultural differences regarding gender roles. This has forced women to carry out household works; rear children and serve the people at home in a patriarchal society like ours. Whatever the qualifications they have and the positions they hold, they are supposed to be more responsible to household things and children except for a few exceptions. As a result, working women have less time and opportunities for professional development. My personal experience and available anecdotal evidence also suggest that the main impediments to this are 'time poverty' and 'family-work balance,' as women are supposed

to perform the processes of social reproduction, from childbearing and raising children to housework, though men have always done some of it as well (Fraser, 2016). According to Wollstonecraft (1975), women lack the freedom to make their own decisions because they lack virtue and are discouraged from developing their power of reason. He also admits that if women are given equal opportunities, they can think as rationally as men. In addition, there are more men head teachers in the teaching institutions and policy-making level than women in the context of Nepal. The involvement of women in leading and decision-making posts can be more sensible for women's empowerment. Notably, policy regarding women at workplaces is changing and made in support of women these days.

As a woman ELT practitioner, these questions often hit to my head: Are only women responsible for household crafts and rearing children? Why are women teachers treated differently than men teachers in the workplace? Are they really less capable than men teachers despite having similar qualifications and experience? Why are women asked about their marital status and motherhood before they are given job opportunities? What is the women teachers' psychology while dealing with discriminatory practices at home and workplace? What impact does it have on the creativity and productivity in their performance? Are they suffering more due to socio-cultural differences regarding gender in the society? And how are they developing themselves professionally despite the hurdles? In this study, I tried to find the answers to these questions.

### **Research Purpose**

This research aimed at exploring the understanding and experiences of women English Language teachers on professional development and the challenges that come their way.

### **Research Questions**

The main research question of this study is: How do women English teachers at secondary level in community schools enhance themselves professionally? To seek the answer of the main question, I set the following additional questions:  
How do women English Language teachers understand professional development (PD)?

- a. How do they narrate their experiences about opportunities for professional development?
- b. What challenges do they encounter in their profession?

### **Delimitations**

My research is on the teachers' professional development of the women English language teachers. It is based on the participants' narrative of their understanding and experience of professional development. I delimited this research just to women teachers' understanding and experiences in relation to socio- cultural understanding regarding gender.

### **Structure of the Report**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the research context, rationale of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and delimitations of the study. The second chapter is on a review of related literature where conceptual, theoretical; policy and empirical reviews have been presented. Chapter third deals with the methodology section includes research paradigm, philosophical considerations, research method, research site and participants, data generating techniques, data analysis process, quality standards, and ethical considerations. The fourth chapter leads to a narrative portrayal of women English teachers. Similarly, chapters five and six deal with the findings and results and the last chapter concedes about reflection, insights, conclusion and implications.

## CHAPTER-II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter I critically review related literature on professional development of English teachers. It begins with the concept of professional development and PD activities for English teachers. Then, I discuss the theory of Liberal Feminism and Empowerment that guide my research. After that, I discuss policy review and the previous research with reference to teachers' experience and understanding towards PD. Finally, the chapter highlights the research gap and presents the conceptual framework of the study.

#### **Conceptualizing Professional Development**

Teachers are the most important members of any society. They play an important role to shape a society by educating and producing variety of manpower who can contribute for the development of a nation. Abakah, et al. (2022) state governments, educators, and researchers have all recently become increasingly interested in teachers' continuous professional development. Phillipson (1992) writes "teachers are made rather than born" (p.14). There are different professional development events and activities that help them to be proficient from novice and expert to experienced teachers. However, it's a long-term development. According to Watanabe (2017), development may not happen at once after an interview or attending a seminar. It is a continuous process that encompasses both progression and regression in the teachers' profession. When teachers gain professional knowledge and specialized skills, they succeed in their profession. As a result, they can contribute to the betterment of the total education system of a nation. At the same time, teachers often face challenges at all phases of their professional development. To cope with the challenges, they need to possess tools and techniques that help them solve the current problems.

EFL teachers always have been keen to learn about contemporary changes in language teaching theories. It is possible through the high level of teacher education and professional development. Mizell (2010) explained educators gain new knowledge and

skills as a result of their participation in professional development events and activities. They apply the learnt knowledge and skills to enhance their teaching and leadership which further helps increase student learning and achievement. Allwright, (2005) emphasizes that teachers also need to be familiar with new technology in education which helps them update themselves and their professional development. However, according to Borg (2015), in-service workshops and courses that are mandated centrally have a negative impact on instructors. Teachers frequently neglect these because they believe that they are unimportant, unreasonable, and unachievable, and that they have little bearing on what really transpires in the classroom. However, these programs are to be organized keeping teachers in center. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) contends that teachers should be in charge of managing professional development rather than administrators and consultants. Then, and only then, can real changes occur in the classroom. He takes a top-down decision-making approach to professional development, lack of ownership of the professional development process and its results, the technocratic nature of professional development content, and the universal application of classroom practices regardless of subject, student age, or level of cognitive development, lack in variety in the delivery modes of professional development, inaccessibility of professional development opportunities, and little to no support in the field as some of the challenges of professional development for teachers in the present context.

Teachers carry out a variety of activities for professional development i.e. self-directed learning, collaborative practice, reflective practice, TPD associations, etc. In self-directed TPD, teachers learn on their own, either alone or in groups. This frequently occurs when teachers choose to use available resources to further their education at their own discretion, with or without institutional support. Villegas-Reimers (2003) argues that it is the teacher's role to create some TPD goals and select the right kinds of activities to aid in achieving those goals. Collaborative learning is another way of teachers' professional development. According to Lasonde and Israel (2010) collaboration has a multiplier effect in learning. Teachers are able to learn from one another's research as well as their own, which aids in the development of attitudes and skills. These abilities go beyond the research experience and into their workplace interactions. In this regard, English language teacher associations are beneficial channels for collaborating on

initiatives for teacher professional development, according to Gnawali (2013).

Furthermore, reflective practice is a way of teachers' professional development in which teachers learn from reflecting their own past practices. Dewey (1977, as cited in Teuku, 2019) regards reflective practice as the process of assessing one's activities and consciously formulating solutions to problems. Learning only occurs when one engages in critical reflection on one's behavior.

In the case of Nepal, we have many non-profit organizations that work for teachers' PD. These networks also run many PD programs at local, national and international levels for the teachers. Apart from formal training, the school administration needs to conduct many internal programs of professional development like mentoring, team teaching, peer observations, reading corners, etc. for the teachers. Professional development, according to Quadhi and Floyd (2021), includes all formal and informal learning activities during a person's career. All these programs achieve the highest goal if the individual teacher is self-motivated in PD. Individual teachers can also work on their own.

A teacher involves in professional development activities every day in different forms. They sometimes do it individually in an informal way or do it consciously by attending planned conferences, training and seminars. Sometimes teachers learn from sharing culture. They share their experiences, knowledge and skills with their colleagues that they gain in formal settings. Borg (2015) mentions that apart from the external level of professional development, PD activities need to address teachers' behaviors, knowledge, emotions, and cognition that are related to teachers' well-being. Such activities are not one-time events, but rather part of a continuous learning process that occurs throughout the careers of teachers. Therefore, professional development must be viewed as an ongoing, integrated process in which each day brings a variety of learning opportunities (Guskey, 2000). Professional development is thus an ongoing process that lasts until a teacher retires from the job.

Teacher educators help teachers make aware of PD activities. British Council Nepal presents the supporting ongoing professional development of teachers by the teacher educators. They provide regular opportunities for teachers to develop their reflective skills and explain the value of professional development in a way that

motivates them. They also increase teachers' awareness and experience with a variety of individual and group professional development activities, including those that use technology. Finally, they advise and mentor teachers, including through developmental lesson observations and post-lesson discussions.

### **Women English Teachers and Professional Development**

Women English teachers constitute a large number of the entire teaching population in community schools in Nepal. Therefore, the role of women teachers in education cannot be overlooked. In fact, they have significant contributions to the basic level of education in Nepal. According to Flash Report I (2019) there are 74923 women teachers in basic the level and 7687 in secondary level in community schools in Nepal. Women teachers are most preferred for teaching the raw kids as Bhusal (2015) found more women teachers than men at the basic level in her study in Kathmandu. The main reason behind this fact is that women teachers are considered more responsible for handling the kids as they are taken as mother figures. Nevertheless, women teachers need to be given opportunities at higher levels if they are qualified, potential and professionally sound. However, they need to go beyond academic qualifications and develop skills and techniques for teaching English at secondary level i.e. classroom management skills, lesson planning, creating teaching materials, assessing, providing feedback, grading, and being involved in social and cultural activities (Burden 2020 & Teenvo 2011). In fact, the goal of gender equality should not be at the expense of educational quality.

For equal participation of women teachers in academia, they need to be involved in professional development activities. They can improve teaching from their own experiences and can be involved in deliberate, planned efforts that are meant to benefit them directly or indirectly. According to Orgovanyi-Gajdos (2016) professional development must be ongoing, intense, and concentrated on the actual classroom—including subject-matter expertise and teaching strategies. They can be involved in peer mentoring, workshops with follow-up support, and research in the classroom. Even though these may be the best professional development (PD) activities, many women English teachers are unable to participate in them. This is possibly due to a lack of support to them for such activities (Murray & Christison, 2011). Therefore, individual

effort, family support and institutional environment can contribute to their professional growth.

Additionally, participation in professional development activities increases the sense of empowerment of women English teachers. As a result, this further benefits to entire education system of a nation in general and they inspire many other women teachers and girl students in particular.

### **Professional Development (PD) Activities for Teachers**

Professional development is an on-going process in a teacher's career. English teachers carry out various professional development activities for enhancing their profession. Some major activities have been discussed here.

#### **Learning by Observation in the Institution**

Teachers can learn from observation. Srinivasacharlu (2019) mentions at the institutions, teachers have the opportunity to observe senior colleagues' classes. To improve their teaching, they might ask experienced teacher educators and subject matter experts to observe their own classes for guidance and assistance. According to Sarrane (2009), observation of teaching is a crucial technique for improving practice as part of academic continuous professional development.

#### **Orientation Program**

Teaching institutions need to conduct orientation program for newly appointed teaching faculty as well as in-service teachers. The New Teacher Orientation and Training Program offer significant advantages. As they begin their new jobs, beginning teachers gain knowledge and create important connections with system resources and employees who may guide and mentor them. These new teachers get the chance to network with experienced teachers and learn from them useful techniques they might apply when they take over their own classes (Richardson & Deering, 2011). Training institutions periodically provide orientation programs and refresher courses.

#### **Seminars, Workshops and Conferences**

Seminars give teacher educators a formal forum where they can deliver papers, exchange thoughts, and debate the various facets of a given topic and its issues with other teacher educators and resource people. The workshop's planning framework facilitates



presenters in tailoring their training to the needs of the local community while utilizing a number of techniques to encourage participants' exposure to new situations (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Furthermore, teacher educators can participate in workshops that give the group of participants a reliable/practical perspective on the numerous facets of a certain topic and difficulties. They take a pragmatic stance when coming up with answers to various problems. Education-related workshop topics may include things like computer-assisted instruction (CAI), action research, and electronic/online evaluation.

Teachers have access to a wide formal platform during conferences. They also provide options for a panel discussion, exhibition, etc. in addition to paper presentations. Conferences are an essential part of professional socialization. They offer alternatives to paper presentations, such as opportunities for a panel debate, exhibition, etc. According to Murray and Christison (2011) conferences are a crucial component of networking among professionals. Teachers communicate with peers in addition to learning about recent scientific discoveries and other teachers' research and practices. According to Diaz-Maggioli (2004) teachers who attend conferences get knowledge that motivates them to actively encourage their colleagues to attend conferences as well as get involved in other professional development activities.

### **Symposium**

Symposium is a great platform for teachers to further their professional development. Traditional conferences are mainly transmission based and give educators the chance to share their research, network with professionals, and progress scholarly endeavors. However, symposium is a new professional development model for teachers which believe that opportunities needed to be created for teachers and educators to participate in trans-disciplinary collaborative exchanges for the sake of individual and group advancement of a particular field and the prompt publication of their collective works (Dobozy, 2012). At a symposium, teachers share their research, thoughts, and opinions with the wider population.

### **Funded Projects**

Locally, funds may be received from a working institution, faculty, or university. Additionally, grants may be received from various governmental agencies as well as from

private institutions, communities, trusts, and corporations (Mahbob, 2015). The financed programs offered by the UGC, NGOs, and INGOs are open to teachers. They ask teachers to submit proposal for the project and get reviewed by the agencies' expert committee. They can begin working on a project as soon as the plan is approved. In context of Nepal, UGC, Research Center TU, provide research grant for the researchers (UGC, 2019). Teachers can perform better in their studies when they receive funding from organizations.

### **Action Research and Evaluation Work**

Action research takes place in the teacher's own classroom. It entails a series of tasks centered on identifying a problem or issue, learning more about the problem, coming up with a solution to the problem, putting the solution into practice, and evaluating the solution's results (Richards & Farrell, 2010). Teachers in Nepal who participate in TPD training need to carry out action research every year and submit it to the TPD center. The result of the action research can be shared with other teacher educators through publication. As a result, they become more self-assured and develop their communication, leadership, and research skills. Teachers can always do appraisal work, assign papers, do reviews, etc. The valuing experience can aid the instructor in broadening their perspective on the subject they are teaching. They are able to see several ways to communicate the concepts.

### **Publications**

Teachers have access to journals, magazines, newspapers, and other publications for their conceptual and research-based writings. Documents on professional experiences, action research findings, or classroom exercises are all acceptable. As a result, they may become more confident, communicate more effectively, and build their professional network. Warren (2018) mentions although the process for publishing in a scholarly journal is more time-consuming, it offers a true assessment of a person's productivity and scientific impact and supports the importance of publishing.

### **Membership in Professional Organizations and Associations**

A member of the faculty, professional groups and organizations are important in facilitating cross-regional communication, experience sharing, and innovation and

experimentation among teacher educators. The common goal of teacher networks is creating a community to support teachers and promote knowledge sharing through collaboration. This will improve the quality of instruction and the learning experiences for students (Padwad & Parnham, 2019). Teachers might join societies and organizations that occasionally engage in academic pursuits and host seminars, conferences, workshops, conventions, and gatherings to debate critically important advancements in the field.

### **Theoretical Review**

After going through a theoretical literature review on Feminism, I found Liberal feminism advocating women's education and profession. Moreover, after collecting the data in the second round from my participants I learnt that my participants have been developed professionally through the process of empowerment in course of time. Thereafter, I used Empowerment Theory too for interpreting their ideas on professional development. In this section, I discuss Liberal Feminism and Empowerment Theory.

#### **The Liberal Feminism**

Feminism is one of the oldest movements in global history advocating for gender discrimination against women and bringing equality and opportunities for them. There are different waves of feminism that came into practice in different time periods from history to the present time. However, I adopt Liberal Feminism in my study. According to Giddens (2001), liberal theory is a feminist theory that holds that limiting women's and girls' access to civil rights and the distribution of social resources like education and employment leads to gender inequality.

According to Jenainati and Groves (2007) Liberal Feminism/Second-wave feminism began in the 1960s and '70s. The term "second wave" was created by Marsha Lear to delineate the increase in feminist activity in America, Britain and Europe from the late 1960s onwards. The second wave of feminism was influenced by the Civil Rights Movement. In the US, it came as a result of civil rights activism and anti-Vietnam campaigning. The Women's Right Movement was the more practical and socially motivated movement, while the Women's Liberation Movement offered theoretical

remedies for the oppression of women. It challenged the stereotypical traditional role assigned to women.

The second wave feminism gave birth to three main types of feminism: mainstream/liberal, radical, and cultural. I particularly highlight the liberal feminism in this part because it advocates for the equal rights and opportunities of the women and puts great emphasis on political and legal reforms for giving women equal rights and opportunities. In the late 18th century, liberal feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Judith Sargent Murray, and Frances Wright argued that there is a false belief that women are less intellectually capable than men by birth (Cyprus, 2009). This belief towards the women teachers is the main discouraging factor to getting them academically enhanced. Mainstream liberal feminism focuses on etiquette that promotes gender equality and equity for the overall personal and professional development of women. Further, liberal feminists argue that women have equal contributions to society for its development in general and educated women in particular. According to Cyprus (2009), democratic nations' constitutions recognize that no one can be discriminated against because of their gender. Legal equality has historically been the primary goal of liberal feminism, which is now largely realized in many Western countries.

Since I am addressing the issue of women English teachers in Nepal, I chose the theory of Liberal Feminism as the theoretical support for my study. Because women teachers deserve to be as professionally sound as men teachers for sustainable career development and liberal feminism advocates for giving equal opportunities to women and argues for any type of discriminatory practices against women in society. Women teachers are no less than men teachers regarding knowledge. Liberal feminism believes that men and women have the same level of logical reasoning ability. Nature is less influential in shaping a person's personality than nurture. If society educates women in the same way that it educates men, women's logical abilities will be equal to men. Women who are educated will become the primary contributors to society's prosperity as a whole (Nahediyati, 2009). As a result, this theory supported me in establishing a theoretical foundation for understanding how my participants have developed personally and professionally despite socio-cultural barriers to gender roles at home and the institutions.

## **Empowerment Theory**

Empowerment, in the words of Dew (1997), is a way of being. People in this state of being are aware of the restrictions placed on their ability to work, and these restrictions are reasonable given their level of experience and maturity. People actively participate in making decisions that affect the quality of their work and lives in an empowered environment. People who are empowered have access to the criticism, instruction, and expertise they need to complete their work successfully. People who are empowered experience a feeling of pride and ownership in their job and are rewarded for the important part they play in the success of their organization as a whole. Cornell Empowerment Group (1989) defines empowerment theory with the help of two components: power and powerless. In other words, being empowered means being powerful.

Empowering women implies gaining the ability to think and act independently, developing a sense of dignity, believing in one's own ability to effect desired changes in oneself, the right to control one's own life, the right to choose, realizing all women's potential, and achieving equality in society (Phala & Mukonza, 2021). When a woman teacher gets empowered, she can take decisions freely developing self-esteem in her that enhances her personal and professional life. She further recognizes other women's potentialities and advocates for equality, change and social justice. In other words, the empowerment process causes women to overcome obstacles and engage in activities that allow them to control their own destiny (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Therefore, being empowered is a process. It takes a considerable amount of time to be empowered. Men and women are the two important parts of any society. If women are empowered she empowers the entire family and her community. Cornwall (2016) defines empowerment as a woman's enjoyment of the ability to make effective and important decisions for herself and her family. In this regard, Wallerstein (1992) writes, in a society empowerment promotes a person towards the process of independence and creates social justice. Women English teachers get empowered when they enjoy the opportunities for professional development. Their involvement in PD activities helps them build up a sense of confidence, self-esteem and dignity. As a result, they can do justice to their profession.

After collecting the data for the second round, I decided to add the empowerment theory to my study. It is because I found that my participants had become more professionally empowered in their careers as they went through thick and thin. They overcame obstacles and participated in a variety of PD activities along the way, allowing them reach to their current positions (Hanaysha & Tahir, 2016). Moreover these women have contributed to wider academic dimensions i.e. from teaching to leading and taking a more active role in all elements of change in a variety of ways.

### **Policy Review**

In the context of Nepal, National Center for Educational Development (NCED) was established in 1993 for conducting various training and programs for teachers in order to improve the quality of education in Nepal. However, the Department of Education (DoE) was established in 1999 which was later renamed as Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CHRED) after the commencement of federalism. The CHRED updated its framework for professional development for teachers and named it "Teachers Professional Development Framework, 2072." The updated framework for teachers' professional development stated to give different types of training to the teachers. The primary goal of the training was to provide teachers with opportunities for ongoing, active learning that were relevant to technology and their changing professional contexts, ensuring that all in-service teachers had access to 30 days of TPD training within 5 years. The program's goal was to provide English teachers with the fundamental skills required for effective secondary-level English classroom instruction. The main strategies of professional development were teaching practices in the classroom, teacher self-study, professional networking, and teacher sharing of experiences. The updated framework also placed a strong emphasis on the use of technology.

According to CHRED (2016), teachers' professional development program consists of three major activities; teacher training, self-study-based learning and exchange of experiences. Teacher training includes certification training, refresher training, and need-based modular training. Refresher training is given to teachers who have completed certification programs. Likewise, teachers receive need-based modular training to help them gain some specialized abilities at Resource Center (RC). For the

success of teacher development programs, there is also the provision of follow-up with the teachers who have participated in professional development activities.

CHRED provides fellowships for pre-service training to selected women teachers and candidates from disadvantaged groups. Similarly, School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) claims that School Management Committee (SMC) in the community schools hire teachers in accordance with the current Act and rules, but priority is given to hiring women, Dalits, and other disadvantaged groups.

With this, the TPD training of the government needs to be made ongoing throughout the teaching profession because teachers frequently need to be updated. The government must, however, periodically evaluate teachers' performance to ensure a successful outcome. Otherwise, certifications and training are only available for promotions. Furthermore, women teachers need to be given training on women themes for awareness about their rights and workplace discrimination in addition to other professional training. Apart from this, priorities need to be given to producing women trainers for teachers' professional development.

### **Empirical Studies**

This section reviews some empirical studies that are related to my research purpose on professional development of English teachers in general and women teachers in particular.

In context of Nepal, Gnawali (2013) did his PhD dissertation on English language teachers' development through professional associations with the purpose of exploring how teacher associations contribute to the professional development of the teachers who join such associations. His study further explored that TPD was the core of association activities for English teachers. Teachers learn and grow by means of reciprocity with one another. Furthermore, these professional associations enable them to organize events, write and publish, blog writing and opportunities with foreign exposure and higher studies. It also explored the contributions that its members make to the associations. However, this study was limited to NELTA as a way for the professional development of English teachers particularly those who were working as NELTA members.

Kshetree (2017) did his PhD on policies, practices, and prospects of teacher training in Nepal. In this study, he found that TPD training was initially implemented regularly.

However, pre-TPD planning was disorganized, and those who would attend the training were chosen at random. TPD was conducted without taking the needs and demands of the teachers into account. Additionally, the majority of RCs only conducted face-to-face training for three of the five days without adequate planning or management. TPD training has, to some extent, transformed the head teachers' behaviors in order to develop the suitable condition for putting the knowledge, abilities, and perspectives into practice in the actual classroom setting.

Kshetree and KC (2020) explored gender and indigenous perspectives in English classes. In the study, they looked at M Ed English courses titled 'Interdisciplinary Readings Part-1' and 'Readings in English'. It was essentially a textual analysis of how gender roles are represented in these courses' various texts, as well as whether indigenous knowledge is included in the texts to connect the readers' prior knowledge with the new knowledge to be imparted. Despite the fact that there are a significant number of texts with female names, the researchers indicated that both courses failed to maintain gender balance in terms of including female writers and female-related problems. This study proposed including gender-related themes and texts written by women writers at all levels, from elementary to master level.

Bhusal (2015) did her Master's degree dissertation on female English teachers' professional development. It was a narrative study. The main purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of female English teachers' professional development with supporting and hindering factors. She approached five women teachers from Lalitpur district for the study. She collected data through written narratives and interview. The study revealed that the women EFL teachers enjoyed their profession and felt secured economically, socially and emotionally. Moral and emotional supports from their organization and family were the main supporting factors for female English teachers' professional development. Likewise, time management problem, insufficient salary, salary discrimination between male and female teachers despite equal qualification etc. are some of the hindering factors for their professional development.

Sapkota (2017) studied the EFL teachers' experience of professional development and opportunities in her M Phil dissertation. She selected five EFL teachers from Kathmandu Valley. The main purpose of the study was to explore EFL teachers' experience of the



process of professional development and utilization of professional development opportunities. The main finding of the study was that EFL teachers were aware that teachers' professional development influences students' learning. This awareness led them to find better opportunities in English language teaching, EFL teacher training and EFL curriculum development. However, building good command of the English language, difficulty in making time for their profession and professional development and, transferring their learning from the training sessions to classroom practice were a few challenges they faced.

Pradhan (2018) studied female EFL teachers' professional development in her M Phil dissertation. The main purpose of this research was to observe how female EFL teachers perceive and understand professional development and uncover the experiences they have undergone in their journey of professional development. She approached four female EFL teachers from different institutional schools in Nepal. In the study, she found that her participants had a very positive attitude toward PD. They preferred informal ways of professional development far more. They further stated that higher academic degrees and formal training boost their self-esteem and confidence. Their main challenges were household responsibilities and gender-biased social constructs. They even had to be dependent on the family's decision and permission in their rights to reproduction and higher studies. However, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations played a vital role to help them grow professionally.

Pokharel (2021) studied on female English language teachers' identities. The participants of the study were three women English teachers of secondary level from Kathmandu and Bhaktapur districts. She collected data through in-depth interviews with the participants. Her study concluded that the exposure that the female English language teachers get from the beginning of their life to the beginning of their professional life determines their position and perception towards teaching; and those phenomena of being from the very beginning help to shape the becoming of the self.

Most of these studies particularly focused on the PD of women English teachers who were teaching in Kathmandu Valley where there were ample opportunities for PD in comparison to women English teachers teaching outside the Kathmandu Valley. Being a permanent resident of the Rupandehi district and teaching here nearly for two decades, I

decided to study the women teachers' experiences on PD who were teaching in this district. Therefore, in this study, I explored how the women English teachers in Rupandehi district perceive professional development, whether they have PD opportunities at their places, and how they are managing PD activities despite the challenges due to socio-cultural differences regarding gender in our context.

In the international context, Kagoda (2014) studied the professional development of female teachers in Uganda. The study showed that women are still regarded as inferior beings to men in some parts of Uganda. This gender inequality is uprooted in the communities. This can be clearly seen in academia too as women teachers in rural areas are still subjugated by men and traditional culture. As a result, men teachers show no respect for the women teachers. Thus, men-dominated education structures discourage women teachers to seek for more education and promotion. Moreover, low salaries for women teachers, unmotivated students in large classes and unpleasant learning environments combined with heavy domestic work are the most striking factors for hindering women teachers' professional development in schools. In this study, the researcher concluded that female teachers in Uganda have a very low professional status to male teachers due to the double responsibilities of the female teachers at home and school.

Hassan (2016) investigated female teachers' professional development through action research practice. The study included 23 female English teachers from colleges and high schools. The data was gathered through teacher reflection and in-depth interviews. According to the EFL teachers, their participation in action research (AR) contributed to their professional development. The teachers believed that AR brings opportunities, particularly for women teachers who have additional responsibilities at home and in their communities. Furthermore, in-service action research is a cost-effective, efficient, and successful approach of professional development.

Similarly, Qadhi (2017) accomplished her Ph.D. dissertation on the perceptions and experiences of female English language teachers in terms of continuing professional development. The research was conducted in Qatar. She collected data from 16 female English teachers with at least three years of experience teaching in Qatari schools. This study found that the current model of professional development for ELTs in Qatar needed

to be revised as it focused on the traditional ‘one size fits all’ model. The study further proposed a more versatile type of model that helps English teachers for continuing professional development. The study explicitly stated that traditional PD strategies were in use in Qatar. It did not consider the teachers' individual differences, needs, and levels, and assumed that one size fits all. As a result, the study concluded that English teachers in general and female English teachers in particular, require dynamic and interactive forms of professional development.

### **Research Gap**

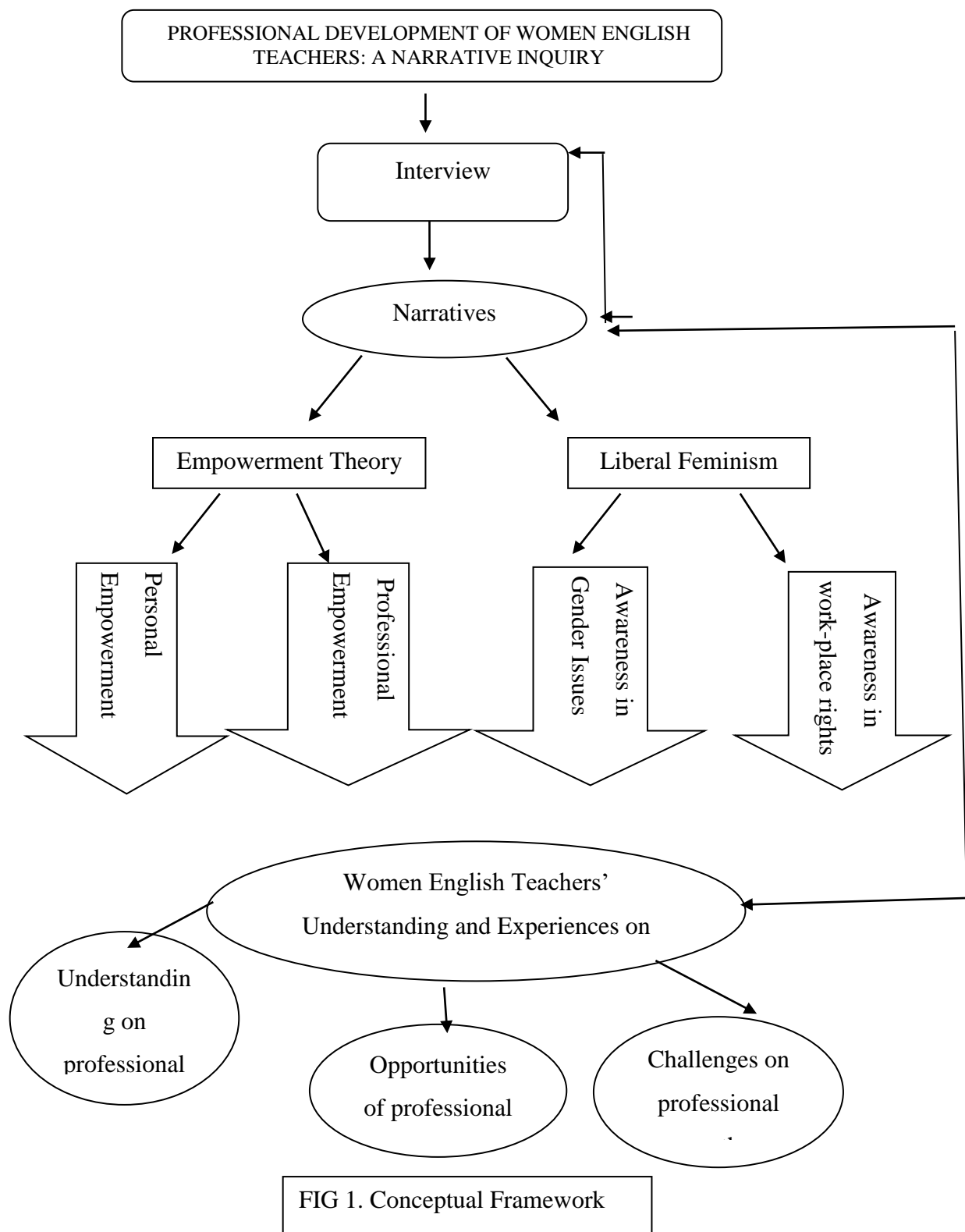
The review of the literature on the professional development of English teachers in the previous section of this chapter shows that the professional development of English teachers is a crucial field of research. English teachers have a positive perception of PD and are involved in different professional development activities in one way or another locally as well as globally. Notably, professional development opportunities have improved teachers’ professionalism, students' academic performance, and the effectiveness of entire educational institutions. English teachers can be encouraged to be involved in PD through action research, reflective writing, self-directed learning and many other types of formal and informal practices of professional development. However, very few women English teachers are found to enjoy the equal status as men teachers do in Nepal. The area of PD of women English teachers has not been much explored in the Nepalese context. Few studies are carried out, but they are Kathmandu valley centered. In this study, I studied how women English teachers in secondary-level in community schools in Rupandehi experience professional development within their careers. I saw it through the lens of gender perspective. Through their narratives, I further explored how women English teachers enhance professionalism; what positive changes they have got in their career with professional development opportunities and the challenges they faced and overcame to reach to their present positions. As it is the study of the professional development of secondary level women English teachers, TPD training of the government could not be left untouched. Therefore, in this study I also explored how these women English teachers viewed TPD training of the government as a part of their professional development activity and how online medium of training

influenced their professional development which had not been looked at in the previous studies in relation to women English teachers in the context of Nepal.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework above outlines the roadmap of my research entitled, ‘Professional Development of Women English Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry’. This conceptual framework evolved from discussions on thematic and theoretical reviews, as well as the research methodology I used. Hence, in this framework, the connections between theories, themes, and inquiry approaches are illustrated. This framework provides an overview of the overall research work. Themes are created to interpret women English teachers’ lived experience of PD in their careers.

### Conceptual Framework



### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature related to my research. I divided this chapter into different headings such as thematic review, theoretical, policy review and empirical review. In thematic review, I reviewed different literature to introduce the concepts related to teacher professional development. Then I reviewed the theories used in the study. After that I reviewed the policy followed by an empirical review. The studies carried out in different parts of the world show that it is crucial for English teachers to continue their professional development to fulfill the context-specific needs. At last, I discussed the research gap and conceptual framework of the study.

## CHAPTER-III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses a brief account of philosophical considerations; ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumption and the methodology that frames this research and gives a base to start to focus on the professional development of the women English teachers in Nepal. It also describes the nature and sources of data and selection of the location and research participants, data collection tools, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, quality standards and ethical considerations regarding this study.

#### **Philosophical Considerations**

Experiences are a great means of learning. We observe, evaluate, and interpret things according to our own values. In philosophical considerations, I formulated my opinions regarding the nature of English teachers' experiences with PD, and I saw how their experiences helped them in answering their ways of perceiving professional development. Therefore, under philosophical considerations, ontology, epistemology and axiology were taken into account.

#### **Ontological Assumptions**

Ontology is the study of being or existence. Richards (2003), states that ontology is the science of being, concerned with the nature of reality and its stances. Therefore, being an interpretive researcher, I believe that every woman English teacher is a unique being and has different experiences of professional development.

There are multiple realities in the ways their professional development takes place. I believe that the way a language teacher takes up the PD opportunities is different to the other according to different context. Teachers' development differs from one teacher to another from one contexts to another (Li & Devin, 2021, p. 32). Additionally, they have different interpretations of their own perceptions and understandings. There are variances in their realities because it depends on how they each see the world. In this

study, I also explored the struggles they encountered in their professional journey which was an important research issue that demanded the analysis of multiple realities.

### **Epistemological Assumption**

The philosophical view of epistemological assumptions is based on how one knows to get the valid truth. It talks about the reality of the society to know the world. Richards (2003) argues, “Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and the known” (p. 35). It seeks to answer the question i.e., how is knowledge about reality made known? Interpretive paradigm supports subjective epistemology which assumes that we represent what we know. In this case, there is an empirical world along with interaction and subjective understanding. The epistemology was different from participant to participant with reference to my study. Riessman (2008) contends that in the study, each participant build their knowledge through their personal experiences and narratives. The knowledge of my research study was assembled through inter-subjectivity i.e., through interaction with my research participants about their perception and experiences of PD.

### **Axiological Assumptions**

Everyone is guided by certain values and no values in society are wrong but they are only different. Axiology is the study of how humans make value judgment. It studies how people think and determine the value of different things. Richards (2003) argues, “Axiology is concerned with truth or worth” (p. 36). Regarding my study, I believe that every single woman teacher gets professionally sound, trained and develops better teaching skills if she gets support from schools and home. Value is highly affected by individual perception and realization of things.

### **Interpretivist Research Paradigm**

The overall concern of my study was to explore the professional development of women English teachers. I used an interpretive research paradigm in my study as narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research. According to Dornyei (2007), qualitative research is "fundamentally interpretive" in the sense that the final findings are the result of the researcher's personal interpretation of the data (as cited in Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2014). By its very nature, interpretivism supports the importance of



qualitative data in the search for knowledge (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). It further helped me produce meaning in the professional development of my participants developing profound insights based on a particular context of my participants (Pius & Alharahsheh, 2020). It emphasized on understanding the individual and their interpretation of the world around them.

The interpretive paradigm further believes that the meaning is not discovered; it is constructed through interactions with participants (Ahmadi, 2019). Throughout the study, I got engaged as a reflective practitioner myself in developing an enhanced understanding of the life worlds of the participants (Taylor & Medina, 2013). It was important to focus on the interaction between and among the participants to bring reality. For this, the setting was considered. In this context, Cohen et.al (2007) state that the prime concern of interpretive research is to grab how reality changes according to time, place and context. According to interpretivism, it is believed that value-free data cannot be gathered because the inquirers apply their own assumptions to direct the inquiry process.

My research considers the reality as multiple, subjective and multiple interpretation of meaningful expressions of my participants. However, interpretations varied from setting to setting under some conditions; therefore, I went back to the participants and asked them if my interpretations were correct (Smith, 1992) and re-worked on it.

### **Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method**

To explore the perception and experiences of women English teachers on professional development, I chose narrative inquiry as a research method for my study because through narration we can better comprehend the inner mental worlds of language teachers and students, as well as the nature of language teaching and learning as a social and educational activity (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2014). Through the telling of stories, these women teachers reflect on their experiences and make sense of them. Experience happens narratively. . . . Therefore, the educational experience should be studied narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19).

Narratives are especially useful for illustrating the richness of human experiences as it is human-centered method that believes in multiplicity of the voices, collecting and analyzing life stories of people ( Mertova & Webster, 2020). It aspires to understand knowledge from the individual's narrative of their experiences. The stories of these

women English teachers demonstrated how intricate their practices were, how they had evolved professionally through time, and how they organized and reorganized their work despite the challenges. Johnson and Golombek (2002) argue narrative inquiry not only enable teachers to understand their own professional worlds but to undergo meaningful and positive transformation within themselves in their methods of instruction.

My study encouraged these women English teachers to reflect back on their past and tell the stories behind them. As a result, stories told by women English teachers regarding their experiences with professional development (PD) from the start of their careers to the present undoubtedly revealed many realities about their professional life. Kramp (2004) says that stories make life experiences meaningful. They create memories and reflections that connect English teachers to our past and present, and assist us to predict our future (as cited in Barkhuizen, 2016). It further explored their physical, social, and cultural environment that influenced and shaped their experiences (Haydon, Browne, & Riet, 2017). In other words, I focused on the context of the participants in different stages of professional development in the interview. However, Mertova and Webster (2020) argue that ‘narrative research does not claim to represent the exact ‘truth’ but rather aims for ‘verisimilitude’ – that the results have the appearance of truth or reality’ (p. 4). I found multiple realities or stories of the participants.

Complexity, multiplicity of perspectives and human-centeredness are the main characteristics of narrative inquiry. In other words narrative inquiry is a human-centered approach sensitive to multiple complex issues found in the life of the participants. According to Cortazzi (1993), the narrative research in education was primarily affected by three reasons. They are placing more focus on teachers' professional development, reflecting, and enabling them to share their experiences (as cited in Creswell, 2013). In narrative inquiry temporality is a central feature. Context is ever present in narrative inquiry. It includes notions such as temporal context, spatial context and context of other people (Mertova & Webster, 2020). The narrative acknowledges that time is critical and complex in the learning process in the sense that deeper learning and expert strategies take a long time to develop and cannot be shortened without the risk of simplification or reduction.

Additionally, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) perceive character, scene, place, time and point of view as the central components of narrative. In narratives, there is nothing like absolute and certain. There is a sense of tentativeness in the narrative approach – the sense of doing ‘one’s best’ under the circumstances, bearing in mind that there may be other possible interpretations (as cited in Mertova & Webster, 2020). The purpose of narrative analysis is to find common themes or plots in data (Polkinghorne, 1988). Individual narratives are situated within specific interactions as well as social, cultural, and institutional discourses, which should not be overlooked in their interpretations (Riessman, 1993). Therefore, time, place and social situation need to be taken into account in narrative inquiry.

In this study, I listened to the stories of my participants taking interviews. I got information about how events and entities (i.e., temporal, social, and spatial) connected to each other in relation to their career development.

### **Selection of Research Site and Participants**

My study was related to the professional development of women English teachers in community schools. For that I selected four women English teachers purposively as the small size of participants is useful for a qualitative study (Creswell, 2008). I chose Rupandehi as my research site. At first, I requested ten women English teachers teaching at the secondary level purposively to be my research participants. For that, I inquired if all of them shared a similar type of socio-cultural background and teaching experience through my personal contact with the participants and their teaching institutions. All the participants had experience teaching English for more than 15 years. Out of ten, four teachers only agreed to be the participants in my study. Other participants did not show any interest. I wanted to include a participant from minority group. I visited her school and explained the purpose of the study. She agreed to participate verbally that day but did not respond to my message when I actually wanted her written consent. I first set up the questions for the interview and took their permission before reaching them. I took their consent through email. Among the four participants, two were secondary-level permanent English teachers and two were temporary teachers in community schools in Rupandehi. Their background information is added below:

**Kumud** is a 43 year-old woman and a mother of two boys. She is pursuing her M Phil at KU right now. She has been a teacher for 20 years. She began her teaching career in Butwal as a basic-level English teacher. While juggling her teaching career, she continued her further education. She passed the TSC exam in 2016 after several years of teaching at private schools. Since that time, she has worked the morning shift at a private college and the day shift at a community school. After enrolling in the community school, she attended TPD training organised by the Ministry of Education. Her family is a nuclear one. She has, nevertheless, managed her personal and professional life.

**Sital**, a mother of a boy and a daughter, is 41 years old. She is the principal of a community school in Butwal. She has been a teacher for 20 years. When she was a bachelor's student, she began teaching. She pursued a career and further education simultaneously. After earning her master's degree, she spent four years as a teacher at a public campus. She prepared for the TSC exam while working as a teacher, passing it in 2016. She attended TPD training right after her enrollment at a public school. She hopes to pursue a Ph.D. in the future. For work reasons, her husband resides in a different district. She currently raises her two children by herself.

**Sami** is 31 years old. She is a mother of a son. She has got a decade of teaching experience in private schools. She began teaching at a private school when she was a + 2 level student. She started teaching at +2-level immediately after completing M Ed from a public campus on the morning shift in Rupandehi. She teaches at a community school in day shift. She lives in a joint family. She finds it challenging to manage her personal and professional life.

**Prema** is a 42-year-old mother of two boys. She began her career as a teacher at a private school quite early in life. She maintained her higher education while while pursuing her work. She spent some time as a professor at a private university. She now works as a teacher in a public school. She occasionally goes to NELTA conferences. For the sake of her job, she lives far from her family. Currently, her children live with her husband and in-laws.

### **Data Generation Techniques and Tools**

I selected the Narrative inquiry research design for the study. In my study, I incorporated four women English teachers as my research participants. For collecting the

data, I met two of them physically took face-to-face interview and took a Zoom interview with the other two according to their convenience in both rounds. However, I took short interviews on the telephone with all the participants for the third round to ask probing questions that were important for data. From all these rounds of interviews, I gained detailed information about their life-history experiences on professional development in relation to opportunities and challenges they encountered. Therefore, the primary data were collected in the form of narration of their lived experiences regarding PD through in-depth interviews.

### **Interview**

The primary methods for gathering data for my study were interviews. At first, I formed interview guidelines. I interviewed the participants using the guidelines I had prepared beforehand. However, I asked probing questions whenever it was necessary during the interview. Then I recorded the information of the participants on my laptop. Then I transcribed and typed the data into a computer file, in order to analyze it after interviewing. In narrative inquiry, the interview is a very useful tool as it helps to unfold the story behind a participant's experiences and gain in-depth information about the proposed topic. Interview strings help researchers gain more information and produce the stories for research. I believe that stories bring many other stories that are hidden in the experiences of the participants.

According to Richards (2003), conducting an interview is simply a matter of gathering information; however, in qualitative research, we must delve deeper and build strong rapport with our participants in order to be able to communicate their worldviews. We learn more accurate information from them as our relationship improves. I did not directly ask questions to them. I waited until they become comfortable with me; they felt comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions after an informal talk in personal level. Interviews were taken in different rounds of intervals until I got to the saturation point.

### **Data Generation Process**

Before I began collecting data for my research, I visited with the participants frequently to gain a suitable amount of information. Once I had built a solid rapport with

my participants, I planned to meet them. When I first met them, we discussed the opportunities and challenges they faced in our personal and professional life. In the informal meeting, I asked them about how they were enhancing their professional lives. I called them to check if they had time for a meeting in order to gather the data. Due to their busy schedules, it was challenging to easily meet with them. Despite my busy schedule, I was able to schedule an interview with them. I spoke with two of them in person and conducted Zoom interviews with the other two in accordance with their convenience. When I met them, I explained to them my purpose and planning. Before starting, I got their consent to record their voices. Additionally, I had a note copy on which I made a list of the important information they revealed. I took three different rounds of interviews in different intervals to collect the data in the saturated form.

Every participant contributed to my understanding of the significance and meaning of professional development. Their viewpoints, stories, and life experiences were valuable to me. They kindly shared their experiences with PD opportunities and challenges. They described a variety of personal and professional experiences in their stories in the first round of the interview. I encouraged them to be more specific about their opportunities and challenges of professional development in the second round on the basis of the responses they made in the first interview. I recorded their answers on my laptop in both rounds. At last I took 20 minutes interview on the telephone for the questions that I felt missed out on in the first and second rounds.

### **Meaning Making Process framework**

Data were collected through interviews with participants for generating their views and ideas paying close attention to the context in which narratives were constructed. Context is important for understanding the narratives. Riessman (2008) says, “Stories don’t fall from the sky ...; they are composed and received in contexts—interactional, historical, institutional, and discursive—to name a few” (p. 105). Stories convey a particular kind of information that depicts the way events and actions affect people's ability to achieve their objectives and carry out their purposes in both positive and negative ways. (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 8 as cited in Saldana, 2016). The stories of the participants were analyzed and interpreted systematically focusing both on content and context using the framework proposed by Saldana, (2016). At first, I transcribed the

recorded data of participants and analyzed them reading time and again. Then, the data was organized to the respective categories on the basis of key focusing questions. After going through the coding process, I consolidated the data. After that I gave meanings and structures to the participants' narratives keeping them in different categorization. This further led to generate the themes (Saldana, 2016). As a result, different themes were generated. In other words, after I obtained a list of coding, I categorized them into larger themes. Each theme is divided into subthemes.

### **Quality Standards**

Maintaining quality standard is very important while carrying out the research work. Therefore, I maintained the quality of temporality, sociality, spatiality, trustworthiness, transferability in this study. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) points out three commonplaces for studying the narrative inquiry. They are:

#### **Temporality**

“Events under study are in temporal transition” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Directing attention temporally guides inquirers' attention to the past, present, and future of the people, places, things, and events under consideration. The temporality of places, objects, and events must be taken into consideration, as well as the temporality of the narrative inquirers' own lives and those of the participants.

#### **Sociality**

Narrative inquirers are concerned with both personal and social circumstances. By personal conditions, “we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480) of the inquirer and participants. The term social conditions refer to the environment in which people's experiences and events take place. Cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives are used to understand these social conditions. A second dimension of the commonplace of sociality focuses on the inquiry relationship between the lives of researchers and participants. Narrative inquirers are unable to escape the inquiry relationship.

#### **Spatiality**

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define place as “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events

take place” (p. 480). The key to this commonplace is recognizing that “all events take place in some place” (p. 481). For narrative investigators, our identities are intricately related to the stories we tell about our experiences in a given location or places as much as to the experiences themselves.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness needs to be developed among our participants and readers. I will be developing the trustworthiness in the data. The quality standards of my study will be trustworthy and authentic as the dominant paradigmatic base of my research is interpretivist and the quality standards of an interpretive research include the quality standards (Taylor & Medina, 2011). As trustworthiness is a quality standard, my emphasis will be on making my research trustworthy by prolonged engagement with the research participants delving into their world of the teaching profession. Narrative research is enriched by the strength of the data analysis, in which attention is directed to the ‘trustworthiness’ of field notes and transcriptions of interviews.

### **Transferability**

Only authentic data was included, and unauthentic data was removed from the research. Any research we carry out around the globe has to do with the transfer of information in an authentic manner. Thus, it is not easy work to find replication in qualitative research, but a reader can examine the way the researcher has obtained data and analyzed them. Transferability can be achieved by providing ‘thick description’, by collecting sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context, and by reporting the data with sufficient detailed precision (Lincoln & Guba 2002, as cited in Shenton 2004). Thus, to ensure transferability, I collected sufficient data from in-depth interview until the data reached to the level of saturation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Research is mainly a relational activity that demands the researcher’s sensitivity to, and emotional identification and solidarity with, the people under study. First, I ensured them not to harm their emotions. I kept the participants’ view secret and only used for the purpose of research. Social justice was practiced while conducting the research and using the data.



### **Taking Permission**

At first, I took the permission of the participants through email before I visited them for data collection. They were informed about the purpose of my study. According to Leedy and Ormrod's (2005) opinion, research participants should be made aware of the study they are participating in and given the option to decline. The interview was taken after a good rapport was built among us.

### **Harm and Risk**

My respondents were assured that there wouldn't be any risk and harm being part of the study. I did not force them to share anything that was personal to them. I didn't interrupt them when they were speaking; rather helped them speak freely and comfortably.

### **Confidentiality**

I maintained the confidentiality of my respondents. All four participants were referred to by pseudonyms to protect their identities (Mertova & Webster, 2020). In other words, pseudo names are used instead of their real names throughout the research work.

### **Chapter Essence**

This chapter was about the methodology adopted in this research. It began with philosophical considerations, including discussions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. This further highlighted the use of narrative inquiry as a research method. The total process of this research from planning, selection of research participants or sampling and, process of data collection to transcribing has been discussed in this chapter. The concluding section of this chapter has addressed the quality standards and ethical issues, which are an essential component of research work.

## CHAPTER IV

### NARRATIVE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN ENGLISH TEACHERS

In this chapter, I present the narrations of women English teachers' experiences of professional development. I retell the experiences that they shared during the interview. I have categorized their experiences into different sub-titles. I also include their actual voices wherever it is contextual.

The collected data about the experiences of the women English teachers on professional development had information in chunks that needed to be organized into narratives for maintaining integrity and consistency. After the interview sessions, I transcribed them. Then, I developed the responses into narratives. The sections that follow this paragraph present the narratives of the women English teachers 'experiences on PD.

**Kumud** was born as a first child in Aasam India in 1979. Her father was in Indian army in Aasam. She grew up with other two siblings (sisters) in the family. The family returned from Aasam to a village in Gulmi, Nepal after the retirement of her father from Indian army in 1984. So, she began formal schooling at a public school near her home. She was a bright child since childhood. Her mother was educated in Aasam. She knew the value of education for girls. Therefore, she kept a tutor for her three daughters at home. Kumud was fascinated with her tutor and wanted to become like her in the future. Unfortunately, her mother died at the age of 30 of a minor disease. The family got heart-broken by this unexpected incident in their lives. She completed her school education in her village and came to Butwal for continuing further studies in 1995. She did PCL and Bachelor in English Education from Butwal and a Master in English Education from TU, Kirtipur. She had begun teaching at a private school in Butwal when she was a bachelor's first-year student. After completing her master's degree she got back to Butwal in 2006 and started teaching at the college level. She passed TSC exam of the government of Nepal in 2016. Since then, she is teaching as a secondary level English teacher in a public school.

**Kumud's Schooling** Kumud was enrolled in a neighborhood school after her family came back to Gulmi from Aasam. She studied up to the pre-primary level in that school. Then, she was sent to a distant village community school for further school education. Unfortunately, Kumud lost her mother when she was just thirteen years old. At that time, she was in grade eight. As soon as I learned about this tragedy, tears started to fall. Her studies were disrupted by this tragedy. She shared:

*We came from Aasam to Gulmi in 1984. My mother was educated in Aasam. Everyone in the village took her as a wise and bold lady. She would read books in her leisure time. She was involved in local politics too and worked as a female leader in the village. Our family was fortunate to be guided by her. Unfortunately, this happiness could not long last. She died at the age of thirty-three leaving our father and us (three sisters) forever. I used to stand first or second in the class but could not do well after this.*

Losing a loved member so young is a big trauma for a family. The loss of a mother at that age was a great tragedy for Kumud and her sisters. A woman who was so sensitive with her children had left them forever. This obviously had a negative impact on her children's education. Being the eldest daughter, Kumud got the responsibility of taking care of her other two sisters and their education after the death of her family.

### **Higher Education and Teaching Profession**

Kumud, though, was fascinated by her tutor's performance. She viewed her as an inspiration and aspired to follow in her footsteps as a teacher. In 1994, she graduated with SLC from a community school in Gulmi and moved to Butwal to further her education. She joined a public campus majoring in English. She passed intermediate in 1997 and continued her bachelor's degree at the same campus. She shared:

*I was impressed by a lady tutor in the village. I wanted to become a teacher like her. After passing SLC in 1994, I came to Butwal and started living with my uncle and aunt and joined I Ed in a public campus majoring in English.*

Kumud began looking for a teaching job after passing intermediate. She was reminded by her late mother's words that she had intended her daughters to be self-sufficient financially. So, she started working as a basic level English teacher at a private school.

She eventually secured a lower secondary level teaching position in Butwal at a higher paying school after gaining some experience. She expressed:

*After I passed intermediate level, I started searching for a job. I got to teach at a private school as a basic level teacher. I earned Rs.1700 per month. It helped me bear the expenses of my education; however, I struggled hard to adjust myself to the English-speaking environment.*

### **PD Opportunities and Challenges**

She was married to a lecturer in 2001. He supported her decision to complete her master's degree. By that time, she was a mother of a son. She left her 15-month-old kid in the care of her in-laws in Gulmi in 2003 and moved to Kathmandu to enroll at Tribhuvan University. In 2006, she completed her M. Ed. and returned to Butwal. She continued to teach secondary level at the same school. She gained confidence with experience and began taking classes at the +2 level as well. She continued after this and prepared for the Teacher's Service Commission (TSC) exam. She passed it in 2016. She afterward moved to a different district, far from her home and family, to work as a lower-secondary teacher at a community school. She had two boys up until that point.

Despite being away from home, she used the time to study for the secondary level TSC exam. Fortunately, she passed this exam and became a secondary level English teacher in 2016. Now she has been transferred to a school in Rupandehi district. She does up-down from home and teaches at bachelor's level at a private college too in the morning shift. Her passion for studies does not stop here. She is doing M Phil now from a private university.

While pursuing her master's degree at Tribhuvan University, Kumud had the chance to go to an international conference of the Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA) in 2004. After she got back to Butwal, she attended a regional conference organized by NELTA Rupandehi, she was a secondary level teacher in a school then. She explained:

*I knew about NELTA when I was doing master's degree in Kathmandu in 2004. I attended an international conference with my friend there. This was the first time I knew that there was a platform of sharing and training for English teachers in Nepal. When I got back to Butwal after completing master's degree, I came to*

*learn that NELTA had its branch in Butwal too. I got an opportunity to attend a regional conference there conducted by NELTA Rupandehi. These helped me to get some practical ideas in teaching pedagogy.*

Kumud got the opportunity of Teachers' Professional Development (TPD) training run by the Ministry of Education after she was enrolled in a community school in 2016. She learnt to carry out action research, make lesson plans, and prepare project work from the training. Apart from that, she believed that short formal trainings are insufficient for a long-term teaching career because education is constantly changing. She emphasized the importance of engaging in a variety of PD activities, such as reading, writing, researching, self-directed learning, and collaborative learning with colleagues, for professional development. She recounted:

*I attend training conducted by British Council, NELTA, STFT, ITAEFL, the Research and Innovation Center, KU etc., from time to time and these have helped me a lot.*

Furthermore, she is involved in reading, researching, writing, and publishing to keep herself informed and updated on the new explorations in the field of ELT. She has presented papers at national and international conferences and published articles in ELT journals. She thinks, reading and writing are crucial for the overall growth of cognitive, emotional, economic, and professional development in her life. In order to improve her professionalism, she also engages in reflective practice and collaborative learning with her co-workers. She further stated that during pandemic time, she took online professional training courses and also attended online conferences from home without worrying about travel and lodging which was highly beneficial for her professional advancement. In fact, she could manage these with household activities. She gains a lot of knowledge from social media. She is a member of the Rupandehi Women English Teachers' Virtual Forum. They share training opportunities, webinars, workshops, and many other resources pertaining to English language teaching and women's issues. She further stressed PD activities and M Phil experience has helped her enhance teaching. She further claimed that she has developed multiple perspectives on the same entity. She is now experienced in teaching pedagogy, classroom management strategies, and the individual differences of the students. Her classroom used to be very much teacher-

centered in the past but these days she involves students in peer work, group work, project work, presentations and so on. Kumud shared a bitter experience of being discriminated against at the workplace for promotion. She stated:

*When I was teaching at a boarding school in 2000, the junior man teacher got promoted but I wasn't. That brought inferior complexity in me. Sometimes I doubted on my capability, the other time I thought I was discriminated. This experience made me feel less productive and less potential at workplace.*

She shared another experience of managing her personal and professional life. She further added:

*I kept seven years of birth spacing between my two children for managing my studies and career. I had to settle down in my career too. Therefore, I could not plan babies at my desired time. So, it is a big challenge for women to maintain this part of life.*

Now she is a permanent teacher at a community school. She is the only woman English teacher at the secondary level. In school, sometimes she feels her ideas not being heard and addressed by the other men teachers and administrative faculty. She shared:

*When I share some new ideas with my colleagues about teaching they do not give any response. They behave as if they heard nothing especially the men teachers. We have a messenger group of teachers where we share about teaching learning activities. Sometimes I upload students' presentations or their creative works on it but no teacher seems to react or appreciate the work. We don't have sharing and appreciating culture at our school.*

**Sital** was born in Butwal as the first girl child in a middle-class family in 1981. Her father worked for the government. They had a small shop in their house. Being the eldest child Sital used to help her parents sell things in the morning and in the evening time. There were many public schools and few private schools in Butwal at that time. Sital's father was very concerned about his children's education. Therefore, he kept all four of his children in a private school. Listening to this, his relatives in the village called him mad for spending so much money on girls' education. However, he did not take notice on it. Sital was a bright child in her studies since her childhood. She had learnt to work hard from her parents. After SLC she joined a public campus majoring in English

although she wanted to study commerce. She completed I Ed and B Ed from Butwal. She started teaching at a public school as lower secondary English in Butwal. After she passed B Ed she went to Kathmandu for Master's degree in 2002.

**Sital's Schooling** Sital's family had moved to Butwal from Parbat. Sital stated that her father's relatives in Parbat were surprised that he had spent so much money on his daughters' education, sending them to private school. She recounted:

*We were four siblings all together, three girls and a boy. Although we belonged to a middle-class family our father admitted us to a private school. It was a newly established school in our town. The school had a good English environment. Many teachers were brought from Darjeeling to teach in English medium. Our father now shares that his relatives in Parbat were surprised to see our father spending lots of money on girls' education.*

She studied there up to grade seven. With her other siblings they were later transferred to another private school in Butwal. She passed SLC in 1996.

### **Higher Education and Teaching Profession**

Sital wanted to study commerce at a community college in Butwal after SLC, but her father wanted her to study education with a major in English. She stated:

*I was interested in commerce but happened to join education majoring in English due to my father's advice.*

This incident reminded me of my own experience, when I wanted to study at a commerce campus for intermediate, but my father insisted on me studying education with a major in English. We both had similar experiences. Sital, therefore, joined a community campus in 1996 in education faculty majoring in English and passed intermediate in 1998.

After passing intermediate she got an opportunity to teach at a community school, the school where she is a head teacher now. She started her teaching career at that school as a lower secondary teacher. She was doing B. Ed in the morning shift. Teaching supported her studies. She reconstructed:

*After passing intermediate in English education in 1998, I started teaching at a community school as a lower secondary level English teacher. I was doing Bed from the same campus.*

## PD Opportunities and Challenges

She had the opportunity to attend the NELTA conference in Kathmandu while studying B. Ed. One of the teachers at the campus encouraged her to attend the conference. For the first time, she realized that NELTA was a platform for teacher training. In 2002, she passed B. Ed on a regular basis. Because there was no M. Ed program at her campus, she wanted to study M. A. continuing her job. Her father, on the other hand, encouraged her to leave her job and go to Kathmandu for further studies. She received her M. Ed. from Tribhuvan University in 2004.

Sital got married to her classmate, in 2004. She moved to Palpa with her husband and began teaching at a campus. Her husband and she both taught at the same campus. She faced a bitter experience on the very first day in the class. She recounted:

*After completing my master's degree both my husband and I was called to Palpa to teach at a community campus in 2006. The campus had started M Ed in English education. I was given a compulsory subject to teach to M Ed students. When I entered the class, many male students left the class saying, 'Is this lady going to teach us? We don't take her classes'. They even questioned to my capability without observing my class. They said, 'how can a woman teach to this level?'*

After few classes only students got sure that she could teach well. She said those students still stick in her mind and their statement still pinches her. During that time she managed professionalism and family affairs too. She was a mother to two children but she did not give up. She kept herself involved in other professional activities like training, reading and writing. She taught in that campus for nine years. By the time she was a mother of two kids, a son and a daughter. She and her husband managed the kids anyway but when the children started school, Sital realized that she had to give time to her children in the morning and in the evening. Sital wanted to be settled in the job. Her husband was being settled in a community campus. That's why she started preparing for the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) exam in 2013. She could not succeed for the first time; again, she attended it for the second time in 2016. She nailed it this time. She got posted in a community school in Gulmi. She went with her daughter, leaving her son and husband in Palpa. After four years in Gulmi, she was transferred to a school in



Rupandehi, where she is the head teacher. Sital did not get any experience in induction and mentoring when she was a novice teacher in the community school. She stated:

*I didn't get any opportunity for induction and mentoring though it was a model school of the district. However, I am now planning to manage an induction and mentoring program for newly appointed teachers in this school where I am working as a head teacher.*

However, she got an opportunity to attend TPD training given by Ministry of Education. She shared:

*I got TPD training twice in five years' time for 30 days after enrollment in a community school in 2016. We got trained in action research and lesson plan. We need to conduct action research, prepare a report, and submit it to the municipality per-year. It also helps us in our promotion.*

She attended numerous seminars and workshops hosted by NELTA Palpa. She worked as a primary level teacher trainer in Palpa and Gulmi, and she also led teacher training for CHRD (Center for Human Resource Development) and TPD online. She stated:

*I enjoyed webinars as great opportunities during covid time. I am also training English teachers in grades 11 and 12 on a new course organized by NELTA in partnership with the British Council and CHRD now. Apart from these, I also attend head teacher training. I am planning to pursue an M Phil at the Open University in the near future.*

Her husband was teaching in Palpa and had started Ph.D. She had the responsibility of her children and the school as she had got the opportunity to become head teacher. She has double the responsibility of family and school now. She has to take care of her children as well. She shared:

*Sometimes I wake up at 4 in the morning, prepare food and leave for school at 6 a.m. for tuition class. So, I hardly can manage time to read. Sometimes I think women don't have favorable situation for further studies.*

She also shared another challenge as a woman head teacher. She recounted:

*People believe that female teachers cannot devote enough time to their students; they are not courageous enough to take responsibility. Such circumstances make me believe that I am truly inferior to them. As a principal, my leadership is put*

*into question. They believe that they cannot collaborate with women. We are only being taken as representatives.*

**Sami** was born in Gulmi district Nepal. She was the youngest sibling in the family. Though Sami was born in a village in Gulmi, she got a chance to be educated at a private school. There were few private schools in the village. Sami was interested in extracurricular activities. She used to participate in dance competitions and volley-ball. After SLC, she came to Butwal for continuing further studies. Her elder sister was there in Butwal. She was also involved in the teaching field. Therefore, she convinced Sami to study education majoring in English at a private college. Sami got admitted to a private college for +2. She got the opportunity of teaching at a private school when she was in grade 11. She continued teaching and further studies together. She completed B Ed from the same college and completed master's degree from a public campus in Butwal in 2017.

**Sami's Schooling** Sami started formal education at a private school near her home. She studied in that school up to grade eight and then she was sent to a community school for secondary level education. She was a bright student in the beginning, but she could not manage it in upper classes. Since childhood, she was a kind of rebellious one who did not like the stereotypical roles assigned to a girl child. She shared:

*I was good at extracurricular activities at school. I have won many dance competition. However, we had to go to distant places for competition but my parents did not allow me to go there saying that going out and staying away from home for girls is not a good idea. This always pinched me a lot.*

FIG 1



FIG 1. (Source: From the participant)  
Sami performing dance at

Sami participating in a dance competition at her school.

The above narrative of Sami shows that she was interested in dance since her childhood; however, she was not allowed to go away from home and perform. Her interest on media now as she works as a VJ on a radio as a part-time job, also shows that she had a hidden

talent of art since her childhood but hindered from this due to power-politics of family and gender issues.

### **Higher Education and Teaching Profession**

Sami passed SLC in 2007. After schooling, she moved to Butwal for her further studies. Her elder sister lived in Butwal and studying education at a govt. campus. She was an English teacher at a boarding school. Sami was always inspired by her sister. She therefore joined education faculty majoring in English at a private college in Butwal. After completing grade 11, she joined a boarding school as a basic level English teacher. She entered in teaching field to be financially independent. She wanted to bear her educational expenses herself. Ultimately, she found that teaching helped her studies as well. She remembers:

*My friends felt nervous to stand in front of teacher and friends in micro teaching in B Ed but I could do that confidently. At that time, I felt I took good decision starting my career early as a teacher.*

With teaching, she completed bachelor's degree and also started to work on a radio program. She worked as a VJ in a show. With these all, she was developing her career into two different fields.



FIG 3. (Source: personal contact)  
Sami as a VJ on a radio

### **PD Opportunities and Challenges**

Subsequently, she got married. Her new family was educated. Her husband and father-in-law were teachers. They understood the nature of her work so co-operated her in every work of life. Sami had balanced her teaching career and higher education studies well. She could manage time for studies as well. However, early teaching days were full of critical moments. Whenever she faced problems in teaching learning activities, she consulted her senior teachers. She started teaching from basic level. With higher degrees she had ambition of teaching in higher grades in school. After completing bachelor's degree she wanted to be upgraded to lower secondary level but did not get the

opportunity. But she felt discriminated against when a man colleague having the same qualification got promoted. She shared:

*I was replied that women teachers fit in the basic level because they cannot control class and do not have time for preparations. I did not give up; therefore, I am here today while my other women colleagues are teaching at primary level till today. So, I took challenges as an opportunity. We should not make excuses in life.*

But now she thinks that she did not get discouraged, so did not give up. She rather developed courage and believed in herself. With her continuous effort and hard work, she completed her Master's degree as well. She continued her further studies as well and passed M Ed from a public campus in 2017. After she passed her Master's degree, she got an opportunity to teach at a community campus that was a bit away from home. However, she had to leave this campus as she could not manage for a long time. She recalled:

*I had a first class that started at 6:30 am. I had managed it although the campus was 10 km away from my hometown. I used to go by scooter. It was covid time and one day I met an accident. After that incident I was taking lift from a male colleague. After a few days I did not feel comfortable in his company and started using public vehicles using safety measures of covid. One day I was late for the class for which I was questioned by the administration. I put my problem in front of the administrator, but it was not considered. That incident made me resign from the job on the same day. I still feel that it would not have happened if there was a man teacher in my place. Women are bounded by various circumstances.*

Sami did not get any type of formal training in the school. She wanted to attend some training on her own but could not manage her time. However, she attended a few training in professional development online during the pandemic time. She would consult her senior teachers when needed their help. Sami studied on her own on Google and the internet to keep her updated. As she was involved in media too, she took some professional media training online.

Her family is educated and is involved in teaching field. They understand the nature of her work although most of the household's work is in her part. She said,

*My family supports me psychologically, but our society thinks that household works are the responsibility of women. We get conscious of household things when we have guests at home. Though the family members are supportive of my work, they too hesitate to help me in front of them. So, our societal norms come as obstacles in our way.*

There are many challenges in her day-to-day life, although she has managed her time for preparing classes. She does it at night cutting her sleep hours. It's almost 11 or 12 when she gets to bed every day.

**Prema** was born in a village in Arghakanchi district in Thada village, Nepal as the youngest child in a village in 1980. She began formal education at a public school in Arghakanchi. After SLC, she came to Butwal for further studies. Although she wanted to become a nurse, she got admitted to English Education by the influence of her brother and sister-in-law. They convinced her saying teaching is a good job for girls. I too had similar type of experience. I also wanted to join management and worked as a banker. But I came to teaching field by the influence of my father who believed that teaching job was a secured job for girls.

### **Prema's Schooling**

Prema started her schooling at one of the community schools of the village at the age of five. She was a bright child in school. She used to hold the first position in the class. She completed SLC from the same school in 1996 and came to Butwal for further studies. Her elder brother and sister-in-law were teachers in the community schools in Butwal. They suggested her to study I Ed with major in English although she wanted to become a nurse.

### **Prema's Higher Education and Teaching Profession**

After SLC, Prema came to Butwal for pursuing her further studies. She joined English education majoring in English. It was due to the influence of her brother. She came to the teaching field although she was interested in nursing. She started her teaching career at a private school in Butwal in 1999. She was a bachelor third-year student and wanted to be financially independent for her studies.

## PD Opportunities and Challenges

Early teaching days were full of challenges due to the English medium of instruction. But her continuous hard work and dedication helped her to become a good teacher soon. In her early teaching career, she got the opportunity to be the coordinator within two years of teaching experience. It was a great opportunity, and it was equally challenging at the same time. She recounted:

*I was made coordinator at the primary level out of 32 teachers at my school in 1998. However, a male colleague was senior to me. One day in the exam duty, he refused to go to the class. He said he deserved fewer duty days than others. He did not cooperate with me. This made me feel uneasy to work as a coordinator.*

As a coordinator, she frequently attended meetings with the administrative personnel as well as with other coordinators of lower secondary and secondary levels. That helped her develop strategies for counseling teachers, evaluating their performance, and presented guidelines for improving students' performance. This experience built up confidence in her profession.

She continued her further education after marriage. Prema got married when she was doing a Bachelor's Degree in Butwal. She moved to Kathmandu with two years old son and her mother-in-law for pursuing a Master's Degree. It was equally challenging to her to balance her studies and the upbringing of her son. After completing her Master's Degree she came back and started teaching as a part-time lecturer at a community campus. She taught there for five years. She was hopeful to be a full-time teacher but she got disappointed in this regard. Two colleagues junior to her got the opportunity to be full-time lecturers but she could not. This made her discontinue the job. She was much worried for the stability of the profession; therefore, she decided to move to a public school. It was not an easy job for her to leave her family and stay there at school for the sake of job.

Prema used to solve her teaching or classroom problems in collaboration with other teachers since she started teaching career early. Her present school has a mentoring system for novice teachers. She is given the responsibility of mentor for novice teachers. Her school gives the responsibility to the senior teachers to conduct workshops on themes for activating the teachers as she is one of the senior teachers at her school. They have

formed a research cell at her school for researching and writing, she is one of the executive members. This responsibility makes her read many research-based materials and carry out research on her own. She is a life member of NELTA. She attends international conference of NELTA regularly. Prema shared:

*The covid time had really become a blessing time for my professional development as there were many opportunities of online webinars, and I could attend them from Kitchen. I earned many certificates of CPD during that time. Prema aspires to pursue M Phil degree, but she thinks there are many challenges for that. However, her friends encourage her to continue further study.*

All these women English teachers have their own experiences of personal and professional lives. All three came to Butwal from villages to pursue higher education except Sital. The most common thing in them is that three of these female teachers came into teaching field due to the familial influence including me. Prema and Sami joined English education due to the influence of their kin who were in teaching field. Sital and I came to this field due to our fathers' decisions although we were interested to study commerce. However, Kumud was herself influenced to become a teacher by a female tutor since her childhood. These narratives of the participants also reveal the fact that how family dynamism is prevalent in our society while deciding the career goals for girls. Apart from this they started their career early, and continued teaching and study together. However, there were twists and turns in their personal and professional lives, they did not give up. They seem clever to update their professional life. They are professionally sound, confident and role models for many other women teachers and girl students.

### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I presented the narratives of my participants. It explored the life-history stories of my research participants from the beginning of their life to their present status in relation to professional development. This includes the start of their formal education, their early teaching career, professional opportunities and the obstacles they encountered due to socio-cultural construct regarding gender in Nepal.

## CHAPTER V

### WOMEN ENGLISH TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The main aim of this study is to explore the understanding and experiences of women English teachers on professional development and the challenges that come their way. This section deals with thematic analysis and interpretation of the data collected through the interview which is based on research question one, 'How do women English teachers perceive professional development (PD)?' On the basis of their responses to the perception of PD, three sub-themes have been generated: professional development is updating professionalism, professional development is learning and sharing the art of teaching and professional development helps in developing the overall performance of the students.

#### **Professional Development is Updating Professionalism**

This theme was generated from the responses of the participants in response to my question on how they perceive PD for career enhancement. The participants expressed the common view in different ways that teaching is a continuous process; teachers have to update themselves for sustaining the career through formal and informal modes of professional development activities and events. Kumud stated:

*Teachers' professional development is a continuous process for sustaining in a career. One can attend trainings, seminars and conferences for learning new knowledge and skills in teaching. A teacher needs to learn throughout life in order to update with the changing trends in teaching and learning language and also to compete in the global market.*

Kumud viewed teachers' professional development as an ongoing process. One has to do it formally and informally throughout the teaching profession. She finds it rewarding as it helps her grow professionally. One can update every year attending seminars, and conferences. Similarly, Sital expressed:



*Professional development is a life-long process. It is required for updating our professionalism. Moreover, it needs to address the needs and expectations of the students and teachers. Similarly, Sami described: PD is very important for updating teachers. PD activities are beneficial for the entire institutions. However, PD activities need to address the diverse needs of the teachers, students and the teaching institutions.*

They believe that they can change the way of teaching if TPD is made relevant and contextual according to the academic environment, needs of the teachers and the institutions and level of our students. In a similar prospect, Prema opined:

*In my opinion, PD is important for learning teaching skills and strategies for teachers. Teaching institutions need to conduct PD activities in school to enhance the performance level, skills, knowledge, and techniques on the part of EFL teachers. Our school conducts workshops and seminars time to time. It not only helps to apply the learned skills in my practical life but also enhances the overall development of students to a greater extent.*

These participants opined that PD activities are important for updating the profession. They need to help teachers bring change in the teaching strategies and pedagogy. Applying them in classroom practice, they can meet the needs and expectations of the students with better outcome. In the same vein, Kizilbash (2016) states that there are three major goals of professional development programs for teachers. These are “change in classroom practices of teachers, change in their attitudes and beliefs, and change in the learning outcomes of students” (p. 20). Moreover, there are other various impediments that distort the implementation part of training in the classroom in the context of Nepal i.e., insufficient teaching-learning materials, technological barriers, insufficient time, large classrooms, tired students, lengthy courses, exam-oriented teaching are the major barriers in the execution of the strategies in the classroom. As a result, it has a negative impact on students’ achievement. Baral (2019) found the level of achievement of students in Nepal's public schools is incredibly poor, according to the country's assessment of students' performance. The basic answer to why students are performing poorly is that they are not receiving a proper education in public schools. This is due to the inadequate training that teachers receive in in-service training.

Apart from the formal training of the government, teachers need to go through several practices on their own to sustain in this profession. In this regard, Padwad (2011), argued that professional development is essentially a personal journey and that one must work out one's personal meaning, agenda, and action plan for meaningful and sustainable professional development, i.e., read various scholarly journals that inform about innovative teaching pedagogies and new information in the field of ELT that are useful for their classroom context. To shed light on the same issue (Lee, 2011), teachers' active participation is increasingly recognized as an important part of their ongoing professional development. The above responses revealed that these participants have good understanding and positive perception of PD. Interestingly, they think that PD activities i.e., in-service education, mentoring, peer works, observation, reading, writing, publishing, and presenting are beneficial for updating the teaching profession which is essential for sustainable career development

### **Professional Development is Learning and Sharing the Art of Teaching**

Regarding the question about the understanding of PD, all the participants expressed that PD is a kind of pair-share of knowledge and expertise among ELT professionals. Allwright (2005) mentions that English language teachers are more likely to experiment with the most recent advancements in education and language teaching theories with their students allowing them to continue to develop in the adaptation and application of their art and craft, which is crucial for their professional development.

#### **Kumud stated:**

*PD opportunities help teachers learn about teaching pedagogy, teaching methods, and strategies. They can meet with ELT experts in different platforms i.e., British Council, NELTA, STFT, ITAEFL, etc. It is about learning the art of teaching in the ELT forum.*

Kumud's this answer reveals that she takes PD events and activities as formal platforms as the opportunity to meet with ELT experts and learn to teach better. She stated that the experts' expertise on current issues in ELT helps language teachers learn to teach better in day-to-day teaching. Tsui (2005, 2009) distinguishes two types of teaching expertise: expertise as a "state" and expertise as a "process." Expertise as a state examines characteristics associated with a teacher after years of teaching, whereas expertise as a

process examines teachers' development of various characteristics over time (as cited in Farrel, 2013, p.136). Therefore, being an expert is not only having a long year of teaching experience rather one has to go through a long process of professional development events and activities. In this regard, Mwila et al. (2022) writes that experts must possess the skill to initiate, frame, and sustain the PD learning process. They also require winning over the mentee's trust in their willingness to work together and overcome the difficult challenges of professional learning in the fast-paced environment of daily school life. Therefore, the above response shows that if trainers, mentors, or coaches have good expertise in the respective field, they can motivate and build up trust for sustainable PD activities for teachers' development. Sital expressed:

*Professional meeting with experts either as participants or as trainers boost up knowledge, skills and confidence of the teachers. Recently, I worked in a training session collaboratively with a professional trainer for teachers teaching grade 11/12 new courses in 2022. It was organized jointly by NELTA and British Council. This has developed my confidence as a trainer.*



FIG 4. (Source: from personal contact)  
Sital presenting on a training program

Good PD encourages professional collaboration and sharing among teachers and experts (Quadhi, 2021). Her collaborative practice with an expert improved her professional practice through sharing knowledge, and skills. Prema mentioned:

*For me conferences, seminars and workshops are good platforms for learning and sharing teaching experiences nationally and internationally.*

Teaching institutions require conducting training, seminars, and workshops for enhancing teachers' development for both in-service teachers and novice teachers. Through these, teachers are able to familiarize themselves with experts and share their own experiences with their colleagues. Furthermore, they are encouraged to carry out research studies and pair-share them in the training programs. Ealing and other schools have developed and delivered a broad program of developmental courses, networks,

meetings, conferences, and other centrally run or school-based CPD opportunities for schools. They collaborate with internal, and external school, and associate colleagues to improve all aspects of learning and school effectiveness (Ealing Learning Partnership (ELP), children and adults' service, 2022). This type of collaboration becomes a catalyst for the success of the entire education system.

### **Professional Development Helps in Developing Overall Performance of the Students**

In response to the understanding of professional development, the participants came out with the common reply that teachers' professional development ultimately has to do with the student's performance. In this regard, Prema stated:

*Through PD activities, teachers gain knowledge on the subject matters, enhance teaching techniques and improve teaching skills. They apply the learnt knowledge and teaching strategies in their day-to-day classroom. As a result, it helps to develop student's performance as a whole.*

In relation to the above response, I connect the idea of Diaz Maggioli (2003), where he mentions that the strength of professional development strategies resides in the fact that they all have as their primary ambition to enhance learning quality and the demands of the teachers. Teachers will be more prepared to handle the problems of the future by implementing the strategies for the progress and development of the students, while also enabling schools to become stronger institutions of learning. Similarly, the public nature of teaching inspires teachers and raises social expectations for them to find strategies to raise student achievement (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009). In this prospect, Sital said:

*In the formal type of professional development activities, teachers get resources that are helpful in using the curriculum in the classroom. They also get ample language exposure, get engaged in collaborative learning and develop presentation skills. This helps them to make their classroom more effective. They will also help students to learn in groups, come out with the answers and present them in the class.*

This idea of PD is related to the idea that resources made accessible to the teachers have a significant impact on how well a curriculum is delivered in the classroom. As a result, it's critical that both teachers and students have access to the right

resources and are trained on how to use them (Giri, 2010). Furthermore, this training helps language teachers to make students work in groups, use the language as much as possible and present in the class.

### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I included the first theme of my study. I analysed the response of the first research question of the participants as the first theme of this study. I further sub-thematized their understanding about professional development into three titles: Professional development is updating professionalism, professional development is learning and sharing the art of teaching and professional development is developing the overall performance of the students.

## CHAPTER VI

### EXPERIENCES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter is guided by the second question of this study, ‘How do they narrate their experiences about PD opportunities in relation to socio-cultural context regarding gender in Nepal?’ I present the analysis of the PD opportunities and challenges that had been narrated by the women English teachers in the following two sub-sections: ‘Opportunities of professional development’ and ‘Challenges encountered in PD activities’ respectively.

#### **Opportunities for Professional Development**

When I enquired about the PD opportunities in their professional life, they all explored that they came into the teaching field when they were pursuing their higher studies. They believed that it was a great opportunity for them to continue their higher education when they were already in the teaching profession. They could bear the education expenses themselves independently. Further, they said that they got the opportunity of PD participating in training, conferences and seminars before and after coming into the teaching field. With this they also updated themselves through research activities, reflecting upon their own experiences and could publish their research articles in the ELT journals. I have sub-categorized these under the following sub-themes:

#### **Higher Education, a Way of Teaching Life**

I generated this sub- theme from the common response of my participants. They began teaching career and higher studies side by side which they take as an opportunity for professional development.

Kumud narrated:

*I started teaching in 1997 at a private school in Butwal. I was a bachelor first-year student in a public campus in Butwal then. I began teaching early to support my higher education. Since then, I have been continuing my job and studies together. Still, I am a schoolteacher and an M Phil student. Though I began teaching to support my studies in the early days of my higher studies, later I knew*

*it was a part of my professional development. Formal education helped me become a secondary level English teacher at a community school from a basic level English teacher.*



FIG 5. (Source: personal contact)  
Kumud presenting as a research scholar

Pursuing higher studies and career together was the obligation for Kumud for continuing further studies in the early stage of her career. But now she does it for professional development. In course of time, she learnt in-service education and in-service trainings are the developmental process in professionalism and mutually interconnected for staying up to date for sustainable career. According to Li and Dervin (2018) PD refers to in-service training, in-service education and staff development activities. Teachers participate in some form of in-service training to address their inadequacies and broaden their professional competencies (Osamwonyi, 2016). This indicates that PD is a life-long learning process in formal and informal settings.

In a response to a probing question on how challenging it was for her to begin a career early and from a private school, she shared:

*I struggled hard to teach and adjust myself in an English medium school in the early days because I did my schooling at a public school in the village of Gulmi. I had problem in speaking English fluently. Other teachers in the school could speak English fluently, even a Nepali subject teacher. I felt a kind of humiliation not being able to speak like them being an English teacher. Therefore, I decided to join an English language class, started reading The Rising Nepal and listened to the English news to cope with it in those days. Apparently, this turned out to be a blessing now. Now I am a teacher at a public school and our school has now started teaching in English medium instruction (EMI) and I do it easily when there are many English female teachers who are struggling hard to teach in English medium.*

Kumud seems to develop professionally herself through self-learning i.e. reading English newspaper and listening to English news. Self-directed learning is beneficial for teachers who can take responsibility for their learning. However, the level of responsibility taken is interrelated with a person's level of interest, desire, and personality qualities (Du Toit-Brits & Van Zyl, 2017). In the above response, Kumud shared that her school started teaching in English medium instruction (EMI). However, she did not have any problem with it as she was a proficient English speaker when her few female colleagues had problems teaching in English medium. Her further studies and past experience of teaching at a private school aided her in this endeavor. Few teachers in public schools find EMI classrooms enjoyable and fascinating in a variety of content-related disciplines. These teachers are either experienced from English medium schools or new to the professions (Khatri, 2015) and have command over the English language. "What problem did your colleague face due to EMI shift in your colleague?" I probed. She responded:

*Our school began to teach in English medium in 2018. This happened all at once without any plan and preparation. As a result, there were two sections in each class in the secondary level, one English medium section 'A' and another in Nepali medium section 'B'. One of my female colleagues was teaching in Nepali medium in section 'B' at the secondary level. However, in 2019, she could not have full teaching loads in Nepali medium sections only, so, she had to take one period in section 'A' in English medium for class 9 students but she was not comfortable taking class in that section. After two classes, students began to complain about her class. They were actually complaining about her English language. She had been teaching in Nepali medium since long. She used the Nepali language most of the time in the class as a result she could not speak English fluently. She felt humiliated as she herself was not willing to take this class in English medium in this section. As a result, the administration shifted her class to lower secondary level to fulfill the load. This made her feel demotivated and discouraged.*

The government needs to conduct professional trainings for those teachers who have been struggling with EMI in public schools in Nepal. Khatri (2015) reported that



many public schools in Nepal have adopted EMI in recent years. The key goals of implementing EMI are to increase student participation, improve educational quality, and improve school performance. However, most teachers who have previously taught in Nepali medium of instruction find EMI extremely difficult. They believe that their schools' adoption of EMI has placed a pressure on their profession. This tendency may impede teaching and learning efforts. According to Leong (2017), the implementation of EMI necessitates a rapid shift in university operations, such as the development of professional development courses for teachers and supplementary English courses for students to assist them in adapting to the new English-speaking situation. In the same vein. Sami recounted:

*I began teaching at a basic level at a boarding school in Butwal after passing grade eleven in 2008. I was quite young then. Though I got to teach in grades 2 and 3, I had no teaching idea. I got puzzled about how to begin and end the lessons. I used to read the lesson and summarize it to my students. I would write all the questions and answers on the board and make them copy in their notes. I did it for the whole year. However, in the micro-teaching at the end of the 12 class, we were taught how to teach. It helped me make lesson plans for every lesson, develop teaching materials, brainstorm the students before beginning the class, make them read the text first hand and help them guide in doing the question answers. Teaching practice for a month helped me use classroom teaching strategies. Actually, it helped me develop teaching confidence. I did my bachelor's and master's degree with a job. University education was indirectly helping me become a better teacher every day. This was actually realized when I got an opportunity to teach bachelor-level students at a public campus and +2 level students at my own school after completing a master's degree in 2017 from a public campus in Butwal. I did not know I could teach to bachelor-level students only having teaching experience at the lower secondary level. Theoretical knowledge in the subject matter in English education, micro-teaching, teaching practice in +2, bachelor and master level were helping me develop professionally. Similarly, I gained English language exposure from my teaching experience. As a result, I could express the answers flawlessly in English in the*

*exam. I passed my bachelor's and master's degrees regularly. Over the course of time, I found myself a confident student as well as a teacher. I realized education and teaching supported each other in shaping me as a teacher ultimately.*

Students learn theoretical knowledge regarding teaching approaches, pedagogical knowledge and teaching techniques and strategies through in-service education, which they use as a theoretical base for their classroom practice as teachers. Teaching practice and micro-teaching as essential parts of in-service education in education faculty help pre-service teachers learn the techniques of teaching. According to Elias (2018), teachers must be equipped not only with effective pedagogies and solid professional knowledge, but also with the ability to deal with changing contextual conditions, which further complicates educational practices. This needs pre-service teacher education programs that prepare teachers to deal with large social and cultural difficulties that greatly mediate educational processes in the specific environment and beyond. As a result, microteaching, as one component, contributes significantly to the scientific, productive, and meaningful nature of teacher education programs. At the same time through their teaching experience, they gain exposure to languages and skills that enhance their studies for better results.

Apart from pedagogical knowledge, teaching methods, techniques, skills, lesson plan, and material production pre-service education also need to focus on English as a medium of instruction in the language classroom. So that pre-service teachers can have lots of language exposure and practice before they get to the real classrooms as teachers. However, the students who have collected teaching experiences from private schools in their early careers do not have any problem teaching through EMI in the community schools. Therefore, the contribution of the private schools for producing the competent English teachers cannot be overlooked.

Sital expressed:

*I was a bachelor's second-year student when I started teaching at a community school in Butwal in 1999. This helped me to take financial responsibility for my study. My study and job went side by side. I completed my bachelor's degree in 2000. Then I left my job and moved to Kathmandu for further studies. After appearing M. Ed second year exam in 2003 I worked in an*

*NGO in Kathmandu. It paid me well and could manage my expenses of living and education in Kathmandu. Although, this job was not of my discipline, I felt more empowered working there. Now I am working as a head teacher in a community school and planning to join M Phil from Open University. For me learning is a lifelong process.*

Sital continued her study and job side by side from bachelor level to master level. This gave her financial independence. This reminded me of my early teaching career. I began my teaching career very early at a private school. This contributed to educational expenses of my sister and me.

Furthermore, while pursuing a Master's Degree, Sital worked in an NGO. It paid her well. It supported her in study and study boosted her teaching career. Sital is a head teacher now and still strives for M Phil and a Ph.D. Sital got empowered by in-service education and job opportunity. It developed a sense of confidence, self-esteem and dignity in her. As a result, being a head teacher, she is able to do justice to her profession and to others who work under her leadership. Young (1993) asserts that women's empowerment enables them to take charge of their own lives and outlines their goals. They can further work to support others and seek support from the government for social change. In this regard, women's empowerment appears to play a significant role in reducing the gender bias in survival that has been widely observed, particularly with regard to young girls (Sen, 2002). In a similar vein, Prema shared:

*I started teaching as a basic level teacher at a private school in Butwal while I was a bachelor-level student in 1997. After two years of experience in that school, I was made co-coordinator of the basic level among 32 teachers. But after completing my bachelor's degree, I left my job and moved to Kathmandu for master's degree in 2007. After completing my M. Ed I came back to my hometown and joined a public campus as a lecturer. Now I am the head of the English department. I wish to continue further studies. Let's see....*

Prema began teaching early in her life. She pursued her education and teaching career side by side. She, as a coordinator guided many teachers in school which developed a kind of leadership skill in her. Due to that skill and dedication to work, she got an opportunity to lead her fellow teachers wherever she worked. Her teaching career

pushed her up to complete her master's degree in 2007. Realizing the importance of in-service education, she desires to continue her M Phil degree if the situation favors her. Her experience is related to Okoye & Onokpaunu (2020) who view that higher education produces highly skilled professionals. The completion of tertiary education raises students' intellectual capacities and instills in them the virtues necessary for lifetime learning and nation-building.

All these women English language teachers except Sital have come to the city from different villages for pursuing their higher studies. Although they have completed their school education from community schools they have started teaching careers from private schools in the city while they were pursuing their higher studies simultaneously. Their early careers have empowered them financially as well as pedagogically. They got opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge that they received in campus into practical classrooms. This has directly helped them build up their English language proficiency in their performance and competence. As a result, they seem to perform well in their higher studies. Regarding higher studies and teaching career, I also share similar type of experience. I also passed my SLC from a community school and started my teaching career from a private school. My English was not pretty good then. I was assigned to teach Headway English in grade two, three and four. There were different genres of literature in the Headway English. I would prepare all the texts i.e., stories, poems, essays etc beforehand. I would read those texts, interpret them and also prepare question answer for the students. Now I realize, I had got enough exposure of English language at that time. At the same time, that was the time when English language inside the school periphery was mandatory. This also forced me to teach and speak in English language. This was helping me in my studies. I could read and write my texts fluently in English language. Not only that, I was also being financially independent from teaching. I could easily afford my campus fee, pay tuition fee and buy materials. This actually psychologically empowered me as a student and a teacher academically and financially. In the beginning days of my teaching career I used to think that teaching was disturbing my studies as I had little time for it. I also used to leave the last period to reach to school at 10:am. However, I later realized that it was actually beneficial for my studies. I passed all three years of bachelor's degree regularly. Actually this teaching experience was

building my competence and performance of English language every day. I believe that it helped me build up the foundation of English language.

### **Trainings, conferences and webinars**

This sub-theme was generated by the responses of the participants in relation to their involvement in PD activities in training, conferences and webinars. In the case of Kumud, she followed many strategies to grow up in her professional life. She shared:

*It was 2003 when I first attended NELTA International Conference in Kathmandu. I was M. Ed first-year student at that time. A team of professors and students participated in the conference together from TU. I was fascinated to see the large number of ELT professionals from home and abroad on a single platform and sharing their knowledge. Since then, I have been attending many trainings, seminars and conferences conducted by ELT associations time and again.*

Gautam (2019) writes teachers attain mastery in teaching by attending different conferences; seminars, training, and reading books that develop their professionalism with various ways. She further added:

*I formally got an opportunity to attend TPD training of the Ministry of Education in 2016 after my enrollment in a community school in Rupandehi for ten days. However, I found it inadequate and impractical as a language teacher because it could not address the problems, I was going through in my classroom in the beginning days in the community school.*

In response to a probing question on what specific problem she faced in the class during that time. She added:

*I was sent as a secondary level English teacher in a school where there was the majority of the Tharu community students. Most of the students neither could speak Nepali well nor English. The problem was that I could not speak Tharu language although I could understand it. Due to this, I could not decide what would be the appropriate methods and techniques to handle that sort of class in those days.*

She attended TPD training provided by the government and found it impractical and insufficient because it could not address her challenge of teaching to students in a different context than her previous school. She opined the TPD training of the Nepal

government needs to be made continuous addressing the varied needs of the teachers in the specific contexts.

The present TPD training seems to be a traditional system of professional development if it is compared with the standard base system proposed by Ingvarson (1998). In the in-service training of TPD, the government sets the goals. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) refers to it as TOP-down decision-making in which models employed are short-term courses or workshops that are not always connected to practical classroom problems. In the standard base system of the professional development system, professional bodies have control while deciding on goals and aiding in the implementation of models. According to Borg (2015) teachers gain bad experience from centrally enforced in-service workshops and courses. These are frequently disregarded by teachers as being irrelevant to their needs, unrealistic, and unfeasible, and having little impact on what ultimately happen in the classroom. Therefore, PD opportunities need to be designed based on real needs identified by the teachers in their day-to-day activities. It is important that schools and educators must assess their needs, cultural belief and practices to choose and apply a suitable approach out of different approaches of professional development (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Sital was sent to Gulmi district after she passed TSC exam in 2016. She narrated:

*After passing the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) exam in 2016, I started teaching at a community school in Gulmi. Though there was the provision of induction and mentoring for novice teachers from the government side, it did not happen in my case. However, my previous teaching experience helped me fix problems myself. Now realizing the importance of induction and mentoring for novice teachers, I manage these at my school where I am working as a head teacher.*

Novice teachers experience pedagogical, social and emotional problems to adjust with the school culture in the beginning days. They need to be properly mentored by the head teachers and other senior teachers at the school. The mentors need to be kind, generous with their time and resources, eager to assist, and promote a cooperative network of ties among teachers (Kapan, 2021). Sital also had an experience similar to

Kumud regarding TPD training. Although she got the opportunity of the TPD training of the government, she could not apply the theory into practice. She recounted:

In response to a probing question on what specific problem she faced in the class during that time she shared:

*I found that most of my students were not very good at writing skills. They had problem in writing in English. They could not connect the ideas using the tense properly; however, they were good in content. At that time, I was quite confused to deal with the situation. I had no idea of teaching the writing skill to that level of student. I thought training would help me solve this problem, but it was something different.*

For Sital TPD had to be context sensitive. However she did not find it contextual regarding her classroom problems. Therefore, TPD training needs to be made context sensitive administrating the need analysis of the stakeholders. In other words, according to my participant, the TPD training of the government launched in Nepal for the enhancement of teachers' professional skills and pedagogical aspects need to meet the objectives and needs of the teachers and the students. In this regard, Yumru (2015) found out teachers' requirements need to be taken into account when planning professional development activities. As a result, they can apply the skills and pedagogy to their strategic context. Additionally, TPD of the government need to go beyond the concept of 'One-size-fits-all' approach (Pistoe & Letseka, 2014) because it is not applicable for all teachers in every context. Though it is economical, has been completely ineffective (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004).

Apart from TPD training of the Nepal Government Ministry of Education, schools need to realize the importance of PD activities for teachers who are 'hungry' to do PD but have no opportunity (Li & Devin, 2021, p. 116). Teachers' educational institutions plan and design school-based and individual programs to support teachers' PD with the help of schools and the government (Dlamini, 2019). Teaching institutions can work in collaboration with training associations and the Ministry of Education at local and national levels for training the teachers.

It was during the period of the pandemic of covid-19 when the data from the participants were collected, and it had brought up unforeseen circumstances in every sector of human life including education. My research could not be complete without considering the influence of covid-19 on teachers and their professional development. As a result, I also inquired about how these individuals were utilizing this time for professional development. Sami recounted:

*During covid-19, I got an opportunity to participate in- many online courses and conferences at regional, national and international levels. I did an Open Course from American Embassy and attended training from British Council and NELTA.*

Prema utilized covid time in PD activities. She recounted:

*The covid time had really become a blessing time for my professional development. There were many opportunities for online webinars in 2020 and I earned many certificates of PD during that time. I could attend some webinars from Kitchen.*

Covid -19 time was very fruitful for women English teachers to participate in PD activities in many online forums. I myself attended some seminars, webinars and ELT courses during that time. I also attended two international courses Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on professional development from American Embassy and Arizona State University USA during the Covid time. This was possible because I could attend them without leaving my home. I did not have any burdens of travel expenses, lodging and food. Actually, It was a golden time for me to develop my profession attending many training sessions in regional, national and international levels. This experience was similar to the idea of Mody (2022) a speaker at a plenary session at the international conference of NELTA stated that online PD activities are great opportunities for women English teachers for their professional development as they could attend them from their homes. So, the experiences of the women English language teachers of online trainings have suggested for inclusion of online training courses as important PD activities in the main-stream training of the government in the future especially for women teachers. For this, the teachers need to be trained in handling the technological devices. Sami reconstructed:



*I did not get the formal opportunity of the TPD training. I consulted my seniors when I had any problems in teaching since the beginning of my career. Now, I realize that there is every solution to my problem on the internet. Most of the time, I use technology to upgrade myself professionally. We have wifi in the school.*

Teachers can use technology for professional development. They need to be skillful in handling the technological devices and can also exchange their knowledge by uploading videos independently and writing blogs. Moreover, they can present their papers online in webinars and conferences. For this, teaching institutions need to provide ICT trainings for teachers. A growing component of teacher education programs is training on the use of technology for language teaching (Hubbard, 2019). Therefore, teachers need to be technology friendly.

### **Research, Reflection and Publication**

A good teacher always makes time for reading, writing, reflecting, and publishing if he or she wants to compete in the teaching profession today (KC, 2021). When I asked my participants whether they go through reflecting self for change in teaching, do research works and go for publication as part of their professional lives, they came with these ideas. Kumud who is an M Phil scholar shared:

*In 2019, I joined M Phil in ELE at a university for updating my academic endeavor. In M Phil first semester, we were taught to practice reflective writing. In one of the classes, we were asked to write a reflection on our experience of learning and share it in the groups. We would do it in each session. I would write my reflection and share it with my classmates and they would do the same. We learnt a lot from one another's writing techniques and learning experiences. As a result, it improved my reflective writing. After this, I started connecting my practice with past experience. Then only I knew, reflecting on our own past experiences can help us shape our present teaching. As a result, I am improving my teaching every year. These days, I question myself. Has my teaching been improved? Do I teach better than the previous years?*

Her concept is similar to that of Tovey and Skolits (2022), who define reflective practice as self-awareness and contextual awareness, critical thinking and questioning, with the purpose of facilitating growth via learning and improvement. Reflective

practice, according to Calderhead and Shorrock (1997), increases teachers' understanding of the environments in which they work; assists teachers in analyzing, discussing, evaluating, and changing their own practice; enables teachers to understand the moral and ethical difficulties implicit in their work; and enables educators to have more self-control in their efforts to advance one's career and shape future educational trends. However, teachers are expected to learn about their profession not through their own experiences, but through the findings of outside so-called experts (Farrell, 2013), which is a false belief for teachers' professional development. Teachers might thus gain a lot from reflecting on their own prior experiences.

Since reflection is a requirement for action research, reflective thinking encourages teachers to conduct it in order to address common classroom issues (Blazquez, 2007). Therefore, teachers carry out action research every day in the class. They try to find out the problems in the classroom and come up with immediate solutions through small-scale studies i.e., teaching pedagogy, classroom management problem, discipline problem, problem due to the individual difference of the students etc.; however, all these activities might not be documented in the forms of reports or articles. Similarly, Sital expressed:

*I became the life member of NELTA in 2004. As a life member, I get a copy of NELTA journal every year. I built up the reading habit of the ELT articles. Similarly, I became the executive member of NELTA Palpa for 2 years. NELTA Palpa publishes ELT journal every year. Reading the ELT articles of NELTA helped me write and publish articles in the journal of NELTA Palpa in the years 2015 and 2017 although they were general articles. This helped me to work on writing book chapters. I have also published a resource book for 'Teachers Service Commission' in 2021 in collaboration with other two writers. I also got an opportunity to present a paper in collaboration with another ELT professional at NELTA virtual conference in 2022. I did not know that I could present a paper at an international conference, however, a male friend of mine who is an ELT trainer, writer and a great motivator encouraged me to do it with his collaboration. It always feels easy working with him.*

Reading, writing, and publishing are the major activities for teachers for their continuous professional growth. Reading articles, books, and journals make teachers updated with the current state of affairs and issues regarding English language teaching. In the words of Ogeyik and Akyay (2009) reading regularly fosters creativity and critical thinking in its readers. It is thought that reading improves one's abilities and capabilities to do an action. Reading academic papers help teachers carry out a similar type of studies, document them and go for presentations and publications on local, national and international platforms. Writing and presenting in pairs and groups make teachers work easily with fun and develop interpersonal skill. Writing collaboratively with colleagues offers teachers a unique pedagogical tool (Montero, 2005, p. 38). They can learn new pedagogical skills with one another. In this regard, Prema shared:

*Our school made a research cell in 2016. I am an executive member of the cell. We publish school journal every two years. This initiation of school has helped me develop the reading habit of ELT journals and articles which has further developed my writing skill, presented research papers in the seminars conducted in our school.*

Teaching institutions have to make teachers aware of professional developmental activities. Having a research cell and publishing journal in the institutions make teachers compulsion to get involved in PD activities. Teaching institutions have to allocate some money to research activities for teachers and students. The entire teaching needs to be made research based.

Apart from all these, these women teachers seem to be inspired by the women who had left a great impact on their lives. Kumud and Sami were inspired by their female teachers since their childhood to become a teacher in future. Not only had that Kumud's mother's desire for her to be independent worked as a pillar to form and shape what she is today.

### **Challenges Encountered in PD Activities**

To explore the challenges my participants encountered at different stages of the profession I asked them a few questions regarding their personal and professional lives. From the responses of the participants, I have divided this theme into the following sub-

themes: structural challenges and practical challenges which have further been sub-divided into different categories.

### **Structural Challenges**

In Nepal, gender-based discrimination against female teachers is common. Female teachers face a number of structural issues that impede their professional growth and constrict their opportunities for advancement. There are frequently few opportunities for women teachers to advance in their careers, especially in leadership positions. This may result in a "glass ceiling" that keeps women from contributing fully to the educational system and realizing their full potential.

#### **Discriminatory Practice at Workplace**

These women teachers had experienced discriminatory practices at their workplaces in one way or the other. They recalled their bitter experiences in the form of challenges in their professional lives. Regarding discriminatory practice, Sital recalled:

*After completing my master's degree in English education, both my husband and I were called to Palpa to teach at a community campus in 2006. The campus had started M Ed in English education. I was given a compulsory subject to teach to M Ed students. I share the experience of the very first day. When I entered the class, many male students left the class one by one. All girls including two boys were there in the class. This made me feel very bad. I later came to learn that they left the class because they did believe I could teach them. One of the students was reported to have questioned 'Is this lady going to teach us? Another said, 'We don't take her classes'. They questioned to my capability without observing my class on the first day. One student questioned, 'Who brought her here to teach to this level?' But after a few days of teaching, they realized that I could teach well. Surprisingly, they did not have any issues with my husband. He was as naïve as I was in teaching. Still, I feel pinched when I think about it.*

It is not the fault of these students who behaved to these man and woman teachers differently. They have become the victim of socially constructed norms where women in our societies are expected to limit household crafts. This reminded me of an incident of my youngest child in his kindergarten class. One day, I found him writing his homework.

He had written the question answer i.e. Q.1. Who cooks food in your family? Ans. My mother. Q. 2. Who earns food in the family? Ans. My father.

I felt disgusted with this type of teaching to the 21 st- generation children and therefore decided to meet the coordinator of kindergarten. After the meeting with her, I learnt that the school makes the curriculum itself for kindergarten and they teach like this because most of the students find their mother and father in the respective works at home and outside home. As a woman teacher, I advised her to re-write the answers as 'My parents' for both questions. Women's labour at home certainly contributes to the economy of the very house. It is because they are offered money if they work same thing outside home. However, since the eighteenth century, women have tried to be both women at home and men at work; they have been fighting against the narrow, socially constructed idea that a woman should devote herself to her family and her home and should not work or be productive. (Jenainati & Groves, 2007). This kind of practice is gradually continuing in our context. Educated women cannot limit themselves to household crafts. They have been putting forth a lot of effort to balance their personal lives with their careers outside home. Sital is a head teacher at a community school now and her leadership is still questioned. She recounted:

*Actually, I was supposed to become the head teacher at the school in 2019 according to my qualifications. However, I waited for the retirement of the then-head teacher due to seniority despite her qualification. After her retirement, I claimed for it, however, I got questioned by the man teachers for my capability and time management. One of the senior male teachers said, 'It is very difficult for women to take the lead, are you ready'. Another said, 'How will you manage the time?' She added:*

*They thought women teachers were not bold enough to take the lead. They were doubtful about my capabilities and time management. Such circumstances, forced me to think that I was really inferior. They thought it was difficult to work and collaborate with women. I was just taken as a representative at my workplace in the initial days. But situation is different now. They have seen my devotion and dedication in my work and responsibilities.*

Our society seems to be very traditional in practicing equal rights to women in different sectors. Though few men seem to be advocating on women and their rights they find hard to believe that women are rational beings and deserve full rights to their careers and make up their potential in equal competition to men. In case of Sital, even so called educated school teachers (men) who were less qualified than her had doubt on her capability. So it is very important to make all the people understand that men and women are equal and both play a vital role in every sector. Liberal Feminism holds a belief that women are to be equally represented in the higher level positions in the workplace. Women's integration into public life is equally crucial to the integration of men into society. The advancement of the economy, of education, of decision-making, and of the law should all involve women (Mukul, 2022 & Guy-Evans, 2023).

Kumud reconstructed:

*After attending an online workshop in creative writing conducted by British Council in 2013, I planned to disseminate it with primary-level colleagues at school. I collected some materials with the help of expert and I prepared power point presentation for this. When I went to take the head teacher's permission, he asked, "Are you sure you can do this, think once? Are you well prepared enough to handle the workshop? These questions made me feel that I was not worth enough and got back from the opportunity. I felt that a man teacher would have been easily trusted if he was in my position.*

This is one of the bitter experiences of a woman teacher. There are many incidents in women's lives when they are not heard and left unnoticed. Because most human communities place a higher emphasis on men than women, this has been happening historically. However, women do have equal status to men in some communities, such as the nomadic cultures of Asia and the Middle East (Mangols). They have the same rights to property, power, and voice as men do in their societies (Freedman, 2002). We can also create this type of balanced society if men and women are treated equally at home and workplace.

Despite the continuous efforts of these women teachers, society seems to underestimate women's leadership and professional responsibility. This type of doubt of society decreases their self-esteem and forces them to think they are less capable and

inferior to men teachers in workplace. Since men do not want to follow directions from a woman, the women on the school management team are undercut. The power is in the hands of the male leaders. The students view men as authority individuals who demand respect rather than women (Jarvis, 2013). Additionally, it reduces their productivity and inventiveness at work. As a result, they are unable to fully realize their potential; it has an adverse effect on both their PD process and the virtue of their students' performance. Parrav et al., (2016) expressed that women teachers must be given the right environment, support, and resources to manage their stress at workplace. In order to improve their functioning skills and lessen stress, teachers may change the way they approach situations in a positive way. Eventually, this will contribute to greater career satisfaction. In Sital's case she seems to have come out of this challenge. Though, society had doubts about her capability, her previous institution had faith in her duty. As a result, she was made coordinator of B. Ed level in campus in 2006. This helped her develop confidence and leadership skill, which is helping her now to work as a head teacher in a community school. She further prepared TSC exam and nailed it through open competition despite the challenges. This again added bricks to her professional life. Prema encountered a circumstance in her professional life at a community campus where there was a provision of the contract for part-time teachers having three years of experience but she did not get this opportunity. She remembered:

*After receiving my Master's Degree in 2005 at Tribhuvan University, I went back to my hometown and began working as a part-time lecturer at a community college. I was a part-time lecturer for three years. Although the campus had a provision to promote part time lecturers to contract, I did not get this opportunity but a junior man teacher got this chance. As a result, I had to quit this job feeling unsecured.*

This type of inconsistent pattern in the provision at workplace discourages teachers from professional development. Sami recounted her experience of discriminatory practices at her workplace. She shared:

*I started teaching at basic level in 2012. I was doing +2 then. With my further qualification and experience, I desired to teach at higher classes in 2016 but I was not given this opportunity. A man colleague with similar qualifications and*

*experience got promotion to lower secondary level after few years of experience but I didn't. When I kept my proposal of promotion to the administration, it replied, 'There are no women teachers in the higher classes. On the one hand they cannot handle the class if they are given. On the other hand women don't have time for preparation'. He further advised me not to be ambitious. But I did not give up and prepared myself to compete with men colleagues. That's why I am the only woman teacher who started at basic level and teaching to the +2 level.*

This experience of Sami is very much similar to my experience when I was teaching at a private school in the early days. A male colleague was upgraded to lower secondary level but I was not despite having similar qualifications and experiences. Sami further added:

*There were many experiences of being discriminated against in my early teaching career. I took that naturally in those days and remained unsatisfied. I was not aware of how I was being discriminated at my workplace. But at this level of my career, I realize that I did not have analysis capability at that time. Now I recall those days and analyze how I was treated. It makes me feel bad.*

In reply of a probing question, 'What could have made you aware of gender issues and workplace rights in those days? She added:

*In my opinion, gender issues need to be kept in courses from the elementary level. That would have helped me and many girls to understand what was going wrong around us. Training on gender issues needed to be given to women teachers. Teacher education programs should include women teachers' professional development in the course for not only creating awareness but for teaching and learning.*

Many women teachers need to be made aware of workplace rights. Moreover, they are to be trained on gender issues through professional development training. Women's rights to live a life free of fear and insecurity in the household, public, and work spheres must be promoted through awareness-raising program (Coyle, Shrestha & Thapa, 2014). The texts need to include gender themes, femininity and women teachers' PD in the course. As a result they can understand what is happening to them at the workplace, and defend and advocate for their work rights wherever they feel discriminated. Sabir (2008) argues that textbooks are typically the learner's most formal exposure and that they represent the



norm that is to be transferred. They may prove to be one of the most effective instruments for changing the learner's perspective on gender equality, human rights, and other issues. Our current curriculum should evolve to include gender issues, female involvement, constructive roles and professional development as one of its key educational priorities in order to transform the ingrained social construct of gender discrimination. These responses of the women teachers also reveal the fact that women's experiences, capability, intellectuality and leadership are often underestimated and questioned in the academia in our Nepalese contexts. However, these women English teachers are ambitious and career focused. They are updating themselves professionally balancing their family and career side by side. Despite the discrimination at the workplace, they did not lose motivation and remained positive, hopeful and believed in themselves empowering them personally and professionally. According to Hanaysha and Tahir (2016), women become more empowered when they overcome barriers and participate in activities that allow them to control their own destinies. People who are empowered have access to the criticism, instruction, and expertise they need to complete their work successfully. People who are empowered experience a sense of ownership and pride in their work, and they are recognized for the critical role they play in the success of their profession as a whole (Dew, 1997).

#### Social Fear of Working in Collaboration with the men-counterparts

Sami had an experience of quitting the job due to social fear in her past life. She recalled:

*After completing a master's degree in English language education, I got an opportunity to teach at a public campus that was 30 km away from my place. I was given classes for a bachelor's degree. I had to take the first period that started at 6: 30 am in the morning. Though it was difficult to reach that early to that distant college, I could manage it. I used to go by scooter. One day I met an accident on the way. After taking a rest for a few days, I started going to the campus on a colleague's bike. He was a male colleague. After a few days of up-down with him, I started feeling uncomfortable in his company. One day I said to him that I was feeling cold to travel on two-wheelers. I need to use the bus instead. Actually, I was lying. Then, I started using the public vehicle for the campus with preventive measures because it was covid time. I would always get*

*late to the first class because the bus never dropped me on time. I was questioned by the administration for being late. I put my problem and requested to change my period but it did not happen saying that one must be on time in the campus. So, one day I decided to quit my job and finally did it.*

After this sharing I asked Sami a probing question: You said you felt uncomfortable travelling on your male colleague's bike to the job. What made you feel uncomfortable? Did you face any type of verbal or physical abuse from your male colleague on the way or you had any other reason? In response to this question, she replied:

*No, he was a good friend of mine. He never made me feel uncomfortable; neither verbally nor physically but I sensed something odd from the school community. I got scared. Both of us had our families. I thought not to continue this any further. Therefore, I decided not to travel on his bike anymore. So, I stopped. But this had a negative impact on my professional life. I got late on the bus. I left my job just because of that circumstance.*

If Sami had a female coworker, she never would have felt awkward travelling together in our culture. She would have continued her job and would get financially more stable. Furthermore, her confidence would be higher as she had the opportunity to teach bachelor-level students at that college. Due to this type of societal fear, it is more challenging for women teachers to walk and work together with men counterparts for upgrading their professionalism. As a result, women teachers are hindered from taking advantage of PD opportunities and prevented from realizing their full potential for attaining self-empowerment. This type of social barrier causes anxiety in women, which has a negative impact on their performance, which is directly tied to students' successes. Ashworth (2018) argues that men and women must collaborate for better outcome in any institution. When good men and women work together, they establish more effective teams, achieve greater outcomes, and contribute to an institution's sustainability.

Sami who lives in a joint family recounted:

*I live in a joint family. In our society daughter-in-laws are expected to complete household stuff at any context. I am expected the same. It does not matter if I have an exam the next day. Although my family is educated, we do not have the culture*

*of serving tea to daughter- in- law by father- in- law. My husband occasionally attempts to help me in the kitchen, but we are both conscious of what the rest of the family and visitors might think if they saw it.*

The age-old cultures and traditions are still dominant in our societies where women are expected to serve the family members. Educated women still have not come out of it. They are trying to make the family happy following the traditions and suppressing their pains. They are afraid that if they go against the norms, their relationships might be ruined. Therefore, it is very difficult for women to balance work and family due to a lack of time, support from their husbands, and workplace cultural norms and gender biases, which can have a negative impact on women's health as well as being a barrier to their career advancement when compared to men (Sciotto, 2022). Here's where I can share my own experience. We live in a nuclear family. My husband prepares lunch for the family and takes the kids to school every day while I work the morning shift. However, when he is with his other family members, he feels odd doing what he does every day.

In the same prospect, Sital was taking responsibility for her two kids alone at the time of the interview. Her husband, who just completed Ph.D., lives in another district for his job. Interestingly, they were classmates since their bachelor's degrees. She shared one of her experiences of managing her home and job. She uttered:

*As an English teacher, I have to take coaching classes for grade 10 that starts at 6 am. So, I get up at 4 am and prepare lunch for the family. After I get back from coaching, I feed my kids and make them ready for the school. I reach school at 9:30 again.*

I asked her a probing question about taking responsibility of the kids alone and her husband earning PhD early as both of them were classmates since their bachelor's degree. In response, she seemed to believe that mothers take good care of children. She was happy and satisfied raising her kids under her supervision and was pleased for her husband's success. However, she hoped to resume M Phil in Open Mode soon.

The truth is that women go through reproduction biologically, but the assumption of the biological motherhood is the myth that all children need their mothers, which is itself based on erroneous reasoning. Children can be cared for by either their fathers or mothers. There is no difference between them as caregivers (Oakley, 1974 as cited in

Jenainati & Groves, 2007). In families when both parents work, raising children is a shared responsibility between the parents.

However, in the second round of interview, I again asked the same question to Sital but in a different way. This time I found the question triggered her more. I asked, ‘Do you think your husband was more capable for being able to enjoy more professional opportunities and achievements than you?’ This time I could read her emotions in her eyes. She said, she never felt that she was less capable than him. In fact, she sounded bold and confident to tell her internal feelings this time and admitted that whatever the academic degrees and professional capabilities one has, a woman is always made more responsible for rearing the kids. But in the first interview, she did not tell what she really had felt. It shows that women are suppressed to express their internal feelings due to the social and cultural values that make them to believe that they parent better than their husbands and have to be happy in their husband’s achievements. Whatever the circumstances Sital has at present, I found her progressive and optimistic. She sounded determined to begin further studies in near future.

### **Practical Challenges**

Women teachers face numerous practical challenges while balancing motherhood and job responsibilities. In our context, women are frequently expected to take on a greater share of the care giving and household duties which directly and indirectly impede their profession.

#### ***Motherhood in-between Education and Career***

All the participants began their teaching career while they were studying intermediate and bachelor degree. Their motherhood came up as a challenging factor between their career and studies. In this prospect, Kumud shared:

*I remember I was a mother of a child when I passed B Ed in 2004. I was teaching at a private school as a lower secondary level teacher. I did not have any plan to leave my job and continue further studies going to Kathmandu. There was M.A in English at my place but I did not like to join it. However, my husband encouraged me to go for M Ed in Kirtipur. But I had a big question in my mind: what to do with 2 years son? Then my husband planned to keep him with in-laws in Gulmi. I went to Kathmandu, my son was sent to the village and my husband stayed in*

*Butwal. Many times, I thought to quit my studies and get back holding my child. However, two years passed, and I got back to my family. I am still indebted to my in-laws, who are no more now, who supported me in my academic and professional life.*

Despite the hurdle, Kumud went on to pursue higher studies leaving her 2 years son with in-laws. It was a wise decision of her husband to send her to complete her studies. It was equally tough for him to stay away from his family and continue his job. In fact, it would not have been possible for Kumud to get academically sound if her husband and in-laws had followed the traditional roles assigned to women in our society and had not permitted her to pursue her career. This type of decision makes the family economically and socially strong and happy in a long run. Kumud further reported that she could not have another baby for a long time due to her career. She recounted:

*I wanted to have another baby after 4 years gap of my first child but I could not plan it accordingly. It's because I was struggling to be settled down in my job. I wanted my job to be secured first. Therefore my two children have a long gap in their births. I felt very difficult to go through the process of childbirth after such a gap. First it took me some years to prepare myself mentally for another birth.*

This experience of Kumud reminded me of my own experience of pregnancy. I have two children and both of them are planned ones. I planned to deliver them in the month of Ashar and Shrawan because after the maternity leave for 45 days I could take rest for a month in Dashain vacation. So, working women have multiple responsibilities to balance i.e., familial to biological responsibility of bearing children including job responsibility. It's their right to give birth to children according to their wish although all working women are not able to enjoy this right in our context. It's a great challenge for these women to balance their family planning and professional planning. However, there are few women teachers who seem to have been balancing both. They are professionally very sound having a balanced familial life but there is a great struggle behind their untold success stories. These women teachers are the real role models for other working teachers and girls aspiring to be teachers in future. Therefore, sometimes their stories need to be told, listened and shared in the academia. They should be offered opportunities to share their stories to other women teachers inculcating their expertise, which is the real mantra

of narrative inquiry. According to Sadler (2021), everyone has a story to tell. Stories that touch our hearts, broaden our minds, and lift our spirits are powerful and must be told. In the similar vein, Sital stated:

*I left my two kids aged 7 and 3 with my husband when I got appointed to a community school in Gulmi after I passed TSC exam in 2016. I left them in Palpa and went to Gulmi. However, my daughter aged 3 could not leave away from me. She wanted to stay with me. I took her to Gulmi with me and admitted her to a private school.*

Therefore, men and women have to go beyond socially constructed roles to get empowered together. Many men and women follow the traditionally assigned roles for men and women which is a great hindrance to the progress of the family. Humanist feminists argue that both men and women are forced into socially constructed gender roles that prevent them from becoming their true selves (Jenainati & Groves, 2007).

Regarding familial support, Prema remembered:

*I took my mother-in-law to Kathmandu to look after my son who was only 2 years old when I started my Master's Degree at Tribhuvan University in 2003. However, I struggled every day to manage time for my study and my son.*

Prema too had familial support to face the challenge of her academic and professional career. Her mother-in-law also took a challenge to help her daughter-in-law. She left her husband in the village and went to Kathmandu with Prema to support her.

Similarly, Sami recalled her days of motherhood:

*I was teaching in a private school, and I was also a bachelor's level student when I delivered my first baby in 2015. I took a long break from my job to raise my child. However, I continued my job when my maternal mother took care of my child in day-time. I remember, I used to drop him with my mother and pick him up after my school was over. Now I remember, that time was full of struggle.*

This experience of Sami reminded me of my days of motherhood. I had two shifts job (morning and day) when I delivered my first child. Although I lived in a nuclear family, my maternal mother took responsibility for my child to see him in the daytime and my husband in the morning. This helped me continue my jobs. This type of familial support helps women to come out of any type of challenges that come on the way on their

professional lives. The above experiences of women teachers reveal that family support is very important to their professional lives. If there was no support for their family, these women teachers wouldn't have achieved what they have now. However, many women teachers in our context do not have this type of familial support from their husbands and family members. As a result, they are forced to be satisfied with what they have. Bhusal (2015) in her study found that the primary influencing elements for the professional growth of women English teachers were organizational and familial support morally and emotionally.

### ***Double Responsibility of Home and Work***

These all participants started their teaching careers early in their lives. In the time of the interview, I found them working in double shifts either in the same school or in different colleges. All of them had managed their time for interview either face to face on Saturday morning or in the evenings on Zoom. In the time of the interview also they were intervened time and again. So, they had another challenge of managing the home responsibility and job responsibility. They recalled their stories. Kumud expressed:

*As a mother and a teacher, I have been managing my home and career for 20 years. It is my duty to cook food and serve the family members although my husband buys food stuff and takes my responsibility in my absence. I kept a helper to look after my kids when they were small. There are many incidents when I felt distressed, embarrassed, and annoyed due to the double responsibility. I recall one of them here. Recently there was a webinar hosted by STFT. I had to make dinner for the family because the webinar started at 7 o'clock in the evening. Even though the webinar on ICT was very important to me, I had to skip it.*

It is a fact that working women have double responsibilities of home and the workplace in our societies. Additionally, they have the biological responsibility of being mothers as well. Whatever the qualifications and positions they hold; they are expected to take the responsibility of serving the family at home and raising the kids. These always come as barriers in their professional lives. As a result, they are reluctant to many professional opportunities. However, liberal feminists typically support equal partnership in marriage as well as greater male involvement in parenting (Mukul, 2022).

Despite all these challenges these women teachers seem to enjoy PD opportunities being involved in different activities. They are progressive and up-word moving. In this study, these women teachers are found goal oriented and independent decision-makers about their education, career, and reproduction in comparison to the women teachers a few years back in Nepal. The main reason for this was that these women teachers began their careers before marriage and were financially independent. Financial independence led them to empowerment. Therefore, it is very important for girls to get educated and settled down in careers prior to marriage for balancing a personal and professional life in our context. Friedan (1963) asserted that if women were able to manage all of their domestic responsibilities, they would have the time and energy to pursue professional careers. This would provide them with both private and public satisfaction (as cited in Jenainati & Groves, 2007). The knowledge of the English language itself is a major tool for their professional growth and empowerment. Poudel (2017) found out that English language proficiency serves as a weapon for the empowerment of women. Women who are fluent in English believe that they have many possibilities in society, and that these opportunities have helped them become strong and capable individuals. The ability and independence lessen gender disparities by battling stereotype-based gender discrimination.

Despite their personal efforts for professional growth, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with training associations and teaching institutions need to provide sufficient training opportunities for women teachers that are contextually appropriate for their needs. For that Need Analysis can be carried out before conducting teacher training. In the case of women teachers, pre-service and in-service courses should include gender-related themes to make them aware of the odd practices at home and workplace. Furthermore, women English teachers need to be treated in terms of equity at home and workplace rather than equality. Apart from home and workplace responsibility, these professional women have biological responsibility as well which needs to be seen through the lance of equity. If this is taken into consideration, they certainly can do justice to their profession as they are not inferior in terms of wisdom and intellect. Regarding opportunities and challenges on professional development, these women teachers are found to enjoy PD opportunities in their careers. Most of the time, they have



created PD opportunities on their own. They are progressive and intellectual. They have faced few challenges due to the patriarchal mind set of the people in the society.

However, they are supported by their husbands for continuing further studies; take up PD opportunities and home management more or less. Coincidentally, all the husbands of the four participants are engaged in teaching field. They have understood the potentiality of their better-halves in their careers. They are also familiar with the nature of the work and possible challenges in the career. As a result, they seem to be supportive, motivating and practical.

### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I presented the analysis of the responses of the participants based on the second research question about opportunities and challenges of professional development. I put the analysis of the PD opportunities under three sub-titles: in-service education as the way of life, individual practice for PD and researching, reflecting, and publishing. Similarly, I put the analysis of the PD challenges under other three sub-titles: motherhood in-between education and career, discriminatory practice at the work-place and double responsibility of home and work. In other words, the participants were found to value professional development opportunities. They continued their higher education while working, attending government TPD training, and participating in various types of conferences, seminars, webinars, and workshops. As part of their professional development efforts, they wrote, researched, and published. Obviously, they experienced numerous hurdles throughout their professional careers. It was a great challenge for them to balance their professional and personal lives, as well as parenting in the middle of their careers. They felt inferior to their male colleagues at work and were frequently discriminated against as female teachers by the administration.

## CHAPTER VII

### INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter begins with the insights I gained from the entire procedure. Then, it includes the conclusion I've reached in the study. Similar to that, this chapter also incorporates some of the implications I thought were important as a way to wrap up my work followed by the reflections of this research journey.

#### **Key Insights**

*A young village girl of teen  
Comes to the city to be heard and seen.  
Starts studies and career for specialization  
Feels independent and driven.  
But being a teacher and a mother  
Has a challenge one after another.  
Frequently considers ending her job  
But once more, she blooms like a phoenix bird.  
Reads, researches, presents and talks  
Seminars, workshops and trainings are her professional works  
Inspires and motivates many other girls  
Aspire to be a strong, independent woman like her.*

Above poetic lines are the insights I have gained from the life stories of my participants in terms of professional development opportunities and challenges they have encountered to come to present positions. In the study, the main research question 'How do women English teachers at the secondary level in community schools enhance themselves professionally' has been guided by additional questions about their understanding of PD, take up the PD opportunities and challenges that they encountered and strategies they followed for the professional development. They took PD as a life-long process and have gone beyond the formal settings of TPD training. They believed in updating themselves according to their needs and the level of

the students. For that TPD training of the government needs to be made sufficient and context sensitive. The strategy ‘one size fits all’ (Quadhi, 2017) is extraneous. This expression of the participants indicates that teachers’ needs require to be analyzed before launching any type of training. Understanding the training needs of employees involves recognizing performance gaps and figuring out where the gaps might be filled by enhancing skills and knowledge (Betti, 2021). If trainings are conducted analyzing the needs of the teachers, they can have a positive impact on their classroom performances. Students may as a result see improvements in their academic performances. For that, the Ministry of Education has to work with training organizations and academic institutions to ensure that teachers have access to sufficient training opportunities on the basis of their needs. They also understand that for teachers’ professional development, teachers need to share their expertise on national and international platforms through conferences, seminars, webinars, and workshops.

Their narratives also pinpointed that they took up many professional opportunities to engage themselves in different PD activities formally and informally throughout their professional lives. These women teachers started teaching and higher studies side by side. Some had to work to fund their studies, while others wanted to be financially independent. Teaching, however, supported their studies and through higher education, they acquired theoretical understanding and instructional techniques to become better teachers. But later they realized the importance of continuing career and in-service training for their professional enhancement.

From their narratives, I also found that they have come to this long professional way of updating themselves on their own. Apart from the formal training of TPD, they attended conferences, seminars, and workshops for updating themselves. They also revealed that webinars were very good opportunities for their professional growth during a pandemic situation. They took the help of their mentors whenever they needed it. Social media like Google, You Tube, Wikipedia, and Blogs were the additional digital platforms for their professional support.

Additionally, they groomed themselves through action research and self- reflection. They carried out small-scale research in their classrooms and solved day-to- day problems of teaching and learning. They improved their teaching by reflecting upon their past and

questioning to self. Furthermore, they read scholarly journals, wrote articles and book chapters, and presented and published in national and international platforms.

Their professional journey was full of challenges, though. They have overcome many challenging aspects of their lives to come to their present status. These women teachers also had to deal with workplace discrimination. Their leadership and capacity were frequently questioned. They were not promoted believing that they were unable to control the higher classes and expected to perform like motherly figures for the junior students. However, they did not give up. They continued their higher studies, got involved in professional activities and kept competing with men counterparts and maintained their professional status. Another obstacle in many teachers' professional paths was managing their responsibilities at home and at work. Due to their dual responsibilities, they were under pressure. They had professional obligations in addition to caring for their family as a mother, wife, and in-law.

However, they took up every opportunity for gaining knowledge and skills that made them competent, confident, and resourceful. Despite many personal and professional barriers in their lives, they did not give up. They continued with higher studies, focused on their career, and got involved in lots of PD activities that shaped them as professionals.

### **Conclusion**

I carried out this research using the interpretive paradigm and a qualitative research design. I collected the data from interviews with the participants and narratives were analyzed. I delimited this study on teachers' understanding and experiences in connection to a socio-cultural understanding regarding gender. Based on the study's findings, I have reached the following conclusions. To sum up; the study's insights are helpful to me in coming to these conclusions.

It can be concluded that these women English teachers seem to take PD as a continuous process, help update professionalism through learning and share the art of teaching going beyond the confines of TPD training administered by the Ministry of Education. They understand that TPD is important to learn teaching skills, teaching strategies and update their professionalism; however, TPD launched by the government is not sufficient and context-sensitive. In one hand, training time for TPD is insufficient. On

the other hand, it is not practical because it does not take need analysis of the stakeholders into consideration. TPD in Nepal is rather traditional. It is centrally enforced which can not address the practical classroom problems of the teachers teaching in different contexts. Teachers get bad experiences from this type of practice. In addition, many women English teachers are facing problems in coping with EMI in public schools. Their stories also make it clear that they grab many professional opportunities and participate in a variety of formal and informal TPD activities for PD. Most of them are found to begin their careers in teaching from private schools and advance study side by side. The early teaching career is not only helpful for their financial independence; it assists them in better results in academic achievements and vice versa. However, they gradually come to understand the value of ongoing career and in-service training for their professional development.

It is also explored that they have developed a long professional path for upgrading themselves. In addition to the TPD's official training sessions, they have updated themselves by attending conferences, seminars, and workshops. Additionally, they acknowledge that during the pandemic, webinars remain beneficial for PD. They also develop themselves through self-reflection, and action research. Additionally, they read scholarly journals, write book chapters, deliver lectures at home and abroad, and publish their works in journals all of which have given them a sense of psychological and professional empowerment.

These women English teachers have faced many challenges in their working lives. They have overcome numerous difficult obstacles throughout their lives to reach their current position. Motherhood, in-service education, familial and professional responsibilities, workplace discrimination is some of the major challenges they have encountered. In recent days, they seem to have been aware of their rights and advocate and practice them actively in their personal and professional lives.

Despite the challenges, they persist in pursuing higher education, concentrating on their careers, and participating in numerous PD activities that help to mold them into professionals. In fact, these women teachers were found to be more goal-oriented and independent decision-makers about their education, career, and reproduction than women teachers in Nepal a few years ago. The primary reason for this was that these female

teachers began their careers prior to marriage and were financially self-sufficient. As a result, financial independence empowered them. Therefore, it is important for girls to be educated and establish a career before marrying.

### **Implications**

From the understanding of women English language teachers on professional development, I found that they take TPD training of the government as an important medium for the professional development of English teachers. However, they viewed it as not adequate and context sensitive. TPD training needs to be made more adequate and context sensitive identifying the skills and knowledge gap administrating the need analysis tool for teachers, students and the institutions before conducting TPD for teachers. In other words, TPD needs to be designed based on real needs identified by the teachers in their day to day classroom activities. Teachers' requirements need to be taken into account when planning professional development activities. The effectiveness of TPD program needs to be monitored and assessed by collecting the feedback from the participants and supervisors for further improvement. TPD should also provide special training for teachers who are having difficulty coping with EMI in public schools. These training needs to be extended and made continuous throughout one's professional life and also encourage teacher educators to get involved in continuous learning culture attending conferences, seminars, webinars, workshops etc. For that TPD center can collaborate with training associations and teaching institutions. Furthermore, the experts delivering TPD need to be well qualified and experienced. Additionally, women English teachers need to be made aware to be engaged in online training and other forms of formal and informal TPD activities and events apart from the present TPD training of the Ministry of Education in Nepal.

Similarly, women teachers in Nepal suffer from discriminatory practices at their workplaces. Most of them do not defend against these due to the lack of awareness about women rights and professional rights. Therefore, policies about training on gender themes need to be conducted for women teachers to make them aware of their professional rights and get empowered to debate on workplace discrimination. Furthermore, teacher education programs should include women English teachers' professional development in its course. In the study, motherhood was found as one of the

hindering factors for working women. The study concluded that reproduction is biological, but motherhood is not. Parenting can be done by both men and women. This should not be the question while appointing women for job opportunities. For the empowerment of the women teachers' professionalism, the policy regarding leaves, salary, and some training sessions need to be made not only on the basis of equality but from the lens of equity as women teachers have multiple responsibilities i.e., familial, biological and professional in the context of Nepal.

For creating this planet as a better place to live in, all sorts of discrimination to women must be eradicated. Education is a great weapon for change. It is only possible by educating people in general and girls in particular. Change at the grassroots level is required. If women and their issues, gender roles and femininity are covered in texts from the very beginning, the younger generation will have a greater understanding of equality and equity in relation to gender.

This study covers a small size sample of a particular district for exploration on professional development; therefore, findings of the study may not be applicable in all sorts of context. At the same time, I believe that this study is potential for guiding other researchers for carrying out studies incorporating many issues related to women English teachers that can be included in further research. Gender-specific training for women English teachers, incentives for women English teachers' for greater participation in training, the inclusion of women English teachers as mentors and trainers in training etc. are some of the areas that might help to explore more on women English teachers' professional development.

### **Reflection**

On one fine afternoon in December, 2019, I got a call from my colleague Dr. Ksheetri . He informed me about the block mode of M Phil of Kathmandu University. He also shared with me about a group of scholars who were planning to join it as the first batch. After that, I consulted one of the group members, prepared my documents and got admitted. In our first semester, we had two papers: Research Methodology and Applied Linguistics.

In one of the research classes, our research teacher Dr. Suresh Gautam asked us to select a topic of interest for the research. 'Reading Habit of the students' came to my

mind immediately. As an ELT practitioner, I wanted to explore on the reading habit of the students at the basic level in community schools. When I shared it to him, he asked me to go through the literature in this area. After going through some literature review in this area, I developed it into a research proposal. In addition, I published an article on it and gave a presentation on the topic at an international conference. However, in the second semester, we had a paper on professional development. After going through a few classes, I changed my mind not to further continue with my reading habit but to work on the professional development of the teachers. Due to many thick and thin in my own professional career as a woman English teacher, I decided to conduct my study on the professional development of women English teachers outside the valley. I have my own narratives in my academic and professional life. Being a woman English teacher has brought about a lot of ups and downs for me. Sometimes the social conventions for women were a barrier in my work life, and other times my biological attribute of going through reproduction did. However, my continuous efforts to enhance my performance while participating in several PD events and activities helped me to remain steady in my job and compete in the global market. By sharing my experiences, I wanted to shed light on other women English teachers' PD opportunities and difficulties in their professional lives. Through this narrative study, I want their voices to be heard in the ELT arena and issues addressed through academic discourse.

After this, I consulted with professor Gnawali. He suggested me to read some literature in this area. I read some studies on professional development that were carried out in our context and the international context. The literature went beyond PD; some were about creating an identity of women English teachers. I divided the literature review section into three sub-categories: thematic review, theoretical review and empirical review. Under thematic review, I reviewed two major concepts: conceptualizing professional development and PD activities for teachers. These two concepts make the idea of PD clear in the context of women English teachers' professional development. After this, I choose Empowerment and Liberal Feminism as a theoretical base for the study. Besides these, I also reviewed some studies on PD in the national and international contexts. Among many studies on PD, few were carried out on women English teachers.



In the context of Nepal, I found few studies on women English teachers, and they were valley centered. Therefore, I decided to study women English teachers in my locality. After this, I selected narrative inquiry as the research method for the study. The rest of the research design followed the framework of the narrative inquiry method. Then I developed interview guidelines and reframed them as per the suggestions of my research supervisor. I selected four women English teachers as the participants for the study. With their consent, I met two of the participants in person and two on Zoom for the first round of interviews. However, managing time for the interview was extremely difficult for my participants for the second time. Then I decided to take it online. They were easily available for the online interview.

For the analysis part, I developed three themes on the basis of two research questions. The first theme dealt with how these women English teachers perceive PD, the second theme was on their PD opportunities, and the challenges they encountered during professional journey.

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