

February 2023

Paradoxes Faced by Women Teachers in Practicing Professional Ethics in Undergraduate Colleges in Nepal

Mamta Sitaula
St. Xavier's College, Nepal

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Sitaula, Mamta (2023) "Paradoxes Faced by Women Teachers in Practicing Professional Ethics in Undergraduate Colleges in Nepal," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1, Article 19. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss1/19>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

Paradoxes Faced by Women Teachers in Practicing Professional Ethics in Undergraduate Colleges in Nepal

By Mamta Sitaula¹

Abstract

Women instructors teaching in undergraduate colleges face much unethical behavior during the tenure of their professional lives. The feeling of clashing their professional ethical concerns with institutional misconduct is wisely explained as “experience of professional ethical considerations.” This study adopted a qualitative research design with a humanist research paradigm. I adopted auto/ethnography to study the phenomenon where I myself was a participant in order to relate the feelings of “self” with the other participants. Data saturation was maintained by interviewing five women teachers from different private colleges of Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. The findings were compared and contrasted with various ethical paradigms such as care, justice, critique, and silence. This study is substantiated from theoretical perspectives, and the findings revealed that gender discrimination still exists among men and women teachers at the undergraduate level in Nepal. Therefore, in order for colleges to foster or establish gender-friendly environments, there is a dire need of consciousness amongst the administration, the stakeholders, and the women teachers as well.

Keywords: Ethics, Professional ethics, Women teachers, Higher education, Gender equality

Introduction

Looking at the present scenario, I am aware that much has been contributed to the educational sector in Nepal to achieve gender equality. Women are equally given importance to men to enter and grow in this profession. CEDAW Nepal (2018) recommends that women should be given opportunities to express their concerns freely, and their age, special circumstances, and authority should be taken into consideration to understand their perspectives (p. 9). Hence, in many situations, a desirable environment has been created and is being developed more so that women teachers experience a high quality of work life during their teaching tenure. In this section, I want to share how reforms have been made to encourage women’s participation, gender equality, and social inclusion in Nepal. It is stated in the *Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal* (2015) that, “There shall not be any physical, mental, sexual or psychological or any other kind of violence against women, or any kind of oppression based on religious, social and cultural tradition, and other practices” (pt. 3, art. 38, § 3) and “women shall have the right to get special opportunity in the spheres of education, health, employment and social security on the basis of positive discrimination” (pt. 3, art. 38, § 4). In the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007), Article 4 states that our country is “independent, sovereign, secular, inclusive and a fully democratic State.” Article 35 focuses on the special priority for women (Government of Nepal, 2007a, pp.

¹ Mamta Sitaula completed her M Phil in Development Studies from Kathmandu University, Nepal in 2018. Currently she is a Faculty of Research/Department Research Coordinator at St. Xavier’s College, Department of Social Work, Nepal. She is an Executive Member at an NGO, Nepali Women’s Global Network (NWGN). She has twice received the “Fathers Locke and Stiller Research Awards” for her excellent research work. She is a social worker and a researcher.

5-21). Paudyal (2013) also highlighted that, after the restoration of democracy, the 1990 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal provisioned an inclusive policy with specific provision to promote the rights of women, children, elderly, and people with disabilities (p.16). It is visible that progress has been made so far to include women's participation in most of the professional and economic sectors. For the sake of poverty reduction, they included teaching (Tenth Plan, 2001-2007). This review of literature establishes the current protections for women teachers in the Nepali professional educational context.

It is my analysis that, on the one hand, the government is emphasizing women's participation in the teaching profession and on other hand, women teachers are still facing gender discrimination. Apart from discovering all these gender inclusion protections and goals, which are practiced in most cases, I have still come across unethical practices and discrimination everywhere in my personal and professional life as a woman teacher. As expressed by the authors Tašner et al. (2017), though teaching is categorized as a highly gendered profession dominated by women, we still need to give special attention to gender when discussing education (p. 49). In this research, the participating women teachers and I have experienced gender discrimination in the teaching profession in Nepal, which has continuously been neglected as an issue. In Nepali culture, gender discrimination is supposed to be a taboo, where its existence is felt in every context, but it is still supported and shrouded in myths. Any country's economy is boosted by the participation of women (Government of India, 2007, p.184); this includes our Nepalese context too. Women are equal contributors in our economy, but I have observed that they are least identified and respected as contributors. It is found that the social structure of Nepali society is governed by the belief system that emphasizes the continued existence of patriarchal norms and values in some way or another (Dhungel, 2019; p. 368). Therefore, perhaps the disregard for women is a faulty judgment from the still existent patriarchal system that does not want to help eradicate the inequality and discrimination from the root of our Nepalese culture. As a result of this, women teachers unfortunately must face patriarchal systems in their daily professional life.

In their article, Normore & Jean-Marie (2009) insist on making education leaders aware of the various forms of explicit and implicit forms of oppression (p. 4). This is quite relevant in the contemporary context because, like me, my participants are also the victims of all these practices. Reflecting on my personal experience, I could say that at one end, female teachers are supported; they are given priorities over the male teachers, but at the other end, in most of the situations, female teachers are overlooked as if their presence does not matter at all. There exist feelings of bias, as well as a bitter perception of the places and people to whom these women teachers give their attention as a professional educator. These personal concerns of women teachers stimulate various controversies and contradictions of feeling within them. As Bustard notes, "The negative beliefs stress the importance of professional ethics by illustrating the substantial impact that the mishandling of ethical issues can have on an organization" (Bustard, 2017, p. 694). To my understanding, this results in dissatisfaction with one's career choice and a demoralizing working environment. Therefore, there needs to be some policies planned and amended in favor of women teachers, which may help to address the problems that are continuing to impair the professional integrity of the working environment.

Theoretical Guidelines

In this study, some theoretical groundwork is necessary to justify this research and to understand the professional ethics of female teachers. The authors Shapiro & Gross (2013)

introduce what they call “turbulence theory” to explain the unusual disturbances that may happen in anyone’s life to change the significance of a particular scenario. With reference to this theory, I was successful in revealing the significance of certain disturbances in my participants' and my own professional settings. The reason why I want to add this theory here is because my participants and I had experienced the same unexpected, turbulent circumstances that, in turn, influenced our respective personal lives.

Feminism is also a crucial theory because it often speaks for women and girl’s empowerment. In the patriarchal society of Nepal, girls and women are suppressed and oppressed. Henceforth, feminist theory has been an awakening for women in our country. With consciousness about feminism, girls and women, whether in urban or rural areas, are very much concerned with their rights to a fair and equal society.

Critical theory has also helped me to see the injustices faced by women professors in their working context. It has facilitated me to visualize the ethical consensus they are adopting. For all these years working as a professor in various colleges, the thought of discrimination has been swirling in my conscious mind and I have grasped for some kind of solution. Critical theory has helped me to be awakened critically and to reflect on gender equality in the teaching profession.

History of Female Teachers in Nepal

The history of female teachers in Nepal can be explained with reference to a few sociological research surveys that were conducted by UNESCO Consultant in the year 1970-71, CEDA in 1971-73, and a survey conducted again by CEDA in 1981-82. I was able to be acquainted with some data which explained some factors that were affecting girl’s formal education opportunities along with a lack of economic resources supporting women’s advancement. These factors were creating barriers; therefore, the government of Nepal prioritized providing adequate infrastructural facilities along with encouraging girls' participation in education and women’s employment in teaching.

The report found that girls were inside their house and did not attend school because of household chores and low economic status. And on top of that, previously, parents thought girls should not attend school because most of the teachers were men. Therefore, to encourage enrollment of girls in formal schooling, the government of Nepal initiated a plan to appoint women teachers with the logic that if women teachers were present then parents would send their daughters to school. Not only this, the government further encouraged girls' education through the incentive of economic benefits. This was one reason that the government started to train women for their placement and retention in the teaching profession. Another reason was that, since women were less educated, there were less opportunities for women to enter into the teaching profession. It was a tragedy that in some cases, some had not attended school at all. Subsequently, this resulted in very few or no women teachers in schools and colleges. The report also found that other factors were lacking in schools such as inadequate facilities for female teachers and students. Looking at all these scenarios, the government formulated and implemented plans to inspire women’s enrollment in education and teaching in Nepal.

Present Scenario of Female Teachers

According to Bista (2005), the problem of gender disparity is increasing. The indicators suggest that girls are lagging behind boys in terms of enrollment, retention, grade promotion and learning achievement (p. 1). This is one reason that girls are more likely to drop out of school, which

further the problem of less women's participation in every field of economic development in Nepal. This low educational attainment also correlates to the low percentage of women joining teaching as a profession. Women reported a higher unemployment rate of 13.1 percent, which is 2.8 percentage points higher compared to males (Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/18, p. XI). According to Paudyal (2013), only 26 percent of women have paid employment in Nepal. The average monthly earning is 3,402 rupees for women and 5,721 for men (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2008, pp. 65-89). This indicates either they are paid less, or they are engaged in lower paid jobs. In certain economic sectors such as civic service, employment of women is as low as 15 percent (Paudyal, 2013 as cited in Ministry of General Administration). Overall, gender disparity is shown to have a significant impact on the employment opportunities and outcomes for women in Nepal.

The low participation of women in the education field incited action to increase the number of women educators from 19% in 1980, to 23% in 1990, and now 52.6% in 2017 (Bajracharya, 2020, p. 9). The UGC Report (2010/11) exposes that there is a tremendous increase in the higher education enrollment of women. The report further suggests that in the last thirty years, women's enrollment in higher education is higher than men's: "Furthermore, if we observe the share trend from 1980 to 2010, the share of males has been declining (changed from 81 percent to 58.2 percent) whereas it has increased sharply in case of females (19 percent to 41.8 percent)" (p. 10). Planned efforts to improve the situation of women began in the Sixth Plan (1981-1985), but the approach was welfare driven. In the Tenth Plan (2001-2007), however, progress was made to include women's participation in most of the sectors for the sake of poverty reduction, including teaching. This further indicates that the chance of women's participation in employment is increasing.

After many reforms to involve women in the educational sector in Nepal, policies and planning were made to introduce a new concept so as to boost inclusion in this sector. This was done to enhance the participation of girls from other minority and marginalized communities in order to fulfill the motto of "Education for All (EFA)." Therefore, the objective was formulated keeping in mind that, "just as having a woman teacher tends to attract girl students, having Janajati or Dalit staff has a positive impact on those groups" (DFID & World Bank Report, 2006, p.18). The main vision to formulate and implement this plan was to involve more and more female students in schools and women teachers in education for economic development. Though there has been a tremendous increase in women engaging in education training and employment in the educational sector, still, a sense of inequality and uncertainties experienced by women persists.

Methodology

My research study is based on qualitative research, and I adopted a humanist research paradigm in order to explain the detailed information that my participants shared. This design helped me to gather rich data concerning the problem of unethical behavior that women teachers faced in their profession. I adopted auto/ethnography design to critically analyze this insidious problem in a more personalized way. I felt that auto/ethnography was also the best choice for me because I am a teacher myself and wanted to relate my own lived experiences in the teaching profession to that of the other participants, and to build arguments that address my own issues. In the words of Marx et al. (2017), "auto ethnography with its focus on lived experience, identity, and perspective has the potential to impact educators deeply as they seek understanding" (p. 4). In this process, my use of self-reflection is integral to the construction of this study. Therefore, I

“emphasized subjectivity, self-reflexivity, emotionality, and the goal of connecting social sciences to humanities through first-person, ethnographic storytelling” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p.210). Along with this, I relied on interpretive, constructivist, and critical paradigms for a better understanding of my research topic. I adopted a purposive sampling type because the selection of my participants depended upon some cause and purpose (Patton, 1990). The rich data collection process was supported with tools including semi-structured questionnaires, informal face-to-face interviews, in-depth observations, the probing technique etc. The positive outcome of this was that it helped me to gather the rich, complex data I needed from my participants. I was involved with their activities like a friend and family member.

Much attention was given to the ethical issues in my study because it is the researcher’s responsibility to follow ethical codes of conduct while remaining fair with his or her research. As Creswell (2013) expresses, ethical issues in research command the increased attention of every researcher today. Therefore, concerns of remaining loyal to the participants, using pseudonyms, etc., were some of the ethical considerations I kept in my mind while doing my study. The primary data which I collected from the field proves the internal validity and reliability of my work. Further, helping to maintain trust amongst the participants, I maintained confidentiality with participants and paid careful attention to standards of human rights.

A Less Respected Profession for Women

In my understanding of cultural perceptions, teaching has been considered as a secondary or optional profession in Nepal. When someone is unable to get involved in other professions, then they pursue teaching as a profession until a more desirable one becomes available. Especially for women, teaching is considered the most desirable profession because of the suitable timing where they can manage professional life and look after their family at the same time. Teaching is not seen as a serious and respected profession due to easy availability. It is stigmatized as “women’s profession.” I held bitter feelings about this sentiment; whenever anyone asked me about my profession, I had always replied proudly, but I have seen people’s expressions and answers as “Ohh! You are in a teaching profession. Well, it is okay until you get another job, it is at least a way to pass the time.” Suffice to say, in Nepal, people do not take teaching seriously in the long-term or even as a worthwhile career.

Paudyal (2013) explains that “in our Nepali society, teachers never want to respect their own profession and hence, this arrogance supplements to welcome negative insight about their own profession.” Even during my research, when I asked my participants how they felt about their profession, whether they were satisfied or not, some answered, “Yes this is a very respectful profession, I love teaching and I am satisfied.” Contrary to this, I also found negative feelings such as these: “I am utilizing my free time because I didn’t get a full-time job. Not fully satisfied. Though I am involved in something, this is not so respected of a profession but I have no other choice.”

In most cases, I also found that the male teachers and the management committee treat women teachers as less preferred for employment. This is because male teachers, even if they are part-time teachers, take many classes at various colleges, while women teachers, due to time constraints, take fewer classes. Therefore, male teachers think of themselves as more learned and qualified, and in turn they underestimate women teachers. Gibney (2017), mentions that there seemed to be a huge difference observed in the perception of men and women related to getting support and encouragement. The author further revealed how women feel that men are more privileged with the opportunity for professional development. I had experienced the same feeling

of inferiority many times and also observed the same emotion in other women teachers regarding their profession.

Dealing with Dilemmas: A Mother Figure or Autocratic Leader?

In the Nepalese educational system, student's psychology is important to understand because students do not feel free to share their feelings, opinions, and ideas with their parents. Ours is an underdeveloped and conservative society where parents are strict and narrow-minded. I am a teacher, and my students share with me their personal feelings, even their love life. It is hard for me to say whether teachers need to deal with these kinds of situations or not. I have always been in a dilemma as a teacher; whether to listen and offer suggestions to aid students in their concerns, or to preserve my professional and ethical values of having boundaries between teacher and student. But my instinct as a teacher who is a woman, and as a mother figure, invites me to listen to my students' concerns, queries, and feelings. I have to provide them with answers.

I often say to my students, "I am your mother at college," and if I call myself their mother, I have to hear what they want to say. It is my obligation. As a teacher I feel that if there is no one to listen to them, they may be frustrated, which could lead them to become involved in an unlawful activity like drug addiction, or some sort of crime or they may have some psychological trauma. I have found that teen youths involved in such activities often have mental health problems, and because there is no one to guide them. Accordingly, in such instances, there is a clash between my personal and professional ethics. There are lots of conflicting situations encountered by every woman teacher. Who am I: A Mother figure or autocratic leader? Our education system is more management-oriented, and thus the college and university authorities do not care about their student's well-being and concerns. Within me I have always been attracted to student-centered management-system because sometimes children and students experience academic difficulties not because they do not understand the designed course materials or they are not intelligent enough, but due to various factors such as excessive anxiety, mental health problems, poorly developed and designed study skills, poor pedagogical practices, or unrealistic expectations about how much they can handle.

Poor Sanitation and Hygiene Facilities for Female Teachers and Female Students

Being absent during menstruation periods, whether during work, school, or college, has become a tradition in our Nepali society for female teachers and female students. From my personal experience and from the conversations with my female participants, I have found that not only students but also female teachers are compelled to stay at their home during menstruation due to poor sanitation and hygiene facilities at schools and colleges. Gender-sensitive sanitation facilities are of utmost importance for girls because its lack impacts their overall growth in educational activities, such as concentration in studies, participation in class, loss of confidence, and discomfort in attending the school while menstruating (Sommer, 2018). In our Nepali society, most of the colleges and schools have combined toilets (for men and women). Combined toilets lead to crowding and waiting in long lines. On top of that the number of available toilets is much less. In some places, the toilets are even combined for teachers and students. The toilets tend to be very dirty and unhygienic. Adding to it, there is poor water quality and sometimes no water at all. In most of the schools, colleges, and universities, there is no first-aid or clinic facility. If any female students or female teachers menstruate during school or college hours there is no provision of sanitary napkins. Rather, they

have to take leave, lying that they are not well or some other reason. They feel shy to explain they are experiencing menstruation because our society stigmatizes menstruation.

I have always supported my female students in such situations if they need any help. Sometimes, they need money to buy sanitary pads, or taxi fare to go home during menstruation. In those cases, they always take my help. I remember girls shyly telling me they had to go out of college premises in order to buy sanitary pads: “No ma’am, we felt shy to tell sir (the male coordinator), and the guard is asking for permission from the coordinator. It is so embarrassing.”

Unmanaged Management: Professionalism Found Lacking

When I asked one of my participants why educational institutions need ethical considerations in professionalism, Purnima revealed that institutions lacked priorities and neglected ethics of the profession. She goes on to say:

They are not service-oriented, they are business-oriented. They work for money. They are not concerned with what good stuff they are offering to their students, what morals, ethical values they are instilling in their students' brain. They are least concerned about their teachers. From students, they make money. If they literally focus on professionalism criteria, and make teacher's concerns their priority, they will think about retaining the teachers and not think about retaining the students. And on top of that, least importance is given to the female teachers.

This was a sentiment felt personally by me and the other participants. No one is willing to take their side and no one is ready to listen to their voices. Both fellow women teachers and I have the same feelings about our profession. It is a bitter reality that most women teachers in our country are experiencing this disregard by our employers. When asked if the participants had ever quit their jobs due to a feeling of bias from higher education employers, Kripa explained in her own words:

Not exactly me but one of my colleagues had to leave the college due to management committees' negligence of favoring students. This was because students so badly behaved with her, disturbed the class knowingly, that she was unable to take the trouble anymore. She went to the management committee to take action against the students, but she was overheard, no one was willing to listen to her complaint, listen to her problems rather the committee tried to console her. She waited for some time but nothing virtuous was done for her. So, she decided to quit her job. Even at her decision of discontinuing from the college, the management did not feel bad rather they let her go. This was actually a strange act from the management's side. In spite of encouraging a teacher, they were favoring students who were wrong in their actions. Is this an ethical consideration in professionalism from the institution's side? I don't think they know the meaning and priorities of ethical considerations in professionalism. This is so repulsive.

In my opinion, every educational institution to some extent has to maintain their ethical codes of conduct and strictly convey this understanding to their staff members and students. The author Nair (2014), explains that all those organizations which do business know what exactly ethics is, but at the same time, to what extent these organizations are actually following and implementing

an ethical environment in their institutions along with maintaining some true conventions is questionable.

Agreeing with the author, I feel that the purpose of government and policy makers is to guide the educational institutions through implementation of ethical practices, and at the same time, engender standards for working towards an ethically adaptive environment in the organization. Not only this, it is important that higher educational institutions accept these ethical codes, which if practiced well can be helpful for the quality of work life for teachers and will enhance a healthy learning atmosphere for the students. In effect, teachers and students can lead the next generation of accountable and ethically responsible Nepali citizens.

My thought process is that a sensible decision has to be made in order to educate the pupil and to guide them using effective discipline. Educational institutions should know and be open to considering what actions best benefit the learning of their students. Along with this, there has to be an answer about whether the educational institutions and teachers are mentoring their students to be well-educated citizens or disobedient and undisciplined.

To my understanding, even though the educational organizations are aware that they need to launch an effective and comprehensive educational reform, they neglect this concept and do not want to understand the world from this ethical and honest perception of gender equality and student or teacher efficacy. They do not want to adapt to the modern-day educational interventions because, according to my knowledge, they are accustomed to traditional ways of doing things and reluctant to change.

In the opinion of Moswela et al. (2014), teachers as responsible human beings take initiative to convert students who are “associates of the society” into a responsible “citizen[s] of the nation,” along with making them a part of their own operations and structures. I have the same understanding that teachers instill in the students the knowledge, attitudes, morals, values, and cultural identity that help them develop their skills, which are necessary for understanding their personal values. And during this process, in higher education, the teacher-student connection grows stronger in the long run. For an institution to be managed effectively, the power of teachers to influence the next generation of citizens needs to be kept in mind. The educational authorities need to value the teacher’s intentions and importance.

Treating Students Equally: Why Are Teachers Stereotyped?

Treating students equally is an important issue because it affects the wellbeing of educational achievements or psychological facets of any student’s life. Teachers’ perceptions and experiences influence the student’s future. They can either enhance or hamper the students’ educational journey in the long run. Therefore, it is the obligation of teachers to avoid bias on the basis of race, gender, and mental and physical ability of every student. In this regard, I suggest educational institutions follow this ethical part of treating students equally as a strict protocol of the organization. By equally and without bias I refer to fostering gender equality and psychological well-being, while discouraging racism and religious discrimination. Bhattarai (2013) states that there exist diversity-based ethical practices that can be implemented at school (pg. 3). From my professional experience, I found that teachers and educational institutions do put forth effort to treat their students equally and without bias. This is a very good sign that many of our educational institutions now are encouraging equal practices and inclusion whether in terms of gender equality, culture, race, or religion. But in some instances, I have even seen students facing the problem of inequality wherein the college or university doubts the students’ academic potential. Teachers and administration mostly favor and encourage students according

to a merit basis. Students are often demoralized and depressed by this preference for already high-achieving individuals.

Parhizgar & Parhizgar (2005) are of the opinion that if we want to know what distinguishes our educational systems, we must ask ourselves: How do we understand the educational philosophy of our educational institutions? Ethicists believe that all pupils have to be equally treated if we really want to apply justice to the system and to the students. Therefore, every educational institution, teacher, or management committee has to keep in mind that equality should be maintained as one of their most effective tools. The authors believe that this system of treating students equally shows the discipline from the side of educational institutions that they are providing all the students with the same opportunities regardless of their differences.

Remaining in the teaching profession, I have confronted different aptitude levels among my students. I can relate my belief system to the ethical philosophy of deontology which, when applied to teaching, considers students' differences and formatting their learning based on their varied abilities. This means that the treatment of students is based on the merit system where each individual's learning is adapted from their differences and existing aptitudes. Students are in fact different in various ways, whether by mental or physical skills, behavioral characteristics, or societal status. But students' differences are not used to discriminate or treat them unfairly; rather, they are used as an advantage to their own learning.

During my literature review, I came to be acquainted with stereotypes. I'm particularly interested in stereotypes among teachers that they may apply to their students and thus unfairly judge their potential. I want to use this word as a metaphor here to describe how teachers judge and treat their students unequally, as well as judge their students according to race, economic status, social status, mental ability, physical ability, and gender. On the basis of these criteria, teachers rank their students and mark them, promote them, and place them, which will also decide their future accomplishments.

In the opinion of the authors Riley & Ungerleider (2012), not only do these stereotypes shape how teachers think about their students' gender and cultural backgrounds, but they also influence a teacher's perception of the student's progress and achievements. I have observed some teachers having preconceived notions about their students, that some of them will not perform well even before evaluating their performance. I argue that, if they have such negative expectations about their students, and if this remains as an impression in the teachers' mind, the students' future as well as academic life is hampered entirely. Teachers should not engage in stereotyped thinking because it is harmful. Therefore, interventions from the side of educational authorities and stakeholders are needed to address these types of discrimination.

During my professional life in teaching, I have experienced situations where teachers had marked their students pass or fail according to stereotype. One of my colleagues said, "this student is not good in studies, so he or she will definitely fail this time also no doubt." As a teacher it was quite painful for me to know this. I remained speechless at times and was unable to speak on behalf of those students. Incidents come as a series of flashbacks. I can recall teachers correcting answer sheets and giving marks to students on the basis of a skewed idea of merit, favoritism, and nepotism. I have even seen teachers marking the answers without even looking at them. I have heard one of my colleagues saying, "It's been 15 years into this profession, so experience matters. And another thing is, if you know the student, who can achieve more and who achieves less, it becomes easy to mark them according to their previous academic performances." This is something that should never be practiced. Teachers need to be

cautious enough to believe that their students can change for the better if they get the right support and guidance.

Yes, I also believe that some students achieve more, and some achieve less, but it does not mean that the high achievers are always good and low achievers never progress. Some teachers who have stereotyped thinking believe this concept. I do not encourage such practices and do not respect those teachers who judge their students' progress by their names and past academic achievements. I have seen a teacher saying while correcting an answer sheet, "Now look ma'am, you know this girl, she is very weak, she never passes any exam, I even don't have to read her answer sheet, I can mark her 'fail' without looking at her answer sheet." I was shocked then, to hear this. I felt so sorry for the girl and her hard work. I recall saying to myself "maybe this time, she had attempted some questions correctly. The teacher is responsible to look at what she has written." In that moment, I reflected on my way of doing things, checking answer sheets, and marking papers.

In their article, Riley & Ungerleider (2012) illustrate that there are some students from minority groups who are stereotyped as "[l]azy learners by their inherent nature" (p.9). The authors believe that these students are preconceived as lazy by their teachers, that they do not complete their homework (as cited in Broussard & Joseph, 1998; Oakes, 1985; Oakes, 1995), and that these students have to be given special care by placing them in remedial classes for improvement in their behaviors depending upon their learning ability. But this negative attitude of teachers may provoke students to build a demoralizing attitude of themselves. But if the teachers' attitudes are positive, then the students' motivation and morale could be boosted to achieve more.

Discrimination in Pay Systems

Teaching institutions in our countries do not only discriminate against women teachers in areas such as promotion, but they also differentiate men and women teachers in pay systems. Wolfe (2019) explains that, in any situation in which a woman is not paid as equal as her male counterparts just because she is a woman, even if she does the same tasks, works equal hours, and meets the same objectives as them. This is illegal according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2020). This is an incident of gender-based discrimination and is something I have experienced myself many times to the point of feeling helpless and demotivated.

To my surprise, in one of my colleges, I was not paid an equal salary as my male counterparts even though we were teaching at the same level. My payment was very low as per the university's code of conduct (as per the rule of the Ministry of Education) for bachelor's level teachers, but my male counterparts were receiving a higher salary for the same level of work. I have also faced problems such as not receiving payments on time, not receiving full payments by which I was paid for the price of one class despite teaching two, and sometimes even not receiving any payments.

When I asked my participants if they had ever felt discriminated against when it comes to payment and salaries, Bhavana explained:

Yes Ma'am, many times. In one of the colleges where I am still working, they are not paying 6 months' salary to any teachers. I don't know the reason. When we go for a grievance, they assure us by saying they will pay soon. This is actually not a case of discrimination between male and female teachers but between management committee

and teachers. I have been teaching for about 20 years in different colleges, and I have experienced the same system in most of the colleges. I have hardly had my yearly salary increased in some colleges, and in others, there is no increment at all, and a stagnant pay system exists. In one of these colleges, I have been teaching for 10 years and my salary is the same.

One thing to add on here according to my personal experience is, because women are hesitant to negotiate about their pay and are shy to ask for a pay raise, they are left behind. This further adds to the pay gap between men and women teachers in Nepal.

Extracting Insights from the Exploration of Professional Ethics

The ultimate understanding of my research was the various unethical practices faced by me and my women participants in our professional lives as teachers. The analysis and interpretation of the research revealed that women teachers are being discriminated against in terms of gender inequality by the college authorities. I also found that students bullied women teachers at much higher rates. Further, the research revealed that discrimination was visible in pay systems, paid leave, and incentives. There were not any provisions relating to hygiene facilities to female teachers and female students. From my research, I found the case of mental harassment faced by female teachers to be particularly high and common in many places. My women participants shared their feelings about not being promoted because of their refusal of a sexual relationship with their co-workers and college management committee members, some later having to leave their job as a consequence.

The participants and I even experienced the irresponsible act of the college personnel in terms of not paying any attention to the voices of women teachers, leading them to feel isolated as outsiders. According to my experience and from the accounts of participants, I found the existence of favoritism and nepotism in many teaching institutions. My participants also stated their personal ethics and values as mismatching with the protocols of colleges. Many times, we felt discriminated against for being women. All these factors had a negative bearing on our feelings where at times we felt this profession to be a less respectable profession for women.

Conclusion

My research exposed some bitter understandings about women teachers' feelings in their professional life in the context of Nepal. The disregard for the women teachers' professional ethics, which are supposed to be shared by all teachers and administrators, helped them realize higher education was not equal and discriminated against women. Henceforth, attention is needed from the government, state, educational institutions, and policy makers to come up with a planned effort to develop more sensitive and inclusive ethical codes of conduct, which incorporate the concerns of women teachers in Nepal. Since the state code of ethics is not adopted or perceived in local education systems or governments, it needs to be critically revisited. Through my research, I want to inspire women teachers to raise their voices against discrimination and harassment in any educational institution. I want any women teachers who read my article to be fully empowered and encouraged to speak about any unethical conduct if encountered in their professional career. The ultimate insight from my research indicates that the challenges need to be addressed by educational institutions duly for effective implementation of ethical leadership at undergraduate colleges in Nepal. Women teachers should be given respect just as it is given to male teachers so that they may feel included in the betterment of the nation.

References

- Bajracharya, H. R. (2020). Nepal's Higher Education System and Policy. *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia*, 1-27.
- Bhattarai, P.C. (2010). *Ethics of teachers in Nepali public schools* (Unpublished MPhil. dissertation). Kathmandu University School of Education, Dhulikhel, Nepal.
- Bhattarai, P.C. (2013). Ethical Practices of Educational Administrators: A Nepalese Journal of Educational Leadership in Action 2(1), 1-9. Retrieved from: <http://www.lindenwood.edu/ela/issue03/bhattarai-lite.html>
- Bhattarai, P.C. (2015). The ethics of educational administrators: Are they uniform or contextual? *Journal of Ethical Educational Leadership*, 2(4), 1-16. Retrieved from: <http://www.cojeel.org>.
- Bista, M. B. (2005). *A survey on the status of female teachers in Nepal*. Kathmandu: UNESCO.
- Bochner, A.P., & Ellis, C. (2016). The ICQI and the rise of auto-ethnography: Solidarity through community. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 9(2), 208–217. doi: 10.1525/irqr.2016.9.2.208
- Bustard, J. D. (2017). Improving student engagement in the study of professional ethics: Concepts and an example in cyber security. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 24(2), 683-698. doi:10.1007/s11948-017-9904-4
- CEDAW Shadow Report (2018). *Violence against Women/Girls, Female Migrant Worker, Women Human Rights Defenders, Online Gender Based Violence and Women's Health*. Nepal.
- Central Bureau of Statistics (2008). *Report on the Nepal labour force survey*. United Nations Development Program and International Labor Organization, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- CERID. (2009). *Gender issues in school education*. Kathmandu: CERID.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dahal, B.P. (2014). *Child participation in schools of Nepal: Role and contribution of child clubs* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Kathmandu University School of Education, Dhulikhel, Nepal.
- Das, M. (2015). The writing body: An autoethnographic inquiry. *Man in India*, 95(1), 49-63.
- DFID, & WB. (2006). *Unequal citizens: Gender, caste and ethnic exclusion in Nepal*.
- Dhungel, Laxmi (2019). Educational Migration and Intergenerational Relations: A Study of Educated Returnee Women in Nepal. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 20(7), 359-373. Retrieved from: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol20/iss7/23>
- Gautam, S. (2011). *Literacy sucks! Lived experience of Tharu women* (Unpublished MPhil. dissertation). Kathmandu University School of Education, Dhulikhel, Nepal.
- Gibney, E. (2017). Teaching load could put female scientists at career disadvantage. *Nature News*.
- Gobagoba, M., & Moswela, B. (2014). Ethics education adherence by teacher trainees during teaching practice: A botswana perspective.
- GON, (2002, May 30). Education rules. In *Nepal Gazette*. Kathmandu: Author.
- Government of India. (2007). *Eleventh five year plan, 2007-2012* (Vol.2). New Delhi: Author.
- Government of Nepal (2002). Education rules. In *Nepal Gazette*. Kathmandu: Author.

- Government of Nepal. (2010, Feb). Education act 1971, Education regulation 2002 sixth amendment and teacher service commission regulation 2002 fifth amendment 2010. Kathmandu: Makalu Publication.
- Government of Nepal (2011-12). *The University Grant Commission Report*. Kathmandu: Author.
- Government of Nepal (2015). *The constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Author.
- Government of Nepal (2017/18). Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey. National Planning Commission Central Bureau of Statistics
- Hawkesworth, M.E. (2006). *Feminist inquiry: From political conviction to methodological innovation*. New Jersey, NY: Rutgers University Press.
- His Majesty's Government of Nepal. (1990). *The constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Author.
- His Majesty's Government of Nepal. (2007a). Interim constitution of Nepal. Kathmandu: Author.
- Marx, S., Pennington, J. L., & Chang, H. (2017). Critical autoethnography in pursuit of educational equity: Introduction to the IJME special issue. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 19(1), 1-6.
- Ministry of Education [MOE], & Teachers Union of Nepal [TUN SDCC]. (2007). *Report on stakeholders' conferences on education development*. Kathmandu: Authors.
- Nair, S. R. (2014). Ethics in higher education. In *Handbook of research on higher education in the MENA region: Policy and practice* (pp. 230-260). Hershey: IGI Global.
- National Centre for Educational Development [NCED]. (2011). Gender awareness resource material. Bhaktapur: Author.
- National Planning Commission & United Nations Children's Fund [NPC & UNICEF]. (1996). Children and women in Nepal. Kathmandu: Authors
- National Planning Commission, Central Bureau Statistics. (2006). Nepal at a glance. Kathmandu: Author.
- Nepal Participatory Action Network [NEPAN]. (2009). Social exclusion and inclusion in Nepal: Examples from dalit, muslim and indigenous community. Kathmandu: Author.
- Normore, A.H., & Jean-Marie, G. (2008). Female secondary school leaders: At the helm of social justice, democratic schooling, and equity. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 29(2), 182-205.
- Parhizgar, K. D., & Parhizgar, F. F. (2013). Analysis of the teacher's professional ethical responsibilities in educational institutions. *Journal of Border Educational Research*, 4(1), 22-37.
- Patton, M. (1990). Purposeful sampling. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*, 2, 169-186.
- Paudyel, L. (2013). *Research report on being a woman teacher in Nepal: Experiences of social exclusion and inclusion* (Unpublished doctoral thesis). Kathmandu University School of Education, Dhulikhel, Nepal.
- Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development [CERID]. (2004). Female teachers in primary schools: Distribution patterns, training and transfer. Kathmandu: CERID.
- Riley, T., & Ungerleider, C. (2012). Self-fulfilling prophecy: How teachers' attributions, expectations, and stereotypes influence the learning opportunities afforded aboriginal students. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 35(2), 303-333.
- Shapiro, J. P., & Gross, S. J. (2013). *Ethical educational leadership in turbulent times: (Re) solving moral dilemmas*. Routledge.

- Shapiro, J.P., & Stefkovich, J.A. (2005). *Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas*. (2nd ed). New Jersey, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sitaula, M. (2016). Child marriage and education in Satar community in East Nepal. *A Nepalese Journal of Participatory Development, Participation*, 18(17), 41-50.
- Sommer, M, Kwauk, C & Fyles, F (2018). Gender Sensitive Sanitation: Opportunities for Girl's Education.
- Taşner, V., Žveglič, M., & Čeplak, M. M. (2017). Gender in the teaching profession: university students' views of teaching as a career. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(2), 47-69.
- Teacher Service Commission. (2015). *Teacher license, selection and promotion in FY 2071/72*. Sanothimi, Bhaktapur: Author. Tenth Plan, 2001-2007.
- Thapa, A., & Maharjan, U. (2019). 2 Higher education and economic development in Nepal. *Higher Education in Nepal: Policies and Perspectives*, 25.
- UNDP. (2014). *Human development report 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HRD/2014HDR/HDR-2014-English.pdf>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO]. (2006). *The impact of women teachers on girl's education*. Bangkok, Thailand: Author.
- Vajoczki, S., Savage, P., Martin, L., Borin, P., & Kustra, E. H. (2011). Good teachers, scholarly teachers and teachers engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 2(1). doi:10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2011.1.2
- Wall, S. (2008). Easier said than done: Writing an autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 7(1), 38-53.
- Watson, S. L., & Watson, W. R. (2011). Critical, emancipatory, and pluralistic research for education: A review of critical systems theory. *Journal of Thought*, 46(3/4), 63-74.
- Wolfe, L (2019). Unequal Pay In a Form Of Gender Discrimination: Statistics Show That Women Frequently Earn Less The Author.
- Yount, D. (2013). *Immanuel Kant's ethical theory*. Mesa: Mesa Community College.