A critical-appreciative approach as/for transformative professional development

Parbati Dhungana

Abstract
Critical 'self' (i.e. dualist or egoist I) reflection seems insufficient in the context of Nepali university education, particularly in the process of transformative professional development. Therefore through this paper, I argue that a *critical-appreciative approach contributes to my professional development.* Assuming 'Self' (i.e. non-dualist or non-egoist I) as a better form of 'self', I conducted a self-study examining my conflict (between egoist I and non-egoist I) enhancing integral perspective. For it, I posed the research question: *How could I nurture my integral perspective for my professional development in the higher educational context?* I adapted dialogue as a research method to explore the conflict between 'self' and 'Self' with the support of my embodied knowledge, reflective journal, assignments and articles. In this paper, I discuss how my critical-appreciative approach enhanced my 'self' and at times remained a living contradiction. Then I discuss the four approaches as themes (adapting inclusive perspectives, creating open space, using participatory-based approach and developing tactful mentorship) that provided me with a cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective as professional development. These themes seem useful for understanding 'self' and the rest in an optimal way while being in higher education.

आलोचनात्मक 'स्व' (अर्थात् द्वैतवादी वा अहंकारी म) प्रतिबिम्ब नेपाली विश्वविद्यालय शिक्षाको सन्दर्भमा, विशेष गरी रूपान्तरणात्मक व्यावसायिक विकासको प्रक्रियामा अपर्याप्त देखिन्छ। यसैले यस पेपर मार्फत, म तर्क गर्छु कि एक आलोचनात्मक-प्रशंसनीय दृष्टिकोणले मेरो व्यावसायिक विकासमा योगदान गर्दछ। 'आत्म' (अर्थात् गैर-द्वैतवादी म वा गैर-अहंकारी म) लाई 'आत्म' को एक राम्रो रूपको रूपमा मान्दै, मैले मेरो द्वन्द्व (अहंकारी म र गैर-अहंकारी म बीच) अभिन्न परिप्रेक्ष्यमा परिक्षण गर्दै आत्म-अध्ययन गरें। यसको लागि, मैले अनुसन्धान प्रश्न खडा गरें: उच्च शैक्षिक सन्दर्भमा मेरो व्यावसायिक विकासको लागि म कसरी मेरो अभिन्न दृष्टिकोणलाई पोषण गर्न सक्छु? मैले मेरो मूर्त ज्ञान, प्रतिबिम्बित जर्नल, असाइनमेन्ट र लेखहरूको समर्थनमा 'आत्म' र 'आत्म' बीचको द्वन्द्व अन्वेषण गर्न अनुसन्धान विधिको रूपमा संवादलाई रूपान्तरण गरें। यस पत्रमा, मैले कसरी मेरो आलोचनात्मक-प्रशंसनीय दृष्टिकोणले मेरो 'आत्म' लाई बढायो र कहिलेकाहीं एक जीवित विरोधाभास बन्यो भनेर छलफल गर्छु। त्यसपछि मैले विषयवस्तुका रूपमा चार दृष्टिकोणहरू (समावेशी परिप्रेक्ष्यहरू अनुकूलन गर्ने, खुला ठाउँ सिर्जना गर्ने, सहभागितामा आधारित दृष्टिकोण प्रयोग गर्ने र कुशल मार्गदर्शनको विकास गर्ने) छलफल गर्छु जसले मलाई व्यावसायिक विकासको रूपमा सांस्कृतिक (अर्थात् सात्विक) परिप्रेक्ष्य प्रदान गरेको छ। यी विषयवस्तुहरू उच्च शिक्षामा रहँदा 'आत्म' र बाँकीलाई बृहत तरिकाले बुझ्नको लागि उपयोगी देखिन्छन्।

Keywords: critical-appreciative approach, higher education, integral perspective, 'self', self-study, transformative professional development

A lonely fish
 in a pool
dreamt of a school,
a surging river,
then the ocean
 living together
in harmony.

Like the lonely fish in a small pond, I see my better 'self,' (like the fish in a surging river) in 'Self' (like the harmonious fish living together in the ocean) through my critical-appreciative engagement in the process of my professional development. 'Self' refers to the non-dualistic or non-egoistic 'self', Brahman or pure consciousness (Osborne, 2014). For me, the non-egoistic self or 'Self' is the highest form of my 'self' or being that attains the state of oneness in the form of harmonious and conscious living. Attainment of oneness is my inner 'harmonious and conscious' experience which is possible by being together and/or interacting with the outside world harmoniously and consciously. Here, my concern is to nurture

oneness by adapting multiple strategies or approaches. The critical-appreciative approach is one of them. Critical-appreciative is akin to an integral approach which is neither only a critical approach nor only an appreciative approach rather both and also beyond. Inspired by the integral perspective of Taylor, Taylor, and Luitel (2012), I made sense of the word integral as connected, integrated, inclusive, participatory, oneness-like and beyond (any and/or all of them).

Adapting a critical-appreciative approach I have been continuous questioning taken for granted beliefs, values and practices including my own and of others (e.g. teachers) (Mezirow, 2000), exploring weaknesses (e.g. needs) and strengths (e.g. values and inherent qualities), and thereby appreciating and improving values and inherent qualities addressing weaknesses (Whitehead, 2018) being together. I, a PhD student of Kathmandu University School of Education who has been conducting (since 2017 till the time of writing) PhD research on the issue of teachers' professional development, critically reflected my values, beliefs, and practices of professional development using different forms of reflections, explored my own weaknesses and strengths and thereby appreciated and improved my values and qualities. This research journey developed my cultural perspective (i.e. satvic perspective which I will explain later) which supported me to (re)conceptualize professional development. Through this paper, I shared how I developed a cultural perspective as transformative professional development while being in higher education, particularly in the PhD research process.

It appears to me that before the PhD research process, I did not get enough space for appreciating and improving my inherent qualities in Nepali higher educational contexts. My schooling might have envisioned me as a student of the 21st century. Like Johnston, Mitchell, Myles and Ford (2011), I was assumed to have the following personal qualities and values:

> (1) a well-developed, robust, confident and aware self, able where necessary to challenge and reconstruct existing understanding and modes of operation; (2) an awareness of the values, priorities and power structures implicit in a context and a capacity to be constructively critical to them; (3) appropriate values such as respect for reasons, an inquiring attitude, open-mindness, independent-mindedness (p. 80)

However, I sensed that I, a student of the 21st century, forgot to appreciate my own qualities, qualities of my culture and take

responsibility for nurturing cultural knowledge for passing to the upcoming generation. Rather, I was deeply engaged in reflexive engagement and thereby became passionate about changing or transforming self and others. In line with Luitel and Dahal (2020, p. 1) "reflexive engagement of researchers and practitioners in the life world contributes to the conceptualization of transformative praxis as professional development". According to Luitel and Dahal (2020), for transformative professional development,

> Practitioners can use different forms of reflection, such as retrospective, ongoing, and anticipatory (Johns, 2017). Retrospective reflection refers to reflection on events, activities and performativities accomplished in the past. The main purpose of such reflection is to examine events that have transpired from the vantage point of new possibilities. Reflection on our ongoing actions can help immediately improve, revise, and modify our activities and engagement in the world (Brookfield, 2017). Such an approach to reflection-in-action makes practitioners mindful of ongoing events and eventualities. In the same manner, anticipatory reflection enables practitioners to envision possible opportunities and challenges embedded in their practice.

Adapting multiple forms of critical self reflections I could have enough opportunities of improving my professional practices e.g. to create a harmonious learning environment for teachers. Moreover, I wanted to sustain or nurture my inner harmony fully which seemed impossible only by being critical to 'self' and others. From this insight I made sense that critical 'self' reflection is insufficient in the context of my professional development. It is because I sensed that 'Self' inquiry might be more transformative.

Here, to express my sense, I prefer to use the word *bibek*, a Nepali word, which refers neither only thinking nor only feeling or emotion rather an integrated (or integral) form of thoughts and emotions that interplays and creates synergy and thereby that results into a condensed, authentic form of knowledge or consciousness. In other words *bibek* means my socio-cultural consciousness that enables me to distinguish between 'right' or 'wrong'; to say 'yes' or 'no'. The word *bibek* cannot be replaced with words such as knowledge and wisdom. Here, I am not opposing the notion of knowledge and wisdom by replacing the word *bibek* rather trying to express my authentic or organic understating which the word 'knowledge' and

'wisdom' could not make explicit. Seemingly, knowledge is more connected to Western Modern Worldview (e.g. scientifically proven knowledge of outside world which is available more in written form than in oral form) as wisdom to Eastern Wisdom Tradition (e.g. Vedic and Yogic embodied knowledge of the inner world which is available more in the oral form than in written), however, they are not a dichotomy instead complementary to each other. Perhaps rather than presenting knowledge and wisdom as a dichotomy, I wanted to dissolve dualism (i.e. scientifically proven knowledge vs. embodied knowledge) by valuing co-existence and complementary with appreciative intent. In Balsemão-Pires' (2018, p. 209) words, it is called "dissolution of dualistic thinking." I think the dissolution of dualistic thinking might always not require the notion of deconstruction. Seemingly I had reconstructive intent. Reconstruction of constructivism might work in the context of sustaining through open dialogue and mutual respect (Reusswig, 2020).

It appeared to me that cultural consciousness would support my transformative professional development (Luitel & Taylor, 2019; Taylor, 2013). Perhaps my disciplinary orientation of school and the initial phase of university education could not fully support me to be *bibeksil* (i.e. become conscious of both critical and appreciative dimensions) and enhance my *bibek*. It is because I, a *bibeki* being, use my *bibek* when I think, feel, and/or act to be a better 'self', human, or student and teacher. My sense of *bibek* might have played a significant role in my both normal and abnormal situations and thereby shaped me into who I am and how I am living in this transdisciplinary world.

For instance, sometime in 2018, I (i.e. teacher trainer) was delivering a session to the primary level teachers (interdisciplinary group), beyond my expectation, I found teachers culturally conscious as they engaged in appreciative, creative and critical activities with their students. For instance, teachers used *bibek* (i.e. cultural consciousness) in the teaching and learning process (e.g. inviting local people to the class to share knowledge). I felt transferring my theoretical knowledge and ignoring teachers' socio-cultural consciousness was my blunder. From my next session, using my *bibek*, I tried to develop my cultural responsiveness (i.e. appreciation or value teachers' cultural knowledge and skills being critical self-reflective).

This might be a representative story of many university graduates who failed to value and appreciate socio-cultural consciousness while rushing to become critical practitioners. Perhaps, implying other ways of 'knowing' as inauthentic I was enhancing disharmony within me and that disharmony was reflecting in the outside world. I think as the primary level teachers, the world itself is a transdisciplinary space, however my exposure to disciplinary knowledge and skills limited me to value more to my disciplinary knowledge and skills than interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. Perhaps I was exposed to divided knowledge and/or wisdom in the form of multiple disciplines or subject knowledge/s. Perhaps I was comfortable within the disciplinary boundary. And never realized being with other people or making connections with others than myself could be a collaborator having a sense of empathetic connection with others (Daloz, 2000). Perhaps, I feared moving towards 'we' or becoming a collaborator. My fear of collaboration might be the reason for my non-inclusive nature of choosing not to be with the more diverse people in the world (e.g. inter/transdisciplinary) making connections and cooperation.

Reaching here, I sensed that 'harmony' and 'collaboration' were my living values and realized I was 'a living contradiction' by not living those values as fully as I could, influencing my learning and learning of others (Whitehead, 1969). Here, I got the insight that when I was appreciative towards others and critically reflective with 'self' I experienced harmony within and out. It appeared to me that the dis/harmony of the inner world was the reflection of the outer world and vice versa which was the result of disconnection with people and disintegration with my inner and outer world. Therefore I would like to continue living the values of collaboration and harmony exploring the conflict between 'I' and 'we' (i.e. egoist I and non-egoist I) with the help of a research question: *How could I nurture my integral perspective for my professional development in the higher educational context?* For it, I explored the existing literature and then examined my embodied knowledge, reflective journal, assignments, and articles being critical-appreciative.

Literature review

It appears to me that university education plays a vital role in fostering socio-cultural consciousness, sensitivity, and responsiveness among students. However, I explored that Nepali education is either

promoting critical perspectives (Bista, Sharma, & Raby, 2019; Regmi, 2021) or an appreciative approach such as appreciative pedagogy (Budhathoki & Pant, 2016) and socio-cultural thesis writing practice (Khati, 2020) but not critical-appreciative approach.

Here, the critical-appreciative approach refers to neither critical nor appreciative approach rather an integral approach of critical (self) reflection and appreciation in which one critically (self) reflects, then explores weakness, strengths, values and/or qualities and then addresses weakness improving values, qualities and practices.

As the objective of the higher education of Nepal is "to preserve and develop the historical and cultural heritage of the nation" (Upadhyay, 2018, p. 96) valuing historical and cultural heritages, knowledge and practices seem vital in Nepal and across the board for sustaining, nurturing, and flourishing humanity (Luitel & Taylor, 2019. However, an appreciative approach seems less prioritized and/or implicit as I could not explore any appreciative approach of conducting research in Nepal. Here, I sensed developing my socio-cultural awareness and thereby taking the responsibility of making the critical-appreciative approach explicit.

I think education makes one able to make implicit explicit for common good. Here, my understanding of education expands as education as a cultural value and a value-laden process that cannot overlook inherent strengths which are present in the form of soci-cultural values and/or inherent qualities. The study (Gjøtterud, 2009) discussed that a university educator's living values such as love and critique play a transformative role in guiding university students. I think love and critique create synergetic effects that make it possible for inquisitive and reflective opportunities and thereby support students for transformative learning. Here, I saw the potentiality of making the deep shift through frequent catalysts' (Daloz, 2000) (both soothing and thrilling encounters); in Yongming Tang's words 'a new synergy consciousness' (interplay between individualistic and collaborative interests). However, living values such as love and critique alone might not be sufficient in a country that is rich in diversity (e.g. cultural). For instance, my study (Dhungana, 2020) explored the challenges of living the value "living love" by expressing the word 'love' as a living value in the context of community school teachers' professional development in the rural part of Nepal.

Perhaps it was my experience of the conflict between what cultural qualities I have (e.g. passion) and what I do not have (e.g. inclusion and discernment). Being a university student who has been facilitating in-service teachers for professional development, I felt the need for some particular socio-cultural qualities (e.g. passion, inclusion and discernment) that could support my professional and personal life in a meaningful way. The study (McAlinden, 2014) discussed the two qualities: reflexivity and empathy as essential elements to be an interculturally effective educator. This study reminded me of my cultural qualities (as my identity has been shaped or constructed by my society and culture to which I belong). Here I had a query-did the existing modern (formal) education enhance my cultural qualities? No! (at least for me till I began my PhD study)

I think the existing modern education seems to fall short to nurture my socio-cultural qualities such as inquisitiveness, passion, inclusion, and discernment as it could not support me to enhance them appreciating my existing socio-cultural knowledge which is available in Vedic, Yogic, Shamanic, and Tantric scripts, oral traditions, rituals, images, and practices. It doesn't mean that I lacked socio-cultural knowledge rather I was unaware of its presence in the form of socio-cultural qualities. Somewhere in my heart, I had a sense of respect towards my culture and cultural diversity that's why I might have promoted collaboration and collaborative practices while being with teachers in the school (Dhungana, 2020; Dhungana, 2021) and students in the university (Dhungana, 2021). Doing so, I might have been seeking my cultural identity (i.e. not individualistic but collective) or localness. The study (Parajuli, 2015) discussed the loss of cultural knowledge and calls for searching 'localness.' The call was not for annihilating globalization rather seeking localness to meet globalization. I think I was seeking cultural knowledge to enhance the inherent socio-cultural qualities that I might have been living in for a long time but forgotten.

Here, I sensed that I was experiencing decultured situations. My forgetfulness and/or my ignorance of socio-cultural knowledge and/or wisdom might be the reason for the existing modern education. The studies (Luitel & Taylor, 2019; Parajuli, 2015) discussed the loss of culture in the Nepali educational context, particularly in university. Seemingly, it was the sign of declination of cultural diversity in the Nepali context including across the globe (Luitel & Taylor, 2019) which might be beneficial for some but not for harmonious co-

existence of all (i.e. including human and non-human) I found a study (Schlesinger, 1994) which discussed the loss of collective (i.e. cultural) identity in Europe which is still relevant. I think it was the call for 'cultural emancipation' (Taylor, 2013) or liberation. Here, liberation is not meant as getting rid of modern education rather getting rid of the ignorance, the ignorance of not knowing the possible strengths of socio-cultural knowledge.

I think modern education developed a kind of passion for knowledge acquisition, forgetting what we know and how we know that existed since long for living meaningful life prior, probably to the beginning of modern education. I think modern education played a vital role in my forgetfulness and ignorance (means un/awareness of not known). For instance, despite encountering diverse communities in diverse contexts since 1993, my shifting schools every now and then have not made me critical to unhelpful socio-cultural knowledge and practices and appreciative to the helpful ones. Perhaps, with the orientation of modern education I was so embedded that way as I was 'invariably affected by the quality of the world in which I was formed' (Daloz, 2000) rather could not appreciate helpful socio-cultural knowledge and practices According to Luitel and Taylor (2019, p.2),

> On the one hand, modern education is designed to produce a highly skilled workforce essential for improving a nation's infrastructure, social services and materials standard of living. On the other hand, the absence of local cultural capital in imported curricula contributes to loss of cultural and linguistic diversity…

Appreciating linguistic diversity, for instance, I could learn Tamang and Newari languages from my neighbors, friends and colleagues and thereby use them in my class to enhance the learning of my Tamang and Newari students; appreciating Yogic practices I could practice meditation for enhancing concentration and awareness of my own and of my students throughout my teaching and learning process. Here, I think I am being conscious of my upbringing within the modern education system that has been shaping who I am and who I am not today. Therefore, to enhance cultural consciousness university education can create an open space in which students learn diverse subjects with multi-cultural and cross-cultural groups of students developing both critical and appreciative skills.

I think teacher education can foster a non-dualistic integral (i.e. inclusive) perspective. Seemingly a third space might be an

alternative as the study (Diamond, Wescott, & Mollo, 2021, p. 40) defines teacher education as a 'third space' As the "third space' practice speaks back to narrow discourses of teacher education that frames it as the unproblematic transfer of practice from experienced to novice practitioner." The third space seems unproblematic, as it questions the dualistic or 'either or' perspective and thereby dismantles unhelpful knowledge and practices embracing others. Going beyond the existing transmission technique their study argued for developing reflective and critical professionalism through collaborative inquiry.

The collaborative inquiry of Diamond, Wescott, and Mollo (2021) reminded me of Belenky and Stanton (2000) and Daloz (2000) who argued for transformative learning through collaborative practices. I resonated deeply with collaborative professional practices as they are context-responsive in Nepali educational contexts (Dhungana et. al, 2021). Here, I had a query about why collaborative practices were context-responsive? Seemingly, the word 'collaboration' itself is inclusive in nature. It shows that Nepali people have a deeply rooted quality of inclusiveness.

The word 'inclusion' traced me back to the ancient Brahmanic education system which led me to explore the Bhagavad Gita, the ancient Hindu scripture for its meaning. It was the best thing that I could do. Perhaps I strived to authentically understand my origin to understand myself, my students, my teachers, my family and all others to show a willingness to hear and value their stories (Locke, 2017).

According to the Bhagavad Gita (chapter 14 verse 5) "material nature consists of three modes: satva (goodness), rajas (passion), and tamas (ignorance)." It is culturally believed that goodness is the highest mode, the best quality that humans can possess which makes it possible for the best results.

कर्मण: सुकृतस्याहु: सात्त्विकंनिर्मलंफलम्‌|

रजसस्तुफलंदु:खमज्ञानंतमस: फलम्‌|| 16||

Translation: It is said the fruit of actions performed in the mode of goodness bestows pure results. Actions done in the mode of passion result in pain, while those performed in the mode of ignorance result in darkness.

https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/14/verse/16

We might have forgotten our deeply rooted socio-cultural knowledge that we humans possess all three qualities and we are dominated by one of the qualities. When we are dominated by satva, we have qualities of inquisitiveness, inclusiveness and discernment (chapter 14, verse 11). In the state of rajas dominant we possess qualities of restlessness and passion that arises from desire and attachment (chapter 14, verse 7) whereas in the state of tamas dominant we seem passive and ignorant that arises from ignorance (chapter 14, verse 8). Here, I am appreciating and critically reflecting deeply rooted cultural (e.g. inclusive and discernment) qualities that we all possess including all nationalities, castes, genders, religions, and cultures.

Valuing collective identity and inclusion, the study of Schlesinger (1994, p. 27) discussed constructing "Europeanness" (i.e. collective identity) through developing active strategies of inclusion and exclusion who wrote:

> Collective identities are relatively fluid constructions rather than eternal essences. Their social making is an active, dialectical process that involves the continual construction and reconstruction of a sense of themselves by self-identifying communities using the signs provided by their cultures. The construction of a collective identity also generally involves active strategies of inclusion and exclusion…

I found the study relevant to the Nepali context as I have been trying to explore Nepaliness or collective identity by examining the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

Reaching here, I think university education can help to reconstruct Nepaliness by providing 'good education.' According to Auler (2021), good educational institutions question the incompatibility between academic excellence and equity. I think questioning the existing academic excellence in light of equality might help to enhance equality and equity rather it seems insufficient to enhance goodness (i.e. a constellation of satva-like qualities such as inquisitiveness, inclusion and discernment). According to Auler (2021), there are three qualities of a good educational institution such as socio-emotional education, equity and academic excellence. However, in the context of Nepal which has diverse cultures might also need cultural perspectives to deal with issues in diverse contexts.

Here, I am not considering Eastern Wisdom Tradition and Western Modern Worldview as a dichotomy rather dialectical or co-

existing and complementing each other from my socio-cultural inclusive orientation that values diverse cultural knowledge and practices. Cultural practices refer to the research practices which university promotes intended to provide 'good education'. For me, 'good education' refers to the education that enhances my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective as transformative professional development that continuously encourages living a good or meaningful life.

The lack of theory in qualitative research seems to undermine its quality (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014), however, my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective (partly) guided me throughout the research process which I used as theory. Satvic refers to having satva-like qualities such as inquisitiveness, inclusiveness, and discernment (the Bhagavad Gita, chapter 14 verse 11). In line with Kumar (2008, p. 15) I believe that my satva-like qualities "sees unity in diversity, wholeness, relatedness and creates synthesis"; my rajas-like qualities are "based in disunity and cause separation"; tamas-like qualities "focuses on a part and sees it as if it was the whole." Therefore, in Whitehead's (2008) line, the value words such as inclusiveness and discernment (i.e. reflection that lead to improvement) are my explanatory principles and standard of judgments as they influenced me, others, and social formation.

Methods

Like other teacher educators and self-study practitioners (Delong, 2020; Dhungana, 2021; LaBoskey, 2004; Whitehead, 2009) I found the self-study methodology a suitable methodology to explore and nurture cultural perspectives. It is because self-study methodology supported me to explore to develop a 'satvic framework' (Dhungana, 2021) and thereby inspired to the conflict between 'self' and 'Self' (i.e. I and 'we') intend to transform myself first and then my students and teachers so that I could help them to develop and nurture their own cultural perspective.

The way Willink and Jacobs (2011) drew students' writing of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios, I drew on my lived experiences which recorded in my reflective journal, assignments, and articles that I developed from 2017 to 2021(i.e. during my PhD study years) while being in the higher education context. Using 'dialogue as a research method' I interacted with my lived experiences (Delong, 2020) that hold the evidence of (1) adapting inclusive perspective, (2) creating open space, (3) using a participatory-based approach, and (4)

developing tactful mentorship) as 'my cultural perspective as transformative professional development. Following the scientific format, "IMRAD" (Cuschieri, Grech, & Savona-Ventura, 2018) was challenging particularly in the section of results and discussion as I could not separate results and discussion separately. My multiple ways of reflection mitigated the gap between data, interpretation, results and discussion.

Adapting inclusive perspective

An inclusive perspective seems the first step that led me towards professional development. Here inclusive perspective refers to integral (i.e. to embrace or to integrate) perspective which does not value one perspective over another realizing "all elements are interrelated and are reflections of the same underlying unity" (Taylor, Taylor, & Luitel, 2012, p. 283). The quality word such as inclusion is a common or shared underlying integral quality in both Western Modern Worldview and the Eastern Wisdom Tradition.

For instance, in the university, I took the two academic classes: Curriculum and Advanced Qualitative Research which had become more meaningful than any other academic class as they fostered my inclusive perspective (e.g. Dhungana, in Press). I think these courses which were designed for in-depth study challenged my status quo in light of transformative learning theories and my lived experiences. Further, the classroom culture gradually engaged me in different reflective forms such as retrospective, ongoing, and anticipatory. I started to think beyond 'givens'. I began to question my disciplinary orientation and envisioned holistic orientation. For instance, my assignment submitted on 7 September 2017 showed

> As my research is about effective integrated learning, this demands an inclusive model of reasoning, vision-logic (Ken Wilber, 1999) that draws on Western and Eastern wisdom traditions, seeking to integrate to one another. From a vision-logic perspective, the four paradigms: post-positivist, interpretivism, criticalism and postmodernism comprise in a form of integral paradigm that values all paradigms without privileging any of them to create a better understanding of the learners to prepare them to address the growing needs of their living in their contexts. These multiple paradigms weave all the fragmented ways of learning into one that makes my research a holistic exploration.

Thus I developed a holistic perspective which was later enhanced by transformative learning theories (e.g. Mezirow, 2000; Daloz, 2000) that supported me to be self-critical and to work for the common good. As a result, I gradually see the gap between my prior assumptions and my actual life experiences as I learnt that there are no fixed truths as contexts change (Mezirow, 2000).

As a result not only in my academic classes, I started to look into my life critically and thereby questioned my ways of living personal and professional life. For instance, I realized that I began to listen to and value multiple perspectives of family members enhanced harmonious relationships.

I used to think I was correct although at times I used to support (partly) the perspectives of my family members. But suddenly, I began to give importance to things other than my perspectives, beliefs and opinions. Similarly, I began to question my professional life. My journal entry dated 14 October 2017 shows-

> Being a so-called expert, how could I help the Curriculum Development Centre in developing curriculum materials at the central level and distribute them to all the teachers. How could I be guided by disempowering technical and practical interests? I feel ashamed of myself. How could I become an expert of a particular subject being a teacher of the capital city? My disciplinary orientations seem vain. Are they enough to facilitate the teachers of multiple disciplines in a rural setting?

> Such reflective dialogues with self-taught me to be self-critical. For instance, I felt guilty about doing all the past works including textbook writing. My journal entry dated 15 October 2017 shows:

> By heart, I wanted to see my students and teachers being creative and critical learners but what I was doing was against my wish, that is, I was just promoting the production of old traditions rather than making them emancipatory. Neither my schooling nor my profession has shaped my curriculum practices to develop students as self-regulated (self-reflective) and autonomous (akin to bibeki who can differentiate what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' to them) learners who can be critically aware of the dis/empowering cultural myths.

Reaching here, I realized that I could do differently. It was a step beyond disciplinary space which was possible by developing an inclusive perspective.

Creating open space

Here, open space refers to beyond disciplinary space, i.e. the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning space. An inter/transdisciplinary space is an aesthetic space where learners' (of multiple disciplines) thinking, feeling and sensing interconnect as one (Given, 2008). I think the interdisciplinary and/or transdisciplinary learning space, the space where I was and which I created later in my research process was more open or inclusive than disciplinary space as it developed a sense of 'weness' within me.

For instance, every Wednesday, I, a member of a learning community, used to meet to share, discuss and plan together with the students of other disciplines such as Mathematics and Science. The members of KUSOED, Tribhuvan University (TU), Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU), and action school (teachers) were part of my learning community who frequently meet that formed a forum for reconciliation, where both differences and similarities are acknowledged and thereby led for common good (Daloz, 2000).

As we humans by birth want to engage ourselves and exercise the capacities with the social groups (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the Wednesdays meetings, presentations, and workshops provided an opportunity to live in the transdisciplinary space. Although the transdisciplinary space provided both soothing waves and painful bumps, they became frequent catalysts for me to live a meaningful life. Here, meaningful life refers to the good life which is open and harmonious that is dedicated for common good.

On 'Wednesday meetings', I used to get ample open space for collaboration. I, together with colleagues, shared beliefs, values and vision to interact with meaningful activities and engaged in order to enhance my knowledge and skills (Hord, 2009). In the group, we shared our recent experiences; we provided re/constructive feedback to all; we planned together; we discussed if there was an issue. Together we came to the conclusion. Then individually we worked for a week and again sat and shared in the group. Then we planned further.

By and by I learnt to be open. For instance, in the process of developing baseline tools being together with colleagues in the university, I learnt how to support participants to feel free to share the experience by probing questions; how to ask questions to make it more participatory; how to maintain 'no harm' to any; how to work together and come to a conclusion being in groups. Gradually, I learnt

to say 'yes' and 'no'. For instance, I took a stand to remove some irrelevant probing questions in the group work. I agreed on colleagues' perspectives and decisions. Many times, I learnt from others and even from my own perspectives by active engagement in the discussion process.

Such discussions provided a favorable environment to be open by acknowledging various perspectives, possibilities, opportunities and ways out including my own and of others. None of the members of the learning community seemed and acted as perfect who continued work for the good of all. In this favourable place, I continued learning, sharing, discussing, negotiating and understanding the interplay of differences and similarities. Unlike this smooth journey, one day I experienced a bump that I recorded in my journal.

> Today we sat to finalize the baseline tools. We had been collecting inputs from all the community members and modifying them to make the tools the final tools. Incorporating all voices has already made the tool very long. Although all the members know this reality, none of us was ready to remove his/her part. I think taking a final decision was not easy incorporating all the perspectives. After a long discussion, finally, we came to the conclusion that all the inputs were not important in our context. I sensed that making the tool contextual was the common goal. Then, we had to revisit the tools many times.

From it, I realized that collaborating days were more challenging when the learners of the community members had to decide the best practices. This 'storming' (Tuckman, 1965) phase was the 'difficult phase of a project's life cycle' in which members negotiated their roles, values, relationships and visions and determined leadership to give focus on the project to accomplish than to themselves (Davidson, Naffi, & Raby, 2017). I experienced my value of common good from the incidents in which two of my colleagues discontinued their studies. I recorded one of them as follows:

> I think s/he gave up. Probably, s/he did not like the journey of the rafting, a roller coaster. I had two queries from his/her decision: 1. Does everyone like to negotiate for the common good? 2. Was quitting the only alternative? Perhaps, s/he might have sat in the discussion but that discussion might (not) lead to negotiation and participation for the long-term committed common good.

Perhaps 'common good' was not the final state but an ongoing dialogue with those who may not be full participants on the common (Daloz, 2000). Here, common good refers to the practices that do not harm any participant instead benefit all participants (at least to some extent). Perhaps my sense of 'common good' resulted from collaborative culture.

Thus, frequent meetings, presentations, and informal settings with learners of community field visits are 'frequent catalysts' for me as I have been experiencing constructive engagement with otherness (Daloz, 2000). Perhaps, my being in the open space with the learning community where I could be critical and appreciative to my and others' practices, enhanced my inherent socio-cultural qualities such as inclusion and discernment as I developed my understanding of connection across differences and similarities among people, disciplines, contexts, and cultures.

Using a participatory-based approach
Here, a participatory-based approach refers to the approaches which have qualities of participatory action research such as collaboration, reflection, inclusiveness, dialogue, and democracy (Kemmis& McTaggart, 2007). I attended many Participatory Action Research (PAR) workshops throughout my study and research process which were participatory-based approaches. The workshops helped me to question as well as acknowledge my assumptions and prior knowledge.

In every meeting, I found the PAR approach is participatory, collaborative, empowering and democratic which were completely different from other conventional workshops. Conventional workshops were guided by the top-down approach where the instructors come and teach and share knowledge in a big group intending to implement their understanding but in PAR workshop, we all (probably) equally involved for knowledge production where the trainer and the trainee remain in the same horizontal line, not in hierarchy. All the members present in the workshop of PAR are found committed to the long-term goal of the projects-transforming self and the other through their projects.

I, a practitioner of PAR, knew that we all are internally diverse, differentiated, and sometimes inconsistent and contradictory but also the shared vision was the guideline to work together reconstructing the social interaction by reconstructing the acts that have been

constituting us (Kemmis& McTaggart, 2007). Collaborative planning, action and reflection cycle were practiced in the workshop that has helped me to internalize the PAR process and thereby practice in the research process (e.g. Dhungana, 2020; Dhungana et. al, 2021).

That participatory learning space improved my interactions by questioning and changing my disempowering irrational, unproductive, inefficient, unjust, unsatisfying and alienating (Kemmis& McTaggart, 2007) egoist 'self' or 'I' culture. For it, PAR approaches, planning, taking action and reflecting guided me and my actions. I believe this participatory-based approach has been helping me to improve my way of working with people of similar and different mindsets, values, abilities, qualities and needs. Frequent presentation programs created a forum for reconciliation. Such exposure to the diverse community was always beneficial for the collective feedback (Hord, 2009) as a soothing wave. Presenting understanding in the presentation was a completely new discourse for me. Even the route of that journey was unfamiliar but I enjoyed it.

Every time I am/was open for critical comments intending to improve my practices. I ask my teachers, colleagues and supervisors for constructive feedback. For instance, the feedback provided by my colleague-*"Your presentation is more descriptive than..."*-supported me to be self-critical as I tried to use my reflections and produced better presentations.

I felt really good to be heard. It was nothing new for me but when I heard other's perspectives I began to listen actively. I found active listening to be interesting and eye-opening. In every presentation (others and my own), I learnt something new that was always unique and different. Gradually I learnt to respect others' unique stories as well as my own (I used to hesitate on sharing my stories).

Such improvement proved that all of us have the potential to make things better (Daloz, 2000). The culture of collecting collective feedback and improving my presentations is adventurous. More than that, I realized that I developed 'weness' within open space as I recorded in my journal.

> I found my presentation a different presentation because the presentation was not my presentation but ours. It was the product of collaborative work. My heart sensed, "This is our presentation'. 'Our' includes co-researchers, teacher-participants, me and even a larger community. I felt this is

'weness', 'our' findings. Was I becoming a collaborative practitioner? I shared this feeling before we began our presentation that day. Something amazing happened. I was happy deep down that 'my' and 'your' turned into shared 'our'.

Besides such pleasant waves, I experienced painful waves while becoming a part of a group of people. For instance, my ego was hurt when I felt others not paying attention to me, my work, and my experience at that moment was like a roller-coaster. Again and again, I reached the point that separated my 'self' as 'my kind' from others and 'their kind' (Daloz, 2000, p. 109).

However, painful moments taught me to listen to self and others equally and embrace multiple perspectives aiming for the common good. Such pleasant and painful waves taught my sense of 'self' is unhelpful to nurture my inclusive perspective. Such waves and some other untold (cannot express through words) cumulative effects might have deepened my horizon-developed sense of 'self' and sense of social responsibility. I think such 'catalytic' moments (Daloz, 2000) were transformative conditions to bring positive changes in my professional (i.e. collaborative or cultural) way of living.

Developing tactful mentorship

I think my supervisors' mentorship with pedagogical tactfulness (van Manen, 1991) is/was my life-enhancing opportunity. Here, pedagogical tactfulness refers to the multiple (e.g. critical, appreciative, and inclusive) strategies employed by my mentors while facilitating my learning. My mentors or supervisors have a prominent role in my change by creating pedagogical tactfulness through providing an "all-inclusive perspective" (Taylor, Taylor, & Luitel, 2012) with the blend of "love and critique" (Gjotterud, 2009).

I think, at times, they believed in me more than I do in myself. For instance, they give equal importance to me (like to my co-researcher) although I felt that I did not deserve it as I was new to educational philosophies, theories, and methodologies. Both of my supervisors have been pushing me to take the next step with positive remarks which I no longer thought I had in me at the time. *"Excellent! This is exactly what I wanted to see." "I trust you."*
"Congratulations! Excellent work! You clearly show some grounding challenges, to which I do not have answers, only questions..." Such

remarks such as "excellent", 'congratulations' meant a lot to me. For me, they meant to say- "You keep on experiencing new perspectives and exploring more and more." Despite a lot to improve, such positive feedback encouraged me to improve my way of living and learning.

Similarly, my supervisors' tactfulness enhanced my *bibek*. For instance, at the beginning of my field visit, I sensed chaos, an internal (seemingly cultural conflict) in the school. Perhaps it was only my assumption but I was worried thinking about how to work in such internal conflict? Later, I returned to university and discussed with the members of the learning community and then with my supervisors. Both of my supervisors gave their own opinions (e.g. What do you think would be appropriate for you to do?) and left me to decide on my level of understanding. None of them suggested anything in particular which was unexpected for me. Perhaps, my schooling is deeply rooted in the culture of following instructions from the top (e.g. supervisors) and implementing them without any alteration. In the beginning, I was in a dilemma, whether to avoid the conflict or face it. Finally, I used my *bibek* and decided to face the challenge for common good. As a result, in collaboration with my two colleagues, I planned a four-day discussion program which went well. Although I had some mixed feelings I was surprised to see the positive environment of teachers who welcomed us and participated fully in the four days' program.

Thus, my supervisors' tactfulness taught me not to give up in difficult situations, rather cope with diverse perspectives and go through them. Besides my supervisors, I feel all the other members of the community of learners are my mentors as they hear me, acknowledge my perspective, respect my feelings and give constructive feedback on time whenever I ask and even without asking. I feel all the members of my learning community are my good friends who are teaching lessons one way or another. For instance, we co-authored the paper (Dhungana, et al, 2020), co-present it in the conferences (Rajbanshi & Dhungana, 2020; Rajbanshi & Dhungana, 2021) besides co-learning and peer-evaluating which became my professional praxis.

Figure 1

Final reflections

In short, while adapting the critical-appreciative approach, I explored the following context-responsive approaches (see Figure 1) such as inclusive perspectives, creating open space, using the participatory-based approach, and developing tactful mentorship in the form of a satvic perspective as/for my transformative professional development. For the development of the satvic perspective, the following things were prerequisite:

(1) Nurturing 'we' culture: I nurtured 'we' culture by not deconstructing individualistic 'self' rather expanding 'self' being open and inclusive. Working together was beyond living in isolation. Although working alone was getting time for self, working in a group was getting time to understand 'Self' in reference to 'self'. Further, the interplay between 'self' and 'Self' was a transformative moment, a 'flight of fancy'.

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(2) Knowing living values: I realized my living values such as vulnerability, trust and respect which had the potentiality of being inquisitive, open and self-reflective and self-improving. My living values supported me to sense 'who I am/not, what I don't/know, what I am/not doing and how I am/not improving' while influencing self, others and social formation living values (Whitehead, 2008).

(3) Valuing available time, place, people, and things: I valued what I had in the present moment. Perhaps that provided me with a favourable environment to expand my disciplinary horizon as I felt I had been getting all the moral, personal and financial support to stretch my boundary. Perhaps, my 'supportive structural conditions like time, place & resources' was an important factor for transformative learning (Hord, 2009).

(4) Writing as a 'Self' inquiry: I loved writing as I realized that I thought writing my 'self' and 'Self' and their conflicts and thereby improved my professional practices. Looking back at my own writing with fresh eyes and re-making sense was an eye-opening moment for me.

Thus, the four prerequisite factors and the four strategies supported me to develop my cultural (i.e. satvic) perspective which might be significant to the ones who would aspire for exploring their own cultural perspective in the local and global university contexts. I envision that university students and teachers are well prepared to address the past, present and immediate future professional development issues being together in the diverse cultural contexts harmoniously. I am hopeful that educators and students would foster cultural knowledge through 'Self' inquiry. It would be interesting to continue the discussion in light of cultural perspective to seek the underneath issues of Black Life Matters! Anti-Asian Campaign! Seemingly such issues are the call for "cultural emancipation" (Taylor, 2013) and/or cultural responsiveness. As sustainability in education inquiry about and being in the natural world is vital through inquiry-based learning (Austin, 2020), for nurturing cultural knowledge, cultural responsiveness, and cultural perspectives inquiry of 'Self' seems vital.

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Author Bio

PARBATI DHUNGANA, a PhD scholar, is a visiting faculty of the STEAM Department at Kathmandu University School of Education, Nepal. Her research interests include teachers' continuous professional development, gender, self-study, participatory auto/ethnographic inquiry, living-educational-theory, and socio-cultural perspective. She published a couple of journal articles.