Complexities and Contradictions in the Implementation of Learner Centered Teaching

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Abstract

Learner centered teaching (LCT) have been focuses of discussion from 1980s and particularly the 1990s in developing countries. From the 1980s there have been quite a lot of concerns and arguments over the appropriateness of learner centered teaching (LCT) for developing countries where the social and cultural values, educational traditions, and available resources are so different from the Western countries. Most of the educationists argue for the teacher centred formalistic approach which is believed to be more suitable for contexts where resources are limited and teacher professional capability is low. Although, most of the educationists of the world support LCT, there are a number of complexities and contradictions regarding the concepts and the implementation of LCT. Thus, the major intention of the present article is to shed light on the various aspects of complexities and contradictions of LCT. Six main topics such as: learner centered teaching and the teaching learning methods; cultural beliefs that contradict learner centered teaching; teachers and students' culture; teaching and learning resources; and language complexity; and top-down reform have been presented one by one in the present article.

Key Words

Active Participation, Instructional Resources, Cultural Belief, Language Complexity, LCT Reform

There are complexity and contradictions associated with conceptualising learner-centred teaching (LCT). These complexities and contradictions arise from the diverse use of the term LCT (Msonde, 2011), and the lack of agreement about the defined nature of the concept. The contradiction is further complicated when other terms are used as alternatives. Educationists including critical theorists, educational researchers, teacher educators, and teachers labels LCT as participatory teaching and learning (Msonde, 2011; Phillips, 1997), critical education (Freire, 1972), emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970), liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1966), learning-centred teaching (Phillips, 1995; Richardson, 2003), 'culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Nyerere, 1967), constructivist teaching (Phillips, 1995; Richardson, 2003), competence-based teaching (GoURT, 2005), and place-based teaching (GoURT, 2005; Nyerere, 1967) to mention a few. However, the usage has seldom been consistent, causing some confusion among theoreticians, curriculum and educational policy planners, researchers, teacher educators, and teachers (Msonde, 2011). This article presents learner-centred teaching (LCT) complexities which adversely affect its effective implementation in teaching and learning process. Lea et al. (2003, P.322) maintain that one of the issues with LCT is the fact that many institutions or educators claim to be putting learner-centered learning into practice, but in reality they are not. In a number of research studies, findings show that though the LCT is acknowledged for being the right approach for the present time, yet actual practice is still teacher-centered. One of these studies by Liu et al. (2006), the findings indicate that instructors whether are they of language or content subjects still use traditional, teacher-centered styles in school settings. Shipton (2011) conducted a study in the New South Wales Police College with the aim to determine Police College staff dominant teaching approach prior to extensive staff development that commenced in 2010. The results highlights contradictions in the survey findings, with responses to closed questions indicating a majority favoring learner-centered approaches, while responses to open-ended questions suggest staff tend to be more teacher-centered. Discussion of these results highlights several possible reasons for this contradiction and suggests that further development of staff teaching conceptions is required to encourage reflective practice and the use of learner-centered approaches crucial to the facilitation of problem based learning.

Vavrus and Bartlett (2012:641-642) identify three challenges from a study they conducted on comparative pedagogies and epistemological diversities. Firstly, teachers and teacher educators who are meant to implement educational reforms are often not familiar with the theories, debates and methods related to learner-centred pedagogical reforms. Secondly, the use of enquiry-based pedagogies is in many instances undermined by the teachers" preoccupation with covering the mandated curricula and administering the high-stakes examination systems in most African countries. Thirdly, the implementation of constructivist pedagogical approaches is hindered by the lack of basic books and supplies, overcrowding of classes, lack of textbooks, low salaries, and administrative demands on teachers" time. Analyses of these challenges suggest that, when they are taken into consideration in the educational reform processes, LCT may be better equipped to be implemented with aspects of the enquiry-based approach.

A number of studies reported that there was a great deal of challenges in implementing the learner-centered approach. The study conducted by Nonkukhetkhong (2006) revealed that the barriers to apply the learner-centered approach were inadequate teacher qualifications, students' low motivation and poor English ability, large classes, and poorly resourced schools. For the study by Jan (2009), the finding pointed out that overcrowded classrooms prevented teachers from the implementation of the learner-centeredness. Based on the research done by Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2011), the finding showed that inadequate materials, insufficient human resources, and lack of training in learner-centeredness were the obstacles that undermined the implementation of learner-centered approach. Moreover, An and Reigeluth's (2012) study indicated that lack of funding, limited resources, student behavior, and class sizes were the main challenges in applying the approach. Several studies conducted in Cambodia also found that there were

many barriers to the implementation of the learner-centeredness. Nith et al. (2010), according to their study result, reported variety of obstacles that hindered in successfully using the methods in the classroom. First, it was the large class sizes, which contained 60 to 70 students. Second, the shortage of textbooks for teachers and students was another problem. Third, it was the heavy workloads that teachers had to accomplish, in which teachers did not have enough time to prepare the lesson, particularly for those who taught both in the morning and the afternoon shifts. Finally, the main issue was the low level of teacher capacity, especially in terms of inability to design and use questions to assist students in brainstorming with each other and making students think and analyze. The study by Kheam and Maricar (2012) revealed similar findings of the problem in applying learner-centeredness in Cambodia as well. The problems included classroom management, shortage of teaching and experiment materials (textbooks and laboratory), and big class size (40-50 students). The findings indicated the problems teachers faced such as time constrains, shortage of skill development on learner-centered approach, inadequate ability in the subject matter, and meager salary.

In the following section, major six complexities and contradictions; learner centered teaching and the teaching learning methods; cultural beliefs that contradict learner centered education; teachers and students' culture; teaching and learning resources; language complexity; and top-down reform that denies teacher agency have been presented.

Learner centered teaching and the teaching learning methods

Some educationists conceptualise LCT based on the teaching learning methods used. These scholars (Msonde, 2011), perceive LCT as the practice that seeks students' involvement using what they call participatory teaching and learning methods. They identify participatory methods to include mainly; group discussion, question and answers, demonstration, and field visits. For them, according to Msonde (2011), learning occurs when students merely participate in the teaching learning process. This means that this group of educationists does not assess students' participation in terms of their ability to construct knowledge from their diverse contexts and experiences. Understanding of LCT in terms of mere students' participation in the classroom seemed to affect social studies teachers' conception and practice of LCT. Some teachers equally understood LCT by the methods of teaching and learning. This understanding of LCT consequently affected teachers' teaching practices. Teachers perceived LCT occurs when students participate in the teaching learning and not students' critical reflection of the topics using their diverse experiences thus leading to the development of new understanding of the respective topics. Teachers' conceptualization of LCT seemed to contradict with the ideas of education critical theorists such as Freire and Dewey.

According to Freire (1971), active students' participation depends on the relationships that exist between the teacher and students. Freire denotes that students are placed in a better position for a meaningful learning where teachers provide them enough chances to discuss the subject matter using their diverse prior knowledge and living contexts. Freire's interest is to see students are actively engaged in the learning process by having them taking charge of the teaching and learning. As opposed to the banking approach to teaching where teachers dominate the classroom practice, Freire calls for the change in the teacher-students' relationship

by actively engaging students in the construction of knowledge about the world they live (Freire, 1971). Freire's proposition of how teaching learning ought to take place is also supported by Dewey (1966) who argues that in order to develop creative, critical, and independent thinking as well as problem solving capacities amongst learners, teachers need to connect the subject matter to the students' prior knowledge and their real life situations. This means that both Freire and Dewey's ideas of classroom instruction relate to the LCT curriculum policy which emphasizes the development of students' learning competencies including critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, literacy, and communicative competence. In short, based on critical theorists, LCT places an emphasis on students' learning and that a student is positioned at the centre of all classroom processes. The major focus of LCT is to develop students' abilities and capacities to perform activities and to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing society.

Cultural beliefs that contradict learner centered teaching

LCT emphasises a change in teachers' and students' power relations. However, local cultural factors can influence the capacity and readiness of teachers, students and wider communities themselves to understand and embrace such changes to school relationships. Schweisfurth (2013a, p.4) has observed, 'Some cultures have greater 'power distance' between those with less and more power in a society, such as teachers and students: it is alien in such countries to have a close and familiar relationship with a teacher or to question his or her wisdom'. Research indicates that, on the one hand, teachers who are used to teaching in an authoritative manner face challenges transferring some of their authority and responsibilities to students and hesitate to compromise their privileged position (Altinyelken, 2011; de la Sablonniere et al., 2009); while, on the other hand, students find it more difficult to claim and exercise such authority because they are not allowed to participate in discussions at home or challenge parental decisions (Altinyelken, 2011). While the above factors have been documented and researched in the Nepalese context, one final factor shaping learner centered teaching implementation increasingly highlighted in international literature but thus far unexplored in India is the role of cultural beliefs. Schweisfurth (2011) reviews a variety of studies of learner centered teaching implementation that suggest that cultures which tend towards high power distance or collectivism tend to find it difficult to implement aspects of learner centered pedagogy such as democratic teacher-student relationships or focus on individual learners' interests. Tabulawa's (1997) work in Botswana found a similar challenge to reigning cultural beliefs posed by learner centered pedagogy: To propose that [teachers] shift from a banking education pedagogical paradigm to a learner centered one is necessarily a proposal that they fundamentally change their views of the nature of knowledge, of the learner and his/her role, and of classroom organisation in general. (p.192)

In light of this, several authors have questioned the cultural appropriateness of introducing learner centered approaches largely developed in the West into vastly different non-Western cultural contexts (Alexander, 2000; Ginsburg, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2006). Kanu (2005) and O'Donoghue (1994) highlight the need for a serious cultural analysis to be undertaken before attempting to transfer educational models across cultures, pointing to instances of strong resistance or downright failure faced by such attempts when they do not take cognisance of local cultural realities.

Cultural beliefs are key constraints impeding Nepal's educational progress, including the deep-rooted belief among teachers and administrators that not all children deserve or are capable of the same quality of education, teachers' low regard for teaching as a profession, or their lack of faith in students' ability to think independently. Batra (2006) points out, these basic belief systems highlighted by Weiner remain a critical and unaddressed challenge to this day. Nepalese practitioners have increasingly come up against such cultural barriers in their attempts to promote pedagogical change, even when they do address some of the systemic barriers mentioned earlier. Nawani (2013) analyses the current national attempt to shift from a rigid examination system to LCT, and finds that 'isolated reforms in techniques of measurement will not have much meaning unless accompanied by concomitant changes in the classroom culture'-including teachers' beliefs about learning, teaching, assessment, and the teacher-student relationship. (p.40). The NGO Eklavya in Madhya Pradesh found that in order to train teachers in more learner-centred approached to social science teaching, it was necessary to first engage with teachers' existing attitudes on gender, caste, social hierarchies, religion, tribal culture, etc., which prevented teachers from promoting critical discussions on these issues in their own classrooms (Batra & Nawani, 2010). Several others like Batra (2009) and Rao, Cheng & Narain (2003) also point to the strong role played by cultural beliefs about learning, social order, different learners' abilities, etc. in restricting educational change; however there is no clear consensus between them on how such cultural beliefs should be viewed or engaged with. While Rao, Cheng & Narain go only as far as to say that solutions to educational problems 'must also be sensitive to cultural beliefs and other contextual factors', Batra goes further to argue that these must be actively changed, 'by effectively questioning and enabling the development of an alternative worldview amongst teachers' (2009, p.121). However neither presents a concrete framework for engaging with or bringing change in such cultural beliefs. Overall, despite the above allusions to the importance of cultural beliefs, not many have analysed this specifically in the context of the implementation of LCT as advocated by Indian policies, identified which particular Indian cultural beliefs may conflict with the assumptions of LCT, or provided suggestions for facilitating change in these beliefs. The few studies that have been conducted on Indian teachers' beliefs will be reviewed in chapter 3, but to date there has been little engagement with teachers' beliefs in either educational research or reform efforts in India.

Teachers and Students' Culture

Another contradiction of LCT is embedded within teachers and students' culture. In many countries including Nepal, historically, elders were believed and respected to be the source of knowledge and wisdom (Siwale and Sefu, 1977). They preserved cultural heritage, norms, values, and knowledge of their respective tribes. The elders transmitted this cultural heritage, norms, values, and knowledge to the youth based on emerging needs. This traditional system of education (Siwale & Sefu, 1977) aimed at inculcating in the children, the values of hospitality, bravery, the dignity of labour, respect for elders, and the communalism as opposed to individualism. This education according to Siwale and Sefu was learned by both sexes through sex education, where, emphasis was on the responsibilities of manhood and womanhood. According to Siwale and Sefu, (1977), teaching and learning during the ancient period were also practised through mass media such as tales, legends, whereby children learned history, geography, natural sciences, astronomy, and many other subjects. Based on the teachers and learners' characteristics in one hand and the methods of teaching on the other, it could be suggested that the tradition education was teacher-centred, where teachers possessed the knowledge, values, norms, and societal beliefs transmitted to learners who did not possess them.

Traditional education, therefore, developed authoritative power and autonomous behaviours amongst teachers and lead to inferiority complexes among students. Children were expected to continually respect their elders as source of knowledge and wisdom, which according to Mushi (2005), this elder-child relationship adversely affected the teaching and learning practices. Mushi observes that the historical relationship between elders and children has developed an inferiority complex and cowardly behaviour amongst students in the classrooms today. This could mean that the current teacher-student relationship in Tanzania denotes the perpetuation of the long-lived culturally teaching orientation that did not provide opportunities for children to make sense of the topics using their life experiences. Children were nurtured to accept everything taught by their parents/elders. Likewise, the implementation of LCT in schools' classrooms was constrained by the historically inherited teacher-student relationship where teachers believed to acquire knowledge and authority to transmit to their students who do not possess it. On the other hand, students presented a cultural continuation of respect and an inferiority complex to their teachers. Many times when students were invited to share their conceptions and understanding of different geographic concepts, they demonstrated lack of enthusiasm and readiness to conceptualize and contribute their understandings of the topics under discussion. Against cultural complexity that exists in the implementation of LCT, critical theorists argue for students' autonomy in the classroom. Freire (1971) explains student autonomy occurs when a student is actively involved and provided with opportunities to construct meaning of the topics based on his/her prior knowledge and experience. However, Freire argues that students would not automatically construct knowledge by their merely involvement in the lesson, instead, it would be determined by the kind of classroom relationship that exist between them and their teacher (Freire, 1971). According to Freire, it could mean that the teacher-student relationship during classroom instruction influences students' level of engagement in the creation of knowledge. Freire feels that students will be actively involved in the construction of knowledge if teachers would be ready to position themselves as learners learning from their students and vis-à-vis. In other words, the LCT geography curriculum will be effectively implemented when there is knowledge sharing between the teacher and student and that respect is embedded within the two and not within a single group. Thus, the cultural contradiction and complexity regarding teacher-student relationship could imply the need for the competence-based curriculum to address the complexity amongst education stake holders including curriculum and policy planners, teachers, students, parents, and the general community. The stake holders need to clearly understand what it means by LCT competence-based curriculum and the implied cultural transformation in the classroom context with respect to teacher-student relationships.

Teaching and Learning Resources

Resources constraint is one of the complexities that seemed to adversely affect the implementation of LCT. According to the research findings, teachers taught in large classes of up to

100 students. Those classes had limited instructional resources including text and reference books, computer assisted facilities, and those resources made from the school surroundings. Teachers felt it difficult to actively involve students in a meaningful construction of knowledge given the resource constrained classroom contexts. Teachers' experiences are supported by critical theorists and educationists who argue that the potential role of teaching and learning resources are needed for effective LCT practices. Tabulawa (1998) recommends the need for adequate supply of instructional resources to influence learning-centred teaching. According to Tabulawa, meaningful construction of knowledge occurs when students actively interact with resources. Tabulawa argues that when instructional resources are well organized and utilized, they promote students' creativity, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and active participation in the classroom activities (Tabulawa, 1998). Tabulawa's argumentation regarding the role of resources in LCT echoes Incekara's (2010) ideas suggesting that learning resources such as maps, geographical models, and other emerging technologies are used as communication media through which teachers and students communicate different geographical phenomena, their spatial distribution and relationships among them and human activities. While teachers, Tabulawa, and Incekara's perceptions and understanding of teaching and learning resources as the basics for effective LCT practices, other scholars argue that LCT can as well be effectively implemented in large and resources-constrained classrooms.

In their pedagogy of autonomy for difficult circumstances, Kuchah and Smith's (2011) major proposition is centred on engaging learners in an under-resourced secondary school setting. For Kuchah and Smith (2011), teachers would effectively implement LCT approaches using students as resources. According to Kuchah and Smith, students possess a rich mass of experience and knowledge that has the potential to facilitate learning in under-resourced classroom environments. They propose teachers to actively involve students in every stage of pedagogical decision making. Based on Kuchah and Smith's proposition, students could be involved in designing instructional resources, classroom activities, and evaluation artefacts. They believe that teachers will motivate students' involvement when they tailor the topics to the students' everyday experiences. They encourage teachers to use large classes and resources constraints as opportunities to actively involve students in promoting learners' autonomy. Consequently, the argumentation regarding the role of instructional resources seemed to complicate geography teachers' understanding and practice of LCT in the Tanzania's education delivery context. For example, critical and constructivist theorists such as Freire (1971) and Phillips, (1997) suggest the need to place the learner at the centre of all classroom practices i.e. actively engagement of students in the construction of knowledge.

Interestingly, Tabulawa (2003) seems not only to contradict his own appreciation on the usefulness of LCT approaches in promoting learners' learning, but also presents counter arguments regarding the need for enhancing learners' autonomy using LCT approaches as augmented by critical theorists such as Freire and Phillips. According to Tabulawa (2013), LCT approaches are westernised and conditionally imposed in developing economies' educational contexts without fair consideration of cultural, technological, and socio-economic, and political grounds. Tabulawa sees that western countries and institutions use their political and economic prosperity to sustain their colonial influence in Africa. Tabulawa views that western countries and international institutions continue their political and economic influence in Africa through provision of financial aids and professional support in different socioeconomic and cultural projects. These donor funded projects (DFPs) according to Tabulawa include: educational development projects such as curriculum innovations, instructional approaches, and promotion of medium of instruction through language learning support programmes; orphans and people living in vulnerable environments; health services; and infrastructure development grants support. Tabulawa suggests that many of these projects including LCT approaches are not effectively implemented since they are enforced without significant consideration of the contexts of their implementation. Tabulawa's critique is also reflected in the teachers' teaching practices. Sigimba for example, presented an anxiety in the implementation of LCT approaches suggesting that the approaches were enforced whose educational context does not support their implementation. Sigimba further shared that LCT approaches would not be effectively practiced in an environment with limited instructional resources including teacher shortage, over-crowded classrooms, text and reference books, computer-assisted facilities, furniture, and infrastructures. All these seemed to complicate Sigimba's understanding of LCT and its implementation in geography classrooms.

Language Complexity

The indigenous languages through oral traditions (Heugh, 2006) have been significant media for the preservation and expansion of history, literature, and knowledge systems, as well as for their transmission from one generation to the next for a thousand years. The official language in Nepal is Nepali. Thus most of the students were taught in Nepali in their primary and secondary education. There was an automatic shift from Nepali to English when they enrolled in colleges as the medium of instruction is English. The students' English language is weak and it affects their performance in class. They can hardly speak; when they do it is very little English. Thus they are unable to have effective discussion in class. They have to have a wide range of vocabulary, good comprehension skill, reading skill etc to function well in class. Students' level of participation in class is low because of low language level. Freire (1971) states that the medium of instruction may influence or limit the classroom dialogue between teacher and students as well as students themselves. He thus emphasises the use of students' own language in order to promote their participation in the instructional practice.

Despite all the assertions regarding the need to align the curriculum and the medium of instruction on the African cultural heritage, the western world still perpetuates their influence not only on the curriculum design but also the instructional approaches including the medium of instruction. The colonial influence on African education systems seems to despise numerous appreciations of the role of African languages on the quality of education. For example, the 1951 UNESCO meeting state:

It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium (UNESCO, 1951, p. 11).

The UNESCO observation regarding the role of the medium of instruction reflects geography teachers' experiences in their classroom practices in Tanzania. As presented and discussed

in the findings, analysis, and discussion chapters of this thesis, it was experienced the language to impede positive classroom interaction between the teacher and students. Both teachers and students demonstrated a lack of English competence thus hindering effective communication of geographical ideas and concepts. This means that effective implementation of LCT in Nepal, among other factors, is adversely affected by the medium of instruction. Therefore, it could be suggested that in order to effectively implement LCT in Nepal, there is a need for debate on language policy and subsequent decision about the appropriate medium of instruction. The focus is to use the language that is familiar to both teachers and students.

Top-down reform

Several commentators on LCT reforms in the global have pointed to the very nature of the reform process as one possible reason for their failure (O'Sullivan, 2004, Schweisfurth, 2013; Tabulawa 1998). Typically, pedagogical models are developed by a central team with little input from practising teachers, and expected to be rigidly implemented by teachers with little attention to the actual process of change, the complexities of ground realities, and what teachers themselves know and think about their own classroom practice. Often reformers tend to be unrealistic in what they expect teachers to do, and how quickly they expect change to happen. Teachers' agency and professional autonomy has been cited as a key missing piece in educational reforms (Batra, 2005; Dyer et al, 2004; Ramachrandran et al, 2008). Ramachandran, Bhattarcharjea & Sheshagiri (2008, p.6) maintain that the crux of the problem in pedagogical reform lies in how the education system views teachers: as 'lowly recipients and implementers of instructions and content designed elsewhere', expected to comply with predefined tasks rather than to analyse their own teaching practices in light of students' learning. Batra (2005) argues that this top-down discourse seeps even into the NCF 2005, which despite its commendable vision, views teachers more as 'passive agents of the state who are expected to be persuaded and trained to magically translate the vision of the NCF 2005 in schools' (p. 4349). By failing to articulate the processes and programmatic interventions needed to operationalize its ambitious vision, the NCF 2005 (like many policy reforms in India) unfortunately undermines its own fulfilment. Teachers who themselves have never been enabled to exercise autonomy or critical thinking can hardly be expected to develop these skills in children (Batra, 2006; Kumar, 2005a). Teachers' lack of autonomy creates a culture where teachers feel compelled to strictly follow prescribed curriculum and textbooks, restricting their ability to adapt teaching content and methods to local needs, as expected by LCT. It is perhaps not surprising that Batra views focusing on teacher agency and empowering them as public transformative intellectuals as 'the most important component of reform of Indian public education without which very little can be achieved' (2006, p.6).

Various factors have contributed to shaping and reinforcing teachers' low degree of professional agency. Kumar (2005b) traces its roots to the bureaucratic colonial system that enforced centralisation in both employment-related matters and in academic matters like design of curriculum, textbooks and examinations. Another oft-cited factor has been the policy decision by several states to introduce a system of professionally unqualified and underpaid locally-recruited para-teachers. This was introduced during DPEP as a quick-fix managerial solution to rapid educational expansion in the midst of fiscal crisis, but which today is seen as a threat to the dying professional cadre of teachers in several states (Ramachandran et al, 2005). Teachers' professional status and motivation are further undermined by the low status of teaching as a profession, increasingly chosen as a last resort by unemployed youth or women seeking a part-time socially-acceptable occupation. Coupled with this is the increasing politicisation and corruption rampant in the education system, where teachers often must pay bribes, curry favour with politicians or pursue court cases in order to secure jobs, preferred postings, promotions or transfers. Often, the honest and motivated teachers are the ones saddled with non-teaching assignments or transferred to difficult areas (Ramachandran et al, 2005). These various complexities of teachers' working realities are rarely confronted in public documents, yet as Ramachandran points out, 'a demoralised, unmotivated and burdened teacher cannot turn the system around' (2005, p. 2144). These various factors lead to several stages of 'disjuncture' that take place between the ideal and the real (McCowan, 2009). Disjunctures occur between the vision for Indian society depicted in the Indian Constitution, and the way this gets translated into Indian education policy or curricular frameworks; and then between the vision depicted in NCF 2005, and the way this gets filtered down to trainings. Further disjuncture occurs in the way training messages are interpreted and then enacted by teachers. Such disjunctures must be kept in mind in any study of Indian teachers' pedagogy in relation to curricular policy.

Conclusion

Issues related to the adoption of LCT in developing countries, it might be argued that LCT has not been effectively implemented in many such contexts due to various factors. These issues may need to be critically reviewed. There is contradiction in educationists about the participation of the students in the teaching learning process. One group of the educationists claim that there is need of students merely participate in the teaching learning process while another group of educationist claim that there need of active participation of the learner in teaching learning process for effective learning. Freire's proposition of how teaching learning ought to take place is also supported by Dewey (1966) who argues that in order to develop creative, critical, and independent thinking as well as problem solving capacities amongst learners, teachers need to connect the subject matter to the students' prior knowledge and their real life situations. This means that both Freire and Dewey's ideas of classroom instruction relate to the LCT curriculum policy which emphasizes the development of students' learning competencies including critical and creative thinking skills, problem solving skills, literacy, and communicative competence. In short, LCT places an emphasis on students' learning and that a student is positioned at the centre of all classroom processes. The major focus of LCT is to develop students' abilities and capacities to perform activities and to quickly adapt to the rapidly changing society. This means that this group of educationists does not assess students' participation in terms of their ability to construct knowledge from their diverse contexts and experiences. There is another contradiction associated with LCT that is cultural belief. Teachers who are used to teaching in an authoritative manner face challenges transferring some of their authority and responsibilities to students and hesitate to compromise their privileged position while, on the other hand, students find it more difficult to claim and exercise such authority because they are not allowed to participate in discussions at home or challenge parental decisions.

Another contradiction of LCT is embedded within teachers and students' culture. Historically, elders were believed and respected to be the source of knowledge. The elders transmitted this cultural heritage, norms, values, and knowledge to the youth based on emerging needs. Based on the teachers and learners' characteristics in one hand and the methods of teaching on the other, it could be suggested that the tradition education was teacher-centred, where teachers possessed the knowledge, values, norms, and societal beliefs transmitted to learners who did not possess them. At the same time, teaching resources and language are also effect the teaching learning process. An analysis of barriers to LCT reveals that one major but largely unexplored barrier has been dominant cultural beliefs that may contradict the assumptions of a learner-centred paradigm and may be hindering this shift. The contradictions should lead us to critically question these traditional beliefs to explore which beliefs best support effective pedagogical practice in the Indian context, as well as which beliefs may be hegemonically contributing to oppression within Indian society itself. Unfortunately the whole field of teachers' beliefs, though increasingly explored in Western contexts, has been researched very little in the Indian context. The next chapter proceeds to map this field of research on teachers' beliefs as it has developed in the West, as well as the limited research available in the Indian context, which provides the basis for the present research.

Top-down curriculum reforms are not sufficient to bring about change and current bottom-up initiatives are failing to have significant impact. Programmatic-level re-accreditation as part of the quality process is an opportune time to advance whole-of-program learner-centred teaching learning approaches. This should be supported by targeted and ongoing professional development. There is a need for further research to investigate how this could be achieved. Pedagogical models are developed by a central team with little input from practising teachers, and expected to be rigidly implemented by teachers with little attention to the actual process of change, the complexities of ground realities, and what teachers themselves know and think about their own classroom practice. Often reformers tend to be unrealistic in what they expect teachers to do, and how quickly they expect change to happen. Teachers' agency and professional autonomy has been cited as a key missing piece in educational reforms.

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Dr Shah started his carrier as primary school teacher in Achham District, Province no. 7, Nepal, in 1988 AD. Later, he worked as secondary school teacher, Chief of the Resource Center, and Headmaster of Secondary School. Accordingly, after his completion of M ED, he has worked as lecturer at +2 level (intermediate Level) for some time. Later, he has been appointed as an assistance professor at university in 2000 AD.

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