TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
THROUGH ETHICAL DILEMMA STORIES:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

By

Kashi Raj Pandey
M.A. (English), M. Phil. (Education)

This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

© Kashi Raj Pandey
School of Education
Murdoch University
September 2018
DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief my dissertation entitled “Transformative Learning through Ethical Dilemma Stories: An Autoethnographic Study” contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made. I understand that this research will become a part of the permanent collection of Murdoch University. My signature below authorises for the release of this dissertation to any readers upon request for scholarly purposes.

06 September 2018

Kashi Raj Pandey

Date
DEDICATION

• To my late parents who had a wish to see their youngest ‘child’ to keep struggling in academia and achieve a satisfaction that the Nepalese society would desire;

• To my lovely friend, the late Brian Fisher (AM), for always believing in me and pushing me to do my best throughout the very likely but unexpected excursions of ours. Although I dearly missed Brian’s physical presence at this precious moment, his belief in the creativity within me will always be assured;

• To my teachers, students, and friends who have always been my main support during my journey in developing this work of thesis and to those who and will feel my ideas with their lived experiences as they go through this thesi;

• To my wife and our two sons; their company always took me further to this successful achievement;

And

• To my readers, who, I hope, are ready to spend their time to read and understand what this thesis reveals.

I thank everyone whose name I could not address directly, for all the love, guidance and support they gave me in every moment of my life.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work arrives at a stage of presentation as an outcome of guidance, support and inspiration of many wise mentors to whom I owe sincere and profound gratitude; yet, it went through adventurous twists and turns, ups and downs. I have learnt much about what it means to demonstrate capacity and commitment to conduct and engage with research of this type. Therefore, I would like to thank many people whose time, effort, ever caring guidance, and support were greatly valued in the completion of this dissertation. I would like to thank the Australia Awards for offering me a full scholarship during my PhD study (2014-2019) in Australia.

An immense amount of acknowledgement goes to my principal supervisor Professor Barry Down, the most sought and inspiring of mentors, for his every effort in giving me enough creative space to discover my scholarly voice in this present work. Barry’s generous support during the critical phase of this PhD research has overwhelmed me; such encouragement and illumination about true education have elevated and transformed my academic existence. Each word from the chapters of this thesis has travelled through his mentoring; Barry’s critical feedback as well as thoughtful, timely and empathic inspiration has become the energy for me throughout. My appreciation also goes to Professor Stephen Ritchie for supporting me with a belief that I had something worthwhile to contribute to the world of academia; I thank him for standing by me and taking over the role of a co-supervisor of my PhD research.

I am grateful to Professor Kenneth Tobin for his creative wisdom, support and friendship. Thank you, Ken for encouraging me to continue my research further and seeing its potential at one but very difficult moment of this journey. You always took time from your busy schedule to discuss my academic growth. Your direction and contagious sense of humour will always remain in my episodic as well as semantic memory. I am really thankful to Associate Professor Libby Lee-Hammond who gave me a caring, yet pragmatic support and guidance that kept me academically alive. My meeting with Namulundah Florence, a Kenyan born author and American Professor of Education, became an awesome moment of academic aura; borrowing her words to “keep working for the people you (I) love and care”; these words have energised me to move ahead. My sincere thanks also go to my friend Anup KC for his expertise in formatting while I am equally indebted to Dr. John Fielder, Dr. Michael Seats, Dr.
Stephen Johnson, Dr. Ross James, Antonia Naarstig, and Jennifer Murphy for their editorial support.

Furthermore, I thank Dr. Rekha Koul, Dr. Antonia Chandra, Dr. Chandra Chandrasegaran, Dr. John Fielder, Dr. Michael Seats, Professor David Treagust, Dr. Venkatrao Venkatrao Vishnumolakala, Dr. Margaret Merga, Dr. Peter Taylor, Dr. Elisabeth Settelmaier, Dr. Chris Hogan, poet Peter Jeffery, AM and Dr. Liana Christensen for their inspiration, support and challenge; you have witnessed the struggles I have faced to grow as a successful PhD scholar. You were all the caring members of my academic family; many things have been a real-life learning of transformative education, every day.

I am grateful to my good friends Mangara, Neni, Aditya, Lionel, Naif, Sunil Govinage, Minerva, Helen, Gbenga, Yibo, Antoinette Geagea, Ronnie, Sian, Karen, Jyoti Keshwani, Nimas, Tam, Thao, Azeema, Van, Brendon Briggs, Helen Stone, Janene, and Phil Jones for their continuous belief that I could complete the mission one day, and this is the day. I feel I am surrounded by the greatest talents of the present time when such friendship has been a sanctuary to renew me every day.

Many thanks to my research participants, the pre-service teachers including my dear friend Rudra Danai for always remaining connected, and being ready to share their reflective experiences. You are the main basis of this research journey; without you, this thesis would not have been possible.

This is a time, I joyfully remember my wonderful brothers and loving sisters, doting wife, our two sensible boys, my sympathetic relatives and friends who tolerated my absences in many social/cultural events and provided me with moral support; you are the most precious gifts in my life. You have taught me about living a life I seek to recreate each time we meet; you are my hope that the world can change for the better. I express my sincere thanks to my dear colleagues and students at Kathmandu University (Nepal) and academics, administrative, and library staff at Curtin University and Murdoch University, both located in Western Australia, for their kind cooperation during my PhD study. Many thanks for your encouragements throughout this journey. I am grateful to all of you.
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: A family conclave. 8
Figure 2: A signboard (mis) representing the popularity of English in Nepal. 25
Figure 3: Universal dilemma. 39
Figure 4: My journey to Kathmandu University unfolds from here. 74
Figure 5: The critically reflective components. 160
LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1  B.Ed. Curriculum Framework  261
Appendix 2  Project Information Letter  262
Appendix 3  Research Information Acknowledgement Letter  264
Appendix 4  Project Permission Letter  265
Appendix 5  Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy  266
Appendix 6  A Teachers’ Guide to Classroom Interaction  269
Appendix 7  Lesson Plan  271
Appendix 8  A Sample Response (Verbatim) to Interview I  275
Appendix 9  Follow-up Interview Questions I  276
Appendix 10  Follow-up Interview Questions II  277
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EDSP</td>
<td>Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>School Leaving Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABER</td>
<td>Arts-based Educational Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This research is an autoethnographic account of my experience of transformative learning as a researcher and practitioner. Specifically, it recounts the ways I have used Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy (EDSP) to explore interpretative and creative spaces for transformative learning both personally and with a group of pre-service teachers. The research allowed us, myself and the participants, to challenge some deeply embedded assumptions about teaching and learning for the purpose of revitalising our own professional judgments and practices.

Central to this thesis is the argument that the process of critically questioning one’s assumptions and decision-making in regard to other people and social contexts provides a much stronger foundation for transformative teaching and learning. I have enunciated a multifaceted methodology which is attentive to people, places and culture in an era where ethical decision-making appears to be receding in educational settings. In response, I have investigated, in depth, the use of culturally-relevant pedagogy or EDSP in English teaching in Nepal. Such endeavours, I believe, can encourage Nepalese educators to become more sensitive to the use of stories within the school curriculum.

The EDSP provides the context in which I/we engage in a transformative learning journey with the goal of prompting dialogue and educational change within Nepalese schools. The practice of critical reflection to create a more socially just world involves the realisation of mutual respect, collaboration, care, and trust. Although this thesis incorporates many personal truths from my own life, the research findings will serve to inform other educators who wish to utilise socio-cultural contexts connected to students’ lives as a transformative pedagogy in the Nepalese school system.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Transformative Learning, EDSP
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO MY STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN NEPAL</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoethnographic Experience, EDSP and Transformative Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My interest in stories</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Move Towards Ethical Dilemma Stories</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A transformative research approach</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incubation of My PhD Research Ideas</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Ideas Enlivening This Research</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating children for happiness</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resisting ‘banking’ approaches to pedagogy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering critical awareness</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rethinking culture and education</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honouring home language in the context of English</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting emancipatory interests in EFL classrooms</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Journey into a Transformative Pedagogy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Aims and Questions</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

x
Significance of the Study ........................................................................................................36
Structure of the Thesis ...........................................................................................................40
Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................41
CHAPTER 2: THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF MY RESEARCH ........................................43
Introduction ...........................................................................................................................43
Some Geographical and Demographic Facts about Nepal ..................................................44
Journeying into Myself: On the Road Less Travelled .........................................................46
A Culture of Questioning and Sharing of Thoughts .............................................................49
A Developing Sense of Connectedness with Life and Learning ..........................................51
More Narratives Revisited ..................................................................................................55
My Passion for Teaching .......................................................................................................58
My Efforts Uncover New Paths ...........................................................................................61
  Story one: The leaving of home for a new beginning ......................................................62
  Story two: The wisdom of an old man .............................................................................63
  Story three: Everything new .............................................................................................64
Life of a Full-time Student (2000-2003) ............................................................................71
Some Nodal Moments as a University Teacher of English (2004-2013) .........................73
  Story four: My first University-teaching experience ......................................................76
  Story five: Who makes our class interesting? .................................................................80
  Story six: Perspectives matter .........................................................................................84
Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................85
CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ..............................................................87
Introduction ...........................................................................................................................87
Research Paradigm (Interpretative Qualitative) .................................................................88
Interpretivism

Postmodernism

Criticalism

Autoethnography: A Method to Reveal the Structures of the Labyrinth of My Lived Experiences

Story seven: A good outcome justifies the means

Drawing on arts-based autoethnography for transformative learning

Letters as experiential gestalts of autoethnographic research

A case study approach

Methods and Selection of the Participants

Research site and participants

Ethics and consent

Preparing the groundwork

Fieldwork

Rigour in Qualitative Research

Trustworthiness

Authenticity

Critical reflexivity

Verisimilitude

Pedagogical thoughtfulness

Ethical Considerations

Consent of participants

Guaranteeing anonymity and/or confidentiality

Non-malfeasance

Beneficence
Potential Issues and Criticisms ........................................................................................................ 130
Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................................ 131

CHAPTER 4: ETHICAL DILEMMA STORY PEDAGOGY AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING ........................................... 133

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 133
Thinking Metaphorically ..................................................................................................................... 133
Teaching as a Journey in Transformative Research ............................................................................ 135
X-ray of My Teaching Beneath the Surface of Other Things ............................................................ 138
The Ethical Dilemma Story Method .................................................................................................... 140
  Composing two ethical dilemma stories ......................................................................................... 141
  The use of the dilemma stories in classroom teaching ................................................................ 151
  Fieldwork implications of EDSP ..................................................................................................... 155
Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................... 163

CHAPTER 5: MANY VOICES, STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION ..................................................................................... 164

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 164
A Transformative Pedagogy ................................................................................................................ 165
Participants’ Feedback and My Field Notes: An Emerging Dialogue Within ..................................... 166
  Story eight: The story of Pallavi ................................................................................................... 170
  Story nine: The story of Ravi ........................................................................................................ 182
  Story ten: The story of Shakti ....................................................................................................... 193
  Story eleven: The story of Bikti .................................................................................................... 201
  Story twelve: The story of Suniti ................................................................................................ 208
Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................................... 216

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: MAPPING THE NATURE OF ETHICAL DILEMMA STORIES AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING .................................................................................................................. 218

xiii
Chapter 1: Orientation to My Study of Transformative Education in Nepal

Introduction

Nepal, a small, geographically landlocked country situated between India and China, is the setting for this research project. The Nepalese society is made up of diverse cultural traditions; hence, pursuing people to come up with a single ethical stand on any given issue is not an easy task. In such a context, this research seeks methods of improving students’ engagement with learning English, making the quantity and quality of the spoken and written language relatable to both the Nepalese culture and the global world stage. This research recounts the ways I used Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy (EDSP) to explore interpretative and creative spaces for transformative learning both personally and with a group of pre-service teachers in the context of the Nepalese school and education system. In this introductory chapter, I set the scene around autoethnographic experience, my move towards EDSP and transformative learning, the period of incubation, and key issues animating this research, along with the research aims and questions.

By drawing on an autoethnographic methodology, I have utilised ethical dilemma stories as the binding thread of my research to help promote students’ critical awareness in an English language college classroom in Nepal. The use of reflective writing to promote improvement in my own pedagogic practice through self-reflection, which is an integral element to this research, is expressed in a creative written form. The purpose is to facilitate students’ inner understanding of the principles of reflective pedagogy through deep, self-analytical exploration to enhance understanding of practice with a desire for improvement. By combining the findings from my self-reflection along with the insights of my research participants, my intended objective is to arrive at a clearer understanding of transformative practice seen from a variety of human perspectives.

Autoethnographic Experience, EDSP and Transformative Learning

Transformative learning, according to Mezirow (2012, p. 76), refers to the process by which “we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective”. My
main field of interest has been to foster independent and innovatory thinking in Nepalese school students in the context of their learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). I came into contact with a range of philosophies, learning theories, and practices designed to improve students’ learning experiences in the classroom, across all grades, including foundation level through my experiences allied to my academic studies. These new techniques attempted to address deficits in prevailing pedagogies. Here, I read the works of people such as Comenius, Froebel, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Montessori, Piaget, Kohlberg, Dewey, Freire, Brookfield (Power, 1969; Freire, 1970; Brookfield, 2012), and Bruner (1986). In their own unique way, each of these philosophies and/or educators from different perspectives, endeavoured to advance a more progressive and enlightened approach to education. Drawing on many of these ideas, I have tried in some depth to introduce to classroom teachers the possibility of including a more culturally relevant pedagogy in the teaching of English in Nepal.

Culturally relevant pedagogy, according to Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995, p. 474), “would necessarily propose to do three things – produce students who can achieve academically, produce students who demonstrate cultural competence, and develop students who can both understand and critique the existing social order”. In other words, facilitating the learning of English by using local knowledge, already known to the learners, would provide the ideational and lexical context. An illustration of this would be discussing the major Nepalese festival Dashain to celebrate the time of harvest instead of, for instance, the Maypole dance in England to celebrate the coming of summer.

This research aims to engage the participants, pre-service Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) students and their teacher, Ravi in the method of EDSP. The teacher fully participated as a pre-service teacher and is referred as one of the participating pre-service teachers throughout this research (see The story of Ravi, p. 182). I was also able to access his experience and opinions as a critical friend during this research process. EDSP provides opportunities for reflection and engaged decision-making. I am also interested in the aspect of pedagogy which goes beyond these forms of engaged thinking to transform the students’ way of thinking, their set of mental paradigms and existing epistemologies related to everyday life. It is through this
engaged act of pedagogic thoughtfulness that students and teachers can decipher their critical self-awareness about teaching and learning processes, individually and collectively.

The idea of EDSP can be traced back to the works of well-acknowledged figures such as Jean Piaget (1932) and Lawrence Kohlberg (1981), as the pioneers of moral education. This methodology was later elaborated by other researchers such as Elisabeth Settelmaier (2003) and John Werth (2017) who have inquired into the use of EDSP in the classroom. During the past decade, the dilemma story method has been the subject of research aimed at developing more ‘socially responsible’ science and mathematics classroom environments in Europe and Australia (Settelmaier, 2003; Settelmaier, Taylor, & Hill, 2010; Werth, 2017). My present study has sought to build on this earlier research by extending it to the Nepali context of English language education.

In the task of implementing EDSP, I involved pre-service teachers in actively looking for opportunities for critical reflection on the relationship between their school-based learning and their life-worlds, including self-criticism of their own set of existing mental paradigms. As a teacher-cum-researcher, my aim, therefore, has been to see how the research participants explain their life events, using narrative voice with their more frequent use of oral expression to help improve their English language skills. The pedagogy also envisages the fostering of critical thinking skills in students, as the underlying force behind oral contributions to the ethical discussions where ideas self-originate. Therefore, three particular aspects of the skills of thinking and self-expression are essential to this research:

1. critical awareness and critical self-reflective skills;
2. dialectical thinking about ethical issues; and
3. oral discourse to facilitate the coherent expression and sharing of ideas.

As a practitioner and facilitator of reflective writing, examining my own beliefs about reading and writing has given me the opportunity to question my fundamental teaching values when I recognised instances in my teaching where I had not given sufficient consideration to such values. I had optimistic beliefs about the positive value of various theories of teaching and learning, but pessimistic beliefs about how
such theories are not always implemented in classroom practice. In pursuing this research, I have chosen autoethnography as a philosophy and method to help me better understand the social, cultural, educational contexts of my professional experience. Such experiences have provided the best schooling of my lived world. Royel Johnson (2013, p. 29) states, “[w]hen writing an autoethnography, the author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences”. As I weave through literature within chapters, I have included my reflexive vignettes, in this journey of exploration of research objectives. Sara Delamont (2012, p. 543) explains the value of autobiographic approaches when she asserts that “the scholars who write autobiographical narratives are self-consciously producing an account of their lives that they intend to be entertaining, informative and self-affirming”. The significance of autobiographical writing is essential in unveiling ourselves for self-knowledge and social relations. When writing about myself, I write, not only in an autobiographical manner, but also include social, political, and pedagogic issues which I have interacted and continue to engage with my unique journey, which is “endlessly expansive, inventive, and creative” (Gannon, 2018, p. 21).

My attention to the wider ‘sociological imagination’ (Mills, 1959) plays a significant role in changing my personal situation while also transforming me into an active, socially aware and better member of the community. Indeed, Carolyn Ellis (2004, p. xix) maintains that autoethnography is “… research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political”. Autoethnography links our autobiographies, as windows for reflection, to the existing social contexts and motivates us towards refreshing performance and change. Performance ethnography (Ellis, 2004), is understood as an aesthetic act of a representation of what we discover through fieldwork; it provides a vibrant and textured form of cultural ‘others’ where the artistic endeavour calls upon actors through their use of presentational skills. Particularly, through autoethnography, I attempt to address the issues of possible conscious and unconscious biases in my mind which may have powerful influences on my actions and the outcomes of the research. I try to understand and account for such biases through this self-reflective research. Autoethnography is defined by Garance Marechal (2010) as an autobiography with a social-political interest. Marechal (2010, p. 44) adds that this
mode of research serves as an effective approach based on one’s self-critical reflection seeking to encompass one’s:

… self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing. The term [autoethnography] has a double sense, referring either to the reflexive consideration of a group to which one belongs as a native, member, or participant (ethnography of one’s own group) or to the reflexive accounting of the narrator’s subjective experience and subjectivity (autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest). This distinction can be blurred in some research traditions. Autoethnography is sometimes made synonymous with self-ethnography, reflexive ethnography, or performance ethnography, and can be associated with narrative inquiry and autobiography.

According to Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997), autoethnographic researchers are boundary-crossers while reporting the trajectory experiences in their crucial choices on what aspects of one world can yield and expose in the other. I have, therefore, been looking for a connection, as a potential boundary-crosser, between myself, as an experienced teacher and doctoral candidate embarking on a significant research challenge. Peter de Vries (2012, p. 354) shares in his autoethnographic doctorate study that “autoethnography embraces writing that moves beyond the confines of [conventional] academic writing” … “autoethnographers write poetry, short stories, conversations with themselves like the one we’re having right now, play scripts, you name it” (ibid.). As an autoethnographer, I have an unyielding commitment to connect education with my lived experiences in social and political contexts, and our daily lives filled with spirit, love and courage. As de Vries explains, “[a]utoethnography is inward looking, it’s a narrative of the self” (de Vries, 2012, p. 354). Altheide and Johnson (2011, p. 584) also elaborate how autoethnographic research deals with the expressive framework of our relationships in reexamining our lived events:

A diversity of current research seeks to break down the prior barriers between subject and object, between the knower and the known, between the self and the social, between the spiritual and the empirical, and between the writer and the audience. Autoethnography is only one of several names given to this emerging enterprise, and autoethnographers commonly seek to integrate the storyteller and the story.

I understand this research as my self-identity, a means of subjectivity-objectivity communication between my self-expression and the external world, a way of seeing deeper within myself. It is also seen as the social reality, reflecting a comprehensive, practical method which engages issues that deal with the relevant research questions, ethics and politics. Sarah Wall (2006, p. 146) states autoethnography as “an emerging qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized
style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a societal phenomenon”. I find that the richness of multi-layered subjectivity we describe is the quality that makes our research more interesting. Indeed, as Karl Popper (1957) asserts, there is no scientist who is ever free of biases even when trying to undertake research in as open-minded way as possible. Deborah Fields and Yasmin Kafai (2009) have suggested the inevitable presence of researchers’ and research participants’ worldview as dependable data in social research. I have, therefore, a strong impulse to include my own-self as a subject alongside my research participants’ responses in the body of my research study.

Autoethnography is rich in critical reflection, although it has been criticised for not being scientific and in lacking theory, concepts, and hypotheses (Denzin, 2014). I seek to ascertain the influence of my worldview on the framing and conduct of my research project and the feedback of my participants in the case study described in chapter 5. In a similar regard, I also seek to carry out a critical review of the concepts I utilised in my teaching career and my learning over my lifetime (a life history) from the autoethnographic point of view, stretching myself beyond autobiography and engaging myself between multiple worlds of understanding. Vincent Crapanzano (1980, p. 8) stated in his study, that “[t]he life history, like the autobiography, presents the subject on his [her] own perspectives. It differs from autobiography in that it is an immediate response to a demand posed by an Other and carries within it the expectations of that Other”. Thus, I see the autoethnographic genre of discourse as a means of discovering one’s internal drives which control one’s actions, wholly or in part, including our classroom communication, be it in oral or written form.

Autoethnography has allowed me to create an artistic cross-stitch and channel the tension between my past personal/professional memories and present understandings in writing. David Altheide and John Johnson (2011, p. 584) view autoethnography as “a disciplined way to interrogate one’s [my] memory, to contextualize or re-contextualize people and events […] within interpretations or perspectives”. Accordingly, my writings are extensively influenced by the life I lived with the rich tradition of oral history that existed in my village home along with the unique experience whenever the elders would tell tales. Indeed Elizabeth Tonkin (1995, p. 96) acknowledges that “We are all simultaneously bearers and makers of history, with
discursive representations of pastness as one element in this generation and reproduction of social life”. Thus, the use of the methodology of autoethnography as knitting together the narratives of my cultural self-knowing (Taylor, 2015) helps me to probe critically my existing concepts and mindsets in a way that has helped my becoming a better teacher and a better writer. I have tried to reflect and re-create my teaching and my learning, through such narratives. Joy Scott (2013, p. 22) states that:

narrative is like embroidery in that words can be used to stitch fragments of lived experience together to create a textual and visual rendition of a momentary experience. Both writing and embroidery work on the reader/viewer’s imagination to evoke deeper meaning and understanding.

The ingenuousness of narrative writing helped me provide an insight to my work. In keeping with Donald Polkinghorne (1988, p. 1), such narratives involve “personal and social histories, myths, fairy tales, novels, and the everyday stories we use to explain our own and others’ actions”.

**My interest in stories**

There are always stories inside me; I have heard many classical stories from my parents, and I have been interested in the stories of other lives and journeys as a passionate reader of various mythical and narrative texts. Whenever I had a chance to read or listen to such stories, I travelled with the characters and realised that I was not alone or at least felt less alone than I might otherwise be. My interest in stories has developed through the family narrative, the telling and retelling of our family’s connections with the past. Stories have given meanings to my life and helped bring positive change in my beliefs and behaviours; I have realised the presence of stories to work as a catalyst for my personal as well as social change.

We all have our different stories, and our work is grounded in society we live in. Stories shape how we learn, how we educate and connect with others. The weight of a human heart is hidden within our stories which may seem comic or tragic; they reveal the secrets of our life and living, making our minds always curious and prepared to know more about them. Here are some lines which I have composed as an exposure of inner feelings of my thirst through stories.
Trailing through tales.

Figure 1: A family conclave. (https://www.kurtgippert.com/pictures/017552_7.jpg?v=1481246047)

Here, I try to put my ‘self’, and my ‘life journey’ on the page, writing and sharing my experiences.

When I left the village to seek a better life, with my absence the home became solely hollow but the idea of stories would not leave me alone; the story of my people who rarely have the chance to spread their voice – their own, their individual and family stories – followed me.

Listen: the truth is otherwise; it is never a new thing there in my writing but is a product of silence in me; for I imagine myself woven within everything. (Source: My personal reflections)

My reading of stories has always inspired my curiosity and has created a space for my voice, my individual interpretive view of the events. Stories remain fundamental to how we develop as a society. Storytelling traditions in Nepali society has travelled from older generations who pass down their knowledge with values and morals to the people of younger generations. The stories have often presented clear moral and/or ethical issues to think about, be it the story of Shravan Kumar from Hindu textbooks (Mukundananda, 2010) or a pericope of an ant and a bird from Buddhist legends. In the story of Shravan Kumar, the son, Shravan Kumar had devoted his life to serving his blind parents and one time decided to take his parents on a pilgrimage. On their way to an especially holy place, Ayodhya, they took rest at one part of the town as
they were tired and thirsty. Shravan Kumar went to a nearby river with a water pot in search of water.

As Shravan Kumar was bending down to fill the pot with water from the river he was mistakenly hit by an arrow. The arrow was launched by the king Dasharath who was on a hunting trip. The king came to Shravan Kumar and expressed his sorrow; he had shot the arrow at what he thought was a deer. Before dying, Shravan Kumar said in his last words: “Please give this water to quench the thirst of my old, blind parents”. Then, he died. Life is full of dilemmas and I can sense a powerful message emanating from this sad, unfortunate event as well as the distress faced by the king. I also see the immense possibility of exploring many similar legends and bringing them into the formal classroom discussions through my research.

I have been vividly aware of the power of stories since my early childhood when stories were a common way of entertainment for families and groups in my village. I was born and brought up in the remote mid-hill, mountainous, agro-ecological village of northern Dhading in Nepal where stories have traditionally been a major means of passing on religious, moral and political ideas to the people. Our mother long ago told us as children a story about the hunger which affected an entire generation just because the community did not respect nature. As the trees were felled, the one and only source of water in the village also dried up. When there was no water coming up from the spring, the rivers disappeared too. It meant no clouds could rise up and no rain-drops would form. There was drought all around, leading to hunger in the entire region; a consequence of the failure to plant more trees after they were chopped down. “Hmm… we need to protect nature, and plant more trees then,” I replied to her. Reflecting now and remembering the value of such narratives, I realise that myths and stories are everywhere, seeking to represent reality and possible human reactions to its challenges. Such stories have, as a cultural device, very effectively presented messages to young minds, making these minds more attentive and responsive in the way of acting ethically in various life situations.

In a similar way of thinking, a greater degree of individual reflection was promoted by such story-telling traditions instead of set solutions. Thus, stories can penetrate deeper into the listener’s mind and indeed inspire subjective reflection to provide a greater understanding of the narratives in the stories. This power, inherent in
narratives, was one of the drives which caused me, as a teacher, to engage in research-based around such stories. Cate Watson (2012, p. 472) suggests that “[t]he turn to narrative provides us with a rich and creative resource which has transformed, and will continue to transform, the research landscape”. In my teaching practice, I have experienced how research, inspiration, confidence, style and creativity are required while teaching a particular text.

My interest in pedagogy, being “the art, occupation, or practice of teaching” (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), arises from my childhood learning experiences of being a recipient of the education presented by various teachers. Additionally, I have had some fifteen years of experience as a university-level teacher not only learning from my pedagogic performances but also of observing my colleagues.

I believe that successful teaching demands effective pedagogical habits and approaches on the teachers’ part. The statement, as we start walking, the path becomes clearer…, that I keep hearing from my mentors, works as a guiding inspiration for me. According to Norman Denzin (2014, pp. 70-71), “In the social sciences today there is no longer a God’s-eye view which guarantees absolute methodological certainty. All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer”. Hence, there is not one method for solving all the world’s challenges. The way a teacher perceives her/himself, whether as a facilitator, artist, or educator, plays a transformative role in the classroom, positioning the teacher’s critical and relational knowing.

In many such situations, I have realised how the surrounding environment and culture shape our professional practice. Here, I recall the moments when I, as a teacher, have brought my cultural values into the classroom. Within my English lessons, I have enjoyed discussing Nepali festivals as well as stories, poems and essays written in Nepali with my students. I have seen my students as learning resources, as they shared their diverse home cultures and lifestyles, which contributed to their class activities.

According to Johnny Saldana (2011, p. 67), “researching what you yourself have experienced can make you somewhat ‘expert’ at it [the research process]”. But, it is implied that this experience needs to be documented. As in music, we need intention and musical consciousness firstly, to play the instrument and for our body then to
respond with the appropriate muscular reactions; such motivation is what emerges in most of our teaching activities. If we keep silent after any experience, we communicate our thoughts to no one on the outside. My previous dissertations — *Power, writers, and texts* (Pandey, 2004) and *Journal writing: A means of transformation in teaching learning practices* (Pandey, 2011) dealt with the value of writing as an important means of expressing one’s viewpoints on a given argument.

Writing requires self-analytical thought to transfer ideas to logical, syntactic written form which is, therefore, more communicable than spoken ideas. Writing, and thus the habit of documenting what one has experienced and wishes to share with other colleagues can be a key part of one’s continuous professional growth and development. Therefore, reflection on professional practice is something all progressive teachers should seek to do throughout their professional lives. According to Geoff Bull and Michele Anstey (2010, p. 143), our professional progress achieves success when it is “based on action-learning, and involves collegial and self-reflective conversations”. Peer-reflection, along with participants’ or learners’ feedback, also creates for us the possibility for a clearer understanding of our teaching methods.

Individually, reflection through the regular practice of journaling, along with feedback from my colleagues and students, has enabled me to utilise critical reflective thinking to challenge my assumptions. Hence, my journal entries, in the form of reports of my lived experiences, along with what the participants shared in their discussions with me play a key role in this research (see chapter 5). In my journey of becoming a critically reflective teacher and after reading the following lines by Brookfield (1995), I have become more careful and realistic in the evaluation of students’ work and have changed my own belief about the value of awarding students high scores in the name of fostering motivation. Brookfield (1995, p. 21) asserts that:

… critically reflective teachers know that while meeting everyone’s [the student’s] needs sounds compassionate and student-centred, in its implementation, it often proves it is pedagogically unsound and psychologically demoralizing. They know that clinging to this assumption will only cause them to carry around a permanent burden of guilt at their inability to live up to this impossible task.

Despite all these risks and complexities, Brookfield (1995) provides some compelling reasons to reflect critically, such as its help in our taking informed actions, its deeper benefit in our thinking in a considered manner, and its encouragement in our
intellectual self-inquiry. As a mechanism for rethinking my experiences, along with the creative means to represent and re-conceptualise these lived experiences, this habit of reflection has empowered me to express my insights in my writing, through a process of self-inquiry. To support the argument with examples in my creative writing, I look for events that I experienced directly, or, vicariously, through reading. I have a belief that writing becomes more interesting if the writer has full exposure to, or has extensively researched, their chosen subject area. Inspiration or confidence does not work like magical wands where something comes from nothing; therefore, considerable effort needs to be made to achieve these qualities.

A Move Towards Ethical Dilemma Stories

The EDSP builds upon the constructivist assumption that gives an opportunity for learners to decide for themselves whether their decisions based on their existing values are feasible and/or can be changed regarding particular events and situations. EDSP, as I conceive it, helps teachers and students to become productive members of society by educating them to reach their full potential and contribute to their society as active and productive citizens. My present approach of working with dilemma stories is another endeavour to employ my self-awareness of and reflection upon each of the dilemma stories that I have selected to implement in this research (see chapter 4). These stories have given the pre-service teachers I worked with an opportunity to become involved in the situation of characters through the complementary human mechanism of empathy and projection.

Sharon Mowry (2007, p. 99) asserts that “enabling students to construct meaning of a new learning is at the heart of the constructivist approach”. This approach in my research guides students to find their own answers based on their previous knowledge as a resource for the new knowledge they are expected to create, like in the dilemma stories. The stories present a challenge to the students as the stories do not involve right or wrong answers. The process encourages collaborative learning through group work and pair work. It allows us, as teachers, to pose questions and problems in front of the class and prompts students to formulate their own inquiry leading them to multiple interpretations.
Tobin (1993b) shares that the use of constructivism “has become increasingly popular as a referent for professional actions in the past 10 years” (p. ix), and it still continues to attract the interests of researchers. Constructivism, as stated by Lloyd Rieber (1993, p. 197), “involves individual constructions of knowledge and occurs through the natural interaction with one’s environment or culture”. An important part of this approach is that learning occurs as students reflect on, construct meanings from experiences and talk about their learning activities while the teacher gives enough space for them to interact and investigate while she/he moderates the class. According to Kathy Charmaz (2011), the constructivist approach, “(1) rejects claims of objectivity, (2) locates researchers’ generalizations, (3) considers researchers’ and participants’ relative positions and standpoints, (4) emphasizes reflexivity, (5) adopts sensitizing concepts such as power, privilege, equity, and oppression, and (6) remains alert to variation and difference” (p. 360) where everyone involved in the research, through their actions, “construct[s] both the studied phenomenon and the research process” (ibid.). Learning, as a process of constructivism, creates meaning from our experience.

I have sought students’ full participation and allowed them to try new ways of dealing with complex issues, even by setting their own goals and means of assessment. Therefore, dilemma-based learning, encourages the learners to value differences in their belief and concept systems, and aims to more actively engage the students involved in these stories by creating a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom where education is respected and admired as part of their culture. In this thesis, I discuss the teaching materials with links to day-to-day experiences. Creating links between known situations and new concepts allows participants to develop a personal and lively engagement with the learning activities. Active engagement supports student preparation to function effectively in their later role as responsible community members. Students’ self-awareness leads to their active, civic participation.

Polkinghorne (1988, p. 1) states that our “experience is meaningful and human behavior is generated from and informed by this meaningfulness”. He further suggests that we may later change our voice as storytellers. I still remember the graduation day at my school and how we students were affected by the speech presented by a guest speaker who shared with us her ideas about the roles of the narrative of politicians and
businessmen who benefitted from wars and the slave trade. Such narratives can still help us to develop our own imagination by setting up appropriate scenes of our choices and developing further narratives. Jane Elliot (2012) emphasises that “a successful narrative is more than just a sequence of events” (p. 281) and further elaborates this by arguing why narratives can be seen as a “powerful and useful tool for the collection of information in research” (ibid.). Narratives, which have been indirectly transferred from generation to generation, have been shared by people in Nepali culture as a means of instilling moral values, providing entertainment, and passing on cultural education.

The creation of our own life story is a happening of every day, in every moment. Like the fishing nets that serve as a tool for the fishermen, this narrative inquiry has also become a tool for me to understand myself better. I can reflect on the meaningful lessons that I have learned during my journey in teaching and to academically rationalise mine as well as my participants’ life experiences. Polkinghorne (1988, p. 11) argues that “narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions”. When acting as a mentor to my students, I have generally used an inquiry approach to increase intellectual engagement and foster deep understanding of social phenomenon. Hence, with my confidence that the EDSP is a useful heuristic-constructivist method based on sound pedagogical and ethical principles.

**A transformative research approach**

Individuals tend to find the freedom to convey their own experience of the world where, “organic, emergent, nonlinear storytelling is connected with transformative learning” (Tyler & Swartz, 2012, p. 456). By these terms, Jo Tyler and Ann Swartz (2012) mean to capture the fragile nature of our potentially promising, yet unplanned life world and significance of its representation in our learning. As an educator, I too aim for small transformative learning experiences rather than looking for a big Eureka event to suddenly appear, for I think bigger may not necessarily be always better. But, on the other hand, Irene Karpiak (2006) asserts that “the shocking and sudden critical event” (p. 88) could be the most significant factor for an effective and transformative change. Parker Palmer (1998, p. 21) also avers that our mentors’ “power is in their capacity to awaken a truth within us, a truth we can reclaim years later by recalling
their impact on our lives”. Similarly, I have been encouraged to think more critically and creatively as an agent of change; and I have often found my mentors ready to work with me intensively during my research process. Their support to keep my work going and overcome my hesitancy helped me with tremendous strength and a commitment to stay in this work.

Like most other human beings, I am resistant to moving outside my comfort zone and unwilling to change. For example, I was not very comfortable in leaving Nepal for further studies because I was too fixed with my regular, relatively safe routines. These are some of the issues I contemplated for some time and realised that as human beings we are subject to change our minds over certain important issues. Even the supreme creator, if we believe in God, or if we do not, nature itself, must have thought of our movement and change while human beings were being designed with legs, freeing them from attachment to one place on earth. Terence Lovat and David Smith (1991, p. 166) contend that, “[c]hange is a feature of all natural and human systems”. Paolo Coelho (2008) shares a proverb using the metaphor of roots and wings where our roots allow us to recognise “our fellow human beings and to learn from them” (p. 56) toward freedom and change; not forgetting that one’s roots give stability to each individual. Here I remember the lines by John Donne (1839, p. 574, ll. 1-4) who said, “No man is an island/ Entire of itself/ Every man is a piece of the continent/ A part of the main”. Therefore, the wings I gained from my mentors and their mentoring have enabled me to see “the endless horizons of the imagination” (Coelho, 2008, p. 56).

I wish to share a widely-known line to acknowledge all known and unknown mentors of mine used by Sir Isaac Newton (n.d.) in Feb. 5, 1675: “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”. The beliefs, encouragements and support of my mentors have enabled me to elevate the magnitude of my thoughts, to raise my contemplations up and to visualise farther on the horizon than I otherwise could have only confined myself within my own limitations. At the same time, knowing my roots by expressing my ideas through the stories, I seek to retain the value of life. These experiences made me aware of the passion with which most teachers teach and of their dedication to the educational and general wellbeing and progress in the learning of their students.
I was determined to take action to see effective practices in action. The problem for me was that existing classroom practices often did not represent well the effective practices suggested by various theories. I admit that it was only through my awareness of those beliefs of mine, and through highlighting the negative beliefs in particular that I could position myself to look at changing my classroom practices. Wallace Stevens (1982, p. 247, ll 1-3), an influential poet of the last century in the US, wrote: “After the final 'no' there comes a ‘yes’ /And on that ‘yes’ the future world depends/ No was the night. Yes is this present sun”. For me, this means recognising that change is inevitable and that it starts within us. When we change ourselves, the remaining things too will change in time. And, when I am ready to take on new challenges, I believe I can change a larger part of my responses with effort.

On many occasions, certain inadequacies were demonstrated in lesson presentations at the level of pedagogic process but, also, at that of pedagogic philosophy or learning theory. My observations, on these occasions, led me to see some fairly readily-available ways of modifying the traditional, didactic type of pedagogy which I had observed in order to foster transformative learning approaches. Tobin (1993a, p. 225) shares the possibility that, “teachers can identify and effect salient changes by reflecting on images, metaphors, beliefs, and values in relation to what they perceive to be happening in their class-rooms”. During this research, I admit that my discussions with my supervisors have challenged me to express my thoughts coherently, which was not always an easy task for me. Martin Cortazzi and Lixian Jin (2012, p. 484) proposed that, “[a] narrative researcher needs to engage in self-critical reflection on possible biases, preferences and presuppositions, and to critically inspect the whole research process”. I have realised and reflected at times on the need to give up my present position in order to reach the stage that I aspire. But, such decisions have always been a means and an opportunity for me to transform my thinking about my personal/professional practices through my lived narratives and beyond. As Palmer (1998, p. 29) poignantly notes, “[e]ncounters with mentors and subjects can awaken a sense of self and yield clues to who we are”. While the road to professional transformation is always possible it is not an easy thing to make such an approach especially in the beginning. I feel I should keep on walking further while also reviewing my accomplishments thus far.
When education encourages transformative learning, our students therefore, in line with Paulo Freire (2000), should value their day-to-day life experience which enables them to participate consciously and more effectively in the transformation of society. In this context, education for greater self-determination is needed to foster students’ democratic liberation from the influence of rigid educational and social paradigms and to help them develop the confidence to contribute their ideas to the national participatory decision-taking process. As Jack Mezirow (1978, p. 100) states, this journey of personal transformation is “a structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships”. My transformational learning journey with a wonderful team of research participants, the B.Ed. students, has been woven into a series of dialogues in the dilemma stories which, according to Sue McGregor (2008, p. 51), “involve disorienting dilemmas that shake people to their core”. This transformative approach, in keeping with Donna Mertens, Martin Sullivan, and Hilary Stace (2011, p. 231), challenges “oppressive structures while acknowledging the need to work together”. The present study, therefore, aims to explore thematic connections between autoethnography as a potentially transformational research method, transformational learning, and, the threads of my personal story. Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (1994) have suggested the possibility of creating more thoughtful outcomes through the telling and retelling of our personal stories in the classrooms to weaving a tapestry based on our own consciousness as contributing to our conceptual elaboration. In their words:

In our work we read stories of people’s lives, lives of disruption and lives of humble straightforwardness. We study people’s lives, teachers’, students’, and children’s lives. In our courses we tell stories of our lives both in and out of the classroom, in and out of school. We tell stories of the professional and stories of the personal. Stories such as this are both our leisure reading, our research, our teaching, and our continuing teacher education. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p. 146)

I recall Palmer (1998, p. 2) in a similar way:

The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial as good teaching as knowing my students and my subjects.
Incubation of My PhD Research Ideas

It is common for teachers in Nepal to enter a classroom and commence instruction without first providing some context for the students to begin with. This may leave the majority of the students unaware of the purpose of their learning. At times, the teacher may provide class-notes and specific answers to the respective questions, with the aim of preparing the students to reproduce the same stock-answers in their final examination. In my experience, the question of whether students understand the subject matter of lessons and participate actively in the learning process is seldom actively considered in Nepalese classroom settings; it is not even part of the central concern of many teachers. Some students may be very good in parroting materials learned in a rote manner and so perform well in this instrucivist approach (Rieber, 1993), whereas the majority of them may tend to suffer because of less-developed memory skills. However, even those who get excellent marks in examinations may fail to practise the skills which would have come from real comprehension of the lesson materials in later life. As a university teacher, I have witnessed many such cases of inadequate instructional approach among my students. Therefore, I felt the need of a pedagogical method in order to seek the adequate coverage of knowledge, comprehension, analysis, and evaluation as part of students’ learning (Bloom et al., 1956).

In response to this complex pedagogic situation I have, in this thesis, through my use of EDSP (see chapter 4), explored ways of providing real conceptual learning for my participants, as distinct from prevalent rote-learning classroom methods. I aim to assist learners to have more autonomous decision-making choices, related to their real-life contexts in order to link theory to practice. The dilemma stories are set in a local context, thus permitting participants to view the dilemmas from the standpoint of their own life experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 150) argue that teacher education should be “a process of learning to tell and retell educational stories of teachers and students”. This style of teaching values students’ prior experience and the concepts they have developed in their everyday lives. It helps to actively engage them in their learning and fosters class participation by creating an atmosphere of collaboration between the teacher and students. As a culturally relevant powerful pedagogy in teacher education, EDSP can offer the prospect of counter-balancing the
problem of the devaluation of culturally-derived concepts in the students. This approach provides instructional methods for resolving conflicts between competing possibilities.

The EDSP “aims to enhance its quality and relevance to modern-day students by ‘adding value’ to their learning” (Settelmaier et al., 2010, p. 2). In my research, I am mindful of offering opportunities for students to develop important higher-order abilities by building analytical capacity through critical reflection, empathetic understanding, and collaborative decision-making. I also aim to create a local alternative to the dominant mode of mainstream pedagogy; its political and economic reasons – the reproductive function – that is the continued serving of the narrow interests of socio-political elites, the hegemony of developed countries (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 14), and associated cultures. Hegemonic assumptions according to Stephen Brookfield (1995, p. 15), “are those that we think are in our own best interests but that have actually been designed by more powerful others to work against us in the long term”. This innovative EDSP seeks to provide the foundation for learning where students empathise with characters within carefully designed stories to prompt them to think about and reflect critically on the sequence of events of the dilemma, offering multiple possibilities of identifying with ethical values emanating from global, national and local communities (For example, see http://www.dilemmas.net.au/dilemmas-stories, 2013). The purpose of such reflection, according to Brookfield (1995), is to “uncover hegemonic assumptions” (p. 14) in order to develop critical understanding of how ethical decisions may be made in society. As an educator, it is important to be aware of these wider level perspectives in order to see how practice can change students’ understandings.

**Key Ideas Enlivening This Research**

**Educating children for happiness**

In general, the purpose of positive, social progress is the achievement of superior levels of living and being for humans (Erikson, 1950). This fundamental purpose has been part of human endeavour dating back to the ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle under the heading of ‘eudaemonia’ (Asselin, 1989) meaning happiness, as perhaps the fundamental human purpose. In making sure that positive change is made,
education can play, and indeed should play, a constructive role in facilitating change. All societies change over time, although change is not necessarily one-dimensional (Popper, 2009); it is not always positively progressive at certain periods, even though over longer periods of time, progress may be achieved.

As a Nepalese teacher-educator, I have experienced considerable challenges in my personal and professional contexts that brought me towards this research. For example, let us imagine a situation where one has to learn a language that is completely new, and is told to rote-learn and remember as much of it as one can, without really trying to understand the meanings expressed in the language, for an end-of-course examination and is graded accordingly. Then, what should one do? Right from the first school grade, the final examination questions in Nepal are designed to evaluate only the memory power of the students and thus do not provide an opportunity to develop and articulate their creativity (Mathema & Bista, 2006). The curriculum itself has been formed in a way that students have to pass the final examinations to get promoted to the next grade. The performance of the teachers too, is directly determined by the rate of success of their students’ performance in the final examinations.

I see teaching as a caring profession and, in these terms, the desire for positive human progress is largely synonymous with happiness, our students’ journey to learn to be happy. Nel Noddings (2003) advocates that happiness should be the primary goal of education. She further considers the value of caring relations in education as the foundation for pedagogical activity (Noddings, 2001). She adds, “When I care, my motive energy begins to flow toward the needs and wants of the cared-for” (Noddings, 2005, p. 2). Thus, education with a happiness and care perspective as its driving force can be seen as having an important role in promoting the positive transformation of Nepalese society, and of rural communities in particular.

**Resisting ‘banking’ approaches to pedagogy**

Freire (2000) criticised transmission models of teaching or 'banking' approaches to education whereby students are seen as empty vessels or receptacles to be filled with content by the teacher (p. 72). Instead, he (2000) advocated the development of critical consciousness which fosters problem-posing approaches in which students
develop their power to perceive critically the way in which they exist in the world and how they might act to change it for the better. Freire (1970) challenged what he described as the banking analogy where knowledge is seen as a gift bestowed by the teachers (the depositors) who consider themselves more knowledgeable than the students (the depositories). In such situation of pouring the knowledge from one vessel to another (Freire, 1970), the students are considered to know nothing. They are expected to passively receive, memorise, and repeat. However, the more students work at simply storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop critical consciousness (Pinker, 2002). I see critical consciousness as a way to try to understand myself and my relationship with others. Freire (1981, p. 9) asserted that “mechanically memorizing the description of an object does not constitute knowing the object”.

In my experience, what may be ideally regarded as the real purpose of educating human beings is not always well served by the traditional mode of education. The majority of people in Nepal consider education as only the mainstream school-education which was designed to reproduce the continued social superiority of the dominant social elites and to promote their economic interests (Freire, 1970). Freire (1970), who opposed the traditional teacher-centred view of education, argued that, instead of merely importing curriculum knowledge from a far-off authority or alien place, teachers should embrace a change in the fundamental concept of the education process so as to see it as a fruitful interaction between the mind of the teacher and the minds of the students. As a progressive thinker about education and liberation, Freire (1970) believed that education should help learners reflect critically on their experiences, engaging with issues of socio-economic disparities evident in the communities and nation. According to Freire (1970, p. 10), “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world”. His significant views, as one of the most influential theoretical educational innovators of the twentieth century, challenged the prevailing trend in education that contributed to the marginalisation of minorities and the poor. John Smyth, Barry Down, and Peter McInerney (2014, p. 117) have acknowledged Freire’s “faith in the transformative possibilities of education – a position that reproduction theorists of the 1970s had largely rejected”. Freire’s Brazil in the 1960s and his socio-cultural emancipatory views depict many of the characteristics of present-day Nepal, where
most of the population live rural lifestyles, often, in remote parts of the country, and are served by an education system that has been imported largely intact from the West.

**Fostering critical awareness**

We can say that students and teachers are like two opposite wheels of a cart, in that we cannot isolate the learning activity of one from the teaching activity of the other. My own experience in our traditional schooling is mostly teacher-centred, based on a long-held assumption that authentic knowledge resides mainly in teachers’ minds. After observing an undergraduate lesson in a Nepali university Tan Tin (2014, p. 408) shared “class time involves teacher talk delivering as much content as possible”. The pedagogic situation becomes even clearer when Tin (ibid.) shares her description of what she termed as students’ responses on their perception of teachers’ role:

‘Sir [the teacher] provides the main points from the story. It is good. We listen. Then we like to know what is there in that point from the book. So we go home and study’ (S1). Students value the listening in class by suggesting that: ‘We just concentrate on what the teacher is saying.

In her paper, Tin (2014) explains her concern that a lot of the teaching is overly teacher centred. Thus, a need for change is well-noted in the contemporary pedagogic literature. Consistent with this perspective, is what the celebrated critical educator Paulo Freire (2000) termed school education as an authoritative, instrumental, and vertical banking concept which seemed very true in the traditional mode of education in Nepal. I too remember when I applied a banking approach of dispensing knowledge, while I was pressured by the students’ unwillingness to carry on an informed discussion of the learning material in my class. Martin Haberman (2010) argued that good teaching “can serve as an alternative to the pedagogy of poverty” (p. 85) because it captures the need of present times and helps to draw out students’ potentials. Haberman (2010) added that schools are dominated by a pedagogy of poverty by which he means a coercive approach of limiting the content to be taught in the classroom under a teacher-controlled environment. In such an environment, teachers are mostly expected to direct the learning of students and renounce students’ home lives from learning:

Whenever students are involved in planning what they will be doing, it is likely that good teaching is going on. This planning involves real choices and not such simple
preferences as what crayon to use or the order in which a set of topics will be discussed. Students may be asked to select a topic for study, to decide what resources they will need, or to plan how they will present their findings to others. People learn to make informed choices by actually making informed choices. Following directions — even perfectly — does not prepare people to make choices and to deal with the consequences of those choices. (Haberman, 2010, p. 86)

I think it is urgent to seek an alternative as it is getting harder to change when such pedagogy of poverty has deeply entered into the minds of our students, making it a part of their habits. When teaching a course in Creative Writing, I once asked students to read some stories and poems from their prescribed book to discuss in the class. Here is my reflection: “Today, I got the impression that the majority of students waited for me to give the information needed for the examination while only a minimum number of the students had read the suggested texts” (Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 7 March 2011).

A dialogue between teacher and students, and among students is known as conscientization in Freire’s (2000) terms, by which he means raising critical awareness through self-reflection. However, classrooms in Nepal largely lack the crucial elements of such dialogues. In order for education to achieve liberation, the primary purpose of teachers would be in engaging students, as their teacher, on a path of critical reflection. Teachers need to involve students in observation such as what they see and describe, empathise and share similar experiences, then contemplate on the issues around them and think how they can act within their own contexts.

First of all, teachers have to think of improving the connection between themselves and their students, promoting more horizontal relationships. Consciousness raising, therefore, is derived from the experience of oppression that the learners as the members of the existing society have commonly experienced. This process, which involves an empathic, mutual understanding and collaborative decision-making between teachers and the students, seeks to transform students’ consciousness to enable them to become more self-sufficient in their learning and more actively questioning what it is they are called upon to learn within the pedagogy. According to Henry Giroux (2004, p. 64),

Pedagogy is not simply about the social construction of knowledge, values, and experiences; it is also a performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations. Pedagogy, at its best, implies that learning takes place across a spectrum of social practices and settings.
Rethinking culture and education

The concept of culture and its development is a very dynamic process that is constantly changing. When I started my PhD research, I assumed what culture should be about. During my research process, I also had an opportunity to read a book, *Logics of history: social theory and social transformation* by William Sewell (2005). Culture, according to Sewell (2005), draws attention to the ways in which powerful academic institutions, religious authorities and/or the state mechanisms disseminate a set of beliefs to people’s everyday practices. Sewell (2005, p. 156) asserts, “its [culture] complexity has surely not decreased since then”. For Sewell (2005, p. 170), cultures “are subject to constant change”, always contradictory and contested; it is shaped by power and semiotic meanings and its coherence is constantly shifting. Sewell’s (2005, p. 161) definition of culture “provided an entire alternative model of culture as a system of symbols and meanings – conceptualised, following Saussure, as signifiers and signifieds”. Sewell’s (2005) argument is that cultural meanings may not be located solely in the cultural actor, but are also surrounded by widely available symbolic, cultural forms such as language and rituals. Sewell (2005) combined the two complementary aspects of culture as a system of symbols and culture as a learned behavior that is passed on from generation to generation through collective meanings of human rituals and ceremonials.

Cultural symbols would lose their meanings if they were not located within a cultural practice and our engagement in cultural practice without the use of cultural symbols would be meaningless. Sewell (2005, p. 164) further adds “culture is neither a particular kind of practice nor practice that takes place in a particular social location. It is, rather, the semiotic dimension of human social practice in general”. This reading of culture helps me to think about Nepalese culture. Are most of the cultures in Nepal parts of a created entity, borrowed from other countries? Do I have a culture which I could claim as my own, in Nepal? If I do, perhaps, it is a multicultural society. For instance, there are certain things including our food and festivals, which we claim as ours, appear in bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966); they have either travelled from China or from India; of which we borrow, change a bit, mix, recreate the uniqueness, and claim them as our own.
Honouring home language in the context of English

With the popular craving for English language education, many well-known schools in Nepal’s capital city have opted to follow the highly regarded total immersion method of language learning. In this pedagogical approach, only the one language is used as the medium of communication and learning. This decision carries the implication that due attention must also be given to their own native language. Thus, a balanced curriculum of this kind should offer a range of valuable learning opportunities for all students to equip them as adults to contribute to their own society and, where appropriate, a foreign language capable of generating a different set of employment opportunities. The following picture of a signboard (Figure 2), displayed at one of the popular school’s main gate, clearly illustrates this point.

Figure 2: A signboard (mis) representing the popularity of English in Nepal. (Photo by P. R. Pandey, Kathmandu)

However, I am mindful that this one-way emphasis on acquiring the English language carries the risk of alienating students by depriving them of their native language rather than empowering them to approach translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Ofelia Garcia and Li Wei (2014) urge researchers in the field of language education to make an epistemological transformation by opting to change traditional notions of learning language to translanguaging performance in order to maximise communicative potential. The focus of translanguaging is not limited to one or two languages, but lies in helping students make their voices heard by others as effective communication. I understand that the act of translanguaging in pedagogy may include researchers’ significant commitments to communicate deeply with the participants drawing on the
languages available in the group and resolve their social and linguistic barriers. Here is a scene that I tried to capture in my journal during the field work teaching:

I have finished telling the first dilemma story in English language to my students. Now, it is a time for them to think, reflect, interact and choose the most relevant option to solve the dilemma posed in the story. All the students are working closely to the dilemma situation.

Here are two students sitting together. They talk and share their knowledge of the words and phrase each other in Nepali which is their mother tongue. The students are using elements of Nepali language to communicate more effectively. Yet, they are moving in and out of English to get their messages across. Nearby, other students are also discussing about the dilemma posed in the story. They mainly talk in English and often use Nepali when they need to explain more on the arguments.

I understand this way of communicating among students as using all language resources to communicate – using opportunities from different languages and resources together with very little regard for what we might call the strict borders of Nepali and English. (Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 9 Nov. 2015)

Although we communicated in English most of the time during my fieldwork teaching of dilemma stories, the participants were also encouraged to use Nepali language whenever they thought they could explain better in that way. In a similar context, here are some lines I have composed as an exposure of my inner feelings about the schoolification of childhood, a concept that seldom acknowledges emotional wellbeing and the early learning experiences of students.

All our students speak in English

Dear students,
do you really like to
speak in English?
As you are made to call
‘Maachha’, a FISH.

All “good” schools claim
their child–friendliness, did anyone
ever ask you whether
you wanted to play or read?

Distinction, First, or Second!
Is that only what you want?
Or, do schools have to use
this way to claim a grant?

Pupils, you are
so young and present.
Study, yes; but, do you
need to go that far?

Shouldn’t you be allowed
to enjoy life?
Learning is also possible
with a lot of joy!
Looking at you burdened
with a bagful of books,
I can’t help but think
how impractical it looks.

Oh! Dear,
how long can you continue
yourself in these unfortunate ‘pens’?
And why can’t you understand
a Maachha as a Maachha,
instead of calling it a FISH.

(Source: My personal reflections)

In my view, if we teach students how to learn more effectively by giving them a range of possibilities and problem-solving strategies which they come to understand, they will significantly improve the quantity and quality of their learning. Clif Mims (2003, p. 2) elaborates about real-world activity learning where,

Students must be able to realize that their achievements stretch beyond the walls of the classroom. They bring to the classroom experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and curiosities and authentic learning provides a means of bridging those elements with classroom learning. Students no longer simply learn rote facts in abstract or artificial situations, but they experience and use information in ways that are grounded in reality.

**Promoting emancipatory interests in EFL classrooms**

The ideal type of education would be one which aims at the critical methods of knowing the world, an emancipatory development of students (Habermas, 1972) practically, intellectually, and ethically. Freire’s transformative education approach echoes the ideals of the most influential educational thinker, John Dewey (Simpson & Stack, 2014, p. 163):

For Dewey, the ideal school should indirectly guide students’ growth and development of particular skills, attitudes, habits, and dispositions that shape their thinking, feeling, and acting. In order to do this most effectively and ethically, the school must see itself and be seen by others as an intimate part of the community in which it is embedded and as a dynamic, microcosmic community in its own right.

The purpose of education is to provide the social conditions that support our students towards a range of desires necessary to develop their capacities; this could be in relation to the growth and development of particular knowledge, skills and dispositions as well as their fulfilment of democratic values. Based on what I (eye) witnessed as the issues in Nepalese education system, this aspiration is unrealised for many students. The students also have difficulty finding a post overseas at the end of
their school and university education; they find their qualification uncompetitive on the global scene. The reason behind this could be that most good teachers who talk about modern methods in their own teaching have often been following the old traditional didactic way in which they themselves were taught. Much of this discourse is framed within a narrowly conceived instrumental version of capital and workforce development, which is preparing people in getting a job in a globalised economy. Therefore, the need of contemporary Nepalese education, and English language teaching in particular, has been to include the aspiration of making students globally competitive which really requires them to be more autonomous in their learning, and therefore, more open to being creative and innovative in thought and action.

Critical education as a basic element for social change is strategic and performative. It looks at what is not working for the disadvantaged segment of the society. Reflecting on my own school days, I recall that I was never given any written or oral assignments for the formative expression of my own ideas during that time. Let me share an example of a writing component in our English lessons which teach students about the technique of essay construction instead of requiring them to practise writing their own thoughts and opinions. As a student, I waited until the summative final examination to have my tape-recorder type of ability tested. Questions like, ‘What are the basic components of an essay?’ were asked in the examination instead of writing an essay on some interesting topics. Classroom practices emphasised rote learning and examinations tested episodic memory rather than understanding and the use of the English language in real life situations. So, should we follow such an existing traditional pattern which emphasises rote-learning or seek to help students achieve a deeper understanding of linguistic meanings? As a young student learning English in Nepal, I was in that situation with other students in the class who were focused on pre-arranged lexical items rather than learning how to use English words as units of meaning. This may be the reason why I have sought to explore the transformative interest in my research. According to Giroux (2005b, p. 24):

Critical educators cannot be content to merely map how ideologies are inscribed in the various relations of schooling, whether they be the curriculum, forms of school organization, or in teacher-student relations. A more viable critical pedagogy needs to go beyond these concerns by analyzing how ideologies are actually taken up in the contradictory voices and lived experiences of students as they give meaning to the dreams, desires, and subject positions that they inhabit. Critical educators need to provide the conditions for students to speak differently so that their narratives can be affirmed and engaged critically along with the consistencies and contradictions that
characterize such experiences. They must not only hear the voices of those students who have been traditionally silenced, they must take seriously what all students say by engaging the implications of their discourse in broader historical and relational terms.

For many students, English language education has also provided a one-way passport, encouraging them to leave behind their native culture in preference for the vast influence of English culture. The learning of English in Nepali schools is often viewed by students as something foreign, imported, and thus especially challenging. However, its role in facilitating globalised opportunities must be welcomed as it is seen as beneficial to learn the English language to enhance the prospect of income, privilege, and better jobs.

Many teachers of English are more likely to wish to teach their students according to what has been termed the ‘Western’ way of thinking because of the life advantages it seems to bring, such as the ability to speak, read, and write English. However, Jurgen Habermas (1972), was critical of the earlier paradigms which only focused on traditional ways of knowing about the world as they were not able to transform people’s prevailing situations. Identifying diverse possibilities of emancipatory knowing, Habermas (1972, p. 311) suggests that “[o]rientation toward technical control, toward mutual understanding in the conduct of life, and toward emancipation from seemingly “natural” constrain establish the specific view-points from which we can apprehend reality as such in anyway whatsoever”. He warned about the danger of technical educational activities in inculcating students only with the skills that make them useful to employers and the governing classes. Habermas (1972) added that the existing pedagogy served as a largely instrumental or functional interest as the domain of learning. In this context, I consider that the hegemonic ‘Western modern worldview’ is promoted by a type of English language teaching strategy which presents not only messages about the English language but also about the Western approach to economics and politics. According to Rick Roderick (1986, p. 53), such approaches have “an interest in the prediction and control of objectified processes”. This belief is similar to the traditional way of English language teaching which focuses on structure and grammar fluency, thus lacking local social contextual relevance when presented in a foreign country like Nepal. In contrast to these traditional approaches, which serve instrumental literacy interests, education is

29
understood as a process of revolutionary transformation of society in critical literacy (Freire, 2000). Max Van Manen (1977, p. 221) states:

Habermas articulates a critical paradigm for describing, understanding, and improving the quality of human life. This critical paradigm implies a commitment to an unlimited inquiry, a constant critique, and a fundamental self-criticism that is most vital to the critical tradition he furthers.

Among the multiple ways of observing the world, I view this understanding of a critical paradigm as a means of promoting learners’ emancipatory interest (Habermas, 1972) which consciously recognises the cultural, historical, and analytic ways of knowing the world contexts. Indeed, Hugh Lacey (2002, p. 19) acknowledges that:

Emancipatory activity is collaborative activity, engaged in by people who experience oppression and by those in solidarity with them, that is expressive of their effective agency and that aims both to alleviate the sufferings being experienced and to create conditions for the effective agency of everyone—where the values, manifested in the activity and embodied in the movements and institutions that encompass it, anticipate the values desired to be embodied in transformed social structures.

Our sense of the world may depend on what we value, believe, and conceptualise. Therefore, the emancipatory aspect is an organised effort to help learners question some non-contextual understanding and explore alternative viewpoints in order for them to transform and act on new perspectives. Emancipation focuses on critical awareness toward existing social, cultural, and political factors. This is achieved by more closely relating the new element of learning, the learning of English in the present case, with the easily available elements of local Nepali culture.

My Journey into a Transformative Pedagogy

When I read the book, The Courage to Teach by Parker Palmer (1998), I was prompted by his ideas and subsequently entered a process of becoming more self-aware as an educator. “The educator who is venturing into critical self-reflection and transformative learning must begin by developing a self-awareness about current practice” (Cranton, 1994, p. 215). As a transformative educator, I have placed the living ‘I’ at the centre of my enquiries. Questions I often ask myself are: “Who am I as a teacher”?, “Why do I teach in this way”?, “Whose interests are or are not being served [by my teaching]”?, “What kind of teacher do I want to be”?, and, “Why do I teach what I teach”? In this regard, Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 149) urge
educators to include their life stories in teaching, in research as well as in continuing teacher education:

Thinking of life as a story is a powerful way to imagine who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. In our view, people live lives and tell stories of those lives, and people are characters in their own and others’ life stories. This is a consequence of viewing life as a story. We live stories. When we talk to others about ourselves we tell life stories. Biography and autobiography are the formal fields of inquiry most closely connected with this.

When we take on the challenge to develop new contributions to knowledge and practice, there appears to be an obvious tension for us to confront (Rowan & Brennan, 1998). We can assert this to be correct, as sometimes existing knowledge can take on the role of a dominating paradigm, acting as a powerful block to the acceptance of new theories or the adoption of innovative and more effective professional practices. Rowan and Brennan (1998, p. 5) further comment that we need to make efforts, at times, “to challenge previous ways of doing research, dominant categories of understanding, and gatekeeping, or power relations around what is valued as knowledge”. Therefore, in my research, I have utilised the narratives emerging from self-study, which has inspired me towards EDSP in my ongoing research. The self-study method has prompted me to narrate the experience and analyse my own progress as the researcher in the process, parallel to my focus on the actions of my participants. This progress included the clear possibility of my adopting different understandings from which a transformative event can occur. However, in counter-balance to this type of awareness, I tried to maintain my sense of indebtedness to the great thinkers of the past and scholars from whom I have learned so much. Another goal was to gain a better understanding of how we value our local knowledge and use this in our learning together while, at the same time, seeking to develop, adapt, and change overall my own views and those of the rest of the world, in response to our global contexts.

Karpiak (2006, p. 87) asserts “[t]ransformative change is qualitative change leading the individual to a new view of self and the world” as an ongoing process. Therefore, at times it is acceptable, to have our heads in the clouds as long as our feet are firmly anchored on the ground. When we dream ambitiously or think about global ideas, and plan our goals, we need to stay grounded in our own reality. Our goals demand keeping things down-to-earth and taking practical action, at the emotional, intentional,
and cognitive level, that may have multiple consequences for ourselves and to people around us. These experiences many times take us by surprise (Popper, 1957); they are not as always as we have always precisely envisaged. The following lines express my feelings of respect for all the mentors whom I have encountered in my education.

**Teachers in my imagination**

Teachers are candles who want to burn bright, creating romanticism in magical light that creates a chandelier of knowledge to grow forever.

The performance of flickering flames, caringly warm, wise and soothing, exhaling their intellectual incense; for students, some teachers stay close to their materials; yet, many are flexible in imagination. Facts they connect with the contexts; fun they may add, even in complexity. Link their self with subject, non-stop; blazon the world, together with students.

Good teachers value a shared life, continually trying to create a family atmosphere at schools in which students are encouraged to flourish together also valuing the intellectual tradition, growing and developing in all happy aspects of their life: personal, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual.

Some teachers may begin to weaken with age, yet with love and accommodation, they continue to give their life and the benefit of their education for the success of others, they keep the knowledge relevant and alive; flames thereby become the eternal signs of recognition, the unique attribute and reflection of several luminescent lives, one connecting with another, the mutual support.

The teachers are stellar lights, constantly filled with empathy and inspiration while their teaching is like a torchbearer’s offering: a high level of care, support, advice and compassionate concern, whenever the learners need them most.

(Source: My personal reflections)

**Research Aims and Questions**

The aim of this research is to investigate how EDSP can promote transformative learning that encourages learners to actively uncover underlying messages of the text
in an active, critical, and reflective manner in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the subject under discussion. The research also aims to give prominence to the oral and written discussion of specific Nepali cultural and ethical issues among pre-service teachers enrolled in an *English Language Teaching* course in Nepal. I believe that the effective teaching of English involves not only a focus on grammar and syntax but also on the pragmatic and semantic aspects of language learning which hold that we learn most effectively by communicating with other people and with their ideas. During my research, therefore, I tried to think deeply, in a reflective manner, about our complex human relationships and responsibilities, including the complications of our relationships with one another as human beings seeking to collaborate in our shared search to make progress (Popper, 1957).

The notion of fairness and equality in the distribution of merit, power and wealth as well as how we treat each other is always a contested issue reflecting our basic ethical positions. It is time, therefore, to create an education system based on the values of respect, responsibility, tolerance, trust, care, and honesty. Robert Starratt (1994, p. 5) argues that “[a]s more and more young people grow up with a disregard for community standards of behavior, our society is in danger of descending into ethical anarchy”. The EDSP involves learning to deal constructively and more open-mindedly with the ethical standpoints people face. While, according to Meriel Downey and Albert Kelly (1986, p. 153), “there is no one, universally valid answer to any of the moral issues we have referred to nor, indeed to any others”, EDSP aims to open up dimensions of meanings from the learners’ existing experiences and store of concepts. This issue of moral *judgement* appears to be of renewed importance at the present time because of the moral challenges which have come to the fore at global level: the environmental crisis and the related issue of economic development and the use of finite global material resources; and, the presence of horrific wars in such places as the Middle East, Iraq and Syria in particular. One relevant, often unexamined, feature in the psychological/philosophical literature (evidenced in the previous citations), is the conceptual and actual difference between moral *judgement* and moral *behaviour*. Specifically, the divide is felt between what humans say and value, and how they act.
Ethics in educational research is relative to a culture and to ourselves, and we, as individuals, are bounded by our own subjective narratives. The issue of ethics has become an inter-disciplinary term in education. Indeed, Susan Verducci (2014, p. 579) acknowledges “[n]arratives, as a form of art, direct our attention to specific human experiences, and encounters with narratives in ethics of education have the potential to assist us in perceiving and understanding what is morally and educationally relevant”. In teaching, we require our students to identify values, character traits and principles associated with the importance of understanding self and society because it is the students whom we teach, rather than teaching only the subject as English. In this competing world preoccupied with human rights and responsibilities, learners have the opportunity to exercise a deep engagement, guided by their interests and internal norms. How does a teacher alone decide what is ethical? Is it not better if such concepts are discussed in the classroom and students actively investigate the nature of ethical concepts? While learning a given lesson, if teachers engage the students in ethical dialogue there is support for their ethical growth, and for developing receptiveness towards differences.

For Felicity Haynes (1998, p. 4), “[e]thics presumes that in considering what I [we] ought to do, I [we] take into consideration the rights and interests of others”. The present research, therefore, is aimed at preparing future teachers to understand more deeply the ethical content of important behavioural-social issues facing both their nation and their local communities and, not least, themselves. I have found it worth investing time and effort with the participating student teachers who would in the future actively work with the youth, the future leaders; these youth are the prospective hope of the country, Nepal.

Another important aim was to transform the students’ worldviews by breaking through prevailing mythologies and paradigms to reach new levels of awareness in learners and to assist them to become more critically engaged and caring teachers. By mentioning critical engagement and caring, I mean to envisage a skillful, disciplined, and constructive task which includes critical, intellectual processes to engage our students in considered, reflective thinking through interactive communication. I found the responses of the participating pre-service teachers encouraging especially when they shared the reflection that in their earlier learning they did not get enough
opportunity to reflect critically. Such were my focal interests within the spectrum of EDSP. By means of the EDSP, rather than only ‘saying the change’, my focus lies on an integrated vision of transformative learning as a way of ‘seeing the change’: something more profound, a shift of worldview, a shift of consciousness–raising towards conscientization (Freire, 2000) as a safety net in the students’ overall learning on the premise that each of them finds purpose of their education through connections to the social, political and natural world.

To assist with consciousness-raising I referred participants to issues arising within their own life-worlds. I aimed at enabling them to reflect on and react to local ethical issues so that they might engage in learning as proposed by Settelmaier et al. (2010, p. 11) which “better prepares students to participate as informed members of society and future decision-makers”. This approach is a radical shift from existing classroom practices in educating Nepali pre-service teachers, aiming to prepare them for their endeavours to implement these dilemma story methods of teaching and learning English in Nepali schools. It emphasises a view of language as the means of communication and of the exchange of information, where the role of the teacher entails working as a mentor for the participants in their learning of how to more effectively learn the English language.

In this research, I endeavour to identify some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with the EDSP implemented in a Bachelor of Education, English Language college classroom in Nepal. I have sought to investigate the possibilities for creating critical awareness and transformation of research participants through dilemma stories. The research addresses the following key questions.

1. As a teacher-researcher, how can autoethnographic inquiry support transformative learning? What are the enablers and constraints to creating transformative learning? What conditions need to be brought into existence to foster transformative learning?

2. How can Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy (EDSP) promote students’ self-critical awareness in an English Language college classroom in Nepal? What helps? What hinders?
3. How can I facilitate pre-service student teachers’ deep engagement (from the design stage to teaching stage) using EDSP in an English language college classroom in Nepal? How can EDSP be used in creating transformative learning?

My emergent research is guided by an interest in developing a pedagogical skill-set that would enable me to contribute to improving the teaching of English in Nepal besides such types of self-study involving autobiographical excavation. Thus, my questions are not the pre-structured check-list type; they are intended to inquire into what lies at the core of my thinking as a professional teacher. Indeed, I see the possibility of raising further engaging questions about pedagogical philosophies and methods emerging during this research because of the use of this more open-ended, self-critical practice. During this journey, the research has passed through several stages as it emerged and developed from the initial research concept. In this way, the research concepts and processes have reflected the emergent algorithm in the transformative paradigm (Mezirow, 2012) used as a research method. In this process, I was also able to scrutinise the conceptual and practical steps taken, and to critically reflect on these with a view to finding new syntheses and useful cognitive-social constructs.

**Significance of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to develop a transformative approach of teaching English in Nepal that might empower learners to explore critically their personal values and societal standpoints, relevant to the matter they are learning, by engaging in EDSP. This study is significant because it endeavours to

a) explain the role of EDSP in developing critical awareness among pre-service teachers:

In this research, my practices are grounded in my lived experiences. I chose to use the dilemma story method to address the challenge of encouraging pre-service teachers to think for themselves and see more clearly the immediate relevance to their future lives of their school learning. The EDSP has the unique characteristic of deliberately providing opportunities for students’ oral expression and the sharing of ideas with their class companions. In my experience, such opportunities for oral discussions were rarely offered in traditional classrooms. This research also contributes to the
broad body of research that serves to develop the capacity to think more critically and analytically, especially, in ‘lesser developed countries’ where there is a lack of access to resources such as books, libraries, and librarians.

The learning activities, in this research, offered participating pre-service teachers the opportunity to develop new understandings and visions about their place in the world from within their own cultural contexts, and to practise the skills of formulating and expressing ideas in discourse by sharing ideas with others. While bringing to bear the value of multiple realities from learners’ real-life experiences in their education, the research sought to explore aspects of those participants’ often inchoate creative minds. It was designed to help them form a deeper, more structured understanding of how critical awareness can engage learners in developing their own capabilities;

b) provide a space for teachers and researchers to tell their stories as a form of social criticism in the Nepalese context:

In their adult lives, the participating pre-service teachers may be far less able to pass on valuable information about Nepali culture even to their own children. This would be a grave loss of Nepali values among future generations. Therefore, a way forward is to blend, in a positive manner, within the school curriculum, the values incorporated in the learning of the English language with those which form part of the authentic Nepali culture. A central aim of this thesis is to use Nepali cultural knowledge already possessed by the students to foster the learning of the English language.

Many developments in the Western world come to be enacted in such different societies such as Nepal. The danger of inflexible globalisation lies in its role as a Trojan Horse for promoting the supremacy of the modern Western worldview, among other things, via the English language. Rather than counter-balancing this trend by helping students to strengthen their native culture, many teachers in Nepal feel more comfortable with their students leaving their own cultural values outside the school gate and crossing into the Western culture which prevails in the school. Yet, language teaching methodology has been changing over a period of time. The teacher-centred approach is gradually giving way to transformative, learner-centred approaches;

c) challenge educational orthodoxies and global educational reform movements (GERM):
Although Nepal, from cultural and artistic perspectives, is a highly developed nation, it is one of many non-Western countries caught up in the rapid process of economic and industrial development following what appears to be a general trend of economic globalisation. Less developed countries face problems at a more severe level than developed countries. David Harvey (1995) states that the local, national and global segregation seem to be deeply antagonistic to stopping the world in a dynamic manner, where we have to begin to see how the dynamics of capitalism are all about continuous development. In a similar context, the profound geographical reorganisation of capitalism has paved ways in many of the conventions of our social life. So, education becomes crucial in promoting ‘glocalisation’ (i.e., globalisation that is inclusive of local perspectives), thereby counter-balancing an otherwise solely instrumental, and one-world culture. Roderick (1986, p. 57) further adds,

The emancipatory interest is the guiding interest of critical theory and of all systematic reflection, including philosophy. The goal of the critical sciences is to further processes of self-reflection and to dissolve barriers to the self-conscious development of the human species.

Under globalization, one type of worldview comes to dominant society in an authoritative manner with a purpose to foster the education of the population to promote the interests of the dominant ruling minority. However, this type of learning may pose the danger of promoting amnesia for important aspects of local Nepali culture among the students;

d) reintert matters of culture, ethics, and justice back into educational discourses:

As a transformative teacher-educator, I value education that promotes cultural diversity, cultural interaction, mutual tolerance, and, cultural blending in Nepal. Hence, this research contributes to my personal and professional growth as a teacher of English language. Pedagogic approaches and theories, such as total immersion method of language learning and student-centred approaches are emerging when educational change in multiple disciplines was possible through the use of new and revised teaching materials.
In such cases, this research into dilemma stories belongs to this newer type of teaching methods, which contributes to raising further curriculum issues involving critical and reflective thinking for research in Nepali education. The strategies our students use include prior experiences and categorisations which they have acquired from parents, from those arising from their everyday social interactions as well as those formally learned in school;

e) enhance teachers’ professional autonomy and judgments:

Kenneth Tobin (1993a, p. 225) asserts that, “[t]eachers are professionals who endeavor to implement the curriculum in a manner that makes sense to them”. Hence, this research is guided by my interest in developing a pedagogical skill-set that will enable me to contribute to Nepalese classrooms which, in turn, aim to prepare future teachers to take an open-ended approach on important ethical issues facing both the national and their local communities. Tobin (1993a, p. 225) proposes that, such an open-ended approach may empower “[…] teachers to modify their visions of what the curriculum could be like and compare what is happening in their classes to the vision of what they would like to happen”. I see the critical importance of contextualising English language learning within local Nepali cultural issues to enable the students, as future citizens, to develop higher-order thinking skills in them.

I aim to engage these pre-service teachers in decision-making about various ethical situations and learning to express such learning in English, as a foreign language, in Nepal. In a similar setting, I hope to see my future role as an aspiring trans-disciplinary educator (or change agent) across separate curriculum areas devoting my effort, time, and imagination. Apart from that, this research will contribute to my personal and professional growth as I engage with the research participants, as their English teacher-educator, in the process of dilemma story learning. I want to develop
a collective epistemology that I can share with other subject educators to consider the ‘bigger picture’ of transforming teacher education in Nepal.

**Structure of the Thesis**

Given my interest in stories, a key part of this thesis surrounds the autoethnographic account of my personal, transformative journey from a Nepalese village boy to a PhD researcher. This journey, with inevitable twists and turns, has been primarily focused on the use of ethical dilemma stories to extend my pedagogical practice and create a stronger base of understanding for my research participants, the pre-service teachers. The following six chapters provide an overview and summary of this thesis.

Chapter one (Orientation to My Study of Transformative Education in Nepal) sets the scene around the basis of my interest in autoethnographic research. Autoethnography is a connection between our lived experiences set in the social context which supports the notion of transformative learning. This research used ethical dilemma stories as tools to involve the participating pre-service teachers of an English language college classroom in Nepal, enabling them to discuss a range of possible solutions to culturally relevant situations. This process has aimed to challenge traditional banking approaches to teaching and learning in order to support the development of critical awareness among a group of pre-service teachers.

Chapter two (The Cultural Context of My Research) examines and challenges the traditional educational processes in Nepal from a didactic method to a culture of collaborative decision making and reflection. Incorporating the narratives of personal experiences, twists, and turns, I have woven the journey of my personal background formation to construct my professional teaching beliefs and practices. The journey involves exploration of how events and experiences are interpreted from an insider’s point of view and how this relates to others.

Chapter three (The Research Methodology) explains how autoethnography guides my knowing and making the best sense of my world with a view to improving my own teaching. Becoming a more self-reflective educator, this chapter reflects my endeavour to promote transformative learning among participating pre-service teachers and understand the subjective dimensions of classroom interactions.
Chapter four (The Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy as a Teaching Method) describes the practical aspects of presenting ethical dilemma stories to participating pre-service teachers to see the impact of transformative learning. The EDSP provides relatable scenarios to challenge and unsettle participant’s thought processes leading to acknowledging multiple viewpoints. This pedagogic technique is also useful for pre-service teachers in their teaching.

Chapter five (Many Voices, Stories of Transformation) discusses the outcome of the EDSP and ways of improving the teaching-learning scenarios among participating pre-service teachers in the socio-cultural context of Nepal. The EDSP and its connection to transformative learning changed the pre-service teachers’ initial reluctance to engage in classroom activities to a greater critical awareness and socio-cultural understanding of the stories discussed. I have narrated the learning experience of each participating pre-service teacher in a story form.

Chapter six (Mapping the Nature of Ethical Dilemma Stories and Transformative Learning) recounts my personal understanding and research journey into the importance of cultural and social contexts for the critical awareness of teaching and learning. Based on the evidence in this research, I have summarised the nature of ethical dilemma stories and transformative learning within the following eight key elements.

1. Connecting learning to students’ and teachers’ lives;
2. Utilising cultural and social contexts for learning;
3. Emphasising creativity and imagination;
4. Incorporating authentic and engaging pedagogies;
5. Encouraging collaboration for sustainability in learning;
6. Fostering mutuality, respect, care and trust;
7. Encouraging critical reflection, analytic skills and empowerment; and
8. Promoting emotional, intellectual and artistic development.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have sought to lay out the main details of my research aims and plan. I have included the background of the study, the main issues in the research, the significance of the research and its aims together with three research questions earlier
in this chapter. With the help of these questions, I have tried to review my own research journey, drawing on an autoethnographic approach while also focusing my involvement with the dilemma stories as a binding thread of my research.

As a teacher-educator in Nepal and a doctoral student in Western Australia, I use EDSP as a research and teaching tool for a group of pre-service teachers in Nepal. A principal aim of this research has been to look for more effective ways of involving the participants, the B.Ed. students, to be more actively engaged in their learning. While approaching the dilemmas posed in the stories the researcher tried to cast light on the core problem of the absence of local cultural references in current English language teaching in Nepal. The EDSP appears to have the potential to promote the achievement of these aims.
Chapter 2: The Cultural Context of My Research

Introduction

In this chapter, I set out my ideas in chronological order as I explain the importance of my birthplace, home country, early school days, working life, culture, and university life. I also focus on my narratives about life and learning as a financially and socially struggling student, my reflections on university teaching days, and other significant events which have had a prime role in creating who I am today and who I seek to become. I have tried to bring my childhood experiences into account to see things more clearly with creative imagination and less inhibition. When I started to write about my experiences of, and connections, to early life, I tried to conceive of other worlds and others’ worlds by comparing ideas and feelings with a kind of childlike vision on my part of free-ranging curiosity and imagination. I have sought to employ this naive, open, child-mindedness as the foundation of my writing, and to find the freedom to imagine the world and the environment around me in all its immediacy and wonder. The aim is to make my stories accessible to the readers to highlight the power of life events and ideas as “the doorway for imagination” (Greene, 1995, p. 16). Each experience has opened new doors for me that also brought a deeper understanding of the worlds around me as I am continuing to grow academically.

Many times, when the shared meaning is more desirable, I was encouraged to think for myself for possible solutions to problems and draw balanced conclusions. I have a habit of discussing the books I have read, or notable experiences worth sharing, with colleagues, students, family members and friends. My willingness to enjoy a sense of humility helps me to understand these experiences as I connect the journey of difficult days with other teachers who shared similar experiences. I also share a series of more fortunate events that have led me to claim who I am today whenever I reflect on my past days, the days when I had ample opportunities to step outside my comfort zone and experience the rewards of learning something new.

It is important for me to recognise the cultural components of my ‘becoming’ in order to develop my present work as an autoethnographic inquiry and to extract overall meaning from this journey. I want to provide a sense of how I have been prepared personally and professionally and how this has informed my PhD research.
Some Geographical and Demographic Facts about Nepal

I was born in Nepal, my home and the home of Sagarmaatha (सगरमाथा), or Mount Everest. Although the country is small in size, its people are as tall as Mount Everest in hospitality. Nepal is well-known for the world's most magnificent snow-capped mountains and its bio-diversity. This makes the country very popular for tourism with its natural beauty, historic temples, and ancient palaces which are cultural hubs of worship. Thousands of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims from India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and elsewhere come to Nepal to visit the holy temple of Lord Pashupatinath, and Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautama Buddha; they both sit on the must-visit list for tourists.

Nepal is rectangular and stretches 885 kilometres in length (east to west) and 193 kilometres in width (north to south). The population of the country stands at 26.6 million persons (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011) with diverse ethnic and linguistic heritage who are living in the country that covers a total area of 147,181 square kilometres. It is a land-locked country with India to the east, south, and west and China to the north.
The 125 diverse ethnic groups listed in the census, each with its own distinct language and culture, include the following major groups: Chhetri, Brahmin, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Sherpa, Tharu, and Newar. The census (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011) identified 123 mother tongues in Nepal, and Nepali, which is spoken as the mother tongue by 44.6 percent of the total population, is the official language of the country; Nepali is used and understood by most of the people. The majority of Nepalese are Hindus by religion; there are also substantial numbers of Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and Kirants, a nature-related religion with its unique culture (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Topographically, Nepal is divided into three distinct ecological zones: Mountain, Hill, and Terai, the plain-land. The mountain zone ranges in altitude from 4,877 metres to 8,848 metres above sea level. Because of the harsh terrain, transportation and communication facilities in this zone are very limited, and only about 7 percent of the total population lives there (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In contrast, the Hill ecological zone, where my family village is located, ranges in altitude from 610 metres to 4,876 metres above sea level, and is densely populated. This zone includes the Kathmandu valley which used to be a very fertile agricultural area but has now become largely urbanised. Kathmandu is the capital city as well as the principal urban centre of Nepal. The Terai zone in the southern part of the country can be regarded as an extension of the relatively flat Indian Gangetic plains composed of alluvial soil. This area is the most fertile part of the country and has a subtropical to tropical climate. The Terai, although having a large population, consists mainly of dense forest areas, national parks, wildlife reserves, and conservation areas.

Nepal has underlying concepts of traditional subsistence farming and livelihood. However, in recent years, Nepalese people’s priority in the subsistence farming has changed to growing a consumerist culture while 25.16% of the total population lives below the poverty line (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Many of the Nepalese industrial establishments have been in the process of closing down. As a consequence, young people are suffering from unemployment in the country. They are bound to place their hopes in foreign employment and migration. It has to be said that many of these aspirants possess limited employment-related skills. Moreover, the minimal pay
they receive abroad limits the amount of money and goods they could send home to their families.

Nepal imports most of its goods from either China or India, as both of these countries see Nepal as one of their marketplaces, and Nepal has been almost unconsciously accepting of this trade arrangement. This situation indicates the strong need for lifelong teaching and learning that could give Nepali youth and adults an academic education as well as hands-on experience. Education was available only to citizens who were very rich or belonged to the elite class until the year 1950; English has been the dominant foreign language as it was adopted in the formal education system from the beginning of the twentieth century. Ram Giri (2010, p. 93) states,

> English was adopted in the beginning of the twentieth century. The schools were modelled on the British education system, which followed the patterns/curricula of the English education system in India. The ELE ideology was, thus, imported from British India where the goal of education was to form a class of persons that were English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect.

So, in the early twentieth century, British tutors were brought in to educate the elites which did not cater for the children from the general public (Maskey, 2015, Personal communication). Therefore, education for the public is still very young in Nepal. But, these days, educating children in a good school, or sending children to a wider exposed English medium (teaching) school has become a major priority for virtually everyone in Nepal whether people of poor or rich economic circumstance, hills or plains origin, and ethnic or mainstream families. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 147), “[…] teaching is an educative relationship among people”. Thus, the Nepali education system needs to create an environment where people have a wider set of education and training choices. Nepal began to equip the people with new knowledge and skills that enabled them to improve their livelihoods in a more globalised, and competitive context when it opened borders for its citizens to go abroad to work.

**Journeying into Myself: On the Road Less Travelled**

Let me begin this section, from *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (Swami, 1985), a renowned Hindu, religious text, by quoting these two revered words, ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ (अहम ब्रह्मास्मि), which could be interpreted in English as I am the infinite – the divine or putting it another way, I am the only person with the fullest awareness
and knowledge of my own true self, thoughts, motives, and actions, for I may be best seen from my own eyes – the truth for me. Thus, it could mean ‘I’ as the sole knower of the supreme self which lies within me. Our wisdom of hope and freedom of thoughts start from self-knowledge. It can also be interpreted that the ‘I’ is free to face life, free to forgive, free to embrace whatever challenges that appear ahead of ‘me’, the subject. According to Ramana Maharshi, the enquiry in the form of asking “Who am I?”, is the principal means to achieve the path of knowledge (Sri Ramanasramam, 2010, p. 11). In this journey of knowing myself and moving from the known to the unknown, I further contemplate questions such as: What are the origins of my thought-patterns? And, what are my primary responsibilities towards other people? While I am what I think (कोऽहं कम्वम्), they, in turn, may think about my responsibilities towards them, and contemplate what I have been thinking about them.

Each person has her/his own unique and independent relationships, and their own responsibilities. As an educator, I bear the social and reciprocal dialogue inherent in the relationship between teachers and students, which is a complex, even spiritual relationship. I believe that our self-concept is gradually shaped and re-shaped by people who influence us. Similarly, I am inspired to seek transformation and to be transformed so that I can be a better mentor for students’ self-transformation. In a similar regard, I aim to be constantly open to viewing my research activities in varying ways by adopting new epistemological paradigms where these appear to provide more effective understandings of my research activities. As a lifelong learner, my consideration of an open-minded, self-transformative approach has become a means of becoming an agent of change while conducting this research. During their self-study research, Anastasia Samaras et al. (2014, p. 369), explained how researchers found themselves as lifelong learners and shared a sense of what this feels like:

This reflective vignette is drawn from Lynne’s narrative of her experiences in a university-wide transdisciplinary 2-year self-study research project. As a professor in the School of Art, Lynne believes that “art’s job [and we argue self-study’s job] is to transform the artist, who then must transform the world. The art form is a pathway, and its physical form is a distraction from the real artwork, which is the artist herself.” […] Lynne articulated much of what we each encountered throughout the self-study process […]
They (Samaras et al., 2014, p. 375) elaborate:

There were notations of connection, emotion, and revelations of self-assessment, such as Lynne’s note, “Two central outcomes for me of the self-study I conducted in AY2010-2011 in conjunction with my participation in SoSTC: first, understanding my path to improvement as a teacher as a process of self-transformation, and second, understanding that the closely observed experience of the classroom would tell me how to achieve the end that I was seeking.

Similarly, I hope the alternative combinations of my experience of social, educational, historical, and political influences can illuminate some different ways of seeing the world. Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 152) assert that:

As we work with students, teachers, and others, we have tried to think about constructing and reconstructing our lives. One way of thinking about this is to see that we live our lives, tell and write our lives, retell and rewrite our lives, and attempt to live those retold lives.

I aim to critically reflect and narrate my stories about my journey in becoming a transformative educator. Indeed, Susan Engel (1995, p. 184) acknowledges:

We all want to know who we are and how we came into our world. We all want to know that we were recognised, that we are singular and special. And we each learn this, in part through the stories we are told about our beginnings.

In the process, I have focused on an inside-out approach where the cognitive end-result emerges from the negotiation of conflicting and complementary perspectives. Rather than receiving an outside directive I believe our learning needs to advance beyond the product of a pre-existing, systematic knowledge system coming from taken-for-granted-ness. Being sudden and new, this practice involved tension for me in the beginning, but the potential also lies here for selective social action and conflict resolution through a deeper understanding of the insider’s perspectives within my narratives.

When we realise the need for personal change, it leads to a sense that even our surroundings get an opportunity to change. According to McGregor (2008, p. 57), “society has to change, and only then one is able to contribute to that change”. I hope to embrace many insights and truths through such changes which may lead me to greater freedom of imagination about my imagined future. Now, studying for my PhD and also reflecting on changes that I underwent and on the stories I heard at home, and elsewhere, it has encouraged me to see the world from different perspectives. Stories play an important part of who we are and how we think. Everyone values a
story at one level, be it a hidden or an openly-known one. If we arrive at an understanding of others’ meanings without considering our own lived experiences, our understanding will only be partial and incomplete.

Long after I commenced my journey in research, I continue to look critically, again and again, at the definitions of research. I have realised that research structure varies in its paradigm according to the perspectives or ideologies governing the conceptions in the researchers’ mind. In my research work, I am always challenged to think in response to other people’s remarks about Nepal’s economic and educational progress. These days, I meet many people in Nepal who blatantly prefer commenting on the defects in government policy and on the poor practices of the politicians rather than coming up with alternative solutions. However, we all seem reluctant to acknowledge that change starts in ourselves. Many teachers are reluctant to say, “I don’t know”, when it would be far better for them to admit that they did not know.

A Culture of Questioning and Sharing of Thoughts

It is a general belief that when we have to compose our ideas in written form, we are forced to arrange them in a way that makes sense and provide meaning for the author and audience. I wish to achieve some satisfaction in having met the needs of my readers, especially the young people from my own village, my students and their parents. In sharing my ideas, I wish to achieve a clearer perspective on my own life and future. In the process, I have become aware of the vast range of human possibilities. I also realise that some of the realities in my life are sometimes too harsh to share. Such memories have been softened and expressed in the more amenable forms. My curiosity and desire to explore this new world of ideas has led me towards a wonderland, a place full of both joy and pain where I am able to see things with the naive eyes of my own childlike innocence.

Seeking solutions to our everyday lives by consulting other experts lies at the heart of the age-old Nepalese cultural tradition. The hermeneutic concepts of inquisitiveness, questioning and critique have commonly been the source of the Eastern religious and philosophical debate aimed at bringing ideas into discourse before arriving at a final conclusion. This process of discussion and debate is mentioned in the first lines of an influential Hindu text, Shreemad Bhagawad Geeta (Swami, 1998).
Dhritarashtra said, Assembled in Kuruksetra, the auspicious zone of ‘Dharmakshetra’, what did they do, eager of war, my sons and those of Pandu, Sanjaya?

The text starts with an account of the concerns of the blind, very wise king Dhritarashtra as expressed to Sanjaya, his charioteer. The king sought Sanjaya’s advice on why Dhritarashtra’s sons, the Kauravas, and the sons of his brother Pandu, the Pandavas, were warring against each other to decide who should be the sole ruler of the holy field, the territory of Dharmakshetra. Dhritarashtra felt their efforts would be better spent working out how to live constructively together in Dharmakshetra. Here, the Dharmakshetra, as I understand it, means the vehicle of our life where God, in each individual, guides that person’s soul towards the right decision and shows how the individual should lead her/his life. Dhritarashtra seeks the opinion of Sanjaya, a visionary with special power, to narrate the reason behind Dhritarashtra’s people being eager to enter into the war on that well-known place of righteous action, the Dharmakshetra. Thus, Dhritarashtra became conscious of the dilemma in his people’s mind between love and responsibility for their family and their ambition to control the kingdom; a dilemma which, in fact, led to the battle of Mahabharata (Swami, 1998).

I applied the analogy from this story to my analysis of the role of the teacher in the classroom, as someone who seeks to promote positive discussion and thoughtful investigation of the problems faced by the students as members of the school community. The aim of teaching is to seek social unity and avoid social conflicts by focusing precisely on how to achieve the envisaged consensus, which in normal circumstances is not readily available. At the same time, the central aim of the teacher is to resolve dilemmas, conflicts and contradictions by shared, cooperative and collaborative methods. Therefore, I saw a fruitful analogy of teaching pedagogy as well as the role of a teacher with her/his students and that of a car driver with her/his passengers. The act of successful driving involves the relationship between the structure of the car, engine, fuel, and, not least, the driver. It is the driver’s role to utilise all the components to achieve the goal of successfully bringing the passengers to their destination. Likewise, when I think of teaching and learning, I view the
critical role of the teacher in the classroom to being like that of the responsible car driver who always has the best interests, care and concerns of her/his passengers at heart.

**A Developing Sense of Connectedness with Life and Learning**

Education in Nepal traditionally meant that the students should memorise existing ideas from authoritative sources in the various subjects and reproduce the rote-memorised knowledge or material in examinations. An examination culture is still embedded to measure students’ worth through marks he or she receives through formal testing. Too much of the traditional education has focused on filling the students’ heads with facts rather than developing a sense of humanity, enthusiasm, and creativity.

My early education was little different from that of other students in my home village. I started my study at home, using my mother tongue Nepali, with my father as my first teacher. He helped me to realise that the children of our generation were living at a turning point in history, where we could no longer rely on the traditional practice of following our parents into subsistence farming. My father taught me how to read and write in preparation for formal schooling when I turned five years of age. By the time I started school, I could read and write the Nepali alphabet. My first primary school was located at two and a half kilometres from our village home. At first, I found it hard to walk uphill to school every day along a winding mountain track but, as time passed, I became used to it.

I studied at Shree Netrawati Primary School from grades one to three. It was a small, homely school where everyone knew everyone else; we students were like a close-knit family. My learning started with the ‘parrot-learning’ method where the teachers would read aloud from the textbook, and the class would repeat what was said in chorus. There were no other activities like grammar, spelling, or writing assignments besides simply trying to memorise the same text, repeating lessons the next day, and standing in front of the class. During my days in the school, the teacher would come into the classrooms and instruct us to read a text, making sure that we were subsequently able to repeat it. The need to arouse, respect, or develop the curiosity of
learners was not perceived by the teachers as part of their responsibility. Here is a
word picture from my memory of my schooling in grade three:

*The birth of brightness*

We are waiting inside the room sitting on our own straw mats that each of us
brought from our home. Those students who could not afford to bring a mat would
sit down on the bare floor.
As the teacher enters the room, the students stand up and greet him,
All together: ‘Namaskaar, sir’. (We salute the divine in you, with respect.)

…
Teacher: ‘Okay, basa-basa.’ (Please sit down.)
(We take our seats. However, the room is not spacious enough for everyone to sit
dightly. It is a rather cold room, and the only light enters through the empty
frames of the doors and windows through which the wind currents also freely flow;
all can feel the typical characteristic of a winter morning.)

…
Teacher: “Have all of you brought the book to read?”
(Some say, ‘yes’; but, many keep quiet.)

…
“Okay, open the book and start reading it.” (The teacher directs the students to the
specific page number where the lesson of the day could be found.)

…
(We share the available books, in pairs or in groups, while the teacher waits.
We read aloud; we finish once, then repeat; we finish a second time, repeat; we
finish a third time, and then repeat yet again.)

…
We do this either until the teacher stops us or a student raises her/his hand claiming
that s/he has completely memorised the text.

(Source: My personal reflections)

After I completed my three-year-study in my village school, which was located
about 30 minutes walking distance from my home, I spent four years at Nilkamal
lower secondary school. So, I had to walk four and a half kilometres uphill to reach
the Nilkamal lower Secondary school from grade four onwards. I remember my first
day at the Nilkamal school, it was not only bigger in size than my primary school
but also different in teaching style. The shift from Netrawati to Nilkamal school was
a big decision for my family and for me because of the distance involved.

In comparing these two schools, Netrawati primary school felt more like a stream
while Nilkamal lower secondary school was a river. I would always return home
after dark because evenings set in early in the lower part of the mountains. Many of
my friends decided not to continue their education after primary school because of
the distance to Nilkamal, the nearby secondary school, and their requirement to help
the family on the farm as well as with domestic work. In those days, only the
privileged could afford to send their children to school. I was fortunate in this regard, for I could continue my education at that crucial moment because of my own keenness and the willingness of my parents to see their child being educated. However, I still had to help my parents in household activities and in farming. I never really had a favourite subject until I was in grade seven. As students, we used to dance according to the tune and timing of the teachers. Teachers seldom appeared to realise that those young students see things differently from adults. Whenever students were questioned about their future ambitions, almost all, I remember, said that they wanted to pass Grade 10, the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination, and become a teacher in a nearby primary school.

I have encountered various approaches to language-learning over the years. At Nilkamal lower secondary school, most of the learning happened in a two-way process of interaction between teacher and students. Our teachers expected the students to participate actively in classroom discussions. The teachers were supportive, and so was the reassuring environment with its big playground and shady pine trees. Apart from the examination-focused teaching, we were given access to further reading, writing and extra-curricular activities. The teaching was focused on our general mental and physical development. All these including school environment, curriculum and pedagogy were significant changes from the experiences in my primary school.

Interestingly, I also started learning the English alphabet in Nilkamal lower secondary school, from grade four onwards where our English teacher, Yamnath sir, was regarded as a strict kind of man. He was a hard taskmaster for those who were somewhat less motivated; yet, I found him a nice teacher especially to the hard-working and capable students; I had the good fortune to be considered as one of those. However, it was so hard to familiarise myself with the context of using the English language instead of my native Nepali.

Meanwhile, I had another change of school; in joining Ananda high school for grade eight. Every year I would effectively proceed through to the next grade, which meant getting even closer to competing for the locally available jobs as a primary school teacher. I performed very well in examinations; I realised that I was as equally good in English as I was in Mathematics. Many times I replaced absent
teachers by acting in the teacher’s place when I was in grade eight at only twelve years old, which encouraged my later passion for teaching.

However, I could not continue my study at the Ananda secondary school beyond grade eight because of various obstacles, among which was, the high cost of the fees. Without the ability to afford additional costs, I had no choice but to transfer to a new school, Bhanjyang Kharka secondary school for grades nine and ten. This change was the most challenging choice in my life. I had to support my home as well as manage to travel every day to the next hill, also crossing radical mountain rivers on their rocky stream beds, and additional two kilometres hike from my previous. The walking used to take me three hours in the morning to reach the school and two hours and a half to walk downhill in the evening. The challenge before me was to make that a reality as I had an impression that education would make my life happy and successful. Reflecting on that time I have composed the following poem.

*The teacher I am*

At twelve, in the year
1983, I became a teacher
in my small school.
Then, from Ananda to
Bhanjyang Kharka, a big step –
two more miles to walk,
these poor legs.

No more a teacher;
yet, time to reflect and
super cheap fees,
so why should I fret?
What other options,
did my world afford?
I did the best I could,
with what I had.

With this microscopic
memory of mine
in this year of 2017
after 35 remarkable years since
then on the eve of my PhD
I sit here at ‘Bush Court’
the common meeting place
of Murdoch University
and look backwards at those
God-like teachers, parents,
and my former rustic life, and ask:

How many more miles to walk?
How many more hills to hike across?
How many oceans to cross?
To become once more
the teacher I want to be.

(Source: My personal reflections)

Lovat and Smith’s (1991, p.166) suggestion “to recall a time of significant change in [our] life” had special interest for me. Such change, according to them, “might be associated with moving home or changing school or a job” (ibid.). That time of changing schools was a moment when I experienced a dilemma. When the opportunity to continue with Ananda secondary school was barred to me because of the comparatively higher fees, it took some time to accept my new situation and to present myself in a new place, in front of new people, in a new climate, and in a new culture.

The above poem represents a capsule of time or “memory book” (Thomson & Holland, 2012) in the way I have used reflection for personal growth. Rachel Thomson and Janet Holland (2012, p. 323) explain “memory books are not simply records of daily life but are self-conscious repositories of memorabilia […] – the means and the medium for inventing the self […] with a view to gaining insight into periods of personal change”. The quest to become a critically reflective person has guided me throughout my journey to becoming a better teacher.

More Narratives Revisited

The first English lesson I can remember was on ‘The Fables of Aesop’ where we read the textbook and tried to memorise details such as “Aesop was a Greek slave who lived in the 5th century BC”. To this day, I still remember these words, ‘Aesop, Greek, slave, and the 5th century BC’; however, they were initially very alien to us. Even today, learning English in Nepali schools is still viewed as something culturally unfamiliar, alien, imported, and thus a particularly challenging task but yet alluring and elitist, based on ability to afford education.

After we had finished reading aloud a particular English language text, the teacher picked out the difficult words and translated them into Nepali. We went through the book line-by-line; yet, we did not perceive the meaning of the book. On reflection, I now realise how that text did not represent the values and culture of Nepali people. The major part of the methods we practised in the early years of our English language
program was a word-for-word translation from English to Nepali, free sentence translation and reciting aloud of English texts with little or no understanding. We learned to recite the English verb forms, for example: Go – went – gone into our Nepali terms Janu – gayo – gayako, using a direct-translation method of language learning. In this learning approach, a focus on grammar and translation from English to Nepali were the highest priorities for the teacher. The teacher played the role of a dispenser of knowledge, pouring a graded quantity of information into the small cups of the student-consumers. The students’ role was to act as receptacles of the rules of grammar and lexis dispensed by the teacher. Our errors were immediately corrected, with zero tolerance for mistakes. In this teaching method, very little effort was put into oral pronunciation and communicative activities. Good students received lots of praise but, in fact, many of us were able to learn only some basic concepts of the English language, and had great difficulty speaking for understanding.

This fact-transmission-type of teaching method was practised in our school as the favoured approach for teaching the English texts. Yet, this may not have been the best way forward where the teachers were the transmitters, and the students were passive receivers of information. Here is a typical depiction from my memory about the popular approach of paraphrasing the texts.

**Seeking of stock-answers**

After we tried to read and reread an entire text at our individual capacity level, we would recite the word-meanings from English to Nepali by heart. Those who could tell the meaning in Nepali without looking at the notebook would be considered the smartest students by the teacher and their classmates. Then, all the students would expect to receive a summary of the lesson from the teacher. The teacher would either read a summary from his diary about the text we had just studied or copy it on to the blackboard. Besides this, the teacher would also select some possibly important questions for the examination and suggest their ‘correct’ answers as a guide for our responses. Hence, the success of our learning was not to be determined by our understanding of the concepts elaborated in the text, it was rather to be measured by how we could provide the stock-answers in the examinations at the end of every academic year.

(Source: My personal reflections)

In this way, students came to class to listen to the teacher who was there to teach materials from the textbook for the tests. The student-teacher relationship was dominated by teachers’ active role; we, as students, were dependent on text-based knowledge explained via our teacher’s own understanding of the text. Thus, education was not valued in itself but was simply understood as providing a qualification to help
students find a job. Our role was to copy what the teacher had told us and wait until the final examination was due and then prepare ourselves the night before. We would write the same memorised short, stock-answers to the questions. Even though they asked for discursive responses, nobody would bother much about the exact form of the question. For example, instead of reading the examination questions and answering them using comprehension and understanding, we would focus on trying to recall what was presented to us in our lessons, from where the questions were taken, and on the stock-answers to such questions previously provided by the teacher. Assessments reinforced these pedagogical approaches; the ‘smart students’ memorised and regurgitated textual and teacher transmitted facts.

It is so interesting to remember that while I practise group-work and pair-work in my dilemma story teaching sessions of this research (see chapter 4), such practices were rarely employed during our school days. On the contrary, we students experienced group work by meeting in groups or pairs for our ‘combined studies’ to memorise lessons outside of class and in preparation for examinations. Sometimes, on the eve of the examinations, we divided the lesson notes among ourselves and every participating member took responsibility for explaining certain lessons to the others. If something had already been asked in the examinations of previous years we would simply overlook such material, thinking that it was not a good idea to prepare for what would be unlikely to appear as a question in this year. In most cases, this trick of selecting study questions was effective and I believe still continues today in many Nepalese schools.

This practice is limiting as testing of facts using examinations is not a true assessment of learning potential. A student who has not done very well in some school subjects may be able to show great performance in arts, poetry sports or in drama. What is wrong with that? I believe education has the potential to change lives for the better with its intrinsic and applied values. It is just another way of living a wonderful life.

On reflection, I did not enjoy school-life as it was not organised in the positive manner it might have been. Yet, teachers or evaluators probably found me a good student, but who knows to what extent this limited my creativity. During those years, at Bhanjyang Kharka secondary school, I made many friends. However, almost all my friends left school after attending for the minimum number of years because of
various reasons including the irrelevance of formulaic teaching. From experiencing such an examination-centred educational system, I formed the idea that my initial schooling was highly dominated by that traditional rote-memory mode of learning which had the effect of discouraging many of my school friends and causing them to leave school early. Some others dropped out because of the long walks to school. Still others dropped out for lack of school fees and added opportunity costs such as helping their parents in family farming. I strongly felt the loss of their friendship and the loss of further contact with them later. They must have thought that formal education was not for them. I too, in this regard, may have got the opportunity to learn under the circumstances most probably suitable to my case, and with the best teachers available at that time, but I now realise that was not exactly a soothing experience for me.

My present professional work has involved teaching students of different capacities based on their interests, age, gender and ethnicities. So, in my present research, although I have sensed that the use of the dilemma story methods may be a real challenge over the traditional teaching model, I am determined to go ahead and do my best to apply it where appropriate. Ravi, one of my research participants, shares a similar experience (see chapter 5) while dealing with this kind of improvised teaching:

We have to act as if we know everything just to meet the expectations of parents and students. Many times I have found myself in a dilemma like how long could I follow the hegemony of the conventional set of teaching strategies’ of the teacher as the only source of knowledge and interpretation and remain within the comfort zone or take the challenge of fighting against the strategy by carefully including locally-available resources like the local myths, mysteries, values, and stories to improvise teaching techniques. The exposure to dilemma stories has given me courage to change the long going practice from the largely reliance of students on a teacher’s performance into their active involvement in the learning process.

(Personal communication, 2 Nov. 2016)

My Passion for Teaching

My strong belief is that our school system requires passionate mentors to make learning come alive and become meaningful for students in order for them to flourish and grow. This also resonates with my own journey, from a tiny village of Dhading of Nepal to the modern city of Perth in Western Australia, from a struggling student’s experience to a professional teacher’s narratives.
As long as I can remember, I have had a deep conviction that teachers are potential change-makers, role models, and are often regarded as among the most honest and respected figures in society. Motivation in teaching was already there since my childhood, and it was a profession of my choice. So, the goal of my teaching was to depart from the singular transmission mode and foster the fundamental values of education such as inquiry, communication, and critical awareness. I thought of the need for a new set of capabilities which are best captured under the umbrella of transformative learning. Richard Johnson (1979) describes this kind of learning as the acquisition of “really useful knowledge” which addresses why people are politically troubled; why they are economically deprived; and why they are oppressed. So, the motivation to be in contact with young minds and discuss such issues with young people became a milestone in leading my journey to become more insightful and better equipped to help them in their learning.

Teachers, indeed, are called gurus in Nepal which literally means the ignorance-removers. Students, therefore, believe that gurus are supposed to know everything. However, in my case, allowing for the fact that my teachers were not as perfect as was commonly supposed, they were for me the only source of learning in my village school. They were, therefore, persons to be valued and looked up to by students and parents alike. The idea of the respected profession of a teacher, even in the traditional Nepali mode which focused only on developing oral repetition skills, nevertheless prompted me to think if I should remain in the world of teaching and try to introduce some improvements. In fact, since childhood, I have regarded teaching to be well-respected and very secure. It is also useful to note that a teacher’s verdict is still the final one in Nepalese villages for settling local disputes. A teacher can act as a representative in resolving a dispute, and even act as a negotiator when someone from outside the village is involved for any reason, be it political or social. In these cases the verdict of the teacher is final. Parents often invite teachers from the nearby village schools to come to their homes to read out the letters that have been received from their adult sons and daughters who are working abroad. Therefore, the teacher holds an important role in the life of the village people, and I also wanted to become one when I grew up.
That was sufficient motivation in learning through to the end of grade ten. But, to better prepare myself for the SLC, which was considered a major hurdle, what people call an ‘iron gate’ in Nepal, following on from the tenth-grade test, I left for Dhading Besi, the main administrative centre of our Dhading district. My aim was to search for good teachers who would give me tutorials to fill the gaps left in my incomplete English as English was one of the crucial subjects needed to pass the SLC.

I remember a conversation that went this way:

_The undetected energy of English_

Myself to my relative:
Help me by asking Shambhu-sir if he will accept me into his tutorial class for two months.

My relative: (When she comes back having talked with Shambhu-sir, the “popular” tutor of SLC-English), and says:
Look, English is a very difficult subject for all students. Shambhu-sir is so busy from four in the morning to eleven at night that he is not able to take any more students this year. We were already late in asking him and many students from reputable schools around here had already taken all the available places. Moreover, he would only have accepted you if you were from a nearby school where the teachers had taken the students through the entire English course.

(Source: My personal reflections)

I was so shocked by this message and thought (in my young person’s way) that it was an apparently non-altruistic treatment. My childish understanding did not convince me why such a popular teacher preferred to accept only the students whose teachers had been able to complete the course-book in their respective schools. Therefore, being one who had not been taken through the whole course-book, my moral conviction was still that such tutors ought not to reject needy students like me. What could I do then? In spite of my feelings, I kept quiet and waited for another possible way ahead.

This incident forced me to go to the capital city, Kathmandu, to seek help. I still hold a vivid picture of that challenging, winter day in December 1986 when I walked for a day before I could catch transport at the nearest highway. There was a ‘non-passenger’ carrier, full of goods on its flat-bed, which stopped at the station where I joined a group of other passengers heading for Kathmandu. It was the first time I was riding on a vehicle, my first experience of knowing many newer things and a moment of self-actualisation. Yes, my pursuit of English was responsible for sending me from
my village to Dhading Besi, and later to Kathmandu to prepare myself for the SLC examination. The city was a place where I could seek help in resolving questions about my future life. In Kathmandu, I joined a coaching class run by a team at Kranti Vidhya Griha in Lainchour. That was a great relief for me; the teachers helped me to complete the entire course-books of all the subjects, including English. After a two-month stay in the capital city, I returned to my home district of Dhading. I took the National Board examination of the SLC, passing with fairly good marks. Thus, I became a potential candidate in the job market, that is, for the job of a school-teacher.

As soon as I completed the tenth grade, I had the joy of becoming the first SLC graduate from my small village. I was able, for the first time, to think optimistically about the possibility of becoming a qualified, primary-school teacher. While I cannot remember much detail, the storyteller in me likes to think that it was at that moment that my determination to become a teacher blossomed. I applied for a position to teach at the school in my village and looked forward to being able to draw a monthly salary on a regular basis. However, to my great disappointment, I did not get the job. I recall that being a challenging moment as I had to revise my thinking about my future. I later received an offer to teach at a primary school in a nearby village, but I did not accept the offer because it involved too much travelling. The school was 15 kilometres away, which is more than 3 hours walking from my village. At that juncture, I decided to leave my village; I was determined to make my way forward furthering my studies in Kathmandu, where more opportunities appeared to be available.

**My Efforts Uncover New Paths**

During the late 1980s, I first left my village for the capital city of Nepal; it was also a time when Nepal was heading for revolutionary, political upheaval. I experienced many twists and turns of life when I was away from home, family, village and the local district, this time away lasted considerably longer than I envisaged initially. Then, I realised myself as the subject of my own narratives and my life.

My lived experiences and their documentation as stories disclose something about what I used to be, how I resolved obstacles and enjoyed certain joyful moments of my life, bearing life’s pains to arrive at my current destination of who I have become. So,
whenever I have encountered problems, I have consulted my teachers, family members, students, friends and colleagues. I have shared many interesting life events with them and with the people around me. As Denzin (2014, p. 53) reminds us, an autoethnography “seeks out those narratives and stories people tell one another as they attempt to make sense of the epiphanies, or existential turning point moments in their lives”. Let me now relate a themed narrative of my journey to the city with my nephew Ramchandra, drawn from my autobiographical writing in early 1988. This illustrative reflection gives me an understanding of a significant moment that shaped who I am today as well as the richness of my living a simplified yet scholarly life. I have reflected on this story, on the experience of my leaving home leading to the truck-ride that I chose in order to reach Kathmandu at the beginning of my personal/professional life.

**Story one: The leaving of home for a new beginning**

One excellent morning in winter, with our heads filled with dreams, Ramchandra and I left our homes, in the mountainous village of north Dhading, the most beautiful place that we had ever seen; where we had our lovely families, our cattle, our country life and our comforts: our home. January 2nd 1988, was a tough day for me as I was leaving home for the first time, coincidentally on the eve of my birthday. Most importantly, it was hard for me to leave my mother alone and I could sense the discomfort she had in her face to let her young boy go without any assurance of the next destination. However, I told my mother that I was going to find some village people who were living in their rented rooms in Kathmandu, and stay with them until I get a proper place of my own. I was able to deal with such emotional issues before leaving home.

After an hour’s walk downhill, Ramchandra, whose home I would pass by, joined me on the trip with a similar aim to go to the city for a better future. After a full day’s walk, down, up and through the steep hills, we reached Malekhu, the nearest highway junction from our rural home. It took an entire day’s continuous walk for us to get to Malekhu, the nearest highway junction from our rural home, where we could catch a vehicle, that could be heading to various directions, east or west, Kakarvitta or Pokhara, Bhairahawa or Kathmandu. Yet, we caught a delivery-truck heading eastwards, going to Kathmandu.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 5 Jan. 1988)
Linking this metaphor of finding the proper vehicle to reach the right destination, I had to decide at the outset which route to take. I could have also chosen to go to India, westwards, to visit my sisters and brothers-in-law where I could get safe shelter with fewer challenges. However, in this journey with Ramchandra, I chose to head towards Kathmandu, to the capital city of Nepal from where the sun also rose every morning.

There were some six or seven of us, women, children and an old man, already in the front cabin of the truck. I am reminded of a story that the old man shared with the group which also contributed to my growing awareness of difference and diversity. The message in the story exposed me to the limitations of my understanding and move towards a more open and reflective perspective.

**Story two: The wisdom of an old man**

Once there was an older teenage girl travelling by bus. As the bus moved along, (all of a sudden) she suddenly started shouting.

“Dad […] the trees are moving backwards […]” […] The gentleman sitting beside her seemed very relaxed. However, other people in the seat behind them were staring at her.

“Look, look […] the clouds in the sky […] they are also moving with us”, she added. A woman, who was sitting next to them, approached her father, and said, “Is she your daughter, Uncle?”

“Yes.”

“I think you need to take her to a hospital. To me, she seems to be mentally unstable.”

Smiling, the father replied:

“Thank you for your concern, nanu (young girl). In fact, we have already been to a hospital. She had her eyes operated yesterday, and today is her first day of proper vision. I am just thinking about how blessed we are with science and technology, aren’t we? She was born blind, you know!”

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 2 Jan. 1988)

I remember now that the old man also asked me whether my experience was similar to that of the girl. Life story research seeks to excavate unique information as Ken Plummer (2001, p. 19) explains “[l]ife stories come through many blurred sources: biographies, autobiographies, letter journals, interviews, obituaries”. Now, I ask myself: Each day is a new day, and such are our perspectives, experiences and life stories, aren’t they?
Leaving home was, in some ways, a great challenge for myself and Ramchandra, an adventure and a terrific journey to an unknown destination, but we were both determined. It was also a journey filled with hope for both of us. Although the night was chilly, Kathmandu warmly welcomed us. The first taste of my future was a billboard, permanently hanging at Nagdhunga, the main entry point into the metropolis, read “WELCOME TO KATHMANDU”.

**Story three: Everything new**

What a wonderful experience; for me a blissfully different day in the capital, Kathmandu, with a mixture of emotions, of hope, and powerful excitement. Nepal, a country very well recognised around the globe for hospitality and care, with its capital city Kathmandu was so enthralling for us, the two young people, to wander around, taking it all in.

It was around 11 pm, an hour before midnight when the truck-driver dropped us off at the city bus-station. We thought of saving some money and decided to eat the remaining food that our parents had given us. We both agreed to look for a place to stay with people from our village who would let us stay overnight in their rented rooms.

After midnight, we reached Teku, in the heart of the city, where a good number of people from around our village rented a room. There were some ten or eleven young men sharing this one room. They worked in different sectors; some were mechanics in nearby repair shops, others worked as kitchen help in small restaurants, and some were regular labourers at Kalimati vegetable market. We felt lucky to have found their place where we could stay overnight, thus saving hotel expenses. All of us were known to each other. To pass the time, we chatted on, one after the other, sharing all our news about our villages until we fell asleep.

That winter night brought some troubles too. The very first one was the lack of blankets or even shawls that would cover us and comfort us in the freezing temperatures. There were already five young men sharing one floor-bed, and our arrival added extra pressure on these limited amenities: what fun! We too participated enthusiastically in the “game”, ready to pull over a part of the quilt to our own advantage. What reminded me of this episode was Darwin’s theory of the Survival of the Fittest that was practically experienced throughout that night. No wakeup call was needed for us the next morning: “Hey, it’s not five yet!” The alarm, in fact, went off long after I was already awake. The others, whose work would start soon, also, woke up.
I was new to the city, so one of my overnight partners escorted me to the common tap, where I rinsed my face, brushed my teeth, but did not take a shower. I was aware of the scarcity of water. The next challenge for us was to leave the lodging and find another with an amenable host. We left the place, thankful for the hospitality we had received. Heading towards the city bus station, we were happy to find a fire-place in Asan where some coolies and other wanderers were enjoying the heat of the embers. It was a great moment of sharing. For me, it was a very early memory of Kathmandu life that I still love to cherish; surrounded by some twenty humble members of the public near the welcoming fireplace. The fire meant a lot to me because I was yet to buy warm clothing for the Kathmandu winter.

We moved on and had our first self-paid meal in a nearby hotel, which was not a common occurrence for people like us at such an early age, who normally don’t have money to spend. Then we went to different places; one of them belonged to Rajendra Dai, our nearest relative. I still remember how Rajendra Dai hailed us so warmly with feelings seeming to come from his heart. Rajendra Dai used to live in an army barracks; he was a senior clerk in the Royal Nepalese Army. He was extremely happy to see us and decided to take us to his friend’s rented room.

For us, that was a great relief; it was like a cool black-forest cake eaten on a summer afternoon. I had heard that the black-forest cake is a very European recipe, good at any time of day/year/season. Meeting him, meant maximal happiness to me; I felt as if we were finally celebrating my sixteenth birthday. Rajendra Dai left for work after dropping us there, and we then went on hoping to enjoy a safe night in that place. The people were friendly and hospitable; the lodging was considerably better than that of the previous night. After a sound sleep, I was the last one to wake up the next morning.

I spoke to Ramchandra, and said, “The morning sun is already up, inviting us to another day in Kathmandu. Good morning friends”, with a big, wide yawn to the rest of our sleep-mates. All returned my greeting. Rupendra, one of the young men was ready to leave the room to take his morning tutorials. Another man offered me a cup of tea but I declined. Then I went out with Ramchandra and we had our first cup of tea in Kathmandu, which still stays in my memory; it was such a significant experience. After some moments we wanted to excuse ourselves from the others in the room so we thanked them for being very nice to us, especially as it was our first meeting with them. We realised that their hospitality was due to their high respect for Rajendra Dai.
As we were walking down the stairs towards the courtyard, I realised that my wallet was gone. I was extremely shocked because the incident was unthinkable. I had even held my wallet close to me while I slept the previous nights. I shouted out, “where has my money gone?” All were concerned, but they denied knowing anything. After a while I realised that Rupendra, the one who left early in the morning needed to be questioned. He returned soon from college, at my request. As he arrived, I pounced on him as I was sure that he was the one to have taken advantage of our rustic naivety. After several denials, I was able to get my wallet back from him but it had no money left inside. He declared that the wallet had not had anything inside it. People around must have sensed from my appearance that I was very upset at my loss of the money. After quarrelling with him, we left the place with no money at all. I never got the money back and therefore put the matter out of my mind forever. Still, full of hope and confidence, we both continued our exploration of the city.

It was already nine in the morning. So, embarrassed and upset, we rejected their request to eat before we left their place. The hurt was too fresh in our minds so we left without eating and passed the whole day without food. We visited different places; one of them was our distant relatives’ room. We arrived there and started chatting. Yet, we changed the topic of the conversation when they asked us whether we wanted to eat something. We did not want to trouble them with our problems. Our self-respect, that of growing young men, would not let us lose face at any cost. We also visited some respected colleges inquiring about the process of admissions, the fee structure, and possible assistantships. As we walked down the street, I think it was around four in the afternoon, Ramchandra, who was a year older than me, but still my nephew, excitedly announced: “Uncle, uncle! Look, FIVE RUPEES on the ground.” “Wow!” a fine gift.” I said. “God must be watching over us two young village boys”. I dropped my handkerchief to cover the colourful bank note so that we could have time to excuse ourselves should its owner turn up to claim the money. Seeking to pretend that we were just picking up our own stuff, I asked Ramchandra if he could pick up the hankie with the money, which he did, and we both became more relaxed.

“At least we have some money, enough to buy some candy or a packet of biscuits”, I said.

One could also get a cup of tea for one rupee in those days.

We were hungry, very hungry and tired. Eating really meant eating a complete meal to us. Candy, biscuits or only a cup of tea would definitely not be enough. I asked Ramchandra to wait outside, and approached an eating-place by the footpath, in the heart of Kathmandu, “Bajeko Bhojanalaya”, in the suburb of Putalisadak.

I asked the woman at the front counter: “Sister, do you have any food left?”
“Yes”.

“How do we make payment, is it a single plate system?”

“No, it’s an all-you-can-eat system”.

“Would you consider us for the plate system?”

“Okay.”

“What do you charge for a plate, then?”

“Well, we normally don’t provide meals that way. An all-you-can-eat plate costs 20 rupees and we charge 10 rupees more for those who eat excessively. I can give you a single plate for 10 rupees.”

“Oh, dear!” I thought to myself, as we were at a terrible point not even possessing 10 rupees.

I smiled for a while.

“What’s the matter? Tell me.” The woman spoke with a raised voice.

“Yes, that also I would like to share with my nephew Ramchandra, can I?”

“Okay, okay […] Sit down.” She gave strict orders to her assistant:

“Half a plate, okay?”

I was hurt, though it became a very moving and sensitive moment that I have relished throughout my life. I became very emotional, and told the lady that we had run out of money and needed to spend all that we had left for that small meal.

I called out, “Ramchandra!”

As he came closer, it was a big surprise for the woman. It so happened that the food and Ramchandra both arrived at the same time – one from inside the kitchen and the other from outside. We both shared the beautiful meal and thankfully paid for it. When we meet now, Ramchandra and I still remember that moment; the moment with the most precious food we ever had; a tasty – very, very tasty – meal.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 5 Jan. 1988)

While seemingly simple, the power of this unique story, at least to me, lies in how I have tried to blend it with the views and voices of others who represent, likewise, social identities with similar cultural reference points and common themes. The story is written with multiple perspectives in mind: at least, two, “the author’s and the other’s [where] the eye of the other directs the eye of the writer” (Elbaz as cited in


On arriving in Kathmandu, I undertook casual work, any work, until I found a regular position in a first-class hospitality industry in 1990 which was the best five-star hotel in Nepal. While I was at that property, I worked in a variety of roles, both in food and beverage as well as in the rooms division and the front desk. While working with my hands, I have been through a lot of hardships in my life. Inequality and injustice were things that I got a taste of first-hand. Yet, I never took it as humiliation or a product of poverty; creating backward activity for others’ happiness taught me the lessons of real humanity. Fortunately, I have had the support of good people, my friends and colleagues around who pushed me towards better perseverance and performance. It gave me courage to stand up against cruel, cunning and corrupt power. In addition to my paid duties, I was also involved in trade union activities; being young and enthusiastic about social justice and fair working conditions, and had several opportunities to speak on behalf of over 700 hotel staff members. Through this journey, I realised that doors could be opened after strong struggles. In fact, it was the time when my life plans were not within my control; every door opened after I got my job in that hotel. These experiences spurred me to continue my college education in addition to full-time work commitments. I was constantly juggling a duality of roles based on what was possible versus what was available, being passionate about both supporting my colleagues and pursuing my goals of further education towards teaching. It was a major accomplishment of time management and priority juggling, attending final examinations while working full time.

Many years have passed since that time, and I have continued my journey wearing multiple hats. My interest in social justice has extended into the educational sphere as I have sought to incorporate Nepalese social and political conditions into the composition of two ethical dilemma stories in this research (see chapter 4). According to Denzin (2014), “a person is a cultural creation” (p. 43) who has multiple name-tags in the various contexts of her/his lives according to the changing identities occurring over time, often tied to cultural origin and to the experiences intrinsic to her/his profession, gender, age, or relationships. My self-actualisation has come from the
varieties of work I first found in Kathmandu and the roles I consequently accomplished during those initial, formative phases of my life. It could have come from two sides: firstly, from the experience of being neither a well-skilled nor a well-educated hard manual labourer who had to be satisfied with a little pay at the end of every month. Secondly, I realised the vicious circle would continue for generations of people like me if we did not continue our education. I was determined to work hard believing that a sacrifice in the present may provide for a good future.

I wished to improve my knowledge of English by continuing the ‘Intermediate of Arts’ course with English as my major subject, believing English to be a means of accessing a better job. Until then I had never worried about the literary aspects of English. I had done well in reading English literature solely for the experience of encountering the language and for examination purposes. I gratefully received compliments and corrections whenever, and from whoever they came regarding my performance. Such responses served to increase my motivation and strengthen my determination to study English. I started to take an interest in the style, art and aesthetics of narrative writing. I realised that I was performing well, writing well, and communicating well in English in comparison with my fellow students. This realisation parallels with Maxine Greene’s (1995, p. 4) idea of “becoming wide-awake to the world” through critically reflective narratives which help us to view the world from a variety of perspectives. I completed the ‘Intermediate of Arts’ degree in 1991 which opened another door for me to take another step forward preparing to reach higher destinations.

On joining the ‘Bachelor of Arts’ (B.A.) course in 1992, I discovered that various genres in English literature were especially appropriate to expressing and giving voice to human feelings, and they could all be a great means for refining my language proficiency. I practised different ways to analyse and understand texts until I could understand their grammar and meaning. Perhaps interpretation and critical awareness were the skills which I practised in those days; greatly enhancing my capacity to extract meaning from the given texts and to relate their themes to those similar in my home culture.

I completed the B.A. in 1994 and this coupled with my well-established job at the five-star Hotel in Kathmandu, presented me as a well-qualified candidate for an
arranged marriage; I was married in 1994. For the next few years, I had a life that I had been advocating for all workers as a part of social justice-cum-trade union activism. It was a ‘normal’ life consisting of an eight-hour workday, full time trade union responsibilities with family time for my mother, myself and my wife. Each life event propelled us, myself and my wife, towards our future plans. After the birth of our first son in 1996, I took action to prepare for our family’s future by going abroad to earn more money than was possible in Nepal.

In January 1997, I left my mother, wife and the newborn child in Nepal to work overseas. In many ways, my journey followed the usual pattern of other men leaving their homes to find work, and support their family. However, in my case, I travelled further and with a far loftier goal. This experience was an opportunity to undertake life-research on myself while preparing financially for my future projects. During my time abroad, I saw another lifestyle and was able to experience new cultures in that country of melting pot. I undertook a variety of jobs over there to support myself, working at whatever, whenever, and wherever employment was available. My strong work ethic and ambition enabled me to make adequate savings for a better life for my family in Nepal. In July 1999, I returned to Nepal to resume a normal life and continue my education.

On my return to Nepal, I started looking for a teaching job at private schools. There were not many schools in the area at that time, and the few schools which existed did not announce vacancies via the media. However, I applied whenever I became aware of any available vacancies, but there would usually be no response to my application. These experiences led me to realise that I had my study to add purpose in my life, a drive that I always wanted to continue.

Being aware of the employment-value of teaching English, I took this language as a major subject thinking to improve my level of teaching competence. For this mission, I had yet to study English in its grammatical forms and as a medium for the communication of knowledge. I used to walk to nearby schools, visiting the school offices to talk to the head-teachers and get permission to volunteer to teach students when their teachers were absent. Then, I started voluntarily offering classes in English in those schools. I received opportunities whenever some teachers were kind enough to let me be present in their classes so I could observe their teaching methods and later
speak with them. I observed that the traditional teaching methods were still being used, the continuation of the same old teaching and learning practices from my early years of schooling.

I realised that how I had been taught might influence how I teach. These class experiences caused me to think about my competencies as a teacher and more generally about the social and political situation in Nepal. Again, drawing on my trade union experiences, I sought to provide a voice within the importance of teaching and learning English. By this time I had also realised that studying the subject of English might not only be for the sake of learning the language; it may also serve to expand the horizons of my knowledge. So, I had a strong desire to enter the teaching profession. My driving ambition was to one day be a good teacher. I was enthusiastic to learn about history, about human existence, and about myself in my various life contexts with a strong feeling of urgency to update, or more so, to authenticate myself in education. Each experience influenced other activities, as I sought further studies, a Master’s degree in particular, which gave me an enormous opportunity to prepare myself for the teaching profession.

**Life of a Full-time Student (2000-2003)**

I joined a Master of Arts course in English in 2000; it was also a time when I realised the significance of individual creative processes in achieving greater knowledge for oneself. As I approached poetry, drama, fiction and scholarly essays, which took me to the literary value of personal experience, I started to see my life and living from different perspectives. Such imaginative representation of research, according to Brett Smith (2002, pp. 113-14, as quoted in Sikes, 2012, p. 567),

can evoke emotions; broaden audiences, illuminate the complexity of body self-relationships; include ‘researcher’, ‘participant’, and ‘reader’ in dialogue; help us to think with stories; and […] invite the reader-as-witness to morally breathe and share a life within the storytelling relation […] they are a powerful means of conveying complexity and ambiguity without prompting a single, closed, convergent reading […] The genre becomes an opportunity and a space where one may relinquish the role of the declarative author-persuader and attempt to write as, and be represented by, an artfully persuasive storyteller.

When I linked these aspects of literature to my previous knowledge, the process enabled me to move toward a better understanding of my own cultural situatedness. This awareness made me a more reflective thinker, more open-minded, and
welcoming of new ideas, thus steering me towards becoming a university teacher committed to the sharing of ideas rather than to continuing along the path of the traditional didactic pedagogy of teaching.

I have tried to assume the role of a teacher, of a learner, of a researcher, and above all of a responsible citizen of my country. According to John Van Maanen (1996, p. 45), “by far the most prominent, familiar, prevalent, popular, and recognised form of ethnographic writing is the realist account of a culture, be it a society, an occupation, a community, an ethnic enclave, an organisation, or a small group with common interests”. So, it is our names and roles that contribute to defining us as people. In my case, I am simultaneously: a son to my parents, a husband to my wife, a father to my sons, a student to my professors, a young faculty member to my employer, a mentor to my students, a customer to the bank and shopping malls, a mature man to the children of my village home and multiple other identities which increase as I consider my interactions. Such multiple identities have largely formulated my character and personality; these roles connote a socio-cultural feature that influences how I perceive the world around me.

The perception of our identity by others changes over time depending on the point of view of those observers and on the socio-cultural settings in which one’s identity is displayed and observed. But, some moments in my life have allowed me to project the best image of myself, an image which occupies a very significant place in my life and career. Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 153) share how they connect their life stories with educational achievements:

We recognised that living an educated life was an ongoing process. People’s lives were composed overtime, life stories were lived and told, relived and retold. Initially we saw this ongoing process as one of cultivation, a living and telling of our stories.

According to Denzin (2014, p. 59), “every storyteller has two options when telling a story: to tell a story that accords with the fictional facts about his or her life [experiences] or to tell a story that departs from those facilities”. Here, I have chosen the first option. Through writing, I am seeking to explore my personal, professional becoming, in which my economic, socio-cultural, and linguistic situatedness have continuously reshaped my identity. When I first left my village, I thought I was doing the right thing, and taking the right course of life. I am not certain where this journey
is going to end as these experiences have prepared me well to adapt to change, and have made me flexible in dealing with the contexts I encountered. Such flexibility is at the heart of my methodology, whether it be in my research, in my teaching or life more generally.

Choosing Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal as my initial destination, gave me a plentiful opportunity to expand my life aims and move forward. Had I not moved on from Malekhu to Kathmandu on that particular evening in January 1988, my fate could have directed me differently. In this regard, I am asking questions about my upbringing and about the socio-cultural and economic influences that have allowed me to connect my narratives with other people’s stories. Since then, many of my childhood friends have joined businesses, some have entered the army, and others have joined political parties. Some have even taken a liking to alcohol and smoking after they gave up their studies. People who did not take up the challenge of leaving home and their conventional lifestyle may have different viewpoints from mine as would those who left their homes and had different experiences from mine. But, I am confident that such obvious, yet unusual steps guided me to accept a job offer from a well-established metropolitan university in 2004.

**Some Nodal Moments as a University Teacher of English (2004-2013)**

I often become nostalgic when remembering my formal educational journey which started in a rural Nepalese primary school in the mid-1970s. At times, I recollect some of my notable moments of pain, frustration and struggle, along with the enthusiasm and commitment that has kept me in this profession of university teaching. My upbringing in a unique type of familial, social and academic setting has prepared me to remain within a thought pattern which finally led to my seeing ‘university teaching’ as my life’s work. It has become synonymous with my concept of a life project as well as reward for my hard work and my determination to remain in teaching as my chosen profession.

The concept of my role as a teacher of English corresponds with one envisioned by Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre (2005, p. 960) who argued, “language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the self”. Thus, I came to see teaching as a fine profession to which I aspired and which would offer
me many splendid experiences. I am pleased with having chosen to be a teacher and to seek constantly to improve my professional competencies. I regard it as a time of blessing when I, as a teacher, was able to interact face-to-face with so many students with such divergent interests, capacities, inclinations and possibilities. To experience the efforts of the students, to learn and to see them develop their individual personalities is, I find, one of the great joys of being a teacher.

In this inquiry, I have tried to follow the example of Tamy Spry (2001) who sought to explore her ‘autobiographical impulses’ to connect the researcher’s auto-ethnographic voice with the context of this research. I have tried to link my experiences as a basis for identifying research issues. Among such experiences, I can recall those of when I was a student of literature, an English teacher, and a teacher-trainer, before I joined Kathmandu University in 2004.

When I first joined the university as a lecturer in English, I was convinced that I had at last found the kind of job which could satisfy my deep motivations. Kathmandu University was a newly-formed and growing institution; it seemed stronger than the other universities in every organisational aspect. I too had the opportunity to develop myself in my desired direction of becoming a friendly, supportive, and resourceful teacher. That was a time when I felt that I had to define myself by my work. There were moments when I had to combat the hegemony of the dominant practice of existing paradigms including positivism that preferred rules, laws, and authority in order for me to move towards my own considerations responding to the multiplicity of factors in diverse circumstances. Relying on the conventional practices is the product of our cultural upbringing in Nepal where there is a structured, positivist life considered free of challenges.
Positivism is understood as an assumption which sees the possibility of observing social life and establishing reliable, valid knowledge to reveal a truth about the way society operates and functions (Comte, 1908). People in Nepal normally do not question or argue with their seniors but accept the conventional norms just as they were told to follow. However, Joe Kincheloe and Ken Tobin (2009, p. 520) assert that “positivism induces researchers to discount the value of examining the nature of the knowledge one produces and the forces at work in shaping the inquiry process”. Thus, in this thesis, I have tried to explain the challenges I experienced in having to resist the pressure to follow a traditional process in my teaching, which could be considered a profound departure from any comfortable mode of research. I also encountered a group of young and energetic colleagues who, like me, loved to take up new challenges which propelled us to start new initiatives in creative writing and publication. I also came into contact with many competitively-selected students who had high hopes for their education.

I remember the moment when I took the responsibility to monitor the publication of *The Muse*, the university’s fortnightly bulletin-board magazine aimed at facilitating creativity in writing of Intermediate Science students. The publication was among our initiatives where students came up with their own imaginative productions in the form of poems, stories, essays and drawings. This publication was also significant in promoting the development of positive social values among the students through innovative learning opportunities. My role as a mentor was to encourage the students to reflect on their experiences about different situations and different learning contexts. With both their joyful and painful narratives, I was continually surprised to see their creation and contributions in response to their endeavours to reflect on their experiences.

I realised that when a teacher links him/herself to the subject, with due consideration of the learners’ curiosity and ongoing imaginative power, the students can weave a world for themselves and hope to achieve a better understanding of their life-worlds.

In education, teachers’ ideas are food for the students;
Yet, the key is learners’ selfhood.
(Source: My personal reflections)

Another of my ventures was to teach *English communication skills* to undergraduate-level students. All the students were encouraged to write journals as part of this
English Communication Skills course. As a teacher, I also shared my own writings with them from the beginning of the course, simultaneously seeking to develop the habit of writing in the students as well. Denzin (2014) suggests that the recounting of life experiences in story form by the teacher enables the participants to share the life experiences of others in challenging situations and their benefit from this sharing. In such processes, our shared reflection upon past experiences may help the students to engage in generating new meanings and interpretations.

Based on my experiences, I created several stories and poems to be used as a basis for my interactive teaching sessions reflecting especially upon my experience of being involved in undergraduate level teaching. Those reflective stories and poems of mine were initially intended to stir my memory and later to encourage my students to become more creative in their writings and, by so doing, achieve a better understanding of the issues discussed in their writings. I am sure the students enjoyed creating their own writings as reflective pictures of their village, family and friends, and excursions. So, teachers can create stories for students to read about students’ own adventures written over and over again to assist their learning. I have been teaching English for the past fourteen years at a reputable university in Nepal. Following is a vivid vignette from the first day of my University-teaching in August 2004.

**Story four: My first University-teaching experience**

It is a fine sunny morning. I, a 32-year-old male teacher, entered into an I.Sc. classroom of a reputed university in Nepal. A senior colleague accompanied me from the office to the classroom located upstairs on the second floor. As I entered, I put the textbook and a cassette player on the desk.

“Good morning, sir” (around 60 students, all stood up as a sign of respect to their teacher.)

“Hello everyone, good morning and good to see you all here”, I said.

“Sit down, sit down”, I added.

(Source: My personal reflections)

Then, I asked my students to open the textbook, entitled *Reading between the Lines* (McRae & Boardman, 1995). I started my teaching by explaining the essence of what reading *between* the lines involves. I asked how many of them knew the theme of our discussion that day, which was the “family”. After listening to five or six student
responses, I inserted the cassette to play the song *Father and Son* by Cat Stevens (n.d.), which was the prescribed text to discuss in the class:

**Father**
It’s not time to make a change,  
Just relax, take it easy.  
You’re still young, that’s your fault,  
There’s so much you have to know.  
Find a girl, settle down,  
If you want you can marry.  
Look at me, I am old, but I’m happy.  
I was once like you are now, and I know that it’s not easy.  
To be calm when you’ve found something going on.  
But take your time, think a lot,  
Why, think of everything you’ve got.  
For you will still be here tomorrow, but your dreams may not.

**Son**
How can I try to explain, when I do he turns away again.  
It’s always been the same, same old story.  
From the moment I could talk I was ordered to listen.  
Now there’s a way and I know that I have to go away.  
I know I have to go.

**Father**
It’s not time to make a change,  
Just sit down, take it slowly.  
You’re still young, that’s your fault,  
There’s so much you have to go through.  
Find a girl, settle down,  
if you want you can marry.  
Look at me, I am old, but I’m happy.

**Son**
All the times that I cried, keeping all the things I knew inside,  
It’s hard, but it’s harder to ignore it.  
If they were right, I’d agree, but it’s them you know not me.  
Now there’s a way and I know that I have to go away.  
I know I have to go.

Of course, almost all the students found this song interesting, and the language was also very simple and direct. Moreover, the text was fertile for an interpreter and was full of overlapping voices from two visibly distinct and different generations. The father’s sharing of his lived experiences as an aim to guide his son, based on the father’s limited point of view did not serve the expectation of his son who wanted to be free from every control and from the possessive love of anyone, including his father’s.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 18 August 2004)
In my experience as a university teacher of English in Nepal, I have found that many students also want to hear about the kinds of life and culture that they don’t normally find described in their textbooks. Reflecting on Cat Steven’s (n.d.) song about disagreement and deadlock between the old father and his young son, I thought of representing the motherly side of emotions and composed the following poem.

**A mother speaks about her daughter**

What a natural but balanced relationship: Respectful yet powerful, occasionally a complex tension. A mother highly values her daughter, to see successful and excited from all sides, while not richly realised, the daughter wishes to explore different, that is new.

Her dear daughter, a miraculous gift from God, worthy, indeed she is, the mother sees and looks for the best. For, she hopes in her daughter to see also the best, that is, the quiet confidence with her growing, ever-inquisitive mind.

Situations may make the daughter stay away from her mother; when inflexible to live up to her expectations; she may sometimes also think: too much of traditions, beliefs, advice, as well as compliance.

The daughter is real, with her own desires and prefers to sing about the alternative world of curiosity, adventure, experience; yet, family traditions and cultures are the cement. These values bring both at last together, care for the old and flourish with the new.

(Source: My personal reflections)

My aim in this research is to tease out the connection between the head, heart and hand of people who live in the community and connect it to the context and culture of students’ everyday lives and learning. My lived experiences, background, and culture, of which I have always been proud, have been a compelling influence in my teaching. As Denzin (2014) asserts, I too aim to “take up [my] life in its immediate particularity and go around the life in its historical moment” (p. x). In this way, I move outward to culture, language, discourse, arts, performative practices, and ideology which cover the turning-point events in my life. My experience, background, and culture have also
led me to include many compare-and-contrast questions in my teaching, to make the discussions more worthwhile for the students.

The existence of the ideal, single solution to social problems can always be debated. However, in this thesis, I put such ideas in my stories where I present an ethical dilemma which could later be discussed with a group of students where they are also encouraged to empathise with the characters in the plot and become part of doing justice to each of them. Jack Whitehead (2000) explains that one of the reasons he wanted to become a professional educator came from the feeling that there was something wrong with the ways he was taught at school and university. A similar realisation encouraged me to become a professional educator, aiming to bring solutions to ongoing problems. This commitment towards my future dreams made me realise my strength within my own socio-cultural identity. My emotional as well as mental growth is also an essential feature of this transformative research and I wish to be critically mindful of my teaching and learning experiences.

I believe that we need to see and relate such potential for choice of social action as beneficially connecting with our active, inside-thinking self rather than relying on ready-made paradigms. Using a more narrative approach in my research recording connects to Watson’s (2012, p. 460) observation that “[n]arrative integrates ways of knowing and being and is therefore intimately linked with questions of identity, currently the focus of much interest in social and educational research”. Besides my teaching dilemma stories in a B.Ed. classroom and the impact of the pedagogy on its learners, the present study has, attempted to recognise my experiential narratives in three ways, first, the personal narrative as a student which explores my reflections on my childhood; second, the personal narrative as a university teacher which explores my reflections on my teaching experience; and finally, the personal narrative as a doctoral researcher.

Key turning points and events in these narratives become windows to reflect on our inner lives that are “filtered through the glaze of language, signs, and the process of signification” (Denzin, 2014, p. 2) as we search for self-understanding. To encourage freedom of thought in my students, I endeavor to foster critically reflective processes which encourage dialogue, interaction and the participation of the students in knowledge production (Kincheloe, 2008b). Students are a powerful force for changing
the world, and I find that they are genuinely fascinated by their teachers, who they are and where they come from. I want my students to learn about themselves and to develop as self-motivated, cooperative, competent, and mature citizens of the country, Nepal. They would then feel more confident and be able to cope with the situations that may appear in their life. I would like to share another short recollection of a key moment which made me critically reflect on my own job and incorporate students’ feedback during my initial days of teaching at Kathmandu University.

**Story five: Who makes our class interesting?**

It was the last period on a Sunday and had occurred during my first year of university teaching days. I had to give a lecture to around 60 to 65 *Intermediate of Science* (I. Sc.) students. As usual, during the weekend, I had been ready, well ahead of my teaching session by reading the text twice and preparing notes for the students. The text was Rabindranath Tagore’s one-act play, *Malini*. I arrived at the right time for a one hour class at 3 pm; then saw a sea of faces beaming up at me.

After exchanging customary greetings, I instantly began to read from my notes in a dull monotone. The students tolerated about 15 minutes of this before a student put his hand up and said:

“Excuse me, sir! I have a question. How can you make your class less boring to me?”

No teacher at the University would normally expect such a bold response from a student in the class. However, the student was right that a good teaching session is not only rattling off a body of facts while the students scribble down notes just to prepare them for examinations. When I reflect now, I know, the lecture was boring, and teaching is not just about collecting a paycheck. Yet, I am glad that I was able to take that incident as an opportunity to realise that the students were right. I remember as vividly as it were today what I said that time,

“Yes, thank you; I’m so sorry. This lesson presentation is boring”.

Then, I had set the class free by sending all the students to the library. That’s what some of my colleagues would also do whenever they had to find an excuse not to teach. That was simply not a good day in my teaching career, but it turned out to be the day that motivated me to look for better pedagogic tools, a good reason for me to seek help from my mentors before I approached the same group of students on Tuesday.
I took leave on Monday and went to meet a renowned and experienced professor of English. I shared everything with her in detail. She was extremely glad to see my desire to learn and grow and said:

“Look, you are good in content, which is very encouraging. All you need now is to put them in the context by involving students in the class in order to make the learning more interesting and effective.”

We had a long discussion while my mentor gave me a clear concept to carry my teaching career forward.

On Tuesday, I went to the class with a script for Malini and announced,

“Today, I have got a different approach in my teaching; we’re all going to act the drama out, line by line, reading and acting by saying the words with feelings.”

I got the whole class up and acting one by one, involving everyone. The class became very enthusiastic; even the shy ones came out of their shells. I helped them to stay committed to all the activities in the class. Students continuously asked me questions, and which I wrote on the board for further discussion; we all had a great time. We completed half of the text that day, and I asked all the students to learn about difficult words for the next class. Our next class went very well too. We had so much fun that everyone had a smile on their face. At the end of the class, I thanked the student who asked me to make my lesson less boring. This experience made me realise the need of pedagogic knowledge for teachers and I went on seeking some opportunities of teacher training sessions for myself over the next couple of years; I was never again told that my lessons were boring. This confronting class experience gave me the courage to be self-critical and worked as a motivator to involve myself in any available teacher training and other similar professional development programmes.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 10 Sept. 2004)

Drawing on the lesson from the above story, it is worthwhile noting that researchers in education often try to develop their findings in the form of illustrative tales. John Van Maanen (1996, p. 132) explains that this process uses “dense characterization, dramatic plots, flashbacks (and flash-forwards), and alternative points of view as illustrative techniques”. I consider self-reflection to be an integral part of learning in higher education. I have considered it essential to be included in my professional practice. I think that if one reflects while writing then this reflective process allows
for the interconnecting of one’s observations, past experiences, and judgments. According to Brookfield (1995, p. 19),

[1] teachers are almost bound to be liked if they never challenge students’ automatic ways of thinking and behaving, or if they allow them to work only within their preferred learning styles. Since letting people stick with what comes easily to them is a form of cognitive imprisonment, one could almost say that anyone who consistently scores a perfect ten is just as likely to be doing something wrong as something right.

In contrast to rote memorisation, one may categorise one’s experiences into a more holistic approach to teaching and learning by visualising metaphors and connecting them to critical inquiry. It is also a way of finding out for oneself how one really feels about something. Such reflection, according to Tobin (1993a, p. 225), includes “deliberating on re-constructed images of past thoughts and practices”. Like Tobin, I believe reflection can give meaning to experience, and promote a deeper approach to learning because it encourages students as well as teachers to reframe problems, to comfortably question their own assumptions and to look at situations from multiple perspectives as they analyse their own lived experiences. Reflection aids lifelong learning because it encourages students and teachers to recognise gaps in their knowledge and learning needs.

Reflection is particularly important in writing to identify which is the best evidence while at the same time giving consideration to human values and one’s assumptions vis-à-vis human values, beliefs, and goals. Tobin Hart (2004, p. 37) states, “keeping a journal is another way to explore the inner world and build confidence in writing. We might ask students to reflect on a controversial problem discussed in class or a powerful speech or poem”. The practice of journaling enables students to recognise their own assumptions and how those assumptions might impact in real life. Reflection also helps students as well as teachers to develop a questioning attitude and the skills needed to continuously update their knowledge and skills, as Anne Elliot and Susan Drake (1999, p. 1) explain “stories from the real-life context are also important to professional development”. In the case of the present research, the process of reflection had both encouraging and disappointing results. On the one hand, the students’ performance in their creative work of journaling during the semester was encouraging. On the other, the traditional final examination in which their scores often depended on their having good luck on that occasion brought
frustration whenever the best performers in the class scored very low examination grades.

In my study of the relevant literature, I was able to see that much had been said about reflective practices, particularly concerning how they could be incorporated into classroom routines. However, little was done by classroom teachers in schools and colleges to inquire about the nature of teacher reflection, how it can enhance understanding of classroom practices, and how it could be assessed. In order to improve it, especially, as relates to teaching of English and writing, I have been practising reflective writing, which is a form of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995), along with my students every semester since 2006. I have kept up the challenges of teaching the reflective style and how to assess its outcomes under constant consideration.

According to Palmer (2004), such reflection must flow from our deep contemplation of who we once were; an introspection of who we now are; and a vision of our capability of becoming. In my ongoing effort to be a more effective teacher and writer, I remain deeply interested in critically examining the key conceptions and beliefs underpinning my teaching practice. I read many types of research conducted in the field of teacher education and pedagogy, and I have been able to find some good expositions, specifically within the transformative, learner-centred approach in which I have great interest.

The concept of learner-centred teaching and learning, which “has been long-standing among educators in primary, secondary and higher education” (Lea et al., 2003, p. 321), is a much discussed concept and pivotal to my own interest in transformative learning. According to Hannafin et al. (1997, p. 94), the student-centric approach is “rooted in constructivist epistemology: knowledge and context are inextricably connected, meaning is uniquely determined by individuals and is experiential in nature, and the solving of authentic problems provides evidence of understanding”. I now want to mentally awaken myself further by recounting an ancient story about a nun, who was walking along the banks of a holy river in Himalayan Nepal.
Story six: Perspectives matter

During a week-long journey inside the forest, a religious nun saw wild beasts, birds and trees along her way. But, on the seventh day of her walk, she suddenly saw a man who was catching fish from the river. As she carefully watched the activity, the man would throw his net several times into the river, catch a large number of fish, take them out of the net and then, put them on the ground and leave them there. The fish would jump about here and there, in panic. The nun then approached the fisherman, introduced herself, and asked why he was fishing in that holy river because she thought that no-one should fish in that river for religious reasons. The man replied that he had been working in different jobs for many years. Once he had retired and wanted to do something good for all the other creatures of the world, he had started the task of rescuing all the fish that were ‘drowning in that river’. Listening to this statement, the nun was surprised to realise that every individual has her/his own way, no matter how seemingly strange or odd, of perceiving the world’s events, even like this fisherman who had a very unusual view of what was involved in being a fish. She was faced with the dilemma of whether she should leave the fisherman in his state of delusion or should explain to him how fish actually breathe.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 11 Aug. 2002)

When I think about the dilemma posed by this fisherman’s story, I am prompted to apply its features to the classroom situation of a teacher charged with assisting the students to acquire information and understandings. Sometimes, I arrive at the choice of not leaving my similar ‘fishermen’, my students, in a state of ignorance but of helping them come to understand how fish breathe and, via the metaphor, how they should seek to acquire information and knowledge. Van Maanen (1996, p.132) further asserts that such “literary tales are meant to provide an emotional charge to the reader”. Hence, I attempt to empower my students as far as possible by actively involving them in what they are reading, to analyse a problem for themselves and arrive at their own solutions based on the available evidence, factual, textual, or, coming from further assistance provided by the teacher or some other authoritative figures.

Students, who initially found it hard to cope with all the issues that I placed in front of them, gradually became very comfortable in working with me, and that affected the unfolding of their learning achievements in a positive manner. In this regard, Charles
Bingham and Alexander Sidorkin (2004) argue the significant contribution of the relational dimension of teaching and learning to the purposes of education. In my future studies, I want to explore more educational philosophies and constructivist approaches of knowledge creation, which is also central to Dewey’s (1916) pedagogy, because they are at the heart of my interest and curiosity. Consistent with these interests, while working full-time at Kathmandu University, I studied a Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) in Education. I completed M. Phil. with a dissertation entitled, *Journal writing as a form of transformative learning* (Pandey, 2011). The M. Phil. degree prepared me for my present research. I wrote the following lines seeking to represent some challenging parts of my experiences, my constant learning and discovery of myself. This includes my feeling and thoughts regarding the people and places around me when I first arrived in the coastal city of Perth in Western Australia to commence my PhD.

*The “I” (eye) in me*

My heart of highland mountains in my mind;  
yet, adverse winds blow.  
They bear me away along the rivers,  
which must flow.

I still want to stay,  
mountain bound, while also seeking to understand the other.  
Now must I move away, beginning with my own story  
find another plan,  
I need to change direction, and look to amend errors,  
thus, hope for new creations.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 20 January 2014)

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have described something of my life experiences especially relating to my early years and subsequent experiences of working in different industries before teaching English at Kathmandu University. These experiences provided valuable skills in understanding and framing my socio-cultural engagement along with its importance in my becoming a transformative educator. I also realised the ways that pedagogies and literacy teaching materials that have evolved in the developed
countries have deeply influenced the teaching and learning in Nepal, an area I have monitored since I passed my SLC in 1987. Nepal needs more educators with a unique moral and pedagogical commitment to improving the quality of language education, analytic as well as synthetic including the foundations of phonics, listening, speaking, reading and writing. More importantly, this commitment must be grounded in lived experience and context to enable students to both, read the world and the words (Freire, 1970).

I am also looking closely at Nepal’s delivery of educational services in both urban and rural settings. In my experience, there are more extensive experiential and learning opportunities in urban areas than in the rural settings. I have also followed the political developments in Nepal with interest for the past 30 years. Due to having spent my entire childhood in a remote village of Dhading district of Nepal for 16 years, from 1971 to 1987, I have retained a substantial understanding of the education needs of Nepal’s rural population. My lived experience in such an authentic Nepalese village context and present willingness to link such experiences in pedagogic activities in an English language classroom have provided a pathway to work towards developing a more effective culturally-imbued pedagogy in the teaching of English language in Nepal. Even my transition to the (so-called) metropolitan setting of Kathmandu where I struggled with part-time study and full-time work reinforced this understanding as a seeker of prospective understanding about who I am as a teacher. I believe my PhD research promotes a more inclusive view of education enabling teachers, to draw upon the Nepalese cultural and contextual resources to provide authenticity while also teaching English as a global language medium.
Chapter 3: The Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter reflects my endeavour to become a more self-reflective educator and to include recent heuristic movements, such as collaborative, inquiry-based, narrative, exploratory and contextual approaches to educational research. This quest was achieved through investigating the use of EDSP to promote transformative learning and encourage pre-service teachers to uncover underlying cultural messages of prescribed texts and pedagogy. In this task, I adopt the methodology of autoethnography to examine my own ways of being, knowing and acting in the world with a view to improving my own teaching. In this regard, it reminds me of Whitehead’s (2000) own scholarly journey. In Whitehead’s (2000, p. 93) words:

It took me from 1971 to 1976 (Whitehead, 1985) to understand that a distinctively ‘educational’ research methodology could be distinguished from social science methodologies and used for exploring questions of the kind, ‘how do I improve my practice?’ The methodology was based on action reflection spirals of the form: I experience a concern when my values are negated in my practice. I imagine a way forward. I act. I evaluate. I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

I want to understand the subjective dimensions of classroom interactions and how values, assumptions and beliefs can be challenged and reconstructed in more engaging and transformative ways. Specifically, I focus on a particular pedagogical process, EDSP, as a way of introducing Nepali students studying EFL, towards transformative approaches to teaching based on teacher-student dialogue and the development of critical awareness (see chapters 4 & 5). In pursuing this autoethnographic approach I agree with Tobin (1993b, p. ix) when he writes about the ‘revolution’ against so-called ‘objectivism’ which, according to him, long served as a methodology “to problem solving, broadly conceived across the domains of research and educational practices such as testing, administration, and resource development, often to seek objective solutions and to identify causal relationships among salient variables” (ibid.). In contrast to quasi-scientific methodologies, I deliberately adopt autoethnography and narrative based approaches to make sense of my world. In this context, my story is central to the thesis; in the words of Reed-Danahay (1997) and
her notion of autobiographical ethnography, the researcher also becomes a source of data. I try to present my subjectivity as a form of self-narrative in search of new knowledge by placing (my) self within a specific social context (see chapter 2). I present an overview of the research design in the following diagram.

**Research Paradigm (Interpretative Qualitative)**

![Research Paradigm Diagram]

As well as the autoethnographic use of poems, stories, and letters, parts of this thesis also draw on arts-based educational research (ABER); its structure will be, in some respects, non-traditional. Hence, this research tries to describe emergent events and their connections to my work as a researcher and as a teacher, phrased beautifully by Robert Frost (1916, p. 1127):

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
> I took the one less traveled by,
> And that has made all the difference” (ll. 18-20).

In documenting combined narratives in this study, I have also drawn on the traditions of interpretivism, postmodernism, and criticalism.
Interpretivism

I have used interpretivism, which strives “to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 31) where I understand situation and meaning through the eyes of the participants and their own ontology in an open-ended research method. Starting with my own ‘small’ self and asking myself whether my actions are personally sustainable, this work seeks to examine the concept of sustainability within national, cultural, and environmental contexts. I have implemented the idea of both formal as well as informal interviewing and participant observation. When meanings “are always in motion, inclusive, conflicting, contradictory” (Denzin, 2014, p. 37) the dilemma discussions and descriptions aim to focus the participants’ narrative selves on their personal life experiences through their participatory worldview. Such activities open up the doors for multiple perspectives to be reappraised, spoken out aloud, heard by those around, seen, written down, and/or performed.

Saldana (2011, pp. 153-154) suggests that “a broad array of genres can include interpretation because interpretive writing ranges from theory construction to autoethnography to narrative and arts-based representations”. The interpretivist approach suggests to researchers as co-participants that they seek to understand the situation “echoing the verstehen (a deep and empathic understanding) approaches of Max Weber” (Ringer as cited in Cohen et al., 2011, p. 32) where people through reflection gain control over their own life and understand its functions. I hope that my findings do not end up as frozen within words, rather I wish them to “melt [be readily understood] before the eyes of active readers” (Van Maanen, 1996, p. 25). I wish to analyse my interpretation of my research that links with my life experiences in an ongoing way which remains within the overall structure of my thesis. So, while also being aware of our personal biases, we as researchers tell our personal stories so that “interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher” (Denzin, 1989, p. 12). Interpretation is also appropriate as a counter-balance to the hegemony of conventional structured research and enables me, as a researcher, to implicitly engage myself with the participants of the research and try to feel what it is like to be a student.
**Postmodernism**

Postmodernism supports multiple perceptions and presents plural insights. It is an assemblage of perspectives that challenge centrality and celebrate variety, difference, and multiple ways of expression in meaning and representation. The principal advantage of postmodernism in this research is the “recognition that researchers are part of the world that they are researching” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 27). It celebrates tensions and contradictions in relativism where meanings are not only rooted in universal (essential) centres but in any unique phenomenon. The postmodern research paradigm can develop liveliness in the work of a researcher. When we start to realise that there are multiple ways of knowing in this complex life-world and try to understand our selves deeply, we may start to depict our multiple identities in different forms. Such pluralism offers a rich repertoire of modes of inquiry, and with this in mind, I have tried to use the paradigm of postmodernism with a core notion of representation to bring about for me an inclusive meaning out of my lived experiences. Elizabeth Atkinson (2000, p. 92) asserts “[p]ostmodernism offers us the opportunity to see lives as texts and to acknowledge, sometimes unwillingly, that we are written by our research”. Postmodernism, therefore, acknowledges a strong relationship between the researcher and the researched subjects.

Awareness of such advantages requires my research to see the possibility of openness to move ahead from the collective, rigid and stagnant ideas and to leave behind my comfort zone because of the multiplicity of its concepts. Multiple realities based on cultures, space, time, and views with subjective interpretations are also considered. Hence, I try to explore the possibility where the participants can share the effects of the education they have received on their “daily lived experiences” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 45). However, postmodernism may also lead to confusion in one’s mind while balancing these postmodernist concepts with the need for greater conceptual freedom as knowledge is fluid depending on context. Susanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davies (2007, p. 79) explain it as “contextual, historically situated […] within networks of power and knowledge”. The principles of postmodernism have prompted me as a researcher to explore meanings even from outside the box in the sense of outside one’s existing set of understandings. They allow me, for example, to use metaphors, poetry, pictures, myths, and stories to capture certain, perhaps conceptually ill-defined aspects of the essence of the inquiry by making use of
reflections on my own lived experiences. Postmodernism also incorporates some of the principles of deconstruction where an established central concept is challenged. In deconstruction, the value of opposed polarities is emphasised, and every absence is necessarily acknowledged to understand the meaning of its opposite; for example, the concept of light is made clearer by comparing it with the concept of dark. By realising the richness of linguistic, social and psychological worlds that are in the constant process of “creation, co-creation, and recreation” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 119), all the standards which I propose to use here are interconnected.

Criticalism

Critical approaches aim to transform learners by “explaining and interrogating the relationships between school and society” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 32). They emphasise changing human behaviour in levels of notions, values, and beliefs; even, leading to transforming social practices that we live. Quoting Saldana (2015, p. 61), this research aims to expose “social inequity or injustice that merits public knowledge and action for righting the wrong”. Social equity, democracy, and justice, according to Kincheloe (2008a, p. 5), are “the most fundamental features of teaching and learning”. Instead of accepting what has been given from outsiders, critical educational research, with its emancipatory interest, concerns social justice and democratic values to empower the individuals at the base level. These available benefits have motivated me to re-conceptualise the old habits in education and to transform the conventional norms of teaching that have obstructed the student-friendly approach in Nepalese classrooms.

I aim to free learning from the straitjacket of given paradigms and to transform students’ learning experiences by adopting a more open-minded approach and being critical of prevailing teaching practices. Thinking critically, as proposed by Saldana (2015, p. 61), is “deliberately taking sides on a social and moral issue”. This approach is also shared by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2011), who suggest we need to be both critical of existing assumptions and attempt to transform learning through questioning. Criticalism, we can say, helps to deconstruct the hegemony of English in general as being the over-controlling influence on education in Nepal. On the other hand, I feel it is significant to be aware of the reality of the Nepalese school system and the positive role of the English language in people’s lives.
Although Nepal is not a country that has experienced direct colonial rule, it has nevertheless experienced the effect of the English colonial legacy through its geographical proximity to India. Moreover, the trend of Nepalese youth, who have left home to work in other countries, has established the primacy of the English language such that it is now seen as a sign of prestige in Nepal. However, this invites tension between English-based ideas and our established Nepalese values and traditional lifestyle. Without concern for the contexts and consequences, the slogan of English medium has become an attractive offering of many private schools to draw in more students. Moreover, there is an evident lack of clarity in the policy on English as a medium of instruction in Nepal. The government of Nepal has not yet formulated any clear-cut policy on English Language Teaching. On the one hand, the government of Nepal has chosen a policy of promoting the mother tongue of the children in the early grades, developing the curriculum and materials accordingly (Legislature Parliament of Nepal, 2015). However, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (CDC, 2008) has initiated a policy to introduce English as a subject from primary level onwards in the same government-funded schools (Ministry of Education, 2007). By equating the English medium in education with quality, many education officials have indirectly also supported the import of English lifestyle ideas by sending their children to private schools where instruction is entirely in English and English concepts and cultures are given prominence. Instead of going into the root cause of defects in the education programs and finding the solution from the local level, many public schools have started to accept that an English medium of instruction is the best and have started using English as the only medium of instruction.

Indeed, it is also acknowledged by Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 154) that “[e]ducation is more interwoven with living and with the possibility of retelling and reliving our life stories”. I see that besides acquiring the most valuable skills in the fields of science and engineering, it will be an equally important aspect for us to follow our passions, and perhaps above all, engage with the humanities, and study the human condition. I view the fundamental purpose of education quite differently, relating to the Nepalese proverb that says: Do not run after the crow as it does not necessarily have your ears, and rather try to check one’s ear first.
Autoethnography: A Method to Reveal the Structures of the Labyrinth of My Lived Experiences

This research attempts to explore the lives of myself and my participants as storytellers. In this arts-based autoethnographic inquiry, I incorporate the methods proposed by Reed-Danahay (1997, p. 2):

Autoethnography stands at the intersection of three genres of writing which are becoming increasingly visible: (1) “native anthropology,” in which people who were formerly the subjects of ethnography become the authors of studies of their own group; (2) “ethnic autobiography,” personal narratives written by members of ethnic minority groups; and (3) “autobiographical ethnography,” in which anthropologists interject personal experience into ethnographic writing.

In these three genres, our perceived reality can be regarded as residing within multiple points of view. Hence, autoethnography has allowed me, in my present academic life, to narrate, decipher, and delve deeper into my inner self and my professional practices. Denzin (2014, p. 7) defines autoethnography (and autobiography) as “conventionalized, narrative expressions of life experiences […] where […] autoethnographic texts are always written [and performed] with an “other” in mind”. Autoethnography, therefore, is useful for analysing and interpreting people’s lives, a tool that Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000, p. 739) define as “[...] an autobiographical genre of writing that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural”. Written as first-person narrative, autoethnography is an evocative ethnographic, narrative methodology in search of a deeper understanding of culture and context, of self, and of others that usually feature self-consciousness, emotion, and dialogue as affected by history, culture, and our social structure (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography proclaims human values to be superior to numbers and tables; it honours the knowledge acquired through life experience and shares this knowledge with others. It seeks to promote greater liberty of thought and freedom of expression. For example, how often have we wondered what we might be capable of doing to take us to a state of greater peace and happiness? Now and then, we should talk about our work to ourselves for just a couple of minutes, relooking at the education process, on our students’ experiences, or on something of ourselves. Indeed, Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 151) suggest,

[...] from our perspective, instead of denigrating our biographies of ourselves, we, as teachers, need to acknowledge that our lives and our stories of our lives are important.
We need to imagine possibilities in our own and our students’ lives that will change what others see as a prison into the potential for other futures.

The movement toward autoethnography reflects calls to place greater emphasis on the ways in which the ethnographer interacts with the culture being researched. Hence, my focus will be to observe and assimilate the truthful statements about my self-reflection and my participants that cover our objective life milestones, and our turning-point experiences that have emerged out of our social settings.

Story seven describes an experience from my early childhood in which I began to question whether applying only one particular method to solving life’s problems was effective. My father had been absent from our family since I was very young; he died when I was only ten years of age; therefore, the responsibility fell to my mother for my life education. My mother, who did not have any formal education herself, was nevertheless able to think from multiple perspectives to understand dilemmas and reach important decisions. She educated me through conversations which were comprised of her oral storytelling history. Let me elaborate more on it with an example of how my mother once told me about solving a dilemma by positively justifying the harvest of the best vegetables that had already been offered to the God.

**Story seven: A good outcome justifies the means**

Years ago, it was already late at night, and we were about to go to sleep after a family meal. Some people arrived unexpectedly at our home hoping for a night’s shelter. They were tired and hungry after walking for some days on their mission to find a love-match for a young man of their village who had to get married that year. Here, it is useful to mention that marriages in our village would be commonly arranged by the families. As they reached our home, my mother was very delighted to receive them, for they also belonged to her maternal village.

“What a blessing! We welcome you to our small-home”, my mother said to them and “Guests in the evening are like Gods”, she talked in a soft voice.

“Gods?”,” I asked her.

“Yes, Gods send their people in the form of human beings as guests to peoples’ homes. The guests usually come in the evenings and they bring fortune to the family.”
“Hmm… but, what is there for them to eat? The pitchers of water are almost empty, and are there any vegetables left in the kitchen to cook”?

“Ah, do not worry. You will understand in time, for you are only a child. That’s the reason we always save some water, enough for this purpose. Remember… (pause) the water we put aside in the kitchen, the vegetables in the kitchen garden, the best ones?”

“You mean we will pick them from the garden for these visitors”? I asked in amazement.

“Yes, the ones I told you that had been offered to God. We can harvest them and cook them now. Making the guests happy is serving the Gods, which also assures our own good future.”

This is what I have always seen, even when the winter night has set in:
as soon as the guests choose to enter, on time, in our home, we offer water, eventually some food and the shelter; God’s blessings are continuously greater.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 10 Oct. 1986)

Slowly, such pieces of myths were woven together, and conversations like this would go on almost every day in our family. Indeed, Elizabeth Tonkin (1995, p. 1) provides an eloquent discussion of how such oral history is meaningful in shaping our future activities, writing,

Literate or illiterate, we are our memories. We also try to shape our futures in the light of past experience – or how we understand to have been past experience – and, representing how things were, we draw a social portrait, a modal which is a reference list of what to follow and what to avoid.

Recognising such lived experiences as part of reality leads me to advance further in this research to better understand the participants’ perceptions. According to Elliot Eisner (1991), there are six features of qualitative study such as this one: 1) field-focused; 2) constructed so that the researcher is an instrument; 3) interpretive in nature; 4) expressive in language; 5) highly detailed, and 6) persuasive. While searching for the characteristics of my experience and including life events, I have chosen the method of autoethnography as the vehicle for this research. Tonkin (1995, p. 9) adds that “[w]hat goes on now is interpreted from previous knowledge, from memory. The present we live in is built from past events”. Indeed, my mother was the
person who made me aware of the beauty and power of the stories from the past. However, Bauman (as cited in Jacobsen & Marshman, 2008, p. 803) astutely states that,

[t]here are no methods without deficiencies and every method causes certain methodological difficulties for the researcher. A razor blade as well as an axe are valuable instruments but when it comes to deforestation the axe is much better. The axe is a powerful tool just as is the razor blade but it is much better to use a razor blade than an axe for shaving.

Time and experience has enabled me to measure each method for the best use, and to refine my research techniques for wider understanding.

I aim to capture the nodal moments as they occur, are related, told or understood in connection to the day-to-day activities in my life in which reflections, conversations, myths, and stories work as the subject matter to initiate my self-reflective research approach. These experiences have encouraged me to develop a hungry mind while also seeking peace and negotiation with my day-to-day tensions. The tensions demand a commitment to what I am doing and remind me of my responsibilities. In such situations, “narrative meaning is one of the processes of mental realm and functions to organise elements of awareness into meaningful episodes” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). Polkinghorne’s (1988) concepts of pluralism and liveliness in our thinking have enabled me to think beyond the visible forms of reality as an opportunity to weave my experiences together in the form of a story. This process has encouraged me to act authentically, to think critically, and to narrate meaningfully about my personal and professional journey, incorporating the environmental and cultural sensibilities; valuing the traditions, myths, people, and places I have encountered. Searching for the deep secret of my ongoing concepts of the fundamental truths of existence, I have adopted the let-me-speak strategy while the dilemma activity opens up an avenue for disclosure and cultural respect in the form of letters to represent significant junctures of my research journey.

**Drawing on arts-based autoethnography for transformative learning**

Transformative learning should keep researchers mindful of the possibility for creativity, as another way of perceiving researchers’ ways of knowing and expanding diverse interpretations with their craving to aesthetically craft their creation (Barone, 2008). The process of narrating of prior experiences has empowered me in my
journey to understand more clearly my central research agenda. Susan Finley (2011, p. 436) observes how, “in critical arts-based inquiry, arts are both a mode of inquiry and a methodology for performing social activism”. For this research study, I have chosen a transformative learning paradigm. Drawing on an arts-based autoethnographic methodology, I utilize a range of expressive forms including poems and stories.

This transformative educational research approach also includes critiquing my own beliefs and practices in order to gain an increased awareness of these beliefs where “the goal is to cultivate intuition, insight, and community with the intent of countering injustice and human suffering through collective social action” (McGregor, 2008, p. 53). This process leads to a clearer personal consciousness that I regard as necessary for my personal emancipation (Cohen et al., 2011). As Freire (1998c, p. 27) argues, “[t]he moments we live either are instants in a process previously inaugurated, or else they inaugurate a new process referring in some way to something in the past”. In similar regard, arts-based autoethnography has allowed me to explore insights into the forms of poetic lines and dramatic dialogues that add worldly varieties and fictional features in my lived life. My lived experience, as Richardson (1997, p. 143) states, “is lived in a body, and a poetic representation can touch us where we live, in our bodies”. It helps me negotiate and refine my long-standing reflective imagination, and prompts me towards developing the evocative, yet aesthetic criteria of my research work.

Indeed, Jerry W. Willis (2007, p. 21) states, “There is no legitimate way of asserting with absolute confidence that one paradigm is better than another”. In my research, the classroom becomes an ethno-theatre where theoretical understanding of dilemma stories and the participant’s individual performative images are exposed through their responses (see chapter 5). According to Johnny Saldana (2011, p. 68), autoethnography and experiential poetry are “prominent and legitimate data”; Saldana (2011, p. 158) adds that they offer “a sympathetic, empathetic, emotionally-engaged, and socially-conscious perspective on the world and its people”. First, we respond emotionally often internalising the process and then reflect intellectually using previous knowledge and logic. Hence, emotionally-stimulated, intellectual reflection sought to find its expression through the medium of words. I too had envisaged this
process as being like getting the water up out of the well every morning. Ideas of this type have come from lively discussions, and from my notes which reflect on these discussions (see chapter 5).

In autoethnography, the self is also “viewed as a carrier of culture with a dense connection to others in society” (Chang, 2008, p. 125). Through such cultural concepts and practices, which can be used for developing personal narratives that travel beyond the prevailing objective genre of the traditional mode of research, my students participate in discussion and become more effectively engaged in the topic. I explore my own thinking, and my behaviours through writing; I aim to know my own self deeply and keep looking for wholeness in my personal and professional life. This methodology allows the pre-service teachers to write and express ideas in stories, which could also be achieved through the performance of role-playing (see chapter 5) or poetry, and includes reflective comments. Denzin (2014, p. 6) advises the researcher to “learn how to connect (auto) ethnographies and lived experiences, the epiphanies of lives, to the groups and social relationships that surround and shape persons”; I consider this my primary obligation to myself and my participants who are involved with the case study of EDSP (see chapter 5).

Autoethnography, according to Sarah Wall (2006, p. 146), “is grounded in postmodern philosophy and is linked to growing debate about reflexivity and voice in social research”. I have acknowledged, in this regard, the notion of aesthetic universality of autoethnography as both teaching and learning tool for myself and participating pre-service teachers. The autoethnographic aspect of this inquiry (drawing from the postmodern paradigm) allows for the inclusion of various arts-based genres deriving from the arts, narrative stories, and my imagination that is based on our own cultural, personal, and professional values. The latter, for example, might be my personalised form of narratives, poems, or even sketches of the classroom activities such as verbal, dramatic dialogues. Richardson (1995, p. 200) adds that “in dramas, I found a way to ‘give voice’ to multiple positions, reflect on or spoof my own, and thereby write pieces that show how openness and reflexivity look and feel rather than simply talk about it”. My research, at this moment, was aimed at combining critical understandings of myself and of others within my interactive teaching practices where I tried to examine my culture through my cultural
situatedness. The interactive processes which occurred in the classroom between myself and the pre-service teachers also sought to look at the practical and reflective aspects of a discourse which may be contained in a lesson. Drawing on the notion of reflection (Schon, 1987), the intention is to look at pedagogical methods which endeavour to encourage and empower students to develop skills in analysing their thoughts and conceptual processes with a view to developing verbal arguments or propositions and sharing them in the classroom discussion setting.

I have also concentrated on the use of the critical dimension of autoethnography method, which will assist me in investigating my cultural situatedness from my unique standpoint as both a cultural insider and border-cropper. This has given me an opportunity to link my research with life contexts. This method also reveals the way in which my professional identity as an educator has been shaped as I combine extracts, reflections, and memories from my reflections to express both my self-dialogue and the students’ contributions of ideas. By these, I hope to make sense of emerging issues, and aim to use autoethnography as “a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context” (Reed-Danahay, 2006, p. 15). Reed-Danahay (2006) further defines autoethnography as a methodology which “includes methods of research and writing that combine autobiography and ethnography. The term has a dual sense and can refer either to the ethnographic study of one’s own group(s) or to autobiographical reflections that include ethnographic observations and analysis” (ibid.). I am investigating how pre-service teachers engage in carefully designed dilemma scenarios (see chapter 4) that seek to develop their critical, analytical and literacy skills. Brookfield (2012, p. 72) cautions that “the trick with designing a disorienting dilemma is that it has to be unsettling enough to shake students out of the comfort zone, but not so discomforting that those students will do their best to avoid dealing with it”. Other scholars describe similar conflicting processes of awareness in different terms such as cognitive disequilibrium (Piaget, 1978); cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957); critical consciousness or conscientization (Freire, 1970); and the notion of wide awakening (Greene, 1995). The dilemma discussions have aimed at offering new viewpoints which raise new questions and will provide ways of answering these questions to suggest new explanations.
We construct narratives to justify as well as remember and engage ourselves in any job we undertake. The arguments in the narratives may also be used to persuade others. In this thesis, I aim to reassess my incomplete memories about my teaching and learning experiences through the process of meditation, as otherwise, I may lose the recall of these memories which I regard as important. I have followed the habit of writing narratives after significant events for many years. Like Catherine Riessman (2008, p. 3), I do “not (to) expect a simple, clear definition of narrative […] that can cover all applications”. When I revisit these events they always bring back vivid memories for me whether, of a fodder-collection trip or an experience of a bad examination. Although narratives serve different purposes, in this research, I have involved the participants in sharing with others in the act of storytelling as a pedagogical method (Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007); together, we tried to make sense of our experience and the world.

Such sharing, allowed me “to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people [I] study” (Denzin, 2014, pp. 66-67). The dilemma stories that I discuss with the participants make the classroom more interactive and engaging. Meanwhile, I plan to draw on my lived experiences in the form of reflective stories presented in this research. This allows me to focus on myself (“auto”), my personal and academic journey within and outside typical Nepalese culture (“ethno”), and the process of drafting the (“graphy”) research inquiry (Reed-Danahay, 1997) in order to bridge the gap between the use of language and the acquisition of new knowledge.

Autoethnography, “cannot be judged from traditional positivist criteria. The goal is not to produce a standard social science article. The goal is to write performance texts in a way that moves others to ethical action” (Denzin, 2014, p. 70). As the interpretive, postmodern and critical approaches of this research is multi-dimensional with methods drifting across research paradigms; I have the flexibility to move beyond the conventional “clear-cut” one-dimensional approach where knowledge might be considered “universal” and value-free. I see knowledge as residing in individuals as well as in a shared information space. As such, the solution of any concerns people hold about contemporary issues is likely to be found in their personal writings of life events. In this research, I have also included letters, poems, stories,
legends, drama scripts, and vignettes, interspersed throughout the thesis to give authenticity to my research and provide diversity for the readers of my text.

**Letters as experiential gestalts of autoethnographic research**

Keith Punch (2009, p. 115) refers to qualitative research as “a complex, changing and contested field […] an umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety”. In the course of day-to-day meetings and interactions with people, various dimensions emerge naturally from our experience as pedagogical phenomena. Many of our conversations can be expressed in the form of letters, which are thought provoking and can carry wonderful meanings from one person to another. Letters have greater longevity than human lives, and they were the major means of communication in former times. In relation to life history methodology research, Jenny Martin (2002, p. 110) proposes that it provides us with an in-depth view of our experiences including “an interpretive framework for personal accounts and explanations of actions and meanings”. Letters have worked as messages sent out by leaders or by a family member as a means, for example, to convey the love of a father to a child, or sometimes to express some kind of protest or other deep feelings. Some letters written by great people are capable, when read by others in subsequent years, of standing as signposts to guide the readers forward in approaching current issues. Some of the historical letters that greatly impressed me include Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling* in many volumes, the stunning *Love Letters* of Khalil Gibran, [the] *Collection of Letters* of Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter, and, Mahatma Gandhi’s *Selected Letters* that include a letter sent by him to the British rulers of India and another letter to Hitler, Jonathan Kozol’s (2007) *Letter to a young teacher*, and Abraham Lincoln’s letter to his son’s teacher. Freire (1998a), in his book *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach*, also speaks his ideas that are structured around ten letters to teachers about the lessons he learned from a lifetime of experience as an educator and social theorist. These letters have indeed inspired me to create some of my research narratives in the form of letters. Sue Middleton (2012, p. 302) claims that:

> Qualitative research records, interprets and explains the rhythms, colour, and dynamics of everyday experience. It emanates from complex human interactions that can rarely be studied or explained in simple terms. Qualitative projects almost always include some engagement with documents: printed or handwritten, electronic or on paper, published or unpublished, public or private, contemporary or historical.
In her article, ‘Jane’s three letters: working with documents and archives,’ Middleton (2012, p. 310) puts forward an account of how even “a personal family puzzle was transformed into a cross-disciplinary research project set out to render problematic the qualitative, textual and visual resources social scientists treat as data”. Similarly, in the evolution of my learning, there have been many notable moments when I have benefitted from such textual information where I have had unknowingly but freely put forward my standpoints. These documents work as my life history ‘testimonio’, the term that has generally “been used to denounce injustices suffered by a marginalised group of people” (Booker, 2002, p. 313). This testimonio can be situated “within the larger category of narrative research […] which comprises multiple and oftentimes overlapping variations, including autoethnography, biography, cultural biography, life story, oral history and testimonio” (Tierney & Clemens, 2012, p. 266). By reflecting on my earlier emails and letters sent to my close friends, I have created further documents either by writing scholarly essays or by composing poems, which broadly speaking, I regard as the basis of my cross-textual transformation. Our writing normally does not have to happen in isolation; it may have its links to various human feelings or about society and cultures.

My imagining of inter-coherence, inter-cohesion and connections among and across the texts represent multiple genres of human life and experiences. It could even be based on the works of other artists. In the past, many poems were written while considering paintings as the subject of creation. Known as ekphrastic poems, some notable examples include Landscape with the Fall of Icarus by William Carlos Williams (1996), John Keats’ (1996) Ode on a Grecian Urn, and W. H. Auden’s (1996) Musée des Beaux Arts. Positively impressing me in my inter-textual and ‘life-history’ writings are the following lines from Auden’s (1996, p. 1367) poem Musée des Beaux Arts, showing a connection between reflecting and looking for influence in each other’s relation.

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters; how well, they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or
Opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer’s horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.
In Breughel’s Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plough-man may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water: and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

*Musée des Beaux Arts* (Auden, 1996) is a literary work of art about another artwork using a different medium. In 1939, the Anglo-American poet, W.H. Auden, visited the museum and viewed the painting, *Landscape, with the fall of Icarus*, by Peter Brueghel the Elder. Both works of art, the painting and the poem, try to narrate the Greek myth of Icarus, a young boy attempting to escape from Crete using wings of bees wax created by his father, Daedalus. These works have such a powerful universal message that, when Icarus flew too close to the Sun, melting the wax, and fell to his death, hardly anyone bothered about that great tragedy. The poem questions humanity’s apathy in the face of suffering, and indifference. Thus, there is so much emotional content that we can explore and excavate from within or around ourselves where such narratives establish the legitimacy, truth, and reliability in my research.

Lindsay Prior (2012, p. 426) also asserts that “the ‘diary’, the ‘letter’, the ‘life history’ and other types of documents including the field-note, the research memo and the questionnaire – not only have content, but also fulfill certain kinds of function” in research. I too have written my short stories and poems based on my visit to my village, talking to people who live there, to represent their first-hand emotions, along with the field notes that represent my participants’ feedback and responses to my teaching, which may not be very common in traditional disciplines.

I have composed some short plays and poems in first person narratives as I witnessed what I considered socially significant experience as testimonies. Lindsay Huber (2012, p. 377) claims that testimonio “has served as a powerful tool by non-dominant groups”. However, it has encountered significant debate about its legitimacy in mainstream knowledge in academia and research. Huber (2012, p. 377) argues that scholars are increasingly “acknowledging the power of testimonio to advocate for
social justice, scholars are using it as a tool in qualitative research”. Huber (2012, p. 379) adds, such “testimonios are usually guided by the will of the narrator to tell events which he sees as significant, and is often an expression of a collective experience, rather than the individual”. In this respect, when we start to reflect and delve deeper into our imagination, it becomes possible to understand and create new levels of previously unanticipated situation.

Life histories, according to Michal McCall (as cited in Tierney & Clemens, 2012, p. 276), “have the potential to illuminate social issues and move individuals to action”. As soon as I put my thoughts in writing they give some cathartic effects, and, in this way, people can empathise with their deep-self and discharge tension through writing. Through poetry or inter-personal letters, I have allowed my strong and suppressed emotions to come to the surface which, without the medium of letters, would have never been exposed. Richardson (1997, p. 143) states, “[p]oetry gives us a greater chance of vicariously experiencing the self-reflexive and transformational process of self-creation than do standard transcriptions”. When such reflective imagination, used as a spade, can dig into my inner psychological state and capture the moment within a given literary convention, it allows me to document the fruit of my lived experiences.

Life history in many ways resembles life-story and biography which William Tierney and Randall Clemens (2012, p. 266) clarify as, “[t]o one researcher, biography, life story and life history may be perfectly synonymous; to another interchanging the terms may indicate methodological laziness”. Tierney and Clemens (2012, p. 270) further suggest that “the value of life history is to provide a portrait of lives over time”. Things that we considered insignificant or even that are seen as over-emotional at one point can have sufficient reason to be revisited and be useful to document as a literary or researchable record that can be meaningful for others to look at and reflect upon. Such writings have allowed me to reach near reality; and, the poetic logic has helped me to move away from the traditional, deductive way of understanding truth. Let me share, a letter addressed to the ‘English language’, the role that English has played in my life as a student, at school, at university, and in my personal and professional life. My passion, therefore, is to extend and expand writing capacities to myself and my students.
A letter to the English language

Dear English,

This is Kashiraj, writing to you from Perth, Western Australia. I am a teacher of English in Nepal, but at present, doing doctoral research in teacher education at Murdoch University.

Although you were a terror to me in the beginning, slowly and gradually you have taken hold of me and have become an integral part of my career as a teacher. English, you have finally become an inseparable part of my academic life.

You have already entered my country and culture and are seen as a means to achieve a ‘perfect’, affluent life style; we consider you as the ultimate badge of honour. You have also divided our people into two distinct groups: those who can speak and communicate in English and those who cannot. I too followed you as though you were a plant that produces crops, thinking of a better future after befriending you who are such a global tycoon.

Just to grasp your rhythms, I gave up playing and other pastimes as far back as my early childhood days. I still remember how during examinations I aimed to re-state those paragraphs in the same pattern as they appeared in the English textbook. However, I took a more “Buddhist” approach to accepting you, and kept my hold on you by “taking the harder path”. There were two reasons for this: first, I wished to embrace the challenge and accept the hard way for myself, and therefore, I chose to leave the easier way for others who desperately needed the easier way. Secondly, it was for my own comfort that even if I failed in the journey along the harder path, the easier one would still be available to me.

Yes! English, since I met you, years ago, I have been trying to place myself within the English context. I am always playing hide-and-seek with you. Sometimes I judge myself in relation to native English speakers, but most of the time in relation to Nepalese speakers of EFL. When I am not understood by native speakers of English, I begin to plant the seeds of doubts in my English skills. However, I consider that I have a comfortable command of English when I see that I usually can easily communicate what I want to express in that language.

It is interesting that I had a hard time learning you because of the way I was taught English. Despite my rigorous practice, I know that some errors in grammar and vocabulary are taking time to disappear from my usage. Yet, I am trying to bring a balance between the emotions in my mind and the thoughts in my intellect to have them coexist in harmony while actively working together. So, I prefer to practise you with my students, looking at learning from their point of view, because I have come to understand the value of the student-centered learning approach in teaching as opposed to the teacher-centred one that I had experienced myself as a student.

(Source: My personal reflections)

Many of the personal-experience stories like the one contained in this letter, produced by me in my days of dreams and difficulties, are also the product of my cultural and historical origins. Many times, I try to limit myself, yet I realise that our self-imposed preoccupation with the limitations of our life opportunities only leads to pushing our happiness further and further away. My reflective journal notes, therefore, are not
necessarily limited to the situations envisaged in the letter; rather, they represent deeper structures related to my belonging to the places and situations from which my ideas flow. Here are some lines which I composed at a moment when I felt the real importance of learning English:

\textit{Oh English, are you my friend?}

Will you help me find a job
With better pay
Either here in Nepal or somewhere abroad?
I hope so, and everyone
I know at school believes so, too.

\begin{itemize}
  \item More and more people seem to know English and they say it is the language of business and scholarship.
  \item So, why should I not learn it?
\end{itemize}

But, I am a Nepalese you know and value my culture, my family, my friends, our villages, mountains and countryside.
So, English: do you want me to be good at Nepali things, too?

\begin{itemize}
  \item Through our language we communicate and help each other.
  \item So, am I right when I say that I must try hard to learn English?
  \item But, must also seek to be a good representative of my Nepal, its culture, its language.
\end{itemize}

(Source: My personal reflections)

By reflecting on my teaching-learning journey, and relying on the unique world of Nepalese students and their contexts, I illustrate the use of a contextual model of the EDSP in the professional activity of teachers. In this research I created a small participatory case study from the fieldwork with my pre-service teacher participants, to which I now turn.

\textbf{A case study approach}

Adrian Holliday (1992) describes ethnographic research as a process that "represents an interpretive paradigm, which seeks to address more subjective realities" (p. 413), and adds that such "investigation is based on observations of the behaviour of lecturers and students, treating the host institution, classrooms, and other relevant
areas of concern as cultures” (ibid.) in an educational context. Hence, I have described the findings using multiple genres and representations of ethnography such as writing as inquiry, arts-based research, artful poetics, narrative inquiry, and evocative autoethnography as “the reflexive, cultural reporting of self, most often through narrative” (Saldana, 2011, p. 15). Therefore, autoethnography gives me the authority to speak in my voice. Within this larger autoethnography frame, I used a smaller case study approach with my participants, the pre-service teachers, to investigate the use of EDSP.

I have tried to investigate in depth the dilemma teaching method via the case studies, where the data I received from my participants is grounded in specific instances of their carefully constructed stories. I used a variety of data-generating methods (see chapter 5) to produce evidence leading to an understanding of the cases, providing the answers to my research questions about which scenarios raised the participants’ imagination. I encouraged them to acquire new skills and knowledge with their ability to reason and to form new understandings.

Creswell (2007) asserts that case-study was practised in the early years of social science, which mostly studied individuals, and was different in aim and techniques than the widely-practised positivist-style, broad, statistical surveys. In such case-studies, the issue or a case was separated out according to its place, context and circumstances to identify significant parameters in the participants’ set of concepts. However, when we face complex difficulties in many aspects of our daily lives, we require hands-on, problem-solving skills. Creswell (2007) defines this type of research tool as case-study, which is an in-depth exploration of a researcher’s systematic observation and interaction with an individual or a group. In this research, I have tried to create pictures of the learning from ethical dilemma story scenarios along with the concepts that link theoretical discussion to the real-life situation of the participants. William Neuman (2014, p. 42) underscores case-study research saying “it clarifies our thinking and allows us to link [even] abstract ideas in specific ways with the concrete specifics of cases we observe in detail”. This seems to be the preferred strategy to move from vague historical, social settings towards interactive, case-specific interpretations. Bent Flyvbjerg (2011) proposes that researchers should not concentrate only on the application of scientific theories but should also seek
observational data emerging in the students’ classroom responses. These data may act to confirm the tenets of the established theories, but may also usefully question them. I have emphasised concrete case knowledge to seek constant input from the most significant pool of stakeholders, the pre-service teachers in the present case.

The theme underlying these conversational interactions has potentially strong effects on the thinking patterns of both parties to the interview in an emergent and potentially transformative way. This case study approach, using observation of practice and in-depth interviews with the five participants, also explored their views of influences on their learning in practice. Robert Yin (1994, p. 3) postulates that case studies enable a researcher to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”. These events often provide a closer understanding of the nature of problems and thus add to insights into our teaching and learning contexts. I was aware of my need to acquire the following skills during this research, which are: to be a good listener, to have a firm grasp of issues being studied, to have the ability to ask good questions and to interpret the responses, to be adaptive and flexible so as to react to various situations, and to be unbiased by preconceived notions (Yin, 1994). This descriptive study comprises narrative accounts of mine and my participants; it has enabled me to undertake an in-depth study of the phenomenon under investigation, namely the use of EDSP as a tool for transformative learning.

John Werth (2017, p. 52) shares that, “[b]oth case studies and ethical dilemma stories serve to promote engagement and critical thinking in the classroom”. Werth (2017) adds ethical dilemma stories pose dilemmas with viable options that involve real-life problems where students make choices based on their ethical understanding and values to solve them. The stories, as a central approach to this research, served a pedagogical purpose for these teachers in their practice of critical reflection. The discussion of the issues raised in the dilemma stories has led to the pre-service teachers’ awakenings and transformations. These narratives included the experience of pre-service teachers who were the participants of my research along with vignettes, from my own reflective journey, and interpretive commentary with an attempt at a deeper understanding of the situational phenomenon. Indeed, Middleton (2012, p. 310) acknowledges that “research produces its subjects (researchers) as much as it does its objects of inquiry”. In this regard, my analysis of the responses of these pre-
service teachers during the teaching sessions, interviews, and in their reflective journal notes has given me a sense of what we, as teachers, need to preserve that still works, and, what needs to be changed in our curriculum and pedagogic practices.

The major objective of EDSP was to engage the students’ interest in critical dilemma thinking. In our higher-level cognitive function, Saldana (2015, p. 62) adds, that “thinking critically also involves playing the devil’s advocate for yourself and your analyses”. While taking the role of the teacher, I, therefore, intended sometimes to play the devil’s advocate to get the students more intensively involved in the discussions. During the fieldwork, I also considered the participants’ co-operation to help each other and how they empathised with each other to develop trust among themselves. They were well equipped with an emotional as well as intellectual impact through questions like: What decisions would they make and why? What struggles did they encounter? And how did they make their final decisions to resolve various dilemmas.

According to Zoe Corwin and Randall Clemens (2012, p. 491), “[e]very researcher either knowingly or unknowingly adopts the conventions of one or multiple paradigms”, and my research employs an integral, multi-paradigmatic research design for generating and processing data. As explained earlier, I utilise arts-based, interpretive, postmodern and critical approaches in this research with an autoethnographic methodology which includes pictures, poetry, images, interviews and stories. Van Maanen (1996, p. 127) shares that “the presentation of social reality is in a creative period now and much innovation is taking place”. So, I expect to evoke a participatory sense in the readers through the free-play of literary devices as the materials to build my tales like imagery, metaphors, allusions, phrasings, analogy, and most critically, the expansive recall of fieldwork experience I have used in such creations. All this, according to Van Maanen (1996, p. 101), is “the impressionists’ self-conscious and, for their time, innovative use of their materials – color, form, light, stroke, hatching, overlay, frame – that provides the associative link to fieldwork writing”. Hence, I have tried to incorporate my own assumptions, experiences and impressions, as a researcher, which may have moved beyond the traditional ways of representing and using fieldwork as merely gathering data through cumulative experience.
Methods and Selection of the Participants

To research the use of ethical dilemma stories teaching with pre-service teachers (see chapter 4), I applied the following sequence of actions during my research data generation:

Research site and participants

I identified Mountain Multiple College (MMC), Nepal as my research site and the participants, the B.Ed. students, as well-suited to my research project. There were 28 students enrolled in this B.Ed. class. The students came from different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. Although some students worked part-time in nearby private schools, the majority of them were pre-service teachers of English working towards graduation and employment who aimed at finding a teaching position upon graduation. The participating pre-service teachers had a special relationship with the phenomenon under investigation, relevant to the nature of my research, and their active involvement in it.

The participants were selected for their knowledge, relationship and expertise with my research subject in such a method which belongs to the category of purposive selection techniques. Although I had received a list of the 18 prospective participants, there were only 11 students who were present along with their regular class teacher at the initial meeting with me. I was aware of the fact that not all who promise to join a project necessarily can attend the component sessions. I had experienced the case of student non-attendance at my classes several times whereby students who were there on Monday would be absent on Tuesday. Accordingly, in the case of my research, in the end, six of the prospective participants failed to participate despite earlier pledges, leaving only three female and two male participants including the class teacher. In all, there were five participants who remained during the entire process of the research; however, being a narrative approach with the aim of uncovering deeper meanings and understanding rich nuances, this worked well. In a similar situation, Michael Patton (2002, p. 244) explains:

There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources.
The research participants included me (male) as teacher-researcher, the usual class teacher Ravi (male), and four pre-service teachers, Pallavi (female), Shakti (female), Bikti (male) and Suniti (female), all enrolled in the English Language Teaching course. These five participants in my research regularly attended all activities during the two-week fieldwork teaching and remained in touch afterwards.

For my study, I considered these participants, who were also the future teachers of English in schools in Nepal, as potential agents for the promotion of socio-cultural transformation in Nepali society. The completed unit which I designed involved a two-week teaching project in dilemma story learning in collaboration with the participants’ usual class teacher and in accordance with the approved university curriculum of the B.Ed. course. The setting of the fieldwork in this research was the B.Ed. classroom of MMC in Gajuri, where the college ran a B.Ed. program affiliated with Everest University. The college was located near the busy Prithvi Highway that linked all the major cities of Nepal with the capital city, Kathmandu. Kathmandu is 65 kilometres away from the college. The college was situated in its own building, yet it was under-resourced. Compared to other fancy academic institutions, I deliberately looked for the participants from a less well-resourced college who would benefit from the present research process in order to make a positive contribution to the research site (Cohen et al., 2011). The college did not have an updated library and the students did not have ready access to all the resources they needed such as computers, newspapers, and books for their studies. The five participating pre-service teachers were happy to explore ways to incorporate constructivist, learner-centred philosophies of education (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Even though I did not offer any visible incentives in the form of cash or in kind, they were the most dedicated participants who gave up their other work to regularly participate in this transformative research despite their personal, familial, and social obligations.

**Ethics and consent**

It was necessary to receive permission and obtain access to the research site to work with the participants in an institutionally approved environment (see Appendix 3 & 4). Accordingly, I completed the essential paperwork and approvals by considering all ethical and practical issues potentially required by Murdoch University (Project
number 2015/064) for academic research (see Appendix 2 for Project Information Letter).

Preparing the groundwork

Prior to engaging the pre-service teachers with the ethical dilemma story characters, I needed to lay the groundwork for my lessons. I prepared my lesson plan (see Appendix 7) for my first field trip which was completed in October 2015, with the following questions in mind:

1. How can I introduce ethical dilemma story teaching and analytic discussion to the participating pre-service teachers in this research? Are there any specific concerns I need to address in seeking to introduce this method?
2. What do these pre-service teachers already know that applies to the issues specifically under consideration in a particular story?
3. What preparation is expected of the pre-service teachers? Do they need to read the ethical dilemma stories ahead of time?
4. Do I need to familiarise these pre-service teachers with the vocabulary used in my stories?
5. Do the pre-service teachers need to make written comments after the classroom activity?
6. Do I need to involve them in role-playing activities, such as individual, pairs and class level, relevant to the story theme?
7. What are some of the solution strategies to the dilemmas posed?
8. How do I evaluate the favourable or contrary arguments proposed by the pre-service teachers?
9. How much time is needed for the students to think individually about and discuss a given issue?
10. What are the issues that may be raised by the pre-service teachers in discussion?
11. What directions do I need to provide for pre-service teachers regarding what they are intended to do and accomplish in the ethical dilemma story situation?
12. When do I need to divide the pre-service teachers into groups or pairs and when will they come together as a whole to hold a discussion?
13. How will I assess the effectiveness of the pre-service teachers’ engagement?
I prepared materials that were necessary to conduct the experiential teaching sessions including the recording devices for the individual interviews, along with pen and paper for my observation notes. The field notes comprised my recorded personal interpretations and comments in my handwritten notes after each observation of dilemma story lessons and interview with the participants. This initial scheme was intended to enable me to understand the essential nature of the learning being achieved from the participants’ point of view. I hoped this set of experiences and the participants’ responses would help me to further understand the nuances of my in-depth analysis of the participants’ expressed ideas. I hoped that my understandings would be useful when I arrived at the stage of organisation and analysis of my data.

Fieldwork

During my fieldwork phase, I generated data from my own reading of the research participants’ comments on the two ethical dilemma stories, the audio recordings of the contents of one-to-one interviews and my own field notes. Van Maanen (1996, p. 3) highlights aspects of the benefit of such interactional data-gathering when he points out that “fieldwork asks the researcher, as far as possible, to share first-hand the environment, problems, background, language, rituals, and social relations of a more or less bounded and specified group of people”. In the specific case of my research, I started my interaction with the participants by sharing how my own experiential, lived background was influential in shaping the course of my ongoing research.

Pre-session meeting

As part of this research in October 2015, I attempted to create a comfortable rapport with the pre-service teachers by arranging a meeting with those who expressed interest in participating in my research. At first, I tried to understand the participants’ background in order to plan and implement my research in an interesting manner. I tried to know their interests to open lines of communication by talking about their homes, what motivated their present learning, and what would help their future learning. At the same time, I observed how they interacted with each other and tried to appreciate their distinct personalities. In the same way, I too shared something about myself to establish a connection. I consciously came up with various teaching strategies to help them on the basis of their sharing. Knowing the participants well and connecting to their life worlds was essential to a more relational and engaged
pedagogic activities. I also wanted to learn from the participating pre-service teachers and to communicate more comfortably with them. While interacting with these pre-service teachers on different occasions, I tried to understand more about them within a particular situation. During our interaction, I found some participants very open and confident in what they said while some were initially less comfortable to speak out in front of others.

Teaching sessions

While explaining the use of EDSP in English language lessons, I briefly shared with the pre-service teachers my desire to move from a traditional, didactic to a more respectful, innovative, open-minded, and collaborative model of teaching-learning. My main motive was to know who they are as individuals including their family history, home village and personal interests.

From the first day, all participating pre-service teachers were given the opportunity in the research project to seek to develop themselves as possible change agents of society. I sought to broaden their thinking with the incentive of dilemma stories and the critical consideration of relevant issues such as the culture and lifestyle of the people they knew. All interactions and the dialogues, which involved the representation of the lived experiences of the participants, took place in the familiar setting (Creswell, 2009) of an English language classroom for B.Ed. students. During the discussions, I encouraged the pre-service teachers to pay special attention to the ethical values inherent in their cultural contexts. For instance, I asked them to share experiences based on their gender, religious practices and social class. I wanted to represent the various perspectives of all participants, as suggested by Brookfield (1995, p. 30) by including (1) journal entries of the learners and the teacher, (2) the students’ perceptions of ethical issues as expressed during interviews, (3) my colleague’s [the class-teacher’s] experience of the EDSP, and (4) materials found in the theoretical literature (see chapter 4, Figure 5).

In the current study, my fieldwork teaching took place over two weeks. I asked the pre-service teachers to participate in the research after explaining the nature and the scope of the study in advance. I wanted to ensure a balance of the B.Ed. students,
representing female and male students, to construct a wider view of the issues from various perspectives.

**Engaging participants**

Stories that are likely to engage the students’ attention tend to be those which have relevance to their day-to-day lives. For learners to be creative and innovative, teachers need to create an environment to work both independently and yet also make use of sharing, caring and collaborative decision-making skills. The goal of EDSP is to enhance ethical and socially just decisions (Smyth, Down & McInerney, 2014) by examining local, varied, and challenging ethical situations in people’s lives.

Therefore, the ethical dilemma stories were written to connect with the lived experiences of the participants and were organised around the core ideas of a dilemma issue to develop their engagement, understanding, critical thinking ability, and last but not least, their expressive language skills, both oral and written. I developed newer dilemma story texts that might encourage learners to preserve their own cultural values in their learning whilst developing employment-related skills. The ethical dilemma stories endeavoured to develop the pre-service teachers’ critical sensibilities including compassion, courage and hope. These two stories, *The dilemma of life and how we live* and *The dilemma of leaving home*, are described in detail in chapter 4 (pp. 144–150). In this regard, opportunities were provided for reflection, collaboration, and negotiation to broaden their critical awareness, and to develop their thinking along with their spoken and written communication skills through EDSP.

**Post session interviews**

Besides informal meetings and conversations, an in-depth interview with each pre-service teacher was conducted on the last day of my teaching. These personal interviews aimed to identify the participant’s emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding their experience of ethical dilemma stories. The benefit of these personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between my research participants and myself. The participating pre-service teachers were asked to reflect on the value of ethical dilemma stories for their thinking and critical awareness using a set of open-ended questions. I employed a semi-structured approach to conducting interviews to promote flexibility in participants’ responses and to explore the inner
responses of these pre-service teachers. According to Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale (2015, p. 35), “[t]he research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between two people”. During the *interViews* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015), I asked the participants simple but probing questions. Interview sessions were not restricted to specific questions as I adopted and modified my approach using any new information; such events were discussed in detail and examined in greater depth.

The participants’ narrative responses in the face-to-face teaching situation, in group discussions, and in my own daily contacts with them were used as the starting points for interviews. Additionally, the participants’ learning journals also offered powerful accounts of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Believing that human understanding is contextual and relative to the existing conditions, the interview has become a special type of conversational practice aimed at obtaining knowledge about the participants’ views of the world. Hence, this research in alignment with Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, pp. 63-64) aimed at being “inter-relational and inter-subjective with the goal of producing knowledge about the [particular] human situation”. While interviewing my research participants, I tried to gather information about their childhood, their school, their days of joy and sadness, their parents’ wishes for them, where they want to see themselves in later years, their future goals, and their commitment towards the community they live in. I asked the participants to critically review the process they normally take in resolving dilemma situations which they experience in their daily lives like those included in the ethical dilemma stories (see chapter 4).

The interviews were designed to generate information about the participants’ perspectives regarding their experiences and their reactions in dilemma learning situations. Participants could incorporate their ideas and opinions in an overall, synoptic understanding. I tried to create a more relaxed and conversational tone during the interview. I tried to explain the questions, with some simple examples, to facilitate the flow of the conversational exchange when the participant was hesitant to respond fluently. I also encouraged the interviewees to express their insights and to talk confidently about their ethical dilemma learning experiences. I asked the questions orally and audio-recorded their responses for later analysis. I also kept notes
to help me analyse the gathered data later. The frequency and structure of the audio-recorded interviews were determined by agreement between myself and the participants according to their availability during off-hours. I drew up familiar data, such as participants’ journal entries, classroom workbook, along with some structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews as well as follow-up questions.

**Interview questions**

During this interview, the pre-service teachers and I embarked on a journey to explore the dilemma learning experience together. Drawing on Taylor and Taylor’s (2014) Learning Environment Survey, I developed a set of classroom feedback questions to inform the interview phase of the research. These interview questions provided an opportunity to gain additional insights into the learning experience of the participants. The interview was structured around the use of five questions about the participants’ learning experiences that aimed at promoting open-ended responses. Creswell (2014b, p. 216) argues that “an open-ended response to a question allows the participant to create the options for responding”. Following are the five sets of focus questions I used during the individual interviews.

1. In what ways did you find the dilemma stories relevant to yourself or to people that you know?
2. In what ways were you encouraged to engage in the learning activities? What helped?
3. When you asked other participants about their ideas, what did you learn? Please share about the opportunities to express and exchange ideas with peers, one-to-one and in group discussions?
4. How did you respond to requests to share your ideas and experiences?
5. How did the story allow you to reflect and question your own thinking?

The role of pre-service teachers, while responding to these questions, was not only to receive the knowledge from the semantic content of the story but to adapt and investigate existing ideas to develop new possibilities by connecting to their own lives and experiences (see chapter 5). While the respondents were free to express their views and the conversations flowed smoothly, I still had to explain the questions to
them and ask them to elaborate their views. This allowed the pre-service teachers to balance their perception in the process of critical reflection.

The average duration of the one-to-one interview was scheduled to be 20 to 30 minutes, and each interview followed on from a prior group as well as pair discussion about the planned structure and sequencing of the interview. The initially scheduled interview duration with each participant was appropriate as I could comfortably manage the session within the set time-frame to engage “in a sustained and extensive experience with participants” (Creswell, 2014a, p. 187). During the interview, I carefully observed the body language that accompanied participants’ verbal behaviour. I also found the interviews lively; I could, indeed, always empathise with the participants as the stories they shared were similar to mine, springing from often deeply-felt personal experiences set in our Nepali cultural environment. Dawn Currie and Deirdre Kelly (2012, p. 405) assert that “[t]alking with people is probably the most common way that qualitative researchers generate data”. I too spent a considerable amount of time framing interview questions designed to facilitate abundant student verbal responses as it was extremely important to produce as much relevant data as possible for analysis and sense making at a later stage. Using transcribed interview and supporting notes, I analysed the data generated from the two-week teaching period to provide an important basis for understanding the use of EDSP for facilitating students’ learning of English. Later, I reflected on my analysis by re-reading and comparing the evidence coming from my daily journal and the writing of participants along with their oral interview responses. Although my research project involved the future teachers of English, the desired outcome was to apply transformative learning across multiple disciplines within the Nepalese education system.

To prepare the pre-service teachers to participate freely, they were asked to explain their views depending on their interest in talking about the ethical dilemma stories, and on their availability. As suggested by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 57), I attempted to adopt “the stance of a traveler on a journey to a distant country which leads to a tale to be told [by me] upon returning home”. The interviews were flexible, and focused on the participants’ actual learning experiences which added to the fieldwork observations and classroom discussions. The main points discussed in the
interview were: (1) the participants’ experience working with the dilemma stories, and (2) their critical reflection as narratives, empathy, understanding and transformation, which may derive from their experience of ethical dilemma story pedagogy. The medium of our conversation was English, which is a foreign language for all of us. However, when the participants had their turn to share the stories of their lived experiences, I encouraged them to speak and express their views in Nepali, their mother tongue, as well as in English, to allow them to express a broader range of thoughts with vivacity and imagery, thus enriching the conversation.

As I regarded my reactions and responses to those of the students as a valuable source of data, I continuously and analytically worked on my own understanding of the issues to provide focus on some specifically emergent aspects including class writing, discussion notes, and my observation notes of the data generation process. I continued reading, reviewing and categorising my written journal records of their interactive responses along with my written notes until I could more easily separate my thoughts and ideas from those of the participants. I also added emergent thoughts and provocations for later reflection. I categorised all my notes and put the text into targeted categories such as teacher and student relevance to see the commonalities as well as differences. I repeated this process as I deepened my analysis and sought to rearrange my ideas into a logical order. Throughout this process, I also added my own ideas in note form to create order and connections in examining the outcomes and responses as a whole.

**Emergent thematic analysis**

Thematic analysis is a key method for organising interview data in a variety of disciplines such as educational research. My attempt to analyse the data which were generated from personal interviews and other sources, such as participants’ interactive classroom workbooks, journal entries, and our successive email exchanges gave me an opportunity to structure and arrange the participants’ responses. Such arrangements were aimed at satisfying the accomplishment of research objectives which helped me to identify important aspects of the content, estimate and categorise the patterns, describe situations, and simplify information (Krippendorf & Bock, 2009). I arranged the patterns under the headings of: a) Contextualisation; b) Facilitation; c) Collaboration; and d) Critical Self-reflection (see chapter 5). The rich, individual
interaction of events played an important role in my use of participant observation and in-depth interviews to better understand participants’ inner perspectives; while time consuming, this process yielded valuable insights. I also followed up with relevant clarifying questions (see Appendices 9 & 10) based on the first interview responses of the participants. The process happened in an emergent manner in which the oral explanation of their ideas developed and expanded in the course of the follow-up interview. My active involvement as a researcher in the process of ethical dilemma story learning also became a source of data generation as I was subjectively immersed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I gathered together the interpretive comments of the participants where they provided multiple solutions to the situations posed in my dilemma stories.

Covering a range of possible outcomes from different viewpoints, these emergent discourses developed in the context of dialogue where the participants thought about and attempted to speak analytically. When participants could hear what their colleagues said, they were able to participate in the discussion fully. I immediately transcribed the responses to remember the pauses, patterns, and responses to facilitate my analysis. Photographs were used in this research as evidence to validate my research data and to provide visual information about the participants and my role as a researcher cum educator. I took photographs of the students, collected their journal entries, and analysed class activity workbooks, which became a part of my routine during the process of data collection. The students were aware of all the methods I used for data collection, like photography and audio-recording of interviews on a digital voice recorder.

Accordingly, the research has drawn forth ethnographic insights which included the participants’ gender, age, and cultural and economic background in their learning situations. Thus, the interviews which followed on from classroom discussions sought to understand the diverse views of the participants through engaging them deeply in the discussion of the subject matter. I was very interested in the ethical understanding of the participants. As Van Maanen (1996, p. 75) affirms, “author-fieldworkers are always close at hand in confessional tales, their writings are intended to show how particular works came into being, and this demands personalised authority”, many of
my writings with the pre-service teachers came in the form of our collective confessional tales (Van Maanen, 1996).

**Rigour in Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research, as Claire Anderson (2010) highlights, is often criticised as anecdotal, biased, small-scale, and/or lacking rigour needed to appropriately answer every research question. She further distinguishes validity and reliability in qualitative research: validity relates to the honesty and genuineness of the research data, while reliability relates to the reproducibility and stability of the data. Whitehead (2014, p. 7) asserts that:

> The search for criteria of quality in education research differs from the search for criteria of quality in educational research. Quality in education research is also related to what is understood by ‘education’ and can be related to the validity of the conceptual frameworks and methods of validation used in the different disciplines of education. Within my stipulative definition, quality in educational research must relate to judgments about the influence of the educational research in learning to enhance the flow of values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity.

Quality standards of praxis and representation have been used to regulate and judge the quality of my research which draws on interpretivism, postmodernism, and critical inquiry as an alternative epistemological approach to the traditional language of statistical reliability, validity and generalisability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The authenticity of this research is established through ‘fairness’ to the participants (through representing their conflicting values), and, ‘educative authenticity’ (participants’ learning from their participation). Participants reviewed the analysed data and provided feedback on my interpretations of their responses through respondent validation to help improve the authenticity of the information. The process provided me with an opportunity to re-analyse their feedback for any inconsistencies.

My use of constant comparison means that one piece of data (for example, an interview) is compared with previous data and not considered on its own which enabled me to treat the data as a whole rather than fragmenting it. The constant comparison also enabled me to identify emerging/unanticipated themes within the research project. I still maintain contact with the participants and regularly exchange emails on their professional and personal development. I chose such strategies to write up my findings in a way that seeks to evoke the readers’ feeling that my
interpretations are lifelike, believable and possible (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The chief purpose of this choice was to regulate the extent to which I could capture and represent others’ lived experiences without reducing them to lifeless objects of my study. In the remainder of this section, I elaborate on five key elements of rigour in qualitative, especially autoethnographic research: trustworthiness, authenticity, critical reflexivity, verisimilitude and pedagogical thoughtfulness.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to credibility of research via internal validity (peer debriefing, case analysis, progressive subjectivity, and member checking). Secondly, it is transferability which parallels external validity (via thick, detailed description of data). Dependability resembles reliability (via tracing the construction of the methodology) and stability of the data. Finally, confirmability resembles neutrality (via data triangulation and interpretation audit) regarding interpretive aspects of this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These criteria help me to interact deeply with my participants and build up deep understanding from their experiences. Hence, I frequently interacted with my participants at a number of levels to assure trustworthiness by which I mean in-depth, rigorous, reliable, and credible interpretations. Validity, according to Denzin (2014), “evokes a feeling that the experience described is true, coherent, believable, and connects the reader to the writer’s world” (p. 70) where the work has verisimilitude and reliability. Denzin (2014, p. 70) adds, validity also “refers to the narrator’s credibility as a writer-performer-observer, that is, has an event been correctly remembered and described? Is the writer a credible observer of those events”? in addressing these kinds of questions, I have endeavoured to review literature for comparable studies to formulate various questions surrounding the Nepalese socio-cultural contexts.

**Authenticity**

Autoethnography, the stylistic approach I used in this research project is generally capable of answering one or more questions beginning with ‘how’ which refers to the level and quality of my relationship between me as a researcher and my participants. I worked as an active participant in the research process rather than presenting myself as a traditional objective observer. During this research, I tried to give full respect to others who were involved in this research to make fair representations.
In the Freirean (2007a) tradition, I sought to develop a sense of humility, compassion and empathy with participants as we developed understanding of what it means to be more fully human. As an educated member of society, my role in diversifying the curriculum to accompany our social experiences with creative theorisations about cultural practices and local knowledge is pivotal to transformative education. I put myself in the same position as my participants by narratively reflecting on our individual and collective experiences with the EDSP in the classroom. Typically, the teachers’ commitment to recognising the strengths of students becomes a prompt for them to change their practices. The urgency to address emerging ethical issues and communicate them to their peers for further discussions and possible solutions is always sought. Meanwhile, I am always aware that, “when researchers are in a superior role to participants, the information may be convenient and easy to collect, but it may not be accurate information and may jeopardise the roles of the researchers and the participants” (Denzin, 2014, p. 188). Hence, to claim my research as a collaborative one, I kept close contact with my participants, some of whom maintain the pedagogical approach of writing their own dilemma stories for their students.

**Critical reflexivity**

Reflexivity involves reflecting upon the ways in which my values, beliefs, interests, socio-cultural commitments, experience, life and identities impact on research. Throughout this study, critical self-reflection was useful at every stage of my teaching and learning processes. The notion of reflection and self-awareness leads me towards reflexivity about knowledge production (Pollock, 2008), which is central to my present research and incorporates my self-reflected truths with associated risks of vulnerability of the researcher and participants alike. As an opportunity to gain new insights and review my progress, I found that autoethnography develops a method of articulation that can holistically garner the information by opening a window to dynamic aspects of human experience that cannot be articulated using other available methods. This self-conscious form of conducting research has helped shape the research to explore self-learning, leading to new ways of seeing the world. Kevin Vryan (2006, p. 407) asserts:

> A skilled autoethnographer with the serendipitous advantage of having relevant analytical and methodological education and experience and a “naturally occurring” life—the stuff we social scientists like to conceive of as data and analyze—may be
able to examine features of human experience that would not normally be observable to researchers studying other people, whether due to communication norms, embarrassment, shame, guilt, limitations of participants’ self-awareness, lack of the depth of trust in researcher-as-other interactions that I can grant myself in self-inquiries, and so forth. If anyone else sought to study my life as an impostor, no amount of interviewing or observation of me by a researcher would have been capable of producing the depth, richness, and fullness of data I was able to assemble via fully-immersive (and documented) self-observation, self-interviewing, and self-analysis.

The methods which only seek to understand others’ experience may not allow the researcher a profound understanding of in-depth knowledge. Therefore, I tried to cover significant aspects of the in-depth, lived experiences of my research participants and myself through autoethnography. Consequently, there will be life-likeness in the study. I worked to maintain this by thorough observations, self-interviewing and self-analysis, and by being self-critical to organise my observations within a transformational, heuristic approach.

**Verisimilitude**

Verisimilitude involves the quality of appearing true and real. My research themes were drawn from a wider postmodernist perspective with the aim of assimilating existing knowledge with constructed truths. The two ethical dilemma stories (see chapter 4), as the main research texts, seem very similar with social truth. The participants’ and my own stories and reflective narratives of participants (see chapter 5) resonate as being true and lifelike containing “sufficient detail so that the portrayals can be recognizable” (Garman, 1996, p. 18) thus allowing participant engagement.

In my dilemma story teaching, I tended to challenge the previous pedagogical trends by actively involving students in their learning process and teaching them in the way they liked. Brookfield (1995, p. 21) protests that “the present day educational institutions which devote a lot of energy to keeping the [students] satisfied have simply designed a system where [the students] are asked to do something simple and within their comfort zones”, which he thinks is not helpful in serving the overall objective of education:

> The most hallowed rule of business – that the customer is always right – is often pedagogically wrong. Equating good teaching with a widespread feeling among students that you have done what they wanted ignores the dynamics of teaching and prevents significant learning. (ibid.)
An important pedagogic principle is to seek to interest the students in the learning experience in which they are involved. Interest is a portmanteau term which includes human functions as focus of attention, the pleasure of the experience, the willingness to devote one’s own energy to the learning activity, and the inherent delight in moving from what one already knows, as a basis for action, to what was not known but becomes known. Vygotsky (1978) uses the construct ‘zone of proximal development’ to capture this state of mind. Such process is crystalised in Hegel’s dialectic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis (McTaggart, 1896). A similar process is referred to in Piaget’s (1978) genetic epistemology as mental assimilation confined with accommodation, leading to adaptation which is a new state of critical awareness.

**Pedagogical thoughtfulness**

I have always sought to acknowledge pedagogical thoughtfulness by making my presence in the classroom as a teacher (and here as a researcher) non-authoritarian; and I have tried to make my teaching more responsive, culturally situated, generative, educative, and accommodative in nature. I used dilemma stories as class texts to prompt readers to question the participants’ pedagogical assumptions in their teaching and learning strategies. I believe my research can open up new avenues for academics and practitioners to rethink what really works in their lives through listening, speaking, reading and writing. I have always tried to be thoughtful about my teaching and tried to help my students ask questions and engage in dialogue. There are many occasions when I encouraged the learners in helping them to raise questions about my teaching so that I could also move away from the monotony, question myself, and teach differently in the light of the critical comments.

As discussed in chapter 2, there are gaps in pedagogical practice in relation to the education of the children in ethical, moral, and practical terms. Until recent times, the education system in Nepal has tended to base critical and moral teaching on religious principles. The 1990 restoration of democracy in the country, which changed the influence of religion in education, may be a reason for leaving a gap in this particular area within state school curriculum. My present work investigated the effectiveness of including ethical and moral components within EDSP context, and has come up with some very valuable results.
Ethical Considerations

This research was carried out according to standard ethical principles and practices required by universities. While participating pre-service teachers were informed regarding the objectives of the study, they were also reassured that their answers would be treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes of this present research. Except from the above, participants were not affected, either physically or psychologically, during the research process.

While I was trying to capture an overview of how my own deeper understanding of the ethical dilemma story pedagogy was experienced by the participants, opinions from every member, no matter how different, were considered equally. I am well aware that I should not attempt to reduce qualitative data to numbers, and therefore I tried to give equal importance to every response when my participants mentioned something significant to them. I shared all the participants’ responses with each of them to let them comment on my analysis before reporting to confirm beforehand whether respondents agreed with my interpretations. I sought out further information on some key concerns in favour of checking my interpretations and confirming the results.

These actions allowed participants to read through the data and analyses and provide feedback on my interpretations of their responses. It provided me with opportunities to re-analyse the data for any possible incorrect assumptions, inconsistencies, and challenges. Geoffrey Mills (2014, p. 139) confirms the importance of triangulation in research by using “multiple sources of data”. This process of data triangulation also involved cross-checking data that were generated from my direct interaction with the participants during the class observation, formal and informal meetings, and regular communication with each other as well as maintaining my own journal (O’Donoghue & Punch, 2003). The respondent validation and constant comparison of generated data were also substantiated by a number of techniques, including the cross-checking of apparently contradictory evidence where my transformation as a researcher usually involved overcoming an existing bias.

In this process, I sought out, examined, reflected and accounted for such deviant cases in the analysis to optimise the credibility of participants’ responses. Felicity Haynes
(1998, p. 1) suggested that “[t]he reflective teacher must have enough intellectual awareness to stand aside from personal subjectivity and analyse the possible different responses to the situation”. I was careful that my bias did not alter or interfere with my participants’ perceptions of the responses that I analysed and reported, attempting to create and maintain a comfortable and inclusive climate. This study has included the required ethical criteria of encompassing participants’ consent, and guaranteeing anonymity, non-malefeasance and beneficence.

**Consent of participants**

I presented written information to the participants, which involved informing them of the aims, procedures, and their roles in the research process, and my intention to allow them to make informed decisions about whether to participate in the research process. Christians (as cited in Cohen et al., 2011), acknowledges that “subjects [participants] must agree voluntarily to participate […]and that] their agreement must be based on full and open information” (p. 51) about what their participation would involve. All participants reported their written acceptance regarding their participation in the research through signed consent forms. This acceptance letter aimed to assure participants that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from it for any reason and at any point. However, providing ‘full information’ (for example, about the method of analysing the data) may not always be possible as the researcher may not be fully aware of the process beforehand (Cohen et al., 2011). This may be equally true for autoethnographic inquiry, the method of choice for my research.

**Guaranteeing anonymity and/or confidentiality**

The focus of my research is based on my teaching of dilemma stories and writing reflectively. In this process, I was also involved in observations of my participants, classroom interactions, and interviews. At the stage of analysing the data, I assigned a pseudonym to each respondent to protect their rights to anonymity. I was careful that identifiers did not reveal the identity of the participants and did not to breach respondent confidentiality in any form. I used pseudonyms and disguised locations, as advocated by Karen Kaiser (2009, p. 1635):

> Researchers remove identifiers to create a “clean” data set. A clean data set does not contain information that identifies respondents, such as a name or address (such
identifying information might be stored elsewhere, in separate, protected files). Some identifiers are easily recognized and dealt with. For example, the names of respondents can be replaced with pseudonyms.

I also altered some of the identifying lexis, such as the name of the institutions where they work. However, I used their unique personal characteristics, such as their way of speaking and writing styles, to enable me to identify the participants in order to interact with them more comfortably and ask further probing questions if required. I was able to do this as my research consisted of convenient but only a small number of participants. I also protected contextual identifiers in individual participants’ life stories, including unique or unusual life events, for example, their marital status and other family obligations. Hence, wherever actual spoken words were used, as in vignettes, I offered my participants confidentiality. This was an important ethical decision I took, which made my participants aware that pseudonyms or disguised locations would be used in my findings.

Non-malfeasance

Non-malfeasance refers to protecting the participants from any possible and reasonable harm. In respect of non-malfeasance, I shunned any deliberate wrongdoing or misconduct and wished to abide by all the ethical requirements of research. Through Richardson’s (1997) notion of crystallization for thoroughly deepened understanding of the issue discussed and notion of multiple voicing (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p. 1025), where the participants spoke, expressed and described their reflections in their own words, I treated the data with a degree of professional reserve. I searched for any disconfirming responses which started with problems and lead to an idea of possible inferences (Popper, 2009). Thus, my observations were designed to produce data arising from the participation and practices of my participants where I used a variety of methods in my observations, including taking notes and using interaction checklist.

I kept all the data securely and did not disclose the identity of the research participants while documenting the findings. I included statements about my past experiences that provided background data through which, according to Creswell (2007, p. 184), “the audience could better understand the topic, the setting, or the participants’ [actions]”. However, I did not publicly comment on any sensitive ethical issues that arose during this research. For example, some reflections, like the issue of corporal punishment
that could come from the participants’ honest hearts during the process of reflection and might harm someone’s social and/or professional image, were not disclosed. In this way, the participants were guaranteed in the beginning that whether it be the case of teachers or students, the data generated during this research would be kept confidential and all were presented in a way compatible with the accepted research ethics.

**Beneficence**

Beneficence refers to the specific advantage of research for participants, in particular with the goal of promoting the learning skills of the participating pre-service teachers by using the most appropriate method available for their benefit. Beneficence, including risks and benefits to the research participants, as claimed by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2008, p. 50), “cannot be quantified, nor can a clear meaning be given to acceptable risk or to the benefits that clearly serve a larger cause”. Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p. 51) further assert that “a cost-benefit model of society and inquiry does injustice to the empowering, participatory model of research that many people are now advocating”. Unlike other times of my previous research, in my present work, along with the dilemma stories, I also composed some other scripts with students, such as poems and drama scripts as appropriate. Such compositions have helped me to respect and admire learning as part of our culture, where there were no right or wrong answers. My research passed through different structured stages, including quality standards, ethical issues classroom teaching, observation, on-the-spot reflective writings, presentations, and in-depth interviews. Hence, the data generated here are claimed to be trustworthy in the sense of their reality and genuineness.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 72) assert that “the problem-solving strategies which the participants use in their real lives are essential features to be investigated by the researcher-teacher”. Learning becomes fruitful when students are allowed to become a part of the solution to the problem, rather than being mere devices for what Freire (1970, p. 58) described as “receiving, filing, and storing the deposits”. I preferred to move beyond the simplistic dualisms of ‘teacher-centred’ and the ‘student-centred’ approaches, as I was continually thoughtful about my participants in their learning in
a reciprocal engagement with myself as their teacher and the researcher. Van Maanen (1996, p. xi) explains:

1. the assumed relationship between culture and behavior (the observed); (2) the experiences of the fieldworker (the observer); (3) the representational style selected to join the observer and observed (the tale); and (4) the role of the reader engaged in the active reconstruction of the tale (the audience).

The links between my multiple roles and beneficence is critical as I needed to provide the best practice outcomes for these participating pre-service teachers in addition to usable data gathering. My data were rich for analytic interpretations involved trying to present three side-by-side existing reporting formats following Van Maanen’s (1996, p. 126) idea, to document my fieldwork progression “from realist to confessional, to impressionist tales”. This documentation focused on the confessional, yet insightful and uplifting, moments for my participants to experience.

Potential Issues and Criticisms

In the autoethnographic mode of writing, creating a balance between the roles of autoethnographer and researcher is challenging as we seek to separate our emotions and feelings from the methods used to make observations, and linguistically code and record them. In this research too, it seemed rather complicated to maintain a delicate methodological balance. Perhaps my approach was to some extent in accord with a so-called ‘post-positivist’ orientation which concedes that subjective bias is inevitable. Denzin (2014) asserts that “autoethnography [to some scholars] has been too artful” (p. 70), whereas some criticise it “for not being sufficiently artful” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner as quoted in Denzin, 2014, p. 70). Being artful can have multifaceted interpretations depending on the contexts of the discussion.

Another area of criticism for using an autoethnographic approach is that autoethnography has the tendency to become centred in the writer’s lens of perception without firm boundaries (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). I was mindful of this issue and aware that thinking reflectively and holding the entire project in mind allowed me to focus on outcomes rather than internalising self-absorbed thoughts and feelings. Exploring my own experiences in relation to the research topic created an awareness of vulnerability as I knew that I was not in control of the readers’ perspectives (Wall, 2008). I chose to write authentically as the observer is always inextricably bound up in the observed object, and that bias which influences our description and analysis of
observations cannot be entirely avoided. It would have been easy to rely on my memories while retelling stories of my life (Chang, p. 55); however, this placed me too close to the experiences. Drawing on my reflective journals allowed me to maintain a critical distance and create more reliability in the data.

There was no indication in the responses that indicated any research bias or integrity issues as a result in the Nepali context. We used both Nepali and English languages to communicate during the discussions. Thus, I was able to learn many things from their stories to extend the research to a greater depth. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that I too cannot completely claim I am free from the same straightforward, teacher-centred, teaching-testing conventions which are particular to the Nepalese education system. Just as there are two sides to every coin, there are also perceptual differences that influence how a situation is experienced. While autoethnography is based on my own understanding and learning, I have also endeavoured to portray the voices of participating pre-service teachers within this research, sharing their stories and relationships to EDSP. This has provided transparency in both interaction and analysis. This research is based on the voices of many combining to create new truths. It has allowed me to reevaluate and challenge my memories of each situation (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Thus, the research process is seen as a form part of bricolage and acceptance of multilogicality.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented an account of my study and the resulting understandings of the methods and technical standards that form part of an academic research project. The main academic frameworks of my conceptualisations in this research include ideas contained in the traditions of interpretivist, postmodernist, and criticalist research. This chapter has also functioned as a representation of a self-reflective inquiry using stories as a tool towards my research. The concepts of autoethnography, as an important methodology, encouraged me to direct specific attention to myself as a vital element in my research and the role of the transformative learning process. Autoethnography not only focuses on the area of concepts and practices but also myself as a researcher and social being.
The preparation of this research included the selection of participants, research site and necessary logistic arrangements. I was also mindful of following basic rigour in conducting qualitative research. Ethical consideration covered consent, anonymity and confidentiality of participating pre-service teachers to encourage their proactive engagement. I have further described the practical approaches of teaching dilemma stories adopted in my research in chapter 4.
Chapter 4: Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy and Transformative Learning

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the use of Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy (EDSP) as a teaching method. As a trial of this pedagogy, I presented two of my ethical dilemma stories as part of my research project, to the pre-service teachers, who were also the B.Ed. students, at the MMC, Dhading, Nepal. The ethical dilemma stories are centred on metaphors relating to people’s lives and living and also as an ethnographic study. John Van Maanen (1996, p. 49) asserts that “ethnography must present accounts and explanations by members of the culture of the events in their lives”. In many cultures around the world, we often think in terms of metaphor, comparing two different things through their similarities or networks of analogies.

This chapter is organised around four themes. Firstly, thinking metaphorically leads to an inclusive, open, reflective and transformative path placing the learners at the centre of the learning process. Then, in considering teaching as a journey in transformative learning, I provided opportunities for participating pre-service teachers to actively engage in higher order thinking processes. The third theme of looking at my teaching beneath the surface of other things covered understanding and embracing my multiple roles within the research process that included being teacher, facilitator, researcher, and a research participant. Finally, I have explained how the ethical dilemma story pedagogy can be valuable as an effective teaching and learning technique to support student learning in Nepal.

Thinking Metaphorically

The majority of our thought processes and language use, according to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), are metaphorical. Moreover, metaphor and metonymy seek to proceed by association and image as the major mechanisms of our mind. Hence, it is not just the verbal features of language that matter; instead it is also how we use language to represent our culture and blend this with the thinking of others. These figures of speech also aim to connect the unconnected, engage, and occupy much space in this research into the teaching of English, which ideally requires the
allocation of a suitable tone for discussion and interaction in the classroom. Thus, metaphor can be a valuable tool in this process of communication of meaning.

When thinking metaphorically, we can get a more powerful and vivid picture of the intended subjects. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) talks about divergent thinking as an essential means for creativity that fosters the ability of students to see many possible answers to a question, and many ways to interpret a concern. William Schubert (1986) has shared a similar experience as “twenty children who engage in the same creative writing activity have twenty quite different responses” (p. 28). Moving beyond simple cultural reproduction of ideas by the students, we aim to prepare new leaders in the world who are ready for social change. As Susan Finley (2011) has suggested, we need to “teach children the skills to play, to paint, to create with confidence—let their hands form to the shape of pen, brush or keyboard” (p. 439). Rather than literacy learning, which emphasises conformity to rules and stereotypical practices, I now pay more attention to school learning that involves students being stimulated to think reflectively and say something creatively about how they learned to read and write in their own voice. In learning, our internal skills and learning opportunities are reciprocal resources to supporting our ability to think, act, relate, and live our lives in an integral manner.

Ken Wilber (Visser, 2003, pp. xii), in his foreword to a book, *Ken Wilber: Thought as Passion*, writes that “integral means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalizing, embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that — they include as many perspectives, styles, and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic”. Wilber’s use of the term *integralism*, as I understand it, advocates a pluralistic view of co-existing realities, tends to combine different perspectives that represent distinctly different, but also mutually complementing, worldviews so that they may co-exist. The use of integralism, as an overarching, multi-paradigmatic framework, has made me comfortable in situations where I may seem to be leaning towards transformative learning strategies by being critical of conventional norms. Corwin and Clemens (2012) also acknowledge that:

Paradigms range from positivist to constructivist, from believing an absolute, knowable reality exists to believing in a restricted, socially constructed reality […] Each worldview contains its own set of ontological questions – how is reality defined,
and what does existence mean? – and epistemological questions – what is knowledge, and what is the relationship between the knower and the known. (p. 491)

The principal concern here, according to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2011, p. 6), is to focus on the alternative view of social reality “in which individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they lived themselves”. My learning journey is becoming an exciting experience that has enabled me to see English classrooms in Nepal as more transformative, personally meaningful and culturally relevant experiences for teachers and students alike. For me, solutions and problems coexist within integralism, as do sorrows and joys. The poem below expresses my perceived connection of learning to our integral part of life’s journey.

_Trailing towards the transformative path_

In my dilemma stories, the issues are trapped in the middle of the events; where local contexts are selected, unpacked, pulled apart, processed, repacked, and presented for my participants to dwell on.

These dilemma stories lead us along multiple paths and towards multiple possibilities, to questions worth asking ourselves.

It is not a matter of right or wrong destinations but the steps taken to reach them, engaging with the case and characters while following the trail towards transformation for the learners, for them to move on and try to preserve in their mind the values of the pedagogy step by step, aiming always towards the transformative path.

(Source: My personal reflections)

In this regard, my research has focused on exploring the difference in the world of the teacher’s facilitating student learning which is brought about using the transformative learning paradigm.

_ Teaching as a Journey in Transformative Research_

In transformative learning, McGregor (2008, p. 53) asserts that “knowledge is considered to be fluid, not static. All ways of knowledge are interconnected and enriched by each other (science, lived experience, myths, spirituality, wisdom)”. Thus, by employing the transformative learning paradigm as my research framework, this research has aimed at engaging my research participants in higher order learning
through their active engagement with the dilemma learning activities. This could be an opportunity for them to believe in their own inner strengths and make a huge positive difference in their own learning. At the same time, as a researcher, I am able to think about thinking, and to write about writing, which the pedagogic literature terms as an integrative approach of parallel thinking process (De Bono, 1987) or Noam Chomsky’s metalinguistic strategies (Grenfell & Harris, 1999). In the meantime, I am trying to connect my achievements in the academic area with my identity as a teacher by rethinking and critically re-analyzing my past teaching practices.

Transformative education “involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of our thoughts, feelings, and action” (O’Sullivan, 2002, p. 11). Our experiences shape our understanding and therefore providing space for personal exploration needs to be acknowledged as part of our education. When we have all the requirements for a classroom lesson, the method of delivery and the good nature of a teacher who guides the classroom activities matter a great deal in the teaching and learning process. “Transformation is a process of learning that is embraced as a journey, a learning that is less concerned with fixed facts and has a sense of adventure” (O’Sullivan, 2008, p. xvi) also with some spiritual dimensions. This paradigm includes students’ self-awareness in relation to their connections with the spirituality, community and environment to which they belong. In this research, I sought to assist my participants to gain awareness of their role as citizens of Nepal during the class discussions and through their reflective writing.

The transformative mode of learning places the student at the centre of the learning equation (McGregor, 2008, p. 53), with a team approach, partnerships and capacity building as its core objectives (Mertens et al., 2011, p. 231). The transformative mode is mainly concerned with linking the curriculum with the natural world and other passengers in it, with an understanding of learners’ selves and their self-situations. Stephen Brookfield (2012) argues that, more than delivering the content materials, a teacher’s critical awareness is the key for her/him “to understand how students experience the process” (p. 75). This understanding, as an inclusive process, places learners at the centre of responsibility for their own learning experiences and seeks to transform them. Transformative experience, according to Kevin Pugh (2004 as cited
in Heddy & Pugh, 2015, p. 53), occurs “when students relate classroom concepts to their everyday experience in a way that facilitates a change in their interpretation of that experience”. In my view, this possibility of achieving a mental transformation in students via the classroom experience calls on us to embrace a holistic approach to our life, living, and education. John Dewey (1916) highlights the importance of teaching school subjects including language and literature to effectively integrate our students’ understanding and empower them to apply their knowledge to a real world context. Dewey (1916) proposes that we integrate knowledge and learning across all subject areas. So, when we teach, rather than isolating and limiting our teaching to any of the individual subject areas, we need to create an environment of rich interaction among students and link knowledge to their own perspectives, place and position which I have tried to capture in the following lines.

**Learning the notes**

Venturing into the unknown,  
the rhythm is bright and deep  
a moment of realisation,  
I learn to catch the true tune.

Experience that describes  
facts and finds harmony  
within my ear and heart,  
my brain and stomach.

I reflect how things  
could be done differently,  
arranging various notes and  
seeking ample opportunities.

Tuning up takes time and skill  
Each student is different. Yet, I  
as a teacher must conduct them all  
and later pass on the baton to them.

I point always these  
three fingers to myself first  
and realise every moment that  
I am learning from my mentors  
to prove to my students—  
that they are competent,  
and my task is  
not to fail them.

In an orchestra of knowledge with  
multiple ways of learning, where  
individual talents combine to keep  
the teaching tradition alive – in harmony.

(Source: My personal reflections)
Leading our students from an examination-centred approach to one that develops their thinking skills is an important concern. In this age of disruptive social change, I see enormous possibilities in the journey towards our personal, professional, and cultural transformation through the creative, critical, and collaborative kind of education. Mezirow (2012) further states, “intuition, imagination, and dreams are other ways of making meanings” (p. 75) for ourselves, when we reflect on these issues through the narratives and vignettes of our lived experience. Narratives, Haynes (1998, p. 28) writes, “are part of our story as educationists, and as humans we are continually constructing and interpreting similar stories in our lived experiences”. Such reflective narratives have kept my mind open to differing perspectives and to new information leading towards possible solutions. Nepalese students need education that helps their in-depth meaning-making process. Suiting the need of the culture, economy and politics of their own place, these students need to be prepared to solve the issues of unemployment, hunger, violence and exploitation in many forms. This process captures John Dewey’s ideal of constructive knowledge (Martin, 2003) – learning and applying acquired facts to lived reality.

*Life moves on*

Many moving moments of living:
Fairs or farewell; even leaving in tears;
they remain in our memories,
and return with happiness,
hope and handshakes, for years:
It could be a journey of contrast
between our own utility and the essence,
yet life moves on—the paradox.

(Source: My personal reflections)

*X-ray of My Teaching Beneath the Surface of Other Things*

When I chose an integral, multi-paradigmatic research design to address the research questions, I adopted autoethnography as my research methodology. Since starting my PhD research in 2014, I have tried to extend my theoretical understanding of pedagogical principles through my professional reading and research. This has allowed me to gain first-hand practical experience of how ethical dilemma stories can be used, in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language, and as a co-researcher with B.Ed. students. Indeed, Jean Hartley and John Benington (2000, p. 463) acknowledge how co-research “establishes a dialectical process of enquiry by drawing on the
complementary perspectives, interests, skills, and knowledge bases of academics and practitioners”. Consequently, my being with my research participants, was not as a detached observer but as a collaborator with them in practising the teaching method appropriate to the EDSP. I employed a pluralistic view, which respects the differences of co-existing influences in my ethical dilemma story teaching. These features include linguistic, cognitive and communicative aspects of learning English. This process of research has allowed me to engage myself and these future teachers in our understanding of the models underlying our learning practices by sharing ideas in discussion and in observed practical teaching. This process is intended to prompt the combination of different perspectives that are mutually complementary in the minds of the students, yet represents distinctly different issues such as the ones that are concerned with their economic and cultural upbringings. The success of the dilemma story process depends on the relevance of the particular story to the philosophical and developmental age, origin, prior experience and interests of the participants. These may range, according to Kohlberg’s stage sequence for moral thinking, from pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality (Crain, 1992, pp. 136-141). In examining participant feedback, some interesting age related themes were observed. While they were not linked to the original research, they contributed to the participant’s engagement with the material from a social and cultural perspectives. The younger participants predominately responded from a relativist position as they sought approval of others while the older participants like Ravi, tended to use rational, moral, individual principles and conscience in their decisions.

My experience as a teacher of English at school and university levels assisted me in accomplishing this task. As a special focus, I aimed to increase the involvement and concerns of the students in their B.Ed. course in order, to “soften boundaries between academic work of school education and life skills of community” (Smolin & Lawless, 2010, p. 178). Where such culturally relevant pedagogy is driven by students’ inquiries and concerns, these authors further claim that “multiliteracies and culturally relevant pedagogy are mutually supportive” (ibid. p. 178). Here I remember Jacques Derrida (2000, p. 85) who acknowledged “[t]here is no neutral or natural place in teaching”. Indeed, for me, flexibility of this type may be regarded as a resource for students’ learning. Moreover, I also wanted to prepare these trainee teachers as ambassadors for the concept of self-active student learning when they went out to
work with other teachers and students after graduation. I started to write two ethical dilemma stories using preexisting dilemma stories as a model (http://www.dilemmas.net.au/dilemmas-stories, 2013) to equip them for their role as ambassadors for this mode of learning. This pedagogy seeks to promote students’ understanding in how ethical decisions are made, often resulting in newer or emergent thinking.

**The Ethical Dilemma Story Method**

I have sought to develop my research into EDSP as a way of facilitating and reviewing critically my own personal and professional beliefs through utilising a more creative research paradigm. The extent of the last decade’s change in scientific development, specifically material circumstances, is constantly creating new social and cultural issues to which different kinds of response are sought. The technological advancement has significant complications in many aspects of learning activities where, according to Downey and Kelly (1986, p. 152), “[t]raditional forms of morality cannot provide these answers because they were developed by people who were never aware of the questions”. I am aware that our students stand at a turning point where they are seeking to move away from relying just on old learning habits and are interested in becoming more acquainted with the complexities of rapid modernisation and globalisation. This rapid change increasingly requires flexibility and innovative thinking to prepare our students accordingly. Hence, EDSP has the potential to develop multiple ways of identifying with national and local communities and their common and separate ethical challenges. The ethical dilemma story approach, “aims to enhance its quality and relevance to modern-day students by ‘adding value’ to their learning” (Settelmaier et al., 2010, p. 2). The pedagogy provides a foundation for learning where teachers provide instructional methods for attempting to resolve conflicts between competing moral imperatives. Students then empathise with characters and their actions within a story in order to critically think and reflect about the sequence of events of the dilemma.

In my research, I have also explored the ethical dilemma story method as a learning process and as an educational tool, and have examined the significance of the ethical dilemma story method as a potential component of effective pedagogy. The ethical dilemma story method has a considerable history in the work of Piaget (1932), and in Kohlberg’s theory on moral development (Crain, 1992), as well as in recent research
by Settelmaier (Settelmaier et al. 2010). The ethical dilemma stories involve real-life situations aimed at resolving dilemmas similar to some of the participants’ life experiences. The participants were able to see the relevance to someone or to some moment in their lives that could bring to mind their own lived experiences of ethical issues through the processes of reflection on the ethical dilemma faced by the story protagonists. Also, there seems a strongly felt need in education circles to find a new way of including ethical-moral teaching so that it is not neglected in school curricula. Through practical observation and discussions with teaching colleagues, I noted the decline in the teaching of ethical principles in schools. For this reason, I have advocated the benefits of ethical dilemma stories to develop a greater awareness of ethics in education.

Hence, this ethical dilemma story method sought to engage and attempted to develop learners’ critical reflection on ethical and related cultural understandings. Moreover, the participants were encouraged to share, evaluate, and explain their understandings for solutions instead of concentrating only on solutions proposed by the teacher. The aim of EDSP is to prompt the participating pre-service teachers to see that ethical dilemma stories can be framed to genuinely represent Nepali culture (see chapter 2) instead of, foreign, mainly English, cultural contexts. In this way, I hoped to stimulate more effective participant involvement in all the stages of the EDSP seeking also to promote active engagement of all the pre-service teachers as participants in my research.

**Composing two ethical dilemma stories**

The centuries-long underlying concepts of traditional farming and livelihood are changing in Nepal. For instance, people from remote hill villages migrate to the cities and lands on the plain. Traditional farms are emptying out as each day, the youth are leaving their villages to travel to different places in Nepal, India and overseas seeking long-term employment opportunities. Suresh Gautam (2017), in his PhD research about the life for these young people in Nepal, asserts that youth experience difficulty in adjusting to city life and how they develop their resilience to cope with such adversities as possible transformative learners. Nepalese people’s leaving of homes is actively visible, whereas such migration is only at the physical level. They may leave their place of birth but their deep-rooted emotions, values, rites, rituals, and cultural
knowledge and practices remain within them. In this changing context, learning is understood as an active individual process. In contrast to, the traditional behaviourist approach (Skinner, 1974) which often appeared in reward formats like stickers and candies or even it could have been as terrible as detention-like associated penalties. Thus, such programmed transferring of knowledge, or what Freire (1970) described as banking education, also needs to change. Education should be a preparation for life, such as character building and enhancing the self-confidence and happiness of young people. Today’s youths need to be aware of oppressive practices and construct knowledge by applying the information at hand as well as family traditions and values of human relationships to address current social issues of their lived world.

In this research, I have attempted to understand the process of knowledge construction and how it is generated in the Nepalese cultural context. I have tried to identify, describe, and explain my assumptions about the main features of my own journey of professional learning as a teacher, including key aspects of myself as both a socially active citizen of Nepal and as an emergent teacher/learner. In a similar context, the pre-service teachers in this research will be accountable for the educational formation of their students who will in all likelihood be a very powerful resource in nation-building. These teachers will be in a position to introduce the concept of possibility through a spirit of enquiry in the students. Thus, the participants might blossom into creative enlightened citizens more able to act for the benefit of the nation. The development of students’ self-esteem and of their social capabilities should enable them to prepare themselves, in their turn, to contribute to civic virtue in protecting liberty and political equality in the advancement of the future generations (Dotts, 2012). Teachers, therefore, have a responsibility for preparing students adequately through the development of emerging paradigms such as transformative education.

Educators worldwide give regular consideration to the possible outcomes of their investment of time, effort and resources, and seek to improve their practice in their field of employment. My role as a writer of the stories and a teacher-cum-researcher was not only about getting students through some final examination but encouraging them to think for themselves and to engage in the more creative sides of their learning process. Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 150) share their view that “if a teacher understands (can tell) the story of her own education, she will better understand (tell
the stories of) her students' education”. In this way, I focused my stories, which are grounded in the classroom experience, on promoting a self-active learning process in the students by its effective components and their joint effect in building the students’ character in its ethical dimensions.

In the first phase of this research, I reviewed the B.Ed. curriculum of Everest University, Nepal (see Appendix 1), which provided an overview of the prospective student audience and enabled me to plan my story lessons appropriate to the age, class level, and competency of those students. I then developed teaching materials including the two ethical dilemma stories, titled The dilemma of life and how we live and The dilemma of leaving home, both set in the socio-cultural context of Nepal that reflected the life experiences of the majority of my participants in this research. The structure of the dilemma stories was adjusted to align with the class situation and the structure of the comprehensive curriculum and the requirements of the research project. Accordingly, I utilised the key features in the teaching algorithm such as: (1) the language of the stories is kept simple to enable the students to immediately grasp the meaning of the story with sufficient links to their life experiences; (2) both of the stories present a single central dilemma; (3) the stories are open-ended regarding the best solutions to the ethical dilemma; and (4) the stories are typically structured in several parts with dilemma situations at each interval (Settelmaier, 2003). So, the ethical dilemma stories, which I composed for my PhD research purposes appropriate situations and familiar Nepali themes in oral stories based on social justice concepts emanating from the students’ home cultures. Thus, the stories embody local, real-life Nepali scenarios to encourage the B.Ed. students to value their self-knowledge which makes them understand and tackle the ongoing issues easily using the English language as a platform for expression. These issues resonate with their course requirements (see Appendix 1). Hence, I took the ethical dilemma story method as a strategy for allowing students to reflect on the central content of the lessons, participate, remember and, most importantly, understand the lesson issues, relating them to their prior knowledge and home culture.

I have seen and experienced the presence of ethical dilemmas in the daily lives of people in Nepal, and this proximity gave me the original inspiration to write these ethical dilemma stories. The stories have also tried to resonate with my participants’ lived experiences, for a visible transformation where preciously silenced voices can
be heard and analysed through support and care. Local Nepali contexts were used to enable the students to concentrate on the central ethical question. When foreign contexts were used the students had to spend valuable time trying to picture the foreign context, impeding their ability to focus on the central ethical dilemma.

The dilemma situations in the stories were designed to create empathy in the participants with the story protagonists prompting their consideration of the ethical and societal aspects related to the raised ethical issues. They were designed to engage learners through good lesson delivery and evident motivation in the teacher to assist them in diverse ways of thinking about a specific topic. The purpose in writing such stories was to prepare learners to understand better the concepts of what may be expected of ethical behaviour through the clarification of the various directions bearing upon any planned discussion on how to resolve the ethical dilemmas.

Although the stories may not have been an exact fit to the existing B.Ed. curriculum (see Appendix 1) because of some administrative restraints, their inclusion was an attempt to explore the connections between place, politics, on-the-spot observations, and obstacles of Nepalese village lives regarding ethical decision-taking. This area was an important consideration within the project’s design process. I considered how the two ethical dilemma stories could best fit into the existing curriculum, and what other possible implications they might have such as their contribution to learning in the EFL context. The dilemma stories were aimed to fit with and reinforce the self-reflective aspects of the thinking behaviours of students in their learning of all school subjects. When presented in the classroom setting, these stories had an extended aim to connect the ethical insights gained by the students in the classroom to ethical issues in their day-to-day lives based on their cultural self-awareness. I desired to encourage students to reflect critically on who they are in order to develop their self-knowledge through this process of self-reflection. This critical self-awareness relates to the theme of personal relevance during my reporting of the research findings (see chapter 5).

Both of the ethical dilemma stories have interesting plots aimed at engaging participants in generating new types of knowledge according to their background culture and contexts, to engage with the story, and to make sense of the dilemma posed. I was aware that the ethical dilemma stories would require my participants to engage with various socio-cultural issues. Fullan (2007) asserts that positive
educational change in many disciplines is possible through the use of new and revised materials and teaching approaches. So, my research into ethical dilemma stories could hopefully contribute to raising issues for further research into the English curriculum in Nepal and other non-Western countries experiencing rapid globalisation (Harvey, 1995). As the manifestation of my autoethnographic experience, I have tried to create compelling, unique scenarios within my stories. Each situation is designed to involve the participants and contribute to discussing the ethical dilemma situations of the characters in the stories, thus creating better understanding of the main theme.

Contemporary themes, including physical, emotional, and socio-cultural issues were raised in both of the composed dilemma stories. Physical themes cover aspects including family life, money, and emotional themes concerned with relationships. Also considered in this category are socio-cultural matters including democracy, freedom, sustainability, climate change, political processes, remittances, and nationalism. The first story, The dilemma of life and how we live, centres on a dilemma of an economically poor family in Nepal whose members struggle to decide whether or not to continue the treatment of their daughter who was lying unconscious in a hospital bed with little hope for recovery.

**The dilemma of life and how we live**

Characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maili</td>
<td>—an elderly woman in her late 60s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhandai</td>
<td>—an elderly man in his early 70s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junu</td>
<td>—their elder daughter (who had already died)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muna</td>
<td>—their younger daughter who is in a private hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidur</td>
<td>—Muna’s husband (died a year ago)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda</td>
<td>—Muna’s elder daughter (four-years old)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidur</td>
<td>—Muna’s younger daughter (one-year old)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Oh, this life; what sort of life is this?” Maili, a mother of two, screams after bottling up her feelings for a long time. After eating alone, she has a lot to complain about to herself this evening. “My poor husband has not eaten anything since yesterday”, she adds. Dhandai, her husband, was at the hospital waiting to see their daughter Muna, who had met with a serious accident the previous month ending up in a coma. The doctors say, “It is unlikely that she will recover”. So, there is almost no hope for her.

Muna had fallen off a cliff while collecting fodder in the neighbouring woods and had received a severe head injury. Due to her injury and the subsequent lying in the hospital bed for a period of more than three months, her health had deteriorated rapidly. Her family life had been very successful until the year before. Muna’s husband Bidur had been working for the past several years in the Arabian Gulf, and
earning a good salary. He used to send money home very frequently, and never failed to send an extra amount for the family to celebrate Dashain each year. Unfortunately, the family’s luck had turned for the worse when Bidur became seriously ill and had died over there. Last year, Bidur’s body, wrapped in a shroud within a coffin, had been returned to his village in Nepal. The family had lost its only bread winner. By coincidence, just a week after Bidur’s death, Binda, the youngest child had been born. Since then, Dhandai, the grandfather, had had no other choice but to look after the little family consisting of Muna and her two children: Melinda was three and Binda, a new-born baby.

Muna’s hospitalisation had led to more and more financial problems for the family. Increasing debt had also affected the family which had earlier lost its eldest daughter Junu in a landslide which had left her three young children in the care of the same grandparents.

Maili finds herself in the situation, along with her husband Dhandai, of having the responsibility of supporting their injured daughter Muna and her two children as well as the three children of Junu. Yet Maili and Dhandai are already elderly and not in a strong position to physically or mentally deal with this heavy burden.

Dhandai is the one who stays at the hospital, day and night, with Muna. Seeing her helpless body lying there, he feels certain that she is going to die. Maili murmurs that she cannot bear the thought of losing her only daughter, Muna. Yet, they have the impression that Muna is saying to them: “Help me, reduce my sufferings, and let me depart.”

Several days pass by. When Melinda, the elder child asks her grandmother, Maili about her mummy’s condition, Maili says that, “Muna has gone to work far away and will one day come back home with money, gifts and better prospects for you both”. But, saying this makes Maili feel even more disheartened and she goes into a corner to have a little cry by herself. The following day, she manages to find someone to look after her two granddaughters and goes to the hospital to see her very sick daughter. As she enters her daughter’s room, she utters a loud cry; she cannot bear the situation which appears before her eyes: Muna lying in the hospital bed and Dhandai sitting by the bed in depressed silence.

The head-nurse, hearing Maili cry out, comes in and asks them not to make any noise as it is an intensive care ward. Maili then gets up to leave the room.

(By now Muna has been in hospital for more than three months, there has been no real improvement and she remains in a coma. The doctors say that there is no likely possibility of any improvement. This situation raises challenging issues for Maili and Dhandai.

Suddenly, Maili has new idea: “Should I ask the doctors to help Muna pass away peacefully? Also, what about letting the little girls see their mother’s face before she passes away?”

She proposes to her husband that he talks to the doctor about removing the life-support systems. Dhandai, becomes very upset and sad at having to say a final good bye to his daughter; he goes to look for a doctor and says:

“Doctor, can we talk for a while?”

“Oh, sure. What’s the matter?”
“Muna, our daughter has not got any better since she was admitted; she is still in a coma. She has no ascertainable chance of recovery from this situation. What do you think? Do you see any point in leaving her in this situation or should we remove the life-support systems?”

“Well, I fully understand your difficult situation.” says the doctor. He adds, “May be you can wait until tomorrow for our advice.”

The doctor is not the only medic who needs to be involved in taking the decision about Muna’s treatment. Before being qualified, doctors take an oath to save lives to the best of their ability and not bring life deliberately to an end. However, this case seems very difficult for everyone: the doctors, the nurses and the family. The matter will have to go before the hospital ethical panel.

My second dilemma story, The dilemma of leaving home, describes the situation of a typical, hard-working mother in Nepal’s village setting who is desperate to seek social, emotional, ethical, as well as monetary support. At one crucial point, she even finds it hard to decide whether to accept the moneylender’s proposal to marry her young daughter or to let the daughter leave their village. Both hold risk, but an opportunity in the city could help them to survive and be able to pay off the loan.

The dilemma of leaving home

Characters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shanti</td>
<td>— the mother in her late 30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saraswati (Saru)</td>
<td>— an eighteen-year-old daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal</td>
<td>— Shanti’s husband (lives in Malaysia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mukhiya-baa</td>
<td>— the village moneylender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The woman, Shanti, is speaking. She says, “Another rainy day. I should plant the paddy today.” Saru, her daughter appears and says— “Aama¹, aama – the school has arranged an educational tour. Head-sir has asked the students to bring along 5000 rupees as it is the last day to pay for the trip when we go to school” and I forgot to tell you earlier.

“Oh, good. you’ve woken up early today”! The mother says softly.

“Yes, I also have to weave a flower-garland for the farewell of our Maths-teacher. Today is her last day at our school”.

“Did you say 5000 rupees for an educational tour?”

“Yes, Aama. I have to take it with me today and give it to our class-coordinator.”

“Saru, where can I find 5000 rupees right now? I need some time for this. The money we got from the potato crop has gone to pay for the rice and kerosene-oil. You know

---

¹ Mother.
we already owe so much money to many relatives, and we also owe a lot to Mukhiya-baa¹ the moneylender. No one will be ready to lend us 5000 rupees immediately.”

“Please, Aama — I need the money. Otherwise, the teacher will exclude me from participating. Head-sir has asked all the students to bring the 5000 rupees along today.” Saru, the daughter, is not happy. She adds, “I also need some extra money for lunch this afternoon.”

“Listen, Saru, don’t get upset. I have prepared curry and rice for you to eat at home before you go to school. You are too young to get disappointed, but old enough to understand the position I am in. I think it is the right time to share some important aspects of our family life today. I will tell you everything about how we have been getting along until now.

Years ago, when I was your age, my mother told me that I had had an affluent childhood. Our parents were comparatively rich and that could be the reason we never had to finish the food that was cooked for dinner each evening. All excess food would go into the container for us to feed to the cattle the next day. Sometimes, I reckon that God also kept a record and now I am paying for all that waste with this meager existence of ours.

I was only eleven when I came to this house as a married woman. I became pregnant with you when I was 18. Although we did not have enough land for growing all the food we needed, at least, we owned a small house in the middle of the village; life was simple but sweet. Mangal, your daddy was a good man. He believed that a wise human would not worry too much about having assets and acquiring land. His belief was that “money is something like the west-wind that comes in and goes away”.

However, as you grew up and time passed by, we realised that we needed some greater financial security to support the family better. We decided to take out a loan and invest the money to send your father to Malaysia to work. Your dad left home for Malaysia aiming to earn more money when you were five. He wanted to earn enough to pay off the debt that we owed to Mukhiya-baa and then buy a good piece of land in Dhading Besi.

As Mangal set off on his new journey, I also left this village carrying you on my back. I found a piece of uncultivated land by the Thopal River in Dhading Besi to settle on temporarily. I used to work on different construction sites; roads, houses, bridges, and other projects. Whatever job I found, I was glad to accept. I did not hesitate to take a job as a member of a daily-wage crew, even the heavy work of loading and unloading stones from the river on to trucks. I sometimes worked as a housemaid in the houses of some rich people. Though it certainly paid a little extra money, the additional job of working as a maid, helping to wash clothes and clean houses, was very wearing. For many years I continued struggling on in this way. Maybe that was the reason why my health started showing serious problems. I hardly managed to cover our day-to-day household expenses this way and I realised that I could not send you to a good school in Dhading. The idea of a good school for you became a far-fetched dream for me because of the cost involved in admission, monthly fees, and books.

For the last 11 years, I kept receiving letters from your father saying he would come back bringing good fortune for all of us. But in fact your father could not save much in Malaysia, and as I was only getting a survival income; life was very tough for us. I

¹ An elder (usually a male) in the traditional Nepali village setting.
still managed to feed both of us besides paying the interest on the loan we had taken out from Mukhiya-baa. Also I was persistent in working to pay off the loan, for I had no choice as I wanted to be regarded as a good and trustworthy person.

I believed that our days of glory would come once, Mangal, your father returned home with some money. However, to our misfortune, the message arrived last year that your father had decided to live permanently with another woman there. Thus my only hope faded away but our difficulties remained the same, the loan and our stressful lifestyle. People blamed me for creating my own problems by my sending my husband overseas. Some people even told me that I should look for another man. But I decided to return to this village and kept working on our farm. I thought about your future. I have cherished the memory of those days before Mangal went to Malaysia, when we had hope in our lives. But perhaps I erred in concentrating too much on getting more money. I remember the days when your father and I quarrelled and those days when we laughed together; the days when we had good times and those when we had bad times. Even though I truly loved him, I did not really understand him well. Saru, when you raise your voice when talking to people who love and care for you, it can hurt them very deeply. I only wish I had spoken more softly to Mangal and had not complained so much about the miserable living conditions.

We still owe a large sum to Mukhiya-baa, and your father no longer takes any responsibility for us. You see Saru, it hurts me so much to reveal the truth to you but I cannot keep telling you anymore that your father will return home soon. It is simply not true. I have been managing to pay the interest on a regular basis and, indeed, I need to pay off the loan as soon as possible. Decency is an ornament for mankind, and trust is something that we need to cherish throughout our lives. So I need to repay the loan and I have been trying hard to earn and save every rupee possible. Had you told me at least a week ago, I could probably have managed to find the money somehow to pay for the school excursion trip. But I have just spent what money I had on the rice and kerosene oil. Be as polite as you can and tell your teacher that you will bring the money later if they really want you to participate.

Saru is unhappy and says, “Can we go to and see Mukhiya-baa today, and request another loan?"

The mother thinks about approaching Mukhiya-baa on the same morning to ask for a loan of the 5000 rupees. She and her daughter Saru go to his house and find him sitting in his courtyard, and greet him.

“Namaste, Baje.”

“Shanti… I am blessed by your visit. Sit down, sit down. Isn’t she your daughter? She has grown so tall. She looks very beautiful. What has made you come to my home today?”

Oh, Mukhiya-baa, we again need some money, this time to pay for an educational trip that her school has organised. (Both mother and Mukhiya-baa continuously gaze at Saru).

“Money, money and money—don’t you see me in any other light than this?” The old man’s expression suddenly darkens. “You have already had a large amount from me.

---

1 A common Nepali greeting to address an elderly person.
And, what about Mangal? I heard that he has already settled into a new life in Malaysia. Is this true? You already have difficulty paying off the existing debt yet you still wish to borrow more from me.”

“Mukhiya-baa, I will keep working hard and once Saru, my daughter, gets a good job after her study, we will work together to pay off the debt.”

“You mean you want to send your grown-up daughter to the city to earn money?”

“Yes, Mukhiya-baa. We cannot bear the thought of the loan continuing on and the accumulating interest has been haunting me for a long time.”

“Don’t send your daughter to the city. You should learn from the experience when you did the same to Mangal. People become different when they leave their homes and their comfort zones. I never thought it would take so long for you to pay off my money. Mangal always seemed so trustworthy and honest to me. You both had promised it would not take long to pay back my money. I am sorry but I have to tell you that I need all my money back in a month’s time. If I had bought a piece of land with that money 12 years ago, its price would have tripled by now.”

However, starting to fancy the woman’s beautiful daughter, he proposed a bargain. He said he was getting old and he needed someone to show love and care for him. He would forgive the woman’s debt if he could marry her daughter. Both Shanti and Saru were horrified by this proposal because of the big difference in his and Saru’s ages.

Speechless, Shanti and Saru prepare to leave Mukhiya’s place and Saru drops the idea of going on the educational tour. Shanti whispers, “He is so different than before, the idiot. How can he, an old scoundrel, expect the hand of my young daughter”? Shanti and Saru both sense his desirous eye. Every time they look at him, he tries to bring some emotional pressure to bear on them both.

He says: “What’s the use of my money if I cannot enjoy my life at this stage? And am I not willing to give Saru a much more affluent life? Am I not prepared to be a sharing person?”

Promising him that it won’t be long before they pay off the debt, they both return back home. Mukhiya adds pressure on them to pay off the amount within the short deadline. He even tells them that he will take legal measures if they fail to pay off the debt within a month. Days pass by. Saru takes the School Leaving Certificate test. She does well in the test and becomes qualified for a primary teacher’s job in the village. She applies to many local schools for a post but nobody offers her a place.

At present, Shanti cannot think any further. She cannot sleep. One option she has is to send Saru to the city to look for work. She knows that people who leave their homes do not only leave home, they also leave behind so many other important things: culture, values, traditions, and images and above all close relationships. It is even riskier for daughters like Saru, who without a doubt looks more attractive than most other girls in the village. In spite of a host of difficult considerations, Saru basically shares her mother’s view that it is best for the family for Saru to move to the city.

These two dilemma stories, written for the purposes of my PhD research, have tried to sufficiently address the requirements for ethical dilemma stories to attract the curiosity and concern of my research participants about ethical issues. The stories
have used simple and locally intelligible ethical issues that are likely to arise within Nepali families. The subject matter was intended to be set in the Nepali context to promote lively ethical discussion among the students in the class. Such environments for class discussion of ethical issues “serve to nurture the basic qualities of autonomy, connectedness and transcendence in developmentally appropriate ways” (Starratt, 1994, p. 68). They were, therefore, aimed at encouraging the continued involvement of the participants in the EDSP, even after their involvement in my fieldwork had ended.

**The use of the dilemma stories in classroom teaching**

As a teacher of English in Nepal, I am interested in the potential of storytelling, narrative writing, performativity and aesthetic practice in both my teaching and research activities. The teaching of English as an occupation is highly valued in the continuously changing social, economic, and technological context of Nepal. Individual experience and maturity of thought affects different people in different ways; so, for the teachers to be successful in their teaching, they need to have a strong grasp of social, cultural and political contexts to guide their classroom practices. Deborah Bieler and Leslie Burns (2017, p. 150) assert that “English teachers position students to consider how individuals and institutions are implicated in it all, how writing reflects and changes how people think over time, and how students may want to seek justice through their own literate acts”. In a way, this is a similar reflection relevant to my situation.

An ethical dilemma arises when a person is asked to decide between various moral options. These kinds of provocations allow students to consider alternatives possibilities informed by ethical decision-making processes. The discussions involve a greater understanding of our beliefs in ethical matters as well as social justice, awareness, fairness, rational independence, care for self and others, mutual concern, respect and long-term benefits as the key (see Appendices 5 & 6).

In EDSP, the teacher, as a mentor works with learners to utilize their prior knowledge in achieving alternative solutions in the situations contained in the dilemma story contexts. It enables teachers to become more accepting of potential contributions from the students in comparison to the more conventional didactic methods of subject
teaching. Having an understanding of the method of EDSP helps the teacher to become more appropriately flexible in her/his teaching. The teacher supports the learners to reflect on what they are learning, which goals can be achieved, and the analytic techniques that can be improved in articulating the essential concepts and inquiry methods involved in arriving at a solution. The teacher’s role is to help the students to reconsider their existing knowledge-base by providing them with the opportunity to compare their answers with those of other class members in the various class discussion sessions. The ethical dilemma story method has the capacity to call upon students to embrace challenge and uncertainty in attempting to deal with the dilemmas. In this way, students are prompted to move from seeking to make right/wrong decisions to more subtle consideration of the ethical issues and positive responsiveness to their peers’ ideas and judgments.

The experience of wrestling with dilemmas is intended to help students become more resilient, thoughtful and creative in dealing with new problems. In fact, the skills of thinking outside the box, critical-lateral thinking and problem-solving can assist learners to better understand real-life issues. Moreover, my verbal expression of personal emotions and experiences, as Reed-Danahay (1997) proposed, is one of the possible strengths of autoethnographic research. However, I have also kept in mind the need not to move too far away from the tenets of autoethnography as they apply to the recordings of my impressions and understanding of the expression of these pre-service teachers’ ideas. I have included direct quotes from them and excerpts from my personal reflections to produce what Van Manen (1996) calls a ‘realist’ version of the tale being told. My role as the teacher is to assist the participating pre-service teachers to be active in their learning and knowledge construction. Ken Tobin and Deborah Tippins (1993, p. 9), indeed, acknowledge that “the teacher’s role is to mediate the learning of students”. I saw my role in promoting student learning as making the best use possible of reading materials, discussions at the class level, and, at teacher-student, and student-student levels. I also gave importance to setting reading assignments structured to sequence the steps in the learning in a logical and student-friendly order. Throughout these activities, I also sought to promote self-discovery and reflection of students on the subject matter and their own skills of problem-solving. These were some of the factors that I tried to incorporate in my everyday teaching to document my on-the-spot responses.
In my role as a storyteller-teacher, I initially focused on raising participants’ interest in the stories. Unlike traditional classes, my presence was different. I sought to incorporate my own social, political and cultural awareness as a facilitator in an ethical dilemma story teaching format, while working towards a style of pedagogy by making use of some illustrative, concrete vignettes of my experience. My participants were confronted with the dilemma questions and actively involved in discussions, along with individual and collaborative reflections. They were also encouraged to identify with the main characters in the stories in order to reflect on the various decisions they made. Given these considerations, such individual reflections were followed by sharing and dialogue in pairs and in the group. I then tried to summarise some important aspects of typical Nepali village life reflected in the two ethical dilemma stories described earlier.

During the past decade, EDSP has established itself as a prominent subject of research about our decision making based on the much earlier work of Piaget (1932), and, later, of Kohlberg (Crain, 1992). Considering the judgment of actions, for example, one case was presented by Piaget among children in which an apparently well-intentioned character broke 15 cups as an accident and another case in which a bad-intentioned character broke one cup. Younger children (aged 6–7) judged the character who broke 15 cups and produced serious damage and to be more punishable, whereas older children judged the bad-intentioned one to be more punishable for the purposeful damage. Similarly, Piaget (1932) observed children of different ages playing marbles, and asked questions about whether they followed the rules of the game. Eventually, he found no rules in children younger than five while there were visibly fixed rules to make decisions among those between five and ten. When the children crossed the age of ten they were able to think of their own rules and recognise that these could be implemented by common consensus in coming up with their decisions. Piaget’s (1932) work explains how young children, before making any decisions, would make judgments of the consequences, based on the reality and relativity of their behaviour, only starting to think for themselves as they grow older. In a similar way, Kohlberg (1963) theorised moral reasoning as people progress through six identifiable stages, which are grouped into three levels. The pre-conventional stage where people act out of fear and obedience; conventional where people are more conscious of social approval, law and order; and post-conventional
where people’s principles for the welfare of others matter more in how they decide to do what they do. He talked about how individual mental maturity and social interaction as an aspect of person’s overall development play a central role in our thinking processes.

However, theorists like Carol Gilligan (2003) questioned Piaget’s views trying to “equate male development with child development” (Gilligan, 2003, p. 10). She was critical that Kohlberg (1963), with all his male participants, in “a study of eighty four boys” (p. 18), had put more focus on the concept of individual rights and justice while making moral choices. Unlike Kohlberg (1963), Gilligan (2003) highlighted women’s interpersonal feelings like ethics of care, compassion, belongingness, and relationships within a circle of responsibility that signifies their maturity. Haynes (1998, p. 22) elaborates that “[w]omen, Gilligan argued, often choose to react to a situation by trying to assess what action would cause least harm to all within the web of proximal relations, such as a family or a known community”. Gilligan’s (2003) view was that women were not inferior in their personal or moral development, but different as they considered the impact of their decisions on others, not only focussing on justice or objective logic.

Hence, moving ahead from Europe and Australia to Nepal in the practice of dilemma stories in teaching and learning, my present research built on recently completed research by scholars like Elisabeth Settelmaier, Peter Taylor, and Julia Hill (2010) especially in terms of the application of EDSP to school subjects ranging from Science teaching to English language teaching. This pedagogical approach appears to have potential to change existing problems into projects by using dilemma stories, while it also has the capacity to engage the participants and myself in a deliberate process of active, transformative learning. It uses the ethical dilemma story method to transform students’ ethical awareness, including my own, and to foster the understanding in other teachers of the nature of the teaching-learning process in dealing with ethical issues. This process, as Riessman (2008) highlights, encourages students to learn how to act and speak out in social situations on political issues and thus contribute to the evolution of such ideas in their countries. Riessman (2008, p. 8) states that this is “evidenced by the ways stories invariably circulate in sites where social movements are forming”. When the future also depends on our understanding
that demands global solutions for complex issues, such awareness can contribute to changing our lives. Heightened awareness may also positively change the way we see the world.

My research is aimed at linking with the pre-existing knowledge, values, and life-world of the individual students. This allows the research to make a difference by making transformation dependent on the individuals’ active construction of their understanding of particular topics. The EDSP study sessions in this research, have sought to prepare the participants to become more capable as inter-disciplinary, critical, reflective thinkers who can comfortably work in multidisciplinary teams. This premise is based on their experience in sharing in and respecting the views of peers even when these differ from their own. The sessions, therefore, involved conversations among the participants, which can be taken as a model for interactive discussions in their future teaching. These horizontal, interactive sessions included vivid demonstrations of how to implement new strategies for the classroom for the participants who were the future English language teachers in Nepal. Ethical dilemma stories provided a more engaging learning experience compared to traditional transmission approaches to teaching and learning. Engaging in ethical dilemma story learning processes based on familiar situations, the teacher-student interactions were vividly affected as the focus changed from having to understand culturally foreign situations to debating and discussing the issues using the English language. As pre-service teachers, all research participants had a distinct and valuable role to play, it was a fruitful transformative conclusion with outcomes that could be useful in their everyday teaching. The research, therefore, has been an ongoing process of action and reflection for these participating pre-service teachers and for myself as an agent of change.

**Fieldwork implications of EDSP**

Prior to starting my session, it was important to note what Farhana Sultana (2007) proposes about researcher positionality, where I too had some key concerns regarding the transferability of the research. I prepared myself to thoughtfully take field notes by also recording my observations with appropriate tools, like tape recorder, paper, and pencil, to document my reflective field notes with my teacher-cum-participant presence. Before entering into the EDSP lesson, I initially gave the students some
glimpses of dilemma situations and facilitated their understanding of the dilemma situations through prior explanation of the vocabulary and key concepts involved in the story that we were going to discuss that day. In my introduction and explanation of the meanings of new words, I sought to confer on the students the beneficial effects of having a range of new, often more technical terms, which served to encapsulate a range of meanings and concepts.

For instance, becoming familiar with a new vocabulary would hopefully increase the pre-service teachers focus on higher-order insights of their surroundings. These new concepts were intended to enable them to think in a more critically aware way about their intellectual insights. One word may represent one concept which is different from another and thus achieve a clearer understanding of aspects of the word in which they live and study. This way of looking at the role of language within pedagogy is relevant to any effective teaching in the contemporary era, a concept rooted in human nature. Indeed, a principle enunciated by our Greek philosophical forebears, some 2500 years ago, was that the difference between phenomena was what gave them individuality and their distinctive meaning. I have Heraclitus in mind (Hussey, 1982). This has implications for pedagogy by helping students to form new concepts which have a specific meaning and can be dialectically related to other concepts which have specific meanings and epistemological status.

I have learnt that when students are only driven by a set of right or wrong answers, it deprives them from thinking critically and creatively. I am now more inclined to involve students in the decision making process, for we need to educate them not to make them the slaves of the consumerist corporate culture. I hope to change the typical Old is Gold tradition that is rife in the Nepalese school system which believes in guessing examination questions and preparing students with so called correct answers.

During the initial fieldwork phase of this research, which was primarily an implementation phase, I, as a researcher, explored what were the particular learning experiences of the participants working actively in analysing their own moral views from their own learning space. Here, it is relevant for me to quote Denzin (2014) who states that “the purpose of teaching and learning is to oppose racial, sexual, and class boundaries in order to achieve the gift of freedom; the gift of love, self-caring; the gift
of empowerment” (p. 67) within the overall school curriculum. The fieldwork began with the discussion of my two carefully written ethical dilemma stories and my explicit conceptualisation of how participants would perceive EDSP in their learning by emphasising the need to see the dilemma situation from the eyes of each significant protagonist. The participants accepted to act in the role of secondary school students during our teaching and discussion sessions on ethical dilemma learning. In the following extract, I have written how I started my first lesson:

“Namaste. I am Kashiraj. I was born in a similar village like yours, some 65 to 70 kilometres north from here, in the upper mountainous hills of Nimarukharka. I am here with two dilemma stories, which I wrote for the purpose of my PhD research”.

“Have you eaten your breakfast?” I asked every participant as I was trying to adjust myself comfortably among the familiar settings of the B.Ed. classroom. “Not yet”, everyone said.

“Okay, we’ll eat something from here”. Then, I presented a bowl of mixed dried nuts to them and took the conversation further. As I asked them to pick up some nuts from the bowl, I also told them that they needed to be aware of what they were choosing. To involve every participant in an activity of speaking, I asked them to take a turn in explaining the reason of choosing the particular type of nuts. All participating teachers started to unpack themselves. Suniti said she liked sweet ones so she chose raisins. Pallavi said she loved nuts and she chose almonds and peanuts. Then we moved on and tried to open up even more extensively about introducing ourselves, and about our own interests. I also asked the participants to ask me about my background as a teacher and encouraged them to share similar stories from their experience to highlight the fact that the profession of teaching has rich oral and other traditions that are located in everyone’s everyday experience. By listening to participants’ comments, I checked out with them what they were interested in besides reading and writing stories and what would usually put them off from these activities.

Today, I will be telling you the first story: The dilemma of life and how we live. Oh, listen: I will be splitting the stories into several parts which means you will hear the first part of the story today, then there will be some activities to follow with”.

Suddenly, Ravi stands up and says, “I think you should tell the story today and we can do the activities in our home”.

Pallavi had the similar opinion to Ravi. She added, “Yes, let’s hear the story today”. Then, I explained to them the reason behind my plan to break up the stories into parts and we definitely required some free time to discuss the issues raised in the stories. I asked all my participants to try to put themselves in the shoes of the characters in the story. I also asked them to see if they found the situation similar or different to themselves and to other people they knew. They all seemed puzzled but nodded their heads and said, “Please (then) tell the story”.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 28 Sept. 2015)

The stories were long and tried to encompass the deep dilemma in the minds of characters. Therefore, instead of telling the whole story in one day each ethical
dilemma story ran over four or five two-hour-lessons and allowed us more time to think critically and discuss the dilemma. After the first class, I sat down and thought of these research participants. Starratt (1994, p. 115) suggests that it is important “for teachers to share stories of their success and failures …”. Such sharing contributes to the knowledge repository while helping to reveal what I have become as an educator and gain more insights into my teaching. The following is what I wrote after my first day’s interaction with my participants:

Some of the participants have shared that, one day, they too want to become a ‘good’ teacher like what I am today. I take my memory back to those days when I was a student like them. Honestly, looking at their happy faces, I wish I was one of them – I admit. They all seemed to have admired my story and praised my style of ‘active’ teaching. I was fully comfortable with working with the participants and so were they. This was the end of Day One. I, then, asked the participants to be prepared to participate in the ethical dilemma story sessions on the following day.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 28 Sept. 2015)

Students in a traditional classroom could be swayed to generate a response according to what the textbook said or what the teacher would consider true and final, something like a use of power and silence rather than assuming students’ multiple sets of argument. But, the units of study in my employment of the EDSP also promoted intensive ethical dilemma learning, where students would investigate ethical issues individually, in pairs and in groups. Knowing that “Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage” (Freire, 2007a, p. 33), I tried to create the similar Freirean dialogic classroom environment infused with a spirit of radical love for the benefit of participants and of myself while challenging the status quo and promising new ways of thinking that embraced our views through critical reflective practices. Ramón Flecha (2013, p. 23) writes, “[r]adical love is at the basis of the real transformation of education, societies and individuals. This will only be possible if critical educators dialogue with the people whose voices have been silenced, marginalized, disenfranchised”. This narrative style strategy, has offered us a footstool on which to stand and develop our ability to know ourselves better.

True education, adds Antonia Darder (2009, p. 568) whose work is inspired by the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, resides within “deeply reflective interpretation of the dialectical relationship between our cultural existence as individuals and our political and economic existence as social beings”. Thus, I gave the participating pre-service teachers ample time to engage deeply with the subject matter instead of
instantly demanding a final ‘yes/no’ dilemma decision. I was able to encourage my participants to adopt higher order thinking during the group-work activities and saw active collaboration taking place among them. Collaboration helped the participants feel more empathetic and positive towards their class peers and to their paired colleagues in particular. Indeed, Settelmaier (2009) in a similar situation acknowledges that the teachers’ role in EDSP is to facilitate voice to multiple perspectives of the ethical dilemma and remain impartial to the issues. Thus, I was careful that my role was to support the class-discussions and my views did not affect the opinions or decisions of the participants while they were growing within their own cultures.

The participating pre-service teachers were encouraged to actively contribute to the discussion of possible ethical decision-making in relation to the story themes, as I shared the ethical dilemma stories with them as a group. In this journey my presence has been of a moral agent, a cultural insurgent and the community researcher with a strong commitment to the wellbeing of myself and the pre-service teachers. I tried to encourage the pre-service teachers to refine their abilities to listen analytically and constructively in the class discussions in order to succeed in understanding and responding positively to the contributions of the other participants in the classroom discussion. Through such a process of interaction with their peers, the pre-service teachers forged a deeper understanding of the (sometimes) differing ideas expressed in the discussions before reaching conclusions. These types of interactions are specifically promoted within the EDSP.

It took us two weeks to deal with the two ethical dilemma stories, one story per week. As a teacher-cum-researcher, I provided learning opportunities to the participants and guided discussions; I tried to create an autoethnographic story out of my teaching of these ethical dilemma stories. I have explained how the stories were segmented and presented over one week in my lesson plan (see Appendix 7). After the two weeks of field work research which incorporated 10 Ethical Dilemma Story lessons, the participating pre-service teachers willingly contributed in successive formal/informal interviews and follow-up discussions; they have remained in contact through e-mail interactions from September 2015 to August 2017.
As I had presented the first part of the ethical dilemma story aimed at prompting class discussion, I was encouraged by the enthusiastic responses of the participants to take the discussion further. We realised that the habit of keeping a diary (our reflective notes in journal form) could be a good way to motivate ourselves to be excited about learning experiences by reflecting analytically on the events recorded in the diary. All the participants were actively engaged in the discussion. I then asked them to write down their views for further analysis. They shared their stories (written in their journal) where they also commented critically on their own writing. These personal writings enriched, educated, and entertained us all.

These interactions between the participants and myself were also one of the best ways to learn from each other's experiences. I became more aware of multiple points of view as the researcher on the phenomena of EDSP and connected with the participants by sharing real-life stories and worldviews. Exemplars (Brookfield, 1995) included four critically reflective components that came from the students’ feedback and insights, from ever-changing theoretical lenses, from our own personal and professional autobiography, and from the perceptions of colleagues’ support (see figure 5).

![Diagram of critically reflective components](image)

**Figure 5: The critically reflective components.**
(Brookfield, 1995, p. 30)

Indeed, Van Maanen (1996, p. 4) acknowledges that research should “display culture in a narrative, a written report of the fieldwork experience in self-consciously-selected words”. I have used narrative analysis, which seeks insights and meanings behind the stories, focusing on accounts written by an individual and depicting the reality of that individual’s lived experiences.
The narrative way of analysis puts the researcher and the participants in a position to make sense of what happened during the research. According to Patton (2002, p. 115), it “extends the idea of text to include in-depth interview transcripts, life history narratives, historical memoirs and creative nonfiction”. Therefore, the fieldwork data included my reflective notes including poems and monologues, the participants’ reflective notes and journals, recordings of my meetings with the participants, e-mail exchanges and other forms of feedback from them. In this regard, Joy Scott (2013, p. 37) states, “memoir, poetry and the critically reflexive voice can co-exist side by side on the written page as a way of conveying the complexity of lived experience”. I have tried to create meaningful plots through focused thought on events recorded in my reflective journals, by trying to link my experience of everyday ethical happenings with the story characters’ choices of action in a single understandable lesson unit.

As my data became available, I constantly analysed then connected what I was learning with personal reflections, thereby enhancing meaning-making and contributing to discussions between the participants and myself. These discourses provided a shared space to explore our inner values, cultural roles, and visions as we collaboratively contested, defined and recreated our roles. Data analysis of my research was based on narrative construction through autoethnography. I believe this approach is an accumulation of both the researcher’s and the participants’ lived experiences in a narrative form. I tried to observe the learning activities of the participants through the response categories and made instructional decisions based on these observations. The categories mainly focused on the participants’ responses during their dilemma story learning activities.

As stated by William Smythe and Maureen Murray (cited in Elliott, 2005, p. 140), “[r]esearch in the narrative study of lives yields information that cannot be dissociated so readily from one’s fundamental human values and meaningful life experiences”. As a practitioner-researcher, the overall approach was to analyse and synthesise the data drawn from various sources. I created time to reflect on the teaching and learning processes and recorded my observations in my personal journal. Here are my comments on how my lesson presentation took place:

For the presentation of the first dilemma story, The dilemma of life and how we live, my lesson plan (see Appendix 7) assisted me in proceeding smoothly through the various sequenced stages of the lesson. I also aimed at exposing my participants,
all trainee teachers, to see the potential benefits of using dilemma stories as a pedagogic method. The story method was presented as a potentially useful tool particularly to teachers in their initial years of service when they are searching for ways to both instruct and positively engage their students. In addition to these aims I also sought to provide opportunity for abundant sharing of ideas in the discussions involving the students and myself. However, teachers need to be careful in implementing such free classroom discussions which can challenge classroom order, and take it as normal process that will be managed in time as they get used to the pedagogy.

(Source: Personal journal, Kashiraj, 2 Nov. 2015)

I also managed to assess the responses to the dilemma situations raised on that occasion by mentoring the discussions as the leader of the group. To optimise the engagement of all students, I designed my teaching style (see Appendix 5 & 6) with a view to relating the stories to the students’ existing knowledge of the subject matter. I then focused on eliciting the critical involvement of the students. According to McGregor (2008, p. 53), transformative learning occurs “when new concepts are assimilated such that a person undergoes shifts in his or her foundational frames of reference”. She means that in transformative learning, learners act upon the new perspectives which they experience through their critical awareness. I too observed a notable shift in myself that started from the adoption of a mechanical, structural stance and moved towards a more holistic vision of understanding, such as social, moral, physical and spiritual aspects of human life.

The fieldwork teaching included poster presentations with a synopsis of the participating pre-service teachers’ discussion outcomes on the two stories. The participants worked in two small groups and discussed the assigned stories in preparation for the final synoptic discussion. It was a challenging task but an opportunity for them to make posters and present their views in front of their friends. This was the first time they stood in front of their other colleagues and explained their experience during the two week sessions. As a warm up activity, I asked them to speak to each other about the content they had in their respective posters for 2 minutes. In the beginning, everyone was nervous, shy and hesitant. I asked them to take a deep breath and proceed slowly; they too started to gather confidence accordingly. I observed the whole assembled group and individual discussions while they were working on their posters. I was interested in watching them discuss and share their individual response experiences during the poster making activities. They seemed to be very engaged even though it was getting late. Each of the two poster
preparations took forty to forty five minutes, that is, an hour and half in total. I made sure the participants were on task and frequently reminded them about the time limit in order to make sure that there was enough time left for them to present the posters. The following poster presentations worked as the end of story sessions where participants presented their ideas in front of all class members.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have sought to lay out the details of my pedagogic process. I have realised that there is very little importance given to the area of ethical, moral and value-based dimensions in the Nepalese school curriculum. I relentlessly searched for a better set of pedagogic practices; I employed the transformative learning paradigm as my research framework, to embrace students’ engagement through EDSP to create a better self and society.

Equally important to the design process was the ongoing awareness of my prior interpretations and assumptions as I considered critical reflective discourses to formulate potential actions to enhance transformative learning opportunities. Mezirow (2000, p. 14) defines transformative learning as “the process in which we have an active dialogue with others to better understand the meaning of an experience”. He emphasises rational discourse and critically reflective dialogue as an important means for transformative pedagogy. To this end, I have adopted EDSP as a pivotal aspect of English language curriculum for future teachers in a B.Ed. course in Nepal. I now turn to the participating pre-service teachers’ responses in chapter 5 about their learning of the English language through the use of ethical dilemma stories.
Chapter 5: Many Voices, Stories of Transformation

Introduction

According to Edward Taylor and Patricia Cranton (2013, p. 42), transformative learning falls into the basic interpretive methodology; that is, the researcher interviews a small number of individuals in a specific context or related to a specific issue (retrospectively), does a thematic analysis of the interview data, and reports on four or five themes that appear in the data.

In a similar regard, I sought to engage research participants through the transformative learning process that placed them at the centre of their own active, holistic, and reflective learning experiences. I have interacted with the participants, the pre-service teachers studying for their B.Ed. degree in Nepal, regarding the research aims and the questions formulated in this thesis. I have tried to incorporate participants’ experiences as well as their critical reflective responses in this preliminary finding as a case study approach. In this chapter, I discuss the impact of dilemma story learning on these participating pre-service teachers’ perceptions, as well as their responses based on their existing values while dealing with the posed dilemma situations. Field data of this kind, according to John Van Maanen (1996, p. 95),

are constructed from talk and action. They are then interpretations of other interpretations and are mediated many times over – by the fieldworker's own standards of relevance for what is of interest; by the historically situated queries put to informants; by the norms current in the fieldworker's professional community for what is proper work; by the self-reflection demanded of both the fieldworker and the informant; by the intentional and unintentional ways a fieldworker or informant is misled; and by the fieldworker's mere presence on the scene as an observer and participant.

This chapter discusses findings from my fieldwork where I have frequently interacted with my research participants before, during, and after my fieldwork teaching, since October of 2015. I have familiarised my participants with the concepts of my research and with the practice of ethical dilemma story teaching. I had the opportunity to reflect on my actions in real time during the class discussions, during our formal/informal conversations, and by referring to my reflective notes and through the feedback I received from the participants’ reflective journals and their classroom workbook. Participants’ feedback had a central role in this research. Cranton (1994, p.
states that “[o]ne of the few undisputed principles of learning is facilitated by regular, ongoing feedback; this is as true for transformative learning as for the simple acquisition of knowledge and skills”. In a similar regard, I also had conversations with my participants focusing on each of their responses, their motivation and learning experiences.

**A Transformative Pedagogy**

In this research, while working with my participants on the dilemma story activities, I attempted to investigate how to better engage students in their learning when given an environment to exercise voice and critical thinking around the use of dilemma stories. I tried to understand more deeply the ethical dilemma story method as an accepted, transformative pedagogy which involved critical awareness in our development of constant socio-cultural understanding through an engaged learning activity.

Jack Mezirow (1990) explains the ideas and purposes of transformative learning “to help the learner challenge presuppositions, explore alternative perspectives, transform old ways of understanding, and act on new perspectives” (p. 18). For the transformative learning to take place, an educator’s role is to facilitate learners to raise awareness “of their assumptions and beliefs, reflect on and challenge their assumptions and beliefs and support them during the process” (Cranton, 1994, p. 140). Using this context, following are some lines I have composed about an imagined transformative classroom.

*A transformative touch I often imagine*

I imagine a classroom where teachers are not only standing in front of a board hung on the wall and lecturing; but, approaching students and helping them explore new meanings of the world.
I imagine a classroom where teachers aim to provide a safe, happy, and stimulating environment.
I imagine a classroom where students pro-actively help one another.

I imagine a classroom where students’ curiosity, questions, and soft humming greets their teachers’ ears.
I imagine a classroom where students are genuinely noisy, and working together in groups.
I imagine a classroom where teachers are energetic and always moving amongst the students.
I imagine a classroom where praise and encouragement can be heard and seen; support being offered from all around.
I imagine moments when teachers are passionate about making a positive difference to each student’s life. I imagine teachers who walk into classrooms, and notice that students are absorbed with their tasks. I imagine an education where teachers are not shouting at their students. Indeed, I imagine a classroom where teachers offer students many avenues of change, with a transformative touch.

(Source: My personal reflections)

Participants’ Feedback and My Field Notes: An Emerging Dialogue Within

Geoffrey Mills (2014, p. 179) claims that “there is no single correct way to organize and analyze the data. Different researchers produce different categories from the same data for many reasons, including researcher biases, personal interests, style, and interpretive focus”. In my analytical procedures, I recognise the critical value that my field notes have for drawing my conclusions. Corwin and Clemens (2012), indeed, acknowledge, “[f]ield notes have long held a significant role in data collection and analysis” (p. 489) and further that “field notes are a critical yet often underemphasised component of the research and writing process” (ibid.). Van Maanen (1996, p. 91) refers to such forms of field notes as “confessional tales”, which according to him, “… represent the fieldworker’s participative presence in the studied scene, the fieldworker’s rapport and sensitive contact with others in the world described, and something of the concrete cultural particulars that baffle the fieldworker while he learns to live in the setting” (Van Maanen, 1996 p. 91). Furthermore, I have thematically analysed the data including participants’ interview responses, classroom workbooks, their responses to further queries and probing questions, their reflective journals, as well as my own journal writings. I divided my accounts of one-to-one interviews with my research participants into separate reporting segments for possible further conversation.

In the course of facilitating my data analysis, I also referred to my participants’ interview responses and journal entries as evidence of transformative process in their learning. According to Taylor (2015, p. 1081), transformative ways of learning enable us to reconceptualise five different and interconnected ways of knowing, which are “cultural-self knowing, relational knowing, critical knowing, visionary and ethical knowing, and knowing the action”. Such comprehensive learning during this research has led me to a greater awareness of my surroundings, and to my self-realisation, also
allowing me to be open to noticing significant differences in values. This research process has, therefore, triggered a transformative, lifelong change in my professional practices. Both as a researcher and educator, I have tried to familiarise the participants with the valuable aspects of transformative learning that prepared them for making changes to their pre-existing, informational worldviews.

Ethical dilemma stories use relatable tales of people who live in the community and connect to the context and culture around them, then link them with learners’ everyday lives and learning. The EDSP encourages collaboration as an emotive social process. It is also a major platform to exercise and experience transformative learning. Transformative learning often follows a series of steps in this process. The first step puzzles us with a disorienting dilemma such as a life-event crisis or even transition that triggers a questioning of assumptions; then it sustains through a self-review with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame. We then conduct a critical assessment of our assumptions and recognise that we are not alone. We explore options for new roles, plan a course of action, and acquire knowledge as well as skills to implement the plan. We then try to recognise relationships and build competence for new roles to reintegrate our new perspectives into action (Mezirow, 1975).

Mertens et al. (2011, p. 231) argue that the transformative research paradigm, as an umbrella tool, provides a framework for research that “focuses on dimensions of diversity associated with differential access to power and privilege including disability, gender, race/ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation and other contextually important dimensions of diversity”. I was interested in empowering my students who came from the diverse background, and see them develop mental as well as physical skills. Therefore, I composed two dilemma stories with the aim of holding collaborative decision-making on the ethical implications of various socio-cultural issues and make the educational experiences more meaningful. The dilemma stories were able to engage participating pre-service teachers with an effective means of fostering critical reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995), relevant to their lives. As mentioned in chapter 4, the four themes, namely contextualization, facilitation, collaboration, and critical reflection (see chapter 4), were used to structure interviews where analysis of the responses led to the emergence of some features of transformative learning.
1. **Contextualisation** refers to the personal relevance of the dilemma stories. It relates to John Dewey’s (1916) idea of social experience as the cornerstone of a holistic approach to learning such as how the participating pre-service teachers felt about the dilemma stories, as well as the quality of the dilemma stories. In the dilemma stories, I incorporated locally contextualised concerns linked to the students’ lives to make the learning of English language (process) a relevant and enjoyable multicultural experience (product) for them. For this, I linked English language instruction to the students’ lives, creating dilemma stories that, while expressed in English, address the challenges of modern science and technology within Nepali cultural settings. Cranton (1994, p. 34) elaborated the link between our socio-cultural context as well as lived experiences with transformative learning, and acknowledged “the culture in which we grew up, the society in which we currently live, and the language we speak all serve to determine our meaning perspectives – the way we see the world, and the way we interpret our experiences” (ibid.).

2. **Facilitation** relates to how the participating pre-service teachers received the teacher’s support within the EDSP framework. During my fieldwork teaching, I was careful to consider participant empowerment as a crucial component of transformative learning. Cranton (1994, p. 91) states that “some sense of empowerment is needed before a learner can engage in critical reflection, and a feeling of empowerment sustains an individual throughout the process”. In this research too, the participating pre-service teachers’ ability “to engage in critical self-reflection is yet another aspect of learner empowerment” (Cranton, 1994, p. 165). Cranton (1994, p. 73) has, indeed, also acknowledged that,

Learner empowerment is both a goal and condition for transformative learning. To empower means to give power to, or to make able. An empowered learner is able to fully and freely participate in critical discourse and the resulting action; empowerment requires freedom and equality as well as the ability to assess evidence and to engage in critical reflection.

Cranton (1994, p. 76) adds that such empowerment, “is not just a product of critical self-reflection but also a prerequisite for beginning the process and an important component of continuing the questioning of basic beliefs and assumptions”. It also relates to Freire’s (2000) idea of liberation from oppression which is opposed to the traditional, *banking* concept of learning. Freire urged both students and teachers to engage in a dialogue by putting their power, position, and privileges aside which
helps to minimise their already existing influences (hooks, 1994). However, Freire’s (1970) unyielding commitment to social justice did not intend to create conditions where learner’s knowledge, feelings and understanding should go unchallenged or for the teacher to step back as a mere facilitator.

3. **Collaboration** refers to the process of raising critical awareness through dialogue and action. In this research, the participating pre-service teachers expressed and exchanged their ideas that lead to their taking action on the dilemma situations based on their social realities. According to Ira Shor (1992, p. 237), “[p]osing a problem leads to more dialogues, reflection, and exercise in groups”. Cranton (1994, p. 76) elaborates: “[w]hen learners realize how much support is available through networking, they have a lifelong resource”. This process of dialogue and networking in groups is linked to learners’ emotions and other ways of knowing so that the learning becomes an inter-personal, inter-subjective activity. EDSP provides an opportunity for the learners to think beyond ready-made responses by engaging themselves as characters in the stories. It brings situations to life and explains the learners’ viewpoints as they reflect on how their own values, beliefs, interests, socio-cultural commitments, experience, life and identities impact on the issues discussed. In this pedagogy, there is an encouraging environment for students to ask questions. The dialogues which were practised as a horizontal relationship on an equal footing with my participants offered an educational atmosphere where emerging issues were shared and discussed as a foundation of “love, humility, and faith” (Freire, 1970, p. 79). Rather than a one-way, top-down banking approach, Freire (1970) views education as a collective activity with an important exploration of dialogue and the possibilities for emancipatory practice among learners to enhance social justice. bell hooks (1994, p. 130) explains:

> To engage in dialogue is one of the simplest ways we can begin as teachers, scholars, and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class, professional standing, and a host of other differences.

4. **Critical reflection** has been used as a rational assessment of how, and why, we think certain things in certain ways in the sense of being “open, questioning, mindful, consideration of how we think about ourselves and our teaching” (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 21). Reflection is essential in helping individuals to become better teachers where they can reflect to understand how their considered involvement
influences classroom activities (Brookfield, 1995). Rather than using the term critical in the traditional sense of criticism or judgment, I use it to develop a sense of critical awareness by asking questions and challenging the way things are. Each dilemma story provided opportunities to investigate everyday life and interrupt those taken-for-granted behaviours, routines, beliefs and values that sustain it. This requires a critical awareness of one’s social reality dealing with dilemmas as participants learnt to think deeply to examine their careful and analytical decisions while also questioning the self and their other existing practices.

Following is a case-by-case analysis of participating pre-service teachers’ responses. I have carefully taken their words and edited some of the language for readability and comprehension of the wider audience while retaining the main ideas of what they said during the interview (see Appendix 8 for a sample response). These responses have been crafted to capture the full extent of the participants’ accounts, while connecting myself with their nuanced responses in the story form; and presenting realistic stories and insights.

**Story eight: The story of Pallavi**

These two weeks’ sessions became the best moment of my student life. The dilemma stories led me to open up and be more interactive with people. I have learned to look at my life as a reflection of what I choose to do.

(Pallavi, in personal communication)

My first interviewee, Pallavi, is a highly motivated 22-year-old Nepali woman who grew up in a typical Nepali local village. Her elderly parents still live on a farm. The houses in traditional villages are spread out over a large area, each located on a cultivable plot of land. Pallavi’s village was situated some 10 kilometres from the college in Gajuri where I conducted my fieldwork and the interviews. Pallavi came to Gajuri to gain a B.Ed. degree and get a teaching job.

As a student, she was living in a rented room with minimal amenities, within walking distance of the college. I found her to be very articulate and enthusiastic in the class. She aspired to continue her studies after her B.Ed. and hoped to become a lecturer in English to help other students like her in their education.

We sat facing each other across a small table. After some moments, her friend Shakti, another young female student whom Pallavi had invited to accompany her in the
interview, entered the room and joined us. Pallavi felt more comfortable with her friend present. During an informal tea-time, she shared with me that it was her first time to be formally interviewed by anyone in her life. Shakti’s presence, therefore, helped Pallavi and enabled her to speak more confidently. It also gave Shakti prior exposure to the interview situation to be better prepared for her interview with me later.

**Contextualisation**

Pallavi’s responses to the interview questions were very typical of a Nepalese woman. For example, her perception of the meaningfulness of the ethical dilemma learning experience in response to my questions was relevant to both herself and to people she knew. During our interview and subsequent interactions, Pallavi explained that she found both dilemma stories were relevant to the Nepalese context and heart-warming because they both represented typical Nepali dilemma situations. I then asked her to elaborate her thoughts on the above elements. The following edited extract shows part of the explanation provided by Pallavi for the first dilemma story I told in their class, *The dilemma of life and how we live*, and how it was relevant to her life-world:

Three years ago, I was very sick; the illness was impossible to diagnose in the village. My father wanted to take me to hospital but he did not have enough money nor anyone to give a helping hand to transport me to the hospital in Kathmandu. Then, my father was in a dilemma: whether to sell our limited property to have enough money to get me to the hospital or to see me left suffering and possibly dying at home.

Another incident I remember is about a female cousin of mine in the village. When she had a high fever, she was taken to the capital city of Kathmandu. As the family could not afford her treatment in any of the private hospitals, she was taken to the government Bir Hospital. It was only after a month that she got proper treatment when her brother sent money from Malaysia. (Edited verbatim: Pallavi, Question 1)

To clarify Pallavi’s responses it is useful to know that at the time there were no roads in the village, and her father sought help from other people to carry her on their backs (putting her in a bamboo basket, called a doko). But, nobody was ready to help them because all were busy with their work planting the paddy in their fields. In the second incident, the family faced financial difficulties in order to have their daughter treated. It was only after a month that she received proper treatment when her brother sent money from Malaysia where he was working as a casual labourer. Pallavi’s original response is available in Appendix 8.
We then moved on to discuss her experience regarding the second story, *The dilemma of leaving home*. She shared the following:

I also found it to relate well to my own case. As soon as I completed the 10th grade, my brother and sister-in-law almost fixed my marriage with a man whom, they said, had agreed to marry me and support me in further studies. This experience brought me into a real dilemma situation of whether to listen to my family and get married at such an early age or try to convince them that I was too young to start a married life. In the end, I chose to struggle hard and carry on with my studies and eventually I got a teaching job. Since then I have been paying off my tuition debt and other related expenses from my own earnings, and look forward to continuing my studies in the same way. (Edited verbatim: Pallavi, Question 1)

Sometime halfway through the interview, Pallavi made a comment that I too had in mind about the unequal treatment of people from different economic positions in society. She said, “Sir, I think these poor people are born to suffer, what do you think”? I kept quiet for some time; yet, all the while, I too became empathetic to the dilemma story characters and could not stop responding to her concern. Here is what I remember saying:

Many thanks, Pallavi, for bringing this concern to the deepest level of my emotions. I too used to think in the similar way when I was of your age. This could be the reason that I was able to create the story characters in such a way. I am glad it made you think this way.

(Source: Personal reflections, Kashiraj, 15 Nov. 2015)

Pallavi’s thought-provoking statements were insightful and clearly indicated that she resonated deeply with the contextual nature of the ethical dilemma story activities. The dilemma stories allowed her to contemplate the on-going situation around her village regarding the grim future of poor people. Pallavi shared that she had chosen to struggle hard and carry on with her studies, as well as to pay off her tuition debt and other related expenses from her part-time work earnings; this is an indication that the stories allow people like Pallavi to remember their own life experiences. In my follow-up visit in June 2017, when I asked her to elaborate on her thoughts on the theme of *personal relevance* (Appendix 9), she shared:

I found the ethical dilemma story method quite relevant and effective in classroom teaching where the stories were picked up from the social context of our own village lives and they were very close to teaching reading comprehension, critical thinking and speaking. (Written response to follow-up question 1: Pallavi, June 2017)

Therefore, the ethical dilemma stories led her to recall similar personal experiences, which included emotional-ethical memories. Pallavi’s responses rightly relate to the
overarching socio-cultural themes I was examining within my research as she found the two dilemma stories were ethically and culturally relevant to her as a young Nepali village woman.

**Facilitation for empowerment**

I sought to understand Pallavi’s perception of the extent to which she felt supported by myself as the teacher to engage in classroom discussion. The purpose was to find out the extent to which I was an effective and caring teacher because my essential role as a teacher was to empower my students by developing their understanding, awareness, and realisation that there are multiple points of view about a single issue. In this analysis, I further investigated Pallavi’s perception of whether she had received effective support in terms of facilitation for learning. I have rewritten some of Pallavi’s words, originally expressed in her Nepalese English, to give an uninterrupted sense of her voice to the readers. During the interview, Pallavi revealed:

During the two weeks of the ethical dilemma story sessions, studying and working with my friends and you as presenter made me familiar with the meanings of a number of new vocabulary items. After we got the vocabulary list, you, then, told us the story and let us discuss it with our friends. To the best of my understanding, we all had ample opportunity to express our views. The sessions with you and with the other friends of mine, on learning the English language through ethical dilemma stories, have become a memorable experience for me. (Edited verbatim: Pallavi, Question 2)

During the interview, Pallavi also mentioned what she thought individually and in pairs about the dilemmas raised in the stories. She shared that by becoming familiar with the technical vocabulary items, mostly new; she was introduced to some relevant concepts around which to organise ideas and interpretations of the dilemma situations. In her learning journal, Pallavi wrote:

Our teacher’s style of teaching us the dilemma story approach stimulated us to think freely and creatively. As he told us a part of the story and paused a while, in order to let us think, discuss and write down some ideas, it made us adopt a more locally relevant approach in our thinking. During his entire presentation, he encouraged me to look at my strengths in my learning process with love and respect. So, I was encouraged to think freely, in the open environment he created for us, without any obstructing hesitation and I was able to explore more deeply into my own feelings. (Reflective journal, Pallavi, Oct. 8, 2015, Thursday)

In the same journal, Pallavi wrote how she always thought there was only one ‘correct’ answer to any question. She shared she was surprised to note that I, as her
teacher, would accept two different viewpoints as right answers. However, I confirmed that she could think differently from how her friends thought. At the same time, I had made clear that those of her friends who thought differently were also not necessarily wrong. In her own words, she said, “[i]t was so, so encouraging. I loved it”.

Here is another reflection by Pallavi that she shared with other participants when they met to discuss the effectiveness of this new pedagogy of ethical dilemma learning in their teaching:

One unique thing about Kashiraj sir [teacher] is that he was not judgmental and did not indicate what might be right or wrong answers during his teaching. He simply engaged us to find places within ourselves and our learning that have not yet had permission (from our own within) to come out. He gave me the courage to give myself permission to have time to let my thoughts emerge — and this has become the basis for my continuous journey in this field after the two-week dilemma story session. (Via an email from Rudra: Pallavi, Dec. 16, 2016)

Likewise, in my follow-up visit to Nepal and during my succeeding interaction (Appendix 9) with Pallavi and other participants in June 2017, she shared how she liked the presentation of the stories. She noted how her peers presented the story very well, and commented on how I was able to guide the discussions smoothly. She shared:

I can say this because, in our classroom, he told us the story, then, we discussed the dilemmas during the intervals for discussion. He also clarified the meanings of the difficult words. Then he exposed us to the dilemma situation of the story and made us contemplate what we would do if we were in that situation. All of us spoke our ideas, discussed them and wrote them down. (Written response to follow-up question 3: Pallavi, June 2017)

Pallavi appreciated the recounting of dilemma stories along with the encouragement of open discussion amongst participating students and my acceptance of multiply-framed answers. She valued the vocabulary list as helping her to understand the new words. She used the list to identify new, useful taxonomic categories which she was not familiar, with coming from an EFL background. Pallavi shared how that she noticed my love and respect for her desire to improve her teaching which she described as a positive and memorable impression created in the students.
**Collaboration, the power of dialogue**

My conversation with Pallavi then focused on her collaboration with other participants. I wanted to understand her engagement to her expression and exchange of ideas with others in the class through the dialogue between myself as their teacher and the students as participating pre-service teachers, and between themselves. I sought her views on how she had ascertained other participants’ ideas and what she had gained from hearing their opinions individually and in groups. In response to my queries, Pallavi replied:

I undertook idea-sharing with other friends in pair-work, and in group-discussion, and asked them questions when I experienced difficulty understanding their expressed ideas. I gained lots of knowledge from hearing their opinions. I learned that all of us were capable of writing and expressing their views in a very analytic way. I also learned to respect the views of classmates when they expressed views different from my own. I discovered that different individuals often have somewhat different views on a given topic. I and all my friends in this research had ample opportunity to express our views freely with full respect for and curiosity about each other’s, at times, differing opinions. (Edited verbatim: Pallavi, Question 3)

I then asked her how the other participants set about asking her to explain more about her ideas. In response to this questioning, Pallavi shared that her friends asked her to explain more about her ideas. She also asked them to explain their ideas where necessary when they all were working in groups. Indeed, they exchanged the ideas with each other very confidently. The meaning of team spirit became practically effective in that, by working together, everyone really achieved more, a true networking.

While narrating Pallavi’s response, I too remember that there were seemingly funny ideas occurring in the discussion after which we also laughed together. A sense of bonding was advantageous in coping with troubles; the group work helped to build up the support for one another strongly. However, during an informal conversation one day, Pallavi shared how she was annoyed that other participants in her group had not put in enough effort during the group work. There were moments when she felt that she had to put in more effort than others in the group.

Disparity of work effort could be an especially thwarting issue in EDSP if some students are heavily relying on one or two other students. Based on my analysis while teaching the class, I speculated that two of the participants, namely Bikti and Suniti,
possibly felt it was easier for them to agree with other ‘smart’ ones in the group who seemed to have more understanding of the topic. John Werth, in his PhD research on teaching an ethical dilemma story, discussed how Amanda, one of his science class participants, considered group work to have only worked in theory, and did not account for different personality types (Werth, 2017). Werth (2017, p. 97) added what Amanda further shared with him:

> There will always be someone who does more work than others in the group. This could be especially frustrating if, as a higher achiever, one was relying on other students to be fully engaged to develop material that is needed for success. Amanda made mention of this frustration in her interview a couple of times. She said that although her group agreed on responses to questions raised by the story most of the time, there were times when they were not working. She also said that she felt it was obvious that other members of her group had not developed sufficient knowledge on which to base their opinions. Possibly she felt that they agreed with her because she was the ‘smart’ one.

In my follow-up visit with Pallavi and other participants (Appendix 9) in June 2017, she shared:

> From the exercise we did during a week’s period with the researcher, the ethical dilemma story learning enabled us in thinking and expressing our opinions. The organisation of the stories, the dilemmatic coincidences etc. were frequently raised to make us think, to speak, and to write. (Written response to question 2: Pallavi, June 2017)

As separate evidence, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to support how the dilemma stories helped Pallavi in discussion with other students, Pallavi shared how she first thought she could convince her friends and make them listen to her and accept her ideas. She even tried to look for the answers from the story itself. But, later she remembered what I had said before telling the story and thought about some of her own opinions based on her family, home, economic status and the lessons she had learnt from her parents. She shared them with her friends, and they also shared their stories with her. She said when they discussed, and tried to explain the reason behind their ideas of alternative solutions to the dilemma, the experience gave them a good sense of change in their existing perceptions.

From Pallavi’s expressed views, EDSP seemed to have been effective in her life from different points of view because of the positive outcome of the discussions with others in the group. I recall that similar responses were occasionally raised and further evidenced by Pallavi during in-class discussions. My overall interpretation of
Pallavi’s perception about expressing and exchanging of ideas is that it enabled her to become aware of different understandings of the dilemma situations within her own thinking. She valued discussions with her fellow students that enabled her to discover different perspectives. The activities also enabled her to appreciate the quality of the analytical thinking that emerged from the discussion experience. When she discovered a new way of fostering collaboration with others, she realised that empathy is important within the group and that it is important for all participants to contribute to group discussion.

**Critical reflection**

Here, I seek to understand Pallavi’s critical awareness in dealing with the dilemmas in the stories. My conversation with Pallavi focused on her method of utilising dilemma thinking in making decisions. Through interpretive analysis of Pallavi’s critical reflection, I sought to understand her decision-making process in the dilemma situations in the stories. I asked Pallavi to share, by giving me a short example, whether the dilemma stories caused her to question and reflect on her own ideas. In response to this question, Pallavi replied:

Yes, the stories helped me to understand my values and beliefs. They did cause me to question and reflect on my own ideas. In the past, when I read other stories, I found the characters and background far removed from the Nepalese context. The dilemma stories, centred on familiar, local contexts as they were designed to incorporate a Nepalese context and characters. (Edited verbatim: Pallavi, Question 5)

Pallavi indicated that, compared to the stories she had read, heard, and learned in the past, and which she found very difficult, these dilemma stories were very easy to understand. They gave her a sense of realisation that stories need not be always complex, but could help learners to reflect on a range of important issues. Pallavi shared how she found both Maili’s and Shanti’s stories simple and sweet, and very Nepalese and she found these ethical dilemma stories easier to understand than the earlier ones. As an example of a situation similar to the second dilemma story, one of her neighbours named Sita, had married a seemingly honest man named Gopal. After their marriage, her husband went abroad to Qatar to work, and had not yet returned. He had ceased sending home money. As a result, Sita faced financial and related problems. Sita had not considered that she should divorce Gopal because she had had a child with him. In Nepal, it is not at all easy for a woman to re-marry after having a
child from a previous marriage. As further evidence, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to discover how the dilemma stories helped Pallavi to understand herself and her existing socio-political context more deeply, she wrote:

The second story, *The Story of Leaving Home*, touched me more than the first one. I became angry while listening to the main plot of the story because I was deeply shocked with the situation that the old-moneylender was proposing to marry the young girl, Saru. I felt uneasy to think of any alternative solutions than just to have one opinion of *NO, no* to marrying the moneylender. But, I tried to put myself in the girl’s situation and also thought what my seniors like parents, uncles and village people would advise in such a difficult situation. I also tried to think from the mother, Shanti’s point of view. (Written response to follow-up question 2, Pallavi, August 2017)

Pallavi’s thinking towards the resolution of the dilemma situation is also revealed in her workbook.

> In the second dilemma story, if I were the mother, I would respond to my daughter’s request by telling her about the family’s poor, but real economic condition and by asking her to wait some time until the financial situation became more favourable. (Workbook: Pallavi, p. 11)

Pallavi also shared a possible resolution to the dilemma explaining that if she were Shanti, the mother in the second story, she would have gone to the city with her daughter, looked for any kind of job available there, worked hard and challenged the society that was so unjust to them. Pallavi wrote, “However, I could envisage that I might have to face unfamiliar, difficult circumstances in the city” (Workbook: Pallavi, p. 15). In another instance, during the class activity, when considering the grandchildren being cared for by Dhandai and Maili in the first dilemma story, Pallavi responded, positioning herself as one of those grandchildren being cared for by Dhandai and Maili (Classroom work-sheet: Pallavi, 8 Oct. 2015, Thursday).

While listening to the dilemma stories Pallavi shared that, she perceived her life as very difficult in many ways such as not having enough money and lacking support from her own parents. All she could do at that moment was to watch Dhandai and Maili, the grandparents in the first dilemma story struggling to get along without any significant income and their getting weaker and weaker every day with a risk of their children left to survive on their own. These comments indicate Pallavi’s strong empathy with the distressing situation faced by the grandchildren, and her own struggle to come to terms with their predicament. In a follow-up conversation with Pallavi and other participants (Appendix 9), Pallavi stated:
I was so excited to listen to the stories which were very similar to my own community and its people. It fully made me concentrate and draw my attention. So I felt that the ethical dilemma story can be the best teaching tool for students to get their full attention, and participation which encourages them in self-active learning. (Written response to follow-up question 4: Pallavi, June 2017)

Pallavi’s comments indicate that the dilemma story activities prompted her to engage deeply in the presented scenario and to see it as relevant to her earlier life experiences in rural Nepal. Pallavi also shared that she had made use of the dilemma stories in her own lessons following the two-week sessions. The following extract explains how her exposure to the EDSP helped her realise the need for change in her teaching style:

I have been encouraged to use dilemma stories in my class after my exposure to your research pedagogy. The dilemma situations in the stories challenged me to be active in the class while I struggled to decide which option was more appropriate for me. It makes it easier for me to capture the attention of the students in my teaching. (Written response to follow-up question 12: Pallavi, June 2017)

In my probing question (Appendix 10) to understand whether Pallavi made any quick decisions on the dilemma situations, she revealed the moment when I told the stories in their class. This reminded me that students’ opinions should play a major role in classroom discussions. However, the process was not easy for her as she had a habit of getting quick answers to questions. So, when Pallavi put herself within the complexities of dilemmas, it was hard for her to think of her own ideas and opinions as a valid way of responding to a complex question. Then, she tried to think carefully before making quick decisions. In her own words, if there was anything to push her to decide in a hurry, it was the time limit which prompted her to decide faster. She said, “We did so many things within a limited time” (Written response to follow-up question 1: Pallavi, August 2017).

Further, in my question (Appendix 10) to find out if the dilemma stories helped Pallavi challenge her previous beliefs and opinions, she revealed that she remembered all the childhood stories told by her parents and grandparents. Usually the social and cultural factors affected her decision making as she explained:

I tried to think from the point of view of Muna’s parents in the first story. And in the second story, I first liked to associate myself with Saru, the young daughter. Because I am also a girl and I thought of her situation. It was so difficult to make decisions easily in the class by myself. It could be because it was hard for me to support for Saru’s marriage at her young age. But, after thinking for a while, I also consulted my friends. I changed my point of view and started to think from other character’s perspectives. I remember you encouraged us to question and challenge our own
answers even after we answered the questions once; I learned to look at things from multiple ways. (Written response to follow-up question 4: Pallavi, August 2017)

Pallavi’s response clearly showed that she was emotionally affected by the dilemma stories and experienced a major struggle in choosing among the multiple solutions to the dilemmas. She was able to empathise with the characters and change her point of view. She was more willing to engage in reflective thinking and discussions that would not normally occur in the midst of traditional classroom interaction. Therefore, the dilemma story method helped Pallavi recall some of her own dilemmas and relate these to the concepts of resolution of the dilemmas raised in the stories. She seemed to see the value of new ways of thinking about, and responding to, the dilemmas and become even more resilient. She expressed her perception of the value of participating in the class discussion about the dilemmas and particularly in her attempts of comparing and contrasting her own views with those of her class peers. Despite her positive experience, and her willingness to discuss the positive experience further, she also gave one reflective yet critical comment; there needs to be more time for discussions in these situations.

**Summing up**

Pallavi’s interview responses, her journal and class-activity notes and my follow-up discussions with her confirmed how actively she contributed to the class activities, even writing some short poems and jokes recollected from her memories and experiences. This is how she showed her creative presence by converting the complex social-cultural issues she encountered into dilemmas suitable to present to a class of students in the context of EDSP. Pallavi opened her mind intellectually to the usefulness of considering other solutions to the dilemma forthcoming from class peers, or indeed, from her reconsideration of the dilemma situations. She felt herself connected by the posed dilemmas and her colleagues’ responses in the discussion, to see that many everyday events in an ordinary Nepali life have meaningful components. She found the dilemma experience essentially transformative for her way of thinking on the issues, from an intuitive way into a more considered way, that could help her to resolve future dilemmas.

When I looked back at my observation notes of class discussions, I noticed that Pallavi had struggled to find a solution to the main dilemmas and noted in my journal
how I was glad to see Pallavi being active in the class and seeking her friends’ opinion on the dilemmas posed in the stories. She also put forward her ideas in front of us all. I wrote, “I am glad she seemed happy to have realised the possibility of resolving conflicting ideas in a considered way through discussions” (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 15, 2015, Thursday).

Such realisation of Pallavi can be understood as evidence of her engagement in dilemma thinking. She was a ‘smart’ student; yet, I assisted her at times when she was confused and was unsure of how to express her views. At one point, Pallavi also shared that her colleagues would rarely get the opportunity to present their views and would usually keep quiet and only rely on the views presented by the teachers in the class. Once she wrote in her journal about her friend, Suniti, who seemed a quiet and shy person. Pallavi shared that she had hardly seen Suniti speaking in the class before the dilemma story sessions. Pallavi’s reflective journal also revealed that she realised how herself and her colleagues were able to come up with innovative ideas during the two-week dilemma story learning session. She shared:

During this two-week session of dilemma story learning, we were able to come develop some innovative ideas in ourselves which could be very useful to us and to our students in dealing with many real-life dilemmas in our lives. (Reflective journal: Pallavi, Oct. 16, 2015, Friday)

I had also noticed that such positive contributions were not always evident from Pallavi and other class members. When the participants were late to come to the class one day, I started the session half an hour later than the previous days. On the same day, I had also noticed that two of the participants did not show any interest in the discussions until I reminded them that their active engagement with the issue was crucial in my research. What follows is what I had written in my reflective journal:

Pallavi seemed unsettled today. She left the class 10 minutes earlier than others. She was much quieter during the discussions compared to the previous day. After she left, other participants seemed less motivated today. I think I need to ask her for the reason behind this as soon as we meet for our next session. (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 16, 2015, Friday)

When I asked Pallavi the next day, about the reason behind the sudden change in her behavior, she said it was because of the general transportation strike and she was very worried about how she was going to travel home that day. In this sense, it was very important for a teacher to know the personal as well as socio-political cause behind
the action of her/his students. It is, therefore, interesting to note how these different voices coming from these pre-service teachers interact, agree, and, yet, at other times, confront each other. From the interview conversation with Pallavi, using different textual accounts of her responses, and my reflective notes, it is clear that there is still room for more probing questions if I am to find out Pallavi’s view on how and in what particular ways her learning experience has impacted on her subsequent teaching practice.

**Story nine: The story of Ravi**

Overall, working with the dilemma story activities was a great experience that I will keep with me for years. This pedagogy made me realise that I should have the willingness to make a difference in someone else’s life.

(Ravi, in personal communication)

Ravi, another of my research participants, is a 42-year-old man who has been teaching English at high school and college level for the past two decades. He lived with his wife and three children at Gajuri, in a rented house. I first met him at the 2005 international conference, organised by Nepal English Language Teachers’ Association, in Kathmandu. At present he is an English teacher to a group of B.Ed. students at MMC where I have been doing my fieldwork. Ravi shares a similar cultural background to mine having grown up in a similar hill village; he was an experienced and qualified English teacher in the role of a pre-service teacher to add diversity to the cohort. I am sincerely grateful that he accepted the invitation to contribute to my research in the role of pre-service teacher participant.

I was very excited to interview Ravi to discuss his experience and receive feedback in different forms. He has relatively high literacy exposure compared to other student teachers. On the last day of the two-week period of my field-work teaching, in my interview with him, he entered the room, smiling. I offered him a seat and asked him to make himself comfortable before we started to talk. Across a small table, we sat facing each other in the one-to-one situation as researcher and research participant. When I asked him to tell me more about the nature of his job, he shared that it was his seventh year of teaching English to the B.Ed. students and that every year he saw new happy faces of young people who had joined the course with high hopes of becoming good teachers in the future. He was happy to add that his job was to
prepare those students to become better equipped teachers of high school English in Nepal.

During the interview, I engaged Ravi in a discussion about the pedagogic quality of ethical dilemma stories I had presented to him in the two-week dilemma story class context. As with Pallavi, I sought Ravi’s free and spontaneous comments on aspects of my teaching sessions including whether the story seemed relevant to Ravi and other pre-service teachers. I also tried to find out if appropriate learning support was available from me during their engagement in the ethical dilemma story activities. I sought Ravi’s opinion on whether he had sufficient space to interact and share both in one-to-one and within group discussions.

**Contextualisation**

Here, I attempted to understand Ravi’s perceptions of the ethical dilemma stories, mainly in terms of his learning experiences during the class activities. I focused my conversation with him on how he felt about the ethical dilemma stories and their relevance and quality. I considered his response in his reflective journal and to my reflective notes on the interview. During our discussion, I asked Ravi in what ways the two dilemma stories were relevant to him or to people whom he knew. Ravi told me that he could relate to the dilemma stories as he had also experienced similar situations. Ravi had survived many crucial situations, especially as a college student. He explained:

I was frequently faced with the dilemma of whether to go hungry because I hadn’t found a job in the city or return back home where meals were guaranteed and the ‘money-problem’ did not exist. But, this would have meant abandoning my educational ambitions. Hence, now I realise that this was a real dilemma for me to resolve. (Edited verbatim: Ravi, Question 1)

Reflecting on the similarities between his village upbringing and the dilemma story situation, Ravi revealed in his workbook that many financially poor women from his village shared problems similar to those of the mother, Shanti, in the second dilemma story, *The dilemma of leaving home*. Referring to the behaviour of Mangal, Shanti’s husband in the story, Ravi noted that while some men seemed to be carefree and were not very responsible for their family members, women and children were the ones to suffer the most in such cases in Nepal. Ravi’s statements indicated that both stories were deeply engaging and related to his personal life experiences. He wrote:
Both of the stories sounded very convincing as they carried the stories of our own social situation. The plot was presented in the way that could fill up our mind with lots of curiosity and possibility of what would happen next. (Written response to follow-up question 2: Ravi, June 2017)

Ravi shared that he found the stories very authentic and meaningful to him. I was glad to know that my dilemma stories had triggered an imaginative response in Ravi that opened up a range of possible associations from his own experiences, as well as my hypothetical scenarios that could eventuate from the dilemma stories. He also said, “The stories were valuable as they were set in the local-cultural context” (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 9, 2015, Friday). He told me that such texts, through the dilemma stories, allowed a feeling of ownership in other students as in himself. Ravi shared further from his workbook about how the dilemma story helped him to better understand his values and beliefs:

If I were Saru, the daughter, I would not leave my mother alone, but decide to go to the city with her. I would work hard and make her feel that it was my responsibility to make her happy then onwards. (Workbook: Ravi, p. 10)

As a result of Ravi’s interview responses, his responses in his workbook, and my reflective journal on Ravi’s expressed views, I inferred that the EDSP seemed to have been effective for Ravi in prompting him to reveal some of his own earlier experiences in relevant dilemma experiences. The stories elicited his interest through relevance as well as a resonance with other people’s lives and social experience.

**Facilitation for empowerment**

I sought to understand Ravi’s perception of the extent to which he felt supported by the teacher (me) to engage in the classroom activities. He clarified how my teaching facilitated his understanding and stimulated creative thinking in him. Through my method of explicitly presenting the key concepts and vocabulary, then telling the two dilemma stories, and finally propelling discussion with the use of divergent and evaluative questions, Ravi explained that he was encouraged to engage on a deeper level. What follows here is his response during the interview:

You, after telling one part of the story, gave time for us to work individually and in pairs as a way of facilitating our speaking and writing activities, and were also praising the differences of emphasis contained in our expressed thoughts. (Edited verbatim: Ravi, Question 2)
I was grateful to note that Ravi had felt supported enough in my class to share his personal experiences and that he had observed that I had praised him and other students for their variations of emphasis. It is useful to know that in a follow-up visit with Ravi and other participants (Appendix 9), he shared how my presentation of the dilemma stories began from the background of the story contexts and characters. Ravi wrote:

The teacher brainstormed by asking us to think about the most difficult situation we had gone through in the past and also asked us to explore how we solved the issues. He elicited strong feelings in us by asking what we would do in that situation if we were there. His story ended in the climax of dilemma and made us think deeply. (Written response to follow-up question 3: Ravi, June 2017)

I asked many questions to my students to prompt critical thinking about their dilemma experiences. I encouraged them to consider the different events, situations and possible influencing factors that resulted in their final decisions such as family, finances, geography, education, and health. Ravi explained to me that scaffolding had allowed him and other participants to interact with me and each other more fully. In his reflective journal, Ravi described the overall view of the group of pre-service teachers:

The teacher gave us an appropriate environment and some essential ideas to help us understand the concept of the ethical dilemma stories from an individual standpoint. We were able to produce some reflective writings that came out of our own social, cultural contexts with the teacher’s guidance. (Reflective journal: Ravi, Oct. 8, 2015, Thursday)

Reflecting on the outcome of our dilemma story class, Ravi wrote in his own words about how he first met me: “You are a great inspirer, a good teacher; your own writing is a wonderful inspiration to me. You have given me ample confidence to continue my creative work” (Reflective journal: Ravi, Oct. 9, 2015, Friday). In this regard, I found how my ability to understand what they might be trying to convey was impressive while he found my approach creative, pragmatic, insightful, and to the point. Ravi further revealed that if he ever decided to continue his further studies, he would find some topics to work with EDSP. Ravi shared how he found my approach supportive, as well as a collegial and friendly. He thanked me for all the inspiration and my continuous support. I too acknowledged what an honour it was to meet, watch and work with a dedicated team member like him in my research. Based on an analysis of these responses, I have concluded that the use of essential terminology,
collaborative teaching style, and use of appropriate encouragement for the students are crucial ingredients in creating a collegiate and reflective space for transformative learning.

On reflection, I recognise that the encouragement to my participants was not given randomly as I was aware of when and how much to praise my students’ performances. For instance, I was conscious of not providing a running commentary and deliberately tried to encourage the shy students to speak rather than only respond to the talkative students. I motivated those who had not had the opportunity to present their views in the class earlier. It is important to note that encouragement and constructive facilitation were an essential aspect of pedagogies that occurred at the right learning point and in the right quantity to promote effective learning motivated by the universal, human desire for respect, trust and care.

**Collaboration, the power of dialogue**

The next part of my conversation with Ravi focused on collaboration and class interaction. I sought his perception of how he reacted to other participating pre-service teachers’ ideas and what he had gained from hearing their opinions individually and in groups. Here, I wanted to understand Ravi’s views of the context in which he expressed his ideas and exchanged those ideas with others in the class activities. In response to my queries, Ravi replied:

During the pair and group discussions, I sought the opinions of partners through questioning and noted that there was a substantial range of differing opinions. We were not aiming to establish a final consensus but rather to look for multiple interpretative responses to the dilemmas. (Edited verbatim: Ravi, Question 3)

I was pleased to see such evidence of creative thinking and infinite possibility of solutions to the dilemmas discussed in the classroom. I then asked Ravi whether the other participants had asked him to explain more about his ideas. In response to this query, Ravi told me how they shared their ideas with each other. He shared with and explained his ideas to other pre-service teachers, which at times caused everyone to collapse into prolonged laughter. It was such a lively experience that they had during the sessions. “It was the most enjoyable moment,” he said. In my follow-up visit with Ravi and other participants (Appendix 9), Ravi wrote about the exchange of ideas:
the students who used to be passive listeners became active by the idea of the ethical dilemma stories and spoke up from their own inner feeling because the ethical dilemma stories encouraged us all to loosen up our rigidity. (Written response to follow-up question 9: Ravi, June 2017)

When I recall my teaching sessions with Ravi and other participating pre-service teachers, I remember that I tried to create a supportive learning environment where students felt safe to express the emotions that evolved through the course of working together. As separate evidence, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to ascertain how the dilemma stories helped Ravi in discussion with other students, he shared:

In the beginning, I just kept quiet. I was speechless as I could not think of any possible solutions that were pleasant to take a side. But, after some moments, of my struggling with the dilemmas in the stories, I put forward my ideas to others, who were also my students as I also happened to be their class teacher, thinking they would accept my idea. But during the discussion, I realised that they had already gained the courage to speak up their ideas. I listened to them carefully. Then I liked their ideas too. They were also very good. So, sometimes, I tried to convince them, and sometimes when they convinced me, I thought they were right and I agreed with them. (Written response to follow-up question 3: August 2017)

Ravi’s response shows that the students felt that they gained the courage to share different ideas and viewpoints and that they could effectively work together by relating to and valuing others’ and their ideas. In another instance, Ravi shared how they all benefited from my guidance into inquiry-based learning, such as when I provided tips on reflective writing and helped them with guiding questions for discussion, rather than providing all the answers to the questions posed by the ethical dilemma stories. However, as I noted previously, Ravi also shared that “the time allowed for discussion was not enough during the intervals” (Reflective journal: Ravi, Oct. 16, 2015, Friday). I tried to control the length of the stories by breaking them into meaningful instalments. However, this repeated feedback indicated that for better pedagogical effect in other teaching projects, more time and flexibility were required for discussing the dilemma situation/s in detail.

My overall interpretation of Ravi’s perception about the power of expressing and exchanging of ideas is that he seemed to have perceived the EDSP as a method which facilitated the sharing of ideas among the participating pre-service teachers. It was a space where the occurrence of periodic humour lightened the mood and assisted the potentially over-serious cognitive aspects of the classroom for participating pre-
service teachers to have rich opportunities for collaborative discussions provided by sharing in pairs and group situations.

**Critical reflection**

As part of my interpretive analysis I sought to understand the basis of Ravi’s decisions in the ethical dilemma stories. I asked Ravi to explain, via a short example, whether the two stories caused him to question and reflect on his own ideas. In response to this question, Ravi stated:

Definitely, these two dilemma stories left many valuable impressions on me which called me to reflect on my own ideas about teaching methodology. They gave me guidelines on how to expose potential readers like myself to concentrate more deeply in the reading and comprehension of the stories. In the short time available, we were able to experience many challenges to our thinking which were incorporated in the dilemma stories presented during the sessions. (Edited verbatim: Ravi, Question 5)

It seemed that Ravi struggled with dilemma situations, particularly when asked to explain his views instead of having the freedom to choose a final right/wrong answer to a question. Ravi later came to advance and appreciate the open ended concept that underpinned the nature of the dilemma stories. The following statement from Ravi’s workbook explains how his personal values caused him to struggle with the dilemma in the first dilemma story, *The dilemma of life and how we live*:

I think Dhandai, the father of Muna is in an extreme ethical dilemma of whether to proceed the treatment or stop. Dhandai feels difficult to continue the treatment because of his weak economic condition while at the same time, the sense of being a father does not let him stop the treatment even if there was not any possibility of further improvement in Muna’s health. (Workbook: Ravi, p. 3)

Responding to my probing question (see Appendix 10) about whether Ravi made quick decisions about the dilemma situations, he stated that he took time to look for and consider alternative solutions to the dilemmas posed in both the stories. This was in response to my suggestion before telling the dilemma stories in class that the approach of dealing with dilemma stories was different to the usual right/wrong answers. However, he pointed out:

In some of the questions, I had to make the decision quickly for two reasons: One, I only thought about the questions from right or wrong point of view in the beginning and tried to find the right answers and get a solution. But, after we were encouraged towards discussions to come up with our own opinions I tried to change my earlier practice of making quick decisions. Two, the time limit and numerous thought-provoking situations for
I sought clarification from Ravi about his initial choice of making quick decisions for two reasons; to determine whether he had applied the concept of the dilemma stories in the ways that encouraged creativity, explored multiple possibilities and prompted self-reflection to elicit critical thinking. Further, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to find out whether the dilemma stories prompted Ravi to struggle for answers, he wrote that it was really hard for him to decide in the first dilemma story (see chapter 4) whether to let the daughter Muna die after being discharged from the hospital or to keep her in the hospital. The main tension for him was that, no matter what he decided, each option could be equally unpleasant for the family members. He struggled to decide which option was more appropriate for him. Similarly, in the second dilemma story, Ravi explained how he had difficulty considering the story from the mother, Shanti’s point of view, and the question of whether to accept the proposal of the moneylender and live a life with money or struggle further to save her own self-respect and her daughter’s prospects by refusing to marry him. Ravi felt anyone could be trapped between the two harsh realities of life in such situations. Ravi explained that I encouraged students to ask more questions and challenge their own answers, even after they answered the questions once. Still, he did not have a firm belief whether one point of view should be considered as a valid answer. Recalling the moment when I reminded participants to speak their own mind, he made more effort to express his views. Ravi elaborated as follows:

I again thought what my ideas could be. Then, I had two or three ideas together. I thought which idea was the better one? There too, I thought for whom? For example, what I thought a good idea for the hospital may not be a good idea for the parents of a sick person Muna in the first story. But, I had my ideas after thinking for some time. Good thing is that it made me think from various angles in the beginning. In the second story, I really had no idea how to help this young girl, Saru. I found her in real dilemma throughout the story. It was because she came from such a poor family. More than this, her father and mother were not living together. This was not very common in Nepali community that the father was not contributing to the family. And another thing, the family had a loan to pay. I felt the emotions of Shanti as a mother, and her keenness for her daughter to be happy. Many times, I changed my decisions but, in the end, thought that the young girl Saru needed to find a job and start helping her mother. (Written response to follow-up question 2: August 2017)

Accordingly, in my follow-up question (Appendix 10) to determine whether the dilemma stories helped Ravi in looking at the issues from different perspectives, he stated how he learned to look at things from multiple viewpoints as a result of our
discussion on the dilemma stories. He agreed that infinite responses could be possible (Written response to follow-up question 3: August 2017). Further, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to explore how the dilemma stories helped Ravi to know how he made his decisions in the dilemma situations, he stated that he thought he made the decisions according to his own feelings and values. Also Ravi’s social position, the religion he was following, and his family dynamics were the basic elements which guided him particularly in his immediate responses. Following my thinking and sharing approach, he indicated that it was difficult to make decisions easily in the class by himself. So, he sought the views of others. He then tried to think from the viewpoint of Muna’s parents in the first dilemma story. In the second story, he tried to think from Saru’s point of view. While discussing the stories in class, he sometimes thought these dilemma stories were real trouble when he had a problem in deciding between the opposed solutions such as what they value most? Such as, was money more important than life? For example, he thought any decisions would vary from person to person and situation to situation. To follow on from this Ravi explained:

While making decisions, what was more valuable and urgent for me at that moment became more important. For example, in both the stories, if the families had enough money available, the situations would be different. If they could afford to pay hospital charges in the first story, I thought that Maili and Dhandai would not think of discharging their daughter. But, after thinking long and asking myself several questions, I chose to say that they should discharge their daughter from the hospital. And in the second story, I had an idea that Saru needed to struggle hard to progress and become a successful person. She should not lose hope. I was strongly against her marriage at the young age in spite of the many, obvious advantages of the marriage with the moneylender. (Written response to follow-up question 4: August 2017)

When I asked Ravi to put himself in the shoes of the stories’ characters while thinking about the dilemma and explain his thoughts, Ravi wrote if he were the doctor, he would support the parents of Muna. As Muna’s cure was almost impossible, he would try to convince all of his colleagues at the hospital, collect resources, and raise charity support in order to minimise the pain in Maili and Dhandai because he could understand how parents may feel about such a tragic condition of their child. When engaging with the second story, he said if he where Saru, the daughter, this unbearable situation of Mukhiya-baa’s proposal would also give him the courage to rise above the traditions and misery of Nepali society, and seek for a way to escape. Feelings of helplessness about being poor, rage against one’s own father, kindness to the mother, and courage to fight against the stereotypes of the vulnerability of a young
woman in the city erupted in him (Workbook: Ravi, p. 11). In a similar regard, on the last day of our fieldwork session, Ravi wrote:

If I had to act as Shanti, the mother of a young girl, I would fight with the situation rather than accepting its unjust treatment to me. I would encourage my daughter to struggle hard and send her to the city rather than accepting the moneylender’s proposal to have this old-man marry my young daughter. (Workbook: Ravi, p. 13)

Ravi had clearly progressed from his initial habit of making a quick decision and now considered a myriad of possibilities. In my follow-up visit (Appendix 9), Ravi shared how his exposure to the EDSP helped him modify his teaching style. He started to perceive himself as a facilitator, guide and counsellor in the classroom and expressed a desire to foster students’ creativity through activities, debate, discussion and expression. This change was due to his involvement with this project (Written response to follow-up question 12: Ravi, June, 2017). When I asked Ravi to elaborate on the change in his teaching with an example, he stated:

My teaching in the past was based on answering the difficult questions at the end of the text by myself to the students. I did not expect any involvement from my students to participate in the class discussions to solve any questions. The students used to be happy with my ready-made answers. They used to rote-learn and remember those answers given by me. After this session on dilemma story, I came to know that the questions, climax of the plot, dilemma and all points for critical thinking was meant for discussion with students, not solely answered by the teachers in note form. The insight that splashed in me was that my job was only to facilitate, create situations and stimulate the potential of the students rather than silencing their thoughts. I have begun teaching this way nowadays as an inspiration I received from your research project. (Written response to follow-up question 5: Ravi, June, 2017)

Most importantly, Ravi took the entire dilemma story learning experience to realise that people could think differently about the same issue. He had a significant shift in his own pedagogical awareness. Through experiencing the lived example of discussing the dilemma stories, Ravi became more student-centered, encouraging and valuing of the open-ended contributions from his students. Ravi found the dilemma stories to be the best tools for teaching creative thinking, speaking and writing.

**Summing up**

When Ravi and other participants worked closely with these two stories, they realised the importance of including dilemma stories in the curriculum, in post writing exercises and speaking tasks (Written response to follow-up question 10: Ravi, June, 2017). Finally, Ravi shared that his experience of participating in the research was
one of his best and noteworthy times, which he was fascinated with the lesson contents, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience:

The words just flowed out of me while thinking about my experience of these two dilemma stories. Moreover, as teachers, we would give notes on the topics which we teach to our students for them to recite and remember. The memorised stuff could help the students to pass their examinations, but they would not get benefit by meeting the real objectives of education which is independent as well as group thinking. Such text-based teaching and learning has always been monotonous compared to this interactive mode of the ethical dilemma story experience. (Reflective journal: Ravi, Oct. 16, 2015, Friday)

Once again, Ravi reiterated the value of working together and interacting with others. Our individual emotions are powerful forces for interpreting the stories which have been shaped by our individual understandings of the historical, cultural, and social context of different times. From Ravi’s responses and my notes, it can be inferred that the teaching of ethical dilemma stories prompted Ravi’s critical analysis about his initial ideas and his prejudices and biases. It prompted him to rethink the concepts underlying his teaching method, moving from a receptacle of ready-made answers to becoming a facilitator of interactive, independent, critical and creative thinking. The EDSP seemed efficient (time-wise) for Ravi to incorporate into his teaching. It was equally pleasing to know that Ravi started thinking from different points of view, as he was prompted to move from an unconscious, instinctive way of thinking to a more considered, transformative, dilemmatic approach.

Ravi’s interview responses, learning journals, class-activity notes, and my follow-up discussions with him confirmed how actively he contributed to this research. Ravi also demonstrated his creative presence by writing some short stories and discussing them with his colleagues and students as part of his classroom teaching. He shared that my research has now been the topic of discussion amongst other teachers in his college. However, I recall an incident during my two-week fieldwork teaching, when I found Ravi distracted, periodically checking his mobile phone and replying to urgent messages, which could be due to his busy schedule. I purposely had to focus him back on the lesson by asking his personal opinions on the dilemma discussed in the class.

In October 2016, I presented my studies into EDSP research to the First International Conference on Transformative Research in Dhulikhel, taking my research to the wider community. Ravi, who was present at the same conference, shared with the audience that the EDSP had become helpful in converting complex social-cultural
issues into dilemmas for discussion. He shared that he found the EDSP a suitable teaching method to present to a class of students. When he practiced EDSP in his class, he was able to note different viewpoints coming from the students who were engaged in the dilemma activities.

**Story ten: The story of Shakti**

The dilemma story discussions allowed me to relate concepts in the classroom to the real world; I learned many things which I now can take to my society.

(Shakti, in personal communication)

Shakti is a 23-year-old Nepalese woman, her home village situated around 20 kilometres from MMC – the college where she is studying her B.Ed. course. Every day she commuted from her home to the college. To facilitate her talking about her experience of the ethical dilemma stories learning, I agreed that she could come with a friend. Shakti had already accompanied Pallavi during her interview with me. So, Shakti was well prepared to speak out confidently. As had occurred with other pre-service teachers, when I asked Shakti to tell me more about her life, she recounted her day-to-day, mostly repetitive life. She said that on waking up at around 5.00 am, she helped her parents with the household chores, fetching water from the nearby spring and preparing food for the cattle (two cows, a pair of oxen and one buffalo). In addition to being a B.Ed. student, Shakti also held a day-time teaching job in a private school. She leaves her home at 6.00 am for her college that starts at 6.30 am and stays there until 10.00 am. She then takes a public bus to go to work every day at the end of her studies. Only in the evening, after her school teaching job, does she return to home. Shakti readily identified and engaged with the dilemma stories, due to the similarity to a Nepali context and for other reasons, which she explained:

Sir, what to say? You know us better than anyone else. I so easily identified myself with certain characters in the stories. For instance, I felt myself in accord with the emotions of Saru, the protagonist in your second story, *The dilemma of leaving home*, when she said that ‘she accepted the world as it was and her place in it’; ‘what we have got’ is ‘what we have got’ and from this point we simply seek to move forward. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 1)

Shakti’s sentiments are related to my stories such that she believed in fate, and lived with a hope for better days in her next life. She too belonged to a group of people who accepted such unique sentiments in Nepal. After a short introduction about the conversation, I sought her perception of the relevance of the two ethical dilemma
stories, my support for engagement, and her experience of working with her peers on a one-to-one and group basis. I also asked her how she felt about thinking carefully and analytically about her awareness of her own strengths and weaknesses. In this analysis, I considered Shakti’s responses in her workbook and reflective journal, the feedback I received in an e-mail from the college administration, and my own reflective notes.

**Contextualisation**

Here, I seek to understand Shakti’s perception of the ethical dilemma stories presented by me, mainly in terms of her own experiences. During my interview with Shakti, I asked her in what ways she thought the two dilemma stories were relevant to her or to people whom she knew. In response to this question, she shared:

Both the dilemma stories were relevant to me as well as to people whom I know…. Both stories were typical of Nepalese contexts especially in rural areas. I am also a girl from a rural area of Nepal. The events described in the stories are happening commonly in rural areas. Many people are poor in our village like the parents of Muna as described in the first story and they do not have the money to spend on hospitals when they are sick or suffer injuries. Nepalese society depends highly on the earnings of men. Like Mangal, many of our young village people go to the Arabian Gulf countries to seek employment, hoping to earn money for the family or even to pay off family loans. Like Shanti, women are the ones to stay at home and are responsible for all the household jobs. Many girls who leave their home to work in the city or those who leave the country for foreign employment are not respectfully treated by employers and others. Like Mukhiya-baa in the story, I also know a moneylender who is always a threat to people who had borrowed money from him, and have difficulty paying back the money on time. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 2)

Right after the interview, I invited all the participants for tea and biscuits where I had a chance to hold an informal discussion with all of them. I asked if anyone discussed these dilemma stories with their family members. Shakti raised her hand and spoke: “Yes, sir. I talked with my mother about it and I told the story of Dhandai and Maili to her. She loved the story and said the situation is similar to many people in our village including ourselves”. To clarify Shakti’s response, many people in Nepali villages do not have appropriate land for farming and must depend on loans to survive. There are many moneylenders in the villages who often take advantage of the villagers’ simplicity and weak economic condition by charging excessive rates of interest or by making unpleasant demands on certain members of the family. In a follow-up visit with Shakti and other participants (Appendix 9), Shakti added:
I found the ethical dilemma story was composed according to the social context of our country so that we are much more familiar with the context of the story by which we more easily understand the nature of the dilemma. (Written response to follow-up question 1: Shakti, June, 2017)

Shakti agreed that the dilemma stories were well designed to meet their intended purpose of the stories to enabling students to read easily, and develop their understanding of power, perception, and critical thinking. Based on these responses and from looking at my reflective journal, I concluded that Shakti appreciated the value of culture-specific themes in them. She found the dilemmas presented in stories were similar to those she experienced in her village life.

**Facilitation for empowerment**

With this section, I attempted to understand Shakti’s perception of the extent to which she felt supported by the teacher (me) to engage in classroom discussion. I asked Shakti in what ways she was encouraged to engage in the discussion activities. During the interview, Shakti shared the following:

I was encouraged to engage in the activities by your attractive presentation style. You presented two ethical dilemma stories leading to discussions about the ethical dilemma which were very much related to our Nepalese context. You presented your ideas about the dilemmas in a very interesting, pleasant and engaging way. You showed real respect for our views. You focused on our imagination and gave ample space for the expression of our views and for the styles in which we expressed them. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 3)

In the interview, Shakti recalled the moment when I engaged the students in discussions, eliciting their responses to expand further discussion. She found this experience entirely different from how such texts were dealt with in the past where there was an emphasis on recalling facts exactly as they appeared in the textbooks, and demonstrating these same ideas in the examinations. In the ethical dilemma story sessions, Shakti revealed how I had posed the idea to use the ethical dilemma stories as a tool to engage in thinking about a common theme, and critically contributing to participants’ learning in a collaborative and revelatory manner. She confirmed that the stories served as a foundation to springboard discussion about a common, shared issue amongst the participating pre-service teachers. During my follow-up visit with Shakti and other participants (Appendix 9), she shared the following:
In the process of ethical dilemma story teaching, the teacher told the stories to us, and asked us to discuss in group. (Written response to follow-up question 3: Shakti, June, 2017)

It is noteworthy that Ravi, another research participant, had organised a follow-up reflection session to discuss the effectiveness of this new pedagogy of ethical dilemma learning in his teaching. Following is Shakti’s reflection at the follow-up session:

I had very little confidence in my teaching until I attended the research sessions with Kashiraj Pandey. But, during the two week session with him, we always came home, feeling that we had learned something new because he was so willing to share his knowledge and experience in discussion. (Via an email from Ravi: Shakti, Dec. 16, 2016)

After examining Shakti’s responses, my notes, interactions, and other available evidence, I inferred that she considered the presentation of the materials during my fieldwork was carefully sequenced. She found my encouragement of discussion among the pre-service teachers and their contribution was of practical importance; each contributing their own point of view. She appreciated the overall pedagogic value of the method, which was well-planned, starting from the stage of my telling of the stories, to the discussion and conclusion.

**Collaboration, the power of dialogue**

Here, I wanted to understand Shakti’s views of the context in which she expressed her ideas and exchanged those ideas with others in the class activities. When I asked how she had ascertained other participants’ ideas and what she had gained from hearing their opinions individually and in groups, she replied:

I undertook pair working and shared ideas with my partner, and was also actively involved in group discussion activities. During the pair work and group discussions I listened attentively to their ideas, and exchanged my ideas with them. I gained a lot of knowledge, information and new ideas while hearing other friends’ opinions. … Also, even when we had the similar ideas, our presentation style was different. Hence, group-work and pair-work was a great space for sharing our ideas. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 4)

There is a saying in Nepal, many heads-many minds, which means there are as many opinions as there are men and women, just for its seriousness to be neglected as everyone may go carelessly in their own ways. However, in the case of this research, the saying had a positive side in that all of the participants as individuals offered differing views in looking at the same issue; they were able to contribute their unique
and important viewpoints in the class discussions. Remembering Shakti’s attention to her friends in the group I asked her to elaborate on how she felt when other participating pre-service teachers asked her to explain more about her ideas. In response to this query, Shakti shared:

Yes, my friends asked me to explain more about my ideas when I was involved in the group discussions. Many of their questions were critical and showed their deep understanding of my ideas on certain issues. I also did all my best to further explain my position and ideas in response to their questions. I too inquired about them to explain more about their views on a given dilemma situation. It was a fun part of our learning experiences when we had the opportunity to freely exchange our ideas with each other and with the presenter as well. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 5)

In my follow-up visit with Shakti and other participants (Appendix 9), she shared that the ethical dilemma story method encouraged her to share her views with the other participants. In the process of ethical dilemma story teaching, she had noticed how I told the stories and then put students in a group for discussion about that story. At that time, she said she had the opportunity to share her views with her friends in turn. So, other participating pre-service teachers also received the opportunity to share their views with her, and listen to various views expressed by their group members (Written response to follow-up question 4: Shakti, June, 2017). Explaining how the dilemma affected her differently from her colleagues, Shakti wrote in her classroom workbook that she realised the dilemmas posed in the stories evoked different emotional and intellectual responses in all the participating pre-service teachers. At the same time, her feelings played an important role in this realisation of the responsibility, age, gender and points of view of every individual (Workbook: Shakti, p. 1). This was also revealed in my own comments from the session:

Today, I told the dilemma story followed by different questions to think during the discussions. Students were active in providing their views, and sharing more information about the issue in ‘Think-Pair-Share’ sessions during the short intervals. (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 2, 2015, Friday)

My overall interpretation of Shakti’s perception of the expression and exchange of ideas is that the ethical dilemma story method seemed to have favoured Shakti in the interchange of ideas by guiding her to a greater appreciation of the quality of her own thinking – a point that she shared with friends and with those in her group. The dilemma stories have brought a new sensitivity to Shakti which she understood as the benefit of listening to her friends and practising this in the group. The ethical dilemma
story method, overall, prompted Shakti to endeavour to explain more clearly her ideas to others.

**Critical reflection**

The final part of my analysis and interpretation was based on Shakti’s classroom activities, my meetings with her, and her journal entry. In this part of my interpretive analysis of Shakti’s critical reflection, I sought to understand the process of how she made her decision in the dilemma situations in the stories. During the interview, I asked her to share, using a short example, whether the dilemma stories also caused her to question and reflect on her own ideas. This question was about Shakti’s struggle with dilemmas and in response, she stated:

Yes, the story also caused me to question and to reflect on my own ideas. In the past, I felt that the English stories I was exposed to were always written in an English cultural context with their own characters. When I was in Grade 11 and Grade 12, all the stories I read had a foreign context and foreign characters. The teaching style also tended to be rather boring and monotonous. But, when we discussed the two ethical dilemma stories, I realised that a teacher can bring some fun to the classroom to promote the students’ learning. I got an idea that we can also bring themes from our own Nepalese context and characters in our English teaching by making use of such dilemma stories, and make the classroom more interactive and interesting. I am happy to realise that English stories could be written in the Nepalese context/s. (Edited verbatim: Shakti, Question 5)

Shakti commented that she found me to be very friendly and approachable. This helped me to realise that when a teacher is friendly, the students can initiate enormous positive change in their learning process. “To be honest”, she added, “I also consider myself as one of the strict teachers at my present job. But, after meeting you and attending this two-week session, I am determined to change my teaching style by becoming friendlier to my students”. I was so pleased to hear this because she seemed to have found the dilemma experience essentially transformative in her own teaching. In a follow-up visit with Shakti other participants (Appendix 9), Shakti stated:

I did not have any experience of the ethical dilemma story method prior to my involvement in the present research project. I gained this knowledge only after I got the opportunity to take part in this two week long training about ethical dilemma story. At that period I learned a lot of techniques about it. I also participated as a student in discussion with friends. This way, I realised how the ethical dilemma story helped us to learn the subject matter more deeply. (Written response to follow-up question 11: Shakti, June, 2017)
Shakti added that she was currently employing the ethical dilemma story method in her teaching. She found her students were more motivated in class because of the ethical dilemma stories she learned during this research. Before using this approach, Shakti stated that her students were passive learners not participating actively in the class. They did not write the answers creatively but always looked to her as their teacher. She revealed how the students responded to her new teaching technique as fun learning with opportunities to actively participate in learning activities. Shakti explained how those students who used to copy the answers of others have now started to express their opinions freely. She found her students’ performance level improved (Written response to question 12: Shakti, June, 2017). In response to another question (Appendix 10) about whether Shakti made quick decisions on the dilemma situations, she stated:

I found different way of dealing with dilemma stories. When you told the dilemma stories in our class, you asked us to spend time to think, discuss, and decide. That was so challenging and a new experience for me. However, I also thought it was good for me because I am not a type of person for fast decisions even in my real life situations. So, I took time to look for and consider various alternatives before giving my views. The presentation with break-time to discuss and the dilemma situation of the story prompted me to think deeply before making my decisions. (Written response to follow-up question 1: August 2017)

As further evidence, in my probing question (Appendix 10) to discover how the dilemma stories helped Shakti to understand herself more deeply and her existing socio-political context, she stated that it was so hard for her in the beginning to choose between what to do and what not to do, what to say and what not to say, whom to support and whom not to support in both story situations. She explained:

I feel most of my views were different than others in our class. I remember how my views were different than that of our male friends. I got so excited while listening to the stories from you. This may be because I am girl and the main characters were females in both of your stories. At first, I got excited with the plots of the stories instead of critically examining them. For example, the first story trapped me between the dilemma of whether to think of discharging their much-loved daughter from the hospital with even less hope for her life to save some burden of money or still wait for some more days and let her die in the hospital with proper care. Accordingly, I was deeply shocked by the treatment of the moneylender when he was proposing his inner interest to marry the young girl, Saru. (Written response to follow-up question 2: August 2017)

When I queried whether the dilemma stories assisted Shakti in higher-order thinking, she shared that her thoughts altered while thinking deeply, as she started to think from different perspectives about the dilemma situations. She stated:
In the first story, when I tried to think more deeply, I had a question in my mind that how could the hospitals function if they did not get money from the patients. I think we need to promote health insurance instead of present-day practice of paying the hospital bills directly by the family members. In the discussion, two of other friends also had the similar idea. In the second story, although, I tried to take side with Muna and her mother’s situation in the beginning, I started to feel pity about the moneylender after some time who once helped the family to send Mangal, the father to Malaysia. I thought it was the irresponsibility of Mangal which caused all the troubles in the family. (Written response to follow-up question 3: August 2017)

**Summing up**

After examining Shakti’s responses, and my notes, I inferred that the method did help Shakti to question and reflect on her own ideas by posing dilemmas originating in her own culture. Moreover, she was able to empathise with the characters and change her point of view. Her willingness to engage in reflective thinking and discussions was noteworthy. She saw the value of new ways of thinking about, and responding to, the dilemmas. She seemed to appreciate that the dilemma stories used local contexts and characters. On reflection, I see that we did not have enough time to discuss the dilemma issues in the classroom. Therefore, it was even more difficult for Shakti to make decisions on a dilemma situation within the limited time available. She wished to have spent more time on the discussion because the lack of time forced her to think faster, and also decide faster than really wanted. Further, in my probing question to explore how Shakti made her decisions in the dilemma situations (Appendix 10), she stated:

I enjoyed the freedom given by you as our teacher for choosing the views whichever could be better justified in my own situation. I made decisions on the basis of my own family and social situations. In the case of the first story, I decided for the discharge of Muna because I did not prefer to see any more difficult situation of other family members such as Dhandai, Maili, and the children. In the second story, I connected myself with the young girl, Saru. First, I thought of my own happiness and my family condition, my mother’s self-esteem and our social as well as religious systems. Therefore, I am still undecided whether to accept or reject the moneylender’s proposal in the second story. (Written response to follow-up question 4: August 2017)

When Shakti shared that she was making good use of the method she gained from my two-week session with these pre-service teachers, it gave me impetus to take this project further. Overall, she found the approach effective, noting the significant value of such a style in her own pedagogy as she noticed immediate improvements in her students’ practice and participation.
Story eleven: The story of Bikti

The dilemma story activities have brought so much awareness to my attention even though it took more time, effort, and self-motivation.

(Bikti, in personal communication)

Bikti, a 21-year-old male, seemed comparatively shy and quieter than other participating pre-service teachers in the ethical dilemma story class and asked to be accompanied to the interview by a fellow student, Pallavi. Bikti lives with his farming parents in a tiny village on the other side of the Trisuli river, some six kilometres from MMC, Gajuri. I conducted the interview with Bikti who commutes daily from his home to Gajuri for his teaching job which supports him through his B.Ed. studies. He is fortunate that his teaching position is not far from the college where he is studying.

Bikti appears as a dreamer; he has ambitions to achieve the best results in his studies, wanting to become a successful teacher and change society for the better by imparting quality education to the new generation of children. I focussed our interaction in line with the previous interviews and considered Bikti’s responses in my analysis from his workbook and reflective journal under the following headings.

**Contextualisation**

This section addresses my understanding of Bikti’s perception of the presented ethical dilemma stories, primarily regarding his ethical dilemma learning experiences. During the interview, I asked Bikti in what ways he thought the two dilemma stories were relevant to him or to people he knew. In response to this question, he explained how both stories were relevant to him. Bikti found the dilemma stories relevant to some people he knew as the stories were related to the people and context of the rural area of Nepal. To clarify Bikti’s response, it is useful to know that the economic condition of people in his village was also very poor, like the characters of both stories that I presented in the class. When people are ill in the remote villages of Nepal, they normally do not have money to go to the hospital. Thus, they face many challenges. Likewise, it is common for many young people to leave Nepal and work in other countries. In such situations, many of them would also forget their family in Nepal as Mangal, in the second dilemma story, seemed to have forgotten his wife and daughter after marrying another woman in Malaysia. Bikti
explained that the first story reminded him of a similar situation of his neighbour, Gopal. Once, Gopal’s daughter suffered from high fever, and had to be carried off to the hospital on a stretcher. Since Gopal’s family was in a weak economic condition, the villagers contributed some money for their daughter’s treatment and helped to transport her to the hospital (Edited verbatim: Bikti, Question 1). Likewise, Bikti wrote about the relevance of the dilemma stories in his workbook; an excerpt follows:

I have seen similar situation of young students in my village like the one described in the second dilemma story, *The dilemma of leaving home*. For example, there is a poor family near my home. The parents have sent their son to Kathmandu [capital city] for study but could not send enough money to support his living. (Workbook: Bikti, p. 7)

This comment reminded me of the moment when Bikti shared his appreciation of the dilemma story approach with his friends. Here is an observation which I noted in my reflective journal:

In today’s class, Bikti was very interested to listen to the story. In a tea-time meeting he was sharing with his friends that if all the English texts have easy subject matter like the dilemma story, he thought he would not find the English subject difficult to learn in the future. (My reflective journal: Oct. 16, 2015, Friday)

In viewing these responses, and reviewing my reflective journal, it appears that Bikti seemed to have found the dilemma stories culturally relevant. He found that the two presented dilemma stories stimulated the recollection of similar stories and some of his own related, affective experiences which lead him to elicit stimulating responses from his friends during the class discussions.

**Facilitation for empowerment**

Focusing on collaboration, I asked Bikti about his experience of my dilemma story sessions and asked him to elaborate further on the ways he felt supported by the group and myself as the teacher to engage in their classroom activities. Bikti responded that his learning experience in my class was different to previous learning experiences. He recalled the moment when he only read and summarised the text for examination purposes, whereas in this research, he was encouraged to actively engage in the class activities. When dealing with dilemma stories in the classroom, Bikti found it very interesting and pleasant, revealing the following:
You gave many ideas to engage us actively in learning through individual and group work. The learning process was very unique in that we were also encouraged to express our ideas and think creatively, critically, independently and collaboratively. I am proud of myself for having joined in your sessions and because I learned a new model of teaching English through the use of ethical dilemma stories. (Edited verbatim: Bikti, Question 2)

Bikti shared about the experience in his reflective journal and how learning English using EDSP became interesting and relevant for him. He liked my supportive role with related examples from people’s life journey. He revealed:

If the teacher is supportive, likes you, and also gives examples from our own life situation, I feel ‘Thank you very much.’ (Reflective journal: Bikti, Oct. 8, 2015, Thursday)

Based on Bikti’s responses, I inferred that he found the dilemma story approach engaging, positive, as well as different from his previous learning experiences. The approach seemed to have encouraged him to develop differing ways of looking at a single dilemma and led him towards a wider exploration of his existing ideas.

**Collaboration, the power of dialogue**

This part of my conversation with Bikti focused on peer interaction and engagement for my interpretive analysis. Here, I tried to seek Bikti’s perception on how he had ascertained other participating pre-service teachers’ ideas, and what he had gained from hearing their opinions about the class activities – individually and in groups. In response to my queries, Bikti replied:

When we worked in pairs and groups, I realised how we all pre-service teachers tended to have different ideas and their own unique views on a given issue. We were interested in each other’s ideas. I learnt the importance of cooperation and coordination in respecting our multiple valid views. Sometimes I asked questions to other participants in order to know more about their opinions about a dilemma. I realised that we can gain knowledge and information from listening attentively to our friends. I also attained knowledge about the effective use of ethical dilemma stories as a teaching method for English classes. (Edited verbatim: Bikti, Question 3)

During an informal conversation, Bikti shared how he realised the benefit of sharing his own ideas among his group members and friends while listening to others during discussion time (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 9, 2015, Friday). Then I asked Bikti to elaborate on his responses from our interview. Our conversation was based on the formal and informal discussions, his earlier responses in his reflective journal and
in the classroom workbook. Specifically, I asked him to elaborate on his responses that were shared with his friends in the classroom discussions, to which he replied:

Yes. When my friends in these dilemma story sessions asked for my ideas, I told them what I personally thought about the ethical dilemma situation in the story. It was so much fun to share and explain one’s ideas in pairs and in the group. (Edited verbatim: Bikti, Question 4)

In another instance, however, Bikti stated that the participants had opportunities to share their points of view more extensively in this research. However, I understand that the scope for Bikti and other participants to express their own opinions was possible because of the small-group setting. Bikti wrote, “While working in pairs and groups we got an atmosphere to develop reflective practice while we were trying to resolve the ethical dilemma questions” (Reflective journal: Bikti, Oct. 9, 2015, Friday). In response to my probing question (see Appendix 10) regarding how ethical dilemma stories helped Bikti in discussion with other students he replied:

In the first story, I shared what I thought to my friends and I also listened to other friends. They also told their views. When we had different views about Muna’s discharge from the hospital, we discussed until we reached to a consensus. When we had similar views, we agreed after some discussion. In the second story, when I thought it was okay for Saru to accept to marry the moneylender, none of my friends liked my idea. Specially, the girls argued that that was not possible for Saru to accept the old man as her husband, but he has plenty of money. (Written response to follow-up question 3, August 2017)

Based on Bikti’s responses, I inferred that Bikti and his friends, the pre-service teachers were encouraged to share, exchange, comment on and accept each other’s ideas. The method seemed to have provided Bikti with an exposure, the acceptance of the ideas of the others with very effective cooperation within the group members. Moreover, the EDSP prompted Bikti and other participants to realise the importance of learning to listen. This improved pedagogic model was enjoyable to Bikti; he perceived that it provided mutual help among the pre-service teachers in a cordial atmosphere.

As a researcher, it was hard for me to infer too much as some of the ideas were not elaborated in sufficient depth even though I asked the participants to consider their gender as well as social values to guide them in the decision making process before starting to tell the story. Comments such as “I thought it was okay for Saru to accept to marry the moneylender, none of my friends liked my idea. Specifically, the girls strongly argued that it was not possible for Saru to accept the old man as her husband,
but he has plenty of money” (Personal communication: Bikti, Oct. 9, 2015, Friday). Such comments from Bikti, a male participant, were difficult to interpret because I thought they could be gender as well as culture specific. It was good to hear different perspectives coming up in the discussion, which is a very rare scene. On reflection, I thought that we should have discussed more about the idea of his point of view and allowed Bikti to justify his thinking process. This is something I would like to consider in greater detail in my future research.

**Critical reflection**

In this part of my interpretive analysis, I sought to understand the process of how Bikti made his decision in the dilemma situations in the stories. During conversation with Bikti I asked him to share, using a short example, whether the dilemma stories also caused him to question and reflect on his ideas. In response to this question, Bikti replied how the dilemma stories made him react emotionally. He elaborated saying that the sessions helped him to become more confident to participate in discussions, speak out, present his ideas and write them on paper. He explained:

> In the past we read many stories, yet, did not go this deep into the themes. We used to read, do the exercises and wait to demonstrate in the examination, what we had remembered. But the content and teaching methods of these ethical dilemma stories were more engaging than those earlier stories. These dilemma stories made me think critically about the dilemma situations, and I realised the value of learning for the benefit of learners.

> I found the second story of Shanti similar to a case that I had seen in my local village context. My neighbour married off their daughter (Sarita) at the tender age of 13. She, now, has three children and her husband has gone to Dubai seeking employment. He hasn’t returned home for the past 5 years, and his whereabouts is also unknown to all of us. Sarita has raised the children while she has also worked at a construction site which is similar to the situation of Shanti as described in the second story.

> Your voice projection, teaching style, friendly behaviour, and positive-feedback method have given me a lot to take along with me into my own teaching. I will try to change my teaching style following the strategy that we have practised during this two week session. (Edited verbatim: Bikti, Question 5)

Bikti indicated that, in several instances, he was uncertain of his decision, as his personal values as a responsible member in his family pushed him to disagree with what ‘Mangal’, the protagonist in the second story, did to his wife Shanti and young daughter Saru. This response suggests that the ethical dilemma story prompted Bikti to think in ways he had not been exposed to in his previous ethical dilemma experience. Bikti wrote about his stand that leaving one’s wife and daughter in such
debt and marrying another woman was not ethical for a man. When I asked Bikti to elaborate on his views that the dilemma posed in the second story, he saw the problem as more residing in Mangal than in Mukhiyaa-Baa (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Friday, Oct. 9, 2015). Bikti wrote in his workbook:

If I am the mother of a young girl like Saru, I would respond to her very carefully. I would also explain the family situation to her and encourage her to cope with [her present adverse situations]. (Workbook: Bikti, p. 8)

Bikti shared that the dilemma story also gave him the courage to speak out in the class discussion. In such a case, he responded differently where the mother and daughter did not get positive support from people in the village. He said he felt so bad about the nature of the society. He considered that he would even sell the small property to pay off the debt, then leave the village and go to the city, a bigger place. He wrote “I would hope to find a job which would be enough to feed two of us and send my daughter to a school (Workbook: Bikti, p. 12). Bikti’s workbook reflections supported his better understanding of his values and beliefs based on the stories. The reflections also gave an impression that a different opinion from his colleagues was acceptable. He shared his opinion if Saru agreed to marry Mukhiya-baa, all of them would benefit from that decision. By this decision, the family of Shanti and Saru would be free from the burden of paying off a large sum of money to Mukhiya-baa, and at the same time, Mukhiya-baa would have Saru to take care of him at his home (Workbook: Bikti, p. 10).

In my probing question (Appendix 10) to know whether Bikti made any quick decisions on the dilemma situations, he replied:

While you were telling the dilemma stories in our class, we had a specific break time to spend on individual thinking, sharing, and group discussions. That was a new experience for me because I found it hard to wait when I thought I knew the answer right away.

Then I remembered what you said. You said to us in the beginning that there may be more than one right or wrong answer depending on our existing individual situation and point of views. So, I tried to think about the solution from multiple ways. After thinking about the dilemma for a while in both the stories, I put my ideas for discussion among my friends. However, the time was not enough. For example, when I was going to explain more about my view from the perspective of the moneylender in the second story, there was not enough time. However, I discussed that with you during the tea-time. (Written response to follow-up question 1, August 2017)
As separate evidence to my probing question (Appendix 10) and to support how the dilemma stories helped Bikti to think critically to understand himself and his situation more deeply in the existing social, political context, he replied:

Actually, dealing with such dilemma situations is a part of our life in the village. If it rains, we have a dilemma whether to go to work in the field or not. When we think of leaving home for the city or to go to a foreign country, we have many things to consider in our mind. But I have a habit of making decisions based on the level of urgency and need. Many times we may lose the opportunity of good employment if we take time to decide. Someone else takes the job. For example, if I take time to think about whether to cross the river or not when it is raining, the water level may keep rising. So, I found different way of dealing with dilemma in your research.

When I recall our discussion of the first story, I struggled to think which solution can be better. First I thought the parents need to keep Muna in the hospital. But, after some time I thought they were poor family and old people. Therefore it was really hard for the parents to sustain economically and there was almost no hope for Muna’s recovery. The situation was so difficult, both ways. In the second dilemma story, I first thought the moneylender was trying to take advantage of Shanti and Saru’s difficult situation. I thought he should have helped because he had money to support them. But, again I thought he had already given them some money. A question came into my mind, how long he can keep supporting people like that. (Written response to follow-up question 2: August 2017)

When I further queried (Appendix 10) Bikti’s decision-making process in the dilemma situations, he replied:

In the first story, we kept discussing for long time and tried to reach to some compromising point. And finally, I remember that we gave a common viewpoint of discharging Muna from the hospital.

In the second story, there was an instant idea in my mind after listening to the story that the rich man (moneylender) was trying to exploit the family of Shanti and Saru. But, after a while I remembered you saying us before that we also try to practice the viewpoints of different characters in the story and also to look at the situation in our social political context. Then I tried to become more open-minded. I realised that my socio-economic position must have helped me to identify with Shanti and Saru. So, I tried to think from the moneylender’s position and realised that he could be helpless. I had the idea that he may need support as a family. I requested my friends to think what they would do if they were the moneylender themselves. Would they keep on giving money without self-interest? Unfortunately, we had not enough time to discuss more, but the stories were so interesting and we could discuss these dilemma stories for longer period of time, later at some time. (Response to follow-up question 4, August 2017)

**Summing up**

The ethical dilemma stories were very engaging to Bikti, and he would have liked to spend more time discussing them. Bikti appreciated the value of the dilemma stories compared to other types of stories as the dilemmas in the stories seemed to have
stimulated his reflection by using culturally-specific Nepalese dilemmas. The dilemma stories caused him to reflect on similar previous experiences. Based on Bikti’s responses, I concluded that the ethical dilemma story learning made him emotional, bringing a deeper level of reflection to his initial ethical concepts. It makes a lot of sense that Bikti looked at the story from the moneylender’s viewpoint which wasn’t the initial reaction of the participants. Moreover, Bikti was using marriage as a solution, but no one brought the possibility of Shanti’s re-marriage. This is because of the uniqueness of present Nepalese society where remarrying of women is not very common. The EDSP led Bikti to reflect critically on his values as an ethical, educated man. Bikti’s appreciation of my presentation seemed to have caused a reinterpretation of his existing concepts which led to an experience of personal pedagogic transformation, a transformational event of a Eureka moment.

**Story twelve: The story of Suniti**

The dilemma stories have truly touched me as a person, made me feel the pain of people I care about and changed me for the better. When we are able to contribute to the community and help others, we also receive a sense of gratification and self-worth; slowly, we can change the world, one person at a time.

(Suniti, in personal communication)

Suniti is a 22-year-old, young woman who represents a typical village girl in Nepal. She comes from a simple and economically poor family. Her two younger sisters were already married off, after both of them failed their SLC examination, and lived in different villages with their husbands. Suniti dreams of being a ‘good’ school-teacher in her own village. She believes that by teaching she would share her knowledge with the other poor and disadvantaged children who, like herself, have been left behind in her village.

Suniti shared that her family hardly manages to sustain the crops they produce from their farm. Her home is located at the middle of a hilly village where the neighbours are very helpful. Her family has a buffalo that gives five litres of milk every day, of which they sell four litres and keep one litre for the family’s everyday consumption. During her free time, she is happy to help her parents in farming and raising cattle and goats. She says she is lucky to be able to come to the college because many girls of her age from the village, including her younger sisters, have already been married off. She does not have a paid job while she is also studying a B.Ed. but she plans to find a
job near her home. She thinks a teacher’s job is a secure one. Suniti was not very active during the first two days in group discussions in the classroom; however, she started to become more active and I had noticed her increased inquisitiveness every other day in her response to the ethical dilemma stories.

The interview started with myself and Suniti sitting opposite each other. We had previously agreed that her classmate Bikti, would accompany her for the interview. Bikti arrived half an hour late saying that he had to teach an extra class at his school, replacing an absent teacher. I told him not to worry and to relax as I continued the conversation with Suniti about her experience with the ethical dilemma story sessions. As she felt a little hesitant to talk in English, the conversation was held in a mixture of Nepali and English languages. As with the other participants, I focused the conversation on her perception around the following themes.

**Contextualisation**

Through our interview, I sought to understand more about Suniti’s comments on the ethical dilemma story sessions that I presented, mainly in terms of her responses to the class discussions, and through her reflective journal. I wanted to know from Suniti about the ways the two dilemma stories were relevant to her or to people whom she knew. During the discussion, I tried to focus our conversation on how Suniti felt about the dilemma story content and quality. She responded saying that she found both stories had themes which could relate to her and her society, due to their Nepalese contexts and simplicity in structure. In clarifying Suniti’s responses, it is important to understand that many people in Nepal are still needy of financial support and deprived of educational opportunities. There are situations when the poor people have limited choices as the economically weaker ones have less approach in power and politics. For example, poor people often have to seek a signal from rich people for permission to use public facilities. There is also a lack of awareness and information among the majority of village people on how to improve their living conditions. Suniti explained:

Like in the second story, I know a girl, Gita, from my village who got married at the age of 12 to someone who was double her age. (Edited verbatim: Suniti, Question 1)

It is true that girls get married early in the Nepalese villages and often there could be a big age difference between a bride and a groom. The primary preference in match-
making lies in financial as well as cultural matters. During my fieldwork teaching, when I asked Suniti about how she identified the situation with herself and other people she knew, she replied in her workbook that:

The issues you have raised in the dilemma stories are very similar to the situation of Nepalese people, the students in particular. Like Saru, the main character in the second dilemma story, many of us students have financial problems and worry about not being able to pay the tuition fee even right before the final examination has started. (Workbook: Suniti, p. 8)

When I asked about whether Suniti identified with the character in the story situation, she shared in her workbook that she could very closely identify with the nature of the family’s problems as mentioned in the dilemma stories, such as the sudden illness of a family member, poverty, unemployment, and lack of education, which are well represented in the dilemma stories (Workbook: Suniti, p. 2). Talking about how she was affected by the plot of one of the dilemma stories, Suniti shared in her workbook that:

I was upset while I heard about the Mukhiya-baa’s marriage proposal to young Saru, which was common in our village. However, it seemed unacceptable to me and I thought such issues needed space to be discussed in our education activities. (Workbook: Suniti, p. 10)

To support how the dilemma stories were relevant to Suniti, she shared in her workbook that both the stories represented the situation of her society such as poverty, lack of education among the youth, and their compulsion to seek for foreign employment (Workbook: Suniti, p. 16). I noted her positive interaction during the class discussion:

Today, Suniti seemed pro-active in the class. She shared similar experiences of some of the people of her village. (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 9, 2015 Friday)

In a follow-up visit with Suniti and other participants (Appendix 9), she shared that, after the sessions with me, she had made use of the ethical dilemma stories also in her practice-teaching lessons. She found the dilemma stories to be effective in terms of her own and her students’ capacity to identify and express their newer understandings in both spoken and written form. She said she had experienced such effect during and after her exposure to the dilemma stories in the two-week sessions at MMC as a B.Ed. student (Written response to follow-up question 1: Suniti, June, 2017).
Based on Suniti’s responses, my classroom observations, and reflective notes, I inferred that she found the stories culturally relevant as they had similarities to Nepali people’s lives and social experience. She also found the stories were effective in prompting her to attempt new methods in her teaching. Most significantly, the new methods were effective in prompting students to actively engage with the dilemma stories.

*Facilitation for empowerment*

After analysing Suniti’s reflective journal and workbook responses, I discussed with her the ways she was encouraged by the teacher (me) to engage in the ethical dilemma learning activities. In response to this query, Suniti replied:

> At first, you as the presenter gave us the list of vocabulary items to become familiar with. When you started to tell the story, we had a break in between the sessions and were encouraged to think independently. That was a big encouragement to me to engage in the activities. You, as the presenter allowed us to think deeply about the dilemma situations, then share and discuss our opinions with our friends. (Edited verbatim: Suniti, Question 2)

From her response, it appeared that Suniti took this exposure as an opportunity to know how her understanding of dilemma situations was similar to or different from other pre-service teachers’ points of view. She seemed to like the questions that were asked to elicit perspectives from different angles where she and other participants could put forward their views confidently, both with me and in discussions among themselves. Suniti also stated in her workbook that she was encouraged by the teacher (me), during my fieldwork teaching:

> I was encouraged to engage in the learning activities. We were engaged in discussions actively and given freedom to be flexible to think independently. (Workbook: Suniti, p. 17)

In her reflective journal, Suniti wrote how I created an environment where she could feel the fun of real learning. She wrote she had truly enjoyed my sincere way of sharing the ideas in our class. She said, “I wish I can have many more classes with you like this” (Reflective journal: Suniti, Oct. 7, 2015, Wednesday). Further, in my follow-up visit to Nepal and during my succeeding interaction with Suniti and other participants (see Appendix 9), she shared:

> The teacher told stories with an appropriate break. Then, he put essential questions regarding the paragraph to discuss among us. The important part for me was when the
teacher asked us what we would have thought or done or decided if we were in the given situation. He encouraged us in expressing our view, let us express our views whether we agreed or disagreed with other participants’ ideas and we wrote our views in our workbooks. We were able to explore multiple views through his facilitation. So I feel he presented the story very well. (Written response to follow-up question: Suniti, June 2017)

Based on Suniti’s responses, I inferred that her overall experience was positive, enjoyable, and memorable. She seemed to have appreciated the taxonomic value of the offered vocabulary list and valued my encouragement of open discussion aided by my non-judgmental approaches. Gannon (2018, p. 30) asserts that “narrative fragments without closure or resolution can attune to sensations, moments, impressions, images, and textures”. Indeed, Suniti found that the right environment was provided to elicit the perspectives of her and other pre-service teachers from different angles and with an awareness of divergent views.

Collaboration, the power of dialogue

After reviewing Suniti’s workbook and journal, my observation diary, and her preliminary responses to peer interaction and engagement, I sought Suniti’s views on her approach to learning about other participants’ ideas, both individually and in groups, and what she had gained from listening to her peers. She acknowledged that different friends had different views about the given dilemma situation. She also added that many times, the opinions and presentations of an individual pre-service teacher had different elements and emphases. She explained:

The flexible questions addressed to us by the presenter also helped us to be exposed to different perspectives where the pre-service teachers shared ideas more effectively and link them to those of the others. (Edited verbatim: Suniti, Question 3)

I then asked Suniti to explain how other pre-service teachers asked her to elaborate on her ideas. She described how other participants shared their ideas and information. She also added that she had a fantastic experience with sharing and having the chance to explain her ideas to other friends and listen to their views. Her explanation follows:

When I had different perspective to look at a husband more positively who had abandoned his wife, other friends in the class did not agree. Hence, I convinced them that it is always good to try to build up the good relationship with ex-husband rather than being exploited by the outsiders. (Edited verbatim: Suniti, Question 4)

However, during an informal conversation one day, Suniti shared about an occasion when I asked students about their views on certain dilemma issues. At that moment,
she found it difficult to make decisions. According to Suniti, one of her friends, Pallavi, wrote the views on behalf of other participants on a sheet of paper. Suniti assumed Pallavi must be correct with her written account. I had also noticed several times when Suniti kept quiet in the classroom; later I learned that Suniti and other participants were confused as to whether the decision of Pallavi was supposed to be everyone’s final decision. I wrote: “Today, when I explained that every participant was equally eligible to put their ideas, Suniti was encouraged to speak out (Reflective journal: Kashiraj, Oct. 2, 2015, Friday). After all these endeavours, when I asked whether Suniti was able to share and exchange ideas with other participants during my fieldwork teaching, she said “Yes, we shared our ideas and information with each other; such sharing made us more creative” (Workbook: Suniti, p. 18). In my follow-up visit with Suniti and other participants in June, 2017, she indicated that all the participants were proactive in thinking, speaking, agreeing, and disagreeing during the sessions.

Based on Suniti’s responses and from my observation notes, I inferred that she seemed to have an awareness of the different understandings of the dilemma situations among the group of pre-service teachers. She respected other pre-service teachers’ differing viewpoints on the dilemma and facilitated effective cooperation to link them to those of the others. From her perspective, the ethical dilemma story method favoured the exchange of ideas. As a participant, Suniti shared that all the participating pre-service teachers were encouraged to share and more clearly explain their ideas among themselves. Suniti found the method a stimulating and enjoyable one which prepared her to reflect and put forward her views confidently.

**Critical reflection**

During the interview, Suniti and I discussed various cultural and ethical issues that were found in mainstream Nepali society. Suniti, however, seemed more introverted compared to the other pre-service teachers participating in my research. I thought that the two-week session was not sufficient for her to be fully immersed in critical reflective thinking regarding her values. The final part of my analysis and interpretation of Suniti’s responses was about her struggle with ethical dilemma story learning activities. In this part of my interpretive analysis of Suniti’s critical reflection, I sought to understand the process of how she made her decision in the
dilemma situations in the stories. I asked Suniti to share, via a short example, whether the dilemma stories also caused her to question and reflect on her own ideas. In response to this question, Suniti replied:

Yes, I considered English was a difficult subject to learn and to teach before being exposed to this dilemma story method. Now, I am convinced that it is possible to learn English within our own Nepalese contexts which are highly relevant in our society. Also, I realised that the teachers’ role and the teaching style means a lot while creating a positive environment in learning which I would like to take with me and practise in my teaching. (Edited verbatim: Suniti, Question 5)

After the interview, in an informal setting with all participants, I asked Suniti to explain the reason why she had thought it could be easier to learn English and possibly other subjects within the dilemma story contexts, confirming my assumption that EDSP is useful across other disciplines of learning. She replied that the stories attracted her to think, to engage with the problems, to empathise with the characters and to seek other students’ ideas. So, such concerns actively engaged her in the activities. The stories helped Suniti better understand her values and beliefs as evidenced in her workbook:

After we discussed the first story, I thought for several times and came to the conclusion that I would ask the doctors if we as the family members could take Muna home instead of keeping her in the hospital just to pay the bills when there was no possibility of improvement in Muna’s health. (Workbook: Suniti, p. 7)

In a similar context, when I asked Suniti to talk about her dilemma experience with the second story, she shared in her workbook that she found it very difficult to deal with the second story when Saru and her mother were economically poor, had a loan to pay off and could not afford to spend money. In such a case, after struggling hard with the dilemma, Suniti responded that Saru, the daughter, should not worry about what other people would comment on her decisions. She wrote, “If she wanted to go to the city for possible employment and success, she should do that” (Workbook: Suniti, p. 11). In another instance, during the class activity, Suniti shared if she were Saru, the main character in the second dilemma story, she would not get married with Mukhiya-baa; she would rather challenge the society and move on (Workbook: Suniti, p. 13). Most importantly, Suniti wrote about the transformational change in her thought processes as, “[E]arlier, I thought learning English was [a] difficult thing. But, after going through these stories, I have found it easier with a belief that it is possible to learn this subject in our own context” (Workbook: Suniti, p. 18).
In my follow-up visit with Suniti and other participants in June 2017, she shared how her exposure to the dilemma stories pedagogy helped her change her existing assumptions about teaching and learning. She shared how she got to know that they could learn a lot from their own contexts where there was not necessarily any need to borrow or adapt the text from outside of their contexts. She explained as “These sessions made me realise our culture, our society is rich with stories, feelings, experiences and modes of life. They can be picked up and woven beautifully as a learning material” (Written response to follow-up question 4: Suniti, June 2017).

Suniti shared how she became interested in the approach of dilemma stories and talked about her own writing of two dilemma stories. She explained, “I have written and borrowed some dilemma stories from Kashiraj Pandey to see how I can use them in my classroom” (Written response to follow-up question 12: Suniti, June 2017). In my probing question (Appendix 10) to know whether Suniti made any quick decisions on the dilemma situations, she stated:

I remember you [myself, as their teacher] gave us many questions to think and discuss before we made our final decisions. However, I had a habit of expecting to receive the ‘right’ answer from our teachers. So, I was waiting to receive a right answer from you as our teacher and I was hesitating to give my idea. My experience during your research was different. In the past, I used to hold a habit of hurrying up to seek for an answer to any issues because I also normally believe that whoever could answer quickly, they would be considered as the smart student. Most of the times we would get a ‘right’ answer from the teacher which we just had to read and remember. (Written response to follow-up question 1: Suniti, August 2017)

The above response reminded me of a moment when Suniti was paying close attention as to how I, as their teacher, would respond to the questions. Afterwards, she had a different idea of how I wanted the participants to engage in the activities, as students, for the sake of their own answers. As separate evidence, in my probing question (see Appendix 10) to explore how the dilemma stories helped Suniti to understand herself and her situation more deeply in the existing social, political context, she shared:

I was never exposed in such dilemmas which required my personal judgement. What I decided in the beginning, varied afterwards with my frequently provoking thoughts. As soon as some time of thinking and listening to other friends, I had a change in my opinion. (Written response to follow-up question 2, August 2017)

I also tried to find out whether the dilemma stories made Suniti struggle in her consideration of the stories, and in her discussions with other students. In response,
she shared how she was many times rendered speechless as to whether to focus on the economic situation, or even think of what the society and her relatives would say. There were different but important things she had to consider when examining her approach to dealing with the dilemma situations (Written response to follow-up question 3, August 2017).

Further, in my probing question to understand how Suniti made her decision in the dilemma situations (see Appendix 10), she revealed:

> Honestly, the religious, social, and cultural concepts passed on by my ancestors to me, the religion I followed, my economic condition, my gender all had a kind of constraints in my decisions related to the dilemmas in both the stories. I realised from this experience that what I think a right decision for me may be equally wrong if I fail to include a feeling with other people’s perspectives. (Written response to follow-up question 4, August 2017)

**Summing up**

Suniti had a feeling that even her friends would also want to listen to the teacher’s answer first before they had their say. It was the reason she first thought why I, as their teacher, was delaying in telling them the ‘right’ answer. But, during my sessions, she learned to look at the dilemma issues from different angles, and take time to consider the situation from different characters’ points of view.

Based on Suniti’s responses and from my observation notes, I inferred that she perceived the effectiveness of dilemma stories compared to other types of stories. Her exposure to this research made her open to critical reflection. She embraced and applied the idea of critical thinking in her own teaching practice. She also shared the possibility of creating culturally-specific contexts in English texts and teaching. Overall, Suniti too seemed to have experienced a personal transformation.

**Chapter Summary**

My journey of research into EDSP has enabled me to critically engage with my earlier academic experiences, professional practices and personal life. This research has prompted me to rethink issues that I may have taken for granted, where in spite of differences, a common sense of understanding has emerged through the discussion and sharing. Therefore, a unity in mutual understanding prevailed in the group where the research participants were active in sharing their ideas with each other. The class
discussions played an important part in the participants’ level of engagement in the class activities. This case study analysis confirmed the positive impact of EDSP on participants’ attitude as well as in their critical thinking skills.

Moreover, I have followed up on the implication of EDSP in my participants’ thoughts about their own teaching experiences after their exposure in this research. I also developed some shorter, simpler dilemma stories with a step-by-step guideline for these pre-service teacher participants to implement the approach in their actual classrooms. I have been able to keep all the participants creative, connected, and engaged as active learners. Simply put, it is not only the pedagogy but the role of the teacher which is significant in students’ learning.
Chapter 6: Conclusion: Mapping the Nature of Ethical Dilemma Stories and Transformative Learning

Introduction

I started this PhD research with a sense of curiosity by asking myself various questions, such as: How did my experience of village life in Nepal shape my education and sense of identity? How did these experiences impact on my decision to become a teacher? What kind of teacher did I want to become? What strength and weaknesses did I bring to this role? What theories and practices informed my pedagogical views about teaching? What did I need to change? What changes do I want to see in English language classrooms in Nepal? And what do I need to know? At many points during this research, I struggled with a number of personal and pedagogical decisions. These decisions included my choice of thesis topic (see chapter 1) and how it might reflect my own biography and experience of village life. Maxine Greene (2005, p. 79) argues that “[t]o think of making choices and of acting on those choices takes us into the domain of ethics, unless we are among those clinging to notions of absolute Right and Wrong”. Therefore, the experience of writing this thesis has been personal to me as I travelled through in-depth narrative writing, rather than more traditional forms of academic writing; although cognisant of these features as well, the process has acted upon, informed, and influenced me to become, an “ant which brings its single grain of sand to the anthill” (Best & Kahn, 1989, p. 28).

This chapter starts with the theme of my personal reflection as a transformative learner. I have explained how my traditional ways of thinking about education and research have changed and how I was encouraged to see teaching and learning as a transformative process. Then, I have developed my new understandings and insights within eight key elements of transformative learning based on the experience of myself and my research collaborators. These elements range from connecting learning to students’ and teachers’ lives to encouraging critical reflection, analytic skills and empowerment.
Personal Reflection as a Transformative Learner

Research into transformative learning requires a reflective mind and an awareness of the researcher’s contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process. I recall Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas around social constructivism in which the community-cultural contexts play a vital role in our learning process. Learning is a process of adapting and creating meaning from human experience and interaction within the culturally shared ways of understanding the world. Our lived experiences carry meanings in context to situations. In this research, I have come across many emergent experiences where our “bodies, emotions, and lived experience have become texts to be written” (Gannon, 2018, p. 23). These personal experiences allow us to access the participants’ day-to-day life including local culture and history and the ways in which these components reflect their identities in the learning. Although this may sound a bit excessive, issues such as cultural extinction, climate change and violence, are always productive for an educator to prepare young people for the challenges of a volatile and uncertain world. I argue that pivotal to this task is the need to create a new set of transformational tools capable of accommodating personal, social and political change.

Previously, my way of thinking about education and research was limited to more traditional ways of being and knowing. I used to think that there was only one dominant paradigm of learning and research that had a set of central beliefs and norms to follow, which were disconnected from my life. On reading Mezirow’s (2003, p. 58) work on transformative learning as discourse, I was encouraged to see teaching and learning as a process that “transforms problematic frames of reference — sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets), to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change”. Writing this thesis provided me with opportunities to explore how teaching and learning might be more open to human curiosity, value-based awareness, and learners’ natural passion (Mezirow, 2003). With this idea in mind, I sat quietly and reflected on how I listened to, and considered, the truth claims of experts and their appeal to science and objectivity. Then, I felt fortunate to have had the opportunity to come across an alternative transformative approach to research. This new approach allowed me to encounter places and people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
which gave me the confidence to feel for myself, relish new challenges, and narrate them as my own form of knowledge production.

Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Mary Alfred (2006, p. 55) acknowledge how the majority of educators fail to make a connection between what they “claim they value and the values their practices demonstrate”. Transformative learners, however, see an opportunity in every situation to conceptually construct knowledge from experience, negotiate meaning, and draw conclusions from a unique interpretation of the world. One constant message which came from the research participants, was that traditional ways of teaching and learning were not providing them with opportunities for transformative learning. In the successive research communications, participants shared the value of the ways in which ethical dilemma stories highlighted various contemporary social issues such as: democracy, freedom, sustainability, political chaos, remittances, family responsibilities, inter-personal behaviours, hygiene and cleanliness, enhancing food security, and dietary requirements of people of different ages in the community. This message demonstrates the importance of research of this nature where the dilemma stories have strong resonance with local teaching and learning contexts. Writing narratively throughout this research has allowed me to explore how personal and professional growth, for participants and myself, have been shaped by wider social conditions of life in learning. As I reflect on the previous chapters in this thesis, I now endeavour to identify the main features of transformative pedagogy based on my own experience and research data. In the process, I consider the essential values of the inner orientation of my autoethnographic research and the ways in which it has enabled me to develop a more critical orientation to my teaching and writing. Freire (1998b, p. 31) comments on this realisation, saying:

There is, in fact, no teaching without learning. One requires the other. And the subject of each, despite their obvious differences, cannot be educated to the status of object. Whoever teaches learns in the act of teaching, and whoever learns teaches in the act of learning.

In my role as a transformative educator, I have always been mindful of asking more reflective kinds of questions such as:

- Are the contents of my teaching relevant and meaningful to students?
- To what extent am I learning from and producing knowledge with my students?
To what extent “am I [are we] willing to transform myself [ourselves] in the process of helping my [our] students transform” (Taylor, 2006, p. 92)?

In this context, I reflect on my own self-interactive journey along with the experiences of my teaching of ethical dilemma stories to the pre-service teachers of English: the research participants in Nepal.

The participants in the research were asked to engage with EDSP which also opened the door for transformational opportunities in a B.Ed. English language classroom in Nepal. The use of dilemma stories were employed to engage participants in learning based on personal values about particular aspects that had appeared in their lives. I acknowledge that the very nature of the two ethical dilemma stories which I used for this research can be confronting due to their authenticity and culturally appropriate stories. However, this was necessary to elicit authentic discussion about real-life events in teaching and learning contexts. I doubt whether frivolous stories would have engaged the students in meaningful ways. In this regard, the EDSP challenged learners’ beliefs as well as approaches regarding their own educational growth as the priorities varied according to their daily lived experiences. This research, therefore, encouraged all participants to think about prior beliefs and biases that prompted active participation in dealing with everyday issues, and to propose solutions to societal disparities.

Transformative learning is also about raising awareness so that “the learner understands that there is value in learning and appreciates the learning process” (Adams, 2007, p. 153). Therefore the format should be more learner-centred to elicit responses from students by drawing on their language, culture, experience and interests as the starting point for learning; it should not be: this is what you will learn. Transformative learning seeks to develop constructive, learner-centred practices in the face-to-face classroom environment. My research focus is to empower learners within their own means; being critical of traditional teacher-centred, content-driven approaches. Acknowledging that students are the true partners in the learning process, we need to raise our voices and move towards learner-centred, transformative approaches in which students are the central part of learning process. Hence, transformative learning plays an active role in contrast to “the teacher-centred learning wherein the teacher remains at the centre of the learning process” (Sherine,
The EDSP has allowed the participating pre-service teachers to become more mutually collaborative, critically reflective, and emotionally mature as they gained the ability to show empathy and thoughtfulness. Interestingly the German root word for empathy is *Einfuehlung*, meaning feeling into/within for others (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). This is especially pertinent for interaction between the reader and the characters in the dilemma stories. I believed that EDSP also afforded these pre-service teachers opportunities to identify with the story characters and make decisions on the respective character’s behalf. The participants often reported that this research experience, which was supported by their own activities, has changed their ways of thinking. All of them shared a similar experience; their reactions varied depending on personal context and connection. I was delighted to see that my participants were engaged in both the dilemma stories as I was initially uncertain of their reactions to this method. My present research, therefore, resonates with a rich tradition of transformative education.

Edward Taylor and Patricia Cranton (2012, p. 5) indeed acknowledge that “[t]ransformative learning theory is based on the notion that we interpret our experiences in our own way, and that how we see the world is a result of our perceptions of our experiences”. Similarly, it was important for me to find an appropriate link between my PhD research and transformative education from the beginning. I have now learned to think reflectively in my everyday life while this present work includes thoughtful and reflective consideration of my beliefs and practices. Even though it is said that it could be hard to see the wood for the trees, I have tried to display my self-narratives to discuss my research participants’ stories as the integration of self and others. As an actor and medium in this research, I have drawn on my understanding after considering the purpose of the present study in mind. These understandings resonate with the three research questions which were:

1. As a teacher-researcher, how can autoethnographic inquiry support transformative learning? What are the enablers and constraints to creating transformative learning? What conditions need to be brought into existence to foster transformative learning?
2. How can Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy (EDSP) promote students’ self-critical awareness in an English Language college classroom in Nepal? What helps? What hinders?

3. How can I facilitate pre-service student teachers’ deep engagement (from the design stage to teaching stage) using EDSP in an English language college classroom in Nepal? How can EDSP be used in creating transformative learning?

These questions prepared me to interact with and accept newer ideas. Now, I feel I am able to articulate my capacity to translate those initial thoughts into action. This research has enabled my participants and myself to consider new ways of thinking and has cultivated new possibilities of imagination through ethical dilemma stories. Kincheloe (2008b, p. 32) made an insightful observation stating “thinking in new ways always necessitates personal transformation”. This research has brought positive changes while exploring my own identity during every step of this research journey.

So simply, as if a new body has been created for me, with much silent, spellbinding gaze of thoughtfulness, a process of transformation has happened in me.

(Source: My personal reflections)

The major part of the study was based on the autoethnographic narratives of my own becoming as a transformative learner as well as on the experiences of teaching two ethical dilemma stories in a B.Ed. classroom in Nepal. The responses of research participants, along with my own reflections and narratives and the classroom observation notes, offered insights into some important pedagogical issues. I observed that students can learn effectively when they are actively involved in the learning process and with their own local, cultural contexts. I found that my participants are continuing to work hard to incorporate, into their own teaching, the transformative ideas about analytic discussions in class that they acquired from this research project.

The participants shared that they formed study groups that met at regular times, as they were inspired by the benefit of sharing in my research, to help their students grow through cooperation and coordination. By doing this, the trainee teachers found that working in a group and pairs helped their students to learn better than using the traditional teacher-centred, didactic methods. They shared that some part of the textbook that seemed confusing to one student could be quite clear to another student.
Hence, the struggling students too learnt quickly by simply asking questions of their friends, instead of puzzling over the difficulty, spending much effort and time to solve it, or sometimes giving up. Also, their observation revealed that the smarter students enjoyed explaining their perspectives and gained confidence by helping other students overcome difficulties by reaffirming what they had already understood. The participants also shared that they exchanged their favourite stories, reflections, and study tricks relevant to the topic discussed.

I believe that a true transformation comes about through personal experience. In my case, I have grown into this state of maturity after I tried to review the accumulation of knowledge and experience of real life issues with my own inner wisdom and hope. This awareness has given me more power to explain my experience and enabled me to move toward the habits of being which are more open and inclusive. My readings of many scholarly theorists and educators, including Freire (1970); Piaget (1932); Brookfield (2012); Mezirow (2012); Dewey (1916); Giroux (2001); Tobin (1993a/b); and Greene (1995) who have written about their experiences in transformative education, helped me to look at alternatives to the long-standing reality of the banking model of education that is prevalent in many places around the world (Freire, 2000). More importantly, the development of critical thought encourages learners to ask questions and participate in the wellbeing of the self and the society. This idea has helped me to feel that the current education system in Nepal needs to be transformed to connect learning with the lived experiences of students; not that which is dictated by the teachers and driven by the semantic memorisation of ‘right-answer-information’ for final examination purposes.

In this sense, I found EDSP to be a more dynamic experience where learning can emerge from students’ own cultural contexts and knowledge can be fostered from their own critical self-awareness; the students know what they are doing. Similar responses of contemplation, reflection, and realisation were reported by my participants, the pre-service teachers, in their interview responses as counter-narratives (see chapter 5). Despite their prior beliefs, gender, ethnic background, and social class, all participants experienced a similar amount of learning.

Educators who seek to implement transformative perspectives are not confined to their classrooms. This research, which represents the unification of my personal,
professional, and cultural spheres, is focused on the importance of biography and ethical dilemma stories as an example of transformative learning. Through the actual process of writing and rewriting this present work, I have learned the craft of writing interpretive research. Through this I begin to see its potential as an autoethnographic methodology for creating new forms of knowing about self, others, community, and environment while also revealing the interconnected spaces and realities that reside between cultures and people. I have tried to demonstrate this connection and reality through my autoethnographic stories. The results have shown that this study, with the use of ethical dilemma stories as a key tool to interact with my research participants, gave sufficient challenges and possibilities for transformative learning.

We now have a map that can show us what transformative pedagogy looks like; and what conditions need to be created to make transformative learning more likely as part of our day to day teaching and learning activities. I hope this research will also encourage other researchers to bring their expertise to the table around a cultural-contextual topic that values learners’ prior experience, their inherent orientation to critical approaches, empathy, and desire to change for the positive. Some of the strategies I have sought to apply in this research are writing as inquiry, performativity of metaphoric languages, and literary images in multiple genres. My reflections are interwoven within the transformative contexts of my own lived experiences, as acknowledged by Connelly and Clandinin (1994, p. 155):

We imagine as we try to give accounts of our own lives that we undergo cultivation, awakenings, and transformations throughout our lives. People's lives are composed of many narrative unities, some of which, at any one time, may be thought of educationally in terms of cultivation, others in terms of awakening, and still others in terms of transformation.

During the research process, there were also some features of great importance, such as the participants’ personal development, and their strong enthusiasm for their learning. These interactive elements allowed me to do things differently and vary the strategies. I realised that, for a successful learning experience for my students, as their teacher, I needed to be flexible and accommodating enough to enact changes according to their learning situations. Hence, this research records my new understandings and insights about the benefits of transformative learning as evidenced by my own personal-professional growth and that of my participants.
Mapping a Transformative Pedagogy Using Ethical Dilemma Stories

Based on the evidence in this research and my becoming as a transformative teacher, I wish to identify and describe eight key conditions that need to be created to support transformative student learning, namely:

1. Connecting learning to students’ and teachers’ lives
2. Utilising cultural and social contexts for learning
3. Emphasising creativity and imagination
4. Incorporating authentic and engaging pedagogies
5. Encouraging collaboration for sustainability in learning
6. Fostering mutuality, respect, care and trust
7. Encouraging critical reflection, analytic skills and empowerment
8. Promoting emotional, intellectual and artistic development

1. Connecting learning to students’ and teachers’ lives

Seldom do we explore what it is that we mean by real-life experience. I regard education as learning for life, and learning the lessons of life; it is an integrated approach that develops the all-round personality including our students’ interest in social, cultural and political aspects of their lives. Education should, therefore, move beyond the limitations of literacy, and aim at attaining wisdom during students’ cognitive/intellectual development. For meaningful learning, durable understandings and holistic development of the learners to take place, Thomas Hopkins (1932) argues that the school curriculum should utilise materials selected from all areas of the social heritage that are useful to the present and future needs of the learners. I have tried to encourage my participants, the pre-service teachers, to bring their own episodic experiences to the table around a cultural-contextual topic as the foundation for understanding transformative learning. For my participants, EDSP provided an opportunity for them to engage in dialogue about their social, cultural and emotional experiences. Making meaning out of such experiences has elicited empathy from all of us, leading to our desire for personal and professional change for positive outcomes. This autoethnographic research undergirds my role, as a researcher, and my participants’ real life journey given our active involvement in the research based upon a mutually beneficial relationship. When I included my biography in this research, it
enabled me to move towards thinking about my life history, towards the narrative of my own life worlds and towards values and beliefs within my own cultural as well as socio-political contexts.

Practical, real-life application is a key part of transformative learning. When I asked the pre-service teachers “to write stories about a variety of different topics or events in their lives” (McCall, cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 24), they easily found a link to connect their learning with areas including economic condition and work perspectives. For example, Kathleen Stewart (2005) in her performance recounting everyday activities, discusses the mundane activities like a trip to a grocery store and even picking up a sick dog which had been taken to the veterinarian, as “a collection of self and personal experience stories [that] may be collected and grouped around a common theme” (Stewart, 2005 as cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 30). As a practitioner-researcher, the two-week fieldwork enabled me to investigate the pre-service teachers’ engagement in the use of EDSP as a viable classroom method. While my claim of the pedagogic effectiveness of the ethical dilemma stories may appear exaggerated to some, this experience has enabled me to discover that such progress is possible for the students. However, the progress may be different from student to student.

This research has enabled me to realise that it is possible for us to learn the content of the curriculum employing a local context, and allowing the learning to be a part of our educational process, while not necessarily contradicting the curriculum. During this research, I created autoethnographic texts in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, personal essays, and photo-essays including the types of fragmented and layered writing as journal entries (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The reflective journals provided a view into what the participants were experiencing in my teaching of dilemma stories and how their learning was affected by this experience. At the same time, ethical consideration was strongly foregrounded in testimonial writing about our life experiences which challenged my participants and myself to act as a witness to issues of injustice. What I would like to share here is that the sessions on ethical dilemma stories have led me to realise that teaching English is beyond teaching the mere subject; rather, it is teaching and empowering students, with relevant examples from their own contexts. I gained the knowledge about who helped whom, what was typical about the learning process and how some pre-service teachers presented their
views on some topic, and whether other participants also had similar views about the importance of learning from everyday experience.

2. Utilising cultural and social contexts for learning

Jack Mezirow (1991, p. xiv) writes that “meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction”. Therefore, when learning relates to cultures and contexts, it starts from people’s lives and surfaces with a very authentic sense of their own lived experiences; we continue to learn throughout our lives. Our learning offers a range of competencies and skills we successfully accommodate to global societies where people assemble from different cultures to bolster our self-esteem and confidence so that we can adroitly deal with upcoming challenges. In this thesis, I have discussed my biography (see chapter 1) and tried to demonstrate how this occurred in the context of Nepal (see chapter 2) along with the cultural context and the biography of my participants (see chapter 5) as evidence that the issue of connection with context and culture, is pivotal in transformative learning. One example of this is how I drew upon my own life experience to distil in ethical dilemma stories that I could relate to, and then I found my participants could also resonate in an authentically meaningful way:

Years ago, when I was your age, my mother told me that I had had an affluent childhood. Our parents were comparatively rich and that could be the reason we never had to finish the food that was cooked for dinner each evening. All excess food would go into the container for us to feed to the cattle the next day. Sometimes, I reckon that God also kept a record and now I am paying for all that waste with this meager existence of ours.

(Shanti, the mother in my second dilemma story: The dilemma of leaving home.)

Such awareness also allowed the participants to relate their learning to the real world and be more critical as well as empathetic, interactive, and imaginative to the difficulties they had experienced around them. Hence, it was clear that the ethical dilemma learning experience was relevant to the life-world of the participants. All of them appreciated the value of culture-specific themes and contexts; in particular, the participants were struck by the fact that the dilemmas presented in stories were similar to dilemmas that they experienced in their own village lives. This connection often meant that they were willing to communicate their ideas and feelings based on the recognition that the stories were effective, prompting them to attempt new
methods in their teaching. They felt the dilemma story method was effective in prompting their own students to engage actively in their learning. The study, therefore, indicates that there is a significant relationship between our cultural contexts and their connection to the lessons that we effectively learn which in the course of time transforms our thought process.

3. Emphasising creativity and imagination

Freire (2007b), acknowledged that “it is impossible to live without dreams” (p. 3). Transformative learning is an imaginative, creative, constructive, interpretive, and reflective process. According to Mezirow (2000, p. 20), “imagination is central to understanding the unknown; it is the way we examine alternative interpretations of our experience by trying on another's point of view”. We can only understand and appreciate the differences of other people after we develop an interest in listening to their stories and imagine their lived life by trying to walk a mile in their shoes. In preparing students to become better citizens, McGregor (2008, p. 53) asserts, “when people learn to look firmly at the ideas, values, assumptions, beliefs and ideologies they hold, they can begin to raise their consciousness and increase their awareness of biases, prejudices, and stereotypes that inform their actions”. Imagination is the key feature in defining transformative learning.

When I talk about the process of documenting my experiences in a story form, the stories were hypothetical; yet, they were situated in an authentic context. In my diary, I recorded what Van Maanen (1996, p. 75) termed realist tales. I used imaginative as well as confessional, yet constructive experiences and summarised them in stories and poems with the primary purpose of decorating my journey from village into university teacher. In the beginning, I thought it was risky when I became the centre of the stories that I chose to tell, and embraced vulnerability in the narratives. However, as I kept moving ahead, I realised that it was not as dangerous as spending days and nights running from it. For Maxime Greene (1995), such narratives can release the imagination to perceive new possibilities, free us to generate ideas which may awaken, liberate, and transform our thinking. Accordingly, Henry Giroux (2005a, p. 217) proposes possibility in everything when we “imagine the unimaginable, think differently in order to act differently”. Likewise, I have made an effort to recognise the opinions and views of each participant during the research.
When I wrote the dilemma stories I was mindful in making them appear realistic, and not complicating the narrative. I chose the easily relatable characters, and during class discussions, the participants wanted to connect themselves with the story characters. They kept asking questions such as, “How do you come to know Shanti?; How long do you know her for?; Did Saru really leave the village (please, sir: Tell me)? Where is Dhandai and Maili now?” This questioning provided the proof that I was able to arouse curiosity while telling the dilemma stories to the participants. I also found that the exposure opened reason for these participating pre-service teachers to actively communicate their ideas and concepts among each other in the classroom and even with their parents, family members, and other people outside their classrooms. The dilemma stories had a strong influence on the imaginative activities of my participants. The power of simple words of the students as valuable resources in relating to and potentiating their experiences, interests, and imaginations led our discussion towards thinking beyond the classroom, and relating to the world outside. This is the power of culturally appropriate and contextual pedagogy. Therefore, the stories seek to serve as an inclusive and practical solution in teaching English in Nepal. I have gained greater confidence and hope that the ethical dilemma pedagogy meets the needs of students as it takes on a more multidimensional view of the society.

4. Incorporating authentic and engaging pedagogies

A determining factor for teaching and learning is how much space has been allowed for participation, engagement, and empowerment to develop learners as knowers and producers of knowledge. When a mutually respectful space has been created in the classroom, the stimulating, positive environment itself will welcome peer support, cross-cultural dialogue, and debates of beliefs among the participants in a safe space. Ira Shor (1992, p. 85) defines dialogue in teaching and learning as “a student-centred, teacher-directed process to develop critical thought and democratic participation” which is “initiated and directed by a critical teacher but is democratically open to student intervention […] balancing the teacher’s authority and the students’ input”. Shor (1992, p. 85) describes the dialogic method as “simultaneously structured and creative”. This process was represented through classroom discussions in this research, showing strong connection among participants for their learning process to which they could bring their socio-cultural self to provide a context for their learning.
Therefore, discourse and dialogue are the key factors and central to the transformative learning experience (Mezirow, 1991). The dilemma stories were able to engage students as they were contextual; the teaching of dilemma stories involved issues such as relationships, respect, mutuality among learners along with the concept of biography, history, and relevant culture.

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the participants’ engagement with EDSP in the everyday context of their learning English. The dilemma story approach in my participants’ learning journey has induced a change in their thinking and also deepened their interests in existing socio-cultural issues. The interviews and other responses have confirmed that their participation in this research has had a positive impact on their decision-making skills. The participants also learnt how personal biases influence our decisions. The participants learnt to respect the views of their colleagues; indeed, there were times when they changed their initial decisions after discussion. They obtained confidence in their empathetic, collaborative, and critical reflective practices. The participants in their efforts learned to propose solutions to the everyday issues they encountered, whether personal, social or cultural. The research let the participants identify their social actions as one of the main experiences, including dialogue, reflection, and interpersonal relationships.

In this context, the research participants have shared in their feedback that they have realised the importance of learning from their own contexts and colleagues, while building upon their strengths together. They started to feel more confident to present relevant issues in classroom discussion and communicate effectively among themselves. The participants were able to identify key factors of transformative learning such as a process that was self-directed, self-reflective, interactive, and experiential, characterised by the inclusion of diverse perspectives. The transformation from traditional, teacher-directed learning to contemporary, self-determined interactive learning with real-world contexts has better prepared them to connect with their own communities. It has provided them with possibilities to reach their full potential with critical content and wider worldviews. This research experience has prompted the participants to translate their learning needs into effective and engaging opportunities which will positively affect their future teaching.
5. Encouraging collaboration for sustainability in learning

Mezirow (2000, p. 19) asserts, “learning occurs in one of four ways: by elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning new frames of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind”. This point reminds me of my own earlier high-school days and has encouraged me to recall and respect all sorts of personal stories at this stage. My own education, which used to be simply learning facts, started with believing in teachers and textbooks as the ultimate source (as well as the measures) of knowledge. Whenever I had some ideas, new or old, I used to validate them by asking the teachers: “Is this the right answer, sir/madam”? The school, as well, seemed to be a place of indoctrination rather than learning, where teachers delivered lessons as if all that students were to know was only the facts and information included in the textbooks. Most interestingly, some teachers would just read words by words from the pages, and their students would follow them in chorus; I was one of those followers. Therefore, I used to think good teachers were those who could only implement a series of instructional strategies with their students. However, this traditional, horizontal mode of literacy between teachers and students would be a barrier to this concept of teachers working so closely with the students. Freire (1970) was critical of such pre-designed, oppressive functional literacy; his ideas were intended to raise learners’ consciousness through dialogue and collaboration which would let them imagine their future beyond the limit and situations.

This attempt at fostering transformation in myself and my students may well demand much time and effort. Transformative learning requires to “taking learners out of their comfort zone, both cognitively and affectively while providing sufficient support” (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006, p. 34). Such support in education has an integral relation to the quality of the learning environment that we, as teachers, create in our classrooms for our students. A good learning environment is influenced by the strength of the teachers’ enthusiasm to make the subject matter intelligible and interesting for their students. An effective teacher’s role, therefore, is more to support and encourage students in their learning process and develop a sense of collective responsibility to care for and respect each other. An educator’s empathy and support is another necessary component of transformative learning. In this research I wanted to create a greater sense of curiosity and inquiry among my students through the use of EDSP. This involves facilitation rather than didactic teaching which is so common.
in Nepalese schools and universities. In pursuing this kind of transformative learning I have focused on developing the unique knowledge, experience, passions and interests of my students.

Celeste Snowber (2017) considers teaching as an art of instant collaboration, an endeavour of “wonder and discovery” (p. 1) where teachers are responsible for making the learning a reality as they walk into the classroom and “wait for as artists, [and] poets […] unannounced, yet the soil has been prepared. The soil is our bodies, hearts, and minds” (ibid.). Even God cannot control our individual thoughts, only we can. My focus, therefore, was in empowering the participants for their learning rather than controlling them. The participants were always free persons to act on their own value, interest, and choice. Hence, I was always mindful of this fact, and it is the size of a container that determines how much water we get from the source, not how big is a river or the ocean. I sensed some desire by these pre-service teachers to please me because they might have viewed me as a scholar coming from far away to help them to find something unexposed from their learning experience. Although they seemed to have shared their views so comfortably and confidently, to present myself as a transformative constructivist researcher, I also aimed to provide work as special assignments to them. In this way, I provided a fruitful way to empower the participants to incorporate their prior knowledge into the learning process.

Cranton (1994, p. 229) asserts that “transformative learning is a continual process of growth and development for the learner and for the educator-learner”. It helps learners to act on new, yet more considered assumptions which are based on their individual life experiences and values. All participating pre-service teachers expressed the view that contextualising, facilitating, collaborating and challenging ethical dilemma situations were the key ingredient to their engagement. One participant, Shakti, wrote in her feedback that she truly enjoyed the class, adding “[y]ou have given us an environment to share our opinions, discuss and think for the multiple possibilities to solve a given issue. I thank you for being such a sincere help during this two week class of yours. Thank you for everything” (personal correspondence via email). Other participants also acknowledged the sense of trust, tolerance and mutual respect in the classroom environment. The participants found my presence and ample preparation for classroom delivery useful, appreciating my non-judgmental approaches to
teaching. Bikti, one of the pre-service teachers, shared how he felt about my genuine interest in his wellbeing and future, and felt encouraged to discuss his views openly (personal correspondence via email). Therefore, the dilemma story approach gave them a positive and helpful experience of doing school differently.

6. Fostering mutuality, respect, care, trust and tolerance

I have seen many of our students who love to share their voice in the learning process and provide an important element in transformative learning. Therefore, dialogue, is pivotal to fostering transformative learning. Freire’s (1970) idea of conscientization also provokes the necessary presumption of an engaged community of hope, responsibility, dialogue and discussion in a path of social transformation. Whilst my discussion with the pre-service teachers has been essentially collaborative, as an educator, I am still left with numerous questions such as: What does it mean to be educated? And how do we create the conditions to support teachers and students? In this sense, some dialogue and discussion are always necessary to embrace learners’ unique opinions, with a strong emphasis on co-learning. Although these participating pre-service teachers understood my role as their regular teacher, I was also a participant during the dilemma story teaching period; in this I believe “teaching is not about transferring knowledge or contents” (Freire, 1998b, p. 31) but creating possibilities for collaborative knowledge-construction. Therefore, many times, I was wearing the hat of an organiser and a catalytic motivator in collaboration with my participants. As a teacher-cum-researcher, I held a dual role in my relationships with the research participants, participating in a horizontal, co-learning dynamic, and placing me on an equal footing with the students.

As I moved to learn the participants’ perception on how they had ascertained other participants’ ideas, I understood what they had gained from hearing opinions individually and in groups during their ethical dilemma learning. They shared that this exposure of dilemma story activities made them aware and accepting of different understandings of the dilemma situations within their own and others’ thinking. They had opportunities to work with friends and were able to see flexibility in making choices. The participants shared that they were able to exchange different ideas among themselves and felt it was an important pedagogic model to help them listen
and contribute in the group discussions. They felt that analytical thinking also emerged when their views were taken seriously in the discussion.

Conversations in multiple modes, have led the participants on the road to pluralism in their learning processes, made them awake and conscious of their thoughts and actions. The participants developed diverse people skills as well as significant amount of growth in social skills; their responses revealed that they have as well learned to compromise and value others’ ideas. Participants appreciated their active involvement in class discussion, particularly when comparing and contrasting their own views with those of their class peers about the given dilemma situation. Pallavi, one of the participants (see chapter 5), shared that when her friends asked her to explain more about her idea, she also asked them, as necessary, to explain their ideas when they were working in groups. All participants reflected on who they helped and what type of help they received from others along with what they shared with each other; it became an encouragement to all of them to put their thoughts in writings for further reflection.

The participants exchanged their ideas with each other quite freely. Through discussion of the dilemma stories, the research allowed them to be read and respond to the world around them, providing opportunities to develop their capacity for empathy and reflection. By working together everyone achieved more learning opportunities through collaboration and networking. Pallavi shared that she and her colleagues found EDSP more flexible and encouraging, also receiving ample opportunities to present their views. Reflecting on what Pallavi had shared with me, she shared that she and her colleagues found EDSP more flexible and encouraging; they also received ample opportunities to present their views. As an example, Pallavi commented in her journal that, Suniti, a normally quiet student felt empowered to share her thoughts on different topics discussed in the class. Hence, the ethical dilemma story method allowed students the opportunity to more clearly express their ideas to each other. They also shared with me that there were moments when they had to contribute more than others who had not put in enough effort during the group work. Although, most of the participants did suggest that there needed to be more time for discussion, the method was stimulating, engaging, and enjoyable to them.
Overall, these findings suggest the importance of engaging learners based on mutual respect, critical questioning, and classroom dialogue.

7. Encouraging critical reflection, analytic skills and empowerment

Transformative learning begins by asking questions which lead to a disorienting dilemma. This kind of questioning, which is relevant to all aspects of life and living, refers to the ability to uncover, to re-examine, to be aware and to transform our deeply held assumptions (Brookfield, 1995; Mezirow, 1991) with a view to bringing about change in the self and social situations. Questioning the historical and social context in which we live has been crucial throughout this research as Taylor and Cranton (2013, p. 39) note “critical questioning is a central component in transformative learning theory”. The practice of critical reflection, in this research, has enabled the research participants and myself to cultivate a sense of curiosity, and question the ongoing practices in ways that have enhanced our individual and collaborative learning. In this context, dilemma stories encourage us to question and reflect on issues which we might not have considered previously; thus contributing to a more transformative pedagogy. This process has involved diologic encounter, leading to a change in perspectives and greater open-mindedness. Mezirow (2000, p. 20) states that “the more reflective and open we are to the perspectives of others, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be”. Questioning social practices through reflection is a central component in transformative learning because it cultivates a sense of curiosity about the world.

Reflection is a term that involves challenging the validity of premises of our prior learning, our own thoughtfulness and empathy about important social issues. My own critical awareness on the cultural components of teaching and the participants’ engagement through ethical dilemma stories has helped me to revisit, shift and reshape my values, beliefs, and practices. My best thoughts have arisen when I allowed the research participants to think about their actions creatively and critically and how this might contribute to a more just and hopeful future. In this research I investigated how well these future teachers, my research participants, developed a spirit of mindfulness (Tobin, 2018), culture of dialogue, interdependence, critical reflection, and consciousness. This is not an immediate action process; rather, it implies awareness of our own learning process — perceiving, communicating,
knowing, and negotiating — with others. I am concerned with the why, the reasons for and the consequences of what I do. This requires a willingness to challenge inherent beliefs and assumptions, and reassess the way we approach problems and the imagined outcomes of our own actions. I agree with Kincheloe’s (1993) argument that teachers need to develop a vision of practitioner thinking and cultivate an autonomous, self-directive approach in promoting cooperation and equity among learners. This process has opened doors to my self-learning as well as in encouraging research participants to be more thoughtful about everyday life.

The participating pre-service teachers in this research believed that the dilemma stories allowed them to question and reflect on their own beliefs and practices. They found the journey to be a transformative experience in which they could collaborate to create a better learning environment by working together to explore, imagine, construct, share, verify, and make decisions. The dilemma story method helped them recall some of their own personal dilemmas and life experiences. In the process, they considered resolution of the dilemmas raised in the stories as they engaged in reflective thinking and critical analysis in their own teaching practice. They reported some immediate improvements in their own students’ participation in class. Therefore, critical reflection worked well in helping the pre-service teachers rethink their own assumptions and practices in relation to the external world, which is always and actively present around us.

8. Promoting emotional, intellectual and artistic development

Creativity and imagination are necessary elements of transformative learning. According to Greene (2005, p. 78) “another window may [be] open, and there may be a glimpse of a world in which things can be actually ‘otherwise’. The observer may suddenly feel ‘a passion for the possible’, one description of imagination—breaking through limits and boundaries”. While talking about the imagination and possibility of learning, it reminds me of the discussion in Sophie’s World (Gaarder, 1997). Alberto, a philosopher and Sophie, the fourteen-year-old protagonist discuss individual roles in the world, paths to imagination, and the meaningful pursuit of knowledge and discovery. In this book, I also see a strong pedagogic potential when Alberto associates humans as actors who are “condemned to improvise” (Gaarder, 1997, p. 379). Alberto opens Sophie’s inquiring mind by bringing her into the conversation
and says: “[w]e are like actors dragged onto the stage without having learned our lines, with no script and no prompter to whisper stage directions to us. We must decide for ourselves…” (ibid.). This statement is a rich resource for transformative learning practice, engaging a platform for discussion whereby knowledge construction is possible by using the thoughts of imaginative pre-service teachers, and their genuine experiences as a field of investigation. Taylor and Cranton (2013, p. 39) acknowledge “transformative learning theory is founded on both humanist and constructivist assumptions”. This resonates deeply with the use of ethical dilemma stories in teaching and learning as evidenced by the participants’ interest in the dilemma situations and the implication for their own practice.

Teaching is an extraordinary task that needs to be transformed in more creative ways. It is not an easy job to evaluate or measure students’ progress using only standardised test score and grades, nor by relying on memorising information. This study has revealed that when learners are intrinsically engaged in culturally relevant tasks, they are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards themselves, their life, learning, culture, and people around them. This is an essential personal attribute which contributes to the social and human value of education. This research has helped us, myself and the research participants, to develop self-esteem and agency with a level of self-confidence in our abilities to interpret and change the world. It has given me a new confidence to overcome obstacles that appeared during many instances of my own educational journey.

The research participants have developed a critical awareness of assumptions that otherwise may have limited their capacity to review the world around them and embrace change. This awareness was significantly affected by the situations that they have experienced in life. Their perspective transformation has allowed them to adjust and adapt to change according to the need of situation. The participants realised the benefit of encouraging other class members to put their ideas forward in the form of debate and discussion as they developed their skills to become good listeners and more imaginative problem solvers.

This research involved the task-oriented learning activities which provided opportunities for individuals to communicate their desires, needs, feelings, and interests. This process is an orientation where the learners themselves develop skills
beyond their disciplines while they interpret and reinterpret their experience with the issues they dealt with (Mezirow, 1991). In addition to taking the class and getting a grade, the research included a series of additional auto-research activities that encouraged the participants to reflect and realise who they are, how they have grown, what they have learnt and what they value. They have developed common meaning through reflection to better understand each other. In my research, the feedback from the students, my discussion with them and their learning activities after the research have become the most reliable and powerful evidence of their personal, as well as professional development.

It was clear that the ethical dilemma learning experience was emotionally engaging to my participants. The participants have effectively developed the ability to work cooperatively with others for a specific purpose, collaboratively as a team member. ‘Practice makes perfect’ is a shibboleth that appears valid in the case of the pedagogy I am seeking to advocate. In practice, I found the EDSP to be effective in aiding the students to express their ideas in coherent English propositional forms as a means of self-expression and of sharing ideas with classroom peers and with the teacher. The participants’ written and verbal communication skills allowed them to thoughtfully identify what information they need before they put the issues in discussion; they developed a good sense of empathy with the characters and local contexts. The overall experience indeed became productive in helping these pre-service teachers “to connect student individuality to larger historical and social issues; to encourage students to examine how their experience relates to academic knowledge, to power, and to inequality in society; and to approach received wisdom and the status quo with questions” (Shor, 1992, p. 16). This is goal of transformative pedagogy and I am sure such attributes will enable the participating pre-service teachers and myself to successfully reach our pedagogical goals.

**A Penultimate Breather**

Transformational learning involves all aspects of “head, heart and hands” (Bruehlmeier, 2010), and training different sides of the brain; it is an approach closely related to self-participation, real-life application, learners’ willingness to support each other, and to critically reflect in order to foster personal development and knowledge empowerment. During the initial phase of my PhD research, I first thought dilemma
stories would only boost the capacity of my participants in teaching English. However, over time, I discovered further potential benefits of dilemma stories in my students such as listening, communicating, speaking and critical thinking skills which they had rarely experienced in their earlier educational activities. Transformative learning, therefore, inspires learners to reflect and review their existing values to reconstruct and shift these understandings; it involves continuously revisiting and revising assumptions from multiple points of view. Hence, transformative learning is about interruption and re-positioning assumptions, beliefs, values, practices and perspectives; it is a desire to change the way things are in order to imagine alternative possibilities. However, transformation does not necessarily mean only change for the sake of change as we need to be careful not to commit cultural suicide (Brookfield, 1995). We need to conserve those aspects of our communities and cultures that we value most.

In this research, I have sought to move along the path of becoming a transformative learner by introducing the ethical dilemma story method as a means of honouring and enhancing peoples’ insight, reflection, care, and responsibility. In the process, I adopted four critically reflective components identified by Brookfield (1995), namely, (1) my autobiographical self-review as a teacher and learner, (2) seeing myself from my students’ eyes, (3) incorporating my colleagues’ observations as peer review for critical dialogue, and (4) my active engagements with theoretical literature (see chapter 4, Figure 5). The entire research process aimed at accepting the participating pre-service teachers as they were, and creating opportunities for them to demonstrate their unexplored talents.

When the participants were engaged in dialogue and discussion with each other, they realised a sense of other people’s perspectives. This is how my research participants have taken initiatives on what they have been learning. My preliminary findings have shown that this research project assisted both myself and my research participants to:

1. be more open-minded in thinking about important social issues which sometimes require a difficult decision to be made;
2. be less dominated by existing conceptual paradigms;
3. feel comfortable to express their thoughts on contemporary issues;
(4) achieve a deeper understanding of the nature, purposes and processes of EDSP;
(5) develop a broader repertoire of ways of looking at important social and cultural issues;
(6) incorporate socio-cultural considerations into different curriculum areas;
(7) achieve a level of competence and enthusiasm for composing dilemma stories to suit the Nepali context;
(8) acquire an adequate level of theoretical and practical skills in using the EDSP to positively interest the students in the social-ethical issues represented in the dilemma stories;
(9) enhance literary and communicative skills to express themselves freely using the medium of English.

As a result, the participants gained confidence in their own values and perspectives which were important to them. Participants in this research learnt to help each other in pairs with ideas, as they coped with challenges and difficulties that put themselves on an upward learning curve. They also discerned options for shifting from traditional pedagogy to a more interactive mode of teaching and learning based on thoughtfulness and civic responsibility. This gave them a reason to actively help themselves in planning and delivering their lessons and to show empathy for their students’ lives by engaging in more authentic and dialogic learning.

My focus has been to advance the use of EDSP in the transformation of our everyday teaching and learning activities. However, we must also be circumspect about the rhetoric of transformative learning, especially as it relates to the acquisition of foundational knowledge in discipline subjects. Furthermore, while the outcomes of the research may be generalised in similar contexts; it requires risk-taking to challenge learners’ current positions. More research, especially longitudinal studies, may make this connection stronger. Taylor and Cranton (2013, p. 41) have acknowledged that “adult educators are not neutral or value-free; they are activists who work toward freer participation in discourse and democracy. Yet, they can only set up situations in which the potential for transformative learning exists and, it seems, hope for the best”. The present study has brought my vision into action; it has encouraged me to become more reflective and transcend my own self-understanding. I
am sure it will be helpful for me to set goals based on immediate scenarios and contexts and foresee my own future career as an academic in Nepal. I have envisioned my role as a university professor as well as an active research facilitator after completing this PhD.

I hope that further discussion of transformative learning in the classroom can have a positive inspiration in teaching English in Nepal, and, by extension, to other school subjects. Upon my return to Nepal, this pedagogy will be applied practically in future research to further refine the idea of transformative learning with new insights. This may also lead to a better understanding of the key elements of transformation and their interconnection with other dimensions of transformative learning.

Coda

The process of undertaking this PhD research has allowed me to look at things differently although some practical problems also emerged during the journey. At one point, I was actually quite lost; I felt as if I was so exhausted after my regular boot-camps. However, I sought help from senior scholars and read some significant narratives of other researchers (Ali-Khan, 2016; Fellner et al., 2017; Locke, 2017; Martin, 2006, & Siry, 2011) who also went through similar academic marathons. Now, I am learning to move from where I used to wait until I had to be told to do things, towards the stage of thinking for myself. My supervisors’ suggestions for making my writing ‘a little more evocative and scholarly’ challenged me many times in the beginning and that was the reason I worked hard in making my thesis academically sound, reliable, and artistic. There were also many inspiring moments that positively affected my thesis writing for example when I was given feedback including ‘not a lot more to finalise it’ or ‘you are nearly there’, I became very optimistic towards my achievements. I valued the support to write artistically and imaginatively, and to be bold. This was, indeed encouraging and heartwarming.

I hope this study will be useful to curriculum developers along with the educational planning and policy sectors in Nepal as they help teachers get started on critically grounded work in their own teaching. Although the study was focused on the educational development of future teachers of English, the pedagogy will be equally useful to teachers of other subjects and students of any age. Moreover, this research
has made me more aware, reflective, creative, and critically conscious of my understanding of the personal, social, cultural, and educational issues in Nepalese society. The aesthetics of stories and poems that I have composed during this research may become more appreciated in future as teachers embrace the possibilities afforded by ethical dilemma stories. As Greene (2005, p. 80) argues, “to enter into a poem [or in the form of a story or drama] may be to come in touch with a lost landscape, a landscape of color and smell and sound brought into a kind of rebirth by an act of imagination”. In this way, I hope today’s emotion will become a powerful learning incentive for future reflection; I am pleased to acknowledge this achievement with a sense of serenity.

Learning to survive

Even when I walked through the wind,
I survived the rain and storms.
I travelled many miles in search of light.
I was not afraid of darkness because
I never had to walk alone.
My demands and dilemmas were put
in dialogue and discussion, while
I confidently stood upon the shoulders of giants.

Their support, encouragement, and belief in me enabled to elevate the magnitude of my thoughts.
I was able to continue with hope in my heart.
I was able to raise my contemplation and visualise farther on the horizon that I otherwise would have been confined within confusion.

Here is an end of the storm,
here I see the golden sky with
the early morning sunrise.
I listen to birds: the magpies’ talking
their sweet, wake-up melodies,
capture the sight of a flock of red-tailed black cockatoos happily swirling, and
see the swinging of green leaves
in the light wind; I smell flowers and fruits;
then, feel the breeze, gaze across the Swan,
hear the ocean, and think of my mountains.
I am, now, who I’m meant to be and, almost ready
to return home, full of hope to support people
who are not very different to me.

I would like to conclude this thesis by drawing on another poem, which captures the key components of my personal transformation and has been recently published in the Learning: Research and Practice journal. These lines (Pandey, 2018, p. 10-11) try to
summarise this transformative research approach and the ways in which it has changed my life.

**Being with mindfulness: Some blissful blessings**

I count blessings by relating primary attitudes to each of my fingers\(^1\) when the silence is not enough to protect me. At first, I hold my thumb to lessen some alarming worries, then, with efforts, I am trying to stay away from all forms of extremism. I hold my little finger to suppress the pain of many months. I pretend to be happy: No, no anger thus far: no terror yet. The middle finger is never bothered; my meditative mind preserves the enduring strength as compost for more stories. A result: I am able to host Samata, an unconditional equanimity.

I am loving the life of an ordinary person who enjoys Nature:
You see me as alone; I read the green palm leaves swinging in the light wind, capture the sight of many Western Australian wildflowers of King’s Park within my eyes. I walk my trail. I suddenly notice a mob of wild kangaroos as I walk in the bush. Birds, the Willie Wagtails: I wish to sing along with their chirping and swim along in a swelling sea – the Indian Ocean; or gaze across the choppy waves of the Swan River, and smell the best of them.

It is time to show compassion to myself, and learn to cultivate a friendly feeling towards any missteps, for such stretch-mistakes are the most useful companions in difficult times. The view of differences has been the resource for my being in the world; it has given me courage to expand my abilities. It is a power to reflect on my life and laugh, then be happy, and focus to act with empathy.

I realise how everyone, being infinite and divine, is responsible for their own thoughts, motives, (un) conscious actions, in all the adventurous twists and turns, ups and downs of life. I know that to hurt others is to hurt myself: Also, to forgive and be forgiven is an art. I wish to do more good than harm, for, I may only expect to be valued by them who may even seek to hurt others.

I do not wish to allow the past to hold me back; I choose to take a path that values and respects; I need to sustain all, caring and considerate. I feel blissfully blessed, by harmonising even the ring and index fingers, expecting neither sadness nor more fear. Rather, my thermostat controls the breath, I practice Pranayam\(^2\):

---


\(^2\) Pranayam refers to conscious concentration and control on breathing during the meditation.
Breathing In–breathing Out– I repeat, slowly in a rhythm; I close my eyes, I meditate to increase Mindfulness.

Yes, I observe the awareness through my nostrils.
Vi-Pashyanti, Vipashyana\(^1\) or I repeat, Om\(^2\),
the mantra meditation for kindness, compassion
and calmness of my own body, mind and heart.
I find some true joy in the space between, for a better future.
I witness everyone’s wellness, moment by moment.
I pay attention to things as they are – which,
I hope, will cheerfully count at last; nothing else.

In writing this thesis, I took an easier path of smiling rather than explaining why and whenever I was exhausted I tried the best to keep my emotions low key. I hope to inspire others and their world through my own life and living where this present work will act as a message to them. Borrowing from Greene (2005, p. 80), I view my work as “new beginnings; and to act at a beginning is to move towards possibilities, to live and teach in a world of incompleteness, of what we all are but are not yet”. Thus, I mark the completion of this project as a major stage of my transformative learning journey. What I have learnt from these images will now allow me, in continuing, to inform and refresh every corner of life and learning.

**Chapter Summary**

To conclude my thesis this chapter draws on my own experiences of ethical dilemma stories, and those of my participants, to extract a set of key principles and understandings about the nature of transformative learning. I describe my learning and what it means for both teachers and students and what it means to others (including the participants), regarding the use and authenticity of ethical dilemma stories as a transformational teaching-learning approach in teacher education and teaching generally. In the process, I have discovered an inner enrichment of my own growing maturity through the use of emancipatory, practical knowledge (Habermas, 1972) whereby I have become aware of the social, cultural and educational contexts which shape my new, transformative understandings.

\(^1\) *Vipashyana* refers to see things in an extraordinarily sensible as well as subliminal way.

\(^2\) *Om (Aum/Ohm)* is a sound, which echoes vibration of the universe, in its repeatedly chanting as if it were coming through all living/non-living things, and from everywhere.
REFERENCES


Donne, J. (1639). Devotions upon emergent occasions. Meditation XVII. In Henry Alford (Ed.), *The works of John Donne* (pp. 574–75). Vol III. London: John W. Parker.


Garman, N (1996). Qualitative inquiry: Meaning and menace for educational researchers. In P. Willis & B. Neville (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice in adult education* (pp. 11-29). Melbourne, Australia: David Lovell Publishing.


Haberman, M. (2010). Pedagogy of poverty versus good teaching: it will be formidable difficult to institutionalize new forms of pedagogy for the children of poverty, but it is worthwhile to define and describe such alternatives. *Phi Delta Kappan, 92*(2), 81–87. doi: 10.1177/003172171009200223


Maskey, G.M. (15 October, 2015). Personal communication.


258


I have put my full efforts to properly acknowledge all the sources of information I have used in this research. I am happy to receive any comments and feedback if I missed to mention any known/unknown scholars’ contributions.
## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1  
**B.Ed. Curriculum Framework**

**Curriculum Framework  
B. Ed. (English)**

**Level:** B. Ed.  
**Course No.:** Eng. Ed. 317

**Course Description:**  
This course exposes the students to the varieties of reading materials and writing strategies in order to enhance their academic skills. It adopts a content-based approach to the development of reading, writing, and critical thinking abilities. Furthermore, it focuses on stages of the writing process and the structure of academic writing.

**General Objectives:**  
The general objectives of the course are as follows:
- To expose the students to a variety of contemporary reading materials.
- To facilitate the students to read critically, and write logically.
- To expose the students to a variety of writing activities.
- To encourage students to think independently.
- To enhance the abilities to argue with reasons, and confidence among the students.

### Specific Objectives and Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit I: Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Reading with a purpose</td>
<td>• Read and comprehend the purposes of texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Reading for specific information</td>
<td>• Identify the general idea of the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Reading for general information</td>
<td>• Find the main points in the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Reading for main ideas</td>
<td>• Read and take notes of the important points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Reading critically and analytically</td>
<td>• Comprehend details of the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Reading for pleasure</td>
<td>• Read and analyze the texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Reading and taking notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit II: Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Purpose and audience</td>
<td>• Write keeping in mind the purpose an audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Main ideas and supporting details</td>
<td>• Organize main ideas with supporting details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The essentials of writing</td>
<td>• Explain the essentials of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Writing an essay</td>
<td>• Write narratives and anecdotes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 The structure of an essay</td>
<td>• Write reports and letters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 The writing process</td>
<td>• Write different types of essays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3 Writing with sources</td>
<td>• Write creatively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Creative writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Different genres of creative writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 Writing anecdotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3 Writing stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.4 Writing poems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Writing journal entries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Writing notes and summaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Writing reports and letters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit III: Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Developing a critical mind</td>
<td>• Read and analyze the text critically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Analyzing</td>
<td>• Argue with reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Arguing</td>
<td>• Think independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Reflecting</td>
<td>• Debate confidently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Reasoning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Instructional Methods:

The instructional methods for this course are divided into two groups. First group consists of general instructional methods applicable to most of the units. The second group consists of specific instructional methods applicable to specific units.

**General Instructional Methods:**
- Lecture and discussion
- Demonstration
- Explanation and illustration
- Group and individual work

**Specific Instructional Methods:**
- Self-study
- Project work
- Presentation

**Evaluation:**

The learning of the student is assessed through annual examination held by the Office of Controller of Examinations.
Appendix 2  Project Information Letter

Transformative learning through Ethical Dilemma Stories: An Autoethnographic Study

Information Letter for participating pre-service teachers

Dear ………………………………………

My name is Kashi Raj Pandey and I am writing to you on behalf of Murdoch University. I am conducting a research project that aims to promote 'critical literacy' amongst pre-service teachers enrolled in an English Language Teaching course by engaging in 'ethical dilemma storytelling.' The project is being conducted as part of my Doctor of Philosophy. I have chosen this college because of the participating B.Ed. Students are the future teachers of Nepal.

In this regard, I wish to conduct a series of sessions (2 hours per day for 2 weeks) in writing essays and stories through Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy in your BEd English Language Teaching class. These sessions will help participating students to develop advanced English language skills without any extra cost. I would like to invite you to take part in the project. Here are answers to some questions you might have with you.

What does participating in the research involve?
You are invited to participate in my class as a student followed by completing a feedback form and participating in an interview, and then if you agree, a further period of in-class observation. Details of these are below:

- **In-class sessions:** In agreement with the students, your usual teacher and you, I would like to arrange suitable times to teach the class. The time-frame will be negotiated with you.
- **Interview:** I will ask you a series of open-ended questions related to your understanding and experience of these initiatives within your college context. The interview process will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Interview transcripts will be shared with you for confirmation. Your true answers will contribute highly in the research, and therefore, does not at all affect negatively with your relation to the researcher and to your class teacher and granting.

Do I have to take part?
No. Participating in the research part of the project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. All decisions made will be respected by members of the research team.

What if I wanted to change my initial decision?
If any member of the participant group decides to participate in the research and then later changes their mind, they are able to withdraw their participation at any time. Data can be withdrawn at any time from the study.

There will be no consequences relating to any decision by an individual or your college regarding participation. Decisions made will not affect the relationship with your college, nor the research team or Murdoch University.

What will happen to the information collected, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?
Information that identifies anyone will be removed from the data collected. The data is then stored securely in a locked cabinet at Murdoch University and any electronic data stored on a computer will be protected by passwords and can only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisors. The data will be stored for a minimum period of 7 years, after which it will be destroyed. This will be achieved by deleting any electronic data on computers, external hard disk drives, thumb-drives and physically shredding any hard copy (i.e., notes, researcher diaries) data into a secure document disposal bin.

Ethis approval: RAMP 0327 Sept 2015a
The identity of participants and the college will not be disclosed at any time. Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all other times. The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from you.

It is intended that the findings of this study will be used in the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy thesis, and may also be published in research journals and presented at conferences. A summary of the research findings will be made available upon completion of the project on request and this can be expected to become available in December 2017.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss the project further?
If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study with a member of the research team, please contact me on the number provided below. If you wish to speak with an independent person about the conduct of the project, please contact the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee, Murdoch University by telephoning 9360 6677 or by emailing Ethics@murdoch.edu.au.

How do I become involved?
If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to become involved, please complete the Consent Form on the following page.

This information letter is for you to keep. Thank you again for your time.

Kind regards

Researcher: Kashi Raj Pandey
Email: kashiraj@kku.edu.mp; k.pandey@murdoch.edu.au

Ethics approval: RAMP 0327 Sept 2015a
Appendix 3   Research Information Acknowledgement Letter

Transforming the Consciousness of Future Teachers
Through Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy

This is to acknowledge that I have read the Information Letter for the Principal and understood the nature of this research. The information has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep.

I have also been informed that our students as research participants may not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study.

I hereby give permission to conduct the fieldwork as explained in the project Information Letter, and welcome the researcher, Mr. Kesh Raj Pandey, in our college for the period of two weeks.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Title]
(Deputy Chief)

Adarsha Multiple Campus, Gujri (Nepal)

Phone: v977 (030) 402332 (Landline); Personal 9851055328 (Mobile)

Date: May 6, 2015
Appendix 4  Project Permission Letter

Sr. Kushi Raj Pandey
Macquarie University
Australia

Subject: Project Permission Letter

With reference to your letter submitted to this campus through email for a research work entitled, “Transforming the Consciousness of Future Teachers Through Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy” we would like to inform that the proposed project work is permitted to be conducted here in our campus. This is to acknowledge that I have read the Information Letter for the Principal and understood the nature of this research. The information has been explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered. I have been given a copy of the information sheet to keep.

I have also been informed that our students as research participants may not receive any direct benefit from participating in this study.

I hereby give permission to conduct the Subwork as explained in the project Information Letter, and, welcome the researcher, Mr. Kushi Raj Pandey, to our college for the period of two weeks.

Thank you,

Bikas Pradhan (Dean)
(Campus Chief)
Adarsha Multiple Campus, Gauri (Nepal)

Ph: +977 (1) 4023522 (Landline), Personal: 9851053929 (Mobile)
Date: June 10, 2015
Appendix 5 Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy

Ethical Dilemma Story Pedagogy

Learning outcomes: What benefits does this pedagogy aim to bring?
The main aim of the ethical dilemma stories learning is to promote ethical development in the students via their independent thinking and logical decision-making skills as well as to promote written and spoken language expression in their English as a second language. Therefore, the dilemma stories are aimed at allowing students to develop an understanding of how ethical decisions are made as well as at enabling them to join in effectively in discussion of the cultural, ethical and value-laden issues which are critical elements of ethical decisions (dilemmas.net.au website, 2013).

Rationale:
Ethics and morality have traditionally tended to be included mainly in psychology studies and religious education. However, not many schools offer psychology as a standard curriculum offering and religious education appears to be diminishing in availability and vigour in many places in the world. Religion used to be the central category in curriculum where ethics was located. Independently of religious teaching, ethical dilemma story pedagogy could still be one strong area to replace religion in offering ethical components in the curriculum.

The basic principle of EDSP:
An ethical dilemma story aims to provide a learner with the opportunity to arrive at her/his own decisions from the available choices of ethical action, which may bring positive or negative consequences for the self and other people. The available choices suggested by the teacher could only serve the purpose of how indicating persons might respond to the dilemma situations, but there is also room for the students to come up with alternative responses. Thus, the teacher in her/his lesson planning notes should stress that the ethical dilemma story pedagogy should seek to avoid excessive concentration on bipolar opposites such as right and wrong. Instead the lesson should be planned to promote independent thinking in and independent comments from the students. When the students have their own solutions to offer, they should be encouraged to express these. The students may even engage inventing an encompassing ethical dilemma story of their own to give them further insight into the ethical elements in an ethical dilemma story.
The main features of ethical dilemma stories:

According to the ‘dilemmas.net.au’ website (2013), ethical analysis can be applied in a wide range of contexts. Such ethical analysis will assist the student achieve a deeper understanding of ethical issues facing the story protagonist and to understand the sequence of events leading up to the dilemma. The ethical dilemma stories provide the foundation for a learning sequence that motivates students to explore the ethical issues behind the story and the factors that affect the decisions that were made. Therefore, the students are given ample opportunity to achieve a deeper ethical appreciation of the actions of the characters in the story.

I have kept the stories open-ended so that the students can look for possible solutions to the ethical dilemma situations; I have kept the language of the stories simple in order for the students to find sufficient links to their own life experiences and to make sure they are immediately able to grasp the meaning of the story. According to Settelmaier (2009), the structure of the ethical dilemma stories can be adjusted to accord with our teaching topic, class situation, and with the comprehensive curriculum. Although the majority of the stories end up with one central dilemma, when the stories are long, I have presented the stories in installments so that they become easy for the students to follow.

Structure of an ethical dilemma teaching lesson:

In a typical ethical dilemma lesson, students are “confronted with one or more dilemma questions that are designed to initiate a cognitive disequilibrium and thus a reflective process” (Settelmaier, 2009, p. 142). I have, therefore, tried to put the students in the shoes of a character in the story in order to allow them to recreate the emotions of the character for themselves. They are encouraged to reflect about how they would respond to the dilemma situations individually if they were themselves the characters in the story. The phases in the lesson alternate, where students work individually or in groups. In this research, the students started their involvement in the given ethical dilemma stories in pair-work and mini-group discussions to the sharing of their ideas with other students, eventually joining in a whole class discussion. The step-by-step process, described below, gives an overview of “the structure of a dilemma teaching activity” (Settelmaier, 2009, pp. 142-143):

Step 1
- The story is told orally by the teacher.
- The teacher stops at the first dilemma situation.
Step 2
- A graduated set of questions are put forward by the teacher for the whole class to see.
- These 'Warm up' questions prepare the students for engagement with the story.
- These are aimed at giving the students an opportunity on how to form questions in reference to the local dilemma and its possible solutions.

Step 3
- During the dilemma interruptions, the students work individually at first and then discuss the dilemma in pairs. Finally the dilemma will be discussed in the whole class context.
- At the end of the dilemma story, there is usually a final dilemma and a group report is prepared for the class in the form of a poster.
- Usually the dilemma stories are open-ended and a solution or solutions is/are arrived at by individual, group and class discussion.
Appendix 6  A Teachers’ Guide to Classroom Interaction

A teacher’s guide to student reflection and discussion
(The aim being to promote students’ active engagement with the dilemma and in its discussion.)

1. The teacher introduces the ethical dilemma topic and its purpose with some ‘warm up’ questions to prepare the students for engagement with the main concept of ethical dilemma story. These are aimed at giving the students an opportunity on how to deal with the ethical dilemma situations and look for their possible solutions.

2. The teacher tells the open-ended, ethical dilemma story, orally to the whole class where the teacher stops as required by the dilemma situation, making easy for the students to follow.

3. The teacher divides the class into suitably-chosen pairs with differing levels of ability to discuss their ideas with proposed guidance questions. The teacher elicits understanding on the theme discussed for 5 minutes, and lets students identify the main dilemma in the story.

4. The teacher makes three groups:
   One, raise your hand who think in the line of ‘pros’;
   two, raise your hand who think in the line of ‘cons’;
   three, raise your hand all those who have other alternatives to suggest.

5. The teacher lets the students nominate one volunteer from their group to record the arguments that come up in the discussion. When the first and second groups set about discussing the arguments and collating them, the students with third opinion can assist the discussion move forward.

6. The teacher moderates the discussion to move into the next level of cross discussion by advising them to explain in more persuasive way to the other members; or suggesting some ideas as, would you like to; and asking the students some questions like, what about this? etc.

7. The teacher sees if anyone is convinced and interested to change their opinions. People from the undecided group must choose their appropriate cohort by now. Then, the class members go back to their tasks, most probably in two groups now.

8. The teacher manages two sides of arguments while each one of the groups prepares two brief arguments to facilitate the supporting ‘pro’ decision and two arguments to support the opposing ‘con’ decision. The teacher may also write some points on the board to get them going.
9. The teacher reunites the class, collects the students’ responses and concludes the class by saying, “Okay, class- when we meet next time, we will have another discussion on this dilemma”.

10. After the interval, the teacher reads out to the class all the brief arguments listed in stage 5 (above) by putting them in two lists in the class, and seeks to have these ‘pro’ and ‘con’ arguments further discussed by the whole class. For example, the students give reasons why they think the ‘particular character’ in the dilemma story did the right or wrong thing as supported by the action and activities the character performed. The students try to convince other members of the class who hold different opinion than theirs by explaining why they think the way they think. They also try to see if anyone is convinced by the opposite argument and interested to change their opinions.

11. The teacher gets the students to arrive at a brief final conclusion for themselves. (Prompt: In arriving at this final stage, did you stick to your initial decision or did you go over to the opposite argument?) Students write down their own conclusion.

12. The teacher presents the storyboard and have all the points read aloud to the class.

13. The teacher nominates one student to summarize the responses and make a note of brief written synopsis on a poster from each group (5 minutes each) to mount on the wall or to copy and circulate it to each members for the purposes of whole group plenary discussion as the solution is sought after the rigorous process of individual, group and class discussion.

14. The teacher asks each student to write their own final judgment even after considering their friends’ ideas as part of the students’ assignments. So, each student comes up with a short personal essay with a synopsis of what they themselves consider more appropriate ethical decisions based on the earlier discussion in the classroom and its outcome.

15. The teacher concludes the class by saying, “Okay, class- when we meet next time, we will have another advanced discussion”.

270
## Lesson Plan: Week One

**Monday, Sept. 28 to Friday, Oct. 2 (Ass 11 to 15)**

Steps:
- Lesson preparation;
- Lesson presentation for delivery;
- Interactions.

### Grade level
B Ed

### Duration
2 Hours/day

### Key learning area for the students
Independent, higher-level thinking and logical decision making (Discourse, reflection, discussion, decision, and presentation)

### Curriculum links
B. Ed. English (Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking)

### Resources
Dilemma Story

### Topic
The dilemma of life and how we live: A story from our village

1. **Opening:** Monster box
2. **Introduction:** Here is a dilemma story for our reflection, discussion and response.
3. **Learning outcomes:** Fostering overall creative engagement. At the end of this one-week course, the students are expected to:
   - recognise the features of ethical dilemma stories;
   - have acquired the skills of a storyteller (written/creative);
   - have received feedback from the teacher and their peers about their interpretive comments on the language and appropriate narrative structure of the dilemma story they had listened to, and
   - write a one story from their personal experiences which relate to the themes in the dilemma story.

### Lesson materials
(For teacher/students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monster Box</td>
<td>7.15-7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen</td>
<td>7.30-8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteboard Marker</td>
<td>8.00-8.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.15-9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.00-9.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Procedure - 1st lesson

**Lesson introduction**
I will set the scene for the lesson; I will do some warm-up activities, and describe what I am about to teach.

**Body of lesson**
As I tell the story, I provide an indication of the intended duration of each task that includes questions to develop understanding, and extend the students’ thinking. I also explain to students what they are required to do, and what their role ought to be in their learning processes.

**Break**

**Class discussion/group work**

**Lesson conclusion:** I will bring the lesson to a conclusion by summarising the key points and ideas presented.
Assessment of student learning: What strategies will you use to assess whether or not students attained the intended learning outcomes?
I will use:
1. Informal Class observation: Participants’ engagement in the task, pair work, group work, and presentation.
2. Student notes as evidence of their interpretive responses to the dilemma questions (situations).
3. Feedback from the students about their perceived reactions to the story that they experience.
4. Students’ self-assessment/journal
5. My reflections, my self-evaluation: What went well and what didn’t go as well? Why?
   What will I do next time if I teach the lesson again? What would I do differently? What would I retain and/or change? Why? (Timing, pace, classroom management, voice projection etc.)

Closing – review:
(Summary: In the opening scene, we met Mailli, the mother of Muna. Mailli had lost her elder daughter, Junu, some years earlier when Junu had died in a landslide leaving behind her three children. Muna, the other daughter of Mailli and her husband Dhandai, was in hospital because she had suffered some grave injuries when she had fallen from a cliff while collecting fodder. She was lying unconscious in the hospital bed.
Muna, also the mother of two young children, had not got any better since she had been admitted to hospital. Mailli and Dhandai saw no point in leaving Muna, in this situation, and asked the doctor if the family could take her to their home instead of paying the bills when there was no further hope of Muna’s getting better. However, the oath that doctors took before becoming qualified was that they would do all they could to save any patient’s life and not bring it deliberately to an end. So, here we arrived at a dilemma for everyone, including the doctors.)

Notes for next lesson:
Lesson Plan: Week Two  
Monday, Oct. 5 to Friday, Oct. 9 (AsoJ 18 to 22)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade level</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Key learning area for the participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B Ed</td>
<td>2 Hours/day</td>
<td>Independent, higher-level thinking and logical decision making (Discourse, reflection, discussion, decision, and presentation)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curriculum links</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. Ed. English (Reading, Writing, and Critical Thinking)</td>
<td>Dilemma Story</td>
<td>The Dilemma of Leaving Home: A Story from our Village</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **Introduction:** Here is another dilemma story for our reflection, discussion and response:

5. **Learning outcomes:** Fostering our overall creative engagement. At the end of this one week course, the students are expected to:
   - Recognize and apply the already known features of ethical dilemma stories in their learning;
   - have acquired the skills of a storyteller (written/creative);
   - have received feedback from the teacher and their peers about their interpretive comments on the language and appropriate narrative structure of the dilemma story they had listened to; and
   - write another short story from their personal experiences which relate to the themes in the dilemma story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson materials (For teacher/students)</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pen                                    | 7.15-7.30 | **Lesson introduction**  
I will set the scene for the lesson; I will do some warm-up activities, and describe what I am about to teach. |
| Paper                                  | 7.30-8.00 | **Body of lesson**  
As I tell the story, I provide an indication of the intended duration of each task that includes questions to develop understanding, and extend the students’ thinking.  
I also explain to students what they are required to do, and what their role ought to be in their learning processes. |
| Pencil                                 | 8.00-8.15 | **Break**  
Class discussion/group work |  
**Lesson conclusion**  
I will bring the lesson to a conclusion by summarising the key points and ideas presented. |
| Whiteboard Marker                      | 8.15-9.00 |           |
|                                        | 9.00-9.15 |           |
Assessment of student learning: What strategies will you use to assess whether or not students attained the intended learning outcomes?

I will use:

1. Informal Class observation: Participants’ engagement in the task, pair work, group work, and presentation.
2. Student notes as evidence of their interpretive responses to the dilemma questions (situations).
3. Feedback from the students about their perceived reactions to the story that they experience.
4. Students’ self-assessment, journal
5. My reflections, my self-evaluation: What went well and what didn’t go as well? Why? What will I do next time if I teach the lesson again? What would I do differently? What would I retain and/or change? Why? (Timing, pace, classroom management, voice projection etc.)

Closing review:
(Summary: In the opening scene, we met Shanti, a middle aged woman in the village of Nimarukharka, whose husband had recently left her for another woman. Shanti unfortunately owed a large sum of money to the village moneylender, She lived with her 18-year-old daughter Saraswati. The debt was due in a month’s time. Although Saraswati had been qualified for a primary teacher’s job in the village, nobody offered her a place even after she applied for a post to many local schools. If they failed to pay the money back in time, Shanti could have faced legal consequences and even be sent into jail. However there had been an option: that Saraswati could have chosen the moneylender as her future husband as he had proposed a bargain saying that he was getting old and would need someone to show love and care for him. If the mother and daughter had agreed, he could have forgiven the woman’s debt. The alternative of letting the daughter leave the village for a better opportunity in the city that could help them to survive as well as to pay off the loan, or to accept the moneylender’s proposal brought a dilemma here.)

Notes for next lesson:
Appendix 8  A Sample Response (Verbatim) to Interview I

Interview Response (Verbatim), a Sample

1. In what ways were the dilemma stories relevant to you or to people that you know?
   Three years ago, I was very sick... that... um... at that time... My father wanted to take me to hospital for my treatment and um... but he did not have much money and he did not have others peoples um... than he did not trust to me at the hospital and it was very great conclusion (confusion?). I mean dilemma whether took me to hospital or to die at home... He was very... he was in dilemma.
   Second story is related to my one of my sisters in village who is suffering from fever for 2 month, but (his) family member did not pay the money to the hospital and she was in very um... serious condition and she (um...) kept in bir hospital in Kathmandu. Than... (his) brother was in abroad 1 mean... Malaysia, than he send the money after...um... one month...um... I think 25 days later... than her treatment is success and... success and she... back to the home as a well...

2. In what ways were you encouraged to engage in the activities?
   During these two weeks, studying and working with our friends...um...with you... um... um... I thought it was very interesting and not forgettable moment. So, I learned many vocabulary... so, I practised upon these vocabulary which you gave all of us. (Then) we listened your story and when you break(c’d), we think(c’d) answers and exchanged our views. Your stories pushed us to think very... um... it made us...um... it made our creative thinker also... we enjoyed a lot to your stories....

3. How did you set about finding out about other participants' ideas? What did you gain from hearing their opinions?
   I said (shared?) um... a... with pair work, group discussion, and group work sharing with other participants ideas and I gained lots of these knowledge from hearing other participants. They expressed their views very freely and they respect my views also as well as I expressed my views without any conclusion (final declaration?). I learned from hearing their views we should respect others views also and all individuals are different and they can give their answer differently and we should respect all of ideas which help us to reach every steps of our life also.

4. Did other participants ask you to explain more about your ideas?
   Yes, why not? They asked to explain more about my other ideas. As well as I also requested them to express (explain) their other ideas which help us to do our group and group discussion also and it joins our relation also thru the ideas (um...) strong connection each other... networking...

5. Did the stories also cause you to question and reflect on your own ideas? Please give a short example?
   Yes, why not? The stories also cause on me to question and reflect my own ideas. Because when I read English stories, I found there very unfamiliar name, culture, situation... and I felt very difficult to understand also but now when you gave your um... to this story... after this reading I felt very easy and it makes me very easy to understand because it is related to our context and all characters are familiar um... situation also so, it realised (mised?) me a question um... all stories are not difficult um... and um... if... if... we can understand. The stories engage(s) me to learning many things, many um...new ideas... um... creating... creativity...
Appendix 9

Follow-up Interview Questions I

Follow-up Questions for Participants' feedback (June, 2017)

Dear [name of the participant],

Thank you for your participation in the ethical dilemma story sessions in October 2015. You also completed the Values Learning Environment survey (VLES) which invited you to express your personally perceived value ratings of your experiences of the research procedures. I also wish to thank you for your detailed responses which have formed an important part of my investigation. I now wish to seek your co-operation in providing some further responses to the following questions.

Feel free to express your ideas fully (No very-short replies, please) and use separate sheets of paper in your replies to ‘Section One’ and ‘Section Two’ mentioning the question number for each response so it will be clear to which question the responses relate.

SECTION ONE

1. How did you feel about the effectiveness and relevance of the dilemma story method of the teaching?
2. Do you think the stories were well designed to meet their intended purpose?
3. Do you think the teacher presented the story well and guided the discussion well?
4. Do you think the ethical dilemma story method provided encouragement for the students to share their views with the other participants?
5. Do you think the class discussions led to any new insights in the minds of the participant?
6. Can you think about your participation in the discussions and upon reflections on what was effective or less effective in what you said?
7. Are you able to identify anything lacking or ineffective in the stories presented or in the teachers’ ways of presenting them and guiding the discussions?

Would you, now, also provide your comments to the seven questions in ‘Section Two’, below?

SECTION TWO

8. Write a short paragraph to introduce yourself. Include which school and grade you teach, which subject and the average age of the students in your class.
9. In your view what are the central gains for the students contained in the ethical dilemma story method?
10. Do you see an appropriate place within your class curriculum to accommodate the ethical dilemma story method?
11. Did you have any experience of the ethical dilemma story method prior to your involvement in the present research project or subsequently?
12. Are you currently making use of the ethical dilemma story method in your teaching and why have you decided to use it?
13. Have you got any further comments to make about the effectiveness and relevance of the ethical dilemma story method in the classroom?
14. Have you, so far, had experience of yourself composing any ethical dilemma stories?

Thank you again in anticipation of your replies which may add significant depth to the research findings and provide practical guidance for the future use of the ethical dilemma story method in the classroom.

Warm regards,
Kashiraj Pandey, Researcher
Follow-up Questions for Participants’ final feedback (August, 2017)

Dear (name of the participant)

Hope all is well with you.

I need some more of your time in going back to the dilemma stories I told in your class as part of my research project.

Can you recall the 2 dilemma stories and give me some specific examples of how you reached your conclusion when you had to make decisions about the dilemmas. In particular:

1. Did you quickly make your decisions? If yes, what prompted you to do so?
2. If you had to struggle, please explain this struggle in terms of the 2 dilemma stories: Why did you have to struggle?

3. How did you struggle? (By yourself or in discussion with other students?)

4. How did you make your decisions in the dilemma situations? Did you also see the situation from other people’s perspectives?

Thank you and with warm regards,

Kashiraj Pandey, Researcher